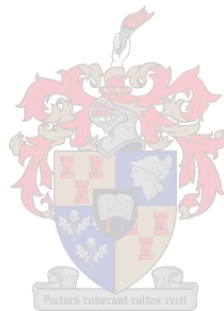


Decelerating factors that impact on the career progression of women academics at Stellenbosch University

by

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Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Sociology) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science at Stellenbosch University



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Declaration

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Abstract

In 2014, Stellenbosch University's (SU's) Transformation office released an infographic displaying the percentage of women and men at the various academic ranks throughout the university. This display emphasised a clear-cut gender divide: as rank increased from junior lecturer to full professor, the percentage of women in these positions steadily decreases and the percentage of men steadily increases. In an attempt to understand this phenomenon, this thesis aims to investigate gender-related influences on career progression among women academic staff. More specifically, it sets out to determine whether women academic staff at SU experience a lack of career progression and if so, what factors they attribute this to, and how these factors differ in terms of faculty, marital and motherhood status, and highest qualification.

This thesis pursues these objectives by following a mixed methods approach which entails both a qualitative study of women working in higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Western Cape, as well as a cross-sectional survey conducted among women academic staff at SU. A theoretical framework is used which attributes differences in career progression between women and men to psychosocial factors, structural features or "deficits" of HEIs, and/or family-related factors. The results show that women academics often refer to structural deficits of HEIs as contributing to their slow career progression. These deficits do not, generally, indicate overt discrimination, but rather that certain assumptions about gender roles, particularly in relation to family responsibilities, are ingrained in the institutional culture of HEIs and that this limits considerably the ability of women to climb the ranks in their institutions.

Opsomming

In 2014, het Unversiteit Stellenbosch (US) se Transformasie Kantoor 'n inligtingsgrafiek uitgereik, wat die persentasie mans en vroue in die verskeie akademiese range oor die universiteit heen uitbeeld. Hierdie uitbeelding het 'n duidelike genderverdeling uitgelig: soos wat rang toeneem vanaf junior lektor to volle professor, neem die persentasie vroue gestadig af, en die persentasie mans gestadig toe. In 'n poging om hierdie verskynsel te ondersoek, het hierdie tesis ten doel om genderverwante invloede op loopbaanvordering by vroue akademiese personeel te ondersoek. Meer spesifiek, dit is daarop gemik om vas te stel of vroue akademiese personeel by die US 'n gebrek aan loopbaanvordering ervaar en, indien wel, aan watter fatore hulle dit toeskryf, en hoe hierdie faktore verskil in terme van fakulteit, huweliks- en moederskapstatus, en hoogste kwalifikasie.

Hierdie tesis streef hierdie doelwitte na deur 'n gemengde metodes benadering te volg, wat beide 'n kwalitatiewe ondersoek behels van vroue werksaam by hoër-onderwys instellings (HOI's) in die Wes-Kaap, sowel as 'n kruisseksionele opname uitgevoer onder vroue akademiese personeel by die US. 'n Teoretiese raamwerk word gebruik, wat verskille in loopbaanvordering tussen vroue en mans toeskryf aan psigososiale faktore, strukturele eienskappe of "gebreke" van HOI's, en/of gesinsverwante faktore. Die resultate toon dat vroue akademiese personeel dikwels na strukturele gebreke van HOI's verwys as bydraend tot hul stadige loopbaanvordering. Hierdie gebreke dui nie, oor die algemeen, op openlike diskriminasie nie, maar eerder daarop dat sekere aannames oor gender-rolle, in besonder in verband met gesinsverantwoordelikhede, ingewortel is in die institusionele kultuur van HOI's, en dat dit die vermoë van vroue om die range in hul instellings te bestyg, aansienlik beperk.

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Acronyms

SU Stellenbosch University

HE Higher education

HEIs Higher education institutions

DIRP Division for Institutional Research and Planning

REC Research Ethics Committee (for Human Research in the Humanities)

WF Women's Forum

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This thesis aims to explore inequalities in career attainments between men and women academics in South African higher education institutions (HEIs), with a particular focus on Stellenbosch University (SU). The purpose of this first chapter serves to introduce the research presented in this thesis. Throughout this chapter, I will contextualise and provide a rationale for the research problem, by providing a historical background to the research and by describing the current situation concerning the state of gender equality, as it relates to academic rank, in South Africa in general, as well as at SU in particular. The rationale for the research problem will also contain an explanation of the possible contributions and impact of the study. I will then briefly discuss the main objectives of the research, introduce the design of this study and the data sources that were used to answer the research questions. This is followed by an outline of this thesis, and I will conclude with the potential use of the research for SU.

1.2. Contextualising the research problem

1.2.1. Historical background of gender inequality at South African universities.

After the democratic transition in 1994, when the new government, the African National Congress, came into power, a new emphasis was placed on the need for equality in terms of both race and gender. After suffering centuries of patriarchy and white dominance, South Africa finally equipped itself with legislation to eradicate discrimination and aid transformation, by introducing a new Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996). This new constitution was based upon newfound, equal human rights for all men and women, one of the essential elements of a constitutional democracy (Meyiwa, Nkondo, Chitiga-Mabugu, Sithole & Nyamnjoh, 2014).

The hope was that, since gender equality took an important place in the Constitution, it would also become a significant element of institutional transformation throughout the

country. However, problems in the materialisation of gender equality arose when, after 20 years of democracy in 2014, it became noticeable that few real changes concerning gender and racial equality in HEIs had occurred. In 2015, the spotlight was increasingly on persistent inequalities and the unfulfilled promises that the post-apartheid government had made. Student uprisings over fee increases, and racial and gender discriminations that persist in historically advantaged institutions, became topics of much social-media hype, and South African HEIs became the focus point of the lack of change and explanations thereof.

South Africa's racially segregated past and the effects it still has in the post-apartheid era is a topic that is still much discussed and researched (Biko, 2002; Walker, 2013; Vincent, 2008). One of the arguments formulated to explain the lack of real change ascribes it to the approach that was taken by the new democratic government more than 20 years ago. This approach placed equal importance on culture and tradition as essential parts of that government's agenda in changing the new South Africa. The consequences of this approach was that the importance of preserving culture eventually outstripped the importance that was placed upon gender-equality policies, and these two ideals became conflicting (Walker, 2013). Other South African scholars, such as Cheryl-Ann Potgieter, Ann-Gloria Moleko, Reitumetse Obakeng, Yvette Abrahams and Zine Magubane, deal specifically with race, gender, and the status of black South African women in the academy (Mabokela & Magubane, 2004). Their research is aimed at exposing the racist and sexist practices that still suffuse the institutional culture of South African universities, despite commitments to diversity and transformation.

In 2015, when the data for this research were collected, gender equality had been enshrined in the South African Constitution for 21 years, but women working in South African HEIs, particularly black women, still claimed that they experienced marginalisation in their work environments, and were still severely underrepresented in senior academic positions. The latest audited data from the Department of Higher Education and Training (2013) shows that, in 2013, South Africa employed, at its publicly funded HEIs, a total of 4 073 professors and associate professors, and of these, only 17% were black, 12% were Indian and coloured, while 71% were white. When one considers the 2 175 full professors, only 15% were black, 5% were coloured and 6% were Indian, while an exceedingly large percentage (73%) were white. Moreover, when inequality is inspected through a gendered lens, among the full professors in South Africa, only 25% are women, and only 2% are black South African women.

When one considers the specific case of SU, a similar pattern emerges: in 2015 of a total of 434 professors and associate professors, 67% are white professors. SU, not unlike many other historically white South African universities, is known for its historical, overt exclusion of female and black citizens, though recently it has been making concerted efforts to improve the diversity profile of its student body. However, by only concentrating on the diversification of its student body, the university overlooks the need for diversification at an employee level as well. It was only in January of 2007 that SU appointed its first black female as Dean (SU, 2016). Although the first female professor had already been appointed in 1920, it was only approximately a century later, in 2016, that the first female registrar was appointed, which seems to indicate a lack of consistency in the university's commitment to constant change (Times Live Media Group Digital, 2016). Statistical information from SU's Division Institutional Planning and Research (DIRP) shows that, at the time of writing, there are still large inequalities between men and women academic staff at SU in terms of the academic ranks they occupy. While women are concentrated in the lower academic ranks of junior lecturer and lecturer, men are concentrated in the higher academic ranks of senior lecturer, associate professor and professor.

Women's feeling of marginalisation in their work environments and the underrepresentation of women academics in senior academic positions is, however, not only a South African phenomenon. The notion of career-attainment inequality between male and female academics in HE is supported by many scholars locally, nationally and globally. Two of the leading scholars on this subject, Long and Fox (1995), stated more than two decades ago that women's childcare responsibilities and outdated perceptions of women's role in society persistently poses a challenge for working women, and especially academic women working in HE. A more recent United Nations (UN) report claimed that women academics face a constant battle with the lack of attention devoted to these adding to challenges they face in terms career advancement opportunities and scientific recognition [UN Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2007].

According to Long and Fox (1995), inequalities in career attainments between men and women can be investigated in terms of four general categories, the first being "participation", which deals with the extent to which women academics are present in the HE sector. The second is "position", which explores the position women take up in the HE ranks. The third, "recognition", deals with the scientific recognition given to women in the form of *inter alia* citations, grants, salaries, and in the South African context,

National Research Foundation (NRF) ratings, etc. In addition, the last category, “productivity”, deals with women’s productivity concerning the number of research outputs (e.g. articles and books), they produce. This research focuses on inequalities in terms of position, or academic rank, at SU specifically, and locates itself within the South African HE context. It is, however, important to note that these categories do not operate independently, but are closely related to one another and have causal and cumulative effects on each other.

The existence of these inequalities demands explanation in terms of the processes that generate and sustain them. Such explanations could, in part, be found through a thorough investigation into the challenges academic women staff at SU face, and a commitment from all stakeholders to bring about real change. Regardless of the importance of, and need for, such insights, in order to promote equality, SU has yet to conduct research among its entire women academic staff component in order to investigate the challenges its members face. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap in knowledge, which could assist in improving the diversity profile of the University in terms of more equal gender representation at the various academic ranks.

1.2.2. Contributions and impact of the study

The need for understanding inequality, as discussed above, and specifically the factors that contribute to the slow career progression of women academics was first identified by SU’s WF and SU’s Transformation Office¹. The notion was preferred that an understanding of these factors through research is needed in order to inform structural changes in the form of policy at SU. Once these policies were to be in place, it would become possible to achieve an equal representation of men and women in senior academic posts at SU. In response to this expression of concern with gender equality at SU, I set out to produce research results that would contribute to the advancement of academic women at SU, and potentially at other South African HEIs as well.

In order to encourage my completion of the research the WF at SU made provision for costs involved in producing a report of these findings. This report will contain the core findings from this research and will be communicated to the WF by means of a

¹ SU’s transformation office was previously known as the Centre for Inclusivity. The Centre recently changed its name due to changes in the management structure of the University, and much contestation concerning how transformation was managed at the institution. Other reasons for the change include a lack of coherence concerning the term transformation.

presentation to all members and other interested and affected parties. The report will also be submitted to the Rector's Management Team for their consideration and to inform any future interventions to address gender inequality among academics at SU.

1.3. Research design and objectives

Academia is a particularly useful location to investigate gender inequality that continues despite efforts towards change. This is, firstly, because HE is considered to be one of the most important institutions for the promotion of gender equality, and secondly, because academia embodies two contradictory principles: HEIs are seen as the site for the production of knowledge and science, and they symbolise values of excellence and progression that are neutral to forms of discrimination; but they have also historically been the site of exclusion (Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988; Acker & Piper, 1984; Berkovitch, Waldman & Yanay, 2012). This is particularly true for previously white- and male-dominated institutions, such as SU. I therefore felt that SU, because of its historical exclusion of black and female citizens and inequalities in post levels, provides an excellent backdrop against which to conduct research on gender inequality.

A mixed method design was employed to conduct this study, which involved a qualitative strand followed by a quantitative strand, or what is generally referred to as the sequential exploratory design. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) explain that, in many applications of this design, an instrument is developed on the basis of the qualitative results, and is used in a proceeding quantitative strand. The decision to use a sequential design for this study was initially based on a need to develop such an instrument, but this reasoning changed slightly during the course of the study, although the choice of design did not. Further details on the research design are discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, while the main objectives of each strand are discussed in the following sections below.

1.3.1. Main objectives of the qualitative strand

Investigating gender inequality is a much more difficult task today than before the 1980's, since the impression is being created that the battle against gender discrimination has been won (Mcrobbie, 1994, cited in Berkovitch et al. 2012). This means that identifying explicit instances of gender discrimination has also become more difficult. Therefore, it was necessary for me to first gain a better insight into the various challenges that women

academics themselves identify, and how these challenges manifest themselves in the present. This inspired the first strand, the main objective of which was to provide me, as an outsider, with first-hand insight. And because the best way to investigate a social phenomenon is from the perspective of the social group who experience the phenomenon, i.e. the women themselves, I needed to ask women working in academia directly what their perceptions are concerning the state of gender equality at their institutions.

More specifically, this strand was aimed at gathering knowledge on what women academics deemed as the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions, as well as which factors they saw as impacting negatively on women's career progression. Data for this strand were collected at a Women's Day Gender Summit, which involved the participation of four universities, namely the University of the Western Cape (UWC), University of Cape Town (UCT), Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), and SU. The Summit was a one-day event which lasted approximately four hours, and was comprised of a panel discussion, focus group discussions and a report-back session, all of which were recorded.

A second objective of the Summit was to explore, through a qualitative, thematic analysis of the proceedings, those specific issues women at SU and other HEIs in the Western Cape face, and in part to define the most important themes to be included in the questionnaire I would later administer to academic women at SU. One of the outcomes of the summit was also to provide the four participating institutions with a report on discussions that took place at the Summit, in order to inform them on the various gender issues that should take priority in HEIs in the Western Cape. The report was compiled by myself, with the help of the coordinator of SU's Transformation Office, and my supervisor, Dr Heidi Prozesky.

1.3.2. Main objectives of the quantitative strand

Using the data collected from the qualitative strand (i.e. the various issues discussed at the Summit), as well as relevant literature, I constructed a structured questionnaire for distribution among all academic women staff at SU. This strand had more focused research questions and produced data specifically aimed at answering each of the four research questions. The first objective of this quantitative strand was to determine the perception of women academic staff at SU of their own career progression. Secondly, this research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the various decelerating factors that

contributed to what is perceived as a lack of, or slow, career progression among women academic staff at SU.

Thirdly, by presenting women with an array of possible factors (as identified by women academics themselves, as well as in the relevant literature) that may have impacted negatively on their own career progression, the data collected from this strand allowed me to determine the extent to which women academic staff at SU ranked each factor's impact on their own and other women's career progression. And, lastly, this strand aimed to provide information of the extent to which two independent variables – namely, respondents marital and motherhood status – influenced their perception of the impact that various decelerating factors may have had on their career progression. The sets of findings from each strand are each presented in two separate, consecutive chapters. Details on the content of each chapter presented in this thesis are elaborated on below.

1.4. Thesis outline

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. The first and current chapter provides a brief introduction to the phenomenon under investigation, and provides the reader with a general sense of the context of, and rationale for, the research. The second chapter explores the relevant literature and theory that are used to make sense of the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative strand. It explores the possible explanations of gender differences in career attainment, by considering various studies as well as theoretical constructs, such as the marriage plot, the self-fulfilling prophecy and the Cinderella complex, which have various degrees of relevance to the psychosocial, institutional/organisational and family-related explanations of gender differences in career attainments. The psychosocial explanation of gender difference in career attainment here refers to differences in the behaviour, outlook and goals of men and women, whereas the institutional/ organisational explanation refers to structural obstacles that exist within the social system of science (Sonnert, 1999; Aisenburg and Harrington, 1988; Dowling, 1981, Merton, 1948). Lastly, the second chapter discusses how women's marital and motherhood status may be relevant to understanding which decelerating factors women at SU perceive as having an influence on their slow career progression.

The third chapter focuses on the research design and methods that were employed. It outlines the research questions that need to be answered, respectively, by each of the two

strands of research; and discusses the sampling, data collection and analysis methods, as well as the ethical procedures and implications of the research. Chapter 4 presents the results of a thematic analysis of data collected during the qualitative strand, by incorporating the narratives of women from the four regional universities in the Western Cape within four major themes. The fifth chapter presents the results of the second, quantitative strand of this research, by firstly describing the demographics of the respondents as well as the population under study; and secondly, how slow or fast the respondents perceive their career progression to have been. This is followed by an outline of the specific decelerating factors women academic staff at SU consider as hindering their own career progression; the factors they consider as hindering a higher representation of women in senior academic positions at SU; and finally, the results from the bivariate analysis concerning motherhood and marital status.

The sixth and final chapter of this thesis summarises and integrates the findings from the qualitative and quantitative strand. It also discusses the limitation of the research and makes recommendations for future research. The last section addresses the contributions and impact of this research, and refers to how various stakeholders may benefit from the outcomes of the research.

1.5. Summary and conclusions

This provided an introduction to the core focus of this thesis, i.e. to explore the various decelerating factors which contribute to women academics' career progression. Firstly, the research problem was contextualised in order to provide the reader with the boundaries within which the research was conducted. This chapter also provided the reader with a brief historical background to the current state of gender inequality at South African universities, and detailed the expected contribution and potential impact of the study. The research design and objectives of both the qualitative strand and quantitative strand were introduced, to be outlined in greater detail in Chapter 3. The chapter also provided the reader with a clear outline of the content of the following chapters that constitute the thesis.

Chapter 2: *Literature review*

2.1. Introduction

Though women's representation among HE staff and students has increased in recent years, women academics remain underrepresented in positions at the higher post levels, and face various challenges in breaking the glass ceiling (Sutherland, 1985). Regardless of various shifts towards more provisions for gender equality in the law, structural shifts have yet to occur, as evidenced by the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions in South African HEIs. Studies on the subject have examined different aspects of why women struggle with career progression in academia, but all form part of particular categories of explanation, these being either the psychosocial, institutional/organisational or family-related explanations of differences. Sandra Acker (1984), who examined the position of women in HEIs in Britain, provides a framework to categorise the various explanations for women's position in HE with five general categories: inadequate individual achievement; social injustice and discrimination; an underinvestment in talent of women; the reproduction of inequality; and lastly, the possibility that there is no problem at all.

Sonnert (1999) reduces explanations for gender differences in career attainments to only two general hypotheses, and it is these that I will apply most often in this thesis. The first hypothesis is that women act differently from men (the difference model), and the second suggests that women are treated differently from men (the deficit model). The former model, also known as the psychosocial explanation for gender difference, attributes gender differences to deep-rooted differences in the behaviour, outlook and goals of men and women. The deficit model, on the other hand, emphasises structural obstacles that exist within the social system of science, which lead to women receiving fewer chances and opportunities in their careers, and collectively, having worse career outcomes than men. In attributing gender difference in the workplace to structural features or "deficits" of organisations, the "blame" for women's under-representation is shifted away from the individual.

Within the difference model, a distinction is also drawn between gender difference originating from innate factors, and from dispositional factors. For this research, I will

disregard the notions of gender difference as originating from innate biological inability as a possible explanation for the position of women in South African HEIs. Rather, I will focus on dispositional factors, such as the impact gender-role socialisation has on women, and the masculinity associated with academia. In this chapter, I will be framing discussions on gender difference in South African HEIs within the two broad theoretical constructs of the difference and deficit model, as well as the effect of family responsibilities on academic women's career progression. Within the difference model I will be exploring various theories concerning gender-role stereotypes, the self-fulfilling prophecy, the marriage plot and the Cinderella complex. Within this former framework, I also discuss the role of the family, since many of these theories give insight into how women's careers, marriage and motherhood are related. With regards to the deficit model, I explore concepts such as institutional culture and feeling "at home" in an institution (Halpern, 2000; Sonnert, 1999; Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988; Dowling, 1981, Merton, 1948).

2.2. Potential explanations for gender differences in career progression at South African HEIs

2.2.1. Psychosocial explanations: the difference model

Gender differences in terms of position and work performance in a competitive environment are, as mentioned above, often attributed to innate biological differences in the abilities and interests of men and women. Men are typically described as rational and assertive, and women as emotional and caring by nature, with the former set of qualities being associated with good leadership abilities, and the latter qualities associated with good child-rearing abilities. Psychosocial explanations for these differences claim that these are not innate, but learnt behaviours: because men and women have accepted them as natural, they constantly rehearse masculine and feminine qualities, and by doing so, become so adept, that the qualities become second nature. This position holds that, rather than particular abilities being present at birth, men and women are socialised into different roles, and because of this, they develop certain skills better than the opposite sex, creating the false impression that one gender is innately more capable to perform a certain task than the other (Halpern, 2000; Hooks, 1991).

Because the female role is seen to include nurturing abilities, women develop a greater sensitivity to non-verbal cues than men, and therefore become better attuned to them. This ability can be attributed to sex-role stereotypes (as opposed to innate ability), as these stereotypes, according to scholars on the subject, lead to women internalising the idea, and learning the skills, of being nurturing (Halpern, 2000; Hooks, 1991). Halpern (2000) explains that, in general, men are seen as task-orientated and competent, and are generally referred to as instrumental, whereas females are seen as warm and expressive. Sonnert (1999) further explains that these norms influence women at a young age, and that subsequent differences in the outlook and goals of women, such as achievement and self-confidence, may influence later career and life choices. These constructed gender-role stereotypes have such a powerful influence on how men and women perceive themselves and each other, that they directly influence the types of careers men and women choose, and how they approach these careers. One of the theories that helps to unpack these differences is the self-fulfilling prophecy.

2.2.1.1. The self-fulfilling prophecy

In 1923 W.I. Thomas and D.S. Thomas developed the Thomas theorem, a theory which claims that any definition of a situation will influence the present, as well as a series of definitions in which an individual is involved, which will gradually influence a whole life-policy and the personality of the individual themselves. Sociologist Robert K. Merton (1948) then coined the term self-fulfilling prophecy, as derived from the Thomas theorem, which in essence claims: “If men [*sic*] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences”. This construct can be applied to gender difference in career attainments in that, when women academics do not see women as academically able due to their acceptance of gender-role stereotypes and abilities, women approach their careers differently or value different things, thereby fulfilling a “prophecy”.

This construct aims to explain that individuals respond not only to the objective features of a situation, but also – and primarily – to the meaning the situation has for them. Once meaning has been assigned to a situation, their consequent behaviour, and some of the consequences of that behaviour, are determined by that ascribed meaning. In accordance with societal beliefs that men hold about women, and women hold about themselves and other women, women are seen, for example, to be less capable of meeting the demands of higher academic positions, less qualified or able than men, and to have a

preference for junior positions. These beliefs are considered to be real, objective features of women academics, with the consequence that women shy away from, are not considered for, or are excluded from, higher academic positions. As a result, women are not present in these positions, because the underlying beliefs have become part of the objective reality and day-to-day thinking patterns of individuals. When the self-fulfilling-prophecy principle is applied to the lack of women in these senior positions, they are then seen as proof that women academics are “naturally” less capable of meeting the demands of higher academic positions, and that they prefer junior positions.

The example above illustrates Merton’s (1948) argument that public definitions of a situation (the prediction) become an integral part of the situation and effect subsequent developments. This public definition of a situation is in the beginning a false definition of the situation, which then evokes a new behaviour, rendering the original false conception true. Merton suggests that in order to break this cycle, the initial definition of the situation, which set it in motion, needs to be abandoned. It is only when the original assumption is questioned, and a new definition of the assumption is introduced, that the consequent flow of events gives the lie to the assumption. Merton also explains how an in-group’s assumption controls an outcome, which affects the members of the out-group who then become the victims of the in-group’s prejudices. He applies this to gender by arguing that, if women are repeatedly told that they are inferior and lack accomplishments, it is all too human to disregard evidence to the contrary. This disregard results in a defensive tendency among the victims to magnify and exalt their accomplishments, and, often as a form of self-defense, these members of the out-group, or victims, become convinced that their virtues are actually vices.

Merton (1948) also relates the self-fulfilling prophecy to labelling theory, which suggests that, once person is labelled, preexisting stereotypes are activated in other individuals, and those individuals are then perceived as threatening and undesirable. When individuals are labelled as such, they may then also incorporate others’ expectations into their own self-concepts, thereby affecting their subsequent behaviour. As will be seen later in this thesis, a fear of becoming labelled may prevent women academics from undertaking activist behaviour in order to bring about change.

Two psychologists, Beall and Sternburg (1995), make use of the self-fulfilling prophecy to specifically explain gender difference in career attainment. They claim that differences consist of two basic elements: a cognitive/mental element and a behavioural element. They explain that:

[the] stereotypical beliefs about men and women cause biased perceptions and discriminatory treatment of them, including discriminatory role and status assignments, and the resulting sex differences in behavior and achievement then seemingly confirm that the initial expectations were true (Beall & Sternburg, 1995:11).

They develop this idea further, by explaining that the conscious and unconscious gender beliefs men and women hold have an impact on how they make use of gender-role stereotypes in their daily lives. They argue that individuals' knowledge of the world includes the "old" gender stereotypes – a schema of what a man is and what a woman is – which we refer to in our subconscious to make sense of gender. Though we do not consciously believe that women are, for example, less competent than men, these "old" gender stereotypes we refer to in our subconscious minds prevents us from treating men and women equally.

Beall and Sternburg (1995) note that these stereotypes lower women's self-confidence in their abilities to succeed at what have been socially constructed as masculine tasks and occupations, thereby diminishing performance. As a result of a loss of self-confidence and the diminishing effect it has on performance, employers are also less likely to hire or promote women, leading to an underrepresentation of women at higher post-levels. Prozesky explains this further saying that "the fact that doubt is cast on women's suitability, commitment and ability to assimilate into academe affects their perception of their own abilities, further reducing their potential, via the operation of the self-fulfilling prophecy principle" (2006:48). The underrepresentation of women in senior positions is then believed to be fair and justified, and women's failure to meet promotion criteria, or their weaker performance, serves as evidence to support the stereotype.

Thus far I have discussed the self-fulfilling prophecy and how beliefs or accepted truths about the natural abilities of men and women may affect either their own or others' perception of their abilities (Halpern 2000; Prozesky, 2006; Heward 1996; Beall & Sternburg, 1995; Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988). In the next section I will now further discuss these perceptions and the concept of gender role stereotypes.

2.2.1.2. Gender-role stereotypes

Wrightsmann describes a stereotype as "a relatively rigid and oversimplified conception of a group of people in which all individuals in the group are labelled with the so called group characteristic" (1977:672, as cited in Halpern, 2000). More specifically, Halpern

(2000) explains that gender-role stereotypes are those that relate to differences between the sexes. They constitute assumptions that are held about what females and males are like, as well as what they should be like, and have a great impact on how women and men view their own abilities, as well as how others view them. When stereotypes of what women or men are like become tied to biological sex, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to escape them.

The socialisation process is key to the internalisation of these perceptions, and consequently, how men and women behave as adults and the decisions they make throughout their careers. As young children, girls are taught they will be prized for their beauty, and boys for their money and prestige. Heward (1996), who conducted research on women's careers in HE in Brittan, traces this to the fact that sons' careers have been, and still tend to be, the fulcrum of family ideologies about social class and masculinities. It is the hope of families that boys would be the realisation of the families' aspirations for status and upward mobility. It is therefore not surprising that men outnumber women in the "hard" sciences, which, compared to the "soft sciences" are not only higher in prestige, but are higher-paying as well (Halpern, 2000).

Though one cannot argue that gender-role stereotypes affect women only, women are at a clear disadvantage regarding career opportunities and career progression, when considering the kinds of skills they are perceived to have, skills more suited for child rearing and nurturing. It is therefore also important to consider, from a male perspective, the subtle difficulties involved in breaking these stereotypes. For example, it is considered far more deviant for a male to engage in traditionally female activities than it is for a female to enter what is traditionally perceived as "a man's world". Halpern (2000) claims that this hyper defiance is due to the idea that the female sex role is a devalued role, which carries less esteem and prestige than the male sex role. This can be seen in academia: when women start entering an academic field in increasing numbers, the men tend to leave, because the field has lost its esteem and prestige. This process is referred to as the feminisation of a field (Blättel-Mink, Kramer, Mischau & Le Feuvre, 2009).

Considering how masculine and feminine connotations to a certain field are constantly changing, the argument can be made that gender roles are not fixed realities, but rather that they are constructed as society evolves. Judith Butler, who is a firm believer in the social construction of gender, describes gender norms as "performative" rather than objective truths. In her critical view of an essentialist understanding of gender, she explains that identity categories, such as gender, are constructed realities of regimes of

power, rather than natural effects of the body (Butler, 1988 as cited in Jagger, 2008). Butler argues that the dominant conception of gender within a certain context becomes accepted as natural, but that since this dominant form of gender performativity is merely constructed socially, it becomes possible for it to be constructed differently (Butler, 1988). Butler contests the idea that gender is “natural” in any way, and explores the ways gender is constructed through specific acts or performances of gender, and also what possibilities exist for the cultural transformation of gender through such acts (Butler, 1988).

When women academics defy the gender roles that have been allocated to them by the socialisation process, they face many obstacles. These obstacles exist not only in their interactions with others, such as their families, spouses and employers, but also exist within themselves. The next section deals with the internal conflicts women face when they make the choice to defy assigned gender roles, by considering Aisenburg and Harrington’s (1988) concept of the “marriage plot”.

2.2.1.3. The marriage plot, motherhood and choices

Societal customs generally prescribe that the proper sphere for women is the private sphere of the home (Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988). It has become so ingrained in everyday social life, that both men and women mold their lives accordingly. Aisenburg and Harrington (1988), as well as Acker (1984), who have investigated gender norms concerning the public and private spheres in Britain, explain that no shift towards gender equality will occur unless there is a substantial shift in the decision-making power in society. And since men generally hold that decision-making power because they dominate the public sphere, the resulting imbalance of power prevents women from taking part fully. In order to shed light on why women have found it so difficult to escape the societal grasp which keeps them in the private sphere of the home, even when opportunities are available to them to be successful in the public sphere of employment, Aisenburg and Harrington (1988) introduced “the marriage plot”. They explain the struggle it entails, as follows:

The correlative point in the marriage plot is that a woman’s attempt to develop other elements of her personality may undermine her inborn moral qualities and threaten her emotional and relational fulfillment. In order that she not compromise her true womanhood, the plot imposes an inhibition on the development of a woman of capacities other than those stemming from her moral nature. These inhibitions

operate against a full and free expression of sexuality in a woman, as well as against the full development of her intellectual capacities, her prowess in reason and the studious pursuit of knowledge (Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988:10)

The authors explain that women cannot rid themselves of the marriage plot as a guideline for proper conduct and a measure of success, and that women's socially acceptable role is ultimately to support men or male-run institutions (Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988). The marriage plot broadly defines what women should want, how they should behave and the choices they should make in their lives according to the "old norms" (Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988). An example of these old norms would be that women should assume the greater family responsibility in the home, and that men should focus on their careers in order to provide for their family financially. The second of these conventions is the "quest plot", defined as the values of the public life to which women struggle to aspire, for example becoming influential political leaders and academics. Because of the difficulties associated with overcoming the marriage plot and pursuing the quest plot, women ultimately follow the "old script", even as they embrace the new, thus battling within themselves and with the outer world (Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988).

Many academic women who have chosen to embark on the quest plot claim that they had to make a choice between having a family or home life on the one hand, and having a successful professional academic career on the other (Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988; David, Davies, Edwards, Reay & Standing, 2005). Many women are, however, unwilling to make this choice – a choice that men are granted immunity from – and are covertly coerced to try to balance family and career in a constant juggling act. In order to explain how women who have embarked on the quest plot are able to juggle these two spheres Schwarts (1989) refers to the "superwomen myth". Schwarts proposes that it is physically impossible for a human being to work a full corporate week and still have the time and energy to be a parent at home. She suggests that, instead of women trying to be "superwomen", they should be offered a career track that allows more time for family and home commitments (commonly referred to as the "mommy track"), which would have both positive and negative consequences for women.

In a similar vein, David *et al.* (2005) conducted research on the incompatibility of academia and motherhood, which investigated the various moral and structural constraints that mothers face in the academic setting after they have decided to embark on the quest plot. David *et al.* (2005) explain how women who try to embark on a quest plot while being mothers, put themselves at risk of being labelled either negatively as

“bad” mothers, or positively as “super mothers”. They become super mothers when they ensure that they tend to both their career and family equally, but bad mothers when they fail at the almost impossible task of successfully juggling their responsibilities. The research finds that choice is a concept that increasingly affects women as mothers, as they become mothers and as they carry out their mothering. David *et al.* (2005) unpack the concept of choice, explaining that, though mothers are free to choose whether they go out to work or not, when they do choose to work, they must themselves alone deal with the consequences as a private responsibility. These types of choices that are particular to women scientists were also affirmed in a study by Heward (1996), who found that, while men build an identity through commitment to becoming a scientist and pursuing a scientific career, women are very aware of having to make the choice between following a career and raising a family.

It should, however, also be noted that discourses which hold women responsible for the well-being of others do not only apply to women who are mothers. Even when women are not mothers, they are still sometimes expected to perform a motherly role in dealing with students. It is also important to note that these choices should be examined from both a structural and moral perspective: structurally, in that not all mothers make these choices under the same conditions; and morally, in that mothers have to negotiate particular moral rationalities that are very different from the moral rationalities that fatherhood is measured against. David *et al.* (2005) take into account structural differences by arguing that not all mothers who make these decisions have the same level of education and social networks, live in the same area and standard of housing, and have the same income and family structure. Aisenburg and Harrington’s (1988) marriage plot speaks to the moral element of choice, as well when referring to women’s inborn moral qualities and true womanhood.

The resulting stress contributes to women’s slow progression as professionals. Because of the struggles women face, they tend to choose research areas that allow them to reflect on the struggles they are faced with in their lives as women (Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988). This has led to certain areas of study to be referred to as “women’s studies” in academia, a field undervalued in comparison to the male-dominated research areas. The concept of women’s studies is widely used throughout the literature and is characteristic of a covert distinction between the type of research academic women generally choose to study, write about and teach, and those men concern themselves with (Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988). . . According to old norms, as referred to above, women’s

intellectual capacities are seen as inferior to those of men, and women are viewed as emotional and subjective in their intellectual approach. More specifically, it is assumed that women's intellectual capacities do not lend themselves to the type of work that would require deep probing and/or the logical relation of complicated ideas.

These old norms correspond with the assumption that women's abilities are innately different from those of men, and therefore they would not perform masculine tasks well. The phenomenon of women's work can be ascribed to the common experiences that women share who "set out on a quest for professional authority in a cultural climate still significantly defined by the marriage plot" (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988), and not because women's intellectual capacities do not lend themselves to the "harder" sciences. Rather, the experiences women share create an area of interest that influences the academic questions they ask and the disciplines they enter into (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988).

As discussed before, there are two lenses through which one could view women's subordinate position in the HE sector. The first is the deficit model, which refers to the biological and psychological make-up of women; and secondly, the organisational or institutional model, which attributes gender inequality to institutional discrimination. Both of these are related to women's greater family responsibilities. The next section considers Dowling's (1981) "Cinderella complex", which provides another lens through which to theorise about the psychosocial component of gender differences in career attainment, by considering the possibility of women's unwillingness to take on a long-term, professional commitment.

2.2.1.4. The Cinderella complex

Dowling claims that one of the effects of this syndrome is that many women would often not think twice about putting their husbands career first, "packing up and leaving their own career behind when there might be a better offer on the table for him somewhere else"(1981:41). She explains that this kind of behaviour can be attributed to the women's belief that their husbands are providing a safety net which they can always fall back on. In this way, women's lower work productivity can be attributed to their decided unwillingness to take on a long-term, professional commitment. One of the main claims Dowling makes concerning the Cinderella complex is that many women have a "wish to be saved", a psychological need to avoid independence (1981:27). Dowling (1981) claims

that this is a common need among women, and though it does not characterise all women, it is certainly true for the majority, including those who are too proud to admit harboring the need.

Though Dowling takes a less sympathetic approach than Aisenburg and Harrington (1988), her reasoning still resonates with their thoughts on the conflict between the old and new norms. Reflecting on her own life, Dowling explains how she had no confidence in her ability to succeed in the world on her own. She describes this as her struggle with the “new way”, while she was at the same time doubtful of her ability to succeed in women’s “old way”, which is to seduce a man into being her protector (1981:26). This common contrast of old and new ways of womanhood causes many obstacles for women.

Dowling relates the abovementioned notions to women’s subordinate position in the workforce, and refers to “the eighty percent” as the percentage of women who occupy menial or semi-skilled jobs with low salaries. To demonstrate this point, she refers to the following quote by Wright (as cited in Dowling, 1981:36):

For every successful professional woman there is another woman whose labour force participation consists of running a punch press eight hours of every working day, and another whose work amounts to making beds and cleaning rooms, and another who spends her days typing letters and filling correspondence.

Here she is emphasising that, although women may be well represented in the workforce, those in senior positions are still in the minority, and although they are present in the professional arena, they are more often in the lower level jobs. As stated above, at the heart of Dowling’s Cinderella complex is the argument that women have a hidden fear of independence, therefore many “talented women often loath to move onto positions of real self-sufficiency [and would] balk at or become unduly anxious about promotions” (Dowling, 1981:38). This is what psychologists would refer to as “performance anxiety” which, in the context of women in the workplace, refers to feeling inadequate and defenseless in the world, a fear of retaliation from someone with whom one disagrees, or the fear of being criticised for doing something wrong. Other scholars have described this as women’s fear of being exposed as frauds when their “incompetence” is revealed at their place of work (Acker, 1988; Dowling, 1981; Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988).

Certain factors, be they institutional, psychosocial or family-related, have been found to have a particular significance for women’s academics careers. The next section explores two of these variables, namely marriage and motherhood status and provides,

through the use of relevant literature, a rationale for exploring their possible influence on the extent to which women academics at SU perceive either psychosocial, family-related or institutional decelerating factors to have an influence on their career progression. Each of these variables are discussed separately below.

2.2.1.5. The relevance marital and motherhood status as independent variables

- *Motherhood status*

Since mothers retain primary responsibility for childcare and housework many academic women who have children are required, in ways that are not required of many fathers, to prioritise their time and effort between work and childcare, referred to as the “double load” (Maürtin-Cairncross, 2003; Aisenburg and Harrington 1988). This often mitigates against academic success for women and may very well contribute to their lack of, or slow, career progression. However, there is no consensus on this issue, in that not all scholars on the subject are in agreement that these additional responsibilities have a negative impact on women’s careers.

The idea that women’s more demanding family responsibilities negatively influences their career progression is sometimes referred to as the “motherhood myth” (Etzkowitz et al., 2000 as cited in Prozesky, 2006), i.e. the popular perception, among both women and men, that women who are mothers choose to stay in positions that allow them to prioritise their families, and therefore cannot and do not progress in their academic careers. My research therefore aims to determine to what extent women academics who are mothers actually perceive family responsibility as an influential decelerating factor contributing to their slow career progression.

Though the motherhood myth often provides an excuse for a lack of concerted efforts on the side of an institution to address structural obstacles to women’s progression in their careers, the possibility that women may not always want to climb the career ladder should also be taken into account. Women are often forced to make a choice between family and career, a choice that they do not want to, but have to, make, and the consequences of refusing to make a choice involves huge sacrifices, one that is taken for granted by men. Therefore, the question that this research aims to answer by considering motherhood status as an independent variable is whether motherhood status influences the extent to which various decelerating factors are perceived to have an influence on women’s own and other women’s career progression.

- *Marital status*

Motherhood and marriage are very closely related when research on women's career progression is conducted, and are often considered under the umbrella term of "family responsibility". This can be problematic, since not all women who have children are married and not all married women have children. Another important fact is that marriages, and the division of labour between married couples differ. Though it may be true that having a family distances females from science careers, some research has found no negative effect of marriage and motherhood on scientific productivity, while other research has.

Halpern (2005) claims that family commitments can explain sex differences in demanding occupations: while marriage and family is seen as an asset for a man's career, it is seen as a hindrance for a woman's. Aisenburg and Harrington's (1985) marriage plot also highlights the impact that marriage has upon women's careers and the extent to which women scientists prioritize their careers. Sonnert (1999) also notes that many married women scientists face the challenge of synchronizing the often conflicting demands of the three clocks: their own career clock, their partner's career clock and their own biological clock. Dowling (1981) adds to the debate with her notion of the Cinderella complex, by explaining that the lack of progression in women's careers can be accounted for in part by their unwillingness to assume a long-term professional commitment, and women's tendency to prioritise their husbands' careers. However, though marriage in these theories is portrayed in a negative light, marriage can also offer advantages to women's careers. Though one might assume that marriage and children hamper women's science careers, empirical evidence in this regard is ambiguous (Sonnert, 1999). Therefore, this research aims to explore whether at SU women academics who are married differ from their unmarried counterparts in the extent to which they consider family-related responsibilities to be a hindrance to their academic career progression as compared to psychosocial and institutional factors.

The following section will explore the deficit model, by examining structural obstacles to women's career advancement, as suggested by various scholars who support this model as an explanation of gender differences in career attainments.

2.2.2. *Institutional factors: the deficit model*

Other than psychosocial factors and family-related factors, such as marriage and motherhood, there are institutional factors that can have a great impact upon women's career progression. These institutional factors, which include the availability of mentors, the institutional culture, promotional criteria women academics often cannot meet, and access to various resources and essential networks have, according to some scholars, resulted in women being concentrated in lower-level academic posts (Hawson, 2016; Dlamini and Adams, 2014; Riordan and Louw-Potgieter, 2011; Prozesky, 2006; Martin-Cairncross, 2003; Hansman, 1998; Heward, 1996; Acker and Piper, 1984).

The issue of gender equality has recently captured media attention, particularly at SU (Times Live Media Group Digital, 2016; Fourie, 2014; Gouws, 2014). Conflicting ideas about the causes of gender inequality among SU staff were discussed in the Cape times, in response to an infographic created by SU's Transformation Office that shows women academics' concentration at lower-level academic posts, which tend to have the highest teaching workload. The discussion provides evidence of a clear divide along the lines of the two explanatory models (the difference and deficit model). One of the arguments made by a male academic staff member against the pursuit of gender equality at SU, was that women choose their [lower] positions themselves because women choose careers that would allow them to spend more time with their children, and that it is therefore not an issue to be addressed at an institutional level (Fourie, 2014).

This argument highlights the deeply institutionalised values that epitomise the hegemonic masculinities that dominate at SU and that increasingly privilege men and disadvantage women academic staff. In response to this, Gouws (2014), a female staff member, and member of the WF provided many counter-arguments to the opinions expressed by Fourie, by clarifying, and emphasising a need for contextualizing, the infographic. She argues that the issue does not, in fact, concern only numbers, but that the greater concern is about the institutional cultures of universities. She explains that having gender parity or equal numbers of women and men in academic positions is no guarantee for gender equality, but what the infographic does demonstrate is a glass ceiling that operates at senior-lecturer level.

A survey which in 2014 examined the gendered nature of management at a university in Ireland, revealed that the majority of senior managers had attitudes similar to those of Fourie (2014), i.e. that women are the source of the problem of their underrepresentation,

and that the focus must be on fixing the women rather than the institution (Shanahan, 2014). Rather than trying to change the system, there was a tendency to claim that women themselves do not want to progress in their careers, because they are concerned with family and caring responsibilities.

This argument runs counter to the institutional explanation or deficit model of gender difference in career progression, and fails to take into consideration various institutional factors that may not be overtly visible, but are only experienced by those who suffer the consequences, i.e. academic women. Below I will discuss the effect that institutional factors, such as lower prestige, a lack of mentoring, and exclusion from male-dominated networks, have on women's careers in the academe.

2.1.2.1. Prestige, mentoring and networks

A metaphor that is often used to describe how women's participation in universities dissipates as they move through the ranks from student to full professor, is that of a leaky pipeline. It suggests that women scholars trickle out of the system, as the institutions they work in become incompatible with their personal lives and wellbeing (Viccko, 2016). Those who oppose the implementation of gender equality policies in HEIs attribute this incompatibility to various psychosocial and family-related reasons, thereby disregarding structural obstacles, or how the pipeline was engineered at the outset. This incompatibility creates different challenges for women academics, and leads women and men to approach their academic careers in very different ways.

Prestige is an important concept in academia, and focusing on research rather than on teaching undergraduates, for example, is seen as more prestigious. Heward (1996) explains that female career patterns are often characterized by diversity and flexibility, with periods outside of the labour market or contract work, such as teaching. She explains that women and men tend to prioritise different aspects in their careers, which often disadvantage women in terms of promotions. Similarly, Coate, Howson & de St Croix (2015), in attempting to explain what holds women back in their mid-career stage, found that, because markers of success in academia follow male-dominated patterns of thinking, women often fall short of those criteria relating to promotions. Activities such as giving keynote addresses, winning medals and prizes, holding editorial positions, positive peer-evaluation of intellectual work, conference papers and research publications are more accessible to men, whereas women find it harder to gain these kinds of markers of success

that would advance their reputations and their careers, or add to their prestige. Women often engage in undervalued forms of labour, such as teaching, repetitive laboratory work and managing laboratories and research teams, data entry and developing junior staff, as well as family-related work, such as childcare and housework. This adds to the challenges women academics face in their careers, and when women take on this kind of work, it frees up time for others (mostly men) to conduct the more prestigious forms of work (Coate *et al.*, 2015; Heward, 1996). Coate *et al.* (2015) found that women are frustrated by the fact that the aspects that motivated them to work were not those that received recognition and reward.

Heward (1996) further explains that these prestigious kinds of work are catalytic for developing a career in academia, and complements self-advertisement. When men are constantly engaging in prestigious kinds of work, it gives them access to patrons and informal networks that play an important role in who is invited to apply for a post and which applicant is successful. Since it is through these informal networks that the members of the academic profession are recruited and promoted, women who find themselves excluded from these male networks are constantly disadvantaged. Furthermore, since building a reputation is closely connected to self-advertisement, it contradicts dominant understandings of femininities. Behaviour such as assertiveness, self-confidence and self-advertisement, which is praised in men, is criticised as unfeminine, and could lead to alienation from women colleagues. In essence, this continuous privileging of men and hegemonic masculinities has cumulative effects on the careers of individual men and women, and maintains the concentration of women in the lower ranks of academia.

Heward (1996) also explains that, other than the lack of self-promotion, women academics also often do not have either the time or self-confidence to establish good networks. Basken (2016) adds that a lack of strong networks has great implications for the career advancement of women and minorities in the sciences. Based on the work of Weber and Reede (2015, as cited in Basken, 2016), she explains how the concept of “personal reach” is one of the best predictors of whether an academic will remain at a university and be promoted. Personal reach here can be defined as the quality of an academic’s personal connections as a measure of upward mobility as opposed to more traditional measures such as grant application success or publication rates. Similar to Heward (1996) Reede (2015, as cited in Basken, 2016) explains that a lack of quality

personal connections is a key obstacle facing women and minorities in science, as a lack of personal connections greatly lowers the likelihood of academic promotion.

For many women, the mid-career stage coincides with responsibilities of caring for young children and ageing relatives, which often leads them to exit from academia, as the leaky-pipeline metaphor suggests. As Hochschild (1975, cited in Acker, 1988) explains, the “clockwork” of university careers is based upon the traditional lifecycle of a married man, which diverts attention from the individual to the system, and therefore women in masculine spheres operate under a “handicap rule”. Hansman (1998) and other scholars on the subject suggest the importance of mentoring as a means of supporting women in order for them to progress in their careers. Based on her research on mentoring and women’s career development, Hansman (1998) explains how important it is for women to have mentors in the workplace. She found that women gain special forms of entry into meaningful social networks and acquire important managerial skills by observing effective senior management. Coate *et al.* (2015) also explains that this kind of mentoring is needed particularly during the mid-career stage, since this is where many women stop progressing, but is also the stage that is characterised by little support and mentoring.

Viczko (2016), however, notes that, though mentoring is essential, there may be some pitfalls when mentoring programs are not carried out effectively. Though mentorship programs for women are frequently implemented as strategy, these programs may sometimes portray women as deficient in particular skills and qualities needed for leadership positions.

The various institutional factors that may disadvantage women, as discussed above, do not operate separately from each other, as is evident from the review of the literature on prestige, networking, mentoring and self-promotion. Rather, the factors are connected by a common institutional culture that is present in South African HEIs. Below, therefore, follows a discussion of the nature of institutional culture at South African HEIs, and how it affects the career progression of women academics.

2.1.2.2. Institutional culture

As a result of the racially segregating laws that characterised South Africa’s apartheid era, gender inequalities intersect very closely with racial and class inequalities (Biko 2002; Vincent 2008; Walker 2005). Therefore, when exploring these phenomena, one

always has to take all of them into account, as well as the changes that occurred in South Africa after the democratic transition.

During apartheid, black education, including HE, was granted lower state funding than white education and consequently, the “non-white” education systems were inadequately resourced by the state. South African scholars such as Mairtin-Cairncross (2003), who writes about the implications apartheid had for patriarchy in South African universities, explains that, even among the historically disadvantaged universities, there was a hierarchy in terms of the allocation of resources, as universities that were established for coloureds and Indians were better resourced than those established for blacks. She explains that, although efforts have been made to attain an equitable tertiary education system in South Africa, reminders of these historical differences are still very clear today. Consequently, the challenges faced by academic women staff at South African historically black universities may be very different from those faced by academic women staff at South African historically white universities (HWUs).

Heward (1996) expands on the notion of a lack of proper policy implementation, claiming that, within the HE context, university management often do have policy statements and formalized procedures in relation to gender equality, but the problem is that they rarely embark on programs of action. Heward explains that the consequences of a lack of implementation of such policies, or the lack of such policies in the first place, is that institutionalized hegemonic masculinities, and the assumption that merit in staff selection and promotion procedures are universal and objective, are never addressed. This further results in women’s lack of promotion being associated with their domestic responsibilities, especially when they take career breaks. She explains that these equal-opportunities policies further promote hegemonic masculinities, in that they are too feeble to address gender power-relations by provoking actions and therefore real change.

In order to explain the lack of effective transformation in South African universities and unpack the concept of institutional culture, Van Wyk (2009) suggests considering universities as organisations rather than institutions. She found that whether universities as defined either as institutions or organisations has an impact on how institutional culture is defined. She explains that, in order to investigate institutional culture, it is necessary to be clear on the definition of the term, since there is no one single characteristic of an institution that can be said to define its culture (Van Wyk, 2009). She concludes that, in order to address the issue of transformation, be it in terms of race or gender, one should be clear on the definition of “institution” as well as of “culture” in the HE sector, and

consider the complicated aspects of institutional culture, before one can attempt to change it. Since changing institutional culture is one of the main focuses of transformation in HE, particularly at HWUs, how we define these terms has a great impact on how transformation should be addressed.

Though, as Van Wyk (2009) states, institutional culture is often not properly defined when attempts are made to change it, one of the characteristics of the institutional cultures of South African HEIs, as found by Dlamini and Adams (2014), is the extent to which patriarchy is entrenched in those cultures. Dlamini and Adams (2014) investigated how women academics experience patriarchy in their working environment, and found that all women who participated in their study experienced patriarchy to different extents, and that men often use gender stereotypes to maintain their positions, by excluding and dominating women at all levels. Their study further showed that women identified various forms of patriarchy that ensured male dominance, including male supremacy, disempowerment, disrespect of women, insensitivity to women's issues, the withholding of promotion, and the manipulation of promotion criteria. They used the theory of gender and power (Connell, 1987) to frame their research, which proposes that the social structures through which men collectively dominate women through bureaucracy, leads to the appointment of men in top positions, while women are concentrated in the lower positions, despite their qualifications, experience and potential.

Tabensky and Matthews (2014) who also conducted research on institutional culture, explain that their definition of an institutional culture implies that a transformed institutional culture means a transformed way of doing things. Specifically, the set of values that inform it should be unprejudiced, welcoming of diversity in all morally legitimate terms, intended to acknowledge and transform a damaging legacy, and responsive to the history and context of the institutional culture. They further note that it should be welcoming of all the people who constitute it or have dealings with it, and be conducive to their flourishing. In essence what Tabensky and Matthews (2014) are suggesting, is that a transformed institutional culture is a miniature reflection of a socially and politically transformed society. Considering the structural and demographic gender inequalities in South African HEIs, these institutions have yet to attain a transformed institutional culture, as defined by Tabensky and Matthews (2014).

One of the concepts they unpack with specific reference to academics, is the idea of being or feeling "at home" in an institution. Since academics' personal and professional lives are closely interlinked, feeling at home in their professional space is important for

their line of work. Academics often find personal enrichment through their professional work, and if they feel welcome and at home, by virtue of an inclusive culture, then they can do both what they have to do professionally, and be who they authentically are personally. Feeling at home is an important concept that particularly affects how women experience an institution, and contrasts it with being alienated or uncomfortable. When women academics feel uncomfortable and alienated, as the result of a patriarchal institutional culture, for example, it has an impact on their ability to perform their professional tasks successfully. In essence, Tabensky and Matthews (2014:15) claim that, “[w]hen we feel at home in an institution, we can perform our appropriate professional tasks, unimpeded and with more success with less friction and frustration”.

Tabensky and Matthews (2014) argue, however, that transforming an institution into a place where everyone feels at home is not an easy task, particularly in a complex, diverse society such as South Africa. Feeling at home is particularly relevant to academic women, because when women, in comparison to their male counterparts, feel a greater extent of alienation, discomfort and unfamiliarity with the ways and habits that ease everyday professional relations, it negatively affects their productivity, which in turn negatively affects their career progression (Tabensky & Matthews, 2014). Considering this understanding of a transformed institutional culture as “feeling at home”, and its relevance to the ability of women academics to be successful in their careers, efforts to change the institutional culture of South African universities can and should be considered essential. However, one of the struggles with transforming an institutional culture is that universities are the bearers and expressions of traditions which partly constitute its culture.

It should be considered that tradition is essential for maintaining an institution and for giving it a distinctive character, regardless of whether it has been charged as being conservative and unwelcoming. An institution extends beyond the lifespan of particular individuals, and tradition is one way that it is able to do so. Many individuals also attend a particular university precisely because of its traditions. But at the same time, it is the opinion of many women employed at SU that patriarchy forms a large part of the institution culture of SU, and of HEIs in South Africa, and that there is a general insensitivity to women’s issues that needs to change (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.1). Though gender inequality issues are acknowledged through proposed biannual action plans, HEIs in South Africa only seem to pay lip service to gender issues, as no actual implementation or real change has taken place (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.1).

2.3. Summary and conclusions

In this chapter, the various theories and other literature which relate to the core topic of this thesis, i.e. the various decelerating factor that contribute to the slow career progression of women academics, were discussed. These theories and other literature will be used in proceeding chapters to provide support for, and help make sense of, the findings produced in this study. This chapter framed the supportive literature within three potential explanations for gender differences in career progression at South African HEIs, i.e. the difference model; family related explanations of gender differences in career progression; and the deficit model. This chapter also provided insight into the relevance of motherhood and marital status as independent variables for bivariate analysis, the results of which are provided in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This research focuses on academic women staff at SU, in particular the various psychosocial, institutional and family-related factors that may detract from their career advancement. It aims, firstly, to qualitatively explore the challenges with regards to career progression that women in HE in South Africa face, as emerged at a Women's Day Gender Summit involving the four regional universities in the Western Cape; and secondly, to quantitatively describe the following:

1. how women academic staff at SU perceive their own rate of career progression;
2. the type of decelerating factors to which these staff attribute their own lack of career progression;
3. the type of decelerating factors to which they attribute women's underrepresentation at the higher academic ranks; and
4. whether there are differences in terms of marital status and motherhood status when considering the type of decelerating factors to which academic women at SU attribute their own rate of career progression.

This chapter will explore in detail the research design and methods that were employed during the course of this study, starting with an explanation of why a mixed methods approach was taken. This is followed by a description of the first strand during which qualitative methods were applied, which is preceded by a description of the second quantitative strand, which took the form of a cross-sectional survey. A section is also dedicated to the integration of the two strands. Lastly, this chapter gives an account of the ethics-related procedures that were followed, including how informed consent was obtained.

3.2. Research design

3.2.1. *Why mixed methods?*

This study was conducted by employing a mixed methods design, in particular a sequential exploratory design, as it started with qualitative data collection and analysis, which was followed by quantitative data collection and analysis, and ended with an integration of the results. Mixed methods designs are becoming increasingly popular in the area of methodological research, and have been described by some as “a research paradigm whose time has come” [and] “the natural complement to traditional qualitative and quantitative research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). However, it has, at the same time, been described by critics as an approach “adopted uncritically by a new generation of researchers who have overlooked the underlying assumptions behind the qualitative–quantitative debate” (Sale, Lohfeld & Brazil, 2002).

This argument is referred to as the embedded-methods argument, which refers to the idea that research methods carry epistemological commitments. Another critique of mixed methods, the paradigm argument, is based on the idea that quantitative and qualitative research constitute separate paradigms (Bryman, 2008). More specifically, the argument is that research tools used in either quantitative or qualitative research are embedded in different commitments to versions of the world and to ways of knowing that world which one is researching. Although similar to the embedded-methods argument, the paradigm argument claims that epistemological assumptions and values cannot be detached from methods, but are intertwined with methods. Thus, when a researcher combines two methods grounded in differing epistemological assumptions, he/she is not actually combining qualitative and quantitative methods, since the two are essentially incompatible with regard to the paradigms those methods have emerged from (Bryman, 2008). I considered these criticisms when I chose a mixed methods approach, and concluded that, due to the nature of my research, it is necessary to employ this strategy. Although I consider the abovementioned arguments to be valid criticisms on an epistemological level, the practical benefits of applying a mixed methods design outweigh the critique levelled against it. These benefits are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

Although mixed methods is also a challenging and time-consuming design to apply to a master’s study, there are various reasons a researcher would consider combining quantitative and qualitative research. Sieber (1973) adds that, when a researcher has

access to sources who have “privileged” information on a given topic, it can make a major contribution to the development of a meaningful survey design. In particular, he emphasises the benefits of familiarity with a social group prior to the design of a survey. As an outsider to the life-world of women academics, and therefore knowing very little about the specific problems with career progression that they face, I needed such privileged information to inform my design of a questionnaire that focused on the most relevant or significant issues in the specific context of SU. Although the literature I reviewed in the previous chapter provided me with some insights in this regard, I could not be certain that women in the specific context where my research was conducted, deemed those issues as the most significant in their context. It is for this reason that I considered it necessary to collect qualitative data for the first strand of data collection, in the form of the stories told by women academics at the various participating universities in the Western Cape.

Also applicable to my study are some of the advantages Bryman (2008) outlines as reasons for undertaking mixed methods research. The research design was aimed at triangulating results by considering, during the final step in the research process, similarities and differences between the qualitative and quantitative findings, as discussed in the concluding chapter. The design further allowed me to offset the weaknesses, and to draw on strengths, of both qualitative and quantitative methods. An in-depth understanding, outlined in Chapter 4, was gained from the application of the qualitative methods, while through the use of quantitative data analysis I ranked the different decelerating factors in terms of the extent of impact women academics perceive them to have had on their career progression. However, to understand the reasons why certain factors were deemed as more influential than others, the qualitative data was again useful. Similarly, if I had applied only qualitative methods, I would not have been able to generalise the results of the quantitative strand to the population of women academics at SU. Although women discussed in detail during the qualitative strand (the Gender Summit) the various challenges they face in academia with regards to career progression, participant-selection issues may have skewed the kinds of issues that were raised during the Summit; issues which may not apply to all women academics at SU. The main participant selection issue referred to here is tied to my collaboration with SU’s Transformation office and HERS- SA, which placed restrictions on my ability to ensure that only participants relevant to the research question were invited to attend.

Mixing for the sake of completeness also applies to my research, in that the qualitative strand enabled me to further and more fully explore a specific factor, such as the influence that motherhood has on career progression. A quantitative survey asking women about the extent to which their motherhood status has impacted on their career progression assumes a homogeneity amongst mothers, which the qualitative data counters.

Bryman (2008) explains that the process of quantitative research that follows a deductive approach starts with theory, from which a hypothesis or hypotheses are deduced, and then followed by enquiry. Before I could embark on the quantitative strand in the context of SU, I therefore needed to generate hypotheses generated from the literature, as well as from the qualitative data, in the forms of themes that emerged from participants' stories. In other words, the qualitative data informed the cross-sectional survey by assisting me in identifying which variables would be most relevant. As such, the integration of the methods took place throughout the thesis.

3.2.2. *The sequential exploratory design*

As mentioned in the previous section, the study followed a sequential exploratory design comprised of two phases, with priority accorded to the first, qualitative phase. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) explain that in many, but not all, applications of this design an instrument is developed on the basis of qualitative results, and is used in a following, quantitative phase. It is due to this reason that this design is also referred to as the instrument-development design.

The decision to use a sequential design for this study was based initially on a need for such sequential instrument-development, but this reasoning changed slightly during the course of the study, although the choice of design did not. Bryman (2008) explains that sequential instrument-development is a methodological concept which refers to a situation where the second strand of research, *sometimes in combination with the relevant literature*, is dependent on the first strand of research. Although I had intended to use the qualitative data collected in the first strand for the development of items in the questionnaire, the literature, in particular a conceptual framework which emerged from my supervisor's PhD (Prozesky, 2006), transpired as being much more useful in this regard than the results of the qualitative strand.

Although this meant that the qualitative data did not explicitly and directly inform the design of the survey instrument, it did give insight into the challenges academic women in South Africa face, which was beneficial for the quantitative strand as a whole, but especially for data analysis. Therefore, this study still applied a sequential exploratory design, but with the majority of mixing taking place during data analysis rather than during data collection, as I had initially intended. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) explain, it is the primary focus of this design to initially explore a phenomenon, making it particularly useful to a researcher who also wants to expand on qualitative findings. True, the design is often discussed as the procedure of choice when a researcher needs to develop an instrument, and is particularly advantageous in this regard, it is not a definitive characteristic of the design.

3.3. First strand: qualitative approach

3.3.1. Research design

As the first strand of this sequential exploratory design was qualitative in nature, I applied a research design that is relatively open-ended and intended for naturalistic inquiry. Together with the coordinator of SU's Transformation Office, and with the financial and other support of the WF and HERS-SA (a self-sustaining nonprofit organisation dedicated to the advancement of women in the HE sector), I assisted in organizing a Women's Day Gender Summit in celebration of the Women's Day that coincided with 20 years of democracy in South Africa, on the 7th of August 2014. This design was applied in order to explore women academics' experience of gender inequality in the Western Cape-region of South Africa. The Women's Day Summit provided a platform for women in HE to voice their experiences and concerns with the issue of gender inequality in their institutions, and how it was being dealt with. Framing the Summit within the broader theme of 20 years of democracy also assisted in sparking wide interest in an often-overlooked and disregarded area of transformation, i.e. gender equality, which tends not to be pursued to the same extent as racial equality (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2).

The Gender Summit provided a safe platform where women would be heard, and where various themes could therefore emerge from women who have experienced gender-related challenges in HE. One of the outcomes of the Summit was to provide useful feedback, in the form of a report, to the various institutions on what the most pressing

concerns are, so that institutions can use this information to help create a non-sexist, positive and opportunity-filled environment for women in their institutions. This report was compiled by myself and the coordinator of the then Centre for Inclusivity², with the help of my supervisor, and was sent to all four universities involved. The report also provided me with a departure point for the thematic analysis, as in it I had already identified many of the important topics that were discussed at the Gender Summit. The report is provided as an appendix (Appendix 3) to this thesis.

3.3.2. *Research methods*

3.3.2.1 **Participant selection**

In qualitative research, non-probability participant selection, rather than random or probability sampling, is most widely used (Bryman, 2008). For this strand, participants in the summit were not randomly selected, but were invited to participate (see Appendix 2). The decision of who to invite was based on my needs as the researcher, i.e. my study aims, and the needs of SU's Transformation Office, HERS-SA and coordinators of the various transformation offices of the other three universities involved. There were no strict criteria placed upon who were permitted to participate, though invitations were only distributed to men and women who work in either of the four HEI's. However, it should be noted that data collection for my research was not the primary goal of the Gender Summit.

According to Bryman (2008), the kind of sampling that was employed during this strand of the study is purposive, in that we invited women who are particular interested in gender issues at the various institutions. In order to be inclusive of all universities in the Western Cape, we ensured that we invited participants from all four universities in the region. The coordinator of SU's Transformation Office and I contacted the coordinators of each university's transformation office and invited as many individuals that work at the four regional universities and who have an interest in issues of gender in HE. This was done by asking coordinators to send the invitation out to those at their university who they reckoned would be interested. We extended invitations to women and men who worked as academics as well as support staff. While the Gender Summit was aimed at addressing gender equality challenges for academic women, it was not

² Now known as the Transformation Office of SU

limited to such women, and a few men were invited. We avoided being gender-exclusive in our approach, and valued the input of all individuals who support the advancement of women in the HE sector. We requested, in a form of snowball sampling, that the invitees further extend the invitation to other interested individuals. Participants also exercised self-selection in choosing to accept the invitation and attend. In addition, a panel was also selected, which comprised of a representative from each of the four universities in the Western Cape region (UCT, UWC, CPUT and SU). The four panelists were chosen because they are specifically concerned with gender-equality issues at HEIs in the Western Cape, and are therefore well-informed on the most pertinent gender-related issues in their respective institutions.

The Summit was attended by approximately 80 staff members from the four institutions that participated. A small group of students from UWC were also in attendance, which provided useful insights from a student perspective. With the exception of three men (one of which was a student from UWC, another a male staff member from SU, and the third a panelist), most of the participants were women. The participants were diverse in terms of race, age rank, experience (some of the women had been academics for more than 30 years, while others had just recently entered), and highest level of education (ranging from doctorate degree to no degree). Of the women, approximately half were white and half were black (including African, coloured and Indian women).

Since the invitation to participate in the Gender Summit was not only extended to women or to academic staff, and participants were very diverse in terms of race, age, rank and status it allowed for a fair representation of different viewpoints, which enhances the authenticity, and particularly the fairness, of the study (Bryman, 2008). The fact that attendance of the event was not exclusionary, and inability during data analysis to identify any participants according to race, gender or academic rank, kept me from allowing my own personal values and/or theoretical inclinations to sway the research and findings derived from it, thereby increasing the confirmability (and overall trustworthiness) of my results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

However, considering the selection criteria and the likelihood of self-selection bias referred to above, it is important not to ascribe the opinions raised at the Gender Summit to all women at SU, or to those at HEIs in South Africa in general. The participants were likely to have experienced discrimination in the workplace, and/or to choose to partake in the discourse of gender advancement at HEIs, and this needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results of the qualitative strand.

3.3.2.2 Data collection

Data collection for the first strand took place at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies, and was aided by the assistance of SU's then Centre for Inclusivity. Since I was part of the organising team for the Gender Summit, I was able to make use of the resources of SU's Centre for Inclusivity to have the proceedings recorded, through the use of a company which was contracted by the Centre. Data collection therefore took the form of audio recordings of the 6 hours of the Summit proceedings. No interviews were conducted with individuals; rather, the event consisted of a panel discussion that was followed by roundtable discussions, which were, in effect, focus group discussions. Once all the data were collected, the recording company compiled it and provided it to me on a flash drive.

- **Panel discussion**

After the welcoming of all participants and guests, the first event of the day was the panel discussion. The panel was asked to respond to a set of questions – developed by myself, in collaboration with a facilitator (who also guided the discussion) and the coordinator of the Transformation Office at SU – to operate as catalysts for identifying the various issues that the woman who attended felt are most pressing. The questions were as follows:

1. Why after 20 years of democracy do we still have to address gender equity and equality? What have been the gains in the past 20 years for women and girls?
2. How does gender inequality affect you personally?
3. Is gender equity applied differently in universities for academic staff and administrative staff? How?
4. What contribution can we ourselves make to achieve gender equity and gender equality?
5. What would gender equity and gender equality look like when it is achieved?

Members of the panel, who were aware of their participation in the studies, were each provided with a recording microphone and were encouraged to speak clearly when raising a point, to ensure that they would be heard clearly by the audience and that their voice would be clearly recorded. Following the panel discussion, all participants had an opportunity to engage with the panel and voice their own personal concerns and

experiences. The facilitator of the Gender Summit ensured that all participants knew that voicing of criticism and differences of opinion were encouraged among the attendants.

- **Focus groups**

Following the panel discussion and the voicing of the participants' own personal concerns and experiences, participants were requested to arrange themselves into smaller focus groups around eight "break-away" tables, each consisting of approximately eight participants. Here they were requested to discuss the same questions posed to the panel, thereby giving them another opportunity to voice their own opinions on the subjects raised. These questions were discussed at length by the focus groups, and produced rich, in-depth and diverse explanations of the challenges that participants faced at their institutions.

A recording microphone was placed in the middle of each of the tables, to ensure that each participant's voice would be recorded as clearly as possible, considering the burden of background noise. Participants were also encouraged to speak clearly when raising a point, to avoid inaudible recordings and therefore unusable data. All participants were fully aware that all discussions would be recorded as data, as they were requested to consent to participate in the research during registration for the Summit (see Appendix 1). After the discussion of the questions, each table was also given 15 minutes to identify the two key issues they deemed most important to be addressed with regards to gender equality at South African universities. The "break-away" groups were then requested to report back to the group as a whole. Each table was encouraged to elect one speaker for their group who would feel confident in addressing the larger group. In this address, the speaker was asked to name and explain the two issues their group perceived as most important.

There were various advantages to making use of focus group discussions, especially since it was emphasised that each individual's contribution to the discussion is valued, as it was an important objective of the Gender Summit (and of my own research) to gain diverse opinions and perspectives on the issues at hand. There were many instances of participants expressing opinions contrary to popular opinions on gender equality in South African HEIs, some of which subscribe to the "motherhood myth" (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1). This showed that an environment where women (and men) would feel safe and heard, regardless of their minority or unpopular opinion, was indeed created, thereby allowing diverse opinions to emerge from the data. This, I believe, opened up a space for

a greater variety of explanations for the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions to emerge. It even allowed women (and men) to disagree with the notion that women are actually underrepresented in senior academic positions.

A particular strength of this method was that it allowed for various forms of authenticity, such as ontological, educative, catalytic and tactical authenticity, to emerge. Ontological authenticity applies in my study in the form of what Onwuegbuzie, Leech and Collins (2008:8) refer to as “a raised level of awareness among participants” and the fact that “the constructions of the research participants [...] evolved in a meaningful way as a result of participation in the study”. For example, by hearing other women’s stories, many discovered that the struggles they were facing were not unique to them, but were more widespread than they initially thought.

Educative authenticity refers to the enhancement of the “participants’ understanding of and appreciation for the constructions of others outside their stakeholding group” (Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 2008:9) By hearing opposing opinions on the issue at hand, and by listening to other women’s stories, many of the participants discovered the different ways that other women experience gender inequality within their institutions, and the role that intersectionality plays in their differing experiences.

As mentioned above, tactical authenticity was also enhanced, in the sense that participants were “empowered to act on the increased understanding that emerged as a result of the study” (Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 2008:9). In particular, they emphasised with each other, advised each other on ways to guard against gender discrimination, and shared coping strategies with each other.

3.3.3. *Data processing and analysis*

Once all the qualitative data – i.e. the experiences voiced by participants during the panel discussion, focus group discussions, and report-back session – were collected and provided to me, I proceeded with transcribing the data. I started by first transcribing the panel discussion and the responses from the audience to that discussion. This was followed by the transcription of the focus group discussions, which I then integrated with the first transcription. Since all focus group discussions took place within a single venue, much background noise was present. Therefore, before I could transcribe this focus group data, I had to enhance the individual voices on the recording above the background noise, using a special audio-editing program. Lastly, I transcribed the report-back session on the

most important issues the focus groups felt needed to be addressed in order to ensure gender equality is achieved in South African HEIs. This final transcription was then also integrated with the other transcriptions.

Once all the audio files had been transcribed, I proceed with a thematic analysis of the data, as defined by Aronson (1995). Themes were therefore identified by bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone, but become meaningful when those ideas or experiences are grouped under a common theme. During the process of identifying common experiences or ideas, patterns began emerging through an iterative process of reading and writing (Bryman, 2008). Once I had grouped similar narratives together, I was able to create distinct categories or themes that I named appropriately (See Chapter 4, Section 4.2).

I identified a theme when more than one participant raised the same of a similar issue, thus the themes emerged directly from the experiences of the participants, thereby increasing their validity (Aronson, 1995). For example, many participants told stories about how they felt that they, at some point in their lives, had to make a choice between their careers and a fulfilling family life. Some women expressed how they resented having to make this choice, while others explained how an involved spouse rendered the juggling of career, household duties and childcare easier. The former narratives were all grouped under a theme I named “Starting a family or advancing in one’s career”.

In addition, I had already at this point read literature on the challenges women academics face with regards to their careers, which allowed me to connect certain theories and arguments to a theme when I wrote up the results. Unfortunately, there was no opportunity for individual participants to provide feedback on whether the analysis was a valid reflection of their narratives. Though such respondent validation could have led to the further enhancement of the credibility of my results, it was unfeasible in the context of this master’s thesis. However, the report on the Gender Summit was provided to each participating institution, which created the opportunity for engagement by participants with at least some of the results of the qualitative strand, though no feedback was received.

3.4. Second strand – Quantitative approach

3.4.1. Research design

The findings from the qualitative study provided me with insight and access to privileged information, , but as its purpose was to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges to career progression that academic women at the four regional universities in the Western Cape face, it did not allow me to measure how women academics at SU in general assessed their own career progression, or which factors were perceived by those who assessed their career progression as non-existent or slow, as having a negative influence on their career progression. It also could not provide me with answers as to whether there are differences in terms of marital status and motherhood status, when considering these factors. To answer these remaining research questions, I made use of a quantitative design, specifically a cross-sectional survey which I distributed among all women academic staff at SU. Data were collected by means of a structured questionnaire, the specifics of which questionnaire, as well as the data analysis methods, are discussed in the subsequent sections.

3.4.2. Research methods

3.4.2.1 Definition of the population and respondents

The population for this strand of the study can be defined as women academics who are permanently employed at SU as instructional or research staff (referred to as C1 staff by SU's Human Resources Division), ranging from junior lecturers to full professors, across all faculties. No sample was drawn for this strand, as the whole population (447) was requested to participate. The term "respondents" is used to refer to those 99 individuals who accepted the request by reliably completing and submitting a web-based questionnaire. Incomplete questionnaires (20) were excluded from the dataset, since they were either submitted without information, or provided a response to only one question. Although 101 completed questionnaires were received, two were later excluded, due to the inconsistent nature of the information they provided. A total of 99 cases, and response rate of 23%, was therefore achieved.

It is important to consider the likelihood of non-response bias, i.e. that the 23% who responded may differ in various important ways from the 67% who did not. Bryman

(2008) explains that it is usually impossible to determine whether such differences exist in terms of factors such as attitudes and patterns of behaviour. However, according to Babbie and Mouton (2011), if population parameters on certain demographic variables are available, as they are in the case of my survey, it is possible to determine any potential bias indirectly, by comparing these parameters with the demographic profile of the respondents. It is then also possible to weight the results accordingly, to counteract any bias. The results of this comparison, details regarding weighting, and their implications for analysis will be presented and discussed in the next chapter.

3.4.2.2 Data collection

I chose a self-administered, web-based questionnaire, because a web-based survey program, “SURveys”, is available for SU students to use at no charge. Self-administered questionnaires were also considered appropriate for the population I intended to survey, because the population is highly literate. This survey program allows one to distribute a link to a web-based questionnaire to all academic women staff with ease. It is also conveniently available to respondents within the time frame allocated (of 2 weeks), as it is stored within their university email inbox.

Once the questionnaire had been completed³, I enlisted the services of SU’s Language Center to translate the document into Afrikaans, to provide women a choice of answering in the language they are most comfortable with. Though it might be the case that some participants whose first language is Xhosa it would be reasonable to expect that all participants were at least fluent on one of the two languages (English or Afrikaans). Therefore, the effort to translate the questionnaire into Xhosa was not worth the advantages that it would offer.

Once both language versions of the questionnaire had been uploaded onto SU’s web-based-survey software program, I conducted a pilot study to determine whether respondents would have any difficulty responding to and/or submitting the questionnaires. According to Babbie and Mouton (2011), the surest protection against errors is to undertake such a pretesting of the questionnaire in full or in part. They also state that the questionnaire should be piloted with people to whom the questionnaire is at

³ A copy of the Afrikaans and English versions of the questionnaires is available on request from the researcher, Ms L Williams (910324.lw@gmail.com), or her supervisor, Dr H Prozesky (hep@sun.ac.za).

least relevant, which is why I chose to pilot it among four members of SU's WF Executive.

An invitation to participate in the survey and link to the questionnaire was then distributed via email to the whole population (see Appendix 4). Women were motivated to respond by stating that the results will be communicated to SU management to assist them in the future improvement of employee wellness and inclusivity at the university.

Administering the questionnaire in this way was not only convenient for respondents, but also for me as the researcher, as it was possible for me to directly export the data into a spreadsheet, instead of entering each response manually, which would have been time-consuming and carries a greater potential for error during data capturing and coding (Bryman, 2008). The survey program automatically stored all data in an online cloud, which also allowed me to easily keep track of the response rate, and provided me with an indication of when a reminder email should be sent out. Guidelines on follow-up mailings suggest that this is an effective method for increasing return rates in mail surveys (Babbie and Mouton, 2011). The invitation was distributed on 15 November 2015, and one week later a reminder was sent out to those who had received the invitation to participate, but had not yet responded.

As evidenced by the infograph created by SU's Transformation Office, which shows that women academics are clustered in the lower academic ranks at the university, I identified the career progression of women academics as one of the most concerning gender-inequality issues at the university, and therefore as the central focus of the survey. However, as mentioned earlier, key themes identified during the qualitative strand helped to highlight the various factors women identified as the most important barriers to achieving gender equality in South African HEIs. These themes and factors, in combination with the relevant literature, also informed the content of the questionnaire that was used to collect data.

The questionnaire is comprised of four main sections. The first section requested demographic information, i.e. faculty within which the respondent is (primarily) employed, academic rank, age, race, highest qualification, marital and motherhood status. The data collected from this section allowed me to describe those who responded to the survey, and to compare their demographic characteristics with those of the population as a whole. It also allowed me to determine whether it was necessary to weight the data, and provided the data for bivariate analysis, which will be discussed in the following section.

The second section asks questions concerning respondents' career history, as well as gathering some qualitative data on the various reasons some women had experienced career interruptions. The majority of data collected from this section was, however, not utilised during analysis due to restrictions on the length of this thesis. The final question in this section, asked respondents to describe their career progression as either non-existent, slow, average, fast or extremely fast. It was a contingency question, asked only of those respondents that had been employed at SU for at least one year, which I considered sufficient for them to be able to provide this description. Of those respondents, the ones who described their career progression as either non-existent or slow were requested, in a third section, to rate various factors that they perceived as decelerating their career progression. Those who had described their career progression as either fast or extremely fast, were asked, in a different part of the third section, to rate various accelerating factors, though data collected from the latter group was not analyzed during this study (see Chapter 6, section 3.6 for further explanation).

The third section was therefore divided into two contingency sub-sections, which asked respondents to rate, on a Likert scale, the extent to which a range of factors had contributed to the rate of their career progression at SU. These factors, or indicators, were presented in a random order, but each belonged to one of three main dimensions, i.e. psychosocial, institutional or organisational, family-responsibility, which cover most, if not all, explanations of difference in career performance, as provided in the literature (Prozesky, 2006). This section allowed me to determine which factors respondents considered to have the largest impact on both their relatively (and perceived) slow and fast career progression, I did not, however, analyse the data on factors respondents considered to have the largest impact on their fast career progression, as there were too few respondents (8) who described their career progression as fast or extremely fast (See Chapter 5, Section 5.2.3).

The fourth and final section of the questionnaire was very similar to the third section in its style, but all respondents were requested to answer it, by rating the extent to which they perceived various factors as contributing to the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions at SU. The following section will discuss the data analysis techniques applied for this strand of the research.

3.4.3. *Data analysis*

Once all the survey responses had been captured in a Microsoft Software Excel spreadsheet, I imported the data into the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Statistics Version 23. I proceeded to assign codes to responses to closed-ended items, and to categorise and code those to open-ended questions, including the “other” category of closed-ended items (in order to determine whether new categories emerged from the qualitative data that I did not include in the closed-ended options). Once the data had been coded, I was able to proceed with descriptive statistics. Descriptive analysis consisted of first describing the relevant demographics of the population (using existing results obtained from DIRP) and those of the respondents, such as the faculty they were primarily affiliated with, their race and their academic rank, in order to compare the population with the respondents. This was done to determine the extent of non-response bias and to inform the weighting of the data (See Chapter 5, Section 5.2).

The second step was to determine to what extent women perceived their own career progression as relatively fast or slow, and then, which decelerating indicators women in the latter category considered as having had the largest impact on their own lack of career progression, as well as which decelerating indicators women considered to have made the greatest contribution to the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions. I did this by calculating means for each indicator, and then creating composite variables by grouping the various indicators according to three dimensions (psychosocial factors, family-responsibility factors and institutional factors). I then created mean scores for each dimension, and from this I was able to determine which dimension women rated as the most influential in slowing down their careers. These indicators and dimensions originally emerged from a literature review of differences between men and women in terms of publication productivity (Prozesky, 2006), but were considered applicable to the more general construct of career progression. A reliability test was also executed to determine whether the indicators were reliable factors of their respective composite variables (see Appendix 6 and 7).

Lastly, I conducted bivariate analysis to determine whether there was a relationship between, on the one hand the way the respondents rated the three sets of decelerating factors (psychosocial factors, institutional factors and family related factors) as influencing their lack of career progression, and, on the other hand (1) marital status and (2) motherhood status. I did not make use of chi square tests to determine the significance

of the relationships, since a sample was not drawn (the chi-square test determines the extent to which a difference observed in a sample may be considered significantly large enough to be reliably inferences to the population). Rather than conducting chi square tests, I applied weighting to counteract non-response bias, using the population data of the variable academic rank.

3.5. Research ethics and institutional permission

When conducting research among staff members of a public institution such as a university, both ethical clearance from an ethics committee as well as institutional permission need to be obtained. This final section of Chapter 3 will consider the ethical considerations that pertain to my research, as well as the various procedures that were followed to obtain ethical and institutional permission to conduct each of the two strands of my research.

3.5.1. First strand

Ethical clearance for the first, qualitative strand, and particularly data collection at the Gender Summit, was obtained through two applications. I first submitted an ethics application to the Departmental Ethical Screening Committee (DESC) of SU's Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, which required a full research proposal to be submitted, together with an informed-consent form for participants. Informed consent formed part of the electronic registration of participants for the Gender Summit, and gave participants the opportunity to consent to being digitally recorded during the proceedings, or to decline participation in the study without being excluded from the event (See Appendix 1). This posed a challenge, since it would have been difficult to identify and therefore exclude from the qualitative data those who did not give their consent. Fortunately, none of the participants withheld their consent.

Through the registration process participants were also informed that all collected data would be treated confidentially and reported anonymously in this thesis. It could be argued that, since the Gender Summit was a public forum, issues of confidentiality and anonymity did not apply (Murphy & Dingwall, 2007). However, as the proceedings were to be utilised as data for the purposes of research (and not merely for the purposes of minuting, and producing a report of, the event) it was necessary to obtain informed

consent, maintain confidentiality and obtain institutional permission from DIRP for the research. To maintain confidentiality, it was essential that only I, as the researcher, was in possession of a recorded copy of the proceedings.

As I intended to collect data from academic staff at SU, the application was referred to SU's Research Ethics Committee for Human Research in the Humanities (REC), which involved completing and submitting another application form. Once ethical clearance for data collection during the Gender Summit had been received, an application to obtain institutional permission from SU's DIRP was submitted and obtained.

3.5.2. *Second strand*

In the first DESC and REC application, I communicated that I could only provide detailed information on the second, quantitative strand once the collection and analysis of the data from the first strand was completed, and that I would therefore be providing an amended application as soon as I had designed – after completion of the first strand – the second, quantitative strand. Once this had been achieved, the English and Afrikaans questionnaires, their accompanying informed-consent forms, and an updated proposal were prepared for the submission amendment. Another requirement of DIRP was that I should submit a letter specifying how the research would benefit SU, to gain institutional permission to the email addresses of all female academic staff. This letter was also submitted, where after institutional permission and final ethical clearance were received (HS1100).

Once I uploaded the questionnaires onto the SURvey program, the mailing list of all female academic staff was made available to a staff member at SU's Information Technology Division, who is responsible for all SU students' research concerning SU staff and students. To protect the anonymity of the female academic staff, I, as the researcher, did not have any access to this list. All responses were also submitted anonymously, as the survey program automatically generated a random -identification number for each returned questionnaire. I was therefore unable to identify any of the participants who responded to the survey. The only way that participants could be identified, was if they contacted me directly if they had any queries and/or comments.⁴

⁴ I received three mail responses, two of which thanked me for conducting the research and a third respondent who disputed the notion of women's underrepresentation.

This was important, since sensitive information was asked in the questionnaire, which could have had damaging personal consequences for respondents if it were to be made public. The issue of confidentiality was also important for protecting SU, since the institution may be held liable for the exploitation of their employees if their information were made available for malicious purposes.

The informed-consent form for this strand constituted the email invitation to the questionnaire. If participants declined to participate, they were taken to the end of the questionnaire and thanked for their time. Those respondents who consented were informed that, although they granted their informed consent electronically, they would be able to save a digital copy of the consent form, by right-clicking on their computer screen. This was important information to convey, since the consent form contained the contact information, as well as that of my supervisor and a person at SU's Division for Research Development, whom they could have contacted should they have had questions.

3.6. Summary and conclusions

This chapter provided the reader with a detailed account of the research design and methods applied in this study. Together with supporting literature, it provided a rationale for the design employed, by focusing on each strand of the research process separately. This chapter also provided the reader with a clear identification of the research questions, the sources of data, and how they were analysed. Lastly, it outlined the ethical procedures followed during both the qualitative and quantitative strands of this research.

Chapter 4: *Results of the qualitative findings*

4.1. Introduction

This chapter reports on the results of a qualitative, thematic analysis of gender-related challenges faced by a selection of women from four universities in the Western Cape province of South Africa, who attended a Women's Day Gender Summit that was hosted by Stellenbosch University on the 7th of August 2014. It discusses various themes that emerged from an analysis of the stories told by the women, about their personal experience as well as the experiences of others. The aim of this chapter is also to interpret the themes against the background of relevant theory and literature, and in terms of career-progression issues that women academics face. Though the Summit was not only attended by academics, the focus of this research is on their experiences. In the last chapter of this thesis, these themes will be integrated with the quantitative findings (See Chapter 6).

4.2. Results of a thematic analysis of data collected during the qualitative strand

I identified four major themes, each of which is further divided into various sub-themes.

4.2.1. The university, socialisation and the home

The first theme addresses the influence that social norms concerning masculinities and femininities, as well as ongoing gender-role socialisation, have on how women behave and are expected to behave in academia. Socialisation is an ongoing process which takes place in various contexts of our lives. Though we are first socialised as from a very young age by our parents, into different gender roles, the socialisation process also takes place in society concerning occupation we pursue as men and women (Mills, 2000). These norms were problematised by the participants: it emerged from the data that broader societal norms outside of the university and gender role socialisation in the home have an impact on how the university operates, and how women academics experience it.

- **“The university is a microcosm of society”**

In correspondence with the notion that broader societal norms have an impact on the university, one participant referred to the extent to which patriarchy is entrenched in society, and that there is actually no reason “*why it should be any different in higher education*”, since the university is a “*microcosm of society*”. She further explains that:

There is something bigger that is a barrier, it's not just the university: it's a patriarchal ideology; how women are perceived generally. If women are kept down in other aspects of society, I really wonder: is it really about the policies, Employment Act and all these processes, or isn't the issue really patriarchy (this general need to want to keep women down)?

Another participant supported this argument – that patriarchy is entrenched in society and spills over into the university – by stating that “*society still sees males as the better leaders and that they will, too, be better bosses*”. She further explains that women work harder than men to progress in their careers, and that therefore, “*if males had to do what women have to do, they probably would've been much further than they already are*”.

This theme emerged as quite prominent in the data, as participants spoke quite extensively about how their careers have been affected by the assumptions attached to their gender by the socialisation process and norms. To illustrate, one participant explained how the patriarchal way other institutions outside of the university operate, impacts on her career, through its assumption of parental responsibility. She explains that “*the school in which [her] son is, operates with certain stereotypes that make it difficult for her*”:

The school works with a stereotype in their heads that one parent is available full-time – at 11:00 in the morning, at 15:00 in the afternoon that person is available – and that person, in their minds, is the mother. And to fight that perception, how do I walk up to the teachers and to say to the principal, “Please stop, this it's difficult”? They just don't see it. To them this is so normal, and they function with this assumption and that causes me a lot of stress.

- **“She said a girl’s place is in the kitchen and a boy’s place is outside with the garden or cars”**

The data showed that socialisation at home also affects women’s careers in an earlier and more direct manner. One participant observed that *“a lot of people still don’t think it’s wrong for a family to decide that a girl child doesn’t have to go and study and that the boy child must go and study and get an education”*. Another echoed this sentiment in broader terms: *“when we are raised, the role of a girl child and the role of a boy child in the home is stereotyped”* and *“that’s where the challenge is”*. She therefore argued that, if change can *“start from that level, then that is going to help the next generation”*:

I think the change or the progression is going to be gradual. It comes from that part where we have to deal with the fact that society is patriarchal in nature, and that is something that we have to deal with, something that we have to unlearn; and it is something that’s going to be achieved over a number of years.

The importance of socialisation is also highlighted by one participant’s experience, which is quite dissimilar from the above stereotypes, because she *“came from a home where [she] had a very strong mother [and] this impacted her view of her career”*. Seeing the struggles of her mother, who was also an academic, stirred within her conflicting feelings with regards to her own career, and choices she has made:

“She was also an academic, chasing that life, and I said to myself: I don’t want to be like her; I actually want to be the traditional woman, stay at home and raise the children. But unfortunately it didn’t happen for me, so I’m also the breadwinner. That is how I find myself in this space.

These concerns expressed by participants are supported by Aisenburg and Harrington (1988), Acker (1984) as well as David *et al.* (2005), who claim that no shift towards gender equality will occur unless there is a substantial shift towards equality in society. David *et al.*’s (2005) research is particularly relevant here, since it investigated the various moral and structural constraints that women, particularly mothers, face in the academic setting, after they have decided to embark on the quest plot. The problems discussed by the participants reflect both moral and structural constraints faced by women academics, and the notion that, by embarking on the quest plot, they have gone against societal norms. As a result, they feel uneasy and unwelcome, never completely embraced into HEIs.

- **“Go in wearing a suit, because they will take you seriously when they see you wearing a suit”**

Another facet of the socialisation process is that women academics are often subjected to pressures that force them to adopt certain behaviours in the academic environment. Some participants expressed the frequent expectation from women in senior positions to often act and even dress like men, and sometimes experience rejection when they rebel against these expectations. One participant narrated such an experience while attending a conference about leadership. She explains how uncomfortable she felt at the sentiments expressed by another female speaker who spoke before her.

The speaker before me spoke about: if you want to get people to take you seriously, this is what you need to do. And one of the things she mentioned was, when you walk into that boardroom make sure you are wearing a suit. Go in wearing a suit, because they will take you seriously when they see you wearing a suit; a pants and a jacket [...] I spoke up against that, because I'm concerned I won't be taken seriously for what I have to give not of what I'm wearing.

Her discomfort and fear of not being taken seriously, because of her rejection of the expectation to dress like a man in her work environment, resulted in her not having been invited back to the conference the following year. Unlike this participant, perceptions of certain roles as masculine or feminine sometimes lead women to adopt certain masculine behaviours, or to act like men at their place of work. These adopted behaviours are not, however, merely adopted to mimic masculinity for the sake of performance, but for women to progress in their careers.

In accordance with western norms, certain employment positions have been labelled as requiring either masculine or feminine traits. According to Halpern (2000), these feminine and masculine traits can be attributed to gender-role stereotypes, observed from a young age, that seem to justify differences between genders, such as differences in career progression among male and female academics. Beliefs about what it means to be feminine and masculine have a great impact on how women view their own abilities, as well as how others view them. As Butler (1988) explains, gender norms are “performative”, rather than objective truths. She takes a highly critical view of essentialist ideas and explains that identity categories, such as gender, are constructed realities of regimes of power, rather than natural effects of the body. Butler argues that, because of the dominant conception of gender within a certain context (such as academia) being normalised, it is taken for granted that this conception of gender is merely performative

and constructed socially. The positive side to this is that, if this is performative, it becomes possible for it to be constructed differently (Butler, 1988). So, as Butler explains, women in academia perform masculinity to progress in their careers.

One of the main problems with women compromising their femininity to progress in their careers, is that this compromise becomes incompatible with their lives as women, which will be discussed further in the subsequent section dealing with the choice between family and career. Heward (1996) provides an insightful explanation regarding women academics' attempt to take on seemingly masculine traits and explains that, thus, they face further obstacles in trying to attain self-confidence and practice self-promotion. This is because behaviour such as assertiveness, self-confidence and self-advertisement, which is praised in men and considered necessary to attain a successful career as an academic, is criticised as unfeminine (and can lead to alienation from colleagues) when women adopt that behaviour to render themselves more visible to compete with men on equal terms for procurement.

4.2.2. *Starting a family or advancing in one's career*

This theme addresses the choice between prioritising family or career, the challenge of career interruptions that originate from family matters and the challenges of obtaining a master's or PhD degree.

- **“Women are forced to [make a choice] and should not have [to]”**

As mentioned in the previous section, women's choice to embark on the quest plot (Aisenburg & Harrington, 1988) often leads to many obstacles for them, be it psychological or institutional, that hinder them from achieving satisfaction in their lives and achievements in their academic careers. The data on this theme showed that many women academics are at some point in their lives faced with a choice between granting either their family or their careers priority, whereas male academics generally do not have to make this choice. One participant explained how “*women are forced to*” make a choice, although they “*should not have*” to, and talks about how she was forced to either choose “*the conventional route of getting married and having children, or choose [her] career*”:

It was two months before I graduated with my PhD that I had to make that choice; and I chose my career and I don't regret it. That all speaks to the problem: we as women have to make these kinds of choices, or had to make them, whereas [for] men [the absence of choice] was just the accepted thing. Because we can't, on the one hand, say we want to get ahead in our careers, but at the same time we have to put our careers on hold because this is our role as women. So there is a contradiction there for me.

Some participants, unlike the woman above, claimed that that they were not willing to sacrifice their family and a quality personal life for their careers. Others admitted to having made the choice in favour of their careers, though not without sacrifices. Making this choice in favour of a career has unforeseen consequences for women, one of which manifests in the form of shaming from friends and family, who criticise women who choose to prioritise their careers as being “deviants” who have rejected their feminine roles. Another participant, who made such a choice, explains that women who choose their careers

need to realize that it's OK for you as a female to decide that you want to become an academic. [...] There should not be pressure, regardless of your background or how you were raised. You should not go to a social gathering and people ask, when are you getting married? Because you [are] female, and when are you having babies, and how are you coping in a male-dominated environment?

As mentioned before, women academics who do choose to prioritise their careers face a constant struggle with rejection and general dissatisfaction with their lives, because of them being perceived as adopting a masculine persona and rejecting the feminine. Apart from the pressures from friends and family, another example of the consequences these women face when choosing to prioritise their careers, is that it can leave them feeling guilty for not fulfilling the traditional motherly role. One participant explains how choosing her career has left her “*guilt-ridden all the time*”:

It is a personal struggle to make peace with the role that you've chosen. You've chosen it, but you don't really have a choice. Like, I'm the breadwinner in my family so it's not as though I can decide: will I work or will I stay at home? Now, you've got this role model, and it's your mom, and I admire her greatly, but it's like you're conflicted. It's like you're abandoning something that you really value.

Thus, women who choose to prioritise their careers become stigmatised, regardless of whether they marry and/or have children.

- **“There’s a name for a woman that goes out to work and doesn’t look after her children: it’s called a ‘black raven mother’, and she doesn’t care”**

It emerged from the data that women’s family responsibilities, such as children or housework, do indeed contribute to the deceleration of their career progression. This is particularly the case when women have children early on in their careers. This was evident in one participant’s statement that, most of the time, *“women’s careers start a little later than men’s: they do master’s a little later, they do PhDs a little later, than men; they start publishing later than men; and delay [their] careers for various reasons.* She explains that *“it’s because of home and family responsibilities”*.

Another participant described how her responsibilities at home impacted on her ability to prioritise her work, and that, although she might have *“better opportunities to advance in [her] career now after 20 years”*, and although she *“might have improved her career, it is not as much as [she had] wanted to”*. She explains that, in her home, she is *“still expected as a woman to cook for the family, and still see to all those things, although [she is] working full day, just as [her] husband [is].”*

Though such household and family responsibilities are considered a career hindrance by some women, it is not always the case. This was evident in one participant’s narrative which explains how women academics would sometimes *“refuse to do [a] job”* because of family and household responsibilities:

I must be honest; I would first think of my family; how any job would impact on my family. I still want to see my children, I still want to nurture them, I still want to be around them. If I hear that a job is going to take 24 hours of my day, I’ll refuse to do that job.

As evidenced by the data, women often have to juggle their family and household responsibilities with work responsibilities. To make sense of this, Schwartz (1989) coined the term “superwomen myth” to describe those women who successfully juggle work and family life. Though Schwartz in her work claims that it is almost physically impossible for a human being to work a full corporate week and still have the time and energy to be a parent at home, she does propose a way out. One of her suggestions in this regard is that women should be offered a career track that allows more time for family and home commitments, commonly referred to as the mommy track. Though this might seem a reasonable suggestion, in theory, Schwartz explains that it would have both positive and negative consequences for women, the latter being an institutionalisation of a lower

career-track for women, as well as rendering all women who are mothers, suspect of job neglect.

- **“You’re an expense to the company, a liability and not a knowledge contributor”**

The abovementioned negative consequences, as Schwartz explains, are often what keep women in the constant juggling act. Though Schwartz’ work focused on the corporate sector, the argument can be made that similar struggles exist for women who work in academia. The lack of provision made for women’s double load leads to women experiencing career interruptions and struggles in obtaining their master’s or PhD qualification, since the time that they have available for activities outside of work often has to be spent on their families. One participant explains how *“having children just brought a hell of a long backlog into the completion [of her] PhD”*. Another participant also explains how, after giving birth to twins in addition to her first child, while working towards obtaining her master’s degree, she faced many challenges with regards to a lack of time, sacrifices she had to make, and additional expenses she had, due to child-care responsibilities. She explains how she was *“told by [her head of department] HoD that [she is at] high risk of not completing, because of [her] three babies”*:

Normally, they said, you can do it in two years, but with my situation they’ll give me three years. I did it in two years. I made sacrifices, I had to pay a full time nanny, get another maid in to help her, and trained her to cook, so I could leave my house at 6 o’clock and come home 7 o’clock to finish this masters. I didn’t see all my children and I missed the first steps, but then after that, I took a two-year reduced salary and reduced workload.

The choice between pursuing an academic career and a family or home life amongst academic women is explored by Aisenburg and Harrington (1988) in their conception of the marriage and quest plot. They broadly define the marriage plot as the social norms which dictate what women should want, how they should behave, and the choices they should make in their lives, according to the old norms. These generally dictate the “proper” sphere for women as the private sphere, i.e. the home., while the quest plot is defined as the values of public life, to which women struggle to aspire. These struggles are clearly evident in the above narratives of the participants who chose to pursue, in Aisenburg and Harrington’s terms, the quest plot.

Although the research by Aisenburg and Harrington (1988), as well as that of David *et al.* (2005), was conducted in Brittain, their findings are similar to mine, i.e. that many academic women who had chosen to embark on the quest plot claimed that they had to make a choice between having a family or home life, on the one hand, and having a successful professional academic career, on the other. Aisenburg and Harrington (1988) also explain that, although women may want to, they cannot rid themselves of the marriage plot as a guideline for proper conduct and a measure of success. This was reflected in my data, in the form of the abovementioned explanation of one of the participants that, though she wants to progress in her career, she would always prioritise her family because, ultimately, she would rather spend more time with her children. As Aisenburg and Harrington (1988) explain, women academics then ultimately follow the old script, even as they embrace the new, and in doing so, battle within themselves and with the outer world.

One of the struggles briefly mentioned in Section 4.2.1 above is that women academics often struggle with self-confidence and self-promotion. These have been constructed as essential skills to master in the academic profession, but still, somehow, do not seem to be mastered as well by most women as they are by men. The next theme will further provide evidence of women academics' struggles with self-confidence, networking and self-promotion, in the form of relevant narratives of various participants.

4.2.3. Networking, self-promotion and mentoring

This theme addresses issues of women's seeming lack of self-confidence and self-limiting beliefs, and the resulting differences between the way they and men approach their careers, as well as the related influence mentorship and institutional culture have on women's career progression. The data showed that some participants attributed the lack of female representation in senior academic positions to a lack of self-confidence and the self-limiting beliefs of academic women. Importantly, however, they perceived these beliefs as closely connected to, and in some instances being influenced by, women's family and household responsibilities, and a hierarchical and patriarchal institutional culture.

- **“No I don’t think I qualify for that”**

Illustrating the attribution of women’s slow career progression, and the resulting underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions, to women’s own lack of self-confidence and self-limiting beliefs about their own abilities, one participant describes how she is “*one of those women that always feels insecure*” and that she “*can’t do it*”. She explains that “*it’s like [she doesn’t] think [she will] qualify for a senior position and [she is] always comparing [herself] to someone else*”.

Another participant echoes this, in part, by recognising the importance of self-confidence if women want to progress in their careers as female academics.

It’s very important to empower yourself by having the self-confidence to speak up when it comes to a certain point. Because if you have the knowledge and the background to back yourself in the questions that the males tend to ask you, it’s easy to be regarded as a leader; it doesn’t matter whether you’re a male or a female. So the thing is, the self confidence that we as females must have; we need to empower ourselves with self-confidence.

Self-confidence is referred to in these quotations as a quality that women academics often lack, but the question remains why this is the case. In order to better understand the tendency for women to blame themselves and other women in this way, Sonnert’s (1999) difference model is useful. This model, also known as the psychosocial explanation of gender difference in terms of career attainments attributes these differences to deep-rooted differences in the behaviour, outlook and goals of men and women. According to this explanation, social norms construct gender differences so strongly that they seem natural. It also holds that, because women internalise these constructed gender differences, they have a powerful influence on how women perceive themselves and each other, and consequently, on how they approach their careers. When certain traits and abilities are considered as natural to either men or women, and consequently women are perceived as less rational and suitable for academia or the public sphere in general, it stands to reason that a lack of confidence would be evident in women who pursue careers based on being able to reason well.

As Halpern (2000) explains, these gender norms or gender-role stereotypes include the view of men as task-orientated and instrumental, and females as emotional, warm and expressive. Similarly, Beall and Sternburg (1995) explain that these stereotypes set women up to fail, and lower their self-confidence in their abilities to succeed at these

tasks. Since academia is highly competitive, and academics are evaluated on the basis of performance, this lack of self-confidence in women academics has a direct effect on women's career progression. Beall and Sternburg (1995) also note that, in addition to challenges regarding self-confidence, employers are less likely to hire or promote women. Women's lack of promotion is then believed to be fair and justified, because women's weaker performance serves as supporting evidence.

Considering women's lack of self-confidence in academia, as well as other factors such as childcare (discussed earlier in this chapter), it is not surprising that, as a result, women and men approach their careers in different ways. My data supports this, as participants described the manner in which men and women academics approach their careers differently in terms of salary negotiation; flexibility to change in terms of location or travel; and the type of work they are willing to do – all of which were described as negatively affecting women's career progression.

One participant, who had been employed at SU for 30 years, advised younger female academics on how to approach their careers. She cautions that they should be flexible in response to change and that they should not “*stay at one institution too long*”: She reasons that, when female academics try to progress in their careers, they will lose out, because men “*negotiate their salaries, [while women's] energy goes into transforming the institution*”. She explains that, because women often invest their efforts into bringing about gender transformation at their institutions, they remain at one institution, in the hopes that they would make a difference, and in the process stagnate in their careers.

Another participant also described how differences between men and women in terms of the flexibility with which they approach their careers, lead to different career outcomes:

men tend to change jobs regularly [and that] is something that women should also consider, because your chances of finding a position that was previously meant for men are better if you change jobs: you get different skills, so you are more marketable.

According to her, the problem is that “*women think more than twice before having to uproot [their] family for [their] job, or even to commute as much as a man is prepared to commute.*” Though this participant's opinion may be considered another instance of “blaming women”, I interpret it as evidence of the heterogeneity of the opinions of women in the subject. Firstly, it should be considered that not all women academics have families,

and those who do, do not to the same extent prioritise their families and/or subscribe to feminist views on the subject. It is important that these women be heard, too.

Other than the issue of career flexibility, the type of positions women tend to gravitate towards affects their ability to progress in those careers. One participant describes how men and women approach their careers differently in terms of the type of work they apply for, and claims that “*you will not find many males applying for the position of a personal assistant, and you will find many women step back when there are very senior positions available*”. She explains that:

this is because women don't think that people would consider them for these [lower-status] positions, because they are female and categorise and label [themselves] and let that hold [them] back from where [they] can be sometimes.

The difference model's perspective on the psychosocial is reflected in this account of the participant, in that she places the blame on the women themselves, similar to the participant quoted before her. Though the psychosocial explanation for gender difference in career attainments strongly emerges when women consider differences between the career approaches of men and women, these differences can also be tied to gender-role specialisation with regard to family responsibility, i.e. that men and women still perform different roles in the home, with women retaining primary responsibility for childcare and housework, and thereby having less time to devote to their careers. However, there are also linkages to the deficit model, in that these assumptions regarding gender roles are ingrained in the institutional culture which affects the perception (among, for example, their employers) of the amount of time women are able or willing to devote to their careers. The former perception can be explained by the motherhood myth (Etzkowitz et al., 2000 as cited in Prozesky, 2006).

Coate *et al.* (2015) and Heward (1996), who investigated the challenges holding women back mid-career, provide another possible explanation, other than those that are psychosocial or family-related in nature. They argue that women are less successful than men in academia, because markers of academic success – such as giving key note addresses, winning medals and prizes and holding editorial positions – are consistent with male-dominated patterns of thinking, and are more accessible to men than to women. Thus, women academics find it harder to gain these kinds of markers of success that would advance their reputations and their careers. Heward (1996) argues that requirement for self-advertisement and networking to establish a reputation, specifically privileges

men and disadvantages women. The effects of the privilege accumulate, so that the careers of men and women diverge, with men being promoted and women remaining concentrated in the lower ranks.

However, in line with Sonnert's (1999) difference model, Aisenburg and Harrington (1988) explain that, because of old norms or the marriage plot, women's intellectual capacities are seen as inferior to those of men, and are rather viewed as emotional and subjective in their intellectual approach, and this then results in them being excluded from senior positions. More specifically, it is assumed that women's intellectual capacities do not lend themselves to the type of work that would require deep probing and/or the logical relation of complicated ideas. This explanation is also in line with the argumenta associated with the self-fulfilling prophecy, according to which any definition of a situation will influence the present. Applied here, it leads one to argue that, when academics accept gender-role stereotypes about women's abilities, they do not view women as academically as able as men. Consequently, women approach their careers differently or value different aspects of their lives, and this then results in the fulfilling of the prophecy. Labelling also applies here, but rather than the label being directed towards an outsider group, women academics, such as the participant above, direct the labels towards themselves.

Also in line with the difference model is the Cinderella complex, which claims that the lack of women's work productivity is a result of their unwillingness to assume a long-term professional commitment (Dowling, 1981). It can be argued that this is reflected in women's inflexibility to adopt career changes, as shown in the data, as well as (and often as a result of) women prioritising their families, which include their spouses. Dowling explains that many women would often not think twice about putting their husband's career first, leaving their own career behind when there might be a better career offer for him somewhere else. Dowling (1981) further explains that this is a common tendency among the majority of women, including those who are too proud to admit it.

- **“Sometimes we have so much work on our table that we don't have the opportunity to help”**

Some participants expressed concern at the lack of experienced female academics who had been willing to mentor young, up-and-coming academics, and claimed that this has had a significant impact on the career progression of women academics. However, it emerged during conversations that, rather than there being an unwillingness to mentor, some of the

experienced academics, in their own words, “*simply do not have the time*”, because of family responsibilities they need to tend to, while at the same time also facing challenges within their own careers. Still, the importance of mentorship was recognised and emphasised:

When people get into higher positions, the issue of mentorship becomes critical. Sometimes we have so much work on our table that we don't have the opportunity to help. We need to change that if we want to change the gender dimension or gender agenda of higher education in this country. We owe it to ourselves and the next generation, because we need to create spaces that amplify the voices of those women on the margins of higher education.”

The data show that sometimes this lack of mentorship affects the willingness of female students to pursue graduate studies. An exchange between a female student and a woman academic exemplifies this:

Student: *When you're in the building, or when you're going into a lecturer's “block⁵” and it's just males, you kind of step back and say, “Well, this won't be for me”. So I'm okay with just doing my Honours. I'm educating myself now to get my dream job, which is not going to be in the university. I finished my Honours and I tried to apply for work and I see that, oh, I need my master's degree to get a job outside the university.*

Academic: *Now my question is: no one approached you to say, “Hey don't you want to come and do a master's?”*

Student: *No.*

Academic: *That's shocking. It's a lack of female role models, really.*

As a result of a lack of support and mentoring, young women who aspire to be academics may simply abandon the notion of succeeding as an academic (Sonnert, 1999). Other than the lack of mentoring of young female academics, another common reference was to the institutional cultures of HEIs in South Africa.

⁵ A place where lecturers gather informally.

- **“When you’re a woman you have to come to this male-dominated institution and beg basically for what you want”**

The data show that some participants blamed the institutional culture of their institutions for the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions. The institutional culture was generally described as “*patriarchal in nature*”, and as treating “*gender equality as luxury*”, rather than a priority. The institutional culture of South African HEIs in general was often viewed as having a negative impact upon the career advancement of women academics, due to its patriarchal and hierarchical nature. Many participants felt that specifically the manner in which patriarchy is entrenched in the institutional culture contributes to women being concentrated in the lower academic positions in South African HEIs. One participant stated that the patriarchal nature of her institutional culture “*makes it impossible for women to be in positions of management and [also] have a life*”. She explains:

I am not prepared to sacrifice my life for a job. As an academic, I already work in the evenings and on weekends. I have a family, and that’s important to me. But if you say that, it’s seen as a women’s thing. This patriarchal culture makes it impossible for women to be in positions of management and have a life. This is the case for men as well, I’m sure, but as a woman I am not prepared to sacrifice my family. So, it’s just how we run institutions, but then women get blamed and not the institutional culture, and not how they operate.

Another participant described how the patriarchal nature of the institutional culture of the university where she is employed, causes her to “*underplay family responsibilities*”. She further described how she felt uncomfortable excusing herself from meetings to take care of family responsibilities, because she was afraid that it would seem as if her “*priorities are not right*”. She also draws an interesting comparison between men and women in this regard:

I have noted that a male colleague of mine easily said, “Sorry, but I need to excuse myself to just sort out a lift for my kids”. I would have found an excuse. I would never say my kids is urgent, because that may look bad, and it feels like my priorities are not right. Where a mother excuses herself from a very important meeting, it is seen as a hindrance.

Other participants argued that the absence, or a lack of enforcement, of a gender policy at the institutions where they are employed, reflects an institutional culture that treats the issue of gender inequality among academics as a luxury and not as a priority. One

participant described how covert gender issues are not properly addressed at the university where she is employed, possibly because, in comparison to more severe gender issues such as sexual assault and violence against women, it is “*not seen as a severe problem*”, because “*you’ve have a job [and] you have a stable income, so you’re relatively comfortable*. However, she still feels that, though “*it [covert gender inequality] may not be to the same extent [of severity] as the person who is lesbian and has to be subjected to corrective rape, or gets murdered by a spouse, it is still an important issue.*”

In a similar vein, another participant explains how gender equality issues are disregarded, and seen as a “*luxury*”:

When [the Rector of SU at the time] announced that he was going to put together a task team [...] to look into the careers of women, I was very happy, but the very first condition was [...] if there is money. So they are making equality dependent on something else, like money, and that is very often an obstacle to equality. So, it’s a luxury.

One participant expressed her dissatisfaction at the lack of implementation of a gender policy at the institution where she is employed. In emphasising this point, she drew a comparison between the Employment Equity Act and gender policy:

The Employment Equity Act [...] tends to eliminate discrimination, and it also encourages ways to address inequalities like affirmative action. So, by acknowledging that there are differences regarding race, you [also] need to acknowledge that it’s more difficult for a female, especially for a female academic, to develop her career. So, therefore they need to build in policies and procedures and things that will accommodate the female academic. If you go on maternity leave for instance, they need to build in policies and processes that will accommodate the female academic career.

Similar to the notion of gender equality being treated like a luxury, as highlighted by the two participants quoted above, another participant explains that the lack of implementation of a gender policy leads gender issues to be treated “*like an afterthought*” when addressing the transformation of HEIs in South Africa. Below she describes how the focus on racial transformation has overshadowed gender-equality struggles:

If [I] look at our country, and if I think of our history, race was the issue. Even after 1994, it was still race. The gender issue at our universities has gotten lost, and it’s still lost, because of race being at the forefront. As far as our country is concerned,

it is first race and then, sort of, “Oh yes, we still have gender”. And because of the fact that it’s race first, there’s more of a will for racial transformation to happen than for gender equity. When it comes to gender policy, universities have a superficial way of dealing with it: because we need to tick the box.

The deficit model for explaining gender difference in terms of career progression is reflected in these participants’ tendency to attribute the lack of women academics in senior positions to the institutional culture at HEIs, thereby shifting blame away from the individual. In accordance with this model, Merton’s (1948) self-fulfilling prophecy helps to explain how institutional operations affects academic women and their careers. The self-fulfilling prophecy, in essence, refers to the claim that humans do not respond only to the objective features of a situation, but also, and primarily, to the meaning that situation has for them. Merton (1948) explains that public definitions of a situations (the prediction) become an integral part of the situation and affect subsequent developments. The self-fulfilling prophecy is in the beginning a false definition of the situation, evoking a new behaviour which makes the original false conception come true. He explains that, once meaning has been assigned to a situation, the consequent behaviour, and some of the consequences of that behaviour, are determined by the ascribed meaning.

Applying Merton’s theory to women academics, it can be argued that women in hegemonically masculine spaces operate under a handicap rule, in that doubt is cast on women’s ability to assimilate into academe. This affects others’, as well as their own, perception of their abilities, further reducing their potential, via the operation of the self-fulfilling prophesy principle (Prozesky, 2006). In accordance with societal norms and beliefs about women, which are ingrained in the institutional culture of HEIs women are viewed as less capable than men to meet the demands of higher academic ranks. This is viewed as “real”, objective feature of women academics, with the consequence that women are absent from higher academic positions.

In their work Tabensky and Matthews (2014), who write about institutional culture and the notion of a university, spoke about feeling “at home” in an institution, and how it affects the way in which that institution is experienced. Their argument concerning transforming HEIs into places where everyone feels at home not being easy, in a complex plural society such as South Africa, is particularly relevant here when considering the description of HEI institutional culture as described by participants. Furthermore, Van Wyk’s (2009) investigation of the impact that institutional culture has on transformation, which claims that to address the issue of transformation it is necessary to be clear on what

we mean when we refer to the terms “institution” and “culture” in the HE sector, should be considered before we can attempt to change institutional culture. Van Wyk (2009) concluded that the disregard for gender-equality issues is the result of universities operating as organisations rather than as institutions, explaining that this has an impact on how transformation initiatives are carried out. This ties in with women academics being perceived as liabilities rather than assets, when universities are treated as organisations, which could explain why there is little regard for gender-equality issues.

4.2.4. *Solidarity and intersectionality*

This theme unpacks the issue of solidarity among women academics against the background of other differences; the fear of being labelled a “difficult person” (activist solidarity); the assumption of homogeneity of experience among academic women (familial solidarity); and challenges regarding the intersectionality of gender with race (intersectional solidarity). Though most participants expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of gender inequality within their institutions, lack of solidarity among academic women to address inequality was a common theme raised during the Gender Summit, and therefore has a role to play in the underrepresentation of women in senior positions at South African HEIs.

- **“You get a label of ‘difficult person’”**

When women experience covert gender discrimination in their institutions, finding other women who share their feelings of marginalisation may be difficult. It may be argued that this difficulty lies in the fact that making the private public can at times be detrimental to the wellbeing of an individual, as is the case for many women fighting for gender equality within their institutions. In many cases women’s decision to participate in the collective struggle ends up shaping the way they experience their work environments. Some participants described feeling weary of fighting what they perceived as an unending battle. One particular participant described the negative way that her colleagues responded to her when she tried to address gender issues at her institution, labelling her as “*difficult*”:

[Doing] the work of a change agent is tiring: you become punch drunk. And I think that for me the thing that’s problematic is that you get labelled as “difficult”, because you ask the difficult questions. Sometimes I think when I open my mouth

people go deaf, because it's me. And I don't mind that, because I think there is a space for change agents, but it also takes a personal toll [...] it's very discouraging when you see that we've moved only that much after 20 years.

She explains that she herself has become discouraged from fighting for gender equality at the institution where she has been employed for a very long time, and that it has become a burden for her. Engaging in activism was also described by other participants as taking a personal toll on women:

Over the last few years, I've come to realize that, in terms of the power relations and the hierarchy, it's a very dangerous thing to...a certain type of activism can be detrimental to you as a person. So now it's a question of: do you act in your personal interest, or do you act in the interest of humankind and female-kind, or being the breadwinner and having that responsibility. It becomes risky, and it sounds like I'm into conspiracy theories, but I've seen it play out – that people are punished at some point, and we have real-life examples of women that's been punished.

The consequences, described above, for women when they speak out against these issues – such as being isolated, punished and labelled as “difficult” – have resulted in many women refraining from getting involved in gender activism, thereby contributing to a lack of solidarity among women academics. Women’s fear of being labelled if they were to participate in activism, as expressed by one of the panel members, resonated with another participant, who described her experience as follows:

What struck a chord with me [...] was when one of the [panel members] said that, when you ask questions, you know, [...] when you just challenge, you get a label of “difficult person”. And I've been given that label, and then comes that introspection. The place where I am at the moment is that I don't want to be involved. And it's also not a good place to be, 'cause that is also not where I come from. I don't come from that place. I mean, I would like to think that I'm an activist, but in this environment you get that label: you're a “difficult person”. So, for my own sanity, I'm stepping back, because you become isolated fighting alone. Nobody wants to be near you; and you don't want to work in an environment like that.

Emphasis was placed on the fact that in order to achieve gender equality within South Africa HEIs, all women should work together and support other women who want to pursue senior positions. However, the struggle with activist solidarity hinders such progress, as one participant explained:

That is the thing about solidarity: we as women don't stand together. We have not said that, "I want Faekah to be the next registrar of Stellenbosch University", for example, and we as a group are all going to work together to get her there. Then we might feel the victory; we can also feel that we have contributed to that part. We make sure we support her. We look after her children.

As evidenced by the narratives of these participants, being labelled is a frightening and discouraging consequence for women in academia, particularly since prestige and reputation are important aspects contributing to the suitability of a candidate for promotion in academia (Heward, 1996). The concept of a self-fulfilling prophecy— which, as discussed earlier refers to the claim that when individuals define situations as real they become real in their consequences – also connects with labelling theory. The sentiments expressed in the quotation above connect well with the fear of being labelled, as expressed by women academics who claim that individuals systematically alter their expectations, vocabulary and response cues when they interact with individuals that they have labelled as undesirable

This fear of being labelled affects the willingness of women to stand in solidarity. One participant explains how the lack of solidarity among academic women who serve on one of the universities' Councils contributes to a lack of progression for academic women. She described her experience in Council meetings as follows:

I will stand up in Council and make a plea for something, and not a single woman will support me. When I walk out of that door they will come to me and say, "We are so happy that you raised it, we are so glad", but they don't speak where it matters, so it makes it a very lonely journey. Where is the solidarity in all of this? And why did they act like this? Because they are afraid. They don't want to be labelled: it will get in the way of their promotion.

Other than a need for activist solidarity, some participants also spoke about the need for solidarity in the form of support from family members. Since women often take on most of the household and family responsibilities, any change in this regard would require the support of their families, especially of their spouses, but of their children as well. One participant explained:

We need solidarity, not only between women, but solidarity from your family; solidarity in the form of support from your family, because if you don't have your family's support, and your spouses' and your kids' support, you can't do anything either. Because that influences the choices that you make.

Some participants spoke about how they struggled to identify with other women who do not have children, and actually identify more with certain males who take on the primary-caregiver role. In this vein, one participant claims that she “*won't pick up solidarity with somebody that has no life experience of having a child and doing an academic job at the same time*”. She explains that differences in terms of marital and motherhood status sometimes create a barrier to solidarity among academic women:

For example, a male colleague of mine that I have in mind – very powerful and really successful – who has so far delegated everything to his wife who doesn't work: I cannot expect that person to understand my world and that person will never consider my issues as important. Compared to my Chair at the moment, who is a male, but he is a single parent of a child (the mother abandoned the child and left them to fend for themselves). He understands my situation, and for the first time ever [...] I've got a male Chair who understands what it is like to be a woman. There I could feel solidarity, but I cannot say that with everybody, across all genders, there is potential for solidarity.

The data further show that the lack of solidarity among academic women can also be attributed to the fact that not all women experience the same kinds of challenges in their careers and homes. Referring to her husband, one participant explained:

I never wanted children, and when I got pregnant, I was a bit upset and then happy afterwards. Now I'm just ecstatic about my child, but my husband was the first one to bath her. He was so comfortable in that role. If he had four months of paternity leave, I would have said, “Here you go. I'll do my part, the breast feeding, but you could handle all of it”, because for him it was a natural thing; for me, unnatural. And yet I played with dolls. It was not unnatural it was just [...] I was afraid of touching something so small.

Though this narrative relates strongly to the lack of solidarity, it also links to the issue of gender-role socialisation (as discussed in previous sections) as she explains that, for her husband, nurturing their baby was “*a natural thing*”, but for her it was “*unnatural*”.

- **“I can do anything as a black person but not necessarily as a black woman”**

Participants also spoke about experiencing issues concerning intersectionality such as racial barriers to solidarity with other women academics. For example, one participant explained how she struggles to identify with white women in leadership positions:

“If you just look at one level, you will say that women are actually [well-represented] on a managerial level [...] though you don’t want to bring race into it, your managers would be mostly white women. You can count on your one hand how many managers there are that’s from another race. From where I stand, we cannot ignore the issues of colonialism and the apartheid legacy, and what role it has played in this country”

Participants connected solidarity with the challenges that intersectionality poses, claiming that gender issues cannot be addressed in isolation, but other factors, such as historic racial disadvantages need to be considered as well. The next section provides further evidence of the intersectionality of social identities and how this poses a challenge in addressing gender equality in HEIs in South Africa. As stated above, women academics are diverse in many ways, and one of these is in terms of racial diversity, which has particular significance, in the South African context, due to its segregated past. One participant reflected as follows on how solidarity is affected by racial diversity:

Sometimes I don’t know what I’m fighting for: whether it’s for my right as an Indian woman in an Afrikaans university, or is it for equity. The intersectionality of identities is so important. I think there is often this idea we need to disentangle: you’re either a woman, this or that; but we are not just one thing at one time.

The issue of solidarity was also referred to in terms of its underlying assumption of heterogeneity of women academics in terms of other facets. This concern was well captured by one participant who explained that *“we mustn’t speak of gender as a homogenous concept, because based on both your race and class, women have different leverages in the system”*. Similarly, another participant explains:

Women need to acknowledge the problem and be honest about it. We can’t just say we’re all in it together because we’re women. Some of us have more advantage than others and some of us are going to have to give up more so than others.

As a result of South Africa’s past having been marked by racial segregation and apartheid laws, gender inequalities in the country still intersect very closely with racial and class

inequalities (Biko 2002; Vincent 2008; Walker 2005). Therefore, when exploring one of these inequalities, one always has to take the others into account as well. According to Vincent (2008), while the demise of apartheid has led to many situations in which South Africans now come into closer contact with one another, this increased contact has not led to greater racial integration, but continues to have an unacknowledged power to determine perceptions, experiences and relationships. He argues that, in HWUs, contact occurs within a context of unequal power relationships, where whiteness continues to be privileged over blackness; where whites benefit more from contact with the racial “other”, who often experiences this contact as reinforcing of their expectations of continued white dominance and privilege. Viczko (2016) also notes that, though policies aimed at improving equity could be implemented to address gender inequality, they often fail to address the intersection of race and gender. Viczko explains that fighting for equity without attention to issues of intersectionality offers no path to justice in HEIs, since policies aimed at improving equity often results in white women receiving leadership positions.

4.3. Summary and conclusions

This chapter addressed four main themes, each of which was comprised of sub-themes. The themes emerged from the narratives of a diverse group of participants who attended a Gender Summit in celebration of 20 years of democracy in South Africa. In summary, the themes that resulted from the analysis of the qualitative data were as follows: “The university, socialisation and the home”, which explored the influence that social norms concerning masculinities and femininities have on the behaviour of women academics, as well as the effect of ongoing gender-role socialisation on how women behave and are expected to behave in academia. The second major theme discussed in this chapter explored the choice of “Starting a family or advancing in one’s career”, which addresses the choice between prioritising either family or career, which women academics often have to make. Other minor themes explored under this theme are the challenges associated with family-related career interruptions and lastly, the challenges associated with obtaining a master’s or PhD degree.

Following on this the theme, “Networking, self-promotion and mentoring” was explored by focusing on issues of self-confidence that women academics often struggle with. This theme also explored differences in the ways that women and men approach

their careers; mentorship; and the institutional culture's influence on women's career progression. The final theme discussed in this chapter is "Solidarity and intersectionality" which dealt with the various reasons participants gave for the lack of solidarity among women academics. Solidarity was discussed against the background of racial and experiential differences; the fear of being labelled a "difficult person"; the assumption of homogeneity of experience among academic women; and challenges regarding the intersectionality of gender with race.

Chapter 5: Results of the quantitative strand

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of an analysis of the data collected by means of a survey conducted among women academic staff at SU. It provides a summative description of these data, and answers the primary research questions posed in this thesis, i.e. (1) how academic staff at SU perceive their own rate of career progression; (2) what the decelerating factors are to which they attribute their own lack of career progression; (3) what the decelerating factors are to which they attribute women's underrepresentation at the higher academic ranks; and (4) whether there are differences in terms of marital status and motherhood status when considering the decelerating factors to which these women attribute their own rate of career progression. Before providing answers to these questions, I first provide a description of the respondents and, where data are available, the members of the population in terms of their faculty affiliation, the race they identify themselves as, their academic rank, marital status and motherhood status.

5.2. Demographic profiles

5.2.1. Comparison of the demographic profiles of the respondents and the population

In this section I provide the results of a descriptive analysis of population data on demographic variables that are relevant to the study, i.e. faculty affiliation, race and academic rank, as provided by SU's DIRP in 2015. This demographic profile of SU's female academic staff is then compared to the demographic profile of the respondents, produced by an analysis of the survey data (also collected in 2015) on the same variables. I draw this comparison, in the form of frequency distributions in tables and graphs, to determine the extent of non-response bias and the possible need for weighting of the data, in order to render the survey data more representative of the whole population of SU's female academic staff.

Table 1 below presents the distribution of respondents across the different faculties, showing that the majority (62%) belong to one of three faculties: Arts and Social Science, Medicine and Health Science, and Economic and Management Sciences, with

approximately 20% of respondents affiliated to each of these three faculties. This is followed by 13% of the respondents who hail from the Science Faculty, with the remaining faculties – Agriscience, Education, Engineering, Law and Theology – each representing less than 10% (and in the last two cases as low as 2%) of the respondents' academic affiliation.

Table 1: Faculty affiliation of respondents and population

Faculty	Respondents		Population	
	N	%	N	%
Arts and Social Science	21	21	86	22
Medicine and Health Science	21	21	84	22
Economic and Management Sciences	20	20	75	19
Science	13	13	46	12
AgriScience	9	9	35	9
Education	6	6	26	6
Engineering	5	5	15	4
Law	2	2	16	4
Theology	2	2	6	2
Total	99	100	389	100

The table also shows that response rates per faculty corresponded very well with the actual distribution of the population of SU's women academics across faculty. The only exception was the Faculty of Law, with respondents from that faculty constituting a much lower percentage (2%) than is the case for the population as a whole (4%).

The distribution of respondents by academic rank is presented in Figure 1 below, which shows that most respondents were either lecturers or senior lecturers, with these two ranks constituting two-thirds (66%) of all respondents. Considering that professors constitute only 11% of the population (as shown in Figure 1), but comprise 20% of the respondents, professors are considerably overrepresented in the data. This is also the case for senior lectures, who are overrepresented in the data by 7%, while lectures are underrepresented in the data by a full 11%.

Figure 1: Academic rank of population

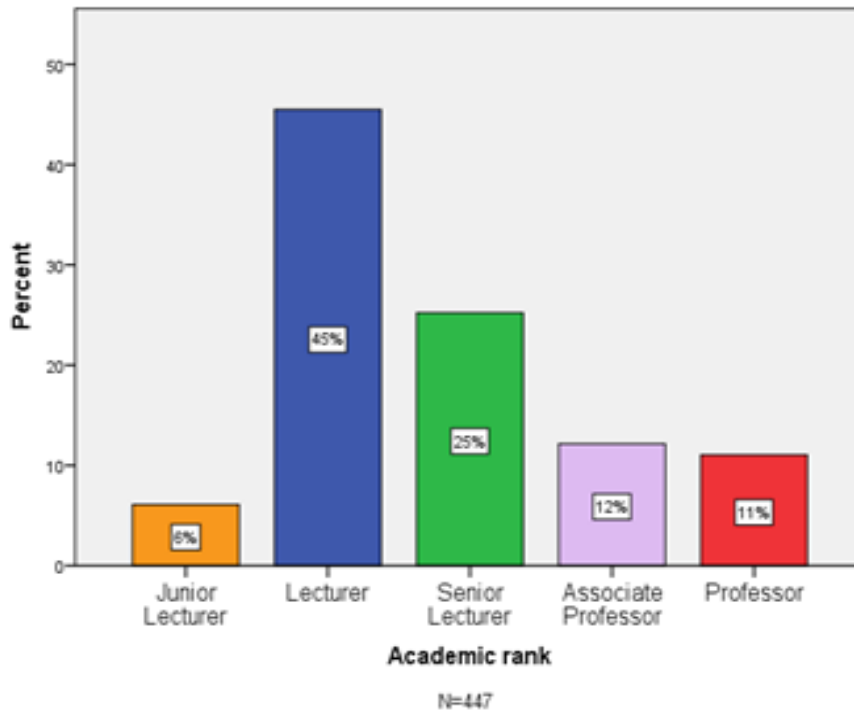
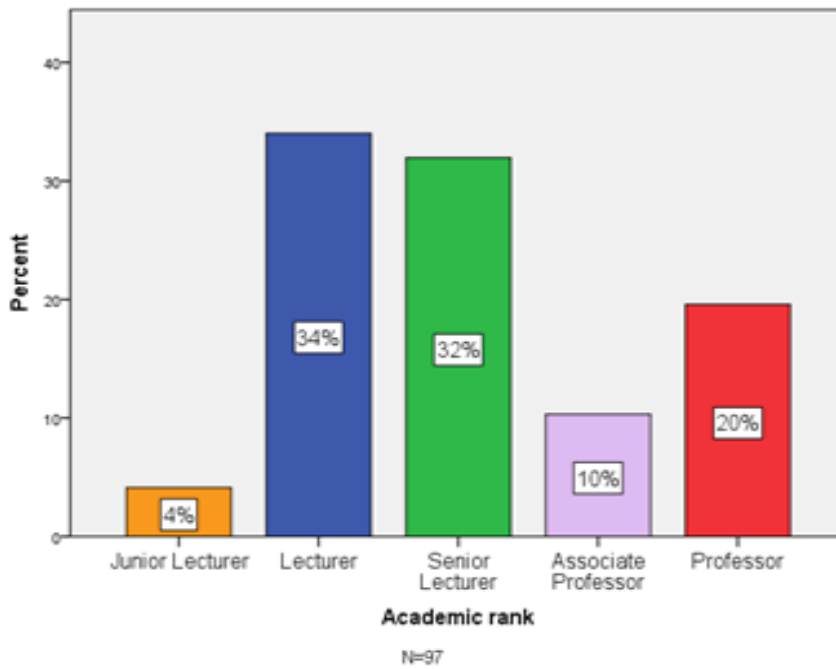


Figure 2: Academic rank of respondents (N=97)



Considering the central importance of academic rank in this study, and its likely relationship with other relevant variables, I ran a non-parametric chi square test to determine whether there was a significant difference between the population and respondents in terms of this variable. The difference was, indeed, significant, so weighting in terms of academic rank was deemed preferable to prevent the rank-biased response rate from influencing the results.

In terms of racial distribution, the majority (85%) of the respondents identified as white. Figures 3 and 4 below show that, compared with the racial distribution of the population of women academics at SU as a whole (among whom 79% are white), white respondents are slightly over-represented in the data.

Figure 3: Race of respondents

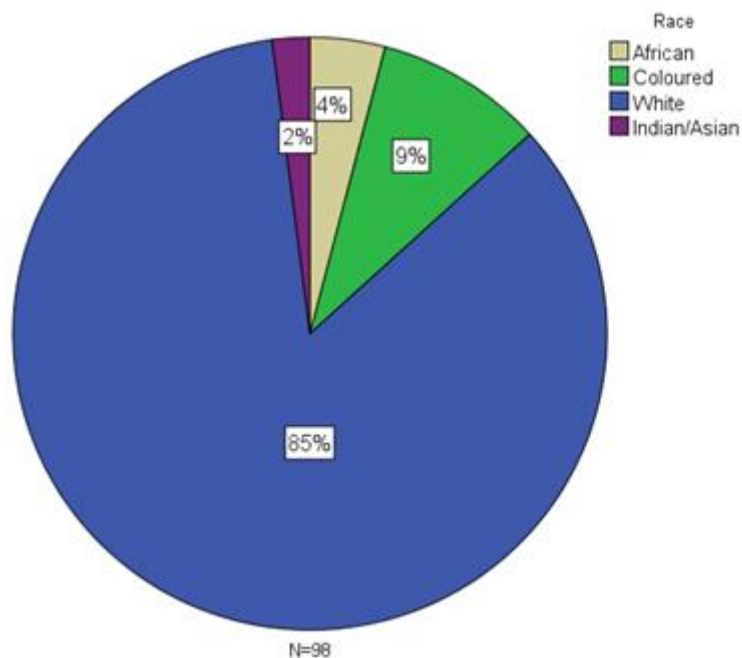
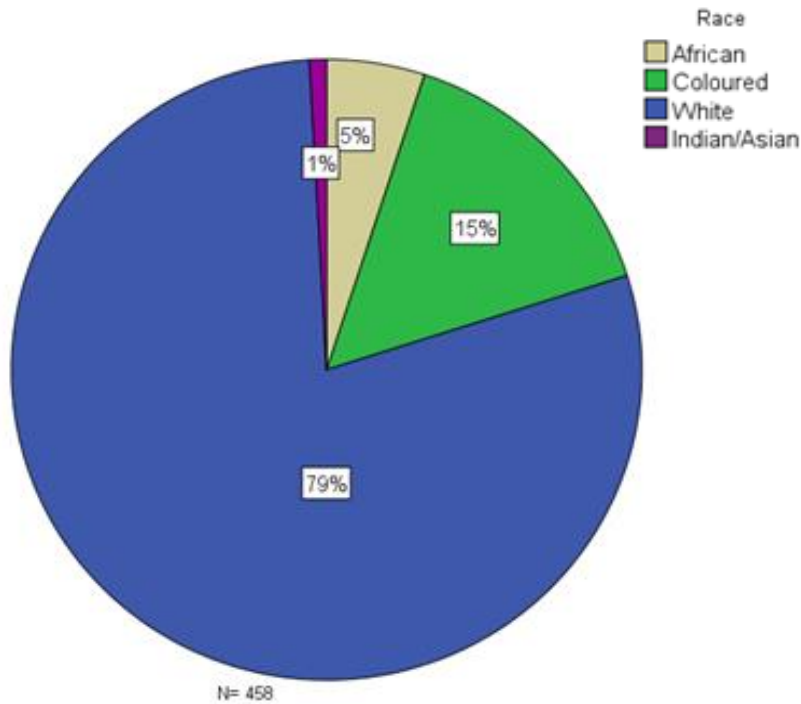


Figure 4: Race of population

A non-parametric chi-square test revealed that weighting for this variable would be preferred, since there is a significant difference between the population and the respondents in terms of race. However, the data could only be weighted by one variable at a time, and it was therefore decided, from Section 5.4 onwards, to weight according to rank only, with the exception of the bivariate analysis, when weighting would be done according to faculty, when this variable was included in a bivariate analysis (see Appendix 5 for how weights were calculated).

5.2.2. *Description of respondents on other demographic variables*

Although I cannot compare the respondents and the population in terms of marital status and motherhood status and highest qualification, as these data are not available for the population, it is important to note the distribution of the respondents across the categories of these variables. Married respondents constituted almost three-quarter (72%) of the cases while single, divorced and widowed respondents constituted a combined (28%), presented in the table below as “non-married”.

Marital status	N	%
Married	71	72
Non-married	28	28
Total	99	100

As Table 3 below shows, married and non-mothers were almost equally distributed amongst respondents: slightly more than half (52%) of respondents reported being mothers (motherhood status was obtained by asking respondents whether they are currently the parent/guardian of any children under 18 years old, see Appendix 8 and 9: Question 11), while just less than half (49%) did not.

Motherhood status	N	%
Mothers	51	52
Non-mothers	48	48
Total	99	100

5.3. Perceptions of rate of own career progression

In this section, I start to answer the research questions, first by describing respondents' subjective perception of their own career progression as relatively slow or fast. The table below shows that, among those 87 respondents who had been employed at SU long enough (longer than one year) to assess their career progression at the institution, close to two-thirds (62%) described their career progression as either non-existent or slow, a further 29% described it as average, while less than a tenth (9%) described it as fast or extremely fast.

	N	%
Non-existent	15	17
Slow	39	45
Average	25	29
Fast	7	8
Extremely fast	1	1
Total	87	100

It is important to note that only those 54 women who described their career progression as non-existent or slow were included in the following analysis of the decelerating factors to which women attributed their non-existent or slow career progression.

5.4. Decelerating factors own lack of career progression is attributed to

This section answers the second research question, by providing the results of a descriptive analysis concerning the decelerating factors that those academic women who view their own career progression as non-existent or slow, attribute their lack of career progression to. In Table 5 below, the various decelerating indicators were grouped into three dimensions: psychosocial factors (as predicted by the difference model, which ascribes the lack of career progression to women themselves), institutional factors (as predicted by the deficit model, which ascribes it to the institution), and family-related factors.

Table 5: Decelerating factors to which respondents could attribute their slow career progression, grouped into three dimensions

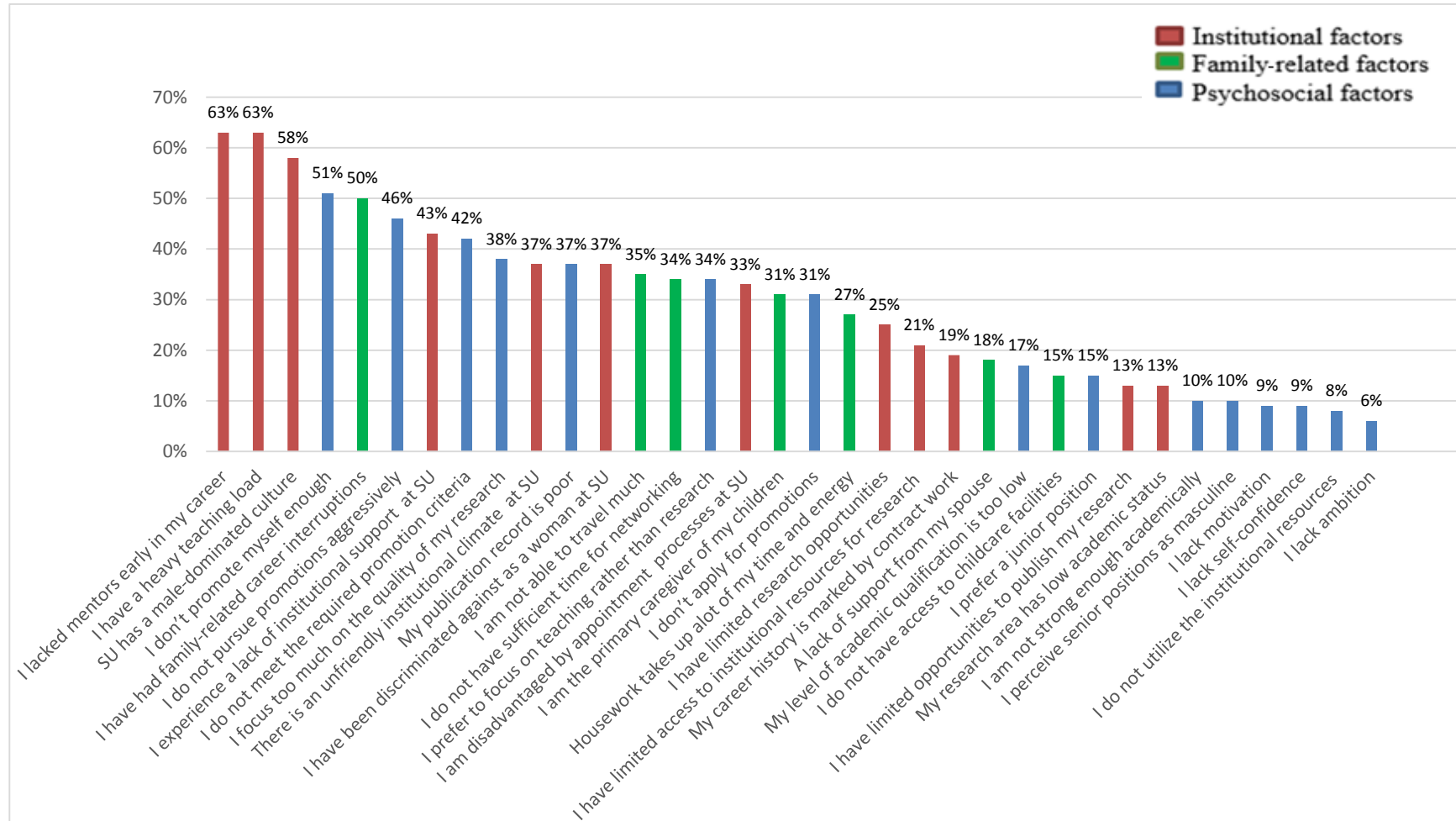
Psychosocial factors (14)
I am not strong enough academically
I lack motivation
I lack self-confidence
I do not utilise the institutional resources available for research
I do not pursue promotions aggressively
I do not apply for promotions
I perceive senior positions as masculine
My level of academic qualification is too low
My publication record is poor
I focus too much on the quality of my research at the cost of quantitative output
I prefer a junior position
I don't promote or "sell" myself enough
I lack ambition
I prefer to focus on teaching rather than research
Family-related factors (7)
I have had family-related career interruptions
I do not have access to childcare facilities
A lack of support from my spouse
I am the primary caregiver of my children
Housework takes up a lot of my time and energy
I am not able to travel much
I do not have sufficient time for networking
Institutional factors (13)
My career history is marked by part-time or contract work
As a woman, I am disadvantaged by appointment or promotion processes at SU
There is an unfriendly institutional climate towards women at SU
As a woman, I experience a lack of institutional support at SU
I have limited access to institutional resources for research e.g., funding, human resources, equipment
I have limited research opportunities
I have limited opportunities to publish my research
I do not meet the required promotion criteria for a higher academic position
My research area has low academic status
I have a heavy teaching load
SU has a male-dominated culture
I have been discriminated against as a woman at SU
I lacked mentors early in my career

A reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha) was conducted to determine whether the indicators above were reliable indicators of their respective dimensions (psychosocial, family-related and institutional). The test revealed that all indicators, except one, received a positive score and could therefore be considered good indicators of the three dimensions into which they were grouped, respectively. The only indicator that scored negatively was the institutional-dimension indicator, "I do not meet the required promotion criteria for a higher academic position". However, a similar indicator, "Many women lack the required promotion criteria for higher academic positions", scored positive when its reliability as

an indicator for the psychosocial dimension was tested as part of the analysis of decelerating factors to which academic women attribute the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions (see Section 5.5 below). This seems to indicate that the indicator “I do not meet the required promotion criteria for a higher academic position” should rather have been considered as part of the psychosocial than institutional dimension. I therefore recommend that in future research this indicator be defined as such.

The analysis involved first ranking the decelerating factors according to the extent to which respondents perceived them to have contributed to their lack of career progression, as indicated by the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed or agreed that a factor had had an influence. These results are presented in Figure 5 below, which also indicates the dimension to which each factor belongs.

Figure 5: Ranked and categorised decelerating factors to which respondents attributed their slow career progression



The bar chart shows that a lack of a mentor early in the women's careers and a heavy teaching load – both coded as institutional factors – were most and equally frequently identified by the respondents (63%) as contributing to their lack of career progression. Interestingly, another institutional factor, a male-dominated culture at SU, was ranked third, with 58% of the respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that this factor has been influential in slowing down their careers. This factor was followed by three factors: two psychosocial (insufficient self-promotion and not pursuing promotions aggressively enough, at 56% and 48%, respectively), and one family-related (career interruptions, which 50% of the women identified as an influential family-related factor).

At the other end of the scale, one finds a group of psychosocial factors which women reported as least decelerating (with 10% or less of the women agreeing that these factors played a role in their lack of career progression): the perception that one is not academically strong and that senior positions are masculine; a lack of motivation, self-confidence and ambition; and neglecting to utilise available institutional resources (e.g. funding, human resources and equipment) for research.

In order to further reduce the detail within the data and to determine with more accuracy which dimensions, on average, were perceived as most and least influential in decelerating the academic women's careers, I created a composite variable, with the dimensions as attributes, which I ranked in terms of (arithmetic) mean scores attained across the statements that constituted each dimension.

The results show that respondents scored institutional factors the highest, and psychosocial factors the lowest in terms of their contribution to the respondents' slow career progression.

Table 6: Mean scores of grouped decelerating factors

Dimensions	Mean Score
Psychosocial factors	2.16
Family-related factors	2.33
Institutional factors	2.76

5.5. Decelerating factors to which academic women attribute the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions

In order to answer the third research question, I analysed the factors to which respondents (in this case all of them) ascribed the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions. I again grouped indicators into the three dimensions: psychosocial factors belonging to the difference model; institutional factors belonging to the deficit model and factors that are family-related. As shown in Table 7 below, each model was measured by 10 indicators, while the family-related dimension was measured by a single indicator. Though there are various indicators of family-related factors that were presented to respondents when they were asked to reflect on their own career progression, in this section I wanted to gain a general sense of the extent to which respondents saw family-related factors as a whole and whether it influenced their perception of the reason for the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions. Therefore, for the sake of simplicity, the specific family-related factors respondents considered here has not been captured.

Table 7: Decelerating factors to which respondents could attribute the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions, grouped into three dimensions

Psychosocial factors (10)

Women do not engage in self-promotion to the same extent as men do
 Women pursue promotions less aggressively than men do
 Women lack confidence in their own academic abilities
 Women under-utilise the institutional resources or support available for research
 Women tend to actively choose to focus on teaching rather than research
 Many women lack the required promotion criteria for higher academic positions
 Women focus too much on the quality of their research at the cost of quantitative output
 Women are intrinsically less able academics than men are
 Women are less ambitious than men
 Women do not publish sufficient numbers of journal articles

Institutional factors (10)

SU is a male-dominated academic institution
 Men tend to rank women's academic work lower than that of males
 Covert gender discrimination against women
 Sexism is embedded in the male-dominated culture at SU
 Women are concentrated in disciplines with heavier teaching loads
 Women have less prestigious mentors than men do
 Women are assigned heavier teaching loads, e.g. more courses or more students per course, than their male colleagues
 SU is not a women-friendly institution
 Women are hired disproportionately on short-term contracts in temporary positions
 Women have less access to institutional resources or support required for research

Family related factors (1)

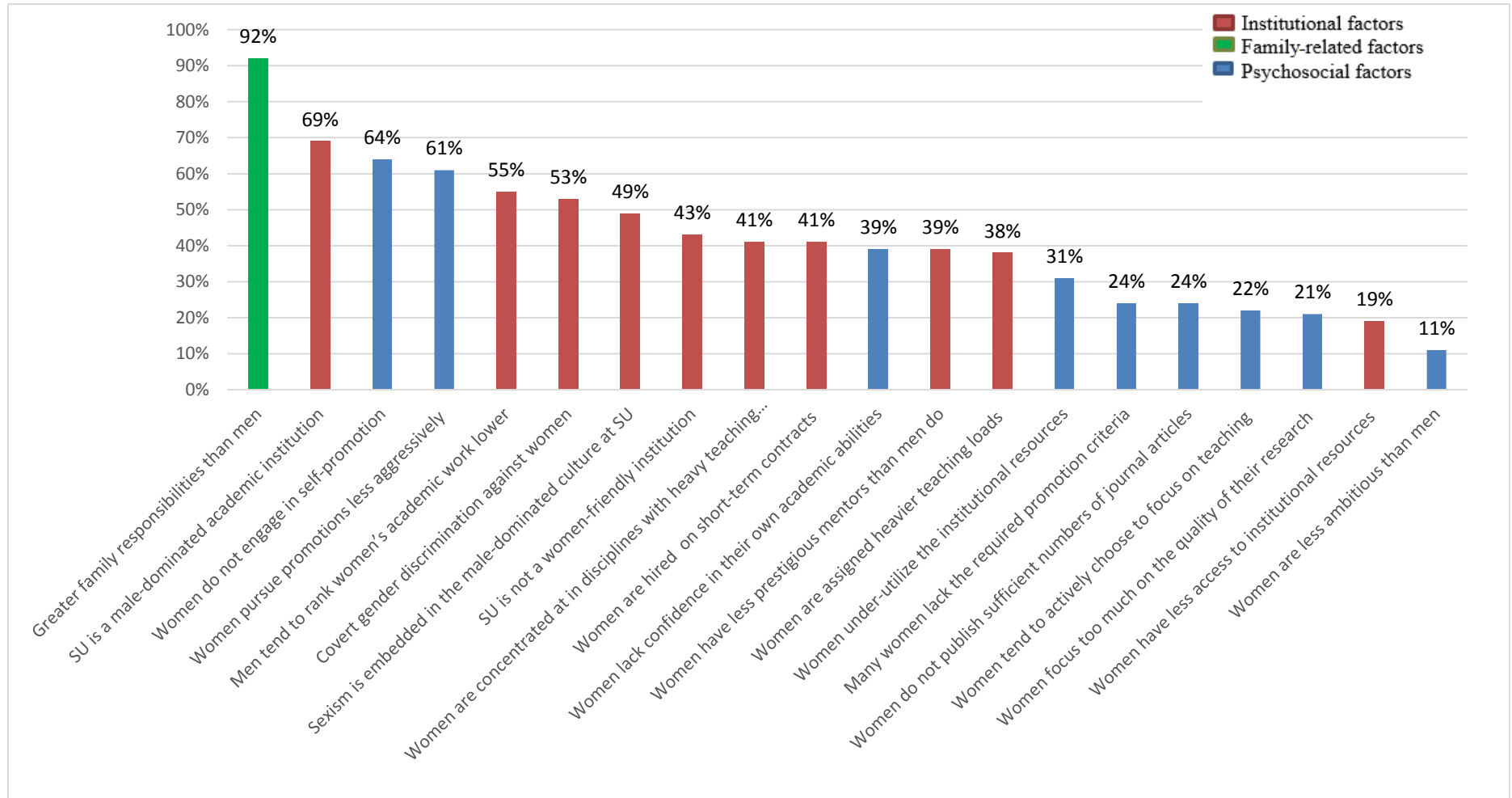
Women have greater family responsibilities than men

A reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha) was again conducted in order to determine whether the indicators were reliable indicators of the two dimensions that were measured by more than one indicator each. The test revealed internal consistency for all indicators of the psychosocial and institutional dimensions, in that all indicators received a positive score.

Figure 6 below displays the frequency at which these decelerating factors⁶, classified within the three dimensions, were cited as contributing to the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions.

⁶ "Women are less able academics than men are" is absent from the graph since it had a mean score of 0.

Figure 6: Ranked and categorised decelerating factors to which respondents attributed the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions



The results show that, when respondents reflected on the reasons for the underrepresentation of other women in senior academic positions (which implies a lack of career progression amongst academic women in general), they responded quite differently compared to when they reflected on their own lack of career progression. Institutional factors are now concentrated in the mid-range, with only the male-dominated nature of SU still highly ranked, at 69%. Interestingly, the single family-related factor – that women have greater family responsibilities than men – was (at 92%) by far the most frequently agreed-with reason for the underrepresentation of women among the higher academic ranks at SU.

Some similarities with the previous bar chart may also be observed, the most striking being that again the two psychosocial factors of women's insufficient self-promotion and insufficiently aggressive pursuing of promotions feature strongly, with 64% and 61% of women agreeing or strongly agreeing that these factors contribute to women's underrepresentation among higher academic ranks. The majority of the psychosocial factors were, however, concentrated on the lower end (<25%) of the agreement spectrum. These include: many women lacking the required promotion criteria for higher academic positions; women not publishing sufficient numbers of journal articles, tending to actively choose to focus on teaching rather than research and focusing too much on the quality of their research at the cost of quantitative output; and women tending to be less ambitious than men. One psychosocial factor, that women are intrinsically less able academics than men are, received 0% agreement from respondents, and is therefore not even reflected in the figure.

In order to further reduce the detail in the data and to thereby compare with more accuracy the dimensions in terms of their perceived influence on women's underrepresentation in senior academic positions, I again created a composite variable, with the dimensions as attributes, which I ranked in terms of mean scores attained for each. For the multiple psychosocial and institutional factors, I calculated the mean attained across the statements that constituted each dimension. In the case of the family-related statement, the mean attained for that single indicator was used.

The table below shows that, when women reflected upon the decelerating factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions, family-related factors scored the highest, and psychosocial factors again scored the lowest.

Table 8 - Mean scores of grouped decelerating factors to the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions

Dimensions	Mean score
Psychosocial factors	2.61
Family-related factors	4.49
Institutional factors	3.25

In the next section bivariate analysis was conducted with motherhood status as the independent variable and the various decelerating factors as the dependent variables which revealed interesting results on differences between mothers and non-mothers when respondents considered their own career progression and other women's career progression.

5.6. The relationship between relevant independent variables and dimensions perceived as contributing to career progression

This section provides answers to the third research question, by reporting on the results of a bivariate analysis to test the relationships between, on the one hand and as the dependent variable, the three dimensions of decelerating factors (psychosocial, institutional and family-related) to which respondents attribute their lack of career progression, and, on the other hand and as independent variables, (1) marital status and (2) motherhood status. Only those 54 women who described their career progression as non-existent or slow were included in the analysis.

5.3.1. Marital status

The next table compares the mean scores assigned by respondents of different marital statuses. Because of the low percentage of single, divorced and widowed respondents, these were collapsed into a category "unmarried", thereby recoding this variable into a binary. The table below shows that married respondents are more likely than their unmarried counterparts to ascribe their lack of career progression to psychosocial factors, while, as one would probably expect, they also score the decelerating influence of family-related factors higher than their unmarried women counterparts. However, unmarried women score institutional factors higher than married women do.

Table 9 : The relationship between marital status and mean score on dimensions of decelerating factors

	Marital status	
	Married	Unmarried
Psychosocial factors	2.22	1.93
Family-related factors	2.39	2.09
Institutional factors	2.68	3.02

5.3.2. *Motherhood status*

Is respondents' motherhood status related to the sets of factors to which they attribute their slow career progression? As expected, the table below shows that mothers scored family-related factors much higher than non-mothers did. It also shows that mothers scored psychosocial factors much higher than non-mothers, but that the opposite applies (although the difference is quite small) in relation to institutional factors.

Table 10: The relationship between motherhood status and mean score on dimensions of decelerating factors

	Motherhood status	
	Mother	Non-mother
Psychosocial factors	2.33	1.70
Family related factors	2.72	1.19
Institutional factors	2.71	2.87

5.7. **Summary and conclusions**

In conclusion, this chapter reported the results of an analysis of data in the form of responses to a questionnaire pertaining to respondents' perceptions on the extent to which various decelerating factors influenced their career progression at SU. It also considered respondents' views on reasons for the underrepresentation of other women in senior academic positions. Before reporting the results on these two main topics, the chapter first compared descriptive statistics for the respondents with population parameters on the variables faculty affiliation, rank and race. Thereafter I provided descriptive statistics on other demographic variables, such as respondents' marital and motherhood status. The last section of this chapter provided the results from a bivariate analysis comparing respondents with different demographic profiles in terms of their perceptions on the extent to which the three sets of decelerating factors influenced their career progression at SU.

Chapter 6:

Conclusions and recommendations

6.1. Introduction

In this study I first collected data from women participants affiliated to three HEIs in the Western Cape on their views on the status of gender equality at the HEIs, as well as the various challenges that they, as women staff, experience in relation to their career progression. I then asked women academics at SU to identify which factors they deemed as having the most influence on their career progression and as making the most significant contribution to the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions. I did this by employing a sequential, exploratory mixed methods design that consisted of two strands: a qualitative and quantitative one. The former involved thematic analysis of data collected during a panel discussion and focus group discussions, and the latter comprised a cross-sectional survey among women employed at SU.

The study produced interesting results that offer insights into the specific obstacles to career progression that women experience and that need to be addressed. This chapter will first present a summary of the results pertaining to the perceptions of career progression and the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions. Within this section, results pertaining to the institutional explanation or deficit model, family responsibilities and psychosocial explanations or the difference model are discussed separately. The next section discusses the limitations and recommendations for future research, and the last section of this chapter presents the final conclusory remarks.

What I found is that, when women academics referred to an HEI as contributing to their slow career progression, it was generally not overt discrimination against their gender that they experienced, but rather that certain assumptions about gender roles, particularly in relation to family responsibilities, are ingrained in the institutional culture of the university and in social norms, and that this limited considerably the ability of women to climb the ranks in their institutions. This culture plays a crucial role in the gender-differentiated career attainments of men and women, and therefore the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions across universities in the Western Cape. The institutional culture of universities in the Western Cape, in particular,

fits the traditional lifestyle of a married male, and continues to produce institutional norms that are not accommodating to women academics' career–life balance.

Both strands supported the argument that HEIs aid the struggles that women who hold both their careers and families in high regard face. From the quantitative data in particular, it emerged that a heavy teaching load, lack of mentoring, and a male-dominated culture are pressing institutional factors that hamper the career progression of women academics. The importance of mentoring, highlighted by the quantitative strand, was complemented by the qualitative data, which shed light on the obstacles to mentoring. Although this thesis was not a comparative study between male and female academics, it shed light on the lived realities of women academics, which are likely very different from those of their male colleagues. Women have to make difficult choices between their families and careers, arguably more often than their male counterparts have to do. The data showed that, when women do not choose, they are faced with a constant struggle to balance work and family, resulting in them being persistently dissatisfied with their career progression.

The limitations and recommendations highlighted in this chapter deal with various obstacles I encountered throughout the research. These include issues with the research design, participant selection, the amount of data collected for both strands, member checking, applying the qualitative results in the development of the survey instrument, as well as the length of the questionnaire.

6.2. A summary of the results and recommendations for future research

6.2.1. Perceptions of career progression and the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions

It clearly emerged from this study that women academics viewed structural obstacles within their institutions, and the greater family responsibility that women often carry, as contributing to their slow career progression, as well as to the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions. Psychosocial factors are, however, generally disregarded. Participants in the Gender Summit were particularly dismissive of the notion that women themselves are to blame for their own slow career progression or for the underrepresentation of women in senior positions. Similarly, in the quantitative findings

psychosocial factors were scored by women as having the least influence on their slow career progression and on the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions.

The qualitative thematic analysis produced four main themes, each of which is comprised of sub-themes. The first theme that emerged, titled “The university, socialisation and the home” showed how ongoing gender-role socialisation and social norms concerning masculinities and femininities affect how women experience academia. This was followed by the theme “Starting a family or advancing in one’s career”, which explored the choice that women academics have to make between prioritising their family or career, the challenges posed by family-related career interruptions, and the challenges involved in obtaining a master’s and PhD degree. The third theme, titled “Networking, self-promotion and mentoring”, provided insight into how the institutional culture affects differences in the career approaches of men and women academics; on issues of self-confidence and the self-limiting beliefs women academics often have about themselves, as well as issues relating to mentorship. The final theme that emerged from the qualitative data concerned solidarity and intersectionality, which were explored by showing how experiential differences – especially race-related ones that point toward the intersectionality of gender and race, and a fear of being labelled as a “difficult person” – pose obstacles to solidarity among women academics.

The quantitative results show that women academic staff at SU seem quite dissatisfied with their career progression, as evidenced by the fact that more than half of the respondents described their career progression as either non-existent or slow, while less than 1 in 10 described it as fast or extremely fast. In terms of the three sets of factors that contributed to their own lack of career progression, respondents scored institutional factors highest, followed by family-related factors, and then psychosocial factors, which were scored lowest. These results were supported by an analysis of individual factors: the three most common factors that women academics at SU attributed their slow career progression to, were lacking mentors early in their careers, a heavy teaching load, and SU’s male dominated culture, which are all institutional factors that form part of the deficit model, which attributes gender difference in career attainment to deficits in the institution. The least common explanations were that women are intrinsically less able academics than men are, that they lack ambition and do not utilise the institutional resources available for research, which are all psychosocial factors that form part of the difference model, which holds that the causes of gender difference in career attainment lie within women themselves, whose career-related behaviours, outlook and goals differ

from those of men. The quantitative results therefore corresponded with the qualitative results, by showing a tendency among women to disregard these psychosocial factors when explaining their own slow career progression.

The results were, however, somewhat different when the women shifted the focus from their own careers towards the underrepresentation of other women in senior academic positions. In this regard, respondents scored family-related explanations highest, followed by institutional factors. Again psychosocial factors were least commonly reported, but the scores were higher than when women reflected on their own career progression. In terms of individual factors, by far the most common explanation was that women have greater family responsibilities than men, followed by the SU's male-dominated nature, and then the explanation that women academics lack self-promotion. The factors respondents were least likely to ascribe the underrepresentation of other women in senior academic positions to, were women's lack of access to institutional resources, followed by their lower levels of ambition and of ability as academics, compared to men.

The next section will explore in detail the results from both strands as they relate to the institutional explanation of gender differences in career attainments. It will discuss the institutional themes from the thematic analysis, and the institutional factors perceived to have the strongest and weakest impact on respondents' own career progression, as well as on the representation of women in senior academic positions.

6.2.1.1. Institutional explanation: the deficit model

Institutional factors emerged strongly from the qualitative data. Participants in the Gender Summit highlighted many challenges posed to the career progression of women academics by structural obstacles that exist within their universities. A distinctive one that emerged from the data was the hegemonic masculinity described as the foundation institutional culture of their universities. Other than institutional culture, networks and prestige, the need to mentor young women academics also emerged as an institutional obstacle for women academics' career progression.

Under the theme "The university, socialisation and the home", participants discussed the problems that the entrenchment of patriarchy in society creates for women academics. The gender-role assumptions still operating in society, places the primary childcare responsibility on mothers, regardless of how this may affect their careers (David *et al.*,

2005). Participants also discussed how these same norms are entrenched in the institutional cultures of their universities and in the schools their children attend. Under the theme “Networking and self-promotion”, participants expressed how the institutional culture of their institutions operates according to the traditional career paths of men, and they explained that its hegemonic nature contributes to women being concentrated in the lower academic positions. This means that women academics are at a constant disadvantage in trying to “underplay family responsibilities” in an attempt to balance their obligations to both their family and to the institution.

Participants also described how the institutional culture treats gender equality as luxury and not a priority, and that this is evident in the absence of a gender policy at some HEIs, or the lack of implementation of gender policies that do exist at others. Within the same theme, participants also discussed the importance of mentoring young women academics, and how a lack of such mentorship affects the willingness of female students to pursue graduate studies. Sonnert’s (1999) research on young female academics supports the importance of mentoring young women academics in addressing the career-progression struggles of women academics, by explaining that women postgraduate students face an array of gender-specific obstacles, with a lack of, or lower-quality, mentorship constituting a subtler one, together with a lack of encouragement.

The qualitative data also emphasised how the way that academia operates in terms of individual prestige affects solidarity among women academics. Under the theme “Solidarity and intersectionality”, participants discussed the fear of being labelled as a “difficult person” when trying to draw attention to the problems women academics experience. This fear prevents collective action from being taken to change the position of women academics in HE, except through formalised organisations within the university structures, such as the WF.

The quantitative data showed that when women academics considered their own career progression, they perceived the set of institutional factors to be the most influential in preventing them from progressing in their careers. The most relevant individual institutional factors were a lack of mentors early on in one’s career, a heavy teaching load, SU’s male-dominated culture, lack of institutional support, an unfriendly institutional climate, discrimination against women at SU, and women being disadvantaged by appointment processes at SU. In addition, the first three of these factors – a heavy teaching load, a lack of mentoring and a male-dominated culture – were the highest scoring factors across all psychosocial, family-related and institutional factors.

When respondents considered the influence that institutional factors have on the underrepresentation of other women in senior academic positions, they scored them similarly. The most influential ones were identified as follows: SU as a male-dominated academic institution; men who tend to rank women's academic work lower than men's; covert gender discrimination against women; sexism embedded in the male-dominated culture at SU; SU not being a women-friendly institution; women's concentration in disciplines with heavy teaching loads; and women being hired on short-term contracts. The least relevant institutional indicators were women having less prestigious mentors than men do, women being assigned heavier teaching loads, and women having less access to institutional resources or support required for research. Interestingly, having a heavy teaching load was considered one of the most influential institutional factors when women considered their own career progression, but was considered one of the least influential institutional ones when respondents reflected on the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions.

6.2.1.2. Family responsibilities

Family-related factors, as they relate to the career progression of women academics, seem to constitute a highly complex issue, since research on this topic has drawn very different conclusions (Sonnert, 1999), and the results of the qualitative and quantitative strands of my study differ quite substantially on this issue as well. The qualitative strand produced themes relating to the prioritising of family or career, the challenge of family-related career interruptions, the challenges of obtaining a master's or PhD degree, and the flawed assumption of homogeneity of experience among women academics.

One of the most interesting findings from the qualitative data was the differences among the women's experiences with regards to motherhood and marriage. Women academics are clearly not homogenous in terms of the way that they think about and experience family responsibilities associated with motherhood or marriage. The results discussed under the theme of solidarity showed that some participants experienced their spouse as helpful in terms of child rearing, while others described how marriage and motherhood made it difficult for them to obtain a PhD.

Under the theme "Starting a family or advancing in one's career", participants described feeling that at some point they had to make a choice between a family and career. This was not an overt choice they were presented with, but rather an internal

conflict that was particular to women who wanted to pursue a career and have a family. This resonates well with Aisenburg and Harrington's (1988) notion of the "marriage plot", which refers to women's struggle when they deviate from the "old" norms and from the marriage plot to pursue the "quest plot". Campbell and Bunting's (1991) research also corroborates this choice, by explaining that it is a result of the norm that men are expected to be less involved in family life.

The quantitative strand also produced interesting results on family-related factors as impacting on women's own career progression. Women academic staff at SU considered family-related factors as the second-most influential set of factors decelerating their career progression. The individual family-related factors that were most frequently identified were family-related career interruptions, the inability to travel much, not having sufficient time for networking, and being the primary caregiver of children. Least relevant were the time- and energy-consuming nature of housework, a lack of spousal support, and a lack of access to childcare facilities. Prozesky (2006) explains that the low rating given to the time and energy consuming nature of housework here could be the result of the fact that women in South Africa have greater access to domestic help than women in most other countries.

When respondents considered the underrepresentation of other women in senior academic positions, however, family-related factors were perceived as by far the most pertinent explanation. Considering that family-related factors were measured using only one indicator here, i.e. "women have greater family responsibility than men", approximately 9 out of 10 respondents considered this unequal gender division of labour to be influential in explaining the underrepresentation of women academics in senior positions. This is an interesting result, considering the relatively low impact family-related factors were perceived to have when women reflected on their own career progression. A possible methodological explanation could, however, account for the high score assigned to this factor: respondents may have agreed with the statement in itself, but not necessarily as the reason or explanation for women's under-representation. Respondents scored certain family-related factors, such as career interruptions, travel and insufficient time for networking, as the most influential among those factors. I would like to argue that, even when family-related factors were mentioned, they leaned towards institutional factors. This implies that the incongruence between perceptions of influential factors in their own careers, on the one hand, and in others' careers, on the other, is even greater.

The quantitative strand further revealed differences between women with different motherhood and marital statuses in terms of how they reflected on their own career progression, as well as the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in senior positions in general. Not surprisingly, mothers considered family-related factors more influential in decelerating their own career progression than non-mothers did.

One might assume that children hamper women's academic careers, but the results on this topic are ambiguous, both where this study is concerned, and in the empirical literature. While some research has found no negative effect of motherhood on scientific productivity, a crucial criterion for academic career advancement, the opposite has also been found (Prozesky, 2006; Sonnert, 1999). What can be tentatively concluded from this study is that women differ in terms of how influential they perceive family-related factors to be, depending on whether they are reflecting on their own careers, or on other women's underrepresentation among the senior academic ranks.

When the effect of marital status on perceptions was considered, women who are married scored family-related factors higher than women who are not married, which is also not surprising. Dowling's "Cinderella complex" seems to apply in this regard, i.e. the argument that women would often not give much consideration to putting their husbands' careers first. She explains that this behaviour can be attributed to women's belief, and the social reality, that their husbands provide a safety net, but she also states that, although this belief is common among women, it is certainly not true for all women.

The next, and last, section on the findings will explore in detail the results from both strands of data, as they relate to the psychosocial explanation of gender differences in career attainments. It will discuss the psychosocial themes from the thematic analysis, and the psychosocial indicators perceived to have the most and least impact on respondents' own career progression, as well as on women's representation of in senior academic positions.

6.2.1.1. Psychosocial explanation: the difference model

The results from both the qualitative as well as quantitative strands showed that women do not consider psychosocial factors to be the main cause of their own slow career progression or of the underrepresentation of women in senior positions. However, participants in the Gender Summit did raise psychosocial issues as they relate to socialisation, solidarity and intersectionality, networking and self-promotion of women academics.

The qualitative strand showed that childhood and ongoing socialisation concerning masculinities and femininities affect how women behave, and are expected to behave, in academia. It emerged that the socialisation process has instilled beliefs about gender differences in abilities inherent in men and women that both men and women maintain. It follows that these beliefs need to be “unlearnt” on a societal level, in order to free women from the mental constraints that prevent them from progressing in their careers. Psychosocial explanations were also raised in terms of racial differences, in particular the prioritisation of race above the need for gender equality in the implementation of post-1994 transformation legislation at South African HEIs. Black, Indian and coloured women consequently struggle with the intersectionality between these issues, themselves unsure which to prioritise. The implication is that differences between women academics in terms of race impact on their willingness to engage with gender-inequality issues.

The qualitative strand also supported the notion that the self-limiting beliefs women academics often hold with regard to their academic work, impact on their career progression. An example of this is women academics sometimes not believing that they qualify for higher academic ranks, and as a result never even apply for senior academic positions. A related belief is that, because men approach their careers in a different way than women do, they progress faster in their careers. More specifically, the genders were seen to differ in terms of their tendency to negotiate their salary, to be open to change, their willingness to travel and the type of work they are willing to do. This is supported by the literature on the career approaches of men and women, according to which there are differences in the kinds of work women and men are interested in and willing to do. Coate *et al.* (2015) ascribes gender differences in career approaches to the fact that assertiveness, self-confidence and self-advertisement is praised in men but criticised as unfeminine in women.

The quantitative strand revealed, however, that psychosocial factors were generally not considered as decelerating respondents' own career progression at SU. Among the psychosocial explanation of gender difference in career attainment, those that were considered least relevant to women's own careers were: a lack of academic ability, the perception of senior positions as masculine, a lack of motivation and of self-confidence, the under-utilisation of institutional resources, and a lack of ambition. It is interesting to note that, although it is argued in the literature that women academics often lack self-confidence (Heward, 1996; Beall & Sternburg, 1995), my study revealed that women academics at SU regarded this as one of the least influential of the psychosocial factors impacting on their career progression.

Women academics at SU did, however, consider some psychosocial factors as significantly impacting on their career progression, i.e. that they lack self-promotion, do not pursue promotions aggressively, do not meet the required promotion criteria, focus too much on the quality of their research (to the detriment of producing quantity), and have a poor publication record. While there is a contrast between the literature and the finding that a lack of self-confidence is not considered relevant to women's career progression, the finding that a lack of self-promotion is relevant is in line with the literature. The literature on this issue explains that engaging in self-promoting behaviour contravenes women's gender socialisation, and carries with it the risk of alienation from other female colleagues and being criticised as unfeminine (Coate *et al*, 2015).

With regards to the quantitative findings on the perceived reasons for the underrepresentation of other women in senior academic positions, psychosocial factors also scored quite low. Those that were perceived as least relevant included women's under-utilisation of institutional resources, not meeting the required promotion criteria, not publishing sufficient numbers of journal articles, their tendency to actively choose to focus on teaching, focusing too much on the quality of their research, and being less ambitious and less able academics than men.

When psychosocial factors were considered as contributing to the underrepresentation of other women in senior academic positions, women's lack of engagement in self-promotion and them pursuing promotions less aggressively than men were most salient. It is interesting to note that these factors also emerged as relevant when women considered their own career progression.

6.3. Limitations and recommendations for future research

The results presented in this chapter are the product of an extended and multi-faceted research process that posed a number of challenges. For some of these challenges I was quickly able to find solutions, as indicated in various sections of Chapter 3, but many were either unforeseen or required remedial action beyond the scope of this research, and will therefore be discussed in this final section of this last chapter.

One of the difficult decisions that I had to make during the conceptualisation of this research was which research design to apply. Applying a mixed methods design was challenging as each of the qualitative and quantitative strands posed its own particular challenges. Although the Women's Day Gender Summit was a golden opportunity to gather, in one location, those women academics who are concerned about gender-equality issues and collect data from them, the collaboration with various stakeholders did limit the focus of the research somewhat. One of these limitations concerned the participants who were asked to participate. Whereas ideally I would have limited participation in the Gender Summit to women academics from the four regional universities in the Western Cape, the qualitative strand's sample included women from support services, men, as well as a group of interested students from UWC. Other than the heterogeneity of the participants, the questions that were posed to them for discussion in their focus groups were not designed to attain the outcomes of this research. Although they did produce some useful data, they also produced much irrelevant data that had to be transcribed, but were disregarded during analysis.

Besides the composition of participants in the Gender Summit and the large amount of data that were collected, another obstacle, specific to the analysis of these data, was the analytical abilities of the participants. Most of the participants in the Gender Summit are highly sophisticated intellectually, which rendered my own interpretation of their narratives difficult because, in a sense, they had already undertaken that interpretation themselves. Regardless of this, I believe I was able to analyse the data creatively whilst not disregarding the participants' own analysis.

After the qualitative data had been captured I did not perform respondent validation to help improve the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of the qualitative data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although a report was made available to the various universities that participated in the Gender Summit, there was no follow-up with the participants in order to ensure that what was said was correctly interpreted in the thematic

analysis of the data. There are two main reasons for this, the first being that it would be quite impractical to follow up with each participant, since the Summit was attended by 80 participants; but also because it would be almost impossible to identify individual participants from the recordings.

The quantitative strand posed some difficulties as well, the first of these being the incorporation of the qualitative results into the development of the survey instrument for the quantitative strand. Although I made use of the qualitative data to inform the questionnaire, the bulk of the factors impacting on women academics' career progression was found in the literature. Although it would have been ideal to analyse quantitatively every aspect of the various challenges academic women experience in the workplace that emerged from the qualitative data, this was not feasible for a master's thesis. This meant that I had to pre-select factors that were likely, according to the literature, to have an impact on career progression, which I could then survey amongst the population of women academics at SU as a whole. This method could, however, be considered problematic, because the bulk of research on this subject has been conducted outside of South Africa.

A third significant limitation of the second strand of this research was the length of the questionnaire. The questionnaire collected data relating to many aspects of career progression, including the career histories of respondents – i.e. previous employment, number of years employed at SU, obstacles in obtaining a PhD and applying for promotions – and as a result produced an excess amount of data that remains unanalysed. There were many more relationships between dependent and independent variables that could have been explored, but because of the constraints of this thesis, I was limited to exploring only some of those the literature identified as most salient. And although the majority of respondents considering their career progression as either slow or non-existent, it would be interesting to compare them with those women who described their career progression as fast or extremely fast. Another interesting comparison could be drawn among different faculties' members' perceptions of the pace of their career progress thus far.

A related limitation is that this thesis did not explore the data collected regarding factors that actually accelerated the careers of women academics. I would recommend that a secondary analysis be conducted with the dataset and a full report produced that would complement the findings reported in this thesis, and explore the accelerating factors contributing to the presence of women in senior academic positions at SU, as a

means of gaining insight into the factors that aided women in overcoming obstacles to career progression.

One of the more significant limitations of the quantitative strand was that I did not use the same indicators for the two sets of questions when asking women to reflect on their own career progression and the underrepresentation of other women in senior academic positions. Due to an emerging focus I did not initially think that I would be comparing the responses to the two sets of questions. Though a comparison in this regard was not a primary research question, the indicators are quite similar, and therefore allowed for comparison. Further limitations concern the analysis of the decelerating factors that contribute to the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions. As explained in Chapter 5, the influence of family-related factors was measured using one only indicator: “women have greater family responsibility than men”.

Further, it should be noted that the three sets of decelerating factors impacting upon women academics’ career progression were not necessarily exhaustive. In addition to the psychosocial dimension, family-related factors and institutional factors, I came across another dimension during the qualitative strand which could have been included, that being the interpersonal dimension. This dimension comprises factors relating to the relationships between colleagues, such as informal interactions between university staff. These interpersonal factors could either have been explored in a category of its own, or have formed part of the set of institutional factors.

In the quantitative strand of this research, non-response bias was dealt with by weighting the data in cases where some types of respondents were over or underrepresented in the data. I weighted according to academic rank in order to ensure that the ranks were represented in the data in the same proportions they are represented in the population as a whole, as a chi-square test (see Appendix x) showed that doing so would be advisable. Although other variables such as race and faculty (recoded into three groups) also showed a significant difference between the sample and population distributions, SPSS version 23 does not allow weighting on more than one variable at a time, and I therefore decided to weight using the variable I consider to be the most important in this research, i.e. academic rank.

6.4. Conclusion

This thesis does not provide all the answers or remedies to address the challenges that women academics experience with regards to their career progression in South African HEIs, but it does show that psychosocial factors alone cannot be used as a means to reason away women's slow career progression. We can see from the results that these factors were not perceived by women academics to be as important as family-related and institutional factors. However, the qualitative data did provide insight into differences in opinion among women and warned against the assumption of viewing women as a homogenous group.

The research has demonstrated what women academics at SU perceive, on the basis of their own experiences, as the most influential factors that tend to decelerate women academics' career progression at SU. Women do not tend to see their family responsibilities or personal capacities as much a problem as the obstacles that exist within the institution. However, they placed emphasis on family-related factors when they considered the reasons for other women's slow career progression. Considering the insights that this research provided into the issue at hand, the question that remains is, how do we bring about real change now that this information is available? My answer to this question lies in reflecting on these challenges women academics pointed out and implementing specific programs to deal with them, such as providing teaching assistance at the lower academic ranks, implementing a mentoring program for young women academics, and creating awareness, through research, of the obstacles that women academics face.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: First strand informed consent form



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are hereby requested to consent to being digitally recorded during your participation in round-table discussion and smaller group discussions during the Women's Day Summit, and thereby indirectly to participate in a mixed methods study of the gender-related challenges that academic women in higher education face.

Although there are no immediate individual benefits associated with participation in this research, it is believed that the contributions of participants to the summit will provide valuable qualitative data on the issues women at higher education institutions in Western Cape region face. These data will be analysed to provide a report that will be communicated to the various institutions participating in this summit. It will also serve as a basis to develop a questionnaire aimed at describing – at a later stage and by means of a survey – the extent to which they are experienced by academic woman staff at SU.

The study is being conducted by Lorryn Williams, from the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology and the Centre for Inclusivity at Stellenbosch University (SU), for her Master's (Sociology) thesis. There are no known risks posed by your participation in this study, and you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. Participating in this research will not cost you anything, but neither will you be compensated for participating in this research.

All data that will be collected during the summit and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Confidentiality will be maintained by managing data with a password-protected personal computer to ensure that my supervisor and I are the only persons who will have access to the data. Both individual and institutional anonymity of the results will be ensured by deleting all identifiable details from the data as soon as possible after data collection.

You can choose whether to participate in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw your consent, at any time without consequences of any kind, by requesting to have your contribution to the summit deleted from the data. In addition, a draft version of the report of the summit proceedings will be circulated among participants to give them the opportunity to remove any content they feel would compromise their or their institution's anonymity.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Lorryn Williams (0734486111; 16184254@sun.ac.za) or her supervisor, Dr Heidi Prozesky (0218082092). If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché (mfouche@sun.ac.za; 0218084622) at SU's Division for Research Development.

To save a copy of this document: Click on the attachment to download the file and select "Save"

Please tick the appropriate box:

√	I agree to being digitally recorded during the Women's Day Summit, and thereby to participate in the study.
	I do not want to participate in this study, and thereby request to have my contribution to the summit deleted from the data.

Appendix 2: Woman's Day Summit invitation

Dear Colleagues

In celebration of National Women's Day and 20 years of Democracy and Freedom, Stellenbosch University will be hosting a Regional Gender Summit in collaboration with HERS-SA (Higher Education Resource Services of South Africa) and the regional Transformation Managers Forum. The summit aims to create a platform to discuss gender equality with regards to the experiences of women in higher education and will draw on the inputs from a range of stakeholders including, men and women in academic and support service divisions.

The summit will take place on the **7th of August 2014 at the STIAS/Wallenberg Conference Centre in Stellenbosch, from 10:00 to 15:00** and will involve key representatives from all four universities in the Western Cape. (We will send a separate invitation to invite a further 20 participants from each institution). The summit will not take the form of a conference or best practice platform, but will rather attempt to deepen the conversation on women working in higher education and aim to set a regional gender agenda for further institutional discussions.

The summit will be opened with a high level round table discussion instead of a key note speaker to stimulate smaller group discussions. **You are hereby invited to participate in the introductory fishbowl conversation with eight key representatives with facilitator Siddeeq Railoun. The fishbowl conversation will take place between 10 and 11:15 am.** It would be ideal if you can participate for the whole day, but if you are able to join us for just this session we would greatly appreciate it.

Kindly RSVP by 25 July 2014.

Regards

Monica du Toit

Coordinator Centre for Inclusivity / Koördineerder Sentrum vir Inklusiwiteit



Admin A (Footbridge entrance)
Room 1007A
021 8082864
+27 83 448 1105

This Women's Day, Stellenbosch University invites you to a *Regional Gender Summit* in collaboration with HERS-SA and the Regional Transformation Managers Forum. Join us for roundtable discussions with facilitator **Siddeeq Railoun**.



20 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY: REFLECTING ON GENDER REPRESENTATION & EQUALITY FOR WOMEN WORKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The summit will aim to create a platform for women and men to discuss gender equality and current challenges for women in higher education, and to formulate themes for a regional gender agenda.
Date: Thursday, 7 August 2014
Time: 10:00 - 15:00.
Venue: STIAS/Wallenberg Conference Centre in Stellenbosch
RSVP and confirm catering preferences with Monica du Toit (mdt2@sun.ac.za) by 28 July 2014

Appendix 3: Regional Women's Day Summit Report

REGIONAL WOMEN'S DAY SUMMIT REPORT

October 2014



“The Commission for Gender Equality found that only 3% of the top managerial positions in this country are filled by women. There is a distinct feeling amongst women at universities that they are often merely tolerated – despite their qualifications. As a woman you get labelled as being difficult when you speak out. When you work as an agent for change, you become exhausted and punch-drunk. It is discouraging for women to see how little has changed these past 30 years”.

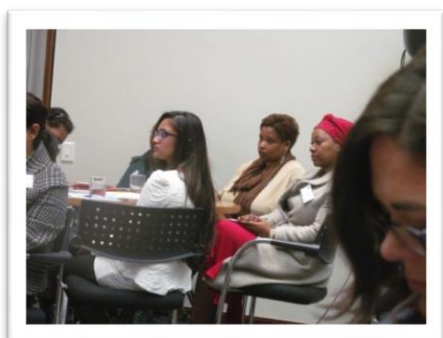
Prof Amanda Gouws

1. Introduction

This report is based on the deliberations of the Regional Woman's Day Summit held on the 7th of August 2014, and hosted by Stellenbosch University's (SU) Centre for Inclusivity in collaboration with Higher Education Resources Services South Africa (HERS-SA). The summit was attended by about 70 staff members of SU, the University of Cape Town (UCT), University of the Western Cape (UWC) and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). This report aims to capture the content discussed to better inform higher education (HE) institutions on the pertinent issues that women in HE in the Western Cape face.

The following questions were posed by Dr Siddeeq Railoun of Collaborative Change Consulting, who acted as facilitator for the introductory panel discussion and larger group discussions.

1. Why, after 20 years of democracy, do we still have to address gender equity and equality? What have been the gains in the past 20 years for women and girls?
2. How does gender inequality affect you personally?
3. Is gender equity applied differently in universities for academic staff and administrative staff? If so, how?
4. What contribution can we make amongst ourselves to achieve gender equity and gender equality?
5. What would gender equity and gender equality look like when it is achieved?



2. Discussion themes and summary

It was the general opinion of the participants that, after 20 years of democracy, it is still important to address gender equality and that a lot more can and needs to be done to address the issue.

Below follows, in bullet-point format, a summary of the most common themes that emerged from discussions that took place.

2.1 Institutional culture

- Issues concerning **institutional culture** and how it impacts on transformation was one of the most frequent and prominent themes that emerged from the discussions. Institutional culture in the universities was described as **patriarchal and hierarchical**, and the manner in which patriarchy is entrenched in our institutions is seen to contribute to maintaining the status quo.
- The **divide** between **academic and support staff** was discussed in relation to conditions of service for administration staff, particularly those who also conduct research.
- **Gatekeeping** and barriers to social networks in our institutional spaces is described as militating against progress and moving forward. How one is **welcomed into a department and how one is given support** is essential to progress with regards to these issues, and the need to create a nurturing, supportive environment was expressed in this regard.

2.2 Gender consciousness and activism

- **Activism**, in particular the lack thereof, but also how we should engage in activism was an important issue. An “**activist paralysis**” in the HE sector, which is a result of the post-1994 era, was identified as a challenge to engaging with activism .
- Becoming “**punch-drunk**” from working towards equality was reiterated by many of the participants across all institutions. It becomes especially discouraging when **no real change** can be seen. But the common opinion was that it is our responsibility to younger generations not to give up, but to continue fighting for equality.
- We need to be more **vigilant** in our institutions with regard to **appointments, promotions and opportunities**.
- Many other women felt that **the assumption that all women have a gendered consciousness cannot be assumed, nor imposed on women in management positions**. To demonstrate this notion, a parallel was drawn between how racial equality and gender equality is dealt with in South Africa. It was claimed that when an individual belonging to a minority is appointed in a position of power it is not expected of that individual to bring about change, but for women this is expected.
- The **lack of or underdeveloped unions** in the HE sector was viewed as an obstacle to achieving gender equality. Unions in the HE sector were also perceived as **gatekeepers** who support a particular agenda; nevertheless, unions also have the potential to play the role of ensuring atonement promotions.

2.3 Sexual harassment and gender-based violence

- **Gender-based violence** in universities, particularly among students who occupy residences, was raised.
- **Sexual harassment** in the form of sex for marks / marks for sex was an important theme of the day. Sex for marks / marks for sex was described as speaking to the stereotyping of gender-based relationships between males and females in the university environment and men’s perceived entitlement to sex. Some women felt that the new generation, the “born frees”, are very **unaware of their rights** in this regard, and do not understand the issues of sexual harassment. If they do come forward, it is only because they know inherently that it is not right. There is an important **educational role that senior women** need to play in this regard.

2.4 Gender policy

- **Gender policy** and the form it should take, not just in terms of males and females but also around human sexuality, was deliberated. The question was asked whether institutions should employ a stand-alone gender policy, or whether all policies should be reviewed through a gendered lens. Policy was also discussed in terms of how different pieces of legislation have come to the fore post-1994, but that our institutions are not plugging into these opportunities.

2.5 Career progression

- The notion that many **jobs are stereotyped to a particular gender** was discussed. There is a strong gender bias among administration staff, as reflected by the fact that there are more women than men in these positions. This was partly attributed to the stereotyping of gender roles leading to men not applying for administrative positions. This, in turn, was described as a result of the socialisation process according to which

young girls and boys are taught certain notions about femininity and masculinity, which have a profound effect on their career choices later in life. The observation was shared that not only do men not apply to these administrative positions, but that women often shy away from applying for **senior positions** because they believe that, as a woman, their applications would not be successful.

- The general manner in which women approach their careers in comparison to men was discussed in general terms as an obstacle to women's career advancement.
- Although much **progress** has been made with regards to civil liberties for women, substantive inequality still exists with regards to socio-economic rights. Within the university, as a microcosm of society, there are inequalities with regards to the positions women fulfill in our institutions, which reflects the **glass ceiling** that women continue to face. It becomes very difficult for woman to progress past a certain level into the higher ranks. One of the reasons for this lack of progress was ascribed to the huge workload that many women have to juggle with their **motherly duties**, which is not only time consuming but energy consuming as well. Many women in HE want to **complete a PhD or Master's degree**, but simply do not have the time, whereas their male counterparts do, leading to faster career advancement and contributing to the gender divide in terms of rank.

2.6 Work circumstances and salaries

- There are discrepancies between men's and women's **salaries** in all ranks.
- An obstacle to achieving greater gender equality in our institutions is that often equality is framed as being dependent on other factors, such as whether a **budget** allows for it. Equality is therefore viewed as a **luxury** and not as a necessity.
- **Mentoring** by senior women to ensure support for younger and less experienced women was seen as particularly important for **young black women**, as there is a lack of black female professors in South Africa. It is important that young academics be assisted during the promotion process. A **heavy workload** was described as an obstacle to the possibility of mentorship.

2.7 Gender representation/critical mass

- **Women are often blamed** for the lack of women's representation in senior positions, such as deans and vice chancellors, whereas the reason for the lack of representation is not a lack of interest, but rather relates to women having to choose between their family life and career. Even if these reasons are acknowledged, they are labeled as a "women's" issue and not seen for what they are: a symptom of the hierarchical culture of our institutions, which renders it **almost impossible for woman to be in a position of management and have a personal, family life**. This was seen by delegated as a **choice only women have to make**, whereas men do not have to face these difficult decisions.
- The **numbers of women enrolling in undergraduate studies** are higher than those of men, but yet at postgraduate levels the women start disappearing. A solution needs to be devised in order to **retain women students in our institutions at a postgraduate level**.

- The **structures of committees** were seen as key to ensuring the end of a **perpetuating male dominance and patriarchy**. The structures of committees in our institutions need to be dealt with carefully: **who serves on these committees and who leads these committees** becomes an important factor in realising the possibility for change.

2.8 Personal attitudes and beliefs

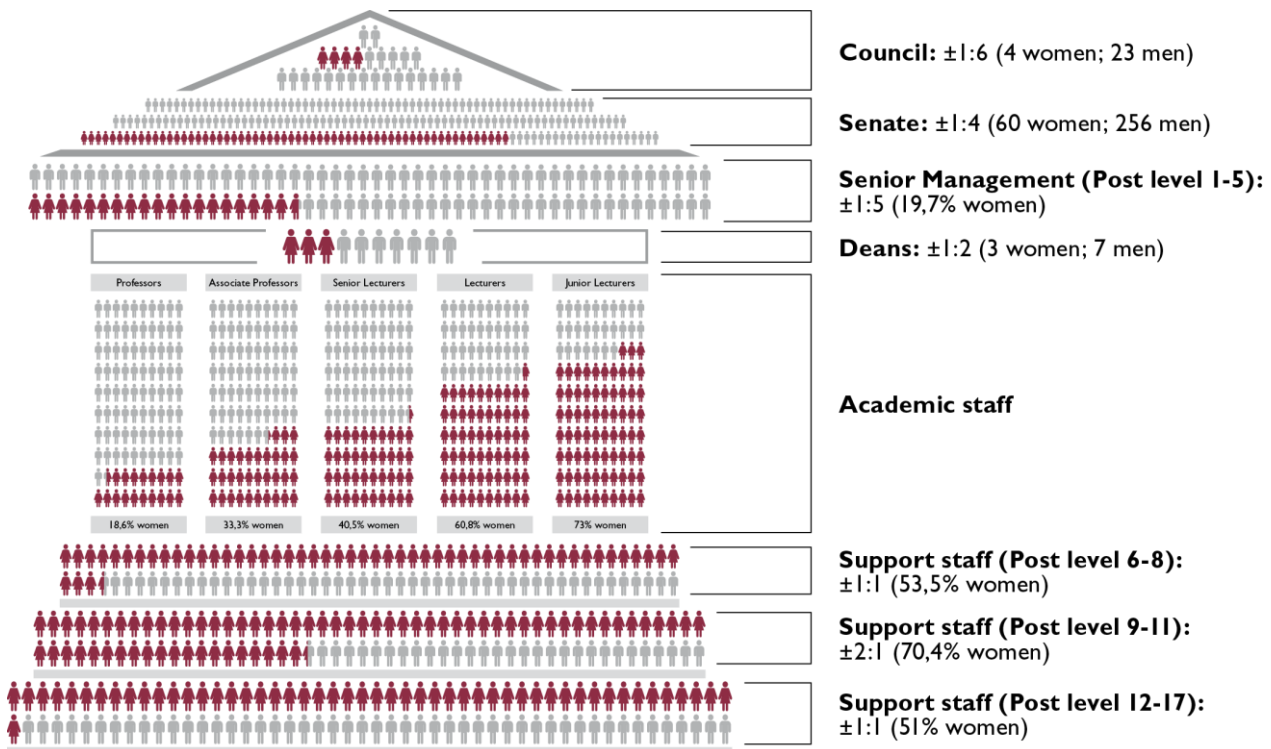
- Emphasis was placed on the need for the **individual to discard self-limiting beliefs** and to engage **personal leadership** to be able to advance into senior positions. Many women said that they try to look for enablements in their institutions that would help them to further themselves academically towards a PhD, for example, but that they come up against constraints and then conclude that in order for **change to really happen it has to happen with the individual rather than the institution**.
- Although women were encouraged to advance into **management positions** in our institutions, some women were of the opinions that once women attain these positions they **behave like men**. This issue was described as a leadership issue rather than a merely a gender issue; it becomes less about men and women and more about embracing human rights regardless of race, creed or sexual orientation.
- The notion of behaving like men was attributed to the patriarchal nature of our institutions. Women claimed that if they did not behave like men in these positions, they would **not be taken seriously as leaders**.

2.9 General

- There were many perceptions on what gender equality would look like when it is achieved. Some described it as a situation where **diversity is the norm** and not the exception, whereas others described it as a situation where the holders of qualifications and PhDs reflect the **population demographics**.
- The role of **colonialism** and the legacy of **apartheid** and **patriarchy** in South Africa cannot be ignored when addressing gender equality.

3. Gender Infograph

In addition to the small-group discussions, SU shared an institutional graph showing the representation of women within the various ranks of the University to further aid discussions on representation.



Based on Stellenbosch University Factbook 2013.

10. Conclusion

The summit themes and priorities identified by participants, as well as more detailed transcriptions, will now be utilised as a basis for further research in the form of a representative gender-climate survey. The initial summary confirms shared experiences and challenges amongst women working in the Western Cape HE sector. Inter-institutional conversations do not merely validate our experiences, but offer important networks across institutions, disciplines and staff categories for gender activism. Participants expressed the need for more regular regional and national discussions with regards to gender.

This report was prepared by Lorryn Williams with the assistance of Dr Heidi Prozesky and Monica du Toit. We thank the participants, HERS-SA, SU's Women's Forum and SU management for their support.

Appendix 2: Email invitation and request for informed consent to participate in the survey

Dear woman academic staff member

I am conducting an MA (Sociology) study on the gender-related challenges that academic women at Stellenbosch University (SU) may be facing. I am particularly interested in the extent to which academic women staff at SU experience various gender-related challenges, whether there are differences in terms race, rank and motherhood status when considering those challenges; and to which factors women such as yourself attribute their own and other women's career progress (or the lack thereof). The results will be communicated to SU management to assist them in the future development and improvement of employee wellness and inclusivity at SU.

If you are a permanent woman academic staff member at SU, you are hereby invited to provide your anonymous insights by responding to an online questionnaire which consists primarily of closed-ended questions. However, the questionnaire also provides you the opportunity to add your own additional inputs, if you choose to do so, in response to a few open-ended questions. You will be asked some basic background information and about your career history (although not sufficiently detailed for you to be identified), and you will be asked to share your views on your own career progression and those of other women academics at SU. The questionnaire should take you approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

Ethical clearance for this study has been granted by SU's Research Ethics Committee for Human Research in the Humanities, and institutional permission has been granted by SU's Division for Institutional Research and Planning.

Your participation in the survey would be greatly appreciated. Please be assured that your responses are completely anonymous. The survey will be conducted using a standard survey tool of SU's Information Technology Division, which prevents me from accessing any identifiable information of respondents, including their email addresses.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Lorryn Williams (0734486111; 16184254@sun.ac.za) or her supervisor, Dr Heidi Prozesky (0218089464; hep@sun.ac.za). If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché (mfouche@sun.ac.za; 0218084622) at SU's Division for Research Development.

[Click here](#) to consent to participate in the study and to complete the questionnaire.

Please note that you may withdraw your consent, or refuse to answer any questions on the questionnaire, at any time and without consequences of any kind.

Thank you in advance!

Kind Regards

Lorryn Williams

Appendix 5: Weighting table for academic rank

	Academic rank respondents (N)	Academic rank respondents (%)	Academic rank population (%)	Academic rank population (N)	Weight	Expected values
Junior Lecturer	4	4	6	27	1,48148	6
Lecturer	33	33	46	206	1,60194	45
Senior Lecturer	31	31	25	112	2,76786	24
Ass. Prof	10	10	12	52	1,92308	11
Prof	19	19	11	50	3,80000	11
Total	97	98	100	447		97

Appendix 6: Reliability-test results for decelerating indicators (respondents' own career progression)

Summary for scale: Mean=32.0000 Std.Dv.=9.64486 Valid N:44 (DA Cronbach alpha: .800166 Standardized alpha: .805837 Average inter-item corr.: .238947					
variable	Mean if deleted	Var. if deleted	Stdv. if deleted	Item-Totl Correl.	Alpha if deleted
Nonexistent_or_slow_1_academic_strength	30.2727	80.2438	8.95789	0.53416	0.78165
Nonexistent_or_slow_3_self_confidence	30.0454	79.9070	8.93907	0.49405	0.78320
Nonexistent_or_slow_5_apply_promotions	29.2500	75.6420	8.69724	0.45204	0.78592
Nonexistent_or_slow_7_academic_qualification	30.1363	78.0723	8.83585	0.43639	0.78664
Nonexistent_or_slow_8_publication	29.1363	69.9814	8.36548	0.67639	0.76219
Nonexistent_or_slow_9_promote_self	28.5681	86.8362	9.31859	0.12284	0.80910
Nonexistent_or_slow_10_motivation	30.1818	82.1033	9.06108	0.39421	0.79022
Nonexistent_or_slow_15_institutional_resources	30.1136	78.1916	8.84260	0.64193	0.77426
Nonexistent_or_slow_16_pursue_promotions	28.6590	81.3156	9.01751	0.33222	0.79506
Nonexistent_or_slow_17_quality_focus	29.2727	83.5619	9.14122	0.19742	0.80777
Nonexistent_or_slow_18_junior_position	29.8863	82.5098	9.08349	0.24358	0.80357
Nonexistent_or_slow_19_ambition	30.2954	78.7990	8.87688	0.60055	0.77687
Nonexistent_or_slow_20_focus_teaching	29.8181	71.5123	8.45650	0.69570	0.76196
Nonexistent_or_slow_25_senior_masculine	30.3636	85.5950	9.25175	0.19883	0.80323

Summary for scale: Mean=17.8378 Std.Dv.=6.59762 Valid N:37 (DATA3 20) Cronbach alpha: .772399 Standardized alpha: .770628 Average inter-item corr.: .335254					
variable	Mean if deleted	Var. if deleted	Stdv. if deleted	Item-Totl Correl.	Alpha if deleted
Nonexistent_or_slow_6_career_interruptions	14,62162	31,85683	5,644186	0,456868	0,752768
Nonexistent_or_slow_21_childcare_facilities	16,00000	35,94595	5,995492	0,356992	0,768232
Nonexistent_or_slow_22_spousal_support	15,83782	34,62235	5,884076	0,329008	0,776998
Nonexistent_or_slow_23_children	15,00000	30,32432	5,506752	0,649792	0,711172
Nonexistent_or_slow_24_housework	15,51351	31,33090	5,597401	0,547799	0,732668
Nonexistent_or_slow_26_travel	14,97297	28,40467	5,329602	0,737275	0,689338
Nonexistent_or_slow_27_networking	15,08108	33,58802	5,795517	0,400470	0,762820

Summary for scale: Mean=36.4167 Std.Dv.=8.32027 Valid N:48 (DATA4 20) Cronbach alpha: .709450 Standardized alpha: .727613 Average inter-item corr.: .185018					
variable	Mean if deleted	Var. if deleted	Stdv. if deleted	Item-Totl Correl.	Alpha if deleted
Nonexistent_or_slow_2_promotion_criteria	33.50000	67.70833	8.228507	-0.094642	0.755492
Nonexistent_or_slow_4_academic_status	34.14583	63.91622	7.994766	0.114510	0.718462
Nonexistent_or_slow_11_teaching_load	32.68750	56.13151	7.492090	0.414162	0.680572
Nonexistent_or_slow_12_culture	32.97917	58.64540	7.658029	0.365302	0.688212
Nonexistent_or_slow_13_discrimination	33.62500	56.69272	7.529450	0.461702	0.675192
Nonexistent_or_slow_14_lack_mentors	32.81250	56.98561	7.548880	0.395622	0.683532
Nonexistent_or_slow_28_contract_work	34.14583	64.12451	8.007782	0.068862	0.728172
Nonexistent_or_slow_29_promotion_processes	33.66667	58.13889	7.624880	0.448932	0.678912
Nonexistent_or_slow_30_institutional_climate	33.43750	57.53770	7.585360	0.458042	0.676972
Nonexistent_or_slow_31_institutional_support	33.50000	56.33333	7.505550	0.482032	0.672432
Nonexistent_or_slow_32_institutional_resources	34.06250	56.93361	7.545430	0.501442	0.671782
Nonexistent_or_slow_33_research_opp	34.16667	57.09722	7.556270	0.552732	0.668212
Nonexistent_or_slow_34_publish_opp	34.27083	58.78083	7.666860	0.370712	0.687662

Appendix 7: Reliability-test results for decelerating indicators (underrepresentation of other women in senior positions)

Summary for scale: Mean=25.6970 Std.Dv.=5.76310 Valid N:99 (D Cronbach alpha: .749913 Standardized alpha: .731601 Average inter-item corr.: .222497					
variable	Mean if deleted	Var. if deleted	Stdv. if deleted	Item-Totl Correl.	Alpha if deleted
GR1_Women_less_able	24.6868	32.8009	5.72721	0.05843	0.75877
GR2_Women_less_ambitious	23.8989	28.1110	5.30198	0.34726	0.73848
GR3_Less_self_promotion	22.2727	27.2286	5.21810	0.39588	0.73189
GR4_promotions_less_aggressively	22.3131	25.5080	5.05054	0.60490	0.70058
GR5_Lack_confidence_abilities	22.7979	25.0501	5.00500	0.57105	0.70352
GR6_Choose_teaching	23.0202	26.5248	5.15022	0.42784	0.72724
GR9_Journal_publication	23.0101	27.3433	5.22908	0.38211	0.73400
GR10_Quality_Quantity	22.9798	27.3531	5.23002	0.42919	0.72699
GR13_under_utilise_resources	22.7878	27.5610	5.24986	0.37431	0.73499
GR15_lack_promotion_criteria	23.5050	26.2297	5.12150	0.41734	0.72956

Summary for scale: Mean=31.9596 Std.Dv.=8.28069 Valid N:99 (D. Cronbach alpha: .875652 Standardized alpha: .873385 Average inter-item corr.: .429921					
variable	Mean if deleted	Var. if deleted	Stdv. if deleted	Item-Totl Correl.	Alpha if deleted
GR7_Dicipllines_heavy_workload	28.7676	63.2288	7.95165	0.19999	0.89016
GR8_Women_heavier_loads	28.8686	55.0837	7.42184	0.62741	0.86138
GR12_Access_Institutional_resources	29.4848	56.8154	7.53760	0.54144	0.86792
GR14_short_contracts	28.7676	56.2591	7.50061	0.59557	0.86389
GR17_less_mentors	28.9697	59.4233	7.70865	0.36046	0.88193
GR18_male_dominated	28.1515	55.2396	7.43234	0.67327	0.85825
GR19_women_friendly	28.8686	52.6393	7.25529	0.77402	0.84957
GR20_sexism_embedded	28.6565	52.8315	7.26853	0.75335	0.85116
GR21_covert_discrimination	28.6161	52.7415	7.26233	0.74276	0.85186
GR22_work_rank	28.4848	53.1386	7.28962	0.72300	0.85355