

**Losing, using, refusing, cruising: First-generation  
South African women academics narrate the  
complexity of marginality**

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## **ABSTRACT**

While existing literature shows a considerable increase in the numbers of women in academia research on the experiences of women in universities has noted their continued occupation of lower status academic positions in relation to their male counterparts. As the ladder gets higher, the number of women seems to drop. These studies indicate the marginalization of women in academic settings, highlighting the various forms of subtle and overt discrimination and exclusion women face in academic work environments. In this study I ask how academic women in South Africa narrate their experience of being ‘outside in’ the teaching machine. It has been argued that intertwined sexist, patriarchal and phallogocentric knowledges and practices in academic institutions produce various forms of discrimination, inequality, oppression and marginalization. Academic women report feeling invisible and retreating to the margins so as to avoid victimization and discrimination. Others have pointed to the tension between the ‘tenure clock’ and the ‘biological clock’ as a source of anxiety among academic women. Where a masculinised presentation of the self is adopted as a solution to this dilemma, the devaluation of the feminine in the academic space is confirmed. However, experiences of academic women are not identical. In the context of studies showing the importance of existing personal and social resources, prior experience and having mentors and role models in the negotiation of inequality and discrimination, I document the narratives of women academics who are the first in their families to graduate with a university degree. These first-generation academic women are therefore least likely to have access to social and cultural resources and prior experiences that can render the academic space more hospitable for the marginalised. Employing Spivak’s deconstruction of the concept of marginalisation as my primary interpretive lens, I explore the way in which, in their narratives, first-generation academic women negotiate marginality. These narratives depict a marginality that might be described, following Spivak, as ‘outside/in’, that is, as complex and involving moments of accommodation and resistance, losses and gains, pain and pride.

# Table of Contents

1. Chapter.....	1
Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background and Context.....	1
1.2 Rationale.....	4
1.3 Theoretical framing: Marginality.....	7
1.4 Research Methods, procedures and techniques.....	9
1.5 Scope of the Study.....	9
1.6 Structure.....	10
1.6.1 Chapter 1: Introduction.....	10
1.6.2 Chapter 2: Literature review.....	10
1.6.3 Chapter 3: Methodology.....	11
1.6.4 Chapter 4: Losing.....	11
1.6.5 Chapter 5: Refusing.....	11
1.6.6 Chapter 6: Cruising.....	12
1.6.7 Chapter 7: Conclusion.....	12
1.7 Summary.....	12
2. Chapter.....	14
Theoretical lenses.....	14
2.1 Introduction.....	14
2.2 Theorising Marginality.....	16
2.3 University Structures and Practices: Patriarchy, Sexism and Phallocentrism.....	20
2.4 Managing Academic Life and Personal Life.....	26
2.5 Intersections of gender, race and class.....	28

3. Chapter .....	31
Research Methods .....	31
3.1 Introduction .....	31
3.2 Participants .....	33
3.3 Saturation .....	39
3.4 Interpretation .....	39
3.5 Ethical Considerations.....	41
4. Chapter .....	42
Losing .....	42
4.1 Introduction .....	42
4.2 Conclusion.....	58
5. Chapter .....	60
Resistance: Using and Refusing.....	60
5.1 Introduction .....	60
5.2 Using Marginality as a Resource .....	60
5.3 Refusing Marginality.....	67
5.4 Conclusion.....	77
6. Chapter .....	80
Cruising.....	80
6.1 Introduction .....	80
6.2 Experiencing acceptance .....	81
6.3 Conclusion.....	95
7. Chapter .....	96
Conclusion .....	96
8. References.....	102

9.	APPENDIX A Informed Consent Form .....	115
10.	APPENDIX B: NODES .....	116

## **LIST OF TABLES**

TABLE 1: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS	34
TABLE 2: CATEGORIES AND THEMES	40
TABLE 3: STAFF IN UNIVERSITIES	48
TABLE 4: PROFESSIONAL STAFF IN UNIVERSITIES	48

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# 1. Chapter

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Context

While existing literature shows a considerable increase in the numbers of women in academia research on the experiences of women in universities have noted their continued occupation of lower status academic positions in relation to their male counterparts. As the ladder gets higher, the number of women seems to drop. These studies indicate the marginalization of women in academic careers, highlighting the various forms of subtle and overt discrimination and exclusion women face in academic work environments. The quantitative underrepresentation of women in the higher level academic positions has been well documented. In the UK there are only 35% of women in full-time academic positions, 35% are lecturers and only 10% hold professoriate positions. By 2008 female professors comprised 15% of university staff (Bagilhole 2002, 46; Sanders *et.al* 2008). In Western countries, the number of women in senior positions especially at professorial level is low despite the increased participation of women in higher education. 24% of US professors were women in 2006 (Sanders *et.al* 2008). Since 1994, there has been a significant increase in the representation of women in South African universities. But while the number of women entering university has increased, women remain a minority particularly in some disciplines and in senior positions (De La Rey 2005; Mazibuko 2006; Mabokela 2003; Shackleton 2007). Research has shown that the women that are able to make it into the academy often find themselves in low ranked positions (Gaskell & Mullen 2009:453; Bagilhole 2000:19; Walker 1998; Skelton 2005:325; Dillabough 1999:347).

With the considerable shifts the world has seen with regards to the inclusion of women in a range of work environments, it might be expected that women would be regarded as equal and authentic inhabitants of their different work places, wherever they may find themselves.



However, this is not the case especially for women considered to be in male dominated professions. To be recognised as competent in their various fields, they still have to work harder than their male counterparts – not only at the work itself but also working harder to ‘fit in’. Although the academic environment and indeed the world has come a long way with respect to the inclusion of women, the fact that women still occupy lower positions in academia reveals that there still exist subtle forms of discrimination and exclusion of women in the academic environment. Scholars like Collins (1986) have described women who occupy such marginalising positions, as outsiders in the academic environment.

A number of studies have examined the various ways in which women have been marginalised in academic institutions and the challenges they face in the negotiation of relationships in the academic environment (Marbley *et al.* 2011; Gaskell & Mullen 2006; Pittman 2010; Acker & Feuerverger 1996; Monroe & Chiu 2010; Reay 2000; Bagilhole 2002; Walker 1998, 1997; Acker 1980; Skelton 2005a; 2005b; Dillabough, 1999). Acker & Webber (2009:486) argued that there is a wide gap between the position of women academics and the structures, cultures and practices of universities. Research reveals how the intertwined nature of sexist, patriarchal and phallogocentric knowledges work to exclude and marginalise women in academia (Luke & Gore 1992:192; Acker & Webber 2009; Acker & Feuerverger 1996; Skelton 2005b:325). It is argued that the platform that allows for this marginalisation is embedded in everyday relations amongst academic staff (Luke & Gore 1992:192; Acker & Webber 2009; Acker & Feuerverger 1996; Skelton 2005b:325; Walker 1997; Alfred 2001:59; Rassool 1995:38; Reay 2000:16; Collins 2001:29). This results in the academic woman having constantly to negotiate her position and identity in the academic environment.

The way in which the academy is structured along masculine lines and the gendered nature of relations among academic staff also works to negatively affect woman academics (see for instance Reay 2000:14; Skelton 2005a:6; 2005b:325; Dillabough 1999:347; Walker 1997; 1998; Alfred 2001:59; Baca Zinn *et al.* 1988; Rassool 1995:38). As a result of these underlying practices, expectations and prejudices, academic women report feeling invisible and retreating to

the margins so as to avoid victimization and discrimination (Luke 1994:211; Reay 2000:18; Bagilhole 2000:28; Skelton 2005b:329; Walker 1997:372; Alfred 2001:62).

In South Africa, although the number of women entering the top echelons of the university has increased, women remain a minority, particularly in some disciplines (White *et al.* 2012; Riordan & Louw-Potgieter 2011; Higher Education in South Africa 2011; De La Rey 2005; Mazibuko 2006; Council on Higher Education 2009). Since 1994 there has been a significant improvement: in 1994, women comprised 31% of academic staff; by 2009 this had increased to 44.2% (Higher Education in South Africa 2011, 3). But by 2007 just 24% were professors and associate professors, 40% were senior lecturers, 48% were lecturers, and only four of the 23 universities in South Africa had a woman as their vice-chancellor (Council on Higher Education 2009, 78, 89). Gunavardena *et al.* (2004 in Sader *et al.* 2005, 62) note that in 2004, while 53% of enrolled students in South Africa were women, this did not necessarily translate to the workplace. By 2011, women comprised 45% of academics in South African universities (HESA 2012). According to the Education White Paper of 1997, “this problem of underrepresentation of Blacks and women, especially of those in senior positions, goes beyond the legacies of apartheid to deeply embedded sexist ideologies that cut across race and class” (Department of Education 1997). The centres of power (faculties, colleges, executive managements, senate and council) in South African universities are dominated by influential men which results in the perpetuation of inequalities (Mazibuko 2006:111; Walker 1998:1997; Mabokela 2003). It thus becomes difficult for women to assert themselves in these settings (see also Walker 1998; 1997; Mabokela 2003).

Much of the work on the underrepresentation of women in the academic setting recognises the intersectionality of women’s experiences of marginality. In South Africa the academy is shaped by its apartheid past, and South African women are structurally disadvantaged in differing ways, depending on their location in relation to structures of gender, race, class, ethnicity and sexuality. Walker, for instance (1998, 346) emphasised the effects of race on the availability of opportunities for advancement by Black women in South African academia (see also White *et al.* 2012:302; Mabokela 2003:138). Scholars (see, for instance White *et al.* 2012; Mazibuko

2006:111) have argued that most South African universities are dominated and influenced by men and masculinised cultures that make it difficult for women to enter and succeed at these higher levels. As Acker & Webber (200:486) point out, this is not merely a problem of numbers. There is often a wide gap between the point of view and experiences of women academics and the structures, cultures, day-to-day interactions and entrenched practices at every level of universities. In this context the academic woman finds herself in a debilitating position of constantly having to negotiate her credibility and identity with her male counterparts and sometimes with other women in senior positions. While there has been a slow inclusion of women and Black people into academia, the figures above reveal that with regard to inclusion, women and Blacks (Coloureds, Indians and Africans) are still located in the lower levels of academia.

Taking this research as its starting point, the present study focuses on the experiences of women academics who are the first in their families to enter the academy – first-generation academic women. In the context of studies showing the importance for women academics of existing personal and social resources, prior experience and having mentors and role models (Bagilhole 1993a:271; Patton 2009:530; Acker & Armenti 2004:17; Morley 2013:124, 125; Fries-Britt & Kelly 2005:240; Jarmon 2001:176) in the negotiation of inequality and discrimination, I ask how first-generation women academics narrate their experiences of negotiating the academic terrain.

## **1.2 Rationale**

While there is a considerable body of research, as has been indicated, which attempts to describe the discriminatory effects on women of the gendered environment that they encounter in academia, little work focuses specifically on women who are the first in their families to enter this environment (Jackson & Mazzei 2012:X). Sandra Jones' (2004) research on first-generation women found that many saw education as 'a way out' of traditional gender roles and class oppression; they saw the academy as a place where they could pursue their educational desires and develop their academic identities (see also Drame *et al.* 2012). Research on access to

education notes that students from disadvantaged backgrounds, low income families and especially first generation students are at a disadvantage when it comes to educational attainment and negotiating relationships in academic environments (Heymann & Carolissen 2011; Lowery-Hart & Pacheco 2011; Timmey & Chapman 2012). In the South African context, studies have shown that children from families where there is no history of tertiary education are less likely to enter into higher education than second generation students and those who do, often experience difficulty at university (Boughey 2009:8; Strydom *et al* 2010:260). This research also shows the severe challenges first generation students face upon entry into the academic environment (Timmey & Chapman 2012). As Boughey (2009:8) argues, in South Africa, race is fused with social class. Black working class students' experience is shaped, Boughey argues by the absence of 'the transmission of privileged values, attitudes and knowledge from one generation to another'. Lowery-Hart & Pacheco (2011:56) argue that because of a lack of knowledge and resources (what Bourdieu termed cultural and social capital), most first generation students are located on the margins despite being on the same campuses as their peers.

Similarly, it may be hypothesized, in negotiating marginality academic women who are the first in their families to enter the academy are likely to lack the social capital (networks of connections and social relationships) and cultural capital (knowledge, techniques, and ways of being acquired or inherited from family backgrounds which may help in the negotiation of certain contexts) that may provide individuals with role models (second or third generation) and other resources to effectively negotiate relations in the university and overcome aspects of marginality (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron 1979). Those who lack such resources may have trouble negotiating relationships and structures as easily as their more culturally and socially well-resourced counterparts, and may have to invest considerable resources in order to come to know (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979:19 see also Bathmaker, *et al* 2013:723), thus emphasising their marginality even as they enter positions of status and power 'inside' the academy. By examining the experiences of first generation women in academia, this study seeks to provide insight into how they negotiate unequal power relations despite their lack of the traditional cultural and social resources that are available to those who are more at home in the academy because of their family background.

Furthermore, universities are not only gendered but also classed (Reay 2004:26; Bourdieu & Passeron 1979:6, 7). Apart from the experience of marginalization on the basis of race and gender, the first generation status of the women in the study creates a lack of fit between their inherited 'family cultural capital' and the cultures of the university. Bourdieu & Passeron note that the social status of an individual's family will affect educational attainment because it affects a person's 'conditions of existence' -- that is the area they live in, their lifestyle and their financial resources which provides them with access to overall life experiences such as travel (Bourdieu & Passeron 1979:12). Research on access to education in South Africa notes that students from disadvantaged backgrounds, low income families and especially first generation students are at a disadvantage when it comes to educational attainment (Higher Education in Context, n.d.:16). Louw *et al.* (2006:23) note that in the South African context, a child's obtaining higher education is dependent on parents having higher education. First generation academic women are therefore a statistical category of person who are less likely to go to university and less likely to succeed if they do, let alone succeed to the point of becoming academics themselves. Many of the participants had to overcome enormous obstacles to beat the statistical odds stacked against them. While some entered academia at a late stage, some had to pay their own way through, working and studying at the same time.

The aim of the present study is to examine the experiences of first generation women in the academy as a prism through which to view gendered work, social, personal and political relations in the university. 'First generation women' are considered to be women who were the first in their family to graduate with a university degree. As Jackson & Mazzei (2012:IX) point out, the experiences of first generation academic women are largely unknown, as they are rather invisible but their perspectives have the potential to offer a very particular vantage point from which to view the negotiation of marginality in the academy. These women are marginalised on the basis of gender and in some cases race discrimination but in negotiating this marginality they have no prior experience of the academy providing them with social and cultural scripts to read off. The thesis explores first generation women's understanding and perception of their experiences of being in the academy, working from the assumption that based on the absence of prior

experience, role models or access to the university context, these participants constitute a particularly marginalised category.

### **1.3 Theoretical framing: Marginality**

Introducing the concept of marginality, Robert E. Park in his essay ‘Human migration and the marginal man’ notes the unstable personality of the marginalised individual, as it is in the mind of the ‘marginal man’ that conflicting cultures meet (Park 1982:881). His conception of marginality while not acknowledging the experiences of women, provides an adequate portrayal of the varying forms of discrimination and marginalisation experienced by women in academia which results in some women experiencing a lack of fit between their identities as women and the masculine, raced and classed cultures of the university. Weisberger (1992:431), improving on Parks’ idea, describes marginality as “a condition of inequality” (where the individual occupies a weak position and is faced with cultures of dominance in areas of language, habits, religion and so on). As discussed above, women in academia do occupy a position of weakness and inequality as they are underrepresented, especially in senior positions in comparison to their male counterparts. While some respond by rejecting the marginality appellation, others have suggested that marginality be seen as positive and productive (Reisman 1951:159; Spivak 1993; Collins 1986). These scholars describe marginality as a site of freedom, liberation, resistance and empowerment. Therefore, rather than view marginality as an oppressive state, scholars like hooks 1989; Spivak 1993 and Reisman 1951 advocate that marginality be viewed as liberating –a potential resource for those otherwise lacking in the cultural and social resources valued by the dominant centre.

Patricia Hill Collins (1986:14) describes the marginal position occupied by women in academia as “outsiders within”, meaning that those women who *are inside* the university are, through deeply embedded discriminatory practices and processes, constantly situated or positioned outside the structures of power and inner workings of the university system. This position has however provided these women with a special lens and specific viewpoint on ‘the self, family

and society' (Collins 1986). This notion of 'outsiders within' is similar to an idea proposed by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who writes of 'outside in' the teaching machine (Spivak 1998; 1990a; 1990b; see also Morton 2005; Jackson & Mazzei 2012). While Collins focuses on the effect of this outsider within status on the experiences and views of the academic woman, Spivak uses it as a way of deconstructing the concept of marginalization. For her the marginal is always on the margins in relation to the centre, hence the marginalised individual is never really outside of the centre.

In this thesis I employ Spivak's concept of marginality to gain insight into the experiences of first generation women in the academy. Central to this understanding is the idea that marginality is always constructed in relation to the centre. Women who occupy this 'marginal' position are never wholly outside the teaching machine (academy), but can rather be understood as outside/in, Spivak contends. Spivak sees studies of marginality as arising from a suspicion that "what is at the centre often hides a repression" and it is this centre/margin binary that Spivak hopes to deconstruct (Spivak 1998:105). Marginality in this context can be described as being outside or the 'other' in a particular system or structure. The individual who occupies this position of marginality has been defined as marginal *by the centre*. Therefore this positionality is never constituted as wholly outside the structure but is outside in relation to the centre (Spivak 1998; 1990a, 1990b; hooks 1989:206). She thus defines marginality "not as a positive space 'outside' of the centre, but as constituted within the centre" (Jackson & Mazzei 2012:7; Borsa 1990:37). A deconstruction of the margin/centre binary therefore reveals the interconnectedness between what is marginal and what is at the centre, thus displacing the difference between the margin and the centre (Spivak 1998:107; Jackson & Mazzei 2012:7).

Spivak suggests that the marginal must inhabit a particular structure to be able to critique it as one cannot do so from outside that structure; at the same time one cannot completely reject such structures since they are in part constitutive of the self. It is this inability to reject completely a structure which one inhabits and must inhabit to criticize that is what Spivak terms the 'impossible no' which is also the creative and dynamic starting point for a radical critique.

Spivak states “This impossible no to a structure which one critiques yet inhabits intimately, is the deconstructive position” (Spivak 1990:16; Jackson & Mazzei 2012:39; Spivak 1990:225; Huggman 2001:7). The academic woman hence cannot want to say no to a structure which gives her life, which defines her as an academic while recognising that to critique it she must inhabit it intimately.

## **1.4 Research Methods, procedures and techniques**

The research methods, procedures and techniques used in the study are described in detail in chapter three. The research employs an interpretive paradigm to analyse the experiences of first generation women academics in universities in South Africa. In order to access the participants' stories, in-depth open ended interviews were conducted with the 15 participants drawn from two South African Universities, ending this process when thematic saturation was reached. The data collected were analysed using thematic narrative analysis and Nvivo data analysis software. As Barbe *et al.* (1989) stated “women’s stories illustrate the construction of gendered identities in a specific social context and the interplay of individual agency and social dynamics in the shaping of identities”. Following Langellier (1989:271) the analysis of the narratives was based on an understanding that narratives must be considered as ‘performed text’ which is examined for its relation to the enhancement of experience and the politics of control, power and knowledge.

## **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The focus of this study is on first generation women academics, women who were the first in their families to graduate with university degrees but who then went on to take up academic careers.. Participants were recruited from one historically White and one historically Black university in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. The study does not include participants or opinions of men or non-first generation (second and third generation) women in these



institutions. It also does not include the experiences of women working outside academia and women with non-academic positions in universities.

I do not claim to speak for all women in academia, but rather to point, through the lens of the experiences of my participants, to a deeply entrenched patriarchal structure in the university setting. The experiences of women in academia differ, depending on a multiplicity of things/relations, the culture of the institution in which she finds herself and an intersection of race, class and gender issues prevalent in such institutions. But the stories that are told here do, I contend, shed light on the complexity of the marginal position and the array of responses that different women and individual women at different moments have to marginality – in these responses sometimes refusing to be marginal, sometimes embracing that identity position as a position of resistance and creative adaptation. While it is true that some women feel crushed by the injustices they encounter, for others the lens of marginality is empowering, not only to themselves but as a resource with which to reimagine relations in the academy in ways that open up new possibilities for others whose experience of the university space is not one of comfortable oneness.

## **1.6 Structure**

### **1.6.1 Chapter 1: Introduction**

Overview, context and background of the study, rationale, method and theoretical framing of the study.

### **1.6.2 Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter presents a review of existing literature on women in academia both internationally and in South Africa and describes the theoretical framework of the study which focuses on marginality theory.

### **1.6.3 Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter provides a step-by-step account of the research process employed, the paradigm, data collection process, how the data was analysed using Nvivo and how the theoretical lens influenced the use of thematic constructs. It also describes how marginality theory, thematic narrative analysis, Nvivo and the data were interwoven during the analysis.

### **1.6.4 Chapter 4: Losing**

This chapter looks at the theme ‘losing’ which describes the participants’ experiences of being on the losing end of power relations. It addresses what may be considered the negative effects of being a female academic in a male dominated space. Aside from gender I also look at how race and class (being first generation) affects the participants’ ability to negotiate structures of inequality.

### **1.6.5 Chapter 5: Refusing**

This chapter looks at ways in which some participants rejected marginalizing situations and attempted to make changes to the structures and ways of being that define them as marginal. The narratives presented here reveal how the participants used their marginality as a resource and refused marginalising situations.

### **1.6.6 Chapter 6: Cruising**

This chapter presents narratives of participants who feel they have been able to thrive despite their marginal situations. I look at those women who have been accepted by the university as authentic academics, and identify the requirement of exceptionality as a condition for their being able to do so. Using Spivak's argument concerning 'tokens' as strategies by the centre to further marginalise and maintain its dominant culture, I argue that the centre only accepts those who do not pose too much of a threat to its dominant culture.

### **1.6.7 Chapter 7: Conclusion**

The chapter presents a summary of the argument based on Spivak's marginality concept. I look at how the various representations in chapters 4, 5 and 6 portray the outside/in nature of the participants in the study.

## **1.7 Summary**

Employing an interpretive approach, using Spivak's theory of marginality alongside other writers on marginality, I examine how women in academia tell stories of their experiences in academia and how they were able to negotiate the marginal positions they occupied in the academic terrain. Thematic analysis of the data yielded four themes which I here term 'losing', 'using', 'refusing' and 'cruising'. These diverse ways of being marginal and responding to marginality reveals the ways in which the academic terrain was experienced and negotiated by the participants. The narratives portray women who were on the losing end of power relation, while at the same time showing agency in their ability to resist such powerful definitions and thrive despite marginalising situations. In this way their narratives are exemplars of Spivak's notion of outside/in – the participants constantly move between the margins and centre as they negotiate relations throughout their academic careers, revealing the interconnectedness between the margin

and the centre as proposed by Spivak. As they resist, accept, use and are co-opted by the structures which constitute them they reveal the inability to say a complete 'no' to a centre which gives them life as academic women.

## 2. Chapter

### Theoretical lenses

#### 2.1 Introduction

The marginalization of women in universities has been the subject of a wide research literature which documents the challenges faced by women in these institutions (Gaskell & Mullen 2009; Acker 1980; Acker & Feuerverger 1996; Bagilhole 1993; Reay 2000; Bagilhole 2000; Walker 1998; 1997; Skelton 2005a, b; Dillabough 1999; Baca Zinn 1988; Alfred 2001; Rassool 1995; Walsh 1995). Women and academia has been the subject of research done in various, if not all countries of the world, and these studies confirm common experiences of exclusion and marginalization. While the research methods and theoretical perspectives differ this literature documents continued discrimination, exclusion and marginalization of women in academia whether overt as in the 80s and 90s or more subtle as in the present day. Since the 1980s hundreds of quantitative and qualitative studies have been conducted on women in academia, all emphasising the minority positions women occupy in academia and the various forms of discrimination women in academia face. Trends in recent literature note that these forms of discrimination are no longer as overt as they were in the 1980s and 90s, but are rather subtle and related to almost invisible practices and attitudes embedded in the daily interactions of men and women in academia. Acker and Feuerverger (1996) have argued that women in academia are both psychologically and socially located on the margins of academia. Women are underrepresented in their institutions or departments in universities, which rather than making them invisible, puts them in the spotlight as they are separated and easily distinguished from the dominant groups, occupying a visible position on the margins (Sanders *et al.* 2008; Acker 1980:83; Bagilhole 1993:263, 269; Reay 2000:14; Bagilhole 2000:19; Dillabough 1999:377; Morley 2013:120).

As Dillabough (1999) argued for instance in relation to teaching, ‘knowledge about teaching is tied to gender codes ... which in turn produce unequal gendered teaching. Concepts such as ‘teacher professionalism’ are not ungendered with women finding themselves outside the definition of ‘professional’ (Dillabough 1999) and therefore occupying minority positions, and positions of lower status and pay in relation to men in the academy (Acker 1980:81; Acker & Feuerverger 1996:14; Bagilhole 1993:261, 262; Reay 2000:18; Bagilhole 2000:19; Walker 1998), often devoting more time to teaching, administration and care work than their male counterparts but when important decisions are to be made they are excluded (Bagilhole 1993:267; Baca Zinn 1988:126).

A significant shift in the literature on women in academia has taken place from defining women as the problem to problematizing academia itself, the structures, practices, and cultures of universities and the gendered nature of relations within the university space (Husu 2001:173; See also Acker 1980:86). This literature examines how dominant male ideologies and the gendered nature of academia constantly ‘others, marginalises and excludes’ the academic woman (Acker & Feuerverger 1996; see also Skelton 2005a:6; Skelton 2005b:325; Dillabough 1999:347). Women in academia have been described as ‘Outsiders Within’, ‘the Other Academics’, ‘Outsiders in the Sacred Grove’, ‘Maids of Academe’, “Donkeys of the University”, ‘Dim Dross’, and ‘Space Invaders’, with concepts like ‘glass ceilings’, ‘chilly climates’ and ‘Ivory Towers’ used to describe universities (Collin 1986; Acker 1980; Sanders *et al.* 2008; Alfred 2001; Mabokela 2003; Reay 2000; Aisenberg & Harrington 1988; Shackelton 2007; Harley 2008; Heward 1994). Husu (2001) however criticised the use of these metaphors which continue to portray women as individuals with problems, hence diverting our attention from the ‘complex process in which gender inequalities are reproduced but also resisted and challenged’. More latterly a literature emphasising how marginalization is resisted and challenged has emerged (see for instance Alfred 2001:64; Blue 2001:135; Bagilhole 1993:2002). As Luke & Gore (1992) noted sexist, patriarchal and phallogocentric attitudes and practices in academia are embedded in the “politics of knowledge” that prevails in the academy.

## 2.2 Theorising Marginality

Studies on women in academia have been framed in various ways using constructionist accounts, interpretive accounts, critical theory, post-structural and feminist thought to analyse and examine how women have been marginalised in academia and the effects of this marginalisation on the identities of women. Reay (2004:35) employed Bourdieu's concepts of academic habitus and cultural capital to understand the powerful identity position of those who are located in the centre of academia by virtue of being constructed as the privileged academic 'norm'. The concept of academic habitus refers to "a feel for the game, an almost unconscious knowledge of the implicit rules, which allow for ascendancy in any given field" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992 in Reay 2004:34). Denker (1992) employed Judith Butler's concept of performativity to examine how gender is 'done' by both men and women in academia and how this performance of gender re-inscribes unequal gender roles and expectations.

Weisberger (1992:431) sees marginality as a set of social coordinates within which marginal persons construct responses designed to resolve or alleviate their ambivalence. He describes marginality as "a condition of inequality" (where the individual occupies a weak position and is faced with the dominance of the alien culture in which they must operate in areas such as language, habits and religion). To be on the losing end of power relations is to occupy a position of weakness and inequality. The marginal position occupied by women in the academy has been described by Patricia Hill Collins (1986:14) as "outsiders within", meaning that those women who are *inside* the university are, through deeply embedded discriminatory practices and processes, constantly situated or positioned outside the structures and inner workings of the university system. As Collins (1986) suggests, this 'outside within' status has provided these women with a specific viewpoint on the self, family and society.

This notion of 'outsiders within' is similar to an idea proposed by Spivak: the concept of 'outside/in' the teaching machine (Spivak 1990a, 1990b, 1993, 1998). Spivak defines marginality as "the name of a certain constantly changing set of representations" (Spivak

1993:69). That is, marginality is never one thing, it presents itself in various forms and evokes various reactions, thus the marginalised subject embodies a ‘constantly changing set of representations’ of the self. Central to this understanding is the idea that marginality is always constructed in relation to the centre. Women who occupy this ‘marginal’ position are never wholly outside the teaching machine (academy), but can rather be understood as outside/in, Spivak contends. As Spivak argues, the relationship between the centre and margin ‘is never clear cut, one bleeds into the other at all times’ (Spivak 1993:31). One cannot clearly delineate the relationship between the centre and margin; it cannot be easily defined or identified. Spivak sees studies of marginality as arising from a suspicion that “what is at the centre often hides a repression” and it is this centre/margin binary that Spivak hopes to deconstruct (Spivak 1998:105). Marginality in this context can be described as being outside or the ‘other’ in a particular system or structure however this position is never constituted as wholly outside the structure but is outside in relation to the centre (Spivak 1998; 1990a, 1990b; hooks 1989:206). Spivak thus sees the centre and the margin as intertwined and constitutive of each other (Spivak 1998:105; Morton 2003).

Spivak relies on Derrida’s strategy of deconstruction and Foucault’s conception of the nexus of power and knowledge to situate her thinking on marginality (Jackson & Mazzei 2012:7). For Derrida, our ways of knowing and understanding concepts relies on their similarity to, or difference (binary opposition) from, another thing, for example, absent/present, man/woman, inside/outside, as one thing is what the other is not (Derrida 1982:9-14; Morton 2003:25). Hence ‘the process by which we make meaning of things is determined by how one “sign” differs from another sign’ (Derrida 1982:9-14; Morton 2003:25). A thing is defined in relation to what it is not, so absent is defined by the lack of presence, female is defined by its difference from male, marginal is defined by its difference from the centre and outside is defined by it not being inside (Morton 2003:26; Jackson & Mazzei 2012:37). Spivak’s deconstruction of marginality does not see the centre/margin as bounded space; she writes that as the margin or ‘outside’ enters an institution or the teaching machine, what kind of teaching machine it enters will determine its contours” (Jackson & Mazzei 2012:37). Hence there are varied forms of marginalities, and the individual that occupies that marginal space never experiences it in the same way as another or



as the same person would in a different setting. The deconstruction of the margin/centre binary therefore reveals the interconnectedness between what is marginal and what is at the centre, the two constitute each other as the centre defines the marginal and the marginal reveals the characteristics of the centre, thus displacing the difference between the margin and the centre (Spivak 1998:107; Jackson & Mazzei 2012:7).

By selecting who and what is marginal, the centre excludes it and differentiates what is marginal and what is central. Spivak thus defines marginality ‘not as a positive space ‘outside’ of the centre, but as constituted within the centre (Jackson & Mazzei 2012:7; Borsa 1990:37). She states ‘politics is the prohibition of marginality that is implicit in the production of any explanation’, thus what inhabits the prohibited margin of a particular explanation specifies its particular politics’ (Spivak 1998:106, 113). The marginal thus reveals what the centre is, the structure and practices of a particular system, since it is this structure that defines what is marginal.

Using Foucault’s concept of power/knowledge, Spivak positioned the university (teaching machine) as a vehicle for power and knowledge that seeks to locate and define what counts as authentic inhabitants of the margin (Jackson & Mazzei 2012:7; Spivak 1998:108). She defines the university as the ‘aggregative apparatus of Euro-American university education where the weapons for the play of power/knowledge as *puissance/connaissance* are daily put together according to a history rather different from our own’ (Spivak 1993:58, 59). That is the ideologies, structures and practices prevalent in university spaces are hinged on traditional and inherited power structures and knowledge formations (with deeply embedded masculine ideologies) which ensures that the university does things because they have been done that way and because those ways of being and doing secure rather than unsettle power hierarchies (Jackson & Mazzei 2012:42). Spivak argues, ‘as our explanations make our actions and ideas possible, our role is to produce and we are reproduced by these explanations’, that is as we explain a particular cause of action, these explanations in a way produce us or make us what we are, in terms of the powers that guide the society we live in (Spivak 1998:108). Therefore our

explanation of a particular action is always guided by the dominant ideology (power) that guides our society and what we are, what makes us is already defined by powers that guide our society (Spivak 1998:108). Hence, the marginalised as defined by the centre is a product of the powers that guides that centre (university) or society. Spivak argues that power is not an institution and it is not a structure, it is not a certain strength that some are endowed with, it is the name that one lends to a complex strategic situation in a particular society (Spivak 1993:29). Spivak sees power as productive, she states 'power as productive rather than merely repressive resolves itself in a certain way if you don't forget the ordinary sense of *pouvoir/savoir*, repression is then seen as a species of production; there is no need to valorise repression as negative and production as positive' (Spivak 1993:38). Therefore the marginalised subject is constantly being produced and reproduced according to the dominant discourses in the teaching machine.

Closely related to the connectedness of the margin/centre binary, is what Spivak termed the impossible 'no'. Spivak suggests that the marginal must inhabit a particular structure to be able to critique it as one cannot do so from outside that structure. She states, "The only way I can hope to suggest how the centre itself is marginal, is by not remaining outside in the margin and pointing an accusing finger at the centre, I might do it rather by implicating myself in that centre and sensing what politics makes it marginal" (Spivak 1998:107). Therefore to critique a particular structure one must inhabit that structure in order to understand the practices and workings of that structure and in so doing one's rejection is never complete. Spivak notes 'even as, outside, I insist that our choices are always interested, the machine assures that' (1993:XV). What Spivak is speaking of here is the fact that no matter what position we take on a given issue, the extent of our actions or reaction is determined by the machine or affected by the machine or power/knowledge strategies in a given institution. Each reaction is in relation to power/knowledge strategies of the centre; even our various acts of agency, freedom or resistance are never wholly 'outside' the teaching machine.

For Spivak, oppression and victimhood, though part of marginality and a dominant occurrence in the lives of most developing world women, should not be the focus of marginality studies, rather

the focus should be on developing a vigilance for the systematic appropriation of the social capacity to produce a differential that is one basis of exchange into the networks of cultural, class and gender power (Spivak 1990:228; 1993:70). That is, our focus should be not be on the positive or negative aspects of marginality but on ways in which we can produce a difference which may effect change in the dominant ways. Spivak notes that the post-colonial teacher can help develop this vigilance against the continual — to her mind, ‘pathetic’ -- reinscription of victimage (Spivak 1993:70). She thus argues for reversing, displacing and seizing the apparatus of value coding that belongs to dominance (Spivak 1993:70). The focus of marginality studies should then be on how power relations are negotiated, resisted and accepted by individuals in a given society.

### **2.3 University Structures and Practices: Patriarchy, Sexism and Phallogentrism**

Universities have been described as highly complex organisations with deeply entrenched structures and practices that are dominated by masculine ideologies, which have affected social relations in these settings (Acker & Webber 2009; Acker & Feuerverger 1996; Reay 2000:14; Skelton 2005a:6; Skelton 2005b:325; Dillabough 1999:347; Walker 1997; Alfred 2001:59; Baca Zinn *et al.* 1988; Rassool 1995:38). According to Luke & Gore (1992:198) as women enter academia, they encounter what Foucault termed ‘the juridico-discursive’ power of the law, which guides the social organisation of academic life. This power which is male centred then guides the attitudes and practices of both men and women in academia. Literature on women in academia constantly emphasises how universities are very much organised along masculine lines which excludes and marginalises women in these institutions (Skelton 2005:325; Dillabough 1999:347; Baca Zinn 1988:126). This literature finds that women in academia face various forms of discrimination, inequality, oppression and marginalization which are deeply embedded in the day to day interaction amongst academic staff. Acker & Webber (2009:486) argued that there is a wide gap between the point of view of women academics and the structures, cultures and practices of universities. The academic woman then has to constantly negotiate her position, credibility and identity with her male counterparts and sometimes with other women in senior positions. Wright *et al.* (2007:153), noted that with academia being male dominated, most

women entering this institutional space are aware of their presence presenting a threat to their male counterparts, who in-turn make them feel 'uncomfortable and out of place as outsiders-within or 'insiders-out'. Ferguson (1984:25 in Acker & Feuerverger 1996) argued that this outsider status may be as a result of women's refusal to accept and embody certain features of the ideal academic which are not in line with their values. That is, the refusal to accept certain structures and practice of academia relegates the academic woman to the margins and reinforces masculine discourses.

Women are systematically excluded even prior to their entrance into academia. Bagilhole (1993:264) refers to the way in which existing employment practices exclude women because they rely on informal recruitment processes in male-dominated networks -- with job descriptions and duties set according to male ideologies. The appraisal system is another area in which women academics face discrimination. Since male ideologies and masculine definitions of excellence and achievement dominate the system and structures of most universities, it becomes difficult for women to be promoted to senior positions. Men distribute and redistribute power among themselves and since there are few academic women in senior academic posts, it becomes difficult for women to enter into senior positions (Skelton 2005b:325; Walker 1997). Success is defined and constructed according to standards that suit men's embodied experience which is constructed as the 'norm'. Women are prevented from participating in the success debate and challenging the norms that prevail in the construction of what it means to be recognised as successful. In order to mould themselves to those norms women have to work harder (Acker 1980:85). Bagilhole (1993:267), further argues that the way in which the university is organised according to hierarchies, prevents women who are not in senior positions from participating fully in important decision making committees (see also Baca Zinn 1988:126). Research on race and academia has shown that the experiences Black women have in academia are significantly different from their White counterparts (Davis *et al.* 2011; Turner 2002; Wright 2007; Shackleton 2007; Harley 2008). Turner (2002) argues that Black women continually experience and live out multiple marginalities. Wright *et al* (2007:150, 151) argued that these experiences of marginalization are worse for Black women in predominantly White universities as the intersection of race and gender which is accompanied by a lack of sense of belonging, being

‘othered’, being denied collegiate support, endorsement and patronage, being taken for granted, works to make these women feel particularly ‘out of place’.

Using Elizabeth Grosz’s (1988) three-tiered model of ‘feminist intervention’ Luke & Gore (1992) argued that women’s experiences of oppression in the academy are influenced by sexist, patriarchal and phallogocentric knowledge systems. According to Grosz (in Luke & Gore 1992:196) “sexist knowledge consists of a series of specifically determinable acts of discrimination, privileging men and depriving women”. Women, especially Black women are physically different to the White men who have traditionally dominated university spaces and are excluded from being part of the ‘old boys club’ or ‘insider codes’ which require being recognisably ‘male’ and having learned the codes and ways of being in order to be accepted (Luke & Gore 1992:197; see also West 1995). Such codes may involve for instance being able to converse on issues like sports and learning the ‘in’ intellectual jokes and witticisms (Luke & Gore 1992:197). These insider codes are not shared with women and sometimes also not with Black men, which only widens the gap, legitimizes and validates those forms of knowledge, while at the same time excluding women (Luke & Gore 1992). Luke & Gore (1992:197) argue that embedded in these insider codes are various forms of sexism which women continually have to live with and that may be impossible to challenge. Other research does however show that women have found ways of challenging these practices. They have developed their own insider codes, witticism and anti-language and networks which serve as a survival strategy (Alfred 2001:64; Blue 2001:135; Bagilhole 1993:2002).

Institutional structures thus organise and regulate women and men, differently valuing their contributions and providing differential access to self-determination and thus reinforcing a context that legitimizes sexist discourses. The backroom deals men make on hiring and promotion, on who gets funding or whose work is good enough to be published are embedded, West (1995:63) argues, in individual understandings and assumptions about excellence and scholarship that cannot be easily identified or challenged. Luke & Gore (1992:203) further note that women have to work harder to prove their intelligence and be recognised. They refer to this

as form of ‘colonization’ which forces women to become that which they wish to critique, to become something they do not want to be, in order to become the acceptable ‘good’ academic. These forms of silencing are subtle as women are allowed to voice their concerns and opinions but underlying practices, expectations and prejudices work to ensure that their views have less weight, are disregarded, or seen as inappropriate (Skelton 2005b:329; Walker 1997:372; Alfred 2001:62).

For example when a sexist joke is made, a woman in order not to seem antagonistic, aggressive or unable to take a joke (and hence overly emotional), ignores such comments. Although vigorous debate and assertive argument is valued in the academy, women avoid taking an aggressive stance on issues they are passionate about as confrontation does not conform to the socially constructed idea of the good woman, which in turn reconfirms the stereotype of women being less capable intellectuals (Acker 1980:84; Luke 1994:216; Bagilhole 2000:29; Luke & Gore 1992:198; Walker 1998:340; Baca Zinn 1988:132). When women do voice their opinions they often report that these go unacknowledged until (re)voiced by a man. Silencing makes women feel invisible and want to retreat to the margins so as to avoid victimization and discrimination. (Reay 2000:18; Skelton 2005b:329; Dillabough 1999:377; Alfred 2001:62).

Another way in which academic women are silenced is that, once they are identified as ‘feminists’ – that is to say people who challenge gender stereotypes and injustices -- conservative males tend to ignore or avoid them completely and they are only consulted on ‘gender issues’ as if this is their sole area of expertise (Luke 1994:218; Acker 1980:83, 84; Reay 2000:18; Dillabough 1999:379). This form of exclusion effectively erases the academic woman’s disciplinary knowledge and expertise. As Reay (2000:19) suggested this may be as a result of what she termed ‘academic hierarchies of knowledge’ which recognises and values highly theorised views distanced from empirical work. Similarly, Acker (1980:86) argued, that what she termed the ‘deficit model for women’ portrays women as ‘not being good enough’ because they cannot embody characteristics which are masculine but are constructed as universal and gender-neutral.

As a result women have to fight to be recognised as equals. This sometimes involves accepting the prescribed rules, thus re-inscribing them, and at other times rejecting and attempting to re-invent those rules. Compromises and penalties are attached to both strategies. It must be noted that women also silence each other. Some women in senior positions can use the power they have to ensure the development of their own careers while oppressing and marginalising other women in the lower ranks. Reay (2000:14) argued that men as well as elite women can use ‘hierarchical ways of working very effectively to promote their own careers and exploit the marginalised subordinate’. Thus Luke & Gore (1992:206) argue that while patriarchy has allowed equal status for some, this does not guarantee freedom from the fundamentally unequal relations that define the academic work context.

The ‘universal male’ of phallogentric knowledges construes women according to the model of the masculine, whether by demanding sameness or conformity to its strictures, or by defining women in terms of opposition/distinction or complementarity (Luke & Gore 1992:196; Acker 1980:85). The universal male “is a rational impassioned thinker, a builder of civilizations and a military strategist, an objective law maker and observer, a writer and speaker of doctrine and truth” (Luke & Gore 1992:207). Because ‘woman’, in contrast, is not universally male, she is defined conceptually by her lack and otherness which “translates at the level of social practice into her exclusion, subjugation and inferiority” (Luke & Gore 1992:107). Traits construed ‘feminine’ in this context are perpetually repudiated. Women constantly have to work harder to prove themselves – to prove that they are able to overcome their feminine lack. But, as Acker & Feuerverger (1996) argued despite this extra effort demanded of, and given by, women academics, most report feeling unappreciated and unrecognised.

Shackleton (2007:23) has argued that institutional culture which is the normalised lived experiences of individuals in an organisation influences every aspect of that institution’s life as it guides the beliefs and behaviours of individuals within that setting. She found that in most organisations, especially universities, gender was dismissed as an institutional dynamic, thus re-

inscribing and legitimizing the invisibility of the male norm and reinforcing the minority status of women in academia (Shackleton 2007:38). Research has noted the effect of socially constructed gender roles on how women are treated in professional positions. For instance they are expected to make tea or take the minutes of meetings reflecting underlying assumptions that women are best suited to being tea makers or secretaries (See Skelton 2005; Dillabough 1999; Acker & Feuerverger 1996). Women are associated with the caring professions of nursing, teaching and social work, and in the academic setting this translates into the expectation that academic women will care for and about students while the men carry on with more important intellectual work (Acker & Feuerverger 1996). Academic women are supposed to help students with both academic and non-academic problems; they are to have open doors to students, which may leave little time for research. While caring is expected of women, it is at the same time devalued whereas the more isolated and self-serving pursuit of research and publication is what is required in order to gain promotion. To refuse to play the expected domesticated role results in social sanction but on the other hand to fit perfectly into these roles means re-inscribing them (Dillabough 1999:381; Acker & Feuerverger 1996). Women in the academy are therefore caught in an impasse of some sort, having to choose between being what Dillabough termed either the 'teacher as mother' or the 'rational teacher' (Dillabough 1999:382; Walker 1997; Giddings, 1998).

Discriminatory performance pressure is closely related to the problem of understanding and confronting the gendered biases in what is accepted as professional knowledge and practice with men being in a position to impose their understanding of the world on women and the experiences of women disregarded as irrational, invalid and less convincing. As a result women may find it difficult if not impossible to achieve equal status with men. Acker (1980:86) argued that there is a 'women's culture' that is invisible to men and thus not recognised by them. This culture is defined as a way of looking at the world through the lens of experiences which may be unique to women, such as menstruation and childbirth. The fact that the 'rule makers' do not understand what it feels like to view the world through these lenses means that the significance of these experiences is relegated to the background. When women come across as having a different perspective to the expected norm, they are 'othered' and the discrimination which they



face often goes unacknowledged (see Fries-Britt & Kelly 2005:239; Walker 1997:375; Epstein 1995:56). Hence the inequalities of women in the academy are deeply entrenched in the structure of the university which is influenced by societal norms and values. Since the academic system is and continues to be identified as a male system and male dominated, women's work and efforts in the academic setting are constantly evaluated, scrutinised and determined by men. As Luke (1994:231) points out 'women's work in the academy whether as student teachers, markers or research assistants' continues to be largely that of the understudies of men.

## **2.4 Managing Academic Life and Personal Life**

Scholars (see for instance Reay 2000:18, 20; Morley 2013:122; Bagilhole 2000:20) have noted that the tension between the 'tenure clock' and the 'biological clock' has been a source of anxiety among academic women. The stresses of children, career, anxiety about appraisal and evaluation constantly affects the academic woman who has to be able to cope with the demands of what Coser (1974 in Acker 1980:82; Thomas 1998:91) described as two 'greedy institutions'. Cole and Zukerman in (Denker 1992:108) argued that a form of 'academic' death seems to occur in women's careers after marriage and child birth. Research has noted the difficulties women face negotiating the academic and the personal. According to Denker (1992:108) academic women have to make hard choices when it comes to making decisions about life, family and academia. Either you are on one side or the other and while one offers the dream of gaining tenure, recognition or promotion the other does not and those who have tried balancing the two end up dealing with stress-induced health problems, sleep deprivation and reduced productivity at work (Acker & Armenti 2004:3, 12- 14). Morley 2013:122; Fries-Britt & Kelly 2005:239).

Skelton (2005b:325) argued that to be accepted as competent and successful many academic women opt for a masculinised presentation of the self, often downplaying or hiding completely the extent of their domestic and child care commitments, which only serves to reconfirm the devaluation of the feminine in the academic space and results in constant feelings of inner tension (See also Rees 2007:15). At the same time society places a heavy premium on what

Sharon Hays (1996) has termed 'intensive mothering'. Hays argues that the form that this ideology takes in the contemporary period is to treat the impulse to mother as the natural instinct of women, or at least 'normal' women and to treat children as having an objectively defined set of absolute needs which require intense commitment on the part of primary care givers – who are usually women. Hays (1996: X) argues that the ideology of intensive mothering is a gendered model that advises mothers to expend a tremendous amount of time, energy, and money in raising their children'. For Hays (1996:2) there is a paradox here: women are increasingly part of the paid work force in Western societies at the same time as the dominant conception of mothering in those societies' pressures women to devoting increasing energy, time and ingenuity to practices of child care. The result is that many mothers in the paid work force must now meet 'the dual demands of paid work and child care'.

In common with other working women, academic women experience being caught in a double bind of the expectations of being a mother and an academic. These two roles moreover are often constructed as polar opposites – the one having to do with the disembodied life of the mind, the intellectual and the rational while the other belongs in the realm of bodily processes, emotion and menial labour. As a result it is particularly difficult to be both a woman/mother/wife and an academic – or at least to be both a 'good' mother and a 'good' academic (see Raddon 2002:378 in Acker& Armenti 2004:16).

Since it is virtually impossible to perfectly balance the two, women must choose to resolve the tension in favour of one side or the other. Those that choose a more professional identity, have to pay a price which may involve giving up on having children, being socially disapproved of as bad mothers, broken relationships because they do not meet the expectation of being the primary care giver, or having little leisure time to themselves (Bagilhole 1993:264; Bagilhole 2000:20; Morley 2013:122; Walker 1998:345; Acker & Feuerwerker 1996:13). A complex question of the timing of child bearing affects women's careers to a far greater extent than men's (Acker & Armenti 2004:10; Bagilhole 2000:20). For academic women who are also primary care givers, work never really stops. At home they have to take care of their children and ensure the

household runs smoothly and at work they also have to work harder than the average man in order to prove their worth. While male academics often have full support from their wives on the home front, women are expected to juggle these responsibilities while meeting or, often, exceeding the same work performance expectations as their male colleagues (Acker 1980:82; Bagilhole 2000:20; Denker 1992:108).

Skelton (2005b:325) has argued that some women in searching for a solution to the work/family divide problem have adopted a more masculine attitude in their academic careers, changing aspects of their identities to fit the conceived idea of a 'good academic'. However as Dillabough (1999:381) argued these masculinised identities translate into subjugation rather than female agency. Denker (1992:109) also argued that women academics who also happen to be mothers face the risk of having this identity thrust upon them as defining their primary role while marginalizing other roles which they may wish to have equal importance attached to, such as that of the researcher or teacher.

## **2.5 Intersections of gender, race and class**

While women's experiences in the academy differ depending on for instance their race, class, gender, disciplinary area, the institutional context, age and generation, common threads are discrimination, power differences and invisibility. Within this commonality, some experiences are specific. Particularly in South Africa where the context is so heavily racialised, Black and White women's experiences might be expected to differ. For example, Black women are expected to speak on issues of race from a 'Black point of view', hence they are seen as representatives of their race or gender in ways that is seldom expected of say, White men or women (Harley 2008:24; Luke 1994:219; Acker 1980:83; Walker 1997:317). Also, Black female academics are expected to perform their professional duties, their domestic roles, and at the same time, serve on committees as 'diversity' representatives, be the advocates of Black issues, teach courses on diversity and be translators of 'Black culture' for the White centre (Harley 2008:24). As a result, Harley (2008) argues that Black women in predominantly White institutions suffer

from what she terms 'race fatigue' as a result of being overextended and undervalued. Harley (2008) describes working class Black women as the 'maids of academe' because unlike their White female counterparts who have the support of socially powerful White men, Black women have no support of that kind. Walker (1998) also argues that race has advantaged White South African women to the detriment of Black women, which has hindered their claim to sisterhood. That is not to say that White women have not been historically disadvantaged. In academia they too face discriminatory practices and have to negotiate their marginal positions (Walker 1998). The differences need to be acknowledged while avoiding the temptation to create hierarchies of oppression. As Luke argues (1994), saying one form of oppression is worse or better than the other may lead to a different form of silencing.

Some women academics do find ways of resisting these forms of marginalization and discrimination by creating safe spaces for themselves, refusing to own a negative self-image, and insisting on the performance of a separate and different identity from what is expected (Alfred 2001: 64; Blue 2001:135). But these forms of resistance are difficult to maintain without becoming energy sapping and can sometimes be read as retreating or failure, serving to maintain the existing hierarchies rather than overturn them. A number of more far-reaching solutions have been proposed including for instance the development of more gender inclusive curricula, strategies for the effective implementation of anti-discrimination policies (Luke 1994:225; Baca Zinn 1988:136), awareness-raising activities for both men and women (Bagilhole 1993:271; Acker & Armenti 2004:3, 4), encouragement and support for younger academic women who can benefit from the advice of more experienced women on how to negotiate power relations with their male counterparts, which might come in the form of mentors, role models and support groups (Jarmon 2001; Baca Zinn 1988:136). Sander *et al* (2008, 309) found that the perception of a friendly environment by women, affects positively their productivity and development in academe. It is crucial that women find ways, in their personal lives, of challenging the social norms which tie them to a traditional role of motherhood and family in a way that makes it difficult to be both a mother and an academic.

In this light, it is therefore important to examine those structures and practices that enable the continued discrimination experienced by women in the academy including those practices that may not seem gender related at first glance. As Morley and Walsh (1995:2) argued, the way women negotiate their experience of patriarchal power in the academy can be revealed through a gendered deconstruction of the academy. The focus of research, Husu argued, should be on showing how this marginal positionality of women in academia is negotiated, challenged and resisted (See Husu 2001). The present project takes up this challenge, focusing on the experiences of first generation women in the academy as a prism through which to view the negotiation of gendered social, personal and political relations in the university.

## 3. Chapter

### Research Methods

#### 3.1 Introduction

This study is based on qualitative research conducted within an interpretive paradigm. Qualitative research rests on the assumption that individuals play an active role in the construction of their social reality, therefore the researcher's interest is in how individuals make meaning of their lives and experiences (Creswell 2009 in Poulos 2011:75; Boeije 2010:6). Research conducted in the interpretive mode focuses on understanding social life and how people construct meaning in natural settings (Neuman 2011:102). That is, the researcher's aim is to gain a deeper understanding of aspects of social life by examining how meaning is perceived by individuals in that social space or world. The goal is to gain an intimate understanding of how individuals experience everyday life, a particular phenomenon or a particular social space, and their feelings or the meanings they attach to events. To gain such understanding, the researcher attempts to see events through the eyes of the participants (Neuman 2011:102). To this end, the researcher examines the lived experiences of individuals to discover insights into how identities are constructed. The researcher must then grasp the meaning of actions by interpreting what the individual is doing or what lies behind the individual's words (Lincoln & Denzin 2000:191). 'Interpretivism thus assumes an epistemological understanding of understanding' whereby the researcher gains knowledge of the actions of the individual and is said to acquire understanding when the meaning of an action is identified (Lincoln & Denzin 2000:193).

My focus here is on first generation academic women -- women who were the first in their family to graduate with a university degree and who went on to take up academic careers. Research shows that the informal cultures available to students from middle and especially upper class families play a role in enabling success and successful negotiation of relationships in the

university (See Bourdieu 1986; Lareau & Weininger 2008; Martin 2012:427, 444). While there is a body of literature documenting the disadvantages that first generation students encounter in terms of effectively negotiating relations in the university setting (Heymann & Carolissen 2012:1378; Timmey & Chapman 2012; Bangeni & Kapp 2005). Heymann & Carolissen (2012:1139), far less has been written about first generation academics. Universities have been described as highly classed, raced and gendered institutions, with a defined dominant cultural identity and traditionally the preserve of the rich (See Bangeni & Kapp 2005:3; Martin 2011:427). But as Bourdieu argues, privilege does not reside in the possession of economic capital alone. Those who lack prior family familiarity with the academic setting may lack the social and cultural capital to negotiate such settings,

Using an interpretive framework, the study tries to answer the question how do first generation women academics in South Africa narrate the complexity of their experience of being ‘outside in’ the academy? More particularly, I was interested in coming to an understanding of:

- the experiences of the participants;
- what these experiences say about the negotiation of access into and survival in the academy;
- what these experiences say about the way in which power is exercised and negotiated in the academy;
- what the participants’ narratives say about how existing gendered, classed and raced relations in the academy are reproduced; and
- How the participants talk about negotiating marginality.

The aim of inquiring into the experiences of first generation women in South Africa is to understand how these women in the academy make sense of events in their lives and the meanings that they attach to these events. According to Bagilhole (1993:216), we begin to understand some of the facts which limit women’s access to, and success within, the profession

by examining evidence of women who have survived within the system. As Barbe *et al* (1989) stated “women’s stories illustrate the construction of gendered identities in specific social context and the interplay of individual agency and social dynamics in the shaping of identities”.

### 3.2 Participants

I took ‘first-generation academic women’ to be those women academics who are the first in their families to graduate and who now occupy academic positions. The fifteen participants were drawn from a historically White (HWU) and a historically Black South African university (HBU). The sample was purposively constructed to include a diversity of participants based on background, class, ethnicity, discipline, ‘race’ and sexuality (Seidman 2006:51).

The inclusion criterion was that participants needed to be working in academic jobs, and to be the first in their families to graduate with a university degree. Some difficulty was experienced in relaying this definition to possible participants and as a result, five interviews of the initial 20 interviews conducted were excluded. Excluded were those whose parents went to university but who did not graduate and those who had a family member who had attained a university degree.

The table below provides details of individuals who participated in the study.

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>‘Race’</b>	<b>Academic Rank</b>
PhD	Catherine	White	Senior Lecturer
PhD	Thandiswa	Black	Senior Lecturer
PhD	Tawanga	Black	Senior Lecturer
PhD	Natalie	White	Senior Lecturer
PhD	Inga	Indian	Senior Lecturer
PhD	Chloe	White	Senior Lecturer



PhD	Mandisa	Black	Senior Lecturer
PhD	Sophie	White	Senior Lecturer
PhD	Evelyn	White	Senior Lecturer
PhD	Rosaline	White	Senior Lecturer
PhD	Emily	White	Senior Lecturer
Master's	Lesidi	Black	Lecturer
Master's	Phumzile	Black	Lecturer
Master's	Simphiwe	Black	Lecturer
Master's	Puleng	Black	Lecturer

**Table 1:** Participant demographics

All the participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A) which explained the nature, aims of the research, the requirements of their involvement and their rights with regards to withdrawal from the study if they became uncomfortable at any point which was also relayed verbally during the interview sessions (See Seidman 2006:65, 66). Participants were informed of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity. The latter entailed not only the use of pseudonyms but also the removal or alteration from the transcripts of all other information that could reveal the identity of the participants.

Interviews were conducted in the participant's institution where they taught or in a few cases in the participant's home. The interviews were audio taped to ensure an uninterrupted session and clarity; this method preserves a participant's words and enables the researcher to go back to the original data in cases of uncertainty (Seidman 2006:114).

The interviews were open ended, but guided by an interest in the experiences of the participants in relation to their journey into and through academia, and how they negotiated the academic terrain on a day-to-day basis both on first arrival and currently.

These interviews provided a means of understanding individuals lived experiences and their perception of these experiences (Seidman 2006:9; Kavale 2007:1). As Seidman (2006:7) argues, individuals' consciousness gives access to the most complicated social and educational issues as these issues are abstractions based on the concrete experience of people. Transcriptions were sent to the participants to ensure that I had captured their words correctly, avoided misinterpretation (see Seidman 2006:64) and avoided compromising their anonymity.

The interviews were analysed using narrative thematic analysis. Drawing on Spivak's theoretical proposition of marginalised women never being outside the centre, I interrogate the question of being outside in relation to the centre, never being wholly 'othered' or excluded even while being situated at the margins. Narratives can be seen as a form of discourse that arranges events in people's lives. They lend coherence to the lived experiences of people so as to offer insight into how the world is perceived by a person, how meaning is made from experiences and how, consequently, identities are constructed (Riessman 2008; Elliot 2005:4; Clandinin & Connelly 1990:2; Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Webster & Mertova 2007:1; Ochsberg 1994:113; Sandlowski 1999; Bell 2002; Linde 1993:12; Coleman 1999:134). As Connelly & Clandinin (1990:2) argue, people lead storied lives by nature and the task of the narrative researcher is to describe such lives by collecting the stories and writing about them. Narratives are defined by Hinchman & Hinchman (in Elliot 2005:3) as discourse with a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offer insights about the world and or peoples' experience of it.

In the process of narrating people are making meaning of their experiences; the process of telling involves a temporal ordering of, a selecting of, events and giving these events cohesion,

meaning and direction to enable understanding from an outside perspective (Webster & Metrova 2007:1; Elliott 2005:7). Thus as Clandinin & Connelly (2000:19) point out, the focus is not just on how individuals experience the here and now, but also on how 'life is experienced in a continuum', on the processes and events that forms what becomes an experience. Narratives reveal individual identities, as stories are told, the teller reveals who he/she is and is not, but as Riessman (2008:8) argues, identity is never stable but is rather constantly changing, 'always producing itself through a process of being and becoming, belonging and longing to become (see also Elliott 2005:36; Bell 2002:209). Hence as narratives reveal identities, these identities are constantly changing in the light of new experiences or old experiences newly understood, even in the process of telling.

Narrative analysis involves an examination of the underlying assumptions that a story illustrates. It forces the researcher to pay attention to the text or story before them, focusing on discourse or the telling and the devices used to make meaning, (Webster & Mertova 2007:4; Sandlowski 1999:162; Bell 2002:202; Riessman 2008:11, 13). It rests on the assumption that we are meaning making human beings and that this process of making meanings is done through the 'imposition of story structures' (Bell 2002:202) on the random and inchoate events of our lives. We select randomly for storying those experiences that fit our preconceived ideas, thus reflecting our assumptions (Bell 2002:202; Webster & Mertova 2007:1). Hence the process of analysing and making meaning of narratives is a collaboration between the researcher and the participant (Clandinin & Connelly 2000:20). In analysing narratives the researcher treats the participants' stories as a rendition of life as perceived by the teller, not as an accurate reconstruction of life events (Webster & Mertova 2007:3). Participants select those experiences that they consider important and worth telling. The aim of analysis is to present a supportable and well-grounded analysis not the 'truth' of an individual's experience (Webster & Mertova 2007:4).

Thematic narrative analysis is the analysis of narrative interviews in relation to prior theoretical insights. When analysing data in relation to theory, the researcher identifies specific areas that reveal the theory or that is in tandem with theoretical explanations (Riessman 2008:60). Here the

language or form is not of interest to the researcher. In the present case I framed the stories told to me in relation to the conception of marginality which I have put forward. The analysis proceeded by way of identifying thematic categories in the data which were of relevance to the dominant theoretical construct of marginality that forms the bedrock of the thesis.

As Braun & Clarke (2006:79) note, there is no clear-cut method for conducting thematic analysis. But drawing from a range of approaches (Reissman 2008, Eillot 2005, Saldana 2009 and Braun & Clarke 2006), I isolated five phases of analysis: pre-coding, generating initial codes, pattern coding, identifying themes, reviewing themes and defining themes. Although the process of interviewing and verbatim transcribing gave me a sense of the data, I reread the data after all the interviews had been completed to have a general holistic sense of the participants' narratives. During this process I wrote memos and pre-coded by highlighting sections that struck me as relevant given my theoretical lens.

After pre-coding, I conducted an initial coding of the transcripts, using the qualitative analysis software programme NVivo. Coding can be described as attaching labels to different segments of data which may be in smaller bits or large chunks (See Chamaz 2006; Saldana 2009:81). Coding involves defining the actions on which the data rests, looking for assumptions, explaining taken for granted meaning and stating the significance of the points, comparing data with data and identifying gaps in already collected data (Chamaz 2006:50). In vivo coding entails using participants' words or the direct language of the participants (Saldana 2009:48), rather than imposing the researcher's words on the data. Using this method I was able to stick closely to the data. Although the study is guided by a strong theoretical framework, In vivo (verbatim) coding helped me to avoid imposing the theory on the data.

Following the in vivo coding, I conducted an initial coding this time with my theoretical constructs guiding my code development. I however tried to stick closely to the data rather than imposing meaning on the data (Chamaz 2006:52). Coding with Nvivo enabled me to do a

simultaneous coding. Simultaneous coding enables coding segments of the data that has already been coded (Saldana 2009:62). The codes were then created as nodes in Nvivo. The process of initial coding involves coding large segments of data in an attempt to interpret the narrative as a whole (See Reissman 2008). As Saldana (2009:10) argues, qualitative research requires a deep reflection on human experience. I divided each narrative into an account of a particular event and looked for the assumptions and meanings of each event after which I coded the different segments. After coding the first few transcripts, I began using codes applied to previous transcripts, although occasionally new codes had to be created, however the number reduced with each transcript. The initial coding yielded 153 codes which included merged In-Vivo codes and initial codes (See Appendix B)<sup>1</sup>.

While the Nvivo programme does not conduct the analysis for the researcher, it helps with analysis by providing the researcher with different ways of managing the data and analysis. The data highlighted and coded in this programme are referred to as nodes. Nodes can be linked in tree like structures which allows codes to be merged into categories, and sub-categories and linked to themes. After the first cycle coding, I began the focused coding to create categories by grouping the codes that had similar characteristics. Focused coding helps to sort, synthesize and organize large amount of data (Chamaz 2006:46). This process involves putting together different or linking codes with one another. During this process some codes are merged or deleted depending on their significance (Saldana 2009:149). This process of combining codes to create categories involves a consideration of how the codes may combine to form a theme (see Braun & Clance 2008:91). Once the different categories had been developed into themes I began identifying what each theme was about, which involved a constant comparison of the data, codes and categories. I then organised them into a coherent account consistent with the data (Braun & Clance 2008:92). Each theme was defined or described and data excerpts identified that exemplify the theme.

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<sup>1</sup> The nodes listed in the appendix do not reflect the child-nodes.

### **3.3 Saturation**

In the process of coding for themes in relation to the theory, gaps were revealed and new concepts came up that had not been suggested by my initial theoretical engagements. For example, the issue of ‘creating spaces’, ‘weird spaces’ and ‘toning down’. The process of comparing codes with categories, data and themes continued until a point was reached when no new ideas were emerging. It became clear at this stage that theoretical saturation was being reached such that the addition of further participants would not necessarily lead to significant new insights within the parameters of the study. Consequently, I stopped data collection and coding.

### **3.4 Interpretation**

The process of focused coding involves grouping codes into different categories which are later grouped into themes. Categorising involves considering how the different categories fit into the story as a whole, and grouping and regrouping the different categories to create an account (Braun & Clarke 2006:92). I grouped the categories according to their similarities and subsequently created an overarching definition of each category. The latter became my themes. Husu (2001:179) directs our attention to ways in which those constructed as marginal do not simply adopt this subject position as their own but also resist, challenge and reformulate the terms of domination. My interest is in precisely these moments of resistance and challenge (see for instance Alfred 2001; Bagilhole 1993b; 2002) but also in accommodation, adaptation and deployment of marginalisation as a resource for one’s own advancement and that of others. Guided by my core theoretical construct of marginality I discerned four categories which I captured in themes of ‘losing’, ‘using’, ‘refusing’ and ‘cruising’. The process of comparing the data with codes, categories and themes, led me to merge two themes together: using marginality as a resource and refusing marginality were merged into a theme on resistance.

<b>Losing</b>	<b>Resistance: Using and Refusing</b>	<b>Cruising</b>
Loss of Income	Being an inspiration	Experiencing acceptance
Different cultures (class race and gender)	Reversing harmful discourses	Managing Conflicting Responsibilities
Presumed incompetence	Resisting ‘in a nice way’	Working harder
Deriding the feminine	Speaking out	Being Exceptional
Unequal status	Rejecting dominant discourses	Dedication
Reproduction through Socialization	Creating Safe Spaces	Tokens and Safe Bets
Lack of acceptance	Creating Safe Spaces	Being able to cope and thrive
Leaving Academia	Selective acceptance	
Toning Down Ambitions		
Being hurt by marginality		

**Table 2: Categories and Themes.**

Because marginality can be seen as a constantly intertwining set of representations, I found that a single narrative could consist of different moments of losing, refusing, using and cruising. Each of these themes is defined and discussed in a separate chapter in the analytical body of the thesis.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Narratives can be seen as a mechanism for arranging the events in people's lives, offering insight into how meaning is made from experiences and how identities are constructed – as well as providing insight into the social and cultural setting within which those experiences arise (Riessman 2008; Elliot 2005; Clandinin & Connelly 1990, 2000; Linde 1993; Atkinson 1998; Seidman 2006). Participants were asked to relate their life experiences, their background, and the events that brought them into academia, their experience of academia, how they negotiated relations within the academy and how they understood these experiences. The interviews provided a means of understanding the participants' lived experiences and the sense they made of those experiences (Seidman 2006:9). In many instances the process of telling led to new realisations on the part of the participants themselves and evoked strong emotions. It was evident that negotiating the academic terrain was often tied up with deep personal struggles for these women. I was well aware of the vulnerabilities of the participants both during and after the interview process, thus I made every effort to ensure that participants' discomfort was minimised (Seidman 2006:64).

In narrative research reliability and validity is based on the field notes and transcripts of the interviews. According to Amesterdam & Bruner (2000 in Webster & Mertova 2007:5) stories derive their convincing power not from verifiability but from verisimilitude: they are true if they ring true – and the same is true for their interpretation. Polkinghorne (1998 in Webster and Mertova 2007:90) argues that validity cannot be measured but is associated with meaningful analysis, the trustworthiness of notes and transcripts and access to transcripts and a transparent analytical procedure.



## 4. Chapter

### Losing

#### 4.1 Introduction

I came in as a junior lecturer, at the bottom of the junior lecturer level, I have been at the bottom of the lecturer level and I have just got a promotion and they put me at the bottom of the senior lecturer level, in fact underneath the bottom of the senior lecture level, what's given as the mean average and I have been having negotiations since January with HR trying to resolve this and I don't understand, how then do you ever get off the bottom. So if you were here earlier or you come from a family who knows how to work the system, then that's one thing. If you are new, I mean I am not that new I have had decades worth of experiences, how do you ever get off the bottom? What do you have to do? (Sophie)

Marginality has most often been understood as a category of oppression, representing loss of status, of income, of efficacy and of agency (Weisberger 1992:431; Reisman 1951; Grant and Breese 1997:192; Gurung and Kollmair 2005; Billson 2005:30; Jenkins 2005; Dennis 2005). Expressing this idea, research has described women in academia as 'outsiders within', 'the Other Academics', 'outsiders in the sacred grove', 'maids of academe', "donkeys of the university", 'dim dross' and 'space invaders' with concepts like 'glass ceilings', 'chilly climates' and 'ivory towers' used to describe universities as they are experienced by women (Collin 1986; Acker 1980; Sanders *et al.* 2009; Alfred 2001; Mabokela 2003; Rassol 1995; Reay 2000; Asienberg & Harrington 1988; Shackelton 2007; Harley 2008; Morley 1994). But, as Sophie describes, in negotiating marginality women who are the first in their families to enter the academy also face a double encumbrance in that they often lack both the social capital (networks of connections and investments in social relationships) and cultural capital (knowledge acquired or inherited from family backgrounds) that may provide non-first generation women with resources to ameliorate and even overcome aspects of marginality (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu and Passeron 1979:13, 14 see also Teachman 1987; DiMaggio &

Mohr 1985; DiMaggio 1982). First generation women may lack social and economic capital in the sense that their family backgrounds do not provide them with the knowledge, techniques and resources that may be needed in the academic field. As Sophie points out, families with cultural and social capital may confer on an individual resources that enable them to understand and know ‘how to work the system’ and those who lack these resources may have trouble negotiating relationships and structures as easily as their counterparts. They, on the other hand, have to learn and invest to know. As Bourdieu & Passeron (1979) note, children with cultural capital come in with certain knowledges (in the context of academia, knowing what meetings to attend, what committees to be part of, who can and who cannot influence various decisions and who and in what way different individuals may be spoken to etc.) that enable them to negotiate the academic terrain, while those from a disadvantaged background have to learn and invest before they can negotiate. Indicating a notion of the raced and classed nature of the educational system, While not all the participants come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, they certainly lack forms of social and cultural capital that are specific to academic culture and that enable one to know the ‘ins and outs’ of academia. These forms of capital are important in the sense that they confer certain characteristics, abilities and knowledges on the individual or agent who acquires them and provides them with strategies for negotiating situations in specific context or fields (Bourdieu 1986). Hence, the academic who has acquired or inherited social and cultural capital may be able to negotiate her way in academia but those who do not have such opportunities or knowledges. As in the case of Sophie, they may not have the same resources and have to find other ways.

... these people that have all these connections, they know the right people in council or they know their friends of their friends or they belong to the right golf courses or whatever the thing is that you need to do and I am not that person and even if I was, I have a problem with the kind of internal networking thing and all for the sake of it, it sucks to me. Collaboration is one thing and trying to make the system different, people working together is something I really aspire to (Sophie).

For some first generation women in academia, their lack of economic and social capital makes overcoming marginality difficult although not impossible. By virtue of their qualifications, they

are insiders, but many of them report feeling simultaneously outside or excluded and marginalised by dominant practices in the university (see Wright *et al.* 2007, 151). As Sophie describes it, she is perpetually ‘new’ in the academy. The way in which universities are organised along the lines of race, class and gender has been extensively studied. The narratives of the women in this study similarly portray the intertwined impact of race, class and gender on their experiences. The historical context of apartheid in South Africa has had a significant impact on higher education as university cultures (structures, processes and practices) reveal the effects of exclusion based on race, class and gender which affect access to education and colour experiences within it especially for those of specific identity groups and genders. Although transformation policies have been put in place to ameliorate these problems, universities remain a site of raced, classed and gendered forms of exclusion and marginalisation.

In this I chapter look at what may be termed ‘the negative consequences’ of marginality as experienced by the participants, consequences which I have termed ‘losing’. I define losing here as “ways in which marginality has meant being on the losing end of power relations”. I look at the ways in which the women in this study experience losses of various kinds (loss of income, status and agency, having to devalue their feminine side, deciding to leave academia or tone down their ambitions). The marginalised individual experiences loss in the sense that she is not able to achieve her original goals, aims and ambitions that she harboured when first entering academia. The narratives of the participants reveal the disappointment they experienced when they realised that academia was not what they thought it was and nor could they effect the changes they initially wanted to make, thus they had to adjust their goals and ambitions and/or find new ways of making a difference.

Many of the women in the study acknowledged the masculinised and racial nature of the university, Sophie recognises and struggles with the way in which the university is ‘White and male’.

I am feeling very disillusioned with certain aspects of the university at the moment, I am trying to work with people about, how do we reconstitute or interrogate the culture, how do we change it. I am very clear that the culture is at best liberal and that's not a compliment, it's still very pale it's still very male (Sophie).

Messner (2000:458) notes that students' conception of a 'professor' is White and male; women therefore have to work harder to come to be regarded as legitimately embodying the idea of the 'professor' or academic. Although transformation policies have ensured the slow inclusion of disadvantaged groups and some universities may be described as liberal, as Sophie experiences it, the dominance of White men is still felt. Acker & Webber (2009:468) further argue that there is a wide gap between the point of view of women academics and the structures, cultures and practices of universities. That it there is a difference between the 'cultures' that women feel comfortable in and the masculinised ways of being that predominate in academic contexts. Catherine recalls her experience of attending a university workshop:

..... The next morning we had a programme and it was like 10.30 and the item at 10.30, it said International Affairs, now I assume they are going to talk about Internationalization, international links something like that. So I'm preparing myself I have got my head ready for this, we started, I don't know half past eight and at half past ten suddenly everybody got up and left the room. I didn't know what was going on, nobody told me, it's like half past ten internationalization and then I think I better follow them so I follow them and they all went into the bar, it was a rugby match and I stood there and I wanted to swear. I was so angry and humiliated at this behaviour that I actually couldn't speak, I had to walk away.....it's like they didn't let you into the secret, you were supposed to know, I have never watched a rugby in my life, I have never watched a football match. You are supposed to know that this is international rugby on and therefore you go, take yourself to the bar, drink beer for over two hours on a Saturday when I have come back from a conference and left my children at home, I was furious, furious..... I came away from that thinking goodness gracious what a way to behave at a university and how masculine it was and the women who would get access to the decisions and discussions were the women who could behave like men and who knew about the rugby and things like that.

Catherine's experience of the masculine nature of the university leaves her shocked, speechless, angered and humiliated. Because she is new (that being her first meeting of that nature) she is not alerted to the real meaning of 'internationalisation'. The assumption that she is supposed to know excludes her and confirms the dominant culture as masculinised. She is placed on the margins of that culture because she does not get the joke. Catherine is a professor and in that sense may be said to be far from being marginal. But this experience shows marginality is reproduced in a small everyday encounter. While it is true that women are better represented in the academy and that overt discrimination has been reduced, subtle modes of exclusion persist in the unspoken rules and rituals.

.....but I wonder about how you are meant to make it as a first generation person and what the role models are and where the role models are. Some of the things I have seen and heard are not the kind of things I want to do.....because I was first generation as well into the university, I think also I didn't have a clear idea of what was expected and what wasn't (Sophie).

For Sophie, negotiating the structures is made all the more difficult because of an absence of role models or prior insider knowledge which would help her to know what can and cannot be done and what is acceptable and not acceptable..

Catherine refers to a different form of exclusion – that of being expected to know, but not knowing, how to negotiate disciplinary expectations – what she refers to as 'the rules of engagement':

I never knew what I was supposed to do with the text, I mean you put a frame up to the text, yah and you put a feminist frame, you put a Marxist frame, I know that now, I didn't know that at the time, nobody made overt to me the rules for engagement.....nobody gave it to me and so because I never knew what I was supposed to do, I lived in fear of not doing what was needed...but just the general sense of loss about intellectually what I was supposed to do. It convinced me that I was stupid, because I didn't know, it convinced me that I was stupid and in

fact I used to sit with this very good friend of mine and in the class we used to decide who the clever people were, who the ok people were and who were the stupid people, we were forever trying to locate ourselves in the class and trying to work out were we ok or were we not ok in this class, so there was very little guidance on what you were supposed to be doing, we were just supposed to like pick it up by osmosis and I find that hugely disconcerting (Catherine).

Catherine's lack of understanding of what to do puts her at a disadvantage, with nobody to explicitly tell her how to engage she constantly criticises herself. Convinced that she is stupid she tries to locate her position, to assess just how far or close she is from the centre. Catherine experiences herself as 'stupid' whereas in fact what she lacks is not intellectual ability but prior knowledge of the rules of engagement. Bourdieu & Passeron (1979) argue that students who have economic, social and cultural capital deficits have difficulty getting into universities and when they do get in they find it difficult to adapt to the culture of the university which is experienced as less alienating by those who do not have these deficits (see also Martin 2012:426). The social and cultural capital which they do possess is in the form of devalued currencies in the university setting; different from the accepted and dominant culture in the university (Yosso 2005). They then experience a lack of fit between the academic culture and their family culture. Bourdieu & Passeron (1979) note that the informal cultural knowledge common to middle and upper class households plays a key role in facilitating success during the transition to post-secondary education. Universities are institutions that were traditionally preserved for the rich whose prior schooling and family position allowed them to gain easy access and to be able to negotiate easily relationships in academia. While equity and transformation initiatives have sought to recruit entrants into the university from wider social circles, the dominant culture maintains and reproduces disadvantage because the new entrants lack the social networks and informal knowledges that provide privileged access to ways of knowing and being that mark one an 'insider' in these settings (see Heymann & Carolissen 2011:135).

## Staff in Universities

	Instruction and Research Staff	Administrative Staff	Service Staff
Total	15, 589	22, 224	5, 904
% Black Staff	39	59	97
% Women	43	61	49

Table 3: Department of Education 2007 (In Higher Education in Context)

## Professional Staff in Universities

Race and Gender	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>African</b>	5,957 (26.7%)	6,525 (29.4%)	6,715 (29.7%)	6,996 (30.7%)
<b>Coloured</b>	1,489 (6.9%)	1,566 (7.1%)	1,656 (7.3%)	1,785 (7.8%)
<b>Indian</b>	1,734 (8.1%)	1,818 (8.2%)	1,871 (8.3%)	1,900 (8.4%)
<b>White</b>	12,106 (56%)	12,231 (55.1%)	12,152 (53.7%)	11, 835 (52%)
<b>Female</b>	9,803 (45.5%)	10,271 (46%)	10,475 (46.3%)	10,649 (46.8)
<b>Male</b>	11,727 (54.5%)	12,000 (54%)	12,160 (53.7)	12,110 (53.2%)
<b>Total</b>	21530	22,271	22,635	22,735

Table 4: DoE HEMIS DATABASE (2008/9/10/11)

Transformations policies and the restructuring of higher education in South Africa has ensured the inclusion of disadvantaged groups in the higher education sector, however the figures above reveal that although some gains have been made with regard to inclusion, women and Blacks (Coloured, Indians and Africans) are still located in the lower levels of academia. As women enter into universities they encounter ideas, rules and guideline on how to become a good academic, which may work against them to secure and preserve male power (which are

embedded in race and class) and undermine their own potential to flourish. As Acker (1980) argues, because men rule, they impose their ideas on others, making their ideas the ruling ideas.

In this context, first generation academic women often find themselves on the losing end of power relations with tangible effects including for example, loss of income, status and agency, and resulting in some instances in the decision to leave academia and in others to tone down their ambitions and settle for a diminished sense of their role. As Sophie describes, there are very tangible losses associated with marginality. In her experience the loss of income can be quantified quite precisely.

I asked about figures about discrepancies for salaries and I got sent the breakdown of the differences in wages between male and female lecturers and the only two positions at the moment in the university where you get paid more is as a junior lecturer which had changed since I started and as a professor and of course there are few of them in professorial positions and anything else whether you are a lecturer, a senior lecturer, an associate professor you can expect at least 4.5% less than a man which works out in a lecturer's level to about R10 000 a year. You know it doesn't sound like much but if you think about being on a scale for 10 years, so if you are a lecturer for 10 years, you'll earn 10 times 10, so you'll earn a hundred thousand less than a man and I found it problematic, I found it deeply problematic, that's something I am trying to work out how best to respond to, how best to address, I don't see why I should be paid less, its 2013, the world is meant to have shifted (Sophie).

In some instances the very programmes that are meant to transform the university can serve to reproduce exclusion because they rest on unchallenged underlying assumptions about women's, particularly Black women's deficiencies as Phumzile describes:

...the thing about the development programme was that it was meant to integrate people into the new system, but what we found was that most of the people that went through that were Black females... and so maybe



there were perceptions, ... that this programme is making it easy for Black people but of course the whole thing is in itself patronizing, to say that you can't just go into proper posts, you have to go through some funded programme that prepares us, whereas for White men, they are just ready to go into academia, so the whole thing is actually it's a bit frustrating and so you have to go through the screening process again to get to a proper post and the perception that this thing makes it easy for us because we have less of a teaching load in order to do some research and I think this was some kind of a moment where someone had to prove that this is not the case and that's all the candidates are properly qualified and so they had to make that process extra difficult in order to prove that there is no way it made it easy for Black academics. But that angered me the most, a hell of a lot, I think it stressed me out a hell of a lot you know that you put in as much as I'm sure many other academics do and I don't see why one has to make an example to show that yes you have the right calibre, by making it extra difficult, you actually are already establishing divisions because you already seeing that the other person, the White male doesn't have to have an extra difficult thing because they are normal. I mean I don't know I keep debating it in my head, it's just the thing that just made me the most angry (Phumzile).

Accelerated Development Programmes of the kind to which Phumzile refers have been set up at many universities with the aim of assisting young academics to integrate themselves into academia. However as Phumzile points out, most of the people in these programmes are Black and Female, suggesting that men, especially White men, are for some reason in no need of 'development'. While the goal of these programmes is inclusion, their existence confirms and reproduces the marginality of certain types of academic. Black women like Phumzile are not regarded as inherently competent enough to occupy an academic position without first being taught what is expected and even after that must prove that they are capable whereas White men are never assumed to need special mentoring or development programmes which exposes the underlying raced and gendered assumptions about inherent competence that circulate in the university culture. Phumzile's narrative provides a good illustration of what it means to be 'outside in'. She is accepted and brought into the university which means that she is recognised as being an insider and legitimate enough to be an academic, however at the same time she is brought in in a way that confirms her outsider status, as she need to undergo a special process to make her fit better. As Spivak (1993) argues the centre identifies and defines margin as

‘marginal’ even in the moment of inclusion. The nature of the centre defines what will count as marginal as the experience of Evelyn, a White woman at a HBU reveals.

.....When I got here, the university was going through a bit of a rough patch, so people I think, saw me very much as a White person coming to tell Black people how to do things and I think I might be partly to blame as well because I had very grand ideas and very big ideas and it probably took me two years to change a little bit and be more, I don’t want to say apprehensive but maybe tone it down a little bit and I think what has changed is I have focused more on tasks and things that I can change and we had good results from that...they were very negative, anything that I would have said, was handled against me and in many of these situations where things will come up and they would say you are a White woman, you can’t tell us Black men what to do (Evelyn).

As Spivak argues ‘as the margin enters the teaching machine, what kind of teaching machine it enters will determine its contours’ (Spivak 1993). Hence the contours of marginality are almost always defined by the kind of centre in which the marginal subject finds herself. Dennis (2005:7) argues that the marginalization of one group is often not accidental but results from a carefully crafted desire to exploit, use or abuse power and dominance to secure or maintain a historical position or to marginalise another in order to acquire such a position or place. Evelyn’s inability to tell the men in her department what to do because of her being White and female in a ‘Black’ university despite her being the Head of Department portrays the effort to define and secure her as marginal in order that others may retain or gain power while diminishing her power. The intersection of race and gender can be seen in Evelyn’s narrative, her Whiteness in a predominantly Black ‘centre’ and her female-ness in a male dominated centre results in a ‘double’ marginalisation, she the ‘White woman’ then cannot tell the ‘Black men’ what to do (See Walker 1998; Turner 2002).

‘Race’ and gender are not the only markers of dominance/marginality. As Inga’s story reveals, embodied markers of otherness are multiple. In her case, her accent is emphasized as the marker

of her difference and a justification for her exclusion from the powerful identity positioning of 'normal'.

English can be spoken in so many accents within England and so many accents around the world and then you have a problem with Indian English. Don't give me that crap. If your accent is so different to mine, I'm also making an effort to listen and understand, so if mine is different from yours, you make that effort to understand (Inga).

Inga explains how diverse markers often stand in for race, class and ethnicity to legitimise differential treatment of those who are marginalised by the dominant culture in the academy. When Inga entered into academia, she encountered what Luke & Gore (1992) describe as the 'juridico discursive' power of the law which guides the social organisation of academic life. This power, which is male centred, guides the attitudes and practices of both men and women in academia. For Inga, she was defined as the other because she has a different accent to the 'norm'. She often experienced difficulty with the support staff and students who made her repeat herself constantly and acted like they had to make enormous efforts to understand her. Her marginalisation happens at the intersection of race, class, ethnicity and gender as is evident in her narrative. Because she deviates from the White male norm on multiple levels, she is often 'given the look of, what do you know, you are Indian' (see also Messner 2000:458). Because she differs from the accepted norm and dominant idea of an 'academic', she is not recognised as being capable of lecturing. She has to prove herself because she is marginalised by powerful constructions of who the expected norm is produced both outside the academy and reproduced in the academic setting.

Scholars (see Kerchoff & McCormick 1995:50) have noted the conflict associated with marginality and that individuals affected by marginality often face great stress, as a result of not being accepted as legitimate or authentic members of a group within which they must nevertheless operate on a daily basis and try to be successful. Reay (2004:31) describes academia as a 'masculine cultural economy' which constantly devalues women because of their

lack of masculine traits. Some women opt for a masculine presentation of the self in order to ameliorate the stress of their circumstances and to try to win greater acceptance. Thandiswa for instance describes having to be more aggressive and thrusting in the academic setting than she would otherwise choose to be.

In the academic setting, I have to fight, mainly, I mean I have to be more aggressive in terms of getting what I want to get, you see because you meet different people there and different people have different aspirations and different expectations from others and for themselves. So you have to be more aggressive, more informed. I can be laid back and quiet while in my other surroundings, I just say it's okay, but as an academic, I find all the times I have to be informed, I have to know what's going on, I have to know how to manoeuvre around something, how to improvise at times if you don't get what you want to get, for me that's how I find it, and I have to like achieve, I have to achieve something, I have to show that I am achieving and I can achieve and I can do better (Thandiswa).

Wright *et al.* (2007:153) noted that with academia being male dominated, most women entering this institutional space are aware of their presence presenting a threat to their male counterparts, who in-turn make them feel uncomfortable and out of place – what Spivak termed ‘outsiders-within’ or ‘insiders-out’. Ferguson (1984 in Acker and Feuerwerker 1996) argued that this outsider status may be as a result of women's refusal to accept and embody certain features of the academic which are not in line with their own values. For women in academia to be recognised as valid or legitimate, they have to present a masculine version of themselves, hiding or completely removing any traits that are culturally associated with the (derided) feminine. In Thandiswa's case this means acting aggressive, manoeuvring and constantly striving rather than being ‘laid back’.

Some women find themselves falling foul of their socialized characteristics such as being softly spoken, caring or non-aggressive and socialized norms which lead them to accept male authority without question, to ‘just keep quiet’. Simphiwe recounts that her ‘socialization to conform to male ideas’ limited her ability to question sexist ideologies in the classroom as a student.

I don't remember anytime where we had to go and confront them that what was said was out of order.....It's useless to ask what do you think because after a meeting..... like you say this is not how it is done, this is how it is done you know but sometimes you just keep quiet, that is how it is, you keep quiet. On a serious note you don't confront, you just keep quiet, I don't know maybe it's the way are socialized that men are head of the family, even if you don't see that head you know you just keep quiet (Simpfiwe).

Simpfiwe's inability to bring herself to challenge masculine authority and express her opinions silences her. In this way the dominant culture secures and reproduces its dominance by presenting itself as universal, normal and natural. As Elizabeth Grosz (1988, in Luke & Gore 1992:207) notes 'Phallogentrism fuses two different sexes (male and female) into one universal model' which necessitates the representation of the feminine in masculine terms; the female then serves as the silent other supporting and legitimising through her silence the universal male figure (Luke & Gore 1992).

Spivak (1993) argues that universities today draw on traditionally inherited power structures and knowledge formations to function, which limits the room for change in the way things are done because they have always been done that way and those ways of doing things secure existing power hierarchies that have an interest in reproducing themselves (Spivak 1993). Anyone who tries to change such structures or practices is often met with fierce resistance as Thandiswa experienced.

.....As soon as we started, because there was that time in 1994 when all the exiles were coming back, and at the same time, the people who went in were feeling very threatened I think and when we talk about research, someone stands in the workshop and said this is not what we do here, those things were done out where you were, we teach and that's all. I mean, it was very bad, in this faculty, if you say I should write my experience of what I found here, I can write a book, how we struggled, how we really struggled, if you are saying when I came this way that was

a very bad experience. Because we were never accepted, because of what we were talking about, it was a hostile reception.

By refusing changes existing power/knowledge hierarchies are secured and reproduced and at the same time, who is marginal is reconfirmed. The people defined as 'authentic' inhabitants of the centre, relegate Thandiswa and others like her to the margins and insist that she should 'know her place' which is to teach and not to have ideas of being a researcher which would be beyond her station and would upset the existing culture, the way things are done 'here'. Thandiswa and her cohort of new entrants into the academy thus encountered an inhospitable and hostile environment, which they had to find ways of working around or overcoming, the introduction of various equal opportunities and the removal of barriers to the development and equality of women in the academy notwithstanding. Research suggests that while many South African universities are undergoing transformation to create a more inclusive environment for formerly excluded groups, Thandiswa's experience remains common with many women however continuing to report feeling marginalised and excluded (see Potgier & Moleko 2004, Walker 1998; De La Rey 2005; Mabokela 2003). As a result some opt to leave academia or, if they stay, to remain in lower status positions, losing the will to fight for promotion and play in the 'centre' of academic politics.

As Luke (1994:217) notes, many women do not survive the odds against them in the quest for academic mobility; they opt to sidestep academia instead. A significant number of women that enter into academia end up leaving as a result of difficulties experienced with male colleagues and students, and the stress of the constant devaluation of their ways of knowing and being (Rothblum 1988:14). While there is no doubt that some women are able to succeed despite these challenges as Potgieter & Moleko (2004:86) found, many deliberately retreat to the margins or leave academia as Simphiwe says she plans to do:

I think that's it, Master's level, that's it. I don't see myself moving forward to whatever and I don't see myself in three years' time being here because I want to go to the corporate world, otherwise publications

and whatever, I don't think I am going there.....I am not moving forward, my brain will just shut down (Simpfiwe).

Rothblum (1988) found that women in academia can respond to unjust situations in a number of ways: they may try to change the institution or situation, devalue their careers as unimportant, devalue themselves or their contributions or choose a different career altogether. Simphiwe, rather than stay and endure, chooses to leave for the corporate sector where she feels her contributions will be more valued.

Spivak (1993) argues that the inherited power structures in universities, work to produce and secure masculine discourses that pervade academia. Knowing how the institution works and being able to play the politics, certainly helps ease the stress but most women are on the outside, 'othered' by the dominant culture, so they must find ways of being that is acceptable which places a great burden on them. As Grant and Breese (1997:198) argue, one response to being marginalised may be withdrawal -- some respond by simply 'staying out' of the business of looking for promotion and status. Although Emily does not withdraw completely in the sense of leaving, as Simphiwe plans to do, her withdrawal takes the form of a lack of interest in promotion. She describes the complex layers of politics which one has to understand to be able to be on the 'in' of things, her realisation that she is 'outside' puts pressure on her, resulting in a decision to 'stay out of it' which means accepting that she will no longer be in a position to 'climb the ladder' of career advancement. .

So I think there's huge pressure on one here and it's not a relaxing atmosphere to work in, there are expectations from you all the time and I think because of my age and because I'm not really interested in promotion anymore, I am past that stage in my life, other things have become more important to me, because I can take a step back, I think I'm able to calm down a little bit. Because what I am also finding is that you've got layers of politics, you've got certain things being said in meetings by people, this is what the university stands for, but, underneath, it is different, so there are layers of politics and as a newcomer, you only hear what is being said, you don't know the complex layers of the politics and after a while you start realising it, that you are not quite in on all that kind of information that people who have

been here for a long time, and that's typical of any institution. Yeah and it is stressful especially if you are looking for promotion. For me personally it doesn't bother me, if I can stay away from the politics of the university I will be happy because it gets ugly, I don't think students probably see that side of academia, but academic politics can be very vicious....I have been able to stay away so far, if you are ambitious and you want to climb the ladder, and become the dean of the faculty, you've got to be involved in the politics, and that's where it becomes ugly, academics generally, not all but generally and I include myself here, we tend to have very fragile egos and yeah, it can get quite ugly when people start fighting each other for higher positions, so I will try and stay out of it (Emily).

Sometimes women who take this approach are interpreted as simply lacking ambition. But as Emily's narrative describes, it is not that the ambition was not there in the first place but rather that a conscious decision is made to 'tone down' ambition. For Evelyn toning down 'a bit' meant that she had to focus her attention on things she can change and not getting too involved in things she felt incapable of changing.

I had a very grand ideas and very big ideas and it's probably took me two years to change a little bit and be more, I don't want to say apprehensive but maybe tone it down a little bit and I think what has changed is I have focused more on tasks and things that I can change (Evelyn)

I suppose I have to just tone down my ambitions, I think when I was studying my doctorate I probably was planning to go for a full professorship at some stage but to do that you have got to publish a lot and I just realised I don't want to play that game, so ideally, its affected my ambition in the sense of, I think when you get older, you also start questioning what you are doing with your life and to spend my energy and time pushing out publications which I don't believe in, I don't want to spend another 5 or 10 years doing that, my time has become too precious to me, so it's not worth it (Emily).

For Emily 'other things' are more important than climbing the career and status ladder. She grapples with trying to explain what it feels like to have an identity that simply does not fit well



with expectations. This is an account of another kind of losing – to literally feel that one is expected to lose something about one’s essential nature in order to be regarded as acceptable.

So what happens is you tend to get split up into parts, so I guess it’s a case of, I think there is a beautiful analogy by somebody who says, you know we not all bunny rabbits, some of us are snakes, some of us are dogs, some of us are fish, some of us are birds and those who are bunnies can make really good bunnies, those who are snakes are wonderful snakes, but when you try and make a snake do a thing that birds do, you try and make a bird do things that a cat does, you’re not getting good work and here, what I feel is been happening is they have been trying to make me and I happen to be a snake, trying to make me do bunny things and cat things and dog things and fish things and birds things as well and they are expecting me to be good at it as well as being excellent at being a snake but I’m not being able to be excellent at being a snake because I am spending a lot of time trying to be a bird and a fish and a whatever, that’s a long way of telling you (Emily).

The dominant culture does not allow Emily to express herself in ways that she is comfortable with, her personality as a ‘very good snake’ is not recognised by the university, rather the focus is on moulding her into other things, making her do and master other things, while ignoring what she is really good at. Emily’s snake like character does not fit with the expected ways of being demanded by the university. She feels that she has to lose her essential nature to fit in; it isn’t good enough for her to be a very good version of herself, she must become something else, a cat, a bird, a fish. She experiences stress in that she feels unable to be all these things at once, to be a good teacher, a good researcher, to publish a lot and also play a large role in community engagement, while at the same time remaining true to her own desires. To alleviate this stress she decides to tone down her ambitions and expectations.

## **4.2 Conclusion**

The participants certainly narrated the many ways in which to be marginalised is to lose out. Many women who decided to leave or move out of academia believe that they were forced out

by the hostile conditions in their institutions, despite their initial desire to pursue an academic career. Women often find themselves in conflict with the dominant cultures of the university which are structured by raced, classed and gendered expectations; they are frequently on the losing end of power relations. The multiple marginalities experienced by the women in the study have very tangible effects, revealing themselves in loss of income, status and agency. Sometimes as in the case of Phumzile, they may be allowed in but a closer look reveals their outside status. As a result some women opt to leave academia while some make conscious decisions to tone down their ambitions as in the case of Emily and Evelyn.

But marginality is not only about losing. Side by side with the narration of profound layers of loss occasioned by marginality were counter narratives, contradictory impulses and modes of both resistance and accommodation. I call these ‘using’, ‘refusing’ and ‘cruising’. As several scholars have pointed out, marginality can be viewed as positive and productive (Spivak 1993, Reisman 1951, hooks 1984; 1989, Collins 1986), as a site of freedom, liberation, resistance and empowerment. bell hooks argues that ‘if we only view the margins as a sign marking the condition of our pain and deprivation, then a certain hopelessness and despair, a deep nihilism penetrates in a destructive way the very ground of our being. It is there in that space of collective despair that one’s creativity, one’s imagination is at risk, there that one’s mind is fully colonised, there that the freedom one longs for is at risk’. In the following chapters I am vigilant precisely for those moments in the participants’ narratives in which the margins are appropriated as a creative space from which to exercise agency and power.

## 5. Chapter

### Resistance: Using and Refusing

#### 5.1 Introduction

The themes coded as ‘using’ and ‘refusing’ portray moments in which the participants narrate resisting marginality, either by finding ways of using marginality as a resource or by simply completely rejecting the marginalising situation. In these moments the participants see themselves as having been able to resist the power of the centre to define their experience and to define their marginality not in terms of deficits but as a space for freedom and agency. To resist is to challenge the power of a given centre, the strategies of power and techniques of knowledge that it authorises, asserting one’s agency, freedom and positive identity.

The narratives in the chapter portray women who used their marginalities as a source of inspiration to both students and family members. Instances of what I term ‘refusing’, varied from subtle to overt refusal of the marginal status, for instance, speaking out, creating change in the classroom etc. To think and resist from the margin is to challenge the authority of the centre, to challenge power relations and techniques of knowledge, to reverse deeply entrenched ideologies and normalising tendencies and to assert one’s agency and freedom. As hooks (1990) describes, complex shifts are possible when people use their marginality as a site of resistance. The narratives in the chapter also portray women who rejected discourses that attempted to marginalise them, finding new ways of being.

#### 5.2 Using Marginality as a Resource

‘Using’ refers to ways in which it has been possible for marginality to be used as a resource, either to the benefit of the participants’ themselves or of others around them. These moments in

the narratives relate situations in which the participants were able to invert marginalising discourses and use them as a form of power both for their own survival and that of their colleagues and students. Their ability to overcome their circumstances is a resource used to inspire others who are in similar positions including students, colleagues and family members. Their position affords them a heightened awareness of the social and cultural capital which they once lacked and they are able to ease the way of others who similarly lack these resources by for instance forming alternative social networks and explicitly providing insider knowledge. Using their own experiences as a resource they make a conscious decision to behave in such a way as to promote new discourses that displace dominant ideologies. For other participants using marginality as a resource meant manipulating situations to their own advantage for instance by using prejudices about women prevalent in the university space to refuse tasks or responsibilities that they did not wish to undertake. To choose to manipulate requires an acknowledgment of the position which one occupies in relation to the centre or the dominant formulations of the power hierarchy and to turn that knowledge around in such a way that it becomes an advantage.

To use marginality as a resource is to reverse harmful discourses that attempt to marginalise one. Rather than focusing on the negative effects of marginality and its attendant losses there are moments in which some participants make a conscious decision to shift power relations. Using marginality as a resource can be seen as a form of resistance because it entails changing or flipping power relations in order to achieve a given goal or objective. This then enables the participants to assert their freedom and agency *because* of their marginality rather than despite it.

Even while shedding tears – often to their own surprise – as they narrated sagas of loss, for many participants their marginalisation was something which they turned into a resource not only for their own survival but in the service of others in whom they found their own experiences and identities mirrored in some way. This offered them a sense of agency and self-efficacy. Some participants were able to use their experience of being marginal in academia as a source of encouragement to both their students and family members to continue with their studies.

I do see myself really as a leader in the department in a sense, yes I guess I am a leader in the department.....in the wider family context I think I have inspired my sister to study as an adult learner, I have certainly inspired my niece to study, I certainly inspired eventually my daughter to study, once she got over the experience of having a mother who was studying and so I think that's in my broader family context, I have been the leader, I have been the first one in the family to go to university, to get a degree and I think the way in which I did it by working full-time, studying at night bringing up my daughter has been inspirational to my immediate family members (Chloe).

Chloe started studying at the age of 33. While being a working-class mother, she was able to successfully complete her first degree, followed by a Master's and then a doctorate and is now a professor. Her success story provides an inspiration to both her immediate and extended family members. It also gives her a sense of self efficacy: her ability to negotiate the academic terrain despite her disadvantage (age, gender and class) gives her a sense of leadership from being able to show people the way and lead people in what may be seen as the right direction. Chloe's ability to negotiate the university terrain, to deal successfully with stress and balance work with having a child to take care of becomes a source of inspiration to those around her. Being the first in her family to enter the academic terrain, her ability to make it to professorship despite being in a marginal position encourages her family members. She is able to empower both her family members and her daughter to study. Her ability to transcend and become successful despite her lack in terms of cultural and social capital gives others the sense that they may be able to make it and this in turn is a source of self-efficacy and agency for her. Here having a story of marginality to tell becomes in itself a resource.

I do tell the students the story, not the details of my life but what it was like being an adult learner, having not studied for 15 years, being a single parent, having an eight hour job and still trying to study and qualify and I think it has perhaps provided some inspiration to students who were struggling to encourage them to work harder and to encourage them not to give up and just to carry on with their studies and if they failed once, they can come back and really have a go at it again. So I think in a way I have influenced people. It's something like what I tell you now, I tell them that I only started studying at the age of 33 with just a matric and that I was a full-time parent and I was in full-time employment and I tell them all about getting up at 2:45 in the morning to make sure my brain was fresh and I could have few hours studying before my daughter woke

up and I tell them about taking my books with me when I took her to the swimming pool or the skating rink while she was having fun with her little friends I was studying, sometimes I took them on a picnic and I would study and they would have fun, this is sort of how I try to encourage them to work hard (Chloe).

The process of telling her story both to the researcher and her students can be seen as a form of resistance that counters knowledges that suggest the impossibility for women to study and be primary care givers.

In telling her story, Emily came to the realisation that she had been able to use the insight provided by the special vantage point of marginality to recognise and respond to others who are having similar experiences to her own.

Yeah, that's one of the outstanding things of being a lecture you see that growth and I've got another student, she was a little bit older than the other students but she was a good student but again to see the growth her, the confidence [crying], actually as I am talking to you now, I begin to realize something, you know as a young woman I was not very confident and I think for me what so important, is to help other young women become confident, that's what probably driving me, so they don't have to battle like I did, because I think, if I think of all my students that I am proud of, its only young women. Interesting! (Emily)

Being on the margin requires recognition of one's position in relation to power structures, Emily is able to recognise the access she has to power and use it selectively: to help other women.

Emily grew up in a system where she was taught not to question authority. Her experience of apartheid and the silencing of people who spoke too much reinforced the idea of not speaking out. However, realising the negative effects this has had on her and will have on future generations, she makes efforts to ensure that her students know that they can question authority.

She does this by teaching them to question her; she tries to reverse power hierarchies by telling her students not to just accept things because they seem normal.

... for me it's about getting the students to understand, number one that lecturers don't know everything, and to start questioning things and to start thinking about things and take responsibility for that kind of stuff, and their own learning also probably because I grew up in South Africa and the apartheid regime and as a person who questioned things, you were targeted, I was too much of a coward as a young person to question too loudly but when something is wrong or is not working the way it supposed to be working, you are entitled to question it and I want the students to learn that they have the rights to question and they have the rights to question me, it doesn't matter if I've got a position of authority over them, I think a lot of things that have gone wrong in the world in the past is, when people are in authority and they tell other people they are not allowed to question, so for me as a lecturer, that to me is the most important. I think deep down I am the kind of person who probably likes forcing change, [laughs] I think people will call me a bit of a reformer but in a very subtle level, when I see something is wrong, I like to change it and I think I grew up in an educational system which was wrong, it's was indoctrinating and when I was a kid at school you are not allowed to question the teacher, you do that you are told, you shut up and for me that's was very wrong.....I could hope for the younger generation now not to fall into that same trap, so I see my role as a teacher not so much teaching what I'm teaching but instilling values in the students (Emily).

Thus Emily, rather than focusing on the oppressive effects of her upbringing, tries to bring about change in the classroom by empowering her students to question authority. For some women in academia, their classrooms are spaces where they can resist dominant ideologies and the normalising tendencies of power/knowledge. For them teaching the next generation though a slow and small contribution, in the long run may displace socially constructed roles and dominant discourses. There is a conscious effort on the part of these marginalised individuals to shift the structure of power relations. Emily uses her marginalised space to produce a counter discourse to what she had been taught or made to believe while growing up. Realising that the educational system in which she grew up was wrong, she makes bringing change to her classroom her way of resisting. Instead of reproducing the discourses that tried to silence her, she

sees her role as a lecturer as being to interrupt them – and it is her marginal subject position that made it possible for her to recognise them in the first place, as a result of having experienced them at first hand. As hooks argues, “the marginalised space can be seen as a central location for the production of a counter hegemonic discourse that is not just founded in words but in habits of being and the way one lives” (hooks 1990:149). By teaching the students to question things she reverses and displaces the unquestioning and unquestioned orthodoxy and creates an alternative way of knowing and being in her classroom. She sees herself as a reformer; her need to force change arising out of a realisation that there needs to be a change in the way things have been done and that she has agency to instil her ideas in her students. Emily uses her experience of marginalisation as a resource to understand what she needs to do to empower her students and help them avoid her own experience thus re-ordering social relations and making room for the possibility of something new.

While for some refusing marginality is an overt act of resistance, for others refusal involves more covert forms which Lesidi describes as manipulation ‘in a nice way’. She describes drawing on expectations of women as distracted by family responsibilities to avoid tasks and deadlines when it suits her. She uses her knowledge of the stereotypes that pervade power structures and relations, in order to be able to identify opportunities to manipulate those structures and relations to her own benefit and to avoid situations she finds difficult or unpleasant (see Ewick & Silbey 2003:1336).

Sometimes you can say your rights in a subtle way ... to manipulate your way if you don't want to do something, rather than speaking out, you know in the sense that being rude or arrogant, there are other subtle ways of trying to do it, you can say you know what my family, my children are really a mess, can you just assist me, as much as I would want really to do this report, at the moment things at home I just, I am in trouble managing that man and those children, can you help me out? You say that to your boss, you say that to your colleague nicely and you find your way around rather than saying I will not do this (Lesidi).

To choose to manipulate requires an acknowledgment of the position which one occupies in relation to the centre or the dominant formulations of the power hierarchy and to turn that



knowledge around in such a way that it becomes an advantage. This places the individual in the position to say no without it constituting an offence or an act of rebellion (See Ewick & Silbey 2003:1336). Lesidi recognises the power relations in academia and also draws from her knowledge of dominant social constructions of women as homemakers and care-givers and uses this knowledge to avoid doing something she does not want to do. As Spivak (1993:39) argues “the homely tactic of power/knowledge, the stuff of women’s life, leads not only to the governmentality of dress codes and work habits, guilt feelings and guilt trips but also to the delineation of the great aggregative apparatuses of power/knowledge which deploy the family as a repressive issue, day care as an alibi and reproductive rights as a moral melodrama in national elections and policy”. Lesidi recognises that in academia she is seen as the denigrated ‘other’ who can be made to do low status administrative jobs (see Bagilhole 1993:267; Baca Zinn 1988:126). But she also recognises that the expectation that as a woman she has to take care of her family, even though she could find ways around these responsibilities if she wished, can be turned to her advantage. Rather than completely reject such ‘impositions’, Lesidi embraces them and uses them to her own advantage. Because this is a familiar moral melodrama she can count on it evoking some sort of understanding from the recipient of that conversation by appealing to his/her assumptions about her identity and the role she can be expected to play. Power here is used in a different way to overt resistance. The strategy is one of reversal: by accepting the dominant assumptions that circulate about her subjectivity and using it to escape writing reports, she does not negate their essentialised assumptions about her as a woman; she actively plays up and plays upon, such sensibilities, to her own (immediate, if not long-term) advantage. Lesidi acknowledges the social structures and is able to identify the opportunities and situations where she can resist without being arrogant or rude. In this way she turns power in her favour by finding a more subtle way to resist. But the participants were not always subtle in their chosen forms of resistance. For some resistance took the form of an outright refusal of the status of marginal.

### 5.3 Refusing Marginality

When it comes to allocation of duties, of roles sometimes you notice that things are just pushed you know to you, that is where usually I speak out and say no, each one is supposed to be doing their work, for instance allocation of classes, sometimes you are the one given usually the first years, the big classes ... bigger workload and all that but I speak for myself, I refuse that (Tawanga).

This theme describes ways in which the expected behaviours of the marginal subject are refused, comprising narratives of resistance to marginality and finding new ways of being. Participants were able to refuse by speaking out, refusing to accept ideas that marginalise them or others around them that they perceive to be like them, and selectively accepting aspects of the dominant centre that suit them. Refusing marginality can also involve creating a safe space in a hostile environment. This space is not wholly outside the centre, it is rather constituted within the centre as a place where the marginalised subject can express herself among others with whom she identifies and where she can be supported and provide support for others. Refusing here has to do with refusing to try to be comfortable in the spaces defined by the centre, and making an alternative space instead. Such refusal is often selective: accepting ideologies and practices that suit one and rejecting others.

To refuse marginality is an outright refusal of the expectations of the (object) marginal status, claiming instead an equal academic identity. This entails refusing a devalued status and resolving to displace the dominant ideas and appellations of the centre while holding onto one's identity as valuable. In these moments the participants refuse to fit into already prescribed identities, initiated by the centre, finding other ways of doing things, displacing dominant ideologies, creating new spaces for innovation and empowerment, and resisting the strategies of power/knowledge that are at work in the technologies of the centre.

Tawanga speaks of her insistence on her deep personal sense of an academic identity being recognised and acknowledged by others.

...like I said not all people will accept females playing that role of an academic, ... you see I want to publish many papers as well, I want to get this promotion and things like that, that's affected me certainly because it's like you have to push more, you try to convince people, I am serious, I may just be female but I just want the same thing that you want, I want to also study hard, I also enjoy reading, I also enjoy studying somehow they don't accept it as easily coming from a female, as it is coming from a male, from a male, those are the things that they expect but from females no, she should want fashion and yes of course I love fashion but there are more important things that I think, family and my career, all those things are part of me .... So gender has affected my experience, the expectations from other people but, I don't always meet their expectation.... They expect women to behave in a certain way because some have this notion that they would mostly be thinking about looking good and gossip and things like that well, I had to convince colleagues that no I'm just as normal as they are, ... I also like to be amongst other females like they would like to be amongst other males, so nothing really extra, but they shouldn't expect me to follow stereotypes ... I like working late, I usually shut down all lights here, I'm usually the last person in this department, you see preconceived idea was that I would be out of here and go and do make-up or whatever, come on, I like that but the picture is this is what I enjoy doing and then I fit in those other things and extras, my family first, because my children are grown up, I do my laundry (Tawanga).

Tawanga refuses to accept that her devalued status will inevitably result in her losing out in the academic game which involves 'pushing more' to displace the masculinised ideal norm of the successful academic and to replace it with an image of herself as a legitimate and equal participant. She insists on an identity that incorporates both that of the 'academic' and that of the (in the academic setting) decried traditional accoutrements of femininity – fashion, home, family – which arouses in those she encounters a sense of dissonance, of the academy as a world in which children, make-up and laundry somehow do not belong. Tawanga refuses to allow this, insisting on making her experience as a woman a visible and legitimate part of her *academic* identity, insisting that she really is 'normal'.

West (1995:62) argued that since academic work is dedicated to rational enquiry and women are constructed as less capable of such rationality, those who excel are seen as exceptions or as

having overcome their feminine lack. As West (1995:63) points out, “academic discourse seeks to separate the two [the feminine, the bodily, the emotional from the rational, the disembodied, the intellectual], and where there is spillage of the female world into the public, the results can only be seen as unfortunate”. Tawanga resists by disrupting the expectations of those who expect her to display socially constructed ideas of what it is to be a woman. She resists by convincing her colleagues that she is *both* feminine *and* competent.

Resisting sometimes involves refusing to go along with decisions and discourses that attempt to exclude and marginalise. When forced to go along with decisions that they do not agree with, for some resisting or refusing is almost impossible, but others, like Thandiswa, speak out.

We had a male Dean and there were opportunities which had come for staff development and I happened to be in that committee and they nominated two males, and I said why should those people be the ones who are going, he said no there is no need we are not looking at men/women here, it was just brushed aside. But I had to put my foot down to say yes, if there is a man going already there should be a woman, I put my foot down ... so I said I would tell them that there is no one if we can't send a woman, and a woman went, they agreed but you can see the way you have to fight (Thandiswa).

For Thandiswa, while recognising her marginal position and the strategies of power/knowledge used to systematically exclude women, she also recognises the position of power she occupies as someone who is able to influence the outcome of a decision. She recognises the strategy of the centre as it tries to mask its marginalisation and exclusion of women by dismissing gender as a criterion. Thandiswa is courageous enough and alert enough to the workings of power, given the vantage point afforded her by her marginal status, to refuse by ‘putting her foot down’. In this way, by speaking out, she resists the marginalisation and exclusion both of herself and of other women in academia.

Here her refusal relies on her being able to notice how power is working in order to interrupt it. Similarly, Tawanga notices the perniciousness of being constructed as not needing to meet the

same standards of those who are regarded as more capable because they fit the expectations more readily. She refuses the seduction, choosing instead to claim equality.

I referred to people saying its okay, you should, you can teach with your Masters, but the guys no, they demanded PhDs from guys. I didn't like that because I thought okay, they need PhD's, I don't need the PhD, why, yet I will still get the same load as everybody else, it's as if I shouldn't aspire towards that highest whatever, that I found quite shocking because what is good for the goose is good for the gander, but I felt no these guys just see it differently I don't know why and they say we have never taken anyone without a PhD here, and I said I didn't demand to come into the department you guys invited me back here when I got my Masters and I wanted to stay on for a PhD and I had found even a job in Canada but you guys wanted me back here and before I came back you promised that I will go back for a PhD but now you're telling me no, so I have to do it for myself (Tawanga).

Whereas some may see being told they do not have to do a PhD in a system where it is compulsory for everyone else as a positive thing, Tawanga sees it for what it is, an effort to reduce and devalue her capabilities because she is constructed as marginal to the requirements of the dominant centre. She recognises the attempt to exclude and devalue her, and the underlying assumption that it rests on that she probably does not aspire to a doctorate. She rejects this configuration and resigns her post after being accepted into a doctoral programme. She thus refuses the invitation to have her status as outside of the norm perpetually confirmed.

Refusing marginality by insisting on one's normalcy, however, requires a kind of double think involving seeing that it will require being exceptional in order to overcome marginality, even while insisting that one is normal, not different, and not exceptional. For these women to refuse marginality requires of them that they at the same time accept that it poses constraints and demands on them. As Spivak reminds us, marginality is not 'a positive space outside of the centre but is constituted within the centre' (Spivak 1993:69). Thus, resistance is possible but also circumscribed.

As Emily and Evelyn describe, to refuse to be granted the concessions that confirm that one is marginal means working ‘three times harder’, being ‘pig headed’, pushing yourself more, ‘rebellious’ against the construction of oneself as incapable.

I think the discipline that I’m in is a very male dominated world .... So I think I’ve always been a bit of a rebel and I think it was my destiny to move into a field where women were still experimenting. One of the things that I have learnt the hard way is, you mustn’t sit back and think other people are going to think how wonderful you are and push you ...if you are ambitious you got to push yourself, ...push yourself hard and you’ve got to take the opportunities ... and you’ve got to learn especially if you are a woman (Emily).

I remember going to the first meeting where ... I was the highest qualified but because I was the only female they asked me to take the minutes, which I refused .... I had to work maybe three times harder than the other scientists that were male but looking back it has made me better, I think it’s definitely contributed to where I am now... I think maybe I am very pig-headed. Whenever a person tells me I can’t do it or they don’t respect me, I will do certain things to earn that respect (Evelyn).

While research shows more inclusion of women into academia in South Africa, most of the newly included are still located in lower ranking positions (See De La Rey 2005; Mazibuko 2006; Mabokela 2003; Shackleton 2007). Moreover, there is often an expectation on women that they will take on administrative positions and tasks and will play pastoral roles in their various departments. Some women, as we have seen, embrace this expectation as an opportunity to perform academic work in a different way and to make a difference in the lives of other marginalised people including their students. But resistance can also take the form of rejecting these impositions and expectations which stem from essentialised assumptions about women’s abilities and designated roles.

I often felt like I was doing a very significant kind of pastoral caring role and also because for students sometimes they think that all professors and seniors are kind of unreachable, unattainable, they are not the kind of

people you take that kind of stuff to and that leaves women or the new staff member.....but I did get to a point, when I was finishing my thesis, where I just stopped coming to the office like I would lecture be here for one consultation period and then just go because otherwise there would be hours and hours of time off (Sophie).

Thus both Evelyn and Sophie resist the expectation that because they are women they will play certain kinds of (devalued) administrative and care roles. Sophie resists by removing herself from the situation entirely while Evelyn's is a more selective refusal to perform certain tasks and to insist on surfacing the assumptions that underlie her being asked to take on those tasks in the first place.

Part of what saps energy at the margins is the extent to which the reconstruction of the institution as a place where women are equally respected and where non-sexist practices are seen as de rigueur rather than avant-garde is often the assumed responsibility of the marginalised. Part of refusing marginality is also refusing this responsibility which is what Sophie has done.

And sometimes with the male students.....because I insist on things like using gender sensitive language in essays, I have had usually White male students who feel like they to want to have a big meaningful discussion about sexist language with me for an hour and a half which is fine but with this assumption that their opinions are right and I have to justify mine as opposed to maybe we should go and read and come back and have a discussion. So that happened twice and I was like actually why am I doing this? I am not making them have to account for their thinking so why am I feeling like I have to justify myself? So my new response is, there's a reading list, do the readings come back, we can talk about it then. I don't have to justify this position (Sophie).

Widely held perceptions of women academics and their views as illegitimate in the academic space work to create an environment in which they have to justify themselves (See Magubane 2004:4). Academics who embody marginal subject positions experience disrespect and undermining of their authority not only from their colleagues but also from students. Sophie's need for self-justification can be seen as an effect of the tactics of power/knowledge, which

constructs her feminine identity and knowledge as devalued and herself as a devalued subject, hence her presence in the academic setting needs constant justification. Because Sophie does not fit the White male stereotype of the academic she needs to justify her claim to knowledge and her claim to legitimately occupy the position of one who ‘knows’. Her doing so reveals the assumption that she is not a legitimate knower, that she is an imposter who needs to justify herself.

Sophie recognises the power at play in this context. Her White male students feel legitimated enough to make claims without justifying them. There is also the underlying assumption that because she is female she can and is willing to have debates about sexism and when she does even though she is their lecturer she has to justify her claims while the White male students occupy positions in the debate about sexist language that are regarded as taken-for-granted and therefore not requiring further justification. Many women in academia encounter such devaluation of their knowledge and have students questioning their ideas, or going back to other lecturers to confirm what has been said in a class. Sophie refuses these expectations of marginality by turning the requirement for justification back on the students, making them do further reading which has the effect of reclaiming her place as rightful teacher and their place as her students. She reclaims her power and positionality as the lecturer and at the same time challenges sexism at a more mundane level.

To refuse marginality is also to refuse the legitimacy of the markers of the expected academic ‘norm’. Inga notices for instance the assumed normalcy of accents different to her own and claims her accent as valid.

But it took me lot many years to come to that point. Because initially it’s was always a matter of I’m not good enough, my English is not good enough, my accent is not good enough, my grammar is not good enough...I’ve been employed for a different set of criteria, not for my grammar and English speaking abilities (Inga).



Here ‘accent’ operates as a saturated signifier – standing in for a set of assumptions about Inga’s ‘race’ or ethnicity entailing incompetence and being a discomfoting and unsettling presence in the academy. Support staff and students express this discomfort in the way in which they react to her accent. She refuses such efforts to marginalise her and peg her as ‘the other’ because of her accent. Rather than internalising the oppression, Inga holds on to her identity and asserts herself as an authentic academic, despite her accent. She claims her legitimacy by pointing to the criteria for her employment which are not language related. Marginality is a construction as Spivak has pointed out of, and in relation to, a particular centre, defined in a particular way. Refusing marginality involves the reconstruction of what is to be unproblematically regarded as ‘normal’ and to make strange the vantage point of normality from which the marginal subject is viewed.

Some women academics resist marginalization and discrimination by creating a safe place for themselves in the inhospitable academy. Refusing to own a negative image of themselves or others like them, they create a separate and different identity from the dominant one (Alfred 2001:64; Blue 2001:135). Some participants spoke of being able to find a safe space for themselves with people they could identify with. At one of the study sites a women’s association provided this space. For Sophie the association was a space where she could talk about the way in which the university was structured and voice her frustration among others who could understand her.

A group of us set up the Society for Female Academics (SFA), one of the people was doing an MA at that time and she was so frustrated by some of the experiences she had been having and she thought that there needed to be a safe space where people could talk about their work or problems or issues. I was more concerned about the structural things like.....can we do things differently, if we imagined the university space what would it look like, would it look the way it looks now and for a lot of us, it wouldn’t (Sophie).

As hooks notes, being in a marginalised space offers the possibility of a radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternative, new worlds (hooks 1990:50). For the first

generation academic woman, such a space has the potential to provide access to those ‘hidden knowledges that come with multiple generational experiences of being at home in the academy and that help those on the margins to adapt and negotiate relationships in the academic setting. Such spaces provide opportunities for networking and the cultivation of social capital which is one of the key resources that first generation academic women lack. They may also provide information about the culture of the institution and the opportunity to share experiences of discrimination in the university setting. As such, these spaces enable those who find a home within them to renegotiate their identities (Knowles 2010:43).

It is nearly impossible to bring about a change without first understanding the structures of the institutions one wants to change. While marginality is associated with devalued forms of knowing, the marginal subject position provides a privileged vantage point from which to notice the way in which things are done in the university, its structures and practices, and from which to criticize and reject these structures and practices. But recognising such practices and structures can also be about consciously deciding which to accept as Tawanga has done – this too is a form of agency.

It’s like you come to a university, there are certain structures which are already there; there are certain ways of doing things which are there. Unfortunately, I didn't even try to fit into those structures, what I tried to do was to try to see the best way possible to do certain things, when I got here I remember, we had something like 5 or 6 post graduate students, we now have over 50, in fact we have the largest number I think in the faculty now and I can see that if I followed the way things were, I wouldn't get very far and probably would have left this university, but if you initiate a bit of change, you have structures there but you pick, those that are good but if you think something is not working, then you get rid of it and you change, especially if you are allowed to change, I was fortunate in that I was allowed to, when I came in I was asked to be HOD after about 3 months, so I was able to change things (Tawanga).

Spivak argues that ‘as the margin or ‘outside’ enters an institution or the teaching machine, what kind of teaching machine it enters will determine its contours’ (Spivak 1993:IX), meaning that in every institutional space there are specific cultures and ways of doing things which have to be

known and negotiated. When Tawanga entered the university space she did not try to fit into the already prescribed ideas and norms about how things should be and how she was supposed to do things. Rather she identified what she felt was good and rejected what she felt was bad. She refused to allow the contours of the university space as she found them to define her. Tawanga resists by getting rid of practices that do not conform to her idea of progress and are limiting to her ability to bring about change. Her strategy involves picking/accepting the good and eliminating/refusing the bad.

Rather than accepting and trying to fit into already prescribed identities, initiated by the centre, some women refuse to fit into them, finding other ways of doing things, displacing dominant ideologies, creating new spaces for innovation and empowerment, and resisting the strategies of power/knowledge that are at work in the university space. After entering into academia, they quickly realise that there are certain structures, processes and cultures that dominate the academic environment; they realise that there are 'layers of politics' and to be successful or to be accepted by the centre you have to follow some but not all the rules. As Tawanga says, if she had followed all the rules, she would not have survived in academia. She is able to recognise some arenas for manoeuvre that are tolerated by the centre. More direct forms of resistance are reserved for instances where the centre does not allow for change or room to operate.

To refuse may mean an acceptance of some part of the structures which one criticises and creating or initiating small changes. These changes may not be the result of overt resistance but may be subtle. In Tawanga's case, she decided to start having seminars and looking for ways to bring more students into the department and got funding to attract post graduate students. Also it may involve instituting changes that may not be popular but as Tawanga notes in the end, after some resistance, people begin to understand that it is 'for their own good'.

I realised some people are not coming to work every day and I said why, but you are paid to work all those days, why didn't you fill in leave forms, no I won't accept it, as HOD, I expect to you to fill in leave forms,

you become very unpopular initially but later I could see people start thinking, no that's the way we are supposed to have been running things, so they start supporting you later, initially it's who does she think she is, no we are not accepting this, no, we have been running things this way and we are going to continue running things this way, I said no sorry if I am going to continue being HOD, this is what I expect. So I had to negotiate my way around but also, introduce change that may not be popular, but in the end people realised no it's for their own good (Tawanga).

In their various roles the participants, rather than confirming their victimhood, described being able to refuse elements of the powerful dominant culture even while recognising that they must inhabit it, indeed invest in it, to criticize it (Spivak 1993:70). Spivak refers to resistance involving concretely reversing, displacing and seizing the 'apparatus of value coding' (Spivak 1993:70) which is what Catherine describes:

A lot of my work has been around how do you make things explicit for students, how do you help them to understand what this space is. It doesn't mean they have to be assimilated into it, because there is a lot wrong with the university but you can't stand outside and throw pebbles at the wall, you have got to be in it, to be critical of it, to be able to change it (Catherine).

Catherine realises that in order to effect change to a system one finds terribly wrong, one must enter such a system, understand its cultures, practices and processes, know the prevalent discourses and carve a way or method for displacing and reversing them.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

Elizabeth Janeway (in hooks 1984:92) argues that 'one of the most significant forms of power held by the weak is the refusal to accept the definition of oneself that is put forward by the powerful'. The women in this study portrayed moments of resistance to dominant constructions

of themselves in the academic space by insisting on defining their marginality as a space for freedom and agency rather than one of oppression and victimhood. They used their marginal situations as a source of both their survival and that of others. hooks (1984:92) has argued that even the most oppressed woman exercises some form of power and performs acts of resistance. For hooks (1989:206) the margins should be seen as a site of resistance and radical possibility much more than a site of deprivation. Spivak likewise argues that rather than focusing on victimhood our focus should be on the possibilities for displacing and reversing ideologies that marginalise, exclude and oppress. Riesman (1951:125; 1954:163) described marginality as a site where 'the intellect and ethical insight is at its best'. For Riesman (1954:166), 'a minority position can be a blessing as well as a curse, and a marginal person not quite in the minority, not quite outside it may have a superior vantage point for understanding and for self-development'. Patricia Collins (1986) similarly argues that marginality can be used as a position of strength since those at the margins have access to a distinct perspective or stand point. For Sadat Obol (2005:194), marginality can have 'unintended benefits'. While largely oppressive, it can also be partially liberating by 'creating new ways of thought and new avenues of agency'. As Spivak (1993:53) also argues, resistance can be viewed as a form of manifestation of freedom, meaning each form of resistance whether by using or refusing marginality reveals the freedom and agency of the participants to act within their will.

Hence marginality can be productive (of new vantage points, perspectives and possibilities) rather than simply oppressive. In the present study, the participants, though victimised, oppressed and marginalised, still have the power to reject the marginality appellation and oppressive constructions of their identities. Rather than render them powerless, marginality is inverted and used as a form of power. Resistance can take both overt and subtle forms. Ewick & Silbey (2003:1311) argue that 'acts of resistance can be seen as a conscious effort to shift the dynamic or openly confront/challenge particular power relations'. To resist, one must understand the strategies of power/knowledge relations in order to consciously subvert such relations and strategies. The narratives of the women in the study revealed an acknowledgement of the workings of power/knowledge strategies in the university space, recognition of opportunities for resistance and a willingness to take full advantage of such opportunities. Following Spivak's

argument that the focus of marginality studies should not be only on victimhood and oppression, the narratives in this chapter portray the experiences of women who rather than wholly internalising their oppression, use their marginal status to their own advantage and for the survival of others around them.

## 6. Chapter

### Cruising

#### 6.1 Introduction

In my field I had a lot of acceptance from male colleagues, on the international scale I have had many colleagues both male and female and I don't feel that there is any discrimination against me as a female, nor is there any particular desire to help me because I'm a female, they are not going to make any excuses, oh shame she hasn't had the same opportunities, I have to be an equal and that's fine, I am happy with that (Rosaline).

Weisberger (1992:429) notes that one possible response to marginality is one of acceptance of the practices and beliefs of the dominant culture, in the course of which the subject may sacrifice the practices of his or her own culture. In this chapter I look at the theme coded as 'cruising': those moments when the participants express their ability to thrive and be successful despite marginalising situations. The narratives in this chapter portray women who see themselves benefiting from marginality, who occupy a comfortable space and position in the teaching machine. The narratives reveal that this sometimes involves accepting aspects of the dominant culture in order to 'cruise' – that is to say, to be accepted and to thrive in the environment as it is rather than expecting it to change. I argue that this involves some level of sacrifice; cruising inevitably comes at a price. These participants report cruising in the academy despite it being a male dominated environment but their narratives reveal painful undertones of the compromises they have had to make to be accepted as 'normal', authentic academics.

I define cruising as describing those whose identity position constructs them as marginal but whose own experience is one of doing well and not suffering any disadvantage as a result of this

identity. I examine the possibility that in order to ‘cruise’ these women have had to accept dominant (masculinised) definitions of what is required of an ideal academic. I suggest that while they claim to experience no form of marginality or discrimination, it is possible to offer an interpretation of their narratives as having embedded in them tales of painful compromises and sacrifices made in order to ‘cruise’ and prices paid to ensure acceptance. In some instances the participants themselves seem not fully to recognise how exceptional they have had to be in order to achieve a measure of equality. Being exceptional is the criterion for ordinary success in their case.

## **6.2 Experiencing acceptance**

Given their first generation status, and hence their lack of the social and cultural capital required to successfully negotiate the academic environment, it would come as no surprise if the women in this study found it difficult to thrive in academe. In recruiting first generation academic women I hypothesized that what the participants lacked in social and cultural resources might prevent them from understanding the ‘unwritten rules’ of academia for example what meetings to attend and how to get things done; therefore accentuating experiences of exclusion and marginalisation in the academic environment. However, some women in the study narrated experiences of doing well. They felt they did not experience discrimination or marginalisation in their workplace and did not believe their gender constituted a ‘problem’ to them or those around them. These participants describe ways in which they have been able to thrive in academia as a result of their acceptance by those constituted within the centre. While some experienced immediate acceptance into the centre for others, it took a while for them to earn recognition as authentic academics. This chapter thus adds another layer to the complexity of experiences of marginality relating accounts of participants who see themselves as having been able to do well and who occupy a position of comfort in academia. They narrate experiences of inclusion, equal treatment and a satisfaction with their current positions, roles and circumstances.



Entering the teaching machine as an Indian woman in a White male dominated setting may have made it difficult for Inga to be accepted given prejudices of race, gender and class but despite these seeming disadvantages, Inga now sees herself as occupying a comfortable position and reports feelings satisfied and confident that she has achieved her goals. At one level her narrative suggests that the environment is an accepting one in which she only had to overcome self-doubt in order to be able to express herself freely and be accepted regardless of her clothing or accent.

I meet more than the expectations; I have constantly achieved what I wanted to see achieved... I've gone through all these phases and now am at a very comfortable position to say, this is my accent. I'm not going to change that, this is my identity as well and I'm not going to change my identity as well. I'm the only one who will walk around with Indian clothes in this town and I have, because initially I tried to fit in ... and then I thought, why the hell, why the hell should I keep pulling my shirt down (laughs) to fit in. So I buy what I buy and I wear what I wear ... that's me, take it or leave it, it's not my problem (Inga).

As Inga, acknowledges however, getting to the position of cruising meant meeting more than the expectations, doing everything that can be done, investing in her work and not diluting her work – that is to say single mindedly pursuing her goals.

Tawanga's account of cruising similarly emphasizes that her current degree of comfort is an outcome of having to do things better than her male colleagues in order to be accepted and recognised as part of the centre.

I don't know but guess what, I enjoyed the challenge, I think they have realized that and they realized that she actually enjoys that, so they just leave me alone. So I'll just do work that they are doing, maybe even better, that way they leave you alone because there's nothing they can do, and students will keep on graduating, that's the only way I can speak back, that's the only way just to do my work and show them, I am enjoying myself, my students are enjoying themselves, so in the end they

give up and then concentrate on something else and in the end I become a colleague [laughs], and in the end I become somebody who they can consult and that's fine because acceptability comes after a long time (Tawanga).

Tawanga's narrative reveals the ability of some women to enjoy their academic positions despite marginalising situations. While some may find her experiences discouraging, Tawanga chose to enjoy her position and do her best which led to acceptance or at least being 'left alone' by her colleagues. Her conscious decision to ignore attempts to marginalise her leads to acceptance. In the end she is recognised as a legitimate 'knower': someone who can be consulted.

Natalie described herself as having cruised in academia 'from the start 'and throughout her career, having experienced no problems with 'glass ceilings'. She sees herself as having been supported all through her career and treated as 'one of the team' partly because she thrives and excels in the particularly valued academic role of researcher.

I was integrated right from the start, I think the story of my life is research it's always been fun, that's the reason I've done it...So I actually had no problems with glass ceilings only support, everything was very collegial...everybody was very pleasant, helpful and I think the most pleasant thing was that you were just treated as one of the team, as an equal, you got on with it and nobody except for those people in business who made the stupid remarks, nobody made any particular sort of remarks about your clothing or this and that but you know it was about the work we were doing and very accommodating and everything (Natalie).

Rather than discrimination and marginalisation, Natalie's experience of academia was one of inclusion and accommodation; she was treated as an equal and is now an emeritus professor, well recognised and respected in her field.

These participants experience themselves as being able to cruise in academia. They have found acceptance and are able to thrive. However, they perhaps do not always recognise that this requires their exceptional ability to manage conflicting responsibilities while at the same time meeting the highest standards of their profession. Their ability to cruise and their acceptance into the centre comes at a cost. For example, Rosaline experiences acceptance and no discrimination while at the same time recognising the impossibility of being both ‘a good scientist’ and ‘a good mother’.

So in my NRF evaluation, they say is there any time when you weren’t working at full force and I did see that for a period when our children were young I actually could not be a productive scientist and be a good mother, and I don’t think anyone really took account of that. I managed to publish enough papers and so on so to be well-recognized but I don’t actually feel that I have to be the top academic in my field in the world, it’s fine and I’m happy where I am, to be recognized with what I do, to feel I can make a useful contribution to society with my work and so on, obviously one strives to do better (Rosaline).

For Rosaline non-discrimination means being treated the same as everyone else with no special treatment, even though the demands on her as a mother *were* exceptional. While these participants argued that they were cruising – enjoying acceptance and doing well in academia -- at the same time there is recognition of the price they had to pay to be in such positions. In Rosaline’s case she recognises that being a mother set her back some years with regards to being recognised in her field and the enormous amount of extra time she had to put in to be in the position she is now:

.....because I had to prove that I was working in the time though, had to prove that I was productive, so actually work longer hours in the evenings and later than is required in order to show that I am fulfilling that and perhaps I do more than I need to but there’s so much work to do anyway that it’s fine....it’s quite difficult sometimes to be successful in your career as a parent, as a mother, I think that it’s possibly more difficult for a woman because somehow we are still expected as mothers to be the main caregivers of our children and I see other women scientists

in my sort of field who chose not to get married and have children, who are actually considered to be ahead of me in their career but it's also fine because I love my children dearly and I have no regrets having them, but it has been difficult trying to be a good mother to them, study further and run a full-time job, build a career were I am actually recognized in the field and I have done that, I have managed to do that (Rosaline).

Rosaline recognises the effects of the social expectation that women are primary care givers on her career and the difficulty in trying to juggle both career and family. She alludes to the necessity of putting in extra hours in order to make sure that her commitment to the work is not questioned given that she is also dedicating time to her children (See Hays 1996:3). She alludes also to the enormous tension and stress that results from trying to balance work/family incompatibility and that must be absorbed by the individual absent social, institutional and structural change.

In the end there is a painful undertone of compromise in Rosaline's account which suggests that in order to 'cruise' in the academy women must not be seen to be demanding too much both in terms of their own expectations of what they might achieve and in terms of the expectations that they have of how their particular needs and situated experiences might be accommodated in order to make it possible for them to thrive rather than merely to survive. In order to cruise academic women who are also primary care givers must often work harder than their male counterparts to show that one can in fact be productive even while having family responsibilities. Hence while Rosaline argues that she has not been limited by discrimination or glass ceilings of any kind, her story reveals the great lengths to which she had to go to be accepted, working long hours and doing more than others but still falling behind those who did not have the same care responsibilities.

To cruise involves being able to manage conflicting responsibilities and the possibility that the resultant effect of managing such dual responsibilities may not be positive with regard to recognition and promotion in the work place. Scholars have noted how the societal construction

of women in a domestic light as wives and care givers has confined them to subordinate positions (Luke 1994:216; Acker 1980:84; Bagilhole 2000:29; Walker 1998:340; Baca Zinn 1988:132). As argued by Reay (2000:18) the negative ideologies and perception of women and their roles affects both the way they are seen and accepted by society and the way they see themselves. While Rosaline as a mother has worked extra hard, putting in more than enough time, the people considered ahead of her are the ones without children. Reflecting the masculinised nature of academia, to be accepted one must be able to meet the requirements of the centre, no excuses, one must be able to fit into the ideas of what it means to be successful, of the qualifications of a good academic, and often ideally this does not involve being a mother with primary care responsibilities. In this way practices and processes of masculine dominance are maintained – the identikit of the ideal worker is a masculinised portrait of a worker with limited family responsibilities, who is able to work late at short notice, who does not take time off for children’s illnesses or special occasions and who does not experience a longing to be somewhere else while at work, regardless of personal ambition or how fulfilling the work may be.

To be accepted as an equal member of the team often requires ensuring that issues relating to the family and motherhood do not affect their work – it is a taken for granted assumption that if one’s work were affected by one’s care responsibility this would make one less ideal as a worker. As a result women often go to great lengths to conceal their care responsibilities and to make sure that they are beyond reproach at work. Scholars have noted the gendered nature of the ideal worker norm as it emphasises masculine assumptions about embodied human experience which affects the way in which organisations are experienced by women (See Kelley *et al.* 2010). To cruise you have to become the ideal worker which involves being seen to embody a complete devotion to one’s work. To be seen as the ideal academic worker norm means accepting the expectation that one will work long hours and that one’s life will revolve single-mindedly around work (see Kelley *et al.* 2010:238). Even though these women claim to have to be accepted as ‘normal’ and doing great, this involved them modelling themselves according to an image defined by the centre, which is essentially masculine, being able to work with little or

no family time or as in the case of Rosaline working longer hours to ensure that family time does not affect the institution's perception of one as an ideal worker.

As Kelley *et al.* (2010:283) note, women and mothers in particular are less likely to live up to institutional expectations (for instance being able to work after hours or stay at meetings after five in the evening) and reap the rewards associated with being the ideal worker. Rosaline notes the way in which being a mother has affected her ability to be as recognised as other women in her field who decided not to be mothers. Skelton (2005b:325) argued that to be accepted as competent and successful some women opt for a masculinised presentation of the self, confirming the devaluation of the feminine in the academic space and resulting in constant feelings of inner tension (See also Rees 2007:15). The family/work divide has been a major problem for academic women. At home they have to take care of their children and ensure the household runs smoothly and at work they have to constantly publish so as not to 'perish'. Given societal expectations of intensive mothering equating to ideal mothering while ideal fatherhood is not associated with the same expectations, male academics who are fathers do not for the most part experience the same role conflicts (Acker 1980:82; Bagilhole 2000:20; Denker 1992:108). As a result this is one reason for why women are not able to progress as fast as men in academia and hence find themselves filling the lower ranking, lower paid positions. This reflects in part the discriminatory nature of the university which takes a certain type of worker as the ideal norm but also alludes to the limited amount of time and energy left for women who are mothers to engage in activities to achieve their academic goals, after fulfilling their maternal responsibilities in societies in which the social expectation remains that women are primarily responsible for the well-being of children (Acker 1980:83; Bagilhole 1993:261, 267; Dillabough 1999; Baca Zinn 1988:128).

Natalie recalls an occasion when this form of discrimination became clear to her in practice:

I remember there was one woman who was going to be appointed as a head of department and they pointed out that she had taken her maternity

leave and that she had been out of it for a while and they just went sort of against her and I thought well in this country they should be glad when people took leave, this was the right thing to do. The University should make provisions for this sort of thing and apart from the fact that she was going to be head of the social work department if more women looked after their children then maybe we would not need so many social workers but well you know it could be a choice. I suppose I had no children so that might be different, I think we just never got around to it and it seemed to work quite well..... (Natalie).

The fact the Natalie never had children may have contributed to her ability to cruise: to have a successful academic career. As Rosaline notes the women in her field who are considered to be better than her are those without children, the lack of ‘distraction’ on the mothering front enables a complete dedication to an academic career, which may have enabled Natalie’s successful career. While Natalie may have a sense of cruising and experiencing no discrimination, this may partly be explained by the fact that she more readily fits the expectations of the ideal worker norm in academia precisely because she is not a mother. To be both a mother and an ideal worker requires either that the individual make enormous sacrifices or that the institution/society changes its expectations of both what ideal mothering involves and how an ideal worker functions.

To cruise often involves being exceptional. Women who are welcomed and accepted by the centre are those who are considered to be exceptional in their various fields: they meet more than the expectations of the ideal academic.

I meet more than the expectations, I’ve spent 10 years doing everything that can be done in those 10 years until last year....I have invested in my work, I have surplus work that now even if I take off a little bit and do what is considered a lot by others, I have done a lot and I have surplus. So it’s not that, am I meeting expectations, I’m more than meeting expectations, I’m the only one in my division who is supervising undergrads, postgrads, publishing, doing community engagements and teaching. So if I have not diluted my work, who are we talking about to

rise against expectations, others have to rise up...I've gone through all these phases and now am at a very comfortable position .... (Inga).

Inga's narrative portrays the form of marginality she experiences, since the norm in the academic spaces she inhabits is White and male and because she is not that, being able to cruise meant that she had to meet more than the expectations of a good academic before she felt comfortable to just be herself. Based on a study in South Africa, the UK and Australia, White *et al.* (2012:305, 305) note that if women do not measure up to the typical career model, they may have difficulty demonstrating that they have the leadership capabilities required for top jobs. Inga recognises that academia is a man's world, she had been taught by her father to not allow her femininity to affect her work, hence she realises that to be accepted -- to be able to cruise -- she had to be exceptional. The paradox is one of needing to be exceptional in order to be recognised just as normal. She had in fact to be more than what is expected of the average male academic in order to get to a place where others will look up to her as an example. Skelton (2005b:325) argued that some women adopt a more conventionally masculine attitude in their academic careers to enable them succeed. Inga similarly feels she had to become like a man, to think and act like the men who were highly regarded in the academy in order to believe that she was good enough.

But again it comes with time, it doesn't come in the first week ... you have to learn to become comfortable with these things and you have to go through that entire cycle of first feeling 'oh maybe I'm not good enough, then the next thing of what the hell and then the next phase of alright, there has to be a different way to do this, so your mind has to go through all those cycles, every human being has to go through all those cycles and I'm not unique, I'm as human as everybody else (Inga).

While Inga makes no claim to being unique, her narrative however speaks of an individual who in fact has had to be rather unique to reach the comfortable position she now finds herself in and enjoy the ordinary privileges that are taken for granted by those at the centre. Cruising involves going through different phases of feeling inadequate and incapable of meeting the set standard, then recognising one's place and one's capabilities and finally an acceptance of one's



capabilities and finding new ways of doing things. Cruising also involves learning to be comfortable with one's identity. To cruise Inga had to learn to accept her identity while at the same time trying to be exceptional to be accepted into the centre. Inga's need to learn certain ways of being in order to be accepted, to have others look up to her, to work extra hard to become recognised portrays the marginal space which she occupies. As is evident in Inga's and Rosaline's narratives, cruising involves devoting extra time to one's job as compared to what is expected of those whose belonging in the space is never in question.

Shackleton (2007:23) found that in most organisations especially universities, gender was dismissed as an institutional dynamic, thus re-inscribing and legitimizing the male norm and reinforcing the minority status of women in academia (Shackleton 2007:38). For Tawanga to be happy in this context, to just 'enjoy the way things are' means consciously adopting strategies to overcome attempts resentments and attempts to 'put her down':

As a female maybe not all your colleagues actually treat you the way you treat them...First they try to really put you down there, then they realize, this is not the type, then there is a bit of resentment, who do you think you are trying to unseat these ideas which I already have...maybe they already have these problems with females, I don't know but guess what, I enjoyed the challenge, ... and that's fine because acceptability comes after a long time....So in a way, I try to be consistent and then also, very few things upset me, very few I don't know, I just turned the other side and I think people here know that so they won't bother trying, colleagues who frighten me, I don't reply, I will just say you do have time to waste, don't you? Why don't you channel that into something else, like do something maybe with all that energy, when you do that, they won't fight back and the next time you see them, you say hi with a smile, they just say she's crazy [laughs] ... and I find that maybe that has helped me enjoy the way things are (Tawanga).

For Tawanga, cruising meant seeing attempts to oppress and exclude her as a challenge to be relished rather than a loss. Instead of allowing negative comments about her to marginalise her, Tawanga decides to enjoy the challenge and after a while she is left alone, but to be accepted

involves ignoring snide comments, even being considered 'crazy' and having to be better at her job and working harder than her colleagues. She has to make sure she is continually graduating students, that way she is seen as competent enough to be left alone

In retrospect the competitor was a man and I think I wondered if I got the job because I was a woman because at that time [my university] was not doing very well in terms of transformation, but I like to think I got it on my credentials because I really was quite an accomplished researcher....  
(Natalie).

Although Natalie reported that she had no experience of discrimination, describing her experience of academia as having been one of cruising, she at the same time questions the conditions for her appointment and wonders if she was hired as a 'token' or not. One marker of the burden of marginality is this constant questioning of one's worth. Part of the privilege of occupying the position of privileged norm is not to be burdened with such doubts. Whether Natalie was actually employed as a token or because she was competent is beside the point. That she feels a need to ask the question reveals the precariousness of her insider status.

Spivak introduces the concept of female tokenism to explain how masculine ideologies are maintained in the academy. She defines female tokenism as false power which male dominated institutions offer to a few women who are able to show that they can think like men on the condition that they use it to maintain things as they are (Spivak 1998:107). That power withheld from the vast majority of women is offered to the few, so that it may appear that any truly qualified woman can gain access to leadership, recognition and reward, hence that justice based on merit actually prevails (Spivak 1998:107). Natalie is an emeritus professor. While she may not be seen or viewed as a token, her story portrays the possibility of gaining access and acceptance into the centre. The power and sense of acceptance by the centre given to Natalie is evident in her narrative, but its wider effect on other women is that they are then made to think that if they follow a particular path, they can be accepted and recognised – it is only a matter of trying hard enough. The Natalie's of the academy legitimise the centre and the (inadvertent)

outcome of their success is to locate failure to thrive on the part of many women in their own personal failures rather than allowing those failures to come to be seen as an effect of the construction of the centre around masculine norms and expectations. Spivak notes that the token woman is encouraged to see herself as different from other women and separate herself from the wider female condition and she is perceived by the ordinary woman as separate, perhaps even stronger than themselves (Spivak 1998:107). Hence masculine ideologies are reinforced and maintained as the woman chosen as token is expected to act and behave in a way approved by the university and can only be tolerated if she behaves that way (Spivak 1998:109). Natalie describes the university as 'a socially constructed place with a shared value system on what counts as knowledge and inducts both students and lecturers into that system'. She acknowledges that her ability to cruise in this 'socially constructed place' depended on her not 'rocking the boat':

I think that comes from me rather than from men, just really coming from ...a patriarchal society I had a feeling for this and I thought I wanted to sort of avoid any tension and I think I still have....when I first came to the institute we used to have, I just followed all the traditions which I thought were working well, I didn't rock the boat so maybe that's just a personal style. I'm quite conservative; I don't like to rock the boat.... I suppose in teams where I have been the head of things running things, I have always been very conscious, my father was from that generation where men don't like to be told what to do by women, I always tried to put it in a way that it was not anything coming from me directly (Natalie).

The university, we are reminded, relies of traditionally inherited power structures and knowledge formations to function; doing things the same way because they have always been done that way and in this way existing power hierarchies are secured and reinforced (Jackson & Mazzei 2012:42). Hence Natalie does not feel marginalised because she adapts and functions according to the inherited power structures of the feminine being subordinate to the masculine which is why every directive is framed as not coming directly from her as a woman to male colleagues. Here she makes no mention of concealing her directives to women but only to men and because her actions maintain and secure power hierarchies as validated by the centre/ teaching machine

she is not challenged or resisted. This is however precisely to illustrate her marginality; that she has to conceal her authority reveals the working of deeply entrenched ideas of rightful masculine dominance and the illegitimacy of female power. Socialised not to challenge men, even as a professor emeritus, she must find ways of exercising her legitimate authority without seeming to exercise it – which reveals that her authority is in fact, in another sense, illegitimate.

Women in this category have been described by Hlengwa (2011) as ‘safe bets’. Hlengwa argues that the university cannot afford not to make safe bets when selecting inhabitants of the margin. Making a safe bet means welcoming in inhabitants who are able to accommodate themselves to the dominant institutional culture and therefore their existence in the university confirms that the dominant culture is universal rather than masculine, and is hospitable to diversity. In this way dominance is secured as to be seen to make no room at all for marginalised occupants would be to risk being labelled overtly discriminatory. These inhabitants give other women the idea that they too can be make it into the centre or achieve a position of comfort or cruising if they act or behave like the ‘selected’ inhabitants which in turn serves the function of locating the explanation for failure to thrive in the university within the individual rather than the social structure.

In the academic setting women face the socially constructed image of what a good academic is: one who lectures, publishes and is involved in community engagement. At the same time at home women often are expected to be good mothers and take care of their families. As Inga notes, she had been told by her father that she needed to deride characteristics he termed ‘girly stuff’ in order to be fully accepted into the centre as normal:

...he would always tell me that I should not bother to know the girly stuff and learn how to cook and wash and clean...I should focus on what a man has to do in a man’s world because when I enter the world I will be entering with a neutral gender or with a masculine power to it, not with a feminine thing of saying, I’m second rate, I can’t do this as well, I have to get back to my home quickly, no not those excuses but to say that I’m

neutral, I'm not carrying my gender with me and I am as good as any man...fortunately my husband supports that completely in his own different way and he always says, I can't go with the excuse of being a woman to my work (Inga).

For the academic woman to fit in the centre, she must be 'gender neutral' by which is meant being a 'man in a man's world'. In other words she has to deride characteristics stereotypically defined as 'feminine' or 'girly' in order to survive. She must embody masculine traits simply to fit in which provides a telling insight into the gender of the centre. The contours of marginality are thus defined in the sense that to be seen as constituted within the centre, to be seen as normal, the woman has to model herself into the constructed ideal academic as defined by the centre, a construction that emphasises masculine traits while devaluing or reducing the importance of feminine traits like motherhood. While some universities do acknowledge that some of their academic staff have children and make provision for them to take care of their children for instance in the form of crèches and maternity benefits, when it comes to promotions however there is no excuse for a woman who has to take time off to have children. The racking up of publication counts and career achievements is seldom nuanced enough to fully take into account the specificities of women's experience.

Thus women who do not consider themselves as marginalised and see themselves as included might nevertheless have paid a far greater price than their male counterparts to be accepted and recognised as normal. Not all women are willing to pay this price. The inhabitants selected for provisional inclusion are not those who defy or disrupt the prevailing power relation in the academy, but inhabitants whose presence maintains power relations in the centre. The university selectively is able to incorporate marginalised individuals who do not pose a threat to its culture and structures. These inhabitants are able to cruise perhaps not always recognising that this requires their exceptional ability to adapt, to work harder and more effectively than others and to manage conflicting responsibilities while at the same time meeting the highest standards of their profession.

### 6.3 Conclusion

Often in complex and contradictory ways several participants portrayed a sense of themselves in a position of comfort and ease despite elements of the same narrative articulating great pain and loss. This sense of ‘cruising’ in academia in spite of, as well as because of, one’s marginality articulates most clearly Spivak’s notion of ‘outside/in’ – the sense in which the ‘marginalised’ academic is never wholly or uniformly at the margin but occupies rather a shifting position, between the margin and the centre, between agency and abjection, power and powerlessness. As Spivak argues ‘our explanations make our actions and ideas possible, our role is to produce and we are reproduced by these explanations in terms of the powers that guide the society we live in (Spivak 1998:108). Inscribed in the experience of the academic woman is a connection to the centre. The academic woman is therefore produced by the cultures and practices that guide the university, her actions and reactions, in fact the totality of her experiences is influenced by the institution (centre) of which she is a part. Hence the academic woman who is cruising does so because she has been accepted and validated by the centre. She can be described as a product of power/knowledge strategies because of the choices she has had to make and the things she has had to give and the concessions she has had to make to gain approval and acceptance. In Natalie’s narrative, she had to accept masculine norms and ideologies to be accepted, choosing not to rock the boat. Some women who are very ambitious accept and adopt the ideal worker norm as they encounter it rather than questioning it even though it sits uncomfortably with their own experience and they reap rewards accordingly. But as Rosaline narrates it is often difficult to balance traditional feminine roles such as being a mother and an academic. As a result many women in these positions then have to settle for a far less satisfactory position. Only a minority are exceptional enough to cruise under these circumstances. This does not mean that working mothers are unable to cruise, as is seen in Rosaline’s case she is indeed able to cruise but this comes at a cost. Similarly Inga and Tawanga are able to cruise because they have been able to more than meet the expectations the university has of them and are exceptional in their fields. By working twice as hard as others in their various fields, these women were able to earn acceptance and recognition. Their ability to cruise was a function of their being exceptional.

## 7. Chapter

### Conclusion

The participants' narratives reveal a host of compromises academic women make to gain approval, fit in and be successful. The fact that they need to earn such recognition and work extra hard portrays their marginality. Even though they interpret their success as having to do with not having experienced discrimination it is clear from what they say that they have had to make sacrifices and to be exceptional to get where they are. They have had, in fact, to be very unequal – in effort and ability -- to be treated equally. The fact that there is no blanket denial of access to top positions to women does not mean there is no discrimination. The narratives reflect the everyday experiences of marginalisation of women in the study, even for those who find themselves thriving and doing well. For example while Natalie is an accomplished professor, she still questions the basis of her employment, meaning that even if women are able to make it and be recognised and experience no discrimination, there are some deeply entrenched masculine practices that may make the accomplished academic woman question her authenticity in the academic setting.

When asked their views about what a good academic is, all the participants iterated the university's description of a good academic, one who is good at lecturing, research and community engagement. While taking care of children is obviously not prohibited, those who take primary responsibility for care giving often do so at a cost. Since the dominant power has dictated the rules and identified the qualities of an ideal academic, one who is able to excel in all three spheres fulfils the ideal worker norm. To propose an alternative – the right to be both being exceptional primary carers and exceptional academics is to risk appearing to be unwilling or incapable of meeting expectations that are presented as universal and timeless when in fact they are socially bounded. It is assumed that those who want both must make personal sacrifices to fulfil their ambitions rather than there ever being any suggestion of institutions changing and adapting in order to accommodate a new identikit of the ideal worker that incorporates care

responsibilities without seeing these as a distraction or inconvenience. That exceptionality is the requirement for women being able to cruise reveals the values of the university. Cruising involves inserting oneself in inherited power structures and knowledge formations and for women to do so is often not easy. The women who are able to cruise and experience comfort in the academic setting, do so because they reproduce and are produced by discourses that help maintain masculine ideologies prevalent in the academic setting. To remove oneself would be to reject the invitation from the centre and would involve considerable costs.

If to cruise means making great sacrifices and working twice as hard and putting in long hours to be accepted, recognised and regarded as normal, if to cruise means being the ideal worker norm, being completely devoted to one's work, how then can women especially mothers achieve equality? I would not go so far as to describe Rosaline, Inga, Tawanga, Thandiswa and Natalie as tokens, however their narratives reveals the way in which their ability to cruise maintains masculine ideologies, as Spivak notes they have been offered as sense of acceptance and equality on the condition that they use it to maintain things as they are (Spivak 1998:107). If these women are able to cruise, it is because the strategies of power and techniques of knowledge in the university they find themselves in have deployed their actions as acceptable; one can then say that their non-marginality is a resultant effect of what they have had to sacrifice. To cruise then entails ridding oneself of the characteristics of the margin and embracing those of the centre.

Using Spivak's idea of the interconnectedness between the margin and centre this study set out to reveal how women in academia, who have been considered to occupy a marginal position given the masculinised nature of academia, narrate their experiences of being 'outside/in' the teaching machine. For Spivak the marginal is always on the margins in relation to the centre and always in some sense 'of' the centre. Taking up this work on the concept of marginality the study tried to show the complex relationship with marginality that the participants have. They are involved with defining the centre, while at the same time being defined by it. Sometimes they evince powerful forms of agency, using marginality as a resource both in their own interests and for the selective advancement of others whom they see as somehow like themselves. At other



times the brute impact of disadvantage and loss in all its guises echoes through their narratives. Their involvement with moments of resistance and capitulation are often voiced in a single narrative. While I try here to trouble the idea of marginality as simple disadvantage, I also see the margins as sites of resistance and agency, and try also to show the cogency of what Spivak refers to as the “impossible no”. The marginalised subject inhabits a particular structure even while resisting and refusing it. These very subject positions are made possible by the structure which one inhabits and must inhabit. That structure foretells too the price of refusal and the benefits of compromise. It is this ‘impossible no’ that we hear echoing through the participants’ narratives.

Some second and third generation academics may experience difficulty negotiating entry into academia, but they possess both the social and cultural capital to be able to negotiate such entry (see Bourdieu). As Hlengwa (2011) puts it, they have ‘access cards’ with which to move fluently within the academic system. However first generation academics lack such ‘access cards’ to effectively negotiate the structures in the university. Despite this lack their disadvantage is never completely disempowering. They are able to negotiate such structures, sometimes losing, sometimes resisting and sometimes refusing. While for some academia presents a struggle that necessitates resistance, for others academia is a place where it is possible to thrive but where such thriving often hinges on being exceptional. For some this requires accepting structures, cultures and practices at the centre, revealing the fact that the centre only welcomes in inhabitants who do not pose any real challenge to its dominant practices. Therefore, while it may be possible for the second generation to be accepted because they possess similar qualities to the centre (which enables one to think and act according to the acceptable culture), the first generation entrant who lacks such resources may have much more difficulty being accepted and to earn such acceptance she must be seen or identified as one who is not a challenge to the centre’s ideologies and culture, one who is able to learn and develop such acceptable traits, qualities and characteristics.

Taking the narratives of 15 women from an HWU and an HBU, I provide a complex account of marginality involving experiences of loss, resistance and acceptance. The women in this study narrated the many ways in which to be marginalised is to lose out. A combination of race, class and gender work to negatively affect their experiences. Some respond by toning down their ambitions or leaving academia altogether. The multiple marginalities experienced by the women in the study on the basis of race, class and gender reveals itself through their loss of income, status and agency, revealing the fact that although some gains have been made with regard to equity and equality in universities, more efforts need to be made which will involve fundamental shifts in what is regarded as the ideal worker norm rather than a conditional welcoming in of selected inhabitants of the margins.

Side by side with the narration of profound layers of loss occasioned by marginality though, were counter narratives, contradictory impulses and modes of both resistance and accommodation. Despite being on the losing end of power relations, the women narrated experiences of resistance in which they were able to use their marginality as a resource or an outright refusal of oppressive relations. As Spivak points out, power is productive (1993:38). Strategies of resistance though are themselves produced by the power/knowledge structures and strategies prevalent in the university space. While there is an effort at transformation in universities in South Africa, the ways in which these women take on power struggles and resist marginalising discourses and practices, reveal that stereotypes and assumptions based on race, class and gender in the university space continue to structure the experiences of those defined as 'other' than the academic norm (See Magubane 2004:4). The experiences of the women in the study that warrants such strategies of resistance as manipulating and displacing ideologies reveal that embedded in the structures and cultures of South African universities are ideologies and practices that work to marginalise other and exclude women. Each strategy of resistance used by the women in this study can be seen as a product of the cultures, ideologies and practices of the universities in which they find themselves. Hence each form of resistance whether it is speaking out, manipulating to get one's way, refusing negative identities, using marginality as a strategy for survival or selectively accepting cultures one finds non-discriminatory, can be seen as a product of power/knowledge strategies in the academy.

For some, marginality can be a space of liberation, a vantage point from which to exercise agency. From this position some of the participants were able to act and carry out their own desires, they were free to either reject completely or partially aspects of the dominant relations in which they were embedded. By helping others, manipulating, speaking out, claiming equality, rejecting negative identities, displacing/reversing power structures, creating safe spaces and selecting aspects to accept and reject, the women in this study were able to bring about pockets of change. Their agency is manifested in the ability to undertake such divergent practices. This does not mean that some may not have witnessed resistance to their ideas and actions; in fact most of the women's ideas were met with various forms of resistance from the centre. However, despite that they were able to implement their ideas, which is perhaps in itself evidence of how exceptional those who succeed despite the constraints really are.

To use marginality to one's advantage or to refuse or reject marginality can thus be seen as a means by which the women in this study resisted dominant ideologies. In a South African context, race, class and gender all work together to affect the experiences of women in academia. By rejecting such appellations and impositions, the women in this study revealed the working of power/knowledge in academia and at the same time revealed the ways in which they used the marginal space occupied by them as sites of resistance and freedom. Their ability to transcend marginalising situations and resist them, points to the fact that marginalising spaces and marginality studies can indeed be much more than tales of oppression and victimhood. The margin can be a liberating space, creating new ways of thought and new ways of seeing. The narratives in this study reveal the efforts made by these (admittedly exceptional) women to change in their small ways patriarchal ideas and ideologies that prevail in the academy. It follows that to remake or transform the university, exceptionality as a criterion for acceptance into the centre or 'cruising' has to be changed. In an analysis of race, class and gender in the academy Kennelly *et al.* (1999:147) argue that European-American middle-class and men professors are offered or provided with a degree of success which is not offered to members of other groups. The middle class White man is accepted and normalised as an authentic academic while women and lower class Black men are not offered this privilege. To enter into this 'normality' would

involve being exceptional. If the average male academic does not have to be exceptional to be accepted, then the same should be the basis for the average academic woman's acceptance. As Kennelly *et al* note, transformation cannot be achieved by an inclusion of a token minority of women or Black men in academia. The institutions need to be shaped by norms other than those which sit comfortably with White male academics (Kennelley *et al.* 1999:147). Scholars have called for a removal of the 'old norm' which ties women to a traditional role of motherhood and family in a way that makes it difficult to be both a mother and an academic (Acker & Armenti 2004:18; Bagilhole 2000:29). While universities in South Africa seem to be achieving transformation in terms of numbers, equality can only be achieved when there is not only equal representation in academia but in the various ranks from lowest to highest ranks. South African universities still have a long way to go as regards such inclusion but a starting point would be in reversing and displacing those traditionally inherited norms that engender inequality and being willing to embrace a new set of norms that reflect more closely the embodied experiences of people from working class backgrounds, women and Black academics in the teaching machine.

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## 9. APPENDIX A Informed Consent Form

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate in the research project of Idahosa Grace on First Generation South African Women in the Academy.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a/an (Honours/Master's/PhD) degree at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on \_\_\_\_\_ (cell phone) or \_\_\_\_\_ (email). The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee(s), and is under the supervision of Prof Louise Vincent in the Politics Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on \_\_\_\_\_ (office) or l.vincent@ru.ac.za (email).
2. The researcher is interested in collecting experiences of first generation academic women in South Africa.
3. My participation will involve being interviewed at my convenience for duration of about one hour per interview.
4. I may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.
6. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
7. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader.

Signed on (Date):

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. APENDIX B: NODES<sup>2</sup>

Name
Motivation to succeed
Proving oneself
Creating Spaces
Crossing Spaces
Auto Coded Interview Questions
Raised by Mother
Dedication
Time
Finances
Doing the extraordinary
Belief in a higher power
Support Coping
experiencing marginality
Education bringing a different perspective
Academia giving a voice
Cruising
Refusing
Gender
Using Marginality as a resource
Accepting Marginality
Reaction to marginality
slightly there were those, there are very small compared to the bigger picture
special blessing to see people you have taught develop
Being hurt by marginality
Academia and cultures of distance
Asking for help
University Structures
Expectations
Shifting Identities
Locating vs Finding Oneself
Critical of the self
Growing
Sense made of experience
Race and academia
Needing to be self sufficient
academia as a means to independence
First
Know
Experience of difficulty
that you exist in a space in a different way than

---

<sup>2</sup> The nodes do not reflect child nodes and merged nodes.

Life  
Experiences  
Changing  
Motherhood  
Refusing academia  
Pressure  
Being emotionally involved  
Sudden Realization ahah moment  
Becoming a mentor helping  
Frustration  
Need for Control Perfection  
Newness and cultures of exclusion  
Coping  
seeking support  
Having no social life  
Learning  
Relationship with colleagues  
Avoidance  
Feeling the need to fight  
Hiding personality true identity  
Sense of Disappointment  
Having a sense of achievement  
Academia not meeting expectations  
Different cultures in universities  
Being unaware of traditions  
Having a more personal relationship with students  
Questioning the need to create ideal academics  
Lack of recognition of family responsibilities  
Layers of politics  
Becoming Cynical about academia  
reducing expectations  
Academia as playing games  
I just realised I don't want to play that game, so ideally, its affected my ambition  
wanting a life outside academia  
Being monitored  
Being forced into shelves  
different performance of the self  
Disillusioned with academia  
Motivation to go to university from parents  
Having no prior knowledge  
Questioning things  
Race  
Having to tone it down  
Using  
Adapting

Losing

Institutions and dominant discourses

Denying the academic self

Liberating

Given big classes

Cultural Capital

Going the extra mile