The Impact of Race, Gender, and Culture in South African Higher Education

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Introduction

South Africa's government initiatives, such as the Commission on Gender Equality, the National Gender Forum, and the Office on the Status of Women, support efforts by its institutions of higher education to become more inclusive and equitable. Nevertheless, there remain fundamental obstacles to the full participation of South African women in the management structures of academe. This article examines the obstacles of race, gender, and culture to the professional advancement of Black female scholars and administrators in South African institutions of higher education.[1] Given the documented historical and continuing underrepresentation of South African women in this sector, it is important to understand their experiences in order to facilitate the establishment of institutional environments that will be supportive to their professional endeavors.

Prior to 1994, the law did not protect Black South Africans. Those who were not White lived in a country that persecuted, segregated, and discriminated against them on the basis of their racial classification.[2] Apartheid included denying job and educational opportunities and limiting access to housing, health services, transportation, and economic opportunities on the basis of gender and race. As Sisonke Msimang asserts, racism under apartheid was both informal (i.e., an everyday practice) and formal (e.g., laws designating areas where Blacks could live, banning interracial mixing, and barring

[1] In the context of this article, the term "scholars" refers to faculty members and others who hold teaching and research appointments within the university. In the South African higher education system, faculty members are ranked in descending order as follows: professor, associate professor, senior lecturer, lecturer A (exists only at some universities), lecturer, and junior lecturer.

[2] The country's legal codes classified people as African, Colored, Indian, or White. The racial classification terms used in this article carry particular historical undertones specific to the South African context. The authors acknowledge that these terms are contentious, particularly as South Africa attempts to shed its legacy of apartheid and carve a new identity as a democratic country. As vestiges of the apartheid past are still pervasive in institutions of higher education, these terms are used to facilitate a concise discussion. In the context of this article African refers to people of indigenous ancestry. Colored refers to South Africans of mixed heritage, usually with Dutch, African, Malay, or Khoisan heritage. Indian refers to people of Indian descent, and White refers to South Africans of European descent. The term Black is used to refer collectively to Africans, Coloreds, and Indians. It is a term that emerged during the Black Consciousness era of 1970s to refer to the "oppressed" peoples of South Africa.

Comparative Education Review, vol. 48, no. 4.

0010-4086/2004/4804-0005$05.00

employment of Blacks for certain positions).[3] Apartheid was also used to curb the participation of women, in particular Black women, in various aspects of life, and it effectively relegated them to second-class citizenship status. Msimang argues that this condition of living had profound effects on the private lives of women both in their home and in public, with the state's encouragement of violence and the conservative patriarchal nature of the society worsening these effects.

It is within this historical context that we demystify the status of Black women in the South African higher education sector. The study on which this article is based was spurred in part by the report of the National Commission of Higher Education that confirmed that in 1993 women occupied 32 percent of the total research and teaching positions.[4] The report further noted that the majority of these women were employed in the lowest academic ranks of junior lecturer or lecturer. Mabokela's research indicated that at some historically White South African universities, women comprised 100 percent of the positions below junior lecturer rank, 89 percent of the junior lecturers, and 45 percent of the lecturers.[5] Within the higher ranks, women comprised less than 3 percent of professors and about 8 percent of associate professors. What emerged from these early studies was evidence of the persistent absence of Black faculty and, more critically, the chronic underrepresentation of female scholars. Naturally, this situation led to calls for the "elimination of occupational segregation," especially by the promotion to and equal participation of women in highly skilled jobs and senior management positions.

Theoretical Framework

This research is theoretically informed by two bodies of research. First, we consider the work highlighting the global marginalization of women scholars in the academy. Second, we draw upon research examining the gendered organizational cultures of universities. When considering the status of women in South Africa, David Johnson's research distinctly emphasizes "gender rather than women," based on the argument that women cannot be understood by looking at their condition only in biological terms.[6] Johnson contends that a full understanding of the integral relationship between men and women in South African society is needed. In particular, he stresses the

[3] Sisonke Msimang, "Affirmative Action in the New South Africa: The Politics of Representation, Law and Equity," *Women in Action* (September 2001), http://www.isiswomen.org/pub/wia/wiawcar/affirmative.htm.

[4] National Commission on Higher Education, *A Framework for Transformation* (Pretoria: National Commission on Higher Education, 1996).

[5] Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela, "'We Cannot Find Qualified Blacks': Faculty Diversification Programmes at South African Universities," *Comparative Education* 36, no. 1 (2000): 94–112.

[6] David Johnson, *Transforming Organizations: Management Cultures, Women and Leadership in South Africa*, http://www2.univ−reunion.fr/˜ageof/text/74le88−119.html, p. 2.

understanding of intersections of gender inequality, race, and class.[7] It is important to recognize that race, class, age, geographic location, disability, and sexual orientation interact to produce inequalities between groups of women. Acknowledging the existence of differences between women in South Africa can shed light on the programs that promote and support the advancement of Black women in higher education.

In examining the status of women in higher education institutions in Kenya, P. Achola and E. Aseka argue that gender-based roles, though irrelevant to workplace performance, are carried into and maintained in the workplace.[8] These authors affirm that women are indeed absent from higher education management. They state that in order to restore women's central role in development in Kenya and other third world countries, there is an urgent need to overcome the barriers women face. Similarly, research on the South African academy suggests that women scholars continue to have both positive and negative experiences as a result of several confounding factors, including their continued sense of isolation, the ambiguity of their standing, the complexity within their institutions, their marginalization, and the exclusionary tactics that exist within South African institutions.[9] The impact of institutional culture on socialization processes and support for women within the institutions seems to be an area not sufficiently addressed by current research.

When tracing the evolution of professionalism 20 years ago, Magali Larson questioned the ability of professions to reform themselves when "knowledge is acquired and produced within educational and occupational hierarchies which are, by their structure, inegalitarian, antidemocratic and alienating."[10] Twenty years later, Judith Glazer-Raymo argues that the issue of male dominance and female subordination cannot be easily separated from issues of race and class in feminized professions such as education, nursing, social work, and librarianship, where women form the majority of the practitioners but few of the executives.[11] Gender equity research in professions such as those in academic disciplines falsely assumes that increasing the proportion of women will make these problems vanish. Glazer-Raymo

[7] Ibid.

[8] P. Achola and E. Aseka, "Searching and Accessing Senior Management for Public Universities in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities" (paper presented at the International Conference on Leadership and Management of Higher Education for Efficacy in Africa, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, November 12–16, 2001, http://www.makerere.ac.ug/womenstudies/full%20papers/onsongo.htm).

[9] George Subotzky, "Addressing Equity and Excellence in Relation to Employment: What Are Prospects for Transformative Change in South Africa?" *Equity and Excellence in Education* 34, no. 3 (2001): 56–69; N. Petersen and S. Gravett, "The Experiences of Women Academics at a South African University," *South African Journal of Higher Education* 14, no. 3 (2000): 169–76; M. Walker, "Women in the Academy: Ambiguity and Complexity in a South African University," *Gender and Education* 9, no. 3 (1997): 365–81.

[10] Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 103.

[11] Judith Glazer-Raymo, *Shattering the Myths: Women in Academe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

asserts that this is a simplistic notion that camouflages the barriers to women's advancement and the pervasive impact of discriminatory practices on their progress.[12] Therefore, to understand the gender dynamics of organizations we need to develop theory out of women's actual organizational experiences.[13] Views that forefront diversity can allow us to explore ambiguities and tensions in women's roles and identities within a gendered cultural arrangement.[14] For example, a Black woman may define herself as a professional or scholar, but on experiencing racial harassment she might see her identity as "Black person," while at another moment, when she refers to her lack of access to day care, the same woman might identify herself as "parent."

Adding another focal layer, C. E. Hackney and D. Runnerstrand demonstrate that methodologies of understanding women's experiences within organizations need to recognize that women's lives and social identities are constructed by the social, cultural, and material conditions around them.[15] When women are appointed to leadership positions, they enter existing social groups with established norms, beliefs, and assumptions that guide their interactions and relationships.[16] Embedded in the process of entry is the expectation that women in academic and administrative positions must take charge and become functioning, integrated group members as well as try to understand and accommodate the unwritten rules of the new group. This process is complex for all newly appointed leaders and particularly difficult for individuals who are different in ethnicity, race, or gender from traditional incumbents in leadership roles.[17]

Jon S. Davies and William Foster, as well as Spencer Marxcy, add that traditional leadership in higher education has been based on "hierarchical thinking and prescriptive skill" that has promoted the status quo.[18] Jasbir K. Singh holds that the correlation between women's leadership styles and characteristics and those of organizations needs to be developed in order to

[12] Ibid.

[13] Janet Newman and Fiona Williams, "Diversity and Change: Gender, Welfare and Organizational Relations," in *Gender, Culture and Organizational Change: Putting Theory into Practice*, ed. Janet Newman and Catherine Itzin (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 108–23.

[14] Johnson.

[15] C .E. Hackney and D. Runnerstrand, "Struggling for Authentic Human Synergy and a Robust Democratic Culture: The Wellspring Community for Women in Educational Leadership," *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal* (2003), http://www.advancingwomen.com.

[16] Ann Weaver Hart, "Women Ascending to Leadership: The Organizational Socialization of Principals," in *Women Leading in Education*, ed. Diane M. Dunlap and Patricia A. Schmuck (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. 105–24.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Jon Davies and William Foster, "A Postmodern Analysis of Educational Administration," in *Postmodern School Leadership*, ed. Spencer J. Maxcy (Westport, Conn,: Praeger, 1994), pp. 61–70; Spencer J. Maxcy, "Postmodern Directions in Educational Leadership," in *Postmodern School Leadership*, ed. Spencer J. Maxcy (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994), pp. 153–62.

improve women's positions in universities.[19] She finds the neglect of women's contributions and their insufficient integration into university management structures to be the main hindrances to the advancement of women in academe. Hannelore Faulstich-Wieland reports that in Germany the question of care of the family was explicitly used as an assessment criterion for management positions for women but not for men.[20] Thus, the gender-specific roles, the rigor, and level of commitment of certain senior positions form a barricade to women aspiring for ascension.

Helen Astin and Carole Leland's research led them to conclude that the U.S. educational workplace should be more a community than an organization.[21] Some authors argue, on the other hand, that when educational workplaces resemble a typical American business organization, many women struggle to lead in a more authentic, socially responsible manner.[22] Some show, however, that women are keen to create an enlivened educational culture grounded in democratic principles rather than through force.[23] Following this latter argument, Astin and Leland assert that female leaders do not have to exercise power over others.[24] Research has documented that women's experiences are closely connected to those of others.[25] Gender influences the nature of transactional relationships among women and others, thus making it challenging at a personal level for women who are in leadership positions.[26]

Other people's perceptions of what it means to be a male or female leader affect women, since these perceptions ultimately affect how women understand their own leadership roles. Barbara Curry demonstrates how women who ascend into higher leadership levels must often contend with culturally engrained views of self-assurance and confidence as unacceptable female qualities.[27] Therefore, as a woman evolves in her leadership position, she is juxtaposed against her own personal development, cultural expecta-

[19] Jasbir K. Singh, "Women and Higher Education Management in the Commonwealth: An Overview" (paper presented at the Women and Management in Higher Education: Regional Trainer of Trainers Workshop, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, June 16–22, 2002).

[20] Hannelore Faulstich-Wieland, "Federal Republic of Germany," in *Women in Educational Management: A European Perspective*, ed. Maggie Wilson (London: Paul Chapman, 1997), pp. 52–77.

[21] Helen S. Astin and Carole Leland, *Women of Influence, Women of Vision: A Cross-Generational Study of Leaders and Social Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

[22] Hackney and Runnerstrand.

[23] James G. Henderson and Richard Hawthorne, *Transformative Curriculum Leadership* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill–Prentice Hall: 2000); James W. Garrison, *Dewey and Eros: Wisdom and Desire in the Art of Teaching* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997).

[24] Astin and Leland.

[25] Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984); Mary F. Belenky, B. Clinchy, M. Goldberger, and J. Tarule (1986), *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

[26] Hackney and Runnerstrand (n. 16 above).

[27] Barbara Curry, *Women in Power: Pathways to Leadership in Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000).

tions, and biases as she tries to justify her position to her supporters. Different scholars have suggested that women must develop their "leadership personae."[28]

So far, our discussion has shown parallels among the issues that face women leaders in higher education sectors in Germany, United States of America, Kenya, and England. This study is informed by a second body of work that is grounded in the understanding of organizational culture, specifically the "gendered culture" of the academy and its influence on the professional behavior and response of particular groups within the organization.[29] According to L. Smirich, "Organizational culture is the social or normative glue that holds an organization together. It expresses the values or social ideals and beliefs that organizational members come to share. These values or patterns of belief are manifested by symbolic devices, rituals, myths and specialized language."[30] Thus, culture influences how people perceive and behave in their environment. It "induces purpose, commitment and order; provides meaning and social cohesion and clarifies and explains behavioral expectations. Through the people within it, culture influences the organization."[31] William Tierney and Robert Rhoads assert that organizations exist as social constructions that revolve around shared meanings.[32] Following this train of thought, it is critical to examine the culture of South African institutions of higher education in order to develop an understanding of its impacts on the professional lives and identities of its women scholars.

To effect this examination, this study draws from Janet Newman and Fiona Williams's framework that analyzes the relationship between race, class, and gender in Britain's social welfare system.[33] This analytical frame helps us understand the social divisions and identities of women in organizations. Newman and Williams contend that race, gender, and class are separate but interconnected and contain innumerable forms of identity, difference, and inequality whose significance changes over time. Their vigorous interpretation of their three-dimensional polyhedron reflects various and changing experiences and suggests that social divisions affect people either singly or in groups and in various ways, at different times and in different situations. They also emphasize that different forms of power and oppression are in-

[28] C. Hackney and E. Hogard, "Women in Transition: A Mission of Service," *Advancing Women in Leadership* (Spring 1999), http://www.advancingwomen.com.

[29] Jan Curry and Bev Thiele, "Globalization and Gendered Work Cultures in Universities," in *Gender and the Restructured University*, ed. A. Brooks and A. Mackinnon (Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, 2001), pp. 90–115.

[30] L. Smirich, "Concepts of Culture and Organizational Analysis," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28 (1983): 344.

[31] A. T. Masland, "Organizational Culture in the Study of Higher Education," *Review of Higher Education* 8 (1985): 157–68 (quotation on p. 158).

[32] William Tierney and Robert Rhoads, *Enhancing Promotion, Tenure and Beyond: Faculty Socialization as a Cultural Process* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

[33] Newman and Williams (n. 14 above).

terrelated. To this end, race, class, and gender have a compounding effect on the experiences and life changes of Black, working-class women in Britain. Emerging from this theoretical position, we seek to understand how the race and gender of South African Black women affect the type of support they receive as they strive to move up the management ladder. We ask, What lessons can we draw from Newman and Williams's work to shed light on the experiences of the women in our study? What challenges do these women face as they seek to move beyond the marginal positions they hold in academe? In drawing attention to the experiences of the South African woman, the findings we present in this article highlight the intricate relationship between race, gender, and culture.

Methods and Procedures

The findings in this article are based on intensive open-ended interviews with 20 Black women scholars and administrators at Rural University and Coastline University, which are two historically Black universities; Seashore University, a historically White university; and City Technikon, a historically Black technikon.[34] These four institutions, like other postsecondary institutions, are shaped by the legacy of South Africa's racial and ethnic lines.[35] They were selected because they reflect the diversity of the South African higher education sector and because their geographic locations, with three urban and one rural institution, are representative of higher education institutions across the country. The participants in this study reflect a wide range of professional experiences, from junior lecturers to senior university administrators.

These participants were comparable to faculty and administrators at other South African universities in terms of their academic qualifications and professional experiences.[36] George Subotzky notes that 50 percent of faculty members at historically White universities had doctorates, compared to 25

[34] Technikons are postsecondary education institutions that structurally and functionally fall between U.S. community colleges and traditional four-year colleges. They were established as vocational education centers to provide practical technical training. They evolved over time to become technical colleges, and since 1995 they have been certified to grant bachelor (B Tech), masters (M Tech), and doctoral (D Tech) degrees in technology. The institutional names used in this study are pseudonyms.

[35] For a detailed discussion of the development of postsecondary institutions, see Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela, *Voices of Conflict: Desegregating South African Universities* (New York: Routledge Falmer Press, 2000); George Subotzky, *Final Research Report: The Enhancement of Graduate Programmes and Research Capacity at the Historically Black Universities* (Bellville: Education Policy Unit, University of Western Cape, 1997); Tshehloane C. Keto, "Pre-industrial Education Policies and Practices in South Africa," in *Pedagogy of Domination: Toward a Democratic Education in South Africa,* ed. M. Nkomo (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1990), pp. 19–42.

[36] The authors do not wish to compromise the anonymity of the women who participated in this study. Many of the participants in our study represent one of very few and in some cases the only Black woman in a given department or unit. Therefore, providing extensive details about each participant might reveal her identity.

percent at historically Black universities.[37] Of the 20 women interviewed, eight had Ph.D.s or other terminal degrees and eight had a master's degree; of the latter group five were enrolled for their doctorates. The remaining four participants were enrolled in M.A. programs at the time of data collection. Among the six participants who occupied a senior academic or administrative position (that is, dean, head of department, director of research, or director of an academic unit), all possessed terminal degrees and extensive professional experience. The length of the participants' professional experiences ranged from 8 to 25 years. While the women who occupied senior-ranking positions were relatively new to these positions, having had less than 5 years in their current positions, they possessed extensive, and relevant, professional experience from other sectors and, for several, other countries. Half of the participants in this study (10) acquired a portion of their professional and academic experiences abroad; some were political exiles, a few had received academic scholarships to other countries, while others had visited on short-term professional exchange programs.

The data were gathered through intensive semistructured interviews. These interviews varied in duration from 1.5 to 3 hours. They sought to capture each participant's personal experience as a female scholar. Each interview was tape-recorded and later transcribed. The analysis of the data employed practices associated with the constant comparative method and cross-case analysis to identify recurring themes within and across data sources.[38] This allowed important themes and categories to emerge inductively from the data across cases.

Given the use of various racial categories in South Africa, it was important that the analysis of race should transcend the dual Black-White paradigm. The cross-case analysis was particularly constructive in identifying commonalities and differences across women scholars from the four racial groups.[39] This level of analysis had the potential to provide cross-cultural insights on how women from different cultural, historical, social, and institutional contexts negotiated obstacles within the academy. It also enabled us to discern patterns in the women's responses that were a result of institutional particularities, some of which were rooted in the institutions' historical foundations and others influenced by recent changes in the higher education system. As the following discussion of themes will demonstrate, each woman's account

[37] Subotzky, "Final Research Report."

[38] On the constant comparative method, see Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998); and Anselm L. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis of Social Scientists* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). On cross-case analysis, see Norman L. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2d ed. (Thousands Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2000).

[39] While this article reports only findings from African, Colored, and Indian women, a small number of White women faculty were also interviewed.

is unique, although there were common incidents that transcended all of their experiences.

Themes

The themes that emerged from the interviews highlight the continuing significance of race and culture on the professional experiences of South African women scholars. The four themes that we will discuss are professional mentoring, impact of culture, continuing significance of race, and understanding the academic game.

Professional Mentoring

Caroline Turner and Samuel Myers assert that association with senior colleagues is a major contributor to success in the academy.[40] All the participants in this study reported that they received "virtually no mentoring" in their work. As a lecturer at Rural University explained, "They simply put you in an office and you'd better figure out how you are going to survive."

The majority of the participants shared concerns about their lack of experience with research, writing for scholarly journals, and presenting papers at professional conferences. Ms. Adams at Rural University stated she had "little confidence in her research skills and was intimidated by the idea of presenting a conference paper." She lamented,

> There is absolutely no support of any kind. If you are going to present a paper at a conference or if you are going to publish, you are competing against people who are at a very high level in terms of academics. It's not easy; you don't feel confident. It's not easy to write papers, even for some of the senior professors here. . . . It's the same thing with research grants. They keep telling us that there is money; we should apply for research grants. My point is, it is useless to tell us there is money when we don't know how to write proposals. The starting point is to write the proposal.[41]

She also noted that on several occasions she requested assistance from her senior colleagues to prepare a conference proposal, but all of them claimed to be busy. Ms. Adams told of an experience where she approached one of her senior colleagues about writing a collaborative conference paper. She volunteered to "do all the dirty work" to prepare the paper, but the senior colleague indicated that he was too busy. She believes that if she had an "opportunity to get one good example of how to write a research" paper, she would be fine. Other colleagues shared Ms. Adams's anxieties and frustrations about the lack of support and mentorship for research. They provided account after account of how their senior colleagues did not seem to care very much about the development of junior scholars.

[40] Caroline S. V. Turner and Samuel L. Myers, *Faculty of Color in Academe: Bittersweet Success* (Needham Heights, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon, 2000).

[41] Interview with Ms. Adams, July 2000, South Africa.

A number of the women speculated that their senior colleagues were reluctant to help because they themselves did not engage in research-related activities. Many of these senior scholars came through the ranks at a time when research was not a requirement for promotion. Therefore, rather than expose their own ignorance, they hid behind the facade of being busy. In addition, as long as the women did not have access to the tools that were necessary to secure a promotion, their senior colleagues, the majority of whom were male, would maintain their position of power. Therefore, the female faculty viewed their colleagues' behavior as a strategy to keep women out of important positions within the university structure.

They also expressed grave concern about the lack of mentorship for graduate students. Dr. Mazibuko noted that at Rural University, indifference toward mentorship spills over to graduate students. Therefore, it becomes a challenge to inculcate students with a culture of research and expose them to "rules of the academic world." She explained that "when it comes to mentorship for students, there is no recognition. As a lecturer, you feel that you are wasting your time because you are not going to be promoted based on your mentoring skills. Therefore, people do not want to volunteer because the university does not recognize their efforts. Maybe if there were some recognition of mentorship, then more people would be willing to do it. Not only for students but junior academics as well."[42]

Out of the 20 women who participated in this study, only three reported that they received some professional support and mentorship. Such support came primarily from mentors or relationships they forged with people outside their workplace. For example, one of the women viewed her husband as her mentor because he occupied a senior position within university management. Therefore, he could provide "inside tips" and information about the inner workings of the university system. She conceded that without his assistance, "understanding this place would be like a maze."[43] Another reported that a German colleague she met at a conference a few years back had been instrumental in the development of her writing. At the time of this study, she had just completed an article that had been accepted for publication, an accomplishment she credited to the support of the German mentor. Although most of these participants have not received any mentoring, they themselves have made a commitment to mentor scholars who recently joined the ranks of the academy, as well as graduate students. In their words, they do not want to "repeat the painful experience of trying do understand the rules of the game, without any guidance or support."[44]

[42] Interview with Dr. Mazibuko, July 2000, South Africa.
[43] Interview with Ms. Gobodo, July 2000, South Africa.
[44] Interview with Ms. Jafta, July 2000, South Africa.

Impact of Culture

The participants discussed the role of culture in their professional experiences in three ways: (1) broader societal norms and values that influence male and female relationships, (2) organizational practices and policies, which are still male-dominated and marginalize "women's ways of knowing and doing," and (3) its relation to interethnic and interracial relationships and interactions on campus. A faculty member at City Technikon who was actively involved in the activities to promote gender equity within her institution, lamented the dire position of women when she stated, "At this institution a woman is a woman and women don't really matter." As we probed for further clarification, she explained,

> The culture here is very patriarchal. . . . Women are treated as if they cannot think for themselves, yet they are expected to do all the hard work. They are the ones that maintain the family. They are really the pillars of the community but all of their hard work is not appreciated. . . . The Indian community is highly religious, and in my religion, there are some very oppressive practices relating to gender. You have the treatment of women as being lesser than men are. The African community is also oppressive in terms of traditional belief systems and Christianity. You find that these cultural practices really influence the way that women and female students are treated here.[45]

Another faculty member, at Rural University, evinced similar concerns about beliefs and attitudes portraying women as inferior and incompetent that are rooted in culture. She stated that in her language there is a proverb that "if you give an institution to a woman, it will collapse." Such statements and beliefs, she argued, carry over into the workplace, where men believe that they have the "divine right" to occupy all leadership positions. Each participant gave account after account of women doing all the hard work but not getting the credit.

Six of the participants in this study were either acting heads of their departments or had recently served in that capacity. Being in this position meant that the women acquired the additional workload of being an administrator without the remuneration or the authority. As one faculty member observed, these acting heads "do amazing work behind the scenes but their male colleagues get all the glory and limelight. These departments would collapse if the women were not behind them."[46]

The treatment that these acting heads receive from their male counterparts places them in a tenuous situation. Often, they are the only female among their colleagues, but more importantly, their acting status compromises their authority relative to their male colleagues who are not in similar positions of authority. Ms. Gobodo, who served as acting chairperson of her department at Rural University, noted that often in meetings with other heads

[45] Interview with Ms. Vishnu, July 2000, South Africa.
[46] Interview with Dr. Sithole, July 2000, South Africa.

of departments, they did not pay attention to what she said because she was a woman. If one of her male counterparts repeats one of her ideas, he is more likely to get credit. She further noted that she is extremely careful when she criticizes, because her colleagues are more likely to attack her and silence her criticisms.

Another faculty member, Dr. Mazibuko, echoed Ms. Gobodo's concerns. Dr. Mazibuko was appointed as course coordinator for third-year level courses in her department at Seashore University. In addition to her regular teaching load, as a course coordinator she was expected to develop outlines for all courses offered at this level, coordinate the activities of the courses' instructors, set third-year course examination dates, serve as a liaison between students and faculty, and attend student and faculty meetings. Dr. Mazibuko noted that the chairperson of her department was very pleased with her work and appointed her to be the coordinator of the undergraduate program. This required her to participate in a number of university and college committees even though they would not be considered under the new guidelines for promotion. While department and institutional service are important elements of these women's professional lives, they do not lead to upward mobility when they are not acknowledged.

A number of the women acknowledged that their colleagues, especially their male counterparts, frequently challenged their authority and expertise. At City Technikon, where Africans are critically underrepresented among the faculty, the women reported that their Indian and White counterparts, both male and female, often negatively criticized their professional contributions. In the interviewees' view, race coupled with gender played a pivotal role in their interactions with colleagues. Dr. Mazibuko, who had extensive experience as a senior faculty member at a historically Black university, noted that her White colleagues were not overtly hostile but that their subtle discriminatory practices were a hindrance in her job. Dr. Mazibuko's account supports Taylor Cox's assertion that imbalanced group representation has serious consequences for those individuals who occupy minority status, leading to stereotyping and subtle forms of discrimination.[47] As Dr. Mazibuko noted,

> When it comes to prejudice and discrimination among people who are highly educated, it becomes very difficult to have any tangibles. People are very subtle. Sometimes you find yourself thinking, am I the one with problems? With academics, they always have counter-arguments to convince you that "I did not mean it that way." You experience subtle things, it's not as overt as all that. . . . My White colleagues [at Seashore] are not as open as my Black colleagues were. At the [historically Black university] where I taught before, it was very easy to know whether

[47] Taylor H. Cox, *Cultural Diversity in Organizations: Theory, Research and Practice* (San Francisco: Berrett-Kohler, 1994).

I was accepted or not. Here at Seashore, it's difficult to say that people are negative. They are not overtly negative. Attitudes are very subtle.[48]

Continuing Significance of Race

The issue of race pervaded many of the conversations that we had with the women at this institution. For example, among the recently hired African women, there was a perception that both male and female Indians colluded against Africans to keep their position of privilege. As a result, the African women did not necessarily view their Indian counterparts as allies. In their assessment, Indian women were as much the oppressor (toward African women) as the oppressed (by Indian men). One of the faculty members explained, "There is a lot of fear from the Indian staff members about Africanization."[49] There is a tendency by the Indians to highlight negative ways in which Africans might impact the technikon rather than the positive contributions they could make.

The continuing significance of race was further highlighted by the "frequently disrespectful, sometimes rude and completely unprofessional treatment" of African lecturers at City Technikon. Ms. Modise, an African administrator, noted that administrative and custodial staff, the majority of whom are Indian, treated the African faculty as if they were "nothing." She remarked that she has observed differences in the way the administrative staff treated men and people of other races relative to Africans. As she observed, "When I go to the administration offices or the finance department the [administrative staff] will ask, 'Do you have an appointment?' Even when they know you are [a faculty] member. But if there is a man standing there, they will always help the man first. Even with race, other people [Indians and Whites] get preference. I don't know if I am being paranoid, but I see this treatment all the time when I go to the admin building."[50]

A number of the faculty expressed frustration at their lack of authority and formal power to effect policies at the institution in question. Ms. Vishnu, a lecturer at City Technikon, noted that even though she works extremely hard on her institution's gender forum to raise awareness about gender inequities, all of her efforts are voluntary. Her gender work is not part of the formal institutional structure, and therefore senior administrators are not required to take her recommendations seriously. Ms. Vishnu also lamented the tokenism trend she has observed in recent years—that is, the tendency to employ a few females or a few Africans just to fulfill the quota. She noted that the few women in top positions within the university were often co-opted within the male culture and became equally unsupportive of other women. Faculty members at Seashore and Rural also expressed con-

[48] Interview with Dr. Mazibuko, July 2000, South Africa.
[49] Interview with Dr. Trokoza, July 2000, South Africa.
[50] Interview with Ms. Modise, July 2000, South Africa.

cerns about the position of the very few women in senior management positions—that is, they are isolated, overextended, and under constant scrutiny.

> People, even other women, do not have confidence in women's abilities. . . . There are very few women in leadership positions in institutions of higher education. These few women tend to be on every committee and they end up being overextended. . . . I have often seen that when women take up senior positions, they emulate men. I sincerely believe that there is contribution that women bring with their femininity. I admire women who go into these senior positions, maintain their femininity, and do not aspire to be men.[51]

What has emerged from the preceding discussion are the ways in which women scholars' professional contributions are undermined and how they must constantly justify their presence in higher education. Another critical issue is the challenge that confronts institutions of higher education to systematically address deeply seeded racial and gender attitudes. While the government passes laws (e.g., the Higher Education Act and the Equity Employment Act), these statutes will not bring any meaningful change until individual attitudes are addressed, institutional policies about equity are enforced, and women are provided with opportunities to become full-fledged contributors in the higher education sector.

Understanding the Academic "Game"

Many of the participants in this study reported that understanding the newly implemented promotion requirements is comparable to walking through a maze. Until recently, South African scholars were not required to have a Ph.D. or its equivalent. This change concerned the women, not because of the requirement itself but because of the conditions under which they must attain the degree. This is in part because of the heavy teaching loads these women have. For example, at Rural University, which was established as a teaching institution, the junior faculty had two teaching sessions per day, with a day session of full-time students and an evening session with part-time students. Typical enrollments ranged from two hundred to four hundred students per class. As Ms. Jafta, a lecturer at Rural University who is currently pursuing her Ph.D., explained, "We teach day and night here, literally. We have large numbers of students. . . . We teach from 8 A.M. until lunchtime and in the afternoon we have tutorials. Then we have to repeat in the evening beginning at 5 P.M. When do you get time to do your own work? This is a serious constraint. . . . I would like to take a year off and finish my Ph.D. I can't see myself finishing without taking time off. I would never finish."[52]

Another new requirement for promotion is doing research and getting

[51] Interview with Ms. Vishnu, July 2000, South Africa.
[52] Interview with Ms. Jafta, July 2000, South Africa.

published. All historically Black universities in South Africa were established as teaching institutions and not intended to be centers of research, inquiry, or scholarly debate. They were staffed by conservative White faculty members, whose role was to repress the pursuit of intellectual activities.[53] Thus, many of the women interviewed were not exposed to a culture of research while they were students and did not have to pursue research as a condition of employment until recently. Therefore, some still view research as a mysterious process, which induces great anxiety.

As lecturers, many of the women have only limited exposure to and involvement with research, making it an even bigger challenge for them to supervise students. The following statement by Ms. Van Wyk, a lecturer at Rural University, succinctly captures the range of problems related to research:

> There is an effort to make our environment conducive to research. There is a small research center and new director of research. But these initiatives are less than a year. We have a very poorly stocked library and our inter-library loan department is not up to scratch at all. It is very slow and sometimes you never receive the material you request. Our computer technology is behind. The majority of the people here do not have access to computers and the Internet. I have to use my personal computer to access this information. We are geographically isolated and far away from other institutions. So, we do not have access to a community of other scholars to engage in scholarly activities. Also, our infrastructure is very poor. We spend too much time getting small things done. A whole day can be absorbed making a few photocopies or sending a fax. It sounds ridiculous but that's how it works here. All of these factors contribute to our lack of performance in research.[54]

Unsurprisingly, publishing and presenting one's research is also an area where the they lack experience. Ms. Adams, a lecturer in social studies education, lamented the lack of support and guidance from senior colleagues in preparing conference proposals, papers, and manuscripts for publication. She noted that in her department, her senior colleagues who had substantially more research experience than she did were reluctant to share their knowledge with her. In her assessment, such sharing threatened her colleagues' position of power over her. Another lecturer from Coastline University noted that many of the senior scholars in her department were extremely uncomfortable offering any support for her research efforts because they did not engage in research themselves. Therefore, they used resistance as a tool to shield their own inadequacies in this area. These colleagues, she reported, received their promotions during an era when "being White or Indian and male were the only necessary conditions" for upward mobility at Coastline.[55]

[53] Nkosinathi Gwala, "State Control, Student Politics, and the Crisis in Black Universities," in *Popular Struggles in South Africa,* ed. William Cobbett and Robin Cohen (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press,1988), pp. 163–82.

[54] Interview with Ms. Van Wyk, July 2000, South Africa.

[55] Interview with Ms. Soraya, July 2000, South Africa.

The dissemination of scholarly material in journals presented a number of challenges for many of these women. They noted that most of the mainstream journals are still controlled by what Ms. Soraya identified as the "old boys' network." The few faculty members who had submitted papers for publication reported that the mainstream journals were not receptive to their "kind of work," which typically focuses on rural areas, non-Western perspectives, or gender perspectives. With respect to gender, a lecturer from Coastline University explained that she would never submit her papers to a particular gender-focused journal because her colleagues perceive it as a "softer option." As she explained, "There is a perception that it is easier to publish in [this gender journal] as a woman . . . but you don't get the recognition as with another hard-core journal. If I worked on an article, I would not waste my time and send it to this [gender] journal. I know this sounds like I am in conflict with my own position, but I am just being honest with you."[56]

According to all of the faculty members in this study, another factor that complicated the promotion process was having a clear understanding of the process itself, including what materials needed to be completed for promotion, where such items could be obtained, and when the deadlines for their submission were. What emerged from our conversations regarding this process was the number of promotion models that existed for different individuals, departments, and universities. These models ranged from recommendations made by the heads of departments, to applications submitted by junior faculty, to no application process whatsoever and faculty receiving notification that they had been promoted without knowing they were even under consideration. The two common threads about this process were the arbitrariness and subjectivity of promotion proceedings and the lack of understanding and confusion that all faculty interviewed expressed. A lecturer at Seashore exclaimed, "It's very confusing to move from lecturer to senior lecturer. Right now as a lecturer, I have a Ph.D., and I am doing everything that a senior lecturer does. But it's still not clear to me what it takes to be promoted to senior lecturer."[57]

A number of women expressed similar concerns about pervasive discrepancies in the treatment and evaluation of women's credentials and contributions to their institutions. The case of Ms. Jafta, a lecturer at Rural University, illustrates these discrepancies. Like most of the women represented in this article, she has had the same academic rank since she arrived at her university more than 10 years ago despite the fact that she maintains an active research program, has published a number of articles, has presented papers at national and international conferences, is well known as a seasoned researcher, and has been appointed as acting chairperson of her department. The following quote illuminates Ms. Jafta's situation:

[56] Interview with Ms. Soraya, July 2000, South Africa.
[57] Interview with Dr. Mazibuko, July 2000, South Africa.

> When I came in from [another university] I was a lecturer, but when I got here they took me back to junior lecturer. I stayed in that position for one year and I was promoted to lecturer the next year. I have been in that position ever since. I did a bit of publishing but I was told that conditions of promotion are tailored for you. Other women here will tell you, don't look at the conditions of service and interpret them as they are. It depends on who you are. For men certain things are overlooked but for women it is tighter. . . . Take my case, my department advertised a senior position that I was interested in. They said the minimum requirement was a Ph.D. and so many publications. Since I did not have a Ph.D. I did not apply. . . . Then I saw the applications, they were all men and not one of them had a Ph.D. I challenged the applications and made many people angry.[58]

Another lecturer confirmed that women often operate in an environment where they have to "prove, prove, prove themselves." In her assessment, female faculty members are under constant scrutiny to perform, whereas their male counterparts do not experience the same type of pressure. This is a phenomenon that Ellis Cose refers to as a "dilemma of the qualified" where minorities have to justify their skills and abilities to insure their place within the majority group.[59] As Ms. Goba, another junior faculty member who acted as chairperson of her department, reflected, "If you place a woman in a position, she must be dynamic. . . . If you are a head of department, as a woman, you must overprepare. When you go to those executive meetings, you need to make sure you have read the reports and have something substantial to say. . . . When men are given positions, they don't have to prove anything. They just have to work."[60]

The position of being an acting head of department places these women in a tenuous situation. They assume the additional administrative responsibilities of the chairperson without relief from their teaching. This means they have even less time to devote to their research and studies, the key determinants for promotion. They must also make decisions that will affect their senior colleagues and risk the chance for future promotion if they offend or make decisions that are unfavorable to the senior colleagues.

What have we learned from these women's experiences? The preceding discussion of our findings suggests similar trends in the experiences of South African women scholars and those of women academics globally. The first theme is the lack of professional mentorship, especially in light of recent and intensified expectations for research and publication. This lack of mentorship also affects students because there are no rewards for faculty members who engage in these activities. Despite this lack of mentorship, women have established alternative strategies of support through collaboration and pursuit of support networks outside of their institutions with other successful scholars.

A second theme is the discussion of culture and how it underscores the

[58] Interview with Ms. Jafta, July 2000, South Africa.

[59] Ellis Cose, *The Rage of a Privileged Class* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), p. 111.

[60] Interview with Ms. Goba, July 2000, South Africa.

integral relationship between broader sociocultural norms and values and their impact on the professional roles and responsibilities of women scholars. In other words, the conflict between the public identity of women as professionals with authority and their private persona as wives, mothers, and daughters with particular socially constructed roles was often mentioned as a problem. Women are constantly engaged in the struggle to maintain a balance between these sometimes conflicting identities and roles, with race adding another layer of complexity to the dynamics. This paradox reveals what Patricia Hill Collins termed "interlocking systems of oppression," a phenomenon worth investigating in future for South African scholars.[61]

Our final theme has been the importance of the academic "game." This game is somewhat reflective of the entire process of political, economic, social, cultural, and economic transformation that South African society is undergoing. Institutions of higher education are challenged to discard their old image as extensions of the apartheid system and to redefine new identities that are inclusive of historically marginalized groups, such as women and Blacks. This change inevitably introduces new rules of the game that confuse people and hinder their efforts, as evidenced by the experiences of our participants, who are struggling to implement and to articulate these rules.

The Road Ahead . . .

Given the challenges addressed in the preceding discussion, how do South African universities and technikons establish institutional cultures that embrace, commit to, and value contributions of women scholars?

Implement Institutional Hiring Policies and Practices That Strive to Attain Gender Equity and Balance

Women are overrepresented in the lower ranks of the academy. In the few cases where women occupy senior positions in the university structures, they are subjected to treatment that undermines their professional contributions. Institutions of higher education are still steeped in cultural values that privilege the "male way of doing things." Therefore, those who do not embrace these values risk being ostracized. In order to be successful in these male-dominated organizations, women constantly have to prove themselves and outperform their male counterparts. As one of the women exclaimed, "If you are a woman you always have to prove, prove, prove; if you are a man, you just have to work."[62] Although the government has passed legislation that requires equitable representation of women in various sectors (e.g., Employment Equity Act), institutions of higher education are dawdling on implementing and enforcing these laws.

[61] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[62] Interview with Ms. Mzivanele, July 2000, South Africa.

Implement a Reward System That Acknowledges and Compensates Women's Contributions

The majority of participants in this study were either acting head of a department or had served in this capacity at some point in their career. These women acquired the additional responsibility of being chairperson of a department without the rewards. Because all of the women were junior-level faculty, they could not be offered a departmental chairpersonship on a permanent basis. What is problematic is that these women had academic credentials similar to or better than those of male colleagues who were heads of departments. The women were subjected to higher standards of requiring a Ph.D. for a promotion than their male colleagues were. This clearly demonstrates the double standards and pervasive disparities that exist in conditions of employment for women. The government can pass laws and require policies to attain equity. However, these laws and polices are ineffectual unless they are enforced and there are consequences for their violation. At this stage, these conditions do not yet exist in the South Africa higher education context.

Create and Support Culture of Scholarship Opportunities for Mentorship and Training

Historically Black universities were created as teaching institutions. The new requirements for promotion call for increased productivity in research and publication activities. Yet, there is little training that has been provided to faculty members in this area. The inadequacy of faculty in the research area also affects the quality of supervision of their students' work. In order to break this cycle, there needs to be a systematic effort to introduce research to students so that it does not become such a mysterious process. Two of the participants received their graduate training abroad and, therefore, became especially astute about integrating research as part of their courses. For example, Ms. Jafta required all her students from the second-year level to conduct small research projects and present their findings in the class. She noted that for the majority of her students doing a class presentation was a formidable challenge because most of their other courses required them to "memorize and regurgitate the facts." Dr. Magadla conducted informal monthly workshops for colleagues to discuss various topics related to the research process as an effort to break this cycle of fear.

Create a Balance between Teaching and Research Expectations

As South African universities strive to create a new culture of research, there needs to be a realistic evaluation of the traditional demands of teaching and the new requirements for higher productivity in research and publishing. The data suggest that the requirements for research have been added to faculty workload without any consideration of or adjustments in historical patterns of employment. Most of the participants have double teaching loads, which leave little time for research. In addition, there have been no adjustments in institutional structures to accommodate research activities beyond

the 8 A.M. to 5 P.M., Monday through Friday work schedule. For example, computer labs are often not open beyond 5 P.M. or during weekends. Libraries have similarly restricted hours, and at some historically Black universities the resources are not very good.

Introduce Better Communication Strategies

South African institutions are currently undergoing major changes in an effort to become more inclusive and effective. As part of this transformation process, there are a myriad new initiatives, policies, programs, and procedures being introduced. Based on the data from this study, there appears to be concerns about how these new initiatives are conveyed. For example, the women in this study have not received any communication that clearly spells out the new requirements for promotion. Though promotion requirements are a significant change that has a direct impact on the professional lives of faculty members, there are no documents that clarify them. As one faculty member exclaimed, "If you don't know the rules, how can you play the game."[63] Some women believe that poor communication is simply another strategy for those in power to preserve their position of privilege.

Conclusion

The year 2004 marks South Africa's 10-year anniversary as a democracy, and there seems to be an acknowledgment that innumerable changes have occurred. There has been a great deal of introspection among politicians, academics, and civil society.[64] There is increased participation of marginalized groups in systems of governance and an increased sensitivity to and understanding of gender and diversity. These changes have coincided with many structural and policy reforms that address and advance the status of women in government, public, and private sectors. It is therefore in the context of these societal changes that South African universities are compelled to pursue equality for women in academe. University policies such as equal opportunity employment, employment equity, and affirmative action policies have created both a discursive space and a practical means for universities to inject and support the advancement of women in academe.

Our research, however, has shown that there is a lot of work to be done to ensure that black women are retained and supported as they pursue their academic professions. The recommendations made here are feasible, given that they are based upon existing structures and incentives available to universities. For example, there is Thuthuka, which is a mentoring initiative

[63] Interview with Ms. Goba, July 2000, South Africa.

[64] Amy Brill, "Ten Years after Apartheid, South African Voters Face Jobs, AIDS Issues," WHAR, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/jan−june04/safrica_4−12.html); Jeff Radebe, "Bridging the Divide between South Africa and the Region through Development" (paper presented at the Conference on Stability, Poverty Reduction, and South African Trade and Investment in Southern Africa, Pretoria, March 29–30, 2004, http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0000755/radebe/index.php).

launched by the National Research Foundation programs in a mix of six historically advantaged and disadvantaged universities.[65] Another example is Women in Research, which aims to help develop and strengthen the research skills of women, particularly Black women. This helps to increase the number of women in postgraduate studies, academia, research positions, and leadership positions at South African tertiary institutions. The Research Development Initiative for Black Academics and Researchers in Training programs connect black women scholars conducting comparative research to their African and international peers. We argue that these types of programs can help our recommendations to be achieved.

The accounts of faculty members and administrators in this study, with their mutual themes, clearly demonstrate the pervasive presence of inequitable and discriminatory practices. It is important to illuminate these experiences as a way to reflect on initiatives that need to be implemented to make South African institutions of higher education truly inclusive and equitable.

[65] National Research Foundation, http://www.nrf.ac.za/thuthuka.