

**An Exploratory Study on the Experiences of Emerging Academics at the University of
Cape Town (UCT)**

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ABSTRACT

The quest for institutional transformation has created a need to continually challenge traditional notions of what an academic is and should be. While several studies have explored academics' experiences to engender transformation systems, few studies have focused strictly on emerging academics (permanently working scholars within the first five years of academic careers). These early-career academics are faced with the challenge of adapting to the institutional culture and meeting disciplinary standards of performance. Their novelty in the system makes them more vulnerable to the effect of these challenges. This study aimed to identify how they navigate these challenges, what defines them as academics, what impacts their academic freedoms, how they challenge disciplinary standards of performance, and the extent to which institutional culture affects their experiences. Through a purposive and snowball sampling strategy, 20 academics were selected from the University of Cape Town (UCT) to study. They were interviewed using a semi-structured approach and were asked open-ended questions with an interview guide. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data as it utilized an ideographic approach in providing insights into the participants' lived experiences. This methodological approach also helped prioritize how the study is carried out and explore participants' meaning-making processes. The participants perceived being an academic as an opportunity for subjective self-expression and a character-building process. They conceded that being an academic required genuine intellectual curiosity and a platform to engender innovation. The study also uncovered the effects of UCT's institutional and transformative plan on assimilating into the academic space. Academics perceived the performance appraising structure as too prescriptive and affirmed their desire to harness their positions to build strong interpersonal relations with students. The study recommends a more comprehensive and longitudinal approach to studying academic experiences focusing on the psycho-social factors influencing these experiences. The research further suggests a streamlined and faculty-based approach to further strengthening educational support systems at UCT.

Keywords: Emerging Academics, Transformation, Disciplinary Standards, Academic Freedoms, Institutional Culture, Academia, Thematic Analysis.

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1 CHAPTER ONE: AN INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Study Motivation

Academia is experienced through active engagement with the structure and culture of institutions (King & Bilot, 2016). This places the burden of responsibility on universities to establish systems that support the optimal performance of academics. Studies are beginning to examine the transformative impact of these support systems on the overall academic experience (Fitzmaurice, 2013; James, 2006). Academics experience their spaces differently, even if the institutional policy is ubiquitous. This inevitably leads to a dynamic and complex ecosystem that requires a nuanced approach for fundamental transformation to be attained (Pick, Symons & Teo, 2015).

Academia is structured around disciplines, with each one having its distinct set of norms. These norms could include research, funding competitions, teaching, and social initiatives (Henkel, 2005). Each discipline's standards shape every academic attitude, thus engender a communal stratum within the institutions. Thus, the disciplinary communities they form become salient support structures for their career progression (Clarke, Hyde & Drennan, 2013).

Therefore, the development of an academic is contingent on three factors;

1. Institutional transformative structures
2. Disciplinary expectation, and
3. Commitment to be part of a more comprehensive academic community.

The alignment of these factors in shaping the experiences of academics is my primary motivation for this study. I have an unwavering affection for academia and for the prospects of being a significant member of its community. A study by Taylor (1989) stresses the importance of being part of “a defining community” that provides a distinct language within which academics interacts; language here refers to jargon and terminologies universally understood in the academic community). Feeling a sense of inclusivity within this community can be achieved by active engagement in global conversations about critical educational issues, building sustainable relationships in disciplinary circles, and active collaboration in projects (Vabø 2002).

An exploratory study's significance cannot be overemphasized, as it gives a reflexive approach to understanding how academia is experienced. The notion of an academic should emerge from a qualitative assessment of individual capacity rather than an objective assessment of ideals (Ferrante, 2015). This further helps me to recognize the importance of personal agency in navigating the structural challenges academics face in the institutions they operate.

1.1.2 Statement of Problem

As tertiary institutions evolve, there is an increased focus on social inclusion and equity initiatives. Universities have started introducing transformation and diversity systems to ensure that all, regardless of experiential backgrounds or social identity, feel a sense of inclusivity (Czerniewicz & Brown, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991). Although the progress made on this front is encouraging (which will be engaged later in the review), there is a concession that disciplinary standards of performance and the nature of the institutional culture has led to conflicting notions of what it means to be an academic (Figlio & Schapiro, 2017). After all, you cannot transform academia if there is no conceptual clarification of what it means, what is expected of academics, what shapes the perception of their performance, and how the institutional culture shapes their experiences.

Traditionally, an academic craves the freedom to teach the discipline of interest, conduct research that aligns with career projections and enjoys the security of tenure (Damrosch, 1995). But recent studies have affirmed that these traditional notions of what an academic is or who they should be, do not fit within the current climate of tertiary institutions (Henkel, 2011; Figlio & Schapiro, 2017). These changes can be attributed to the decreasing financial capacity and limited resources provided to academia by the government or private donors. In most cases, academics have been forced to undermine their interests and teaching quality to compete for funding in market-driven technical research areas (Vice, 2015; Tabensky and Mathews, 2015). While sizeable competitive research grants can boost scholars' careers, these grants can also deter their freedom, thus influencing their performance perceptions. It is, therefore, logical to conclude that pressure and expectation placed by institutions play a significant role in determining academic freedom (the freedom to express ideas and engage in research of preference without official or institutional interference).

The need for global and international recognition has driven institutions to place immense pressure on academics. The behaviors and attitudes in South Africa are influenced by institutional policy and further shaped by a culture defined by networks within the workplace (Tabensky and Mathews, 2015). Academics continuously interact in a social space that sets the tone for how professional achievements and milestones are perceived (Janssen, Jelgerhuis & Schuwer, 2014). Academics face pressure from colleagues to consistently publish research findings in renowned journals or contribute to research advancement at a disciplinary conference (Trotter, 2016). Institutions are also known for setting publishing targets for academics and defining quality research through adherence to H-indexes and impact factors. They reward those academics who are seen to be performing through promotions and grants (Trotter, 2016). By rewarding specific behavior and performances, these institutions set a standard and communicate what 'success' is within academia.

1.2 ACADEMIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

1.2.1 Institutional Transformation: The South African Context

The transformation concept is often used to infer the changes in an existing structure (Manning 2013). A structural change could occur in terms of its leadership, policy, and general outlook, reflecting an adjustment from its previous state (Du Preez, Simmonds & Verhoef, 2016). A study by Vice (2015) explains transformation as a process by which academics feel a sense of inclusion within their institutions. This can be done by introducing blueprints that dismantle social hierarchies and engendering an environment where contributions are recognized. When academics feel like they are a part of their institutions' value-creating culture, they express more freedom, and their performance is optimal (Bunting & Cloete 2004).

Institutional transformation occurs due to internal and external factors. In some cases, the external milieu's political and social-cultural reality could impact the pace and quality of transformation (Kezar & Eckel 2002). Other factors could include global advancements in technology, the nature of emerging markets, demographic changes, and globalization (Bunting & Cloete 2004; Manning 2013).

A critical look at the South African higher education system shows that the political climate has historically influenced institutional transformation. The elections in 1994, for

example, intensified the movement for racial justice in academia. This led to the three significant discourses and conversations on implementing structural changes within the country (Du Preez, Simmonds & Verhoef, 2016). The first discourse was inspired by the reports from “The Education White Paper of 1997” and ensured that institutional transformation revolved around equality in students' admission and university governance (DoE, 1997). The second discourse was inspired by the “2008 Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation, Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education (MCTHE),” It revolved around developing a more holistic and extensive comprehension of institutional transformation. The third discourse was organized around developing innovative learning and teaching practices, comprehensive curriculum changes, and institutional leadership (Du Preez, Simmonds & Verhoef, 2016).

A study by Brink (2007) reveals that the significant challenge for institutional transformation in South Africa is the general comprehension of what it entails. The course explains that this definitional challenge has propelled universities to only embrace ‘affirmative action,’ which falls short. Brink (2007) also argued that having more black students or academic staff is not enough to say an institution has entirely transformed. Brink (2007) raised questions about institutions that just see transformation as “Africanization,” which only signifies a drive to remodel curriculum to “perceived’ African standards repeatedly. The conflicting definitions of what change is has been a deterrent to its consolidation in South African universities.

A study by Kezar and Eckel (2002) explains institutional transformation as planning by utilizing five principal strategies. These include adopting a flexible vision for the institution, ensuring clarity of outlined vision, consulting with the senior management for administrative support, fostering an environment for proactive staff development, and engendering collaborative leadership in university governance. These outlined strategies are not mutually exclusive; thus, they occur in different phases and may take a long time before it is achieved.

A study by Chetty and Merret (2014) explains that institutional transformation can only be achieved when universities have an acceptable pass rate and when black African students can have access to these universities irrespective of their socio-economic status. The study further stressed the need to have an Afrocentric curriculum rather than only highlights European ideals. Therefore, diversification of knowledge must be instilled within

universities, one which contains narratives of African stories. Transformation in university governance must also reflect diversity with procedures to encourage black academics to take up leadership positions (Chetty & Merret, 2014).

The contributions from the critical thinking theories also shed light on how to characterize transformation. This was further underscored by Kogan and Hanney (2000), where student development, training, and learning are pivotal to critical transformation. A key driver to transformation is a concept called “Basic Change.” In this institutional transformation framework, fundamental change requires evaluating teaching's applicability to the student's cognitive development. For transformation to be significant, deconstruction of knowledge must occur, allowing students to recreate it to suit their learning patterns. The deconstruction process goes more in-depth, considering the institution's context and location (Murriss 2016). This transformative framework would require South African institutions to decolonize their curriculum.

1.2.2 Racial Equality in South African Institutions

The Soudien Report (2008) reveals that South African institutions comply with transformative policy indicators mandated by law. The disadvantage of adopting this approach is that transformation becomes more of a compulsory mandate than qualitative and comprehensive. Some universities focus on increasing the number of black academics and students enrolled without further engaging, detailed strategies to make learning spaces feel safe for all (Kessi & Cornell 2015).

The report also recommends that transformation be fully attained if the sources of knowledge are interrogated and tailored towards the university and the country's context. Furthermore, curriculum development should also contain guidelines for how the experience is disseminated to students to ensure that it reflects African philosophies, with narratives they are familiar with (Soudien Report, 2008).

The transformation of institutions in South Africa must begin with those involved in the institution's decision-making processes. The report highlights that significant universities' governance in South Africa must reflect the racial, gender, and socioeconomic diversity that the university hopes to attain. This helps to bring all voices to the table to ensure policies that identify all students' needs.

In a report published by The Council on Higher Education (CHE) in 2015, there has been a call for increased racial diversity within institutions, with white academics occupying most roles. This is shown clearly in the graph below. A study by Paul and Berry (2013) asserts that the lack of racial diversity in senior management positions does not reflect progress made in transformation and could threaten a universally sound policy decision.

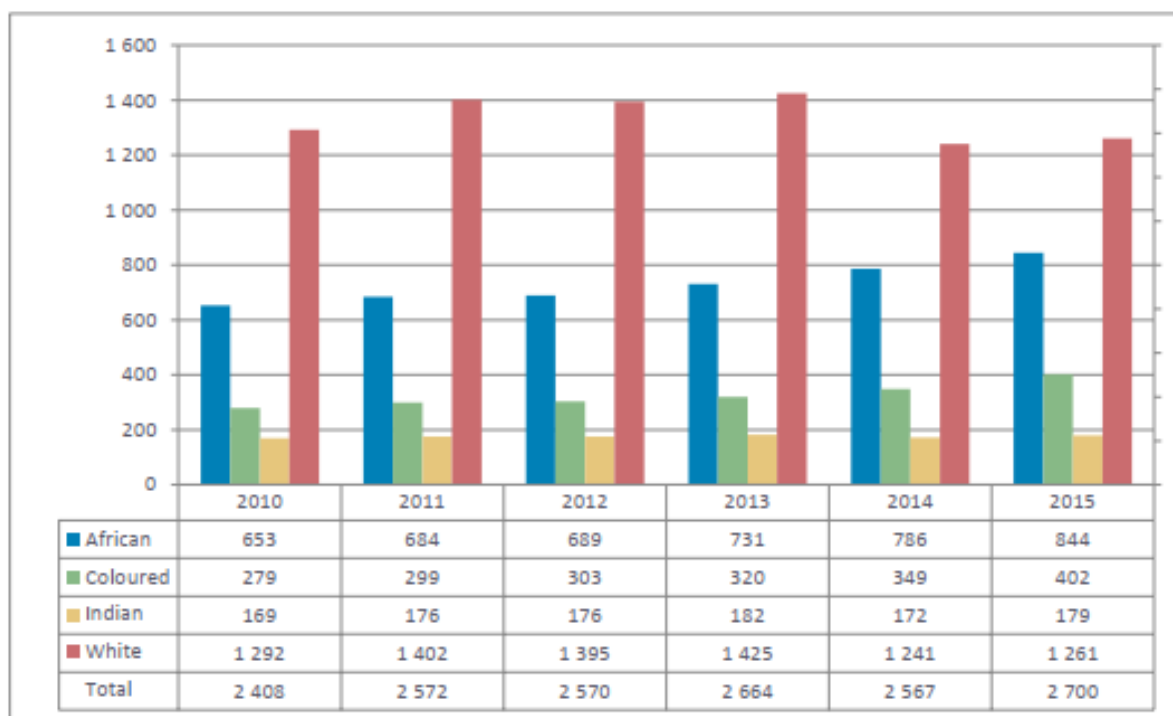


Figure 1: Showing the number of academics in senior management positions by racial diversity

The graph above further illustrates the predominance of white academics in senior management positions. In a South African context, given the evolution of race relations in the country, statistics like the one above helps consolidate the concerns felt in the pursuit of institutional support in South Africa.

The SAHRC Report (2016) reveals that academia's transformation in South Africa is evolving slower than expected. This can be addressed by implementing policies that encourage racial diversity within academia. Figure 6 below further affirms the concerns laid out by the SAHRC Report (2016). The graph below shows that academic staff members employed in the major universities in South Africa are still predominantly white. Based on the definition of transformation laid out by this report, more needs to be done to ensure that a

more diverse coalition of academics is employed. This will ensure that students feel that they are in a more inclusive learning environment.

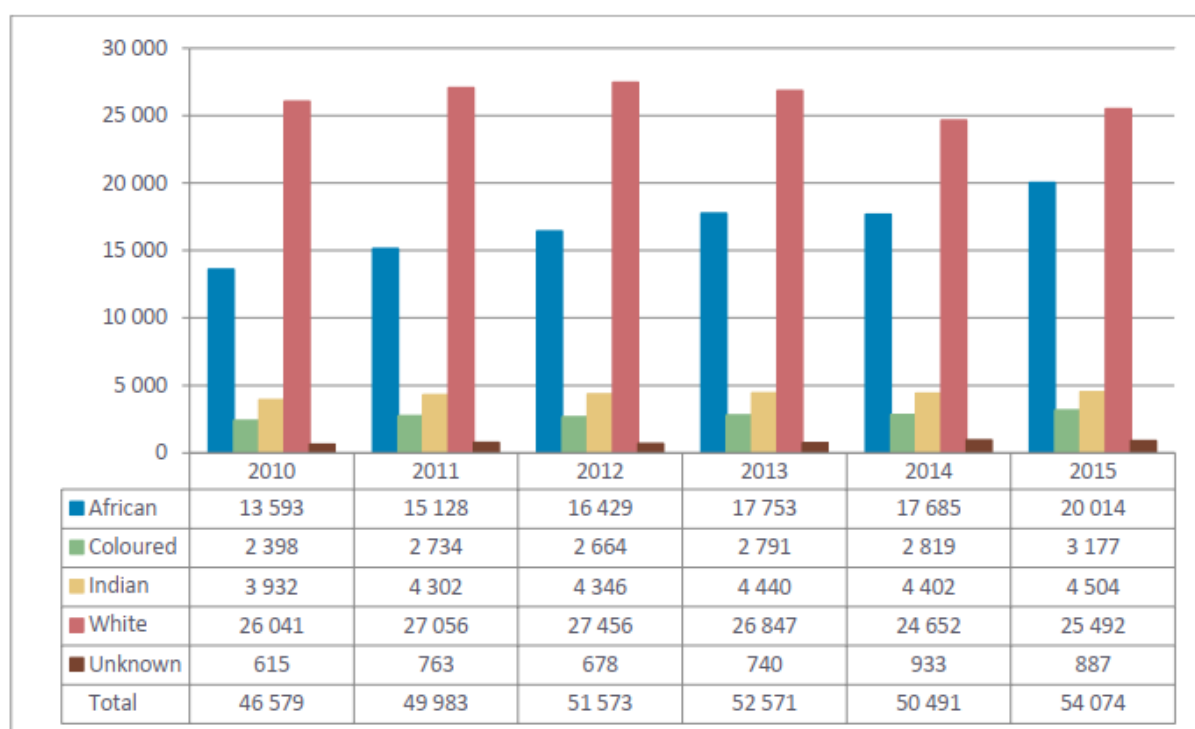


Figure 2: Showing the number of academics' staff members by racial diversity.

As outlined in the SAHRC Report (2016), a deterrent to holistic transformation is the divergence of policy standards across South African institutions. The approach to change differs and, more often, reflects the history of the university.

1.2.3 The institutional culture at UCT: Historical Precedence

An institution is set up to promote or pursue a cause or promote specified values or goals. According to Hodgson (2006, p.13), "...institutions are systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions... [and they] enable ordered thought, expectation, and action by imposing form and consistency on human activities". Meyer (2007) revealed four significant factors that define an institution: structural, organizational, discursive, and cultural. A university's organizational structure comprises the individuals within the system (students, teaching, and non-teaching staff) bound together to reach career and academic goals. Universities are social institutions set up to reflect society's value systems and help attain the interests that are beneficial to society (Thoenig, 2011). The

institutional culture of the University of Cape Town is of interest in this study, as this will be the context in which the study will be carried out.

The peculiarity of racial history in South Africa places UCT as a major actor in the national fight for desegregation. As South African institutions faced years of academic segregation, UCT was one of the institutions distinctly set aside for the white racial class during Apartheid. The fight to ensure that students of all races were admitted into the institution reached a significant milestone in the 1980s when UCT began increasing black students' enrollment. The black representation in the student body also increased (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001). In 1993, the number of black students enrolled in the institution grew to one-third of the overall student population, creating a foundation for further reforms in inclusivity and transformation. This historical precedence has created a need to align the institution to fit the political climate of South Africa while still ensuring that its aim to become a diverse, globally recognized, and liberally oriented university, is not undermined (Welsh, 1979).

This historical precedence has led activist groups to seek transformative steps to promote inclusivity actively. One way this could occur was to tear down symbols that retrospectively reinforce racial segregation and oppression. This led to the #RhodesMustFall movement in March 2015, which was sparked by students who felt the statue of Cecil John Rhodes was reflective of the UCT's resistance to transform (Davis, 2015). Later that year, student activist groups emerged to protest the institution's lack of transformation and increases in tuition fees. This was titled "The Fees Must Fall Movement" It led to students' disruptions on a national scale who felt their voices had been silenced. It is important to note that the institution sometimes opposes/challenges and, to some extent, punishes disruptive forms of participation. Institutional structures, policies, and systems are continually being challenged, leading to compromises that seek to decolonize the educational system. It is important to note that the evolution of institutions helps to shape their culture. UCT ranks as one of the best institutions in Africa; thus, a coherent policy structure helps lay a framework for that standard to be maintained (Trotter, Kell, Willmers, Gray & King, 2014).

Academics are saddled with the responsibility of upholding and challenging these frameworks when they see fit. Thus, every academic is continuously trying to see if they fit within the definition of these frameworks or might seek to adjust them to fit in. This inevitably influences the construction of their identities and shapes their perception of how

academia is defined (Reed, 2012; Czerniewicz, 2014). Therefore, an academic from UCT might perceive their professional spaces differently from an academic from Oxford University. This study is poised to identify and evaluate institutional factors that influence how academia is defined and how academics fit within and experience the designated spaces.

1.2.4 Institutional Culture at UCT: A Quest for Transformation

The craving for racial representation and the process of decimating institutionalized racism has consequentially molded the institutional culture at UCT. This was challenging, especially when the country transitioned from apartheid to a democratic form (Department of Institutional Planning, 2005). The nation of South Africa endured over 40 years of apartheid rule, leading to its structural fragmentation along racial lines. This impacted the nation's political and legislative process, further creating the perception that black and colored South Africans needed to be emancipated (Cloete et al., 1999). Despite the encouraging commitment to social justice, the liberation movement still became racialized. This is because of the emancipatory labels placed on black and colored South Africans (Badat, 1999).

As UCT admitted a diverse crop of students and staff, the focus began to tilt towards ensuring that the institutional space was inclusive. This should involve engendering an academic environment with sufficient support structures for black students and academics to thrive (Jung, 2000). This is because black students and scholars still faced the legislative and socio-economic burdens that emerged from apartheid (Saunders, 2000). Admission into the university system was a milestone, but the freedom to assimilate, enjoy, and thrive was more limited for blacks than their white colleagues. One of the dire challenges faced by black students was the issue of accommodation. The “Group Areas Act” legislation prevented black South Africans from seeking accommodation in suburban districts reserved for whites. Consequentially, this meant that students would have to seek accommodation in the townships and areas distant from where the UCT campuses are located (SRC, 1986). Black students had to deal with constant reminders that they were from a different socioeconomic status than a white student, despite UCT’s efforts towards equity. The efforts by UCT towards desegregation led to the establishment of academic support systems and more financial aid opportunities (Saunders, 2000). The attainment of racial equity has since

become a significant feature of UCT's institutional culture, both for academics and students. It has led to several structural changes in university governance.

In its continuous quest for transformation, the university's governance, the UCT Transformation Forum's Executive Committee, became statutory in 1999. This was set up to ensure racial and gender-based representation within the leadership of the university. This move symbolized a national statement that legitimized and positions the university as a racial equity model and equity model. Legislative bills advanced to guarantee this included; UCT Private Bill, UCT Private Act, and Statute of the UCT, all passed in 1999, 1999, and 2002, respectively. The statute, as stipulated in the Department of Education (2002), reads.

“Any person or body appointing a person or nominating a candidate for election to the council, the senate, the institutional forum or a committee or a joint committee must have regard to the historic under-representation of women, in particular black women, and black people in general, on such bodies and the need to redress that” (p. 36).

Supplemental amendments of the UCT statute came in 2004, stating that any entrance into the Senate committee must reflect the racial and gender diversity of UCT academic staff (Department of Education, 2002). These were noteworthy developments that further shaped the instructional culture at UCT.

The current transformational goal in UCT is inclusive of four fundamental principles.

- “Making the university a more representative institution in terms of its academic and support staff and its student body.”
- “Promoting enhanced intellectual diversity.”
- “Transcending the idea of race.”
- “Improving institutional climate and having an enhanced focus on our intellectual enterprise on African perspectives.” (University of Cape Town, 2014).

1.3 RATIONALE AND AIM OF STUDY

1.3.1 Rationale of Study

Therefore, this study seeks to delve into academics' experiences to explore how it is perceived within the UCT context. In exploring these experiences, the study will seek further insights into institutional culture and how academics are impacted by it. Institutional culture

refers to shared values, ideologies, and traditions reflected in the institutional initiatives, activities, or practices (Austin & McDaniels, 2006). It is imperative to note that the culture, trends, and expectations set by institutions continually change. In contemporary times, academics are invariably challenging these traditional notions, leading to consistent policy changes that affect them.

As noted earlier, South Africa has been plagued with significant division across racial lines. The study by Vice (2015) affirms that academics' intellectual culture is addressed majorly from whiteness studies. With a curriculum woven around Western and Anglo-Saxon values, contextual methodologies are relegated, thus further creating a space unreceptive to academics with an indigenous background (Sehoole, 2016). Under this institutional culture, academia's way will differ across demographic categories due to the fizzling boundaries between personal life and work roles. Tabensky and Mathews (2015) revealed the justification for this assertion, where students and academics affirmed that the curriculum and institutional culture of the major universities in the country is exclusionary.

The group of academics most vulnerable to these academic pressures is the Emerging Academic. In this study, emerging academics will be classified as those within the first five years of their academic teaching or research careers. They are faced with systemic and structural changes that may become a deterrent for their successful integration into the institution. An insight into the demands of research and teaching shows that emerging academics must deal with swift policy changes and introduce novel divisions of academic labor (Clarke, Kenny & Loxley, 2015; Damrosch, 1995). While a lot of work has been done on the experiences of academics (Smith, Deepwell, & Shrives, 2013; Barbour & Lammers, 2015; Tabensky & Mathews, 2015; Pratt, 2012), little has been done to focus on emerging academics as a unique category of interest. If institutional transformation is to be effective, more must be done to understand how early-career scholars deal with the challenges of meeting up to professional competence standards to find ways to support them better.

Furthermore, emerging academics are faced with the challenge of choosing or consolidating their research focus, which could ultimately shape their career success. This study seeks to resolve this gap by delving into their experience as a distinct category. To fully comprehend their experiences, this study will focus on fixing these fundamental issues or questions; for a person to be an academic, they must meet up to specified standards or criteria? Who sets or lays out these standards? What hurdles do they face in adapting to the

tertiary institutional climate or culture? The answers to these questions are the foundation for the aim and specific objectives of this study.

1.3.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to **investigate how emerging academics experience academia**. The need for this is to contribute to the quest for institutional transformation in South Africa by giving insights into how systems within institutions impact the adjustment of emerging academics (Luvalo, 2019). There is a consensus that academic experiences can be conceptualized as an interaction between the institution, the intellectual, and their disciplinary circle (Ylijoki, & Ursin, 2013; Barbour & Lammers, 2015). This study will examine these factors and how emerging academics experience their interaction. This ensures that we develop an empirically coherent insight into what factors contribute to shaping their experiences. The study objectives include:

1. Identifying what it means to be an emerging academic.
2. Exploring the factors that either enhance or inhibit the performance of emerging academics.
3. Exploring the impact of social identities (class, race, gender) on how emerging academics experience UCT.

1.3.3 Importance of the Study.

Through the interconnective nature of academic institutions, academics across disciplines have fully legitimized their identities. They have also contributed to national policy changes (Castells, 1997). This further highlights their importance to society and the necessity for them to engage in cutting-edge research that presents practical societal benefits.

Academics are faced with the enormous responsibility of reaching significant teaching milestones and the production of research output. In some institutions, academics are also tasked with facilitating community development initiatives and university governance's administrative intensity. Their ability to navigate these responsibilities will have salient implications for both student competence and university rankings. Therefore, it is imperative to identify the critical barriers to their performance by qualitative inquiry into their lived experiences. This ultimately helps shape policy debates and create provisions that will help advance career or learning outcomes.

The quality of experience of academics ultimately reflects on the students. Academics who find fulfillment in teaching are likely to prioritize the constant improvement of their teaching standards. These academics require adequate support systems to maintain healthy job satisfaction. The Emerging Researchers Program and New Academic Practitioners' Programme have been set up at UCT to help emerging academics with opportunities to fulfill research targets while still prioritizing teaching. This assistance appears through workshops, funding opportunities, networking circles, and adequate mentorship. Therefore, it is essential to know how academics perceive these support systems and how they feel improved.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THESIS

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. The second chapter will evaluate the current literature on academic experiences and lay out its theoretical framework. It will also outline the theoretical gaps that this study seeks to bridge

The third chapter will a detailed breakdown of the study method and methodology. It will outline the data collection process, the sampling strategy, and the research design's philosophical foundations. It will also highlight the interview stages and the thematic analysis used to analyze the interview transcripts.

The fourth chapter will be an analysis of how the participants define academia. It will provide an exhaustive layout of how academia is conceptualized from the subjective perspectives of academics. It will narratively engage the themes generated from participants and further elucidate the perceived qualities of an academic.

The fifth chapter will engage the academic experience of the institutional culture, transformation, and individualism at UCT. It will provide an exhaustive appraisal of the system of governance and administration at UCT from the viewpoints of all participants interviewed. It delves into the policies and organizational focus of UCT and how it affects the welfare of emerging academics.

The sixth chapter engages the existing performance evaluation systems at UCT and their impact on emerging academics. It further provides an extensive analysis of infrastructural resources, micromanagement, and the effects on academics' performances.

The seventh chapter will present an in-depth analysis of the impact of personal background on how academia is experienced. It explores the themes that arose from

emerging academic participants' accounts of how their racial identity shaped their assimilation into their faculties.

The eight-chapter will present the implications of the findings and their impact on the overall body of knowledge. It elucidates how the results of this research can be instrumental in shaping theory.

2 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION TO REVIEW

This review will critically evaluate the definitions of “an academic” and how it is conceptualized in modern times. It will explore the notion of academic freedoms, factors shaping educational experiences. First, the paper does a historical evolution of institutional culture and how it influences theoretical contributions. Next, it evaluates **the contemporary nature of academic backgrounds**. This will present insights into the factors responsible for shaping the unique experiences of academics. It appraises studies on the impact of technology on academic staff development, the market expectations for modern scholars, the debates around disciplinary fragmentations, academics' experiences in creating a work-life balance, and studies on performance evaluation in academia.

The **theoretical framework** will lay out relevant theories on the underlying principles that shape academic experiences. The Identity Trajectory framework highlights personal agency's significance in achieving educational career goals even when faced with circumstantial and individual constraints (McAlpine & Lucas, 2011). The intersectionality theory by Crenshaw (1989) asserts that gender, race, and class impact the system of injustice faced in academia.

This chapter ends by highlighting the gaps that this study seeks to bridge. Methodological, contextual, and theoretical gaps will also be identified as further justification for this study.

2.2 WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN ACADEMIC: A REVIEW

2.2.1 Defining an Academic and Notion of Academic Freedoms

Academics are defined by the extent to which one can meet the discipline standards they find themselves in, shaping their work practices and interactions at work (Brown, 2014). Studies that have examined academics' experiences focused attention on how they perceive their competence and how they appraise their capacity to meet institutional targets. This is done by a deductive comparison between the specific profession's requirements and their perceived ability to meet them (Freund, Cohen, Blit-Cohen & Dehan, 2014). These researchers established that academic institutions or disciplines set the benchmark for

acceptable standards, thus encouraging people to align with these expectations to thrive (Korica, & Molloy, 2010; Wiles, 2013; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2013).

The conceptualization of an academic in literature is prominently perceived from the position of academic freedom. This stipulates that an academic should be judged from professional autonomy, the freedom to ask exploratory questions, and pursue truth in any choice (Henkel, 2005; Damrosch, 1995). It is the freedom to search, produce, reproduce, replicate knowledge for self-interest, solve practical problems, seek theoretical truth, and represent a group of academic intellectuals. Its construction begins perceptually and requires a subjective psychological appraisal of self-interest (Henkel, 2005). Studies have revealed that modern academics hinge their professional autonomy on accountability systems or financial rewards that stifle their capacity to exercise this freedom (Henkel, 2011; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013). But most of these studies have not explored academic spaces qualitatively and from the perspective of emerging academics. This study will provide the opportunity for academics to extensively express how institutions or disciplinary standards may either restrict or encourage their professional autonomy and what steps they may be taking to engender it.

The conceptualization of an academic can be elucidated from two core frames. First, the intrinsic or internal factor of how personal or experiential backgrounds impact educational spaces' experience. Second, the extrinsic or external characteristics of institutional culture and disciplinary standards influence how academia is shaped.

2.2.2 External Factors Shaping Academic Experiences

These standards involve measures of competence outlined by discipline or research areas that have been established as the bedrock of professional development (Sanchez, Shih & Wilton, 2014; Nash, 2008). As hierarchical levels in career development increase, expectations of an academic also changes. Hence, staff holding mid-level academic positions, for example, may experience academia differently than a person in an academic position. Studies also show that although these role expectations in intellectual development may distinctly vary across disciplines, the principles are still universally applicable (Caza & Bagozzi, 2015; Beddoe, 2013).

The adaptation into a new role requires an academic to implement strategies that help bridge the gap between measuring their capacity and their perceived expectations or goals. Hence, emerging academics handle the pressure of adapting to the system by using other seasoned and renowned professionals' achievements as standards for evaluating their performance (Korica, & Molloy, 2010; Barbour & Lammers 2015). These models are socializing agents that provide valuable feedback and validation on the identification process.

Expectations for academics most times differ across disciplines, further emphasizing the existence of hierarchical benchmarks of expertise. These hierarchies also emphasize the distinction between an academic and “successful academics.” A technically-oriented specialization like engineering emphasizes PhDs and consulting and creating models with practical industrial relevance (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Other disciplines may give high recognition to theoretical contributions or consolidation. Irrespective of where they may fall, academics are bounded by disciplinary expectations that signal the level of competence they have or possess (Pratt, 2012; Dutton, Roberts & Bednar, 2010). For these reasons, modern academics are beginning to challenge the disciplinary expectations by questioning their origins, why they should exist, who sets them, their contextual universality, and what should be regarded as acceptable. Most studies have focused on a performance-based model or approach that only reveals how academics meet these standards but fails to establish the process by which these standards are challenged.

2.2.3 Internal Factors Shaping Academic Experiences

Internal factors include personality, values, and belief systems. These factors also encompass academics' social identities and serve as a lens through which they evaluate their work (Green, 2010). Some academics perceive their roles strictly from excellence, making them highly competitive (Chenny, 2011). It also influences their attitude towards students and how they assess performance. Other academics may prioritize institutional politics and governance over academic targets. These groups of academics are actively involved in the construction of institutional policies (Chenny, 2011).

The degree of importance placed on different aspects of academic endeavors make up the value systems of academics. These values help to extricate the most cherished experience at work. It will likely also help to determine the quality of their research or teaching. A study by Chalmers (2008) outlines the following values that underline academic experience quality.

2.2.3.1 Empirical Decision Making and Standardization:

Some academics make their daily decisions based on evidence and facts. These are academics that value standardization and bureaucracy and ensure that rules follow the books before deciding.

2.2.3.2 *Appreciation for Diversity:* These academics are more flexible to diverse ideas when navigating their professional spaces. They take a more qualitative approach to research, teaching assessment. They do not seek to standardize but instead place significant value on diversity.

Studies have shown that several emerging academics often enter the educational system with existing beliefs and preconceptions (Green, 2010; Knight, Tait, and Yorke, 2006). Most of these beliefs are enduring and often impact their professional development. Emerging academics also have expectations on their academic career trajectory, aligning with what the institution offers. Academics may feel dissatisfied if their expectations are not met, core beliefs are challenged, and systems that support their projected career plans are not fully implemented (Chenny, 2011).

2.2.4 Conceptualization of Performance and Teaching Quality in Academia.

Studies have shown that teaching quality is best measured subjectively. This entails that every academic should be given the freedom to implement their teaching styles (Kulski & Groombridge, 2004; Kis, 2005). But despite this subjective approach, general principles help frame how quality learning can be carried out effectively. According to Chalmers (2008);

“Performance indicators are defined as measures which give information and statistics context, permitting comparisons between fields, over time and with commonly accepted standards. They provide information about the degree to which teaching and learning quality objectives are being met within the higher education sector and institutions” (p. 4).

Research by Chalmers (2008) identified what is referred to as “dimensional frameworks” of teaching quality experienced by academics. These dimensions include;

2.2.4.1 Diversity: Ensuring that teaching content is disseminated to accommodate students' diverse backgrounds who receive them. When applied to institutions, this dimension requires them to provide training on teaching resources that also indulge or accommodate staff members' varying experiences. This also necessitates a staff recognition process that is fair to all involved in teaching.

2.2.4.2 Engagement with Community. This dimension demands academics to improve their engagement with the student community. This requires going beyond the classroom to understand the needs, barriers, and enhancers to student performance (Smart, Feldman & Ethington, 2000). This can be done through counseling, personal consulting, providing tips and soft skills to improve reading habits, encouraging students to enroll in additional tutorial classes to supplement significant lectures, and ensuring that students get sufficient mentorship opportunities. This dimension also entails the teaching of content that engages the needs of local communities. In this way, academics become part of a network that seeks to channel teaching expertise to organizations that need it the most.

2.2.4.3 Assessment: This helps to track the impact of teaching quality in students' tasks and standardized tests. Research has shown this dimension, giving students adequate feedback on their progress and simultaneously tracking the degree of influence teaching has had on them (Harris & James, 2006). Academics experience student assessment in fulfillment of their role as educators and verdict on the effectiveness of their teaching style (Peterson & Augustine, 2000).

2.2.4.4 Institutional Climate and Systems: This requires academics to equip themselves with the necessary infrastructure to improve teaching quality. Academics must ensure they are furnished with skills to operate the latest technology, resources to enhance course content quality, and recent trends in their field. It also requires the comprehension of curriculum requirements and the capacity to pinpoint the ways to improve them.

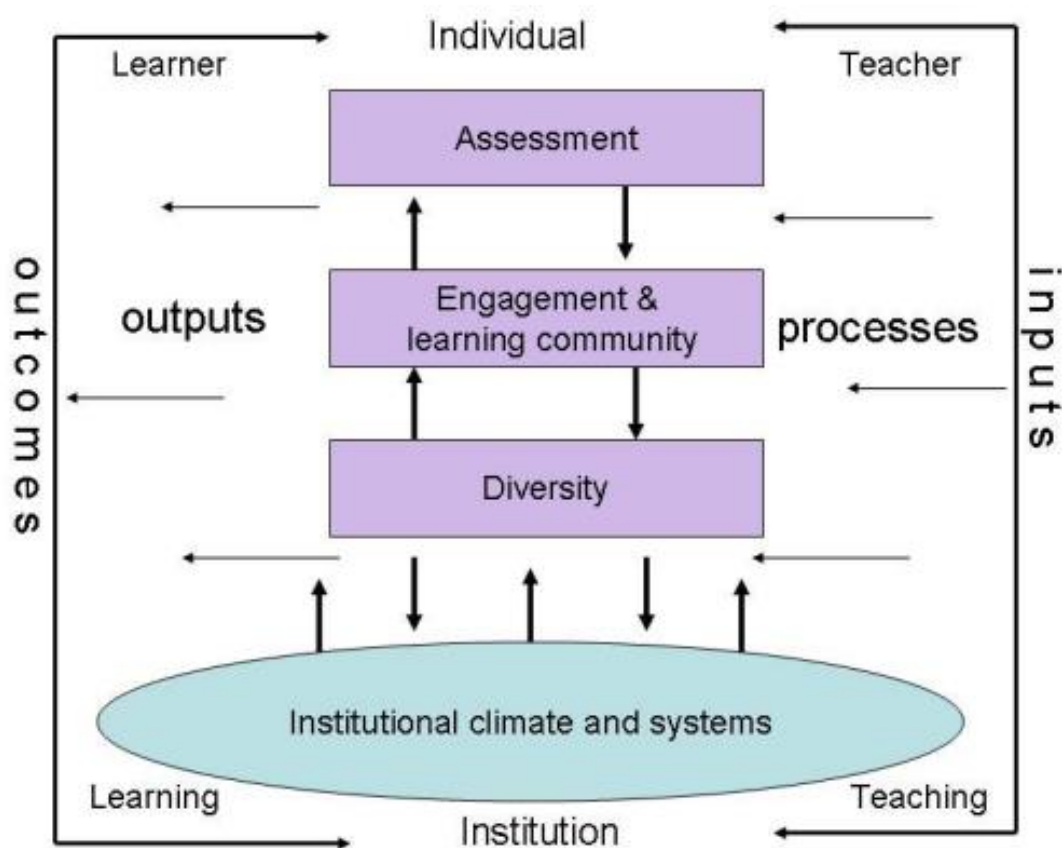


Figure 3: Showing the mode of operation for dimensional teaching quality (Chalmers, 2008).

Figure 2 above shows that the teaching quality framework operates three levels: the institution (faculty and department), the academic, and the student. The theoretical input is processed through assessment, engagement & learning community, and diversity to produce outputs to the learner (Chalmers & Thomson, 2008). This teaching is made possible by utilizing the recourse provided by the institutional climate or systems. The arrows going in and out of the “institutional environment and systems indicate its consistent improvement. As learning occurs, the universities will be on the lookout to update their resources and infrastructure to keep up with the global educational demands (Guthrie & Neumann, 2006). This gives a much-detailed insight into how teaching quality is significant in the proliferation of contemporary universities (Rowe & Lievesley, 2002).

The dimensional framework above may not apply to other institutions and, in some cases, are experienced differently by academics in a different context (Chalmers (2007). But it provides a universal foundation for shaping the discourse on teaching quality and how this could fundamentally shape academics' experiences.

2.2.5 The Historical Evolution of Institutional Culture

The 18th century also referred to as the Age of Enlightenment, positioned universities as institutions that operate independently with the sole purpose of persevering culture and developing reason. It was structured to give academics the freedom to generate knowledge and preserve culture with little or no government (Kant, 1798/2007). This is where the notion of academic freedom evolved from, leading academics to participate in original research and ask critical questions without the fear of external interference (Delanty, 2001). Institutions were perceived as a community of scholars seeking to apply their intellect. (Newman, 1976).

These principles and ideals are still of immense value amongst the academic community today, allowing for critical debates and engagements that help resolve social justice issues globally (Booth, McLean, and Walker, 2009; Marginson, 2011). A study by Nussbaum (1997) outlines that university academics should develop narratives based on their experiences and must be prepared to debate moral issues as they emerge (Bynner and Egerton, 2001). But this notion of an academic institution having limitless freedom and focused on the generation of knowledge came under extreme scrutiny. This is because the public and private donors funded universities; thus, arguments were made that these

institutions should channel their efforts to prioritizing the economic needs of the states and of those who make funding provisions (BIS, 2014; Kezar, 2004)

The university then transitioned into an institution positioned to serve the economic needs of states. This radically changed the traditional notion that academia was solely concerned with transmitting knowledge and preserving culture (Ward, 2007; Henkel, 2007). These economic needs have placed pressure on academia to channel research into the pragmatic economic initiative and focus on shaping the curriculum content into disseminating vocational skills (Barnett, 2003). The teaching trajectory is needed to identify business needs and provide skills that help business development (Willetts, 2011, 530, col 770). Contemporary universities have an urban and industrial focus, laying a pathway for technological innovations across states (Scott, 2005). This evolution gave governments more control and lead to investments by politicians into the higher education system.

A study by Morley (2012) reveals the dissonance faced by modern-day universities. The conflict between institutions' globalized pressure embodies a more cooperative and entrepreneurial identity against the quest to preserve its traditional value system (independent knowledge creation). This has created funding deficits in disciplines within the social sciences, humanities, and arts, leaving them marginalized in dispensing research grants (Collini, 2012).

As higher education progresses, debates and conversations on what defines academia linger. It is important to note that some higher education still prioritizes knowledge creation and cultural preservation despite the existing economic or market-related pressures. For this reason (and many other reasons, including the geographical location of institutions, the institutions' socio-political histories, and the communities in which they are located), institutional culture is heterogeneous rather than homogeneous (Browne, 2010; Delanty, 2001). Each institution of learning observes its history and crafts a culture that ultimately becomes a brand image. Consequently, an institution may be ranked higher in medicine and lower in business-related disciplines. Some institutions are known for their strength in the humanities, while others may focus on engineering and physical structures. The government's pragmatic reactions to these changes are to shift the pivot from the state to the students, giving them more opportunities to make choices beneficial to them (Abbas & McLean, 2010; Morley, 2012).

2.2.6 Institutional Culture in Contemporary Times

The 20th century has seen academia evolve from a fusion between research and teaching into a system involving three major components. According to Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009), these components include Community and University Service Contributions, Teaching, Its Related Activities, and Discipline Focused Research. Insightful analysis of the organizational structure shows that universities in this century tilted their focus to one of these three areas (Norton 2013). While some universities still try to balance all three, institutions' support and funding determine what place they prioritize (Pritchard, 2004).

Research intensive universities are often fortunate to have tremendous support from alumni or the industry. The study focused on universities' pressure on academics for research output to meet funding organizations' demands. Some universities place their cornerstone on students' inculcating technical skills (Bexley, James & Arkoudis 2011). Academics are supported with numerous teaching workshops and supported with tools to facilitate teaching competencies (Pritchard, 2004).

The decrease in government funding for academia globally has led to enormous dependence on competitive research grants and limited institutions' ability to improve teaching quality (Bentley & Kyvik 2012; Norton, 2013). This assertion has been consolidated by studies that find little or no correlation between the accumulation of research focus academics and teaching quality (Figlio & Schapiro, 2017.; Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley, 2009). Despite this limitation, the competitive nature of research grants has helped improve creativity amongst academics and equipped them with innovative tools to solve practical problems in their discipline (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales 2008)

2.3 THE CONTEMPORARY STATE OF ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES

2.3.1 Technological Inclusion in Access to Higher Education

The advancement of technology has eased access to higher education. Students can now enroll in online courses, take distance learning classes, and access various educational content online (Trow, 1997). This has created an increased administrative burden to academics, who must now facilitate in-person and online lectures. A study by Trow (2000)

reveals that academic staff morale has declined due to these changes and has led to reduced interest in academic teaching positions. Furthermore, the enormous demand for teaching output placed by technological advancement has stifled most academics' creativity and productivity (Winter, Taylor, and Sarros, 2000). The surge of students' enrollments due to technology has placed pressure on academics to devise innovative strategies to fulfill their teaching duties. It is also important to note that most of these students come from diverse backgrounds, requiring them to be flexible in implementing these strategies (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). Some institutions have in place support systems to help academics, but this still requires operation and, in most cases, does not help to reduce the administrative load (Trow, 2000). Although access to academics has been made easy by virtual software, most academics do not get the chance to experience in-person connections, class engagements, and productive mentoring relationships with students (Coates, 2010).

2.3.2 Market Demands and Expectations

The influence of the market on academics' experiences cannot be overemphasized (Sayers, 2013). This process, prominently referred to as Marketisation, views higher education as a global or international marketplace. Of course, training students to compete in the job market should be the goal of every institution. Still, recently these have replaced the genuine quest for knowledge creation and raw intellectual curiosity (Dill, Massy, Williams, & Cook, 1996). Academic institutions have focused on equipping disciplines that attract commercial interest, leaving some underfunded (Roberts, 1999). This has raised debates on the degree of academic freedom in recent times, leaving academics with no choice but to shift research focus to areas that meet the market demands (Sayers, 2013). Educational institutions have been propelled to adopt a cooperative model to raise the stakes on their global competitiveness, leaving academics no other choice but to align their teaching and research pathways to fit market expectations (Gill, 2011).

2.3.3 Disciplinary Fragmentations

Studies have shown that faculties and departments form impenetrable allegiance to their disciplines, which may undermine their institutions (Knight & Trowler, 2000; Gedera, 2014; Altbach & Lewis, 1996). This fragmentation creates an ingroup-outgroup experience

for most academics and has a detrimental effect on the university (Turner, & Reynolds, 2011; Mok, 2000). Academics may be compelled to prove that their discipline is more relevant, leading to a 'lack of consensus on what should be prioritized in curriculum development and funding opportunities (Dill, 2000; Gill, 2011). This fragmentation also leads to a considerable loss of congeniality amongst academics in institutional management (Rowland, 2002). Even within departments, studies have shown that conflicts may arise on which methodological research approach is superior or which should be respected (Fielden & Malcolm, 2005). A group of academics within a department could decide that their method of investigating phenomena is continually undermined by the departmental management, leading to internal dispute amongst research groups. This divides the institutions and departments and could ultimately make the working environment toxic to academics. Although healthy debates are still encouraged in most institutions, every structure's politicization has led academia to be polarizing than ever (Gill, 2011).

2.3.4 Balancing Research and Teaching

The growing demand for research output by institutions is so profound that it has become the standard criteria for promotions, tenure, and in some cases, hiring (Prince, Felder, & Brent, 2007). This emphasis on research is due to universities' motivation to increase their national and global prestige, attract sufficient funding, and attract the best media attention (Prince et al., 2007). The key focus on research output is astronomical that teaching quality now attracts less recognition in most universities. This has also affected the quality of research output, as academics are now more attentive to the research output quantity to boost their career development (Dill, 2000).

One of the deterrents to profound research focus is the reduced devotion to the academic development of students. This goes beyond insufficient dedication to teaching and reduced time spent in quality feedback and mentorship for students. Dill (2000) outlined that the teaching load and research expectations may effectively lead to low work-life balance (Wills, 2009). Academics experience significant burnout because of these factors, which could cause a lack of job satisfaction. Another area that could affect is curriculum development (Prince et al., 2007). When teaching responsibilities consistently conflict with the ease of conducting research, academics might reduce curriculum load, thus eliminating teaching blocks relevant to students' career development (Middleton, 2009).

2.3.5 Relationships and Institutional Collegiality

The institutional environment is also responsible for facilitating interactions among academics. To do this, they must develop what Bess (1992) called collegiality, which refers to preserving the structure and fostering goodwill amongst academics within the institution. Bode (1996) asserted that faculty collegiality could be best understood across five themes: reciprocity of interactions, the formality of interactions, sense of community, types of support, and level of involvement.

A study by Menges and associates (1999) discovered that academics who maintain constant off collegial work relationships with other scholars are likely to be more productive. They are also expected to produce more collaborative research contributions to the faculty. Adopting policies to improve collegiality in academic spaces led to more rewarding experiences and optimal performance among academics.

2.3.6 Engagement with Student Affairs

Institutions are in place to educate the next generation; therefore, student affairs are fundamental in shaping academics' experiences. A study by Kuh et al. (1999) reveals that academics must be consistently trained to address the expanding student population. Management of student affairs may seem to be focused on academic development, but institutions are now mandated to prepare academics to address students' social and emotional needs. Although these social and emotional needs are specifically connected to their academic welfare, academics struggle to manage these responsibilities. Students may develop reasons they cannot turn in an assessment, face difficulties comprehending course content, and have marital responsibilities. In institutions where teaching quality is measured by the degree of pass rate, academics experience the burden of figuring out a strategy that will be universally fair to the nature of students they teach.

A study by King (2012) reveals that an excellent way to create an environment for academics to thrive is to designate a group within the staff to handle students' affairs. Student affairs divisions exist in most institutions today as they are tasked with the psychological well-being of students. They also serve as a liaison between teaching academics and the students, strengthening the relationship between them. Even with this development, academics are still the closest to the students and continually track their performance.

Academics experience displeasure when students perform poorly, making them doubt their teaching quality (Sandeem & Barr, 2006). Thus, these academics are still vulnerable to the direct effect of student affairs.

2.3.7 Faculty Infrastructure and Academic Autonomy

The development of an academic is tied primarily to the institutional infrastructure. This infrastructure, which comprises the faculty and department, is responsible for giving academics a platform for creating and disseminating knowledge (Levin, 2012). A faculty's values are reflected in how it treats the academics working within it, determining the degree of job satisfaction experienced (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). A significant predictor of job satisfaction is also autonomy. Academics who have the freedom to develop their course and research content are likely to feel more appreciated (Bekale Nze & Ginestie, 2012).

A study by Finkelstein (2001) and by Billot (2006) explored the significance of role expectations (by institutions) on the experiences of academics. Billot (2006) reveals that new institutions have been flooded with enormous administrative and managerial tasks, leaving academics responsible for working more hours than their contractual agreement. Finkelstein, Seal, and Schuster (1998) posited that a considerable teaching load could cause dissatisfaction in academic duties.

Chung et al. (2010) revealed that primary autonomy is the most important factor for job satisfaction among academics. This qualitative study explored the perceptions of academics regarding institutional leadership. The study conceded that when academics are given the freedom to pioneer their research group or course content, they feel like they are a part of its organizational structure.

A study by Lieff et al. (2012) was qualitatively conducted to explore the impact of faculty environment on academics' lived experiences. A focus group conversation was analyzed with thematic analysis to identify the faculty's relational and contextual ways of academic expertise. Academics in this study conceded that, although the faculties laid out strategies to improve teaching, it was essential to give them the freedom to infuse their personal experiences in creating course content. Findings from the study also revealed that a strong sense of belonging is inspired by opportunities to collaborate and build friendships

amongst faculty members. This sense of belonging engenders an environment receptive to open dialogues and debates on trending academic issues.

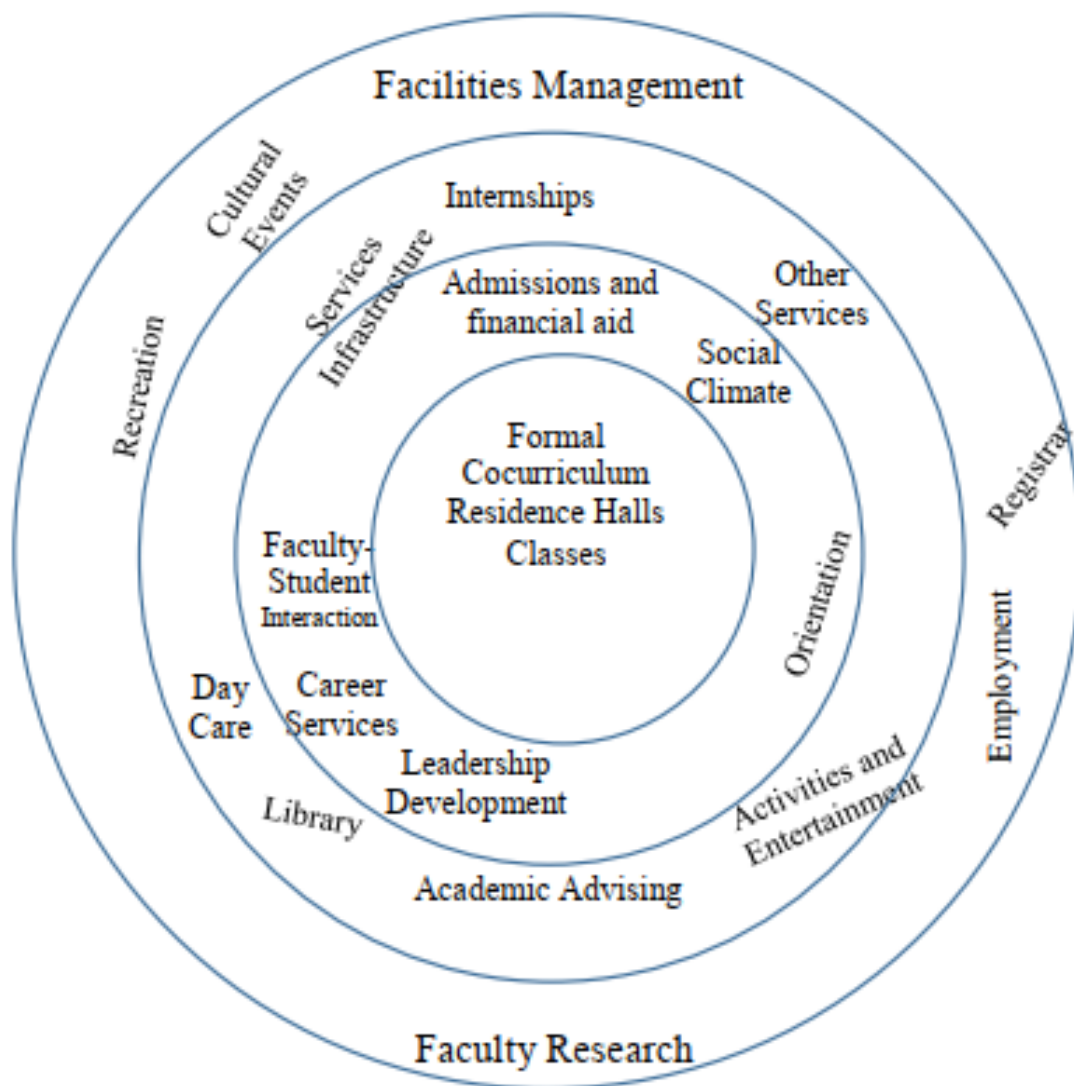


Figure 4: Showing Institutional Management Model (Kuh et al., 1994, p. 70-7)

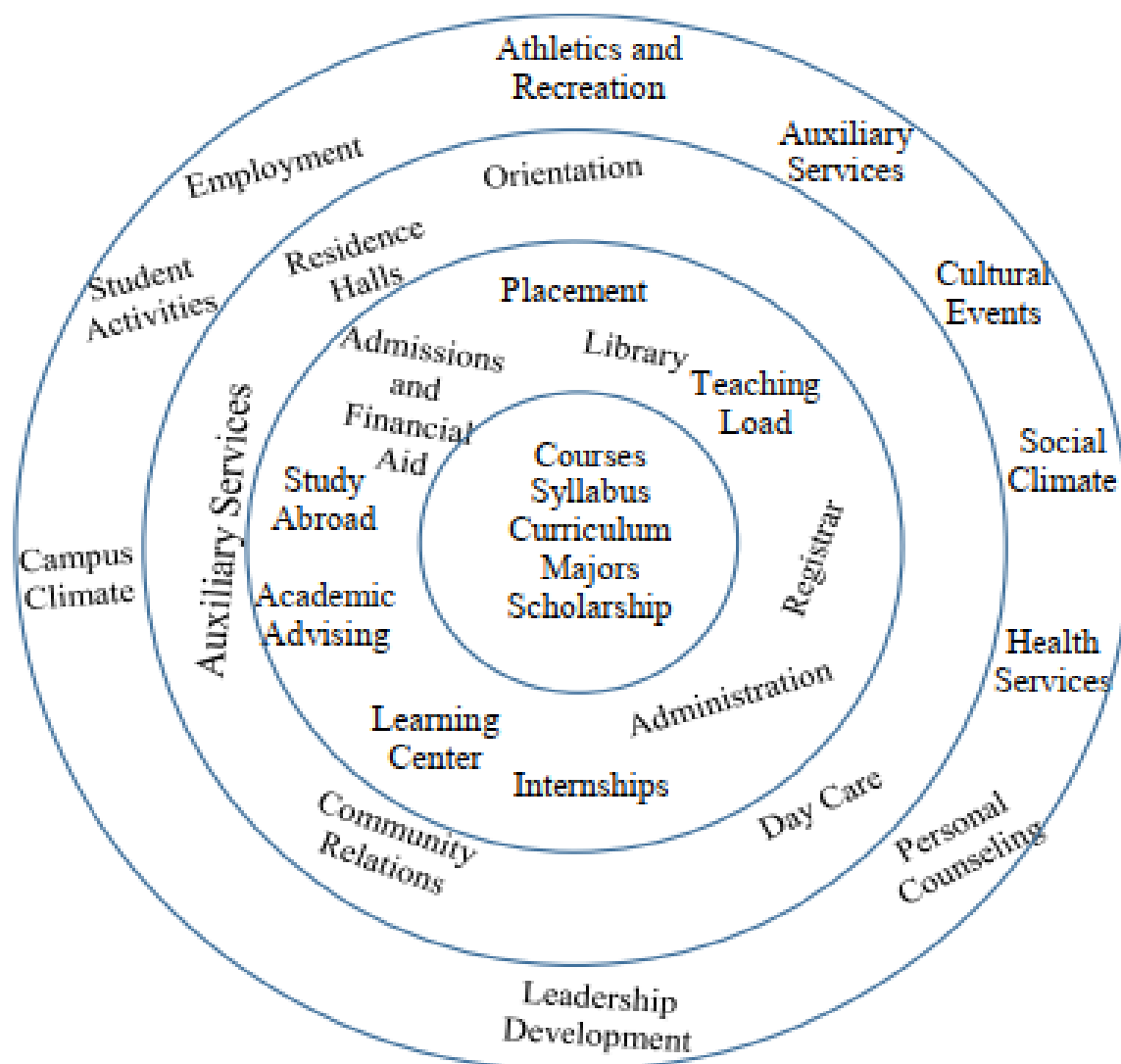


Figure 5: Showing Student management Model (Kuh et al., 1994, p. 70-7).

Figure 6 focuses on institutional structure and the support systems put in place by faculties to improve academics' experiences. At the highest levels are the faculty management and its research priorities, as these frame every other activity in the circle of influence. Figure 7 focuses on student management and accentuates academics' need to factor in curriculum and teaching (Kuh et al., 1994).

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.4.1 The Identity-Trajectory Framework

The Identity-Trajectory framework engages an academic's inclination to implement their personalized career objectives over time, even if it conflicts with evolving institutional or disciplinary expectations (McAlpine, Amundsen & JazvacMartek 2010). The way academia is experienced consequentially rests on how the individual perceives the professional spaces they operate. These schematic representations are developed through personal agency and individual identity. The sociological and psychological foundations of identity are based on the principle that; an individual's thoughts and feelings are prerequisites to goal-directed behaviors (Leary & Tangney 2012). Therefore, the Identity-Trajectory framework focuses on individuals and how they construct their identities as academics (McAlpine, Amundsen & JazvacMartek 2010). This is effectively done through their constant interaction within disciplinary groups and the social structures within their institution. This framework was designed by McAlpine, Amundsen, and JazvacMartek (2010) to examine the longitudinal narratives of emerging academics (McAlpine, Amundsen & Turner 2013).

As revealed by McAlpine, Amundsen & JazvacMartek (2010).

“Identity-trajectory emphasizes the desire to enact personal intentions and hopes over time, to maintain momentum in constructing identity despite challenges and detours; and to imagine possible futures” (p. 139)

The framework is encapsulated in 4 principal constructs, which include:

2.4.1.1 *The Agency*: This construct explains the drive for academics to be proactive and intentional in their quest to mitigate constraints that affect research and teaching (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2009). This requires volition and dedication to meet personalized specified academic targets even in the event of unexpected. These targets may not necessarily align with institutional or disciplinary expectations but are essential to the individual (McAlpine & Turner, 2011).

2.4.1.3 *The Personal:* This construct explains how academics seem to embed their academic careers into their personal lives. It further elucidates how academics use their jobs as a tool for advocacy and transformative action in society (McAlpine & Asghar, 2010). Under this construct, academics become a complete embodiment of their research, making it difficult to separate their personal lives from work.

2.4.1.4 *The Past:* This construct explains how academics project their previous personal experiences to their research and teaching targets. These experiences could be during their time as academic staff or their education (Coulter & Smith, 2009). Comprehending the past of a visionary can help give an insight into the degree of agency they may possess when navigating through challenges. (McAlpine & Lucas, 2011).

2.4.1.5 *Opportunity Structures:* This construct explains how the number of available opportunities helps shape an academic career (Jazvac-Martek, Chen & McAlpine, 2011). These opportunities include research funding, workshops, conferences, and teaching grants. For an emerging academic, this is the most significant construct in shaping their career trajectory.

The linking of these constructs helps to understand the individual differences in how careers are developed in each academic. According to Brew and Lucas (2009);

“Considerable differences exist in the ways people respond to and work within their context. The meanings they attach to research depend on their responses to these contexts. Their responses also depend on the meanings these contexts make possible. (Brew & Lucas 2009; p. 9).

2.4.1.6 *Strands of Academic Identity* A study by McAlpine and Amundsen (2011) reveals that academic identity is developed through three independent yet interwoven strands. These include institutional, networking, and intellectual. With time, these strands intercept asynchronously to help academics grow in their disciplines, institutions, and the global community.

These strands' independent development starts from academics' past experiences, even before beginning their careers. It further evolves into helping explain their drives the motivation of this study and further cast a light on the trajectory of their ambitions in academia. The diagrammatic representation can be found in figure 3 below

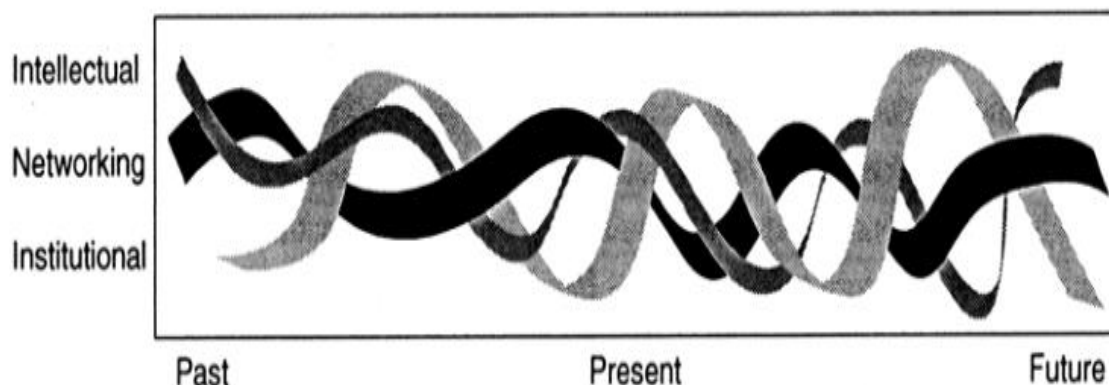


Figure 6: The asynchronous intersection of the strands of academic identity (McAlpine & Amundsen 2011, p.178)

The Networking Strand: This strand represents the relationships of academic leverage that individuals rely on to fulfill their responsibilities. These historical and contemporary networks are built on active interaction with fellow academics within their influence (Hardre, Beesley, Miller, & Pace, 2011). Emerging academics grow when they actively engage with senior academics and draw from their experiences and resource (McAlpine, Amundsen & Turner 2013b). Academics who also engage in teaching get the tremendous opportunity to learn from the unique and novel ideas that emerge from students.

The networking scope transcends the institutions they work in and includes a supportive international community (McAlpine, & Lucas, 2011). This strand comprises two principal elements: the “The Intertextual” and “The Interpersonal”. The intertextual is inclusive of a broader community of academics who participate in relevant conversations within the discipline. According to McAlpine and Amundsen (2011), the networking strand involves.

“...local, national, and international networks one has been and is connected to, and ... includes (a) research and publication collaborations with others; (b) cross-institutional course/curriculum design; (c) work with professionals ... and (d) membership of disciplinary organizations...and on journal boards” (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2011; page, 179).

Interpersonal interaction is in-person conversations with fellow academics that are in closer proximity. These interactions occur more frequently and directly impact an academic's day-to-day activities as the interpersonal context's effects are best described by Fensham (2004).

“A joy of research for some comes from the opportunity it offers for establishing collegial contacts with other researchers. Often these contacts influence the directions and manner of one’s future research, as well as providing rich personal friendships that extend in the future” (Fensham, 2004, p. 44)

The Emerging Research Program and the New Academics Practitioner Program at UCT are examples of beneficial structures for emerging academics to connect or share experiences. The importance of networks in an academic career cannot be overemphasized as it facilitates the generation of ideas that optimize research and teaching quality.

ii. *The Intellectual Strand:* This strand strictly signifies academics' conceptual, theoretical, and practical contributions to their discipline. Some of this contribution is expressed in peer-reviewed journals, books, and participation in academic conferences (McAlpine, 2012a). This strand also represents the contribution academics make to curriculum development and teaching practices that improve student comprehension of course content (Fensham, 2004; Hounsell, 2011). Academics improve by making their contributions and writing public. This intertwines with the intertextual networking strand, as other scholars provide feedback on the impact of these contributions (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2009; McAlpine & Turner, 2011).

This strand ensures that academics get recognition for their work. It is the most critical metric for promotion into senior academic positions in most institutions. For an emerging academic, the most difficult challenge is identifying their long-term research focus and the tensions around the required time to concentrate on writing demands (McAlpine, & Turner, 2011). Academics are faced with the expectations of publishing in journals that may require an advanced approach to writing. This further emphasized the importance of networking and collaborations, as they learn from established academics' wealth of experience.

iii. *The Institutional Strand:* This strand represents a systemic interaction with academic institutions. It is the impact the university makes in the life of academics. An institution is a center for most academic activities (McAlpine 2012c). It is responsible for setting structural targets and ensuring that the academics employed are willing to align their careers to these targets. It serves as a mediator for interpersonal networking and provides infrastructural platforms for academics to showcase their contributions (McAlpine, Amundsen & Turner 2013b). The development of the institutional strand for emerging academics is critical to their successful navigation of the university's political systems (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom 2005). The university governance is responsible for laying out policies that could significantly impact most academics (McAlpine and Turner, 2012). This strand exists in three layers, which include the university, faculty, and departments. Each of these three environments may differ in how they are run, leaving academics responsible for categorizing their roles in all three. Wood (1990) revealed that the most important of these three layers is the department, representing the intimate microstructure for academic growth. Wood (1990) concedes.

“Departmental support was ... an important factor in predicting efficacy, which further underscores the implication that faculty members need to see their departments and institutions as supportive of their efforts and development of research skills and tools”. (Wood, 1990; p. 60).

As academics form research, writing, and teaching groups, institutions provide infrastructure and resources for smooth running. They facilitate several events that keep alumni or interest groups invested in the universities. They further provide training and workshops that educate academics on how to invest resources to meet institutional targets.

2.4.2 Intersectionality Theory

As earlier highlighted, academia is a function of the individual, the discipline, and the institution. Since the individual is a critical part of this interaction, social identity will play a crucial role in experiencing academic spaces (Turner & Reynolds, 2011). Intersectionality theory helped highlight the role of oppression, oppressive contexts, and power in academics' experiences. This is because the certainty of stereotypes and prejudices about different identities may deter academics' sense of belonging. Conversations of this nature led to the

contribution of Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989, 1991), a UCLA School of Law and Columbia Law School scholar, who recognized that identities could not be explored independently, but as a convergence of multiple social identities substructures. She observed that an intersection between race and gender attributes has a more social and political effect than evaluating them independently (Jaramillo, 2010).

Crenshaw (1989) helped shed light on the systemic discrimination felt by a black African American woman dissimilar to a white woman, even if they share a similar gender identity. As academics enter the system, it is imperative to recognize that their demographic identities contribute to their lived experiences and affect their fit. A research publication that a black male writes may get more credit than a black female, which may be detrimental to her professional identity construction (Albarello & Rubini, 2012). A metaphorical description of intersectionality theory by Crenshaw (1989) reads;

“Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens at an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149).

According to Tefera, Powers, & Fischman (2018);

“An intersectional approach is fundamentally oriented toward analyzing the relationships of power and inequality within a social setting and how these shape individual and group identities. That is, our identities are shaped by our experiences in social groups and how we, as members of those groups, encounter institutionalized social structures” (p. viii).

As a theory, intersectionality was perceived to interrogate institutional policies created in the “cloak of diversity” but maybe invisible to women of color (Crenshaw, 1991). As the theory's acceptance grew, it is now understood to provide a framework for intersecting social identities in groups (Carastathis, 2016). It further helps identify structural inequalities in institutions by evaluating their power relations (Salem, 2016).

2.4.2.1 Intersectionality and Women in Academia. Feminist academics have been concerned about academic barriers facing women (Dixon, 2013; Wright, 2014). Their goal is to guarantee that institutional norms do not marginalize women in academia but encourage active participation (Parsons & Priola, 2013; Barg, 2009). In this context, marginalization means an educational system that does not provide sufficient opportunities for women to grow and policies that devalue women's intellectual contributions (Moss & Richter, 2011). Feminist academics have argued that challenging gendered norms does not mean a deviation of objective principles. They believe that female academics must work harder to prove their competence due to the skewed nature of performance evaluation systems (Jenkins, 2014; Coates, Dodds, Jensen, 1998). This system further reduces women's overall representation in academia or senior-level positions (Mauthner & Edwards, 2010; Syed & Murray, 2009).

In South African institutions, the gender differences in academics showed that male academics slightly outnumber females. Although the report by CHE (2015), which showed the trend between 2011-2015 (as seen in figure 4 below), shows improvement in this area, scholars have argued that more equity initiatives should be enforced to encourage the participation of women in academia (Luvalo, 2019; Randall, 2006)

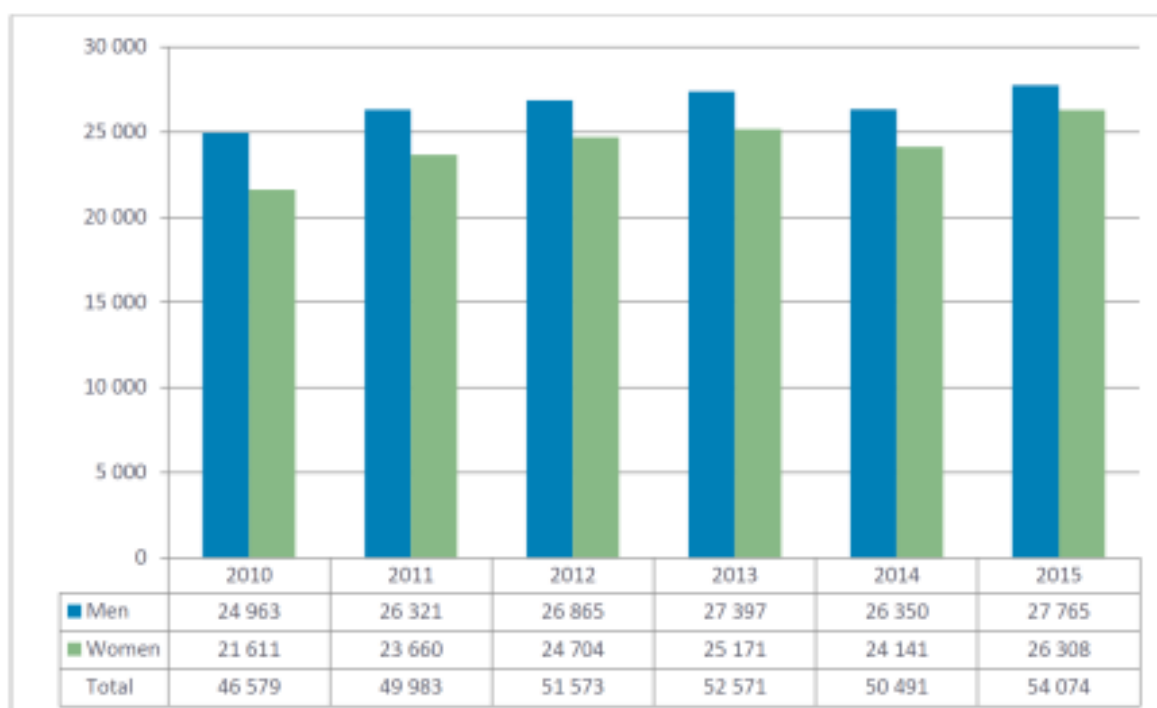


Figure 7: Showing the representation by gender of academics in South Africa (CHE, 2015).

Intersectionality theory highlights women's struggles in academia and recognizes that this is not a representation of group conformity. A group may have subgroups that could tilt power dynamics, reinforcing marginalized groups (Warner, 2008). It sheds light on the fact that students of color may face multiple discrimination sources due to their race and gender (Davis, 2008; Hancock, 2007).

Studies have shown that institutional norms and practices have been a deterrent to women of color's career development in academia (Fotaki, 2013; Morley, 2011). Research by Acker (2008) reveals that the lack of complete transformation in promotional practices may account for women occupying junior-level positions in academia. This is also impacted by work-life balance, skepticism in career decisions, sexism, and discrimination in the workplace (Morley, 2014; Benschop & Brouns, 2003).

Some have argued that these issues impact academia's participation and prevent academia from occupying senior administrative positions in the university governance structure (Seierstad & Healy, 2012; Deem, 2003). Other scholars have attributed this to a socialization issue, where notions in society may influence women's perception of specific disciplines, thus preventing them from taking a career in academia (Marchant & Wallace, 2013; Syed & Murray, 2009).

Although intersectionality theory has been criticized for its narrow focus on identity, its widespread recognition in the academic community underlies its significance by shedding light on marginalized groups' experiences to expedite more effective ways to implement institutional policies on equity.

2.4.2.2 Intersectionality on the Experiences of Academics The intersection of multiple identities or experiential background is the lens through which studies have analyzed the various forms of oppression experienced by certain groups (particularly blacks, women, and people with disabilities) within academia. As highlighted by Kwhali (2017), the experiences of academics differ, and these differences are contingent on the complex “issues of identity, belonging, racism and cultural assimilation have consistently featured” (p.5).

Her study further reveals black female academics' experiences who concede that their success is not determined by individual merits but by oppressive structural systems of people with unique backgrounds, sexuality, sexual orientation, and race. Gatekeepers promulgate

these barriers to the trajectory of their careers in publishing journals and recruitment panels (Kwhali, 2017).

When academics do not feel safe or a sense of belonging, it hinders productivity and stifles the sense of belonging academics feel within these spaces (Tate, 2017). This study recognizes intersectionality as significant in impacting how academics perceive themselves and their professional areas.

2.5 THE PRESENT STUDY

2.5.1 Improving Academic Staff Development in South Africa

The South African historical political climate has severely impacted academia's way of academics in the country. Despite measures to support students' admission into historically white universities, academics have faced severe challenges in ensuring that those admitted fully benefit from the teaching context (Lostsekha, 2013). One of the most significant challenges faced is with the language. Academics have had to develop training content that will help students who struggle with English academic writing intensity. Furthermore, teaching intervention must address border areas like effective learning habits and independent study skills. The implementation of The Educational Skills Programme in South Africa was a significant milestone in training academics to deal with these challenges. But this has not taken away the enormous administrative burden of academics (specifically in historically white universities at UCT) and has made their teaching experience distinct (Quinn, 2006). Academics are aware that students who attended less elite schools do have ideas but may require further support in expressing them.

Academic experiences in South Africa are also unique due to prioritizing a transformative agenda in most institutions. Academics are tasked with ensuring that their educational style and content promote equal opportunities for all students. For this to happen, academics must participate in developmental training that informs transformative teaching practices (Morrow, 1994). Universities have introduced committees across all faculties to ensure that their transformation agenda also adapts disciplinary specificity. Academics are selected, nominated, or sometimes elected to participate in these committees, further increasing their scope of responsibility (Fataar, 2003). Meeting the challenge of

transformation in teaching is exhaustive, but Mbali (2003) highlights the need for established developmental programs for academics in order to meet these challenges. It reads.

“If we are serious about trying to improve the quality of teaching especially to respond to all imperatives of government policy to open up higher education to a greater percentage of the population and hitherto disadvantaged and to grow the economy, then staff development strategies need to be carefully planned and resourced” (Mbali, 2003: Page 98).

It is important to note that academics do not agree on the procedure by which transformation should occur. The responses have been diverse and divided across ideological lines. Academics with liberal or progressive thinking ideologies have pledged their full support for open access to tertiary education, which is highly democratized. They have argued that access should be at the forefront of every plan or policy initiative to be implemented. Academics with conservative ideological leanings have argued the contrary. They believe that the full democratization of education and the opening of access will be detrimental to its quality (Fataar 2012). Although they support transformation, they believe that quality should be prioritized in admission over equity. This is not to say that both do not support quality education or equity, but there is disagreement on where the transformation agenda should place them and the tradeoffs' effect. Ideologically progressive academics have consistently pushed for changes in the content and approach to curriculum development. Conservative-leaning academics believe that students should be fully responsible for comprehending the curriculum's high standards; thus, students who struggle to cope should not be admitted into the universities (Ramsden 2003).

The “Educational Development Program, established in 1993, was a foundational step in the development of academics (Amos & Quinn, 1997). As part of the response to ensuring that academics meet up with a more diverse student generation, national organizations were set up to support academic development. Three of the most prominent ones are the “National Qualification Framework (NQF),” “The Council for Higher Education (CHE),” and the “South African Qualification Authority (SAQA).” As academics seek to meet the challenge of equal opportunities in the country, their experiences are further shaped by the massification of tertiary education and students' diversity. Some of the challenges faced include;

2.5.1.1 Policy Coordination: Volbrecht (2003) reveals that several academics have raised concerns over developmental policies' coordination. Although the aims and objectives of academic development policies are beneficial, the implementation strategies have been highly fragmented.

2.5.1.2 The mischaracterization of Policy Targets: A study by Gosling (2008) reveals that initiatives targeted at the educational development of academics are often misunderstood as policies to help disadvantaged students. This has led academics to develop a lackluster attitude towards these initiatives, leading to marginalized academic development centers (D'Andrea et al., 2002). While educational development programs ultimately impact students, academics need to understand that they are primarily set up to help them directly.

2.5.1.3 Academic Attitudes towards Teaching: A study by Gosling (2009) reveals that several academics valued their research output over teaching quality, which has led to a somewhat negative attitude towards these initiatives. This is because active participation in teaching does not result in concrete career milestones. Most promotional criteria, awards, and funding criteria rests primarily on research; thus, these policy initiatives do not motivate academics (Kifoil, 2012).

2.5.1.4 Higher Level Staff Involvement: Most national teaching initiatives do not gather sufficient attention from senior-level staff management. They are left for emerging academics and junior staff, which eventually undermines these initiatives (Quinn, 2006).

2.5.1.5 Institutional Constraints: Academics may face a heavy administrative workload or other commitments from their institutions, which they eventually prioritize over national developmental initiatives (Kifoil, 2012; Scott, 1998).

Other initiatives launched for academics seek to facilitate the professionalization of teaching and lecturing in higher institutions. Some of these include the “Higher Education Staff Development Initiative” and the “Higher Education Staff Development Initiative.” These initiatives have further helped to ameliorate the learning experience (CHE, 2004).

Understanding how academics perceive these developmental initiatives and their recommendations for improving them is instrumental in dealing with the challenges outlined above. It is paramount to qualitatively inquire from emerging academics at UCT on their experiences with structures to support them. Two of which are the Emerging Researchers Program and the Academics Practitioner Program. This will culminate in a much broader understanding of how to improve these systems.

2.5.2 Epistemological Impact in South Africa

Academics are also faced with the need to balance research and teaching requirements. Studies have shown that academics are saddled with creating a healthy balance in research focus, quality of education, and keeping in touch with technological innovations that impact academia (Pick, Symons & Teo, 2015; Clarke, 2006). Human or intellectual resource is the most significant source of competitive advantage for any institution; thus, if an emerging academic needs are not met, it could affect their standard of performance and, consequently, undermine the institution's quality of teaching and research (Hyde & Drennan, 2013). Few studies have explored how emerging academics navigate these complexities in their quest to balance work-related responsibilities. (Smith, Deepwell, & Shrives, 2013; Ferrante, 2015). This is a gap; this study also seeks to bridge by qualitatively exploring their strategies to fulfill their role expectations.

The Soudien Report (2008) stipulates that policy and compliance, epistemological change, and institutional culture are the most significant aspects of academia's transformation in South Africa. In most cases, institutional standards are constructed in western contexts, creating a need to challenge western definitions to ensure that a diversity of contextual backgrounds is considered. Therefore, transformation in South Africa may require the indigenization of research knowledge and teaching strategies for professional development (Reddy, 2004). It may require that academic research reflect African philosophies and educational models that reflect the students' context. (Du Preez, Simmonds & Verhoef, 2016). This further strengthens the rationale for this study. This is because competence is relative among emerging academics, significantly when moderated by context, continually changing political climates, technological advancements, and individual preferences (personality, mental processes, experiential backgrounds). Extensive interviews and conversations with emerging academics will help address this issue by giving insights into

their unique African stories and the narratives that shape institutional performance standards. It will bring to the fore their suggestions on transformative strategies that are context-specific and woven in a diversity of indigenous thought.

2.5.3 Research Questions

Core research Question: **What are the institutional and performative experiences of emerging academics at UCT?**

Based on the core research question, the following will also be answered in this study.

1. What does it mean to be an emerging academic?
2. How is the institutional culture of UCT experienced by emerging academics?
3. What factors impact the performance of emerging academics at UCT?
4. How do social identities (class, race, gender) shape how emerging academics experience UCT?

2.5.4 Expected Outcomes of Study

This study is expected to make three significant contributions.

1. Understand what it means to be an emerging academic. This was done by asking the academics to give insights into their dynamic interaction experience between the educational, institution, and discipline.
2. Generate detailed insight into how UCT is experienced. This was done by asking about the culture, academic freedoms, interaction with colleagues, role expectations, and performance indicators.
3. Understand how social, demographic, or sexual identities (class, race, gender disability) influence their experience in UCT and impact their professional development as emerging academics.

There is an expectation that novel themes will emerge from the experiences of participants interviewed. On a superordinate level, it is expected that participants affirm institutional culture and disciplines plays a significant role in how academic is experienced (Luvalo, 2019). Furthermore, the intersection of an intellectual's demographic or experiential

background should also play a role in how they fit within the academic space. Participants are also expected to challenge traditional notions of what is expected from an academic and finally give valuable accounts on developing personal standards of professional behavior.

3 CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

3.1 OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

This chapter contains a detailed elucidation of the research methodology and design employed in the current study. It lays out the rationale for choosing the qualitative research design methodology and demonstrates why it fits this study. The chapter also explains the relevance of the symbolic interactionist framework in understanding academia as a community, giving further insight into how interviews can be understood. The sampling strategy, recruiting participants' process, and participants' demographic information are outlined in this chapter. In addition to these, a step-by-step detail of how thematic analysis was applied is documented. This chapter finally concludes with an overview of practical ethical considerations and the principal researcher's reflectivity.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND SETTING

The current study adopted a qualitative research design for the systematic exploration of the perceptions and experiences of participants. This qualitative design has its philosophical roots in interpretive epistemology, which assumes that knowledge and meaning are constructed based on experiences' depth (Patton, 1990). For this study's purpose, this approach helped investigate how academia is experienced and provided empirical insight into what drives emerging academics' meaning-making processes.

Essentially, a qualitative research approach places the utmost priority on subjective interpretations of the world. In this sense, everything that exists is socially constructed- an assumption that ultimately affects making meaning (Crotty, 2007). Researchers Borrego, Douglas, and Amelink (2009) described qualitative research as one which;

“...focuses on smaller groups in order to examine a particular context in great detail ... [and] seeks to generalize through thick description of a specific context, allowing the reader to make connections between the study and his or her own situation (p. 57).

Qualitative research's interpretive nature posits that reality is measured by subjective interpretations that undergo constant modifications solely dependent on a given observer's experiences. It considers the context in which individual experiences occur and provides a deeper understanding of the participants' role in facilitating them. This is why it is often used

in qualitative research, where little information is known about the phenomenon of interest (Snape & Spencer, 2003).

The research took place at the University of Cape Town (UCT), the current oldest serving university in South Africa (formerly called South African College). The institution was founded in 1829 and was renamed UCT in 1918 (Times Higher Education, 2017). UCT is categorically divided into the different campuses geographically distributed along the slopes of Devil's Peak, with most of its buildings donated by Cecil John Rhodes. The campuses include Graduate School of Business (GSB), Medical School Lower, Middle, Upper, and Hiddingh. With six faculties, 5000 employed staff, and 27000 local and international students, UCT is renowned for its progressive transformation policies.

3.3 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST

The symbolic interactionist framework focuses on the nature of societal or communal relationships. The interconnection generally characterizes collaborative relationships among people who share similar beliefs, values, goals, or standards (Serpe & Stryker, 2011). Here, an individual is perceived as an active member of the communal structure who plays a vital role in the community's social construction (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003). This framework emerged from the pioneering efforts of George Herbert Mead (1863–1931). The term “Symbolic Interactionism” was crafted by his student, Herbert Blumer. The underlying premise of this framework states that humans continuously feel the need to assign meaning to things. Otherwise known as symbolism, this meaning-making process evolves from frequent communal interaction (Brown, 2014). As these interactions occur, the actors are made interpretations, leading to the community's unfolding of a shared language.

Researchers often utilize the current framework to find patterns of interaction between community members through meticulous observation and qualitative inquiry. Observing the exchange mode between academics gives insights into the symbols recognized by the disciplinary circle and the institutions. This is often called “academic language.” The symbolic interactionist framework is relevant for exploring academia as a community and comprehending the process by which academics actively communicate within institutional or disciplinary structures (Jackson & Hogg, 2010). This framework fits this study because it evaluates the principles that underlie how academics make meaning or define academia. It

also explains how sense emerges during their interaction with colleagues in the same discipline and institution (Carter & Fuller, 2015).

A symbolic interactionist framework is a valuable tool in annotating how academics develop academia as a community (Farmer & Van Dyne, 2010). Structural symbolic interactionism sheds light on how shared meaning within the academic community is created through continuous interaction (Burke & Stets, 2009).

This framework gives insight into roles within communal structures. The academic community comprises functions that provide specificity to the career projections of each academic. Some academics focus on research, some on teaching, while others engage in both research and education. While their experience will differ from one academic to another, these experiences cumulatively help define relations and create a reciprocal network of influence (Carter & Fuller, 2015). As communication norms continue to be established in academia, it is essential to note that these norms could vary across disciplines and institutions.

Academics from narratives contingent on their experiences within the space they navigate. Inclusivity in this framework is based on the level of comprehension they have for the conventional interaction (Cote & Levine, 2015). This forms the initial challenge faced by emerging academics coming into the system. A comprehension of these norms is facilitated by interaction with people already established within the academic community. However, this is not a passive process; emerging academics are required to actively participate in making meaning and using their background to influence the educational spaces in which they work (Brown, 2014; Leung, Zietsma, & Peredo, 2014).

3.4 SAMPLING STRATEGY

Participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling strategies. A total of 20 emerging academics who were research and teaching staff in the first five years of their careers at UCT were selected and interviewed for the study. The sample size of 20 participants was an adequate number for qualitative research of this nature. Too few participants could have diminished the depth of information in the data collection process.

The purposive sampling strategy was first used in the identification of academics. This sampling strategy is most suitable for qualitative studies that aim to assess a specific

subset of people who fit a unique profile (Trotter, 2012) like the current study. **The snowball sampling strategy** was used to seek recommendations from those who responded to the invitation letter. They were asked to recommend other academics to fit the study criteria and be interested in it.

The Recruitment Process: An invitation letter/information sheet explaining what the study entailed was composed and sent to participants who fit the profile of emerging academics at UCT. This letter can be found in Appendix A. This study's two supervisors recommended the first two of the participants, and invitations were dispersed accordingly. After looking through the debriefing form (found in Appendix D), the participants recommended the Emerging Researchers Program (ERP) at the Research Office as the best place to find participants who would be interested in participating in the study. The ERP recommended a diverse group of academics across all faculties who showed keen interest in the study. These academics were sent invitations, and 24 responded favorably. Interviews were conducted with all 24 academics who demonstrated interest. Of 24, 4 of the interviews were screened out due to the lack of interview clarity. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, all participants were assigned Pseudonyms.

Of the 20 participants, 5 were male, and 15 were female. Furthermore, 5 of the participants were black, 3 were Indian, 5 were colored, and 7 were white. Other details can be found in table 1 below.

Table 1: List of Participants with their number of years at UCT

| Participant Number | Pseudonym | Years at UCT |
|---------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Ray | 3 |
| 2 | Sue | 4 |
| 3 | Leo | 3 |
| 4 | Zoe | 5 |
| 5 | Kim | 0.5 |
| 6 | Eva | 2 |
| 7 | Jay | 0.5 |
| 8 | Ann | 2 |
| 9 | Lia | 0.5 |
| 10 | Kya | 0.5 |
| 11 | Ida | 5 |
| 12 | Meg | 5 |
| 13 | Ala | 5 |
| 14 | Joy | 4 |
| 15 | Amy | 3 |
| 16 | Val | 0.5 |
| 17 | Tom | 3 |
| 18 | Ivy | 5 |
| 19 | Liz | 2 |
| 20 | Dan | 2 |

3.5 THE INTERVIEW

The qualitative interview process was targeted at exploring how participants engaged and comprehended their experiences. The process involves reflecting on the personal agency and frames by which participants construct meaning (Clegg & Stevenson, 2013). According to Taylor (2008),

“When informants share their sense of who they are and what their current experiences mean to them, they do so in ways that are collaborative acts of identity formation, involving both the researcher(s) and the respondent(s).” (p. 30).

The interview process employed helped give a deeper appreciation of how the intersectionality of multiple social identities shapes academia's schematic representation (Flick, 2009). The interview process in this study aimed to evaluate how participant academics responded to situations they have encountered in their academic journey. The interpretative process scrutinized emerging academics' perspectives and affective experiences towards the institutional and disciplinary expectations placed before them. Some participants asserted that the questions asked enabled them to develop deeper insights into areas they never paid close attention to. This interpretive process is further utilized in interrogating belief systems that impact academics' daily practices (Fensham, 2004). In concordance with this, McLean and Pasupathi (2012) asserted that interviews' narrative process is pivotal to consolidating academics' identity.

This approach was adopted to give a clearer insight into each academic interviewed's realities and capture the contexts in which academia is experienced virtually. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2017), an interview is a conversation

“initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information and focused on content-specific research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation” (p. 309)

The interviews took a semi-structured approach and lasted for a maximum of 60 minutes. Before starting the discussion, participants must fill out and sign an informed consent form stating the confidentiality agreement (see Appendix B). It adopted the style of a friendly conversation. The principal researcher also used an interview guide to outline the few areas of exploration and direct the participants around them (Collingridge & Gantt, 2008). Follow-up questions were asked based on participants' responses, and digressions

were allowed to contribute to the identified thematic trajectories stated above. After the recorded interview, transcription of interview data took place immediately in readiness for the data analysis process. Due to the developments around COVID-19, interviews were conducted and audio recorded with Microsoft Teams.

3.6 TRANSCRIPTION

The primary source of data was the interview transcripts. The transcript was generated by listening closely to the interviews and writing in verbatim all recorded words. The researcher double-checked the transcript's accuracy by listening to the recordings and simultaneously checking the text for errors. Transcripts were coded manually, and the themes were generated after the coding process. The researcher ensured that the themes developed were restricted to the narratives generated during the interviews and not influenced by or generated from his personal experiences.

The process of transcribing interview data involved the initial step of converting the recorded interview into text. Due to the time constraints and the enormity of data collected, a transcriber was employed to assist the primary researcher in getting the talks ready for analysis. The transcriber was chosen through an ethically rigorous process and was required to sign a consent form indicating a complete understanding of research ethics and confidentiality of the interview content. The transcriber was also sent a copy of the study proposal and was briefed extensively to ensure the study terms and objectives. The transcript contained the participants' pauses, salient expressions, and every word uttered to reflect the participant's thoughtfully.

The transcript was checked against the principal researcher's recorded interviews to guarantee accuracy and ensure that all errors were eliminated. This process also helped prepare the transcription for the initial stages of the data analysis process and highlight the critical statements from the findings' crux. The cross-checking process also helped the principal researcher get familiar with the data and identify significant themes that could bridge the existing literature gaps.

3.7 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The process of thematic analysis involves the careful identification of themes and patterns within the interview transcript. Thematic analysis was used in this study to explore

the unique experiences of academics and the practices in which they allotted meaning to these events (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This tool's idiographic approach enabled the researcher to prioritize each academic context, consequently creating novel themes (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Thematic analysis is flexible and is not limited to a specific epistemological perspective. This flexibility justifies its suitability for a diverse area of teaching, research, and learning. The process of analyzing interviews is regarded as intersubjective, considering that the researcher's interpretations significantly impact how findings are presented.

As indicated in the preceding paragraph, the ultimate goal of the inculcation of thematic analysis in this study was to identify themes beyond the mere summary of derived interview data. It helped gain an in-depth analysis of the academic's nature, scope, and interpretation (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). Besides, thematic analysis facilitated the coherent organization of themes, giving further insight into the data's categorical imperatives to the research contribution.

The thematic analysis process for this study was performed in six steps, as Braun and Clarke (2006) stipulated. They include;

1. Familiarization with the interview transcript of all 20 participants
2. Generation of codes for significant areas of the interviews
3. Search and identification of themes
4. Review of identified themes
5. Definition of identified themes for final review
6. Narrative summary of the relevance of finalized themes

This analysis's final goal was to answer the research questions of interest and review their contribution to the discipline. The analysis was done on the themes to examine the underlying assumptions and conceptualizations that may have led to the participants' responses. The thematic analysis process equally facilitated the systematic interpretation of areas of exploration in this research. It provided precise descriptions for such a cumbersome data set, giving a narrative summary of the findings' most significant aspect.

The following paragraphs provide a detailed description of the previously highlighted steps of the thematic analysis process as carried out in this study;

3.7.1 Familiarization of Interview Transcripts:

This step was carried out during the validation of the transcripts. The principal researcher separated the transcripts according to the significant areas of exploration. In this study, six important regions were explored, personal definition of an academic, perception of the institutional culture at UCT, perception of performance evaluation metrics, the impact of backgrounds or orientation on educational experiences, experiences of institutional support systems, and performance enhancers and barriers. These six areas were rearranged into segments to help the researcher understand the participants' contributions to each of these areas. Participants gave a wide range of responses and were observed to deviate from one area of focus to another on certain occasions. This process of segmentation helped the researcher regroup such answers accordingly. To illustrate, when asked to address their experience of performance barriers, some participants indicated the institutional culture at UCT. Thus, this stage of the analysis allowed the researcher to regroup the institutional culture's response to its already defined segment. These defined sections or areas of exploration were referred to as superordinate themes (higher-level themes).

3.7.2 Generation of Codes:

The process of generating codes involves highlighting sections of text within the transcripts and assigning labels to them. An identified brand, as used here, is one that sufficiently describes a highlighted area. These labels subsequently become codes that are used for the generation of significant themes throughout the transcripts. An example is presented in Table 3 below to demonstrate how codes were generated for the study's 20 participants.

Table 2: Example of the Process employed in Generating Codes Using Thematic Analysis

| Interview extract | Codes |
|---|---|
| <p>I think my background is a strength... It's a strength in the sense that I come into the classroom, and I'm not just relatable, but I can relate in the sense that I am not just a symbol for transformation... But I am the transformation that my students have been waiting for</p> | <p>Background as a source of strength</p> <p>Transformative Presence in Classroom</p> |
| <p>I go into the class, and I find students who come from the same place, and when they see me occupying that platform, they are inspired and not just because I look like them... but I'm pretty darn good at what I do. So, I feel like that is a strong opportunity for me; it is not a weakness at all... I feel like it's a strength, and I'm representing my community within the space</p> | <p>Relatability and Inspiration to Students</p> <p>Community Representation</p> |

The codes highlighted are represented by the different colors, as seen in the table above. These codes also represent the thoughts and feelings expressed by the participants.

3.7.3 Identification of Themes:

The entire transcript was meticulously combed to find patterns of similar or independent codes. This was done by looking through already defined segments or superordinate themes to find commonalities that bring the overall data to a coherent summary. These themes typically have a much broader scope than codes. In other words, the generated themes are a combination of similar codes or the specification of multiple codes expressing similar meanings. An example of this process can be found in Table 4 below.

Table 3: Thematic Generation and Identification Process

| Superordinate Theme | Generated Codes or Sub-Themes | Participants Contributing to Theme | Generated Themes |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Feedback on the Current System | Receptive Environment | Lia, Ida, Ivy | Strong Sense of Community |
| | Collegiate Support | Kim, Eva | |
| | Ease of Access to Support | Kya, Joy | |
| | Effective Training Structure | Eva, Tom, Ivy | Dedication to Academic Development |
| | Improved Academic Initiatives | Ala, Amy, Ivy, Dan | |
| Fair Funding Opportunities | Ala | | |
| Improving the Current System | Faculty Level Stratification of the ERP | Ann, Zoe | Facilitation of Logistical Support |
| | Incorporation of Support Systems for Women | Zoe, Meg | |

The table above shows that thematic identification is a culmination of codes that portray similar ideas and meanings. Participants conceded that the current ERP system was receptive, had adequate collegiate support and that these support systems were easy to access. This helps to craft a theme that represents a strong sense of community in the current system. A full list of the themes generated can be found in the Appendix E section of this paper.

3.7.4 Review of Identified Themes:

This step was carried out to improve the rigor of the thematic construction process. The extracted themes were subjected to further evaluation to ensure logical consistency and coherence. This process can also be called the “Rectification Phase,” wherein the continuous appraisal of the themes derived helped guarantee that they were exhaustive in fully

elucidating participants' views. This analytic phase involved verifying the generated codes, ensuring that they were accurately paired with themes that best defined them, and finally performing a total appraisal of the entire transcript.

3.7.5 Definition of Identified Themes:

This was the final process before the narrative summary of the findings. This process involved the description of the themes identified to give each one a comprehensive meaning. This captured the essence of each theme and effectively portrayed its relevance to the research questions. Table 5 below shows the definition of the themes identified when participants were asked about UCT support systems like the ERP.

Table 4: Example of The Thematic Definition Process

| Generated Themes | Generated Codes or Sub-Themes | Thematic Definition and Description |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| Strong Sense of Community | 1. Receptive Environment | The research unit through ERP provides an environment where emerging academics share experiences and ideas to resolve their challenges. This has engendered a space that is safe and easily accessible to all. |
| | 2. Collegiate Support | |
| | 3. Ease of Access to Support | |
| Dedication to Academic Development | 1. Effective Training Structure | The ERP has created a system that is dedicated to the academic growth and development of emerging academics. This is effectively executed through training and mentorships opportunities. The funding provided is also fairly distributed to ensure that all early career academics get the resources they need to conduct cutting-edge research. |
| | 2. Improved Academic Initiatives | |
| | 3. Fair Funding Opportunities | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Facilitation of Logistical Support | 1. Faculty Level Stratification of the ERP | To ensure that research support systems remain sustainable, the research unit must eliminate logistical |
| | 2. Incorporation of Support Systems for Women | barriers to deter academics from benefiting fully from its initiatives. These include facilitating faculty support and the incorporation of systems that encourage female academics to conduct more research. |

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.8.1 Ethical Approval from the Ethics Board:

Before the commencement of the data collection process, this project was presented for ethical approval by the Psychology Department's Research Ethics Committee at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The processes involved in the study were critically examined, and ethical approval was thereupon granted. The study was also approved by HR, and permission was given to the UCT academic staff.

3.8.2 Informed Consent:

An informed consent form containing a confidentiality agreement between the researcher and the participants was readily available for this study. All participants were extensively briefed on the study's nature, and objectives and their consent to record all conversations for the research was sought. Participants were required to sign the confidentiality agreement, which provided formal evidence of their consent to partake in the research process. The consent form can be found in the Appendix B section.

3.8.3 Anonymity:

Participants were given assurance of the protection of their identities. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used to represent the identity of each participant in the study. This agreement was equally included in the informed consent form.

3.8.4 Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal:

Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were well informed of their right to withdraw from the study at whatever time they deemed fit.

3.9 THE REFLEXIVITY PROCESS

Reflexivity in qualitative research acknowledges the position and role of the researcher in a study. Specifically, it highlights the significance of the researchers' background, beliefs, and values in the data interpretation process (Hiles & Cermák, 2008). As neutral or disinterested as a researcher might aim to be, personal biases are almost inevitable. These biases may influence how follow-up questions are presented during the interview process and may affect the overall exposition of research findings (Eagle, Hayes, & Sibanda, 2006)

As the principal researcher, I am a Nigerian identifying black African male from a conservative background. While the UCT setting provided a diverse environment for the data collection process, my race just may have affected how participants from different races spoke about the transformative structures of the university. However, I was receptive enough to facilitate an environment where participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences at UCT. My ability to successfully cull data needed for this research was primarily influenced by my aspiration to become an academic and my keenness to learn from participant academics' experiences. During the interview, I built rapport by informing participants of my desire to reach academic heights. Where possible and necessary, I shared a few of my personal experiences.

3.10 RISKS AND BENEFITS

The research presented no risks to the participants. Interviews were conducted using the Microsoft Teams platform; hence, participation was done in the participants' respective homes' comfort. As a precautionary measure, support services by UCT for counseling were made available and readily accessible to participants should they experience distress during their revelation of personal experiences. However, no participant expressed any distress whatsoever.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: DEFINING ACADEMIA AND THE QUALITIES OF AN ACADEMIC

4.1 OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

This chapter will provide an exhaustive layout of how academia is conceptualized from the subjective perspectives of academics. It will narratively engage the themes generated from participants and further elucidate the perceived qualities of an academic. It will also reveal how these perceived qualities reportedly facilitate academics' integration into the broader educational spectrum. Finally, this chapter explores the notion of academic freedom and how it shapes emerging academic participants' positions. The full table of themes analyzed in this chapter can be found in *Appendix E*. The study's findings will be discussed and linked to the reviewed literature to fill its existing gaps.

4.2 WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN ACADEMIC

4.2.1 Student Empowerment and Development

The growth and development of students significantly impact how emerging academics perceive their identity. Participants admitted that engaging in teaching and supervision serves as their primary motivation to become better academics. According to Kya, this entails contributing to their student's lives in a meaningful way and helping them with personal challenges they might encounter while navigating their academic spaces.

“.... you have a lot more insight into the students' lives because the students come to you with, I've got this problem, can you help me deal with my academic work....so I guess I can empower students in that way by getting to know actually what people's problems are and not only Just standing in front of the class and telling them, this is what you need to know for the test, you're actually engaging with the student on a personal level and saying, okay, you have this problem, but I still need you to know all this content for your test, how can I help you and structure it and help you work around your timetable so that you can ultimately perform at your best....” (Kya).

Defining an academic from the position of student development emerges from the desire to make a difference in students' lives and share valuable information. These academics believe that this information sharing exists as an essential aspect of their careers.

Hence, they must ensure that their teaching is targeted at resolving the issues within the community. In the interviews, Ivy admits this.

“So, for me, it was I want to be a person who goes out there and gives an African perspective of legal jurisprudence, especially in the context of commercial law. So, for me, it's leaving a legacy of information and knowledge and sharing that knowledge within a community but using my identity as a key driver to that...” (Ivy)

To Ivy, being an academic requires a proactive determination to give students an African perspective and guarantee that the information obtained is practical and applicable. Zoe also reiterated this increased sense of responsibility to promote the African narrative.

“... also just creating a narrative that is actually contextual.... that we do not talk about what happened in this Eurocentric outlook at UCT... but also being relevant to our students, because we understand the background and also the worldview might be similar... just our students knowing that those narratives are relevant...” (Zoe)

This indicates channeling teaching content to more relatable areas to students and places that fit the world views they have been raised with. Academics who have a passion for teaching also work tirelessly to identify strategies to engender students' interest in their discipline. Ann shares this sentiment and continually seeks to transmit her love for science to her students.

“...the thing that makes me probably most excited is the part that is about enabling other people to learn science. So, I think that's the thing that makes me most excited about what I do... enabling other people to do science, whether it's as an undergrad or postgrad or just as a member of the public. I think that's the part that I get the most personal gratification out of, I think...” (Ann)

Most participants reported gratification from inculcating their discipline into students, transmitting knowledge, and inducing more students into their respective fields' active practice. Joy expressed her concerns about the lack of women in engineering while reaffirming her determination to attract more women into the area.

“...Yes, because I was and continue to be inspired by a woman in engineering. So, if I chose not to be in that realm. I would not be inspiring other people. So, it's one of the ways to get back...” (Joy)

These findings are concordant with studies that identify teaching and student engagement as the key drivers for developing an academic identity (King, 2012; Sandeen & Barr, 2006; Beddoe, 2013). A novel addition made by these findings is the scope by which this impact is made. Focus is placed on the context by which teaching is done and the need to utilize education as a medium to address society's needs. Furthermore, student engagement goes beyond just teaching but entails instilling a more profound affection for the discipline being taught and ensuring a steadfast transition of disciplinary content to students.

4.2.2 Advocacy and Representation

Two defining aspects of being an academic are positionality and representation. These involve a symbolic statement of presence by an emerging academic and its subsequent translation as a platform for advocacy (Olausson, 2010; Smith and Joffe, 2009). Conversations with the academics revealed that some perceive academia as a place to lend their voices to society's most pressing issues. This sentiment was expressed vehemently by Ivy, who says.

“...For me, it's not just about what I'm writing. It's also about my presence and my voice and my influence and understanding how powerful that is in a classroom setting, or also outside of a classroom setting and me being the voice that is speaking and giving an opinion on things that were not previously open to us.... I'm an advocate for people in my community in Limpopo. I'm an advocate for black South African women, and I'm an advocate for women empowerment. I'm an advocate for transformation in academia.... Advocate can also sound very radical and strong. But for me, I'm saying I'm an advocate and in the sense that my softness, and my presence as a woman is a strength in the work that I do. And I embrace that fully...” (Ivy).

Academia, in this regard, goes beyond traditional roles but further symbolizes the commitment of emerging academics to represent their communities. They create a space where people from their communities feel their presence and aspire to attain similar heights (McAlpine & Asghar, 2010). For others, being an academic presents an opportunity to stick to the highest moral standards without making enormous compromises. Liz affirmed this by acknowledging that academia's structure gives her the chance to advocate for what she believes in without the pressure to make salient compromises.

“...it feels the least compromised signaling possibility in the world that we're in. And it feels like in order to still be able to earn an income and not feel severely compromised. So, in some way, it is connected to a state structure that I'm not committed to, or any kind of private entity that I'm not committed to somehow... the project of teaching feels the least compromised and compromising, which isn't to say that there aren't parts of it that are so but yeah, so that was the decision to go into academia...” (Liz).

The perception that being an academic means you have to do more than just produce knowledge aligns with how contemporary scholars participate in conversations about the most pressing global issues (Sayers, 2013). As earlier highlighted in the literature review section of the current research, these academics choose research areas out of sheer intellectual curiosity and their communities (McAlpine & Asghar, 2010; Smart, Feldman & Ethington, 2000). For these reasons, institutions have included social responsiveness as a pivotal aspect of an academic's duty. Tom agreed with this when he stressed the need to assume leadership roles to fulfill an academic obligation.

“....and then of course, another quality that's quite important is the role of leadership in management. So even if it's leadership within your classroom or if you find yourself within your unit, that's also another quality thatI mean, you've got the responsibility of taking because it's a very small proportion of individuals, that's fine and soft within academia. So, if you look at your social responsibility, you've got quite a big role to play within bigger society because people hold academics to a certain level, and rightfully so, I think. So, we've got a responsibility to really perform some sort of leadership role with it at a micro level or macro level...” (Tom).

For some, the achievement of being an academic is more than just a qualification but a symbolic victory. Most emerging academics work tirelessly to make sure that they make their communities proud and chart a pathway for others. This explains why they are keenly involved in their institutions or country's political and transformative agendas (Tandwa, 2016; Luvalo, 2019). Taking the lead requires that they participate in social initiatives that resolve pressing issues and arouse positive change.

4.2.3 The Process of Knowledge Creation

Knowledge creation involves conducting relevant research and contributing to the international domains within a discipline (Henkel, 2005). Some academics admit that executing research primarily defines an academic. This involves research that substantially explores local content and that which is poised to promote an Afrocentric narrative. Tom, who is within the science education discipline, perceives academia as distinctly primed to achieve these.

“I think our science education is a relatively new field. You find ourselves in a unique space, and we often time the knowledge that we have been, you know, transferring was not produced in a context that's very similar to ours. So, you realize that there's lots of room for locally produced research to be conducted... education is so greatly influenced by context. There is a great danger in simply taking research conducted in another context, and you know, applying it to your contexts...” (Tom).

To do this effectively, academics explore societal issues and bridge the knowledge gap by addressing these issues. In full recognition of this, Ivy stated the need for collaboration within the academic community. This, she reports, presents her with a unique opportunity to give her perspective as an African.

“... I feel that creating that knowledge and sharing that knowledge within a community is just as important, and one thing that is important is giving the opportunity to people who did not have the opportunity to do that in the past...think it's very important that we create platforms where we are able to participate in the discourse of knowledge sharing from an academic space, from a corporate space and from all areas, you know, knowledge sharing is very important. And for me, I feel that knowledge sharing from my perspective as an African is just as important...” (Ivy).

The contributions of emerging academics to international research domains are mostly linked to their career development and progression (Trotter, 2016). The positive feedback they get from a journal or publication keeps them motivated to enhance their discipline. Studies have shown that academics make a lasting impact when pursuing interdisciplinary collaborations (Janssen, Jelgerhuis & Schuwer, 2014; Sanchez, Shih & Wilton, 2014). As revealed in these findings, cooperation should be more structured and directed towards depicting culturally pertinent content.

4.2.4 Character Building Process

Being an academic equally involves self-discovery, building character, and spurs growth (Green, 2010). Like Sue expressed below, some of the academics interviewed in this study conceded that they had developed more appealing and positive traits since they became academics.

“So, a lot of your work involves... a lot of mentorships that goes into it. And academia sort of for me, teaches you, you know certain things about your personality and your character and even things that you can work on as an academic... having that empathy because look, students come from communities, communities deal with various issues...” (Sue)

This signifies that academia presents a continuous learning platform, not just for growth in specific disciplines but also for self-improvement. Academics are exposed to a community of scholars that have a lasting impact on their lives. They learn from the approach (teaching and research) and alleviate limitations that may threaten their career development. This feeling was articulated clearly by Kim.

“... I think that's so encouraging because I love learning, you know, so for me learning is a continuous thing. You don't always know everything, and you can learn from everyone and help and assist the next by imparting your knowledge. That's something that really drives me. well, you know, what's rewarding is when someone says you've really helped me really assisted...” (Kim)

Studies have demonstrated that early-career academics are placed under intense training during their first few years (Chalmers; 2008; McAlpine 2012c; Wood, 1990). This process is used to introduce them into the system and cultivate skills imperative to their success in the long run. This was affirmed in this study and was further strengthened by their admission to a character-building process. This implies that learning is not often centered around the academic space but includes a more robust individual development process.

During the interviews, Ray admitted that the academic space does more for him than just personality development and gives him a chance to express himself fluidly and freely.

“Academics is a sense of expression. And it is it is a form of understanding... an understanding a particular environment and being able to express myself through that medium....” (Ray)

For Ray, becoming an academic gives him an avenue to introspect and subjectively inquire about the changes necessary to become the best version of himself.

“This should translate into something that is really personal or subjective to them or not global boxes that mean place people that generally just place people into should be something... you know, for me, it is about a sense of inquiry. I suppose. It's about personal growth” (Ray).

Academics like Ray believe that it is essential to avoid using prescriptive and generic frameworks to define an academic. This indicates a need to approach academic identity from a more qualitative standpoint, where each educational measures their personal growth from their unique individual capacity (Ferrante, 2015; Knight, Tait & Yorke, 2006). This does not suggest that generic standards are ineffective; it only infers the importance of recognizing that every emerging academic exclusively has its individual stories. The educational space gives them the platform to fully express themselves, rather than being pressured to change them. The character-building process is especially striking because it positions the individual as the most critical factor in defining an academic means.

4.3 QUALITIES OF AN IDEAL ACADEMIC

4.3.1 Intellectual Abilities

In this study, emerging academics identified qualities that they perceive as ideal for academia's lasting impact. The identified intellectual abilities are a range of cognitive skills that are critical to facilitating education and scholarship. These skills engage areas such as intelligent critical thinking and innovativeness in the creation of research content. Others require the capacity to learn and strive for excellence in one's chosen academic field.

Intellectual curiosity involves a raw thirst for knowledge that drives academics to reach into domains that strengthen their fertility of argumentative resources (Levin, 2012; Damrosch, 1995). It involves the underlying mechanisms that inspire knowledge acquisition and a persistent desire to create novel information. This viewpoint was expressed by Eva, where she stressed that an ideal academic would actively pursue knowledge and acquire a sense of awareness while doing so.

“I think they should be curious. I think they should be inspired by their own work and by the process of knowing, and that's the process of getting to know something....but I always think like a great academic should also be somebody who both appears to know a lot but feels that they know nothing and there's something about and then you know the sense of awareness that we know something that we know so little in the great scheme of things is what drives at like curiosity for knowledge, that is wanting to know more...” (Eva)

The quest for knowledge has been well documented as a predominant reason why scholars pursue a career in academia (Smith & Joffe, 2009; Dill, Massy, Williams, & Cook, 1996; Henkel, 2005). This study's findings go further to emphasize the need for such academics to ask relevant questions unashamedly. Zoe established this by pointing out that academics must approach everything with a high degree of skepticism to fulfill their role of positively impacting society.

“.... being able to question everything, being able to question... I think we can only transform and also engage in things that have to do with Coloniality if we're able to question... and not be happy with the status quo, this is how it is, and it should stay that way.” (Zoe).

Vigorously questioning the status quo will help emerging academics identify new frontiers for research and seek ways to improve the existing structures. In pursuing novel approaches to research, teaching, and social responsibility, emerging academics are primed to be innovative (Scott, 2005). This involves exploring new ideas, taking risks, and foresight of what the future might entail to stay competitive (Pick, Symons & Teo, 2015). Lia pinpoints innovation as the essential skill for an ideal academic to display to remain relevant in her discipline.

“I think being innovative is important. But also, as I say, also in terms of performing, I always try to make sure that one doesn't only do what's already been done with one tries to find new angles that also get us to provide new perspectives, both for their performance and also for the audience...” (Lia).

To be innovative, academics have to think differently and participate in conversations that propel such creative thinking. This requires a determination to improve and be competitive, consequentially pushing them to discoveries. Emerging academics realize that they have to present new contributions to their field (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales 2008; Scott, 2005). This is what ultimately makes them models and what drives excellence. Through her expressed belief in excellence as the top quality an academic should strive towards, Meg agrees.

“...the obvious would be to be excellent in the field of expertise and to be passionate about this.... their field of expertise. So, and it depends on what they're teaching, and if it's a statistician or lecturer in statistics, then they need to become a master in a field...” (Meg).

For Meg, excellence is only cultivated from genuine interest to improve teaching and research output. To attain such superior heights, emerging academics must be autonomous in their learning. Here, they are at a point where their education is not as structured as students. Although some may have supervisors, the academic space ultimately requires that they independently create a niche (Smith and Joffe, 2009; Bauer & Gaskell, 1999). During his interview, Jay admits this by lucidly revealing his progression towards scholarly heights and how minimal guidance has shaped him into a self-sufficient learner.

“...you're able to solve, learn, pick things up... you don't have that many people actually teaching you, you will become the expert at the subject that you knew, you were able to learn things yourself, you don't have much guidance And even those

people that get a few guidance, you know, they are in the same boat as you, so they don't really have, it is going to take up too much of a time to try and learn from them..." (Jay)

As emerging academics strive to make a difference in academia, actively investing in their intellectual development becomes a requisite for their success. They are held accountable to a higher standard in the educational system because they create and transmit knowledge (Carter & Fuller, 2015; Middleton, 2009). This study reveals that most academics acknowledge the vital role of curiosity and critical thinking in boosting innovative practices. It also helps to give a significant boost to displays of humility, passion, and independent thought.

4.3.2 Communication Skill

While emerging academics may spend a meaningful amount of time researching and creating teaching content, disseminating knowledge gained becomes a prerequisite for navigating academia. From the study, communication skill was perceived from two distinct perspectives. The first perspective requires academics to transmit knowledge in a well-defined and lucid way for students to understand. The second perspective obliges academics to be assertive in their interaction with students.

Interaction and collaboration with colleagues place academics in a constant bubble. The languages of exchange in such businesses are expectedly relatively advanced, posing the challenge of teaching simplicity in their teaching practice. Dan alludes to this during his interview, stressing the need to eliminate ambiguities when interacting with students.

"...I think clarity is always good. An academic, especially in humanities, can often be clouded in this idea of the exoteric with these inaccessible entities who speak and jog in a language beyond mere mortals, first-year students. I think that it's a misleading impression. I'd like to describe concepts and talk about my work and the work of other people in my field in a very accessible way..." (Dan)

This quality has been highlighted in the current research as a critical aspect of teaching quality. An academic endeavors to make teaching accessible and valuable by communicating in a way that is simple and pleasing to the students participating (Kifoil, 2012; Sandeen & Barr, 2006; Morrow, 1994)

Academic-student communication goes beyond the teaching process but also includes day-to-day dealings. One big obstacle academics face in such dealings is in balancing assertiveness with empathy. Students might make demands that could be unrealistic or could test the ethical resolve of an emerging academic. While they develop systems to accommodate all students, emerging academics have to assertively draw the line to ensure that students abide by the universal guidelines already set. Kim refers to this while relating the experiences of her dealings with students.

“...and I think for me, what has been the most difficult is to strike that balance between an interface assertive, but also need to be empathetic. I cannot sound as if I don't care. You know so, but also, I'm not going to be a pushover so that you know... It's like a thin line to balance empathy and assertiveness, which I'm still trying to figure out. So, in my emails, right now, I try to empathize but also lay down the rule to listen, but you do know about this refer to the course outline...” (Kim).

Effective student communication with students creates an atmosphere where students can feel safe and be motivated to succeed. Creating an open-door policy gives students a chance to ask questions and seek advice instrumental to their growth (Lostsekha, 2013; Smart, Feldman & Ethington, 2000; Harris & James, 2006). While encouraging this, emerging academics may guarantee that all students are held accountable to the same moral parameters and standards.

4.3.3 Connectedness

Students deal with a lot of anxiety and pressure from academic space. Some may come from backgrounds that place them at an assimilation or learning disadvantage (Cooper & Subotzky, 2001). Thus, the quality of being relatable becomes a defining and essential characteristic of an ideal academic. From experience, academics know what it is like to be misunderstood or undervalued as students, so the core of their academic identity is situated around making students feel appreciated (Mbali, 2003; D'Andrea et al., 2002). Relatability reduces the power distance between emerging academics and their students, stimulating a more cordial instructive ambiance much needed for learning. This study revealed that some academics include personal stories and examples of their teaching content to facilitate connectedness.

The mainstay for connectedness between an academic and the student is the quality of humility. Emerging academics in this study conceded that accepting the leadership of older or more established academics abet growth. In this regard, connectedness focuses on interaction with senior colleagues or other staff members who may offer pragmatic guidance to an emerging academic. An emerging academic ability to connect to both students and colleagues entails a significant noteworthy amount of relatability. Accepting feedback from students also plays a role in improving the way an academic is perceived.

4.3.4 High Ethical Standards

Intellectual honesty was identified in the current study as an essential quality of an ideal academic. While engaging in research and teaching, academics certainly utilized a range of already documented ideas. Consequently, academics are morally bound to give credit to whomever the concept belongs. This process requires integrity, a quality that equally requires honesty, and a crystallized value system (Sadlak & Ratajczak, 2004; Sadlak, 2001). As affirmed by Sue during the interviews, integrity is the most distinguishing quality for any academic, which requires a solid commitment to do what is right for it to be fully displayed.

“Look, when you are working in the field of academia, any other job for that matter in the world, whatever you do...you have to do in integrity. So, there's a lot of things that you know, and students might share with us. We need to sort of keep confidential and not speak about.... students' concerns or personal...issues to other colleagues.... We can't really say that we're talking about, don't be stealing people's ideas, but you know publishing them as you own, there are many integrity issues involved there. Still, I think even when you deal with students, you have to have a powerful moral and ethical principles and values...” (Sue).

Displaying integrity as an academic signals respect for a set of values and principles. It encapsulates academics' determination to work together while feeling valued and appreciated for their contributions (Thomas & De Bruin, 2015; Sadlak & Ratajczak, 2004). This study's findings show that emerging academics realize that exhibiting this quality goes beyond merely giving credit to colleagues regarding research and entails properly handling confidential information received from students during mentorship and associates during collaborations.

4.4 ADDRESSING THE NOTION OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

When asked about the notion of academic freedoms, the emerging academics conceded that academia is and should be a space that grants liberty to pursue research areas of preference. The idea of academic freedom has come under scrutiny from several researchers, and questions have been raised on what should dictate its degree (Ylijoki, & Ursin, 2013; Kulski & Groombridge, 2004; Henkel, 2011). Emerging academics like Jay address this by doing a comparative analysis between the industry and academia.

“...also, probably why a lot of people get into it is because you're allowed to pursue your own research interests, really. As an academic, you can really do what you want. Whereas if you are in the industry, you are kind of forced to do whatever job you have been given at the time... So, because you're allowed to research what you want, really, you're able to learn things that you're interested in and pick up new skills...” (Jay)

From Jay's perspective, academia stands out as a space that recognizes the necessity to harness intellectual curiosity by giving its scholars complete independence to explore their inclination areas. In a similar vein, Meg expresses that their contribution will transcend just academic spaces and have a far-reaching impression in the industry when academics are given this autonomy.

“I feel the research has a more industry reach where the teaching has an individual reach. So, it's not, I enjoy the individual development, but my research is also really interesting to me as I reach the life insurance industry in the country, and globally” (Meg).

Assimilation into the academic space can only be fruitful if emerging academics feel they play a pivotal role in the decision-making process. Although being nudged to a research direction by a superior could be helpful, the psychological effect of making the final decision on what to pursue cannot be overemphasized.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE, TRANSFORMATION, AND INDIVIDUALISM

5.1 OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

This chapter examines how emerging academics experience the institutional culture of UCT. Three superordinate themes are presented and scrutinized in this section. They include; transformation and inclusivity, the nature of the work environment, and the governance and administration system at the UCT. The study participants gave great insights into the state of transformation in the University of Cape Town and how the current structures affect them as emerging academics. In addition to presenting the participants' perceptions of the theme of concern, this chapter also discusses the university's institutional culture's perceived polarization.

Considering the theme of the work environment, this section provides a detailed analysis of collegiate relationships among emerging academics. As portrayed by the participants during the study's interview process, the work environment's individualistic nature is equally examined and linked to the general scope of existing literature. Finally, this chapter provides an exhaustive appraisal of the system of governance and administration at UCT from the viewpoints of all participants interviewed. It delves into the policies and organizational focus of UCT and how it affects the welfare of emerging academics. The full table of themes analyzed in this chapter can be found in *Appendix E*. Findings are subsequently juxtaposed with existing data and are used to bridge the gap in the literature.

5.2 TRANSFORMATION AND INCLUSIVITY AT UCT

5.2.1 Inadequate Transformation

To establish a space that sufficiently accommodates diversity, the University of Cape Town has undergone a series of transformative phases over the years. When asked about the state of change at UCT, Leo admits that the institution continually contends with its history distressing impressions.

“...UCT obviously institutionally is kind of struggling to grapple with its past right, as a liberal institution, which was mild and is it in many ways in the apartheid culture. So, it would like to represent itself as a liberal institution. It was obviously in

different degrees, perhaps we can talk to the degrees, but it was complicit in the larger apartheid culture of exclusion and racialization.... It is grappling in a sense with the contemporary, you know, inequality of the South African society, which continues to fester and reproduce itself in different levels..." (Leo).

The above statement argues that implementing progressive and inclusive policies at UCT is continuously undermined by the structural inequalities that plague the nation. As the most prestigious institution globally, UCT is expected to set the transformation and inclusivity (University of Cape Town, 2014). This expectation of global pacesetting and competition equally gained scrutiny during the interview process of the current research. Zoe affirms that the institutional norms are mostly perceived as Eurocentric. They are also unrepresentative of African ideals.

"...it's white-dominated, I think we can call a spade a spade, it is very white-dominated. And of course, then in that sense, the way of doing things, the values, they really dominate that white culture and you find yourself and, in this space... it's very Eurocentric, I think we pride ourselves as being number one in Africa and in all this list and great, but I think we were probably not doing justice to our continent and to our role in Africa... White standards do not consider that as black people, and we have different backgrounds..." (Zoe).

From some emerging academics, UCT has not made advancements when placed in comparison to other universities. Ray vehemently believes that the pathways taken by UCT to address its segregationist history do not fully align with the national imperatives.

"...and because I don't think that it's, it's where it is at the moment is truly reflective of what national imperatives actually are. And it is disappointing that a university that considers itself to be number one in Africa has a feeble reflection of what the national imperatives actually are. So, I don't mean transformation; in particular, there are many different arms to transformation; I think UCT has not addressed many of those arms and has lagged behind many other institutions in South Africa..." (Ray).

This problem ultimately creates a space that is foreign for some academics. For structural changes to be sufficient, emerging academics acknowledge that the underlying culture of exclusion where some academics feel that their voices are not heard or do not deserve to be heard should be fixed (Manning 2013). Ivy concedes that creating a

constructive environment for all agents may take more time owing to the inherent lack of opportunities some have confronted.

“...and that is a very difficult and sensitive process, especially when you are working in an institution where there's a long history of, you know, bullying within the faculty and the Department and the whole university. There's a history of discrimination. There's a history of so many things where people feel like their voices are not being heard, or they're not giving, being given opportunities for them to progress by being given very heavy workloads and so forth...” (Ivy).

While conversations about transformation have been well documented in this paper's literature review, this study goes further to recognize that establishing an inclusive space may take longer than expected (Murriss 2016; Du Preez, Simmonds & Verhoef, 2016; Manning 2013). Findings from the emerging academics reveal that historical imprints will consistently impede the progression. Furthermore, UCT's desperation to fix the posing problem and to become a global model could plunge it into ignoring the germane African narratives that should shape it. Thus, a balance is required before the progress can gain visibility for some emerging academics.

5.2.2 Transitional Transformation

Despite admitting that transformation at UCT is inadequate, some academics agreed that significant progress had been made thus far. They believe that UCT is undergoing an imminent transformation phase evident in the policies implemented to strengthen diversity and representation in academia. The milestones reached by UCT can be identified through the steps taken to inspire black academics' entry and active participation. For Liz, she finds solace in her association with members of the Black Academic Caucus. For her, the relationships she built there blossomed and became a launchpad for her career in academia.

“...the Black Academic Caucus has been very important for me as a young academic and feeling a certain amount of solidarity in coming to the space that can be quite daunting... So, kind of, individual relationships with members of the black academic caucus and the BAC, in general, have helped with a certain amount of settling in maybe institution or understanding the culture, never before... It's the more as a collective that'll kind of hear your struggles and be able to give you input and

solidarity and advice... It's aiming to kind of be supportive for those black academics that are here and working in the institution..." (Liz)

The BAC is a landmark indicator of progress towards racial equity for some academics. It brings more voices to the table and sets the tone for administrative changes that affect emerging scholars and students (Kessi, 2017). There has been a materialization of opportunities to help economically disadvantaged academics attain funding for research and teaching resources. Ala acknowledges that the transitional, transformational phase of UCT is further reflected in female leadership's rise, amongst other demographic changes.

".... That it is also my perception that there is a dynamic culture, and things are changing and evolving.... I think it is transitioning from a historic space where very few and fortunate people could attend to being more inclusive. It is transitioning in terms of demographic, in terms of female leadership towards a different demographic profile, in black African students and staff. It is maybe becoming more international attracting international academics and students, so I think it is definitely responding to the needs of transformation..." (Ala).

The BAC became a pivotal contributor in raising awareness of the lived experiences of black students and academics. Their presence and voice have led to significant conversations on prioritizing Africa in curriculum development, teaching, and research (Kessi, 2017). They have supported major activist movements by students and aided the university governance's resolution of student concerns. Members of the BAC have also actively participated in several transformations of the task force in the university. Their efforts have led to collaboration with unions, governmental agencies, and alumni. These contributions have helped to shape the institutional culture of a historically white university like UCT.

Transformation in leadership and academic participation will not be fully complete without its manifestation in curriculum development. As noted earlier in the review, the learning and teaching approach impact how academia is experienced (Kogan & Hanney; 2000; Kezar & Eckel, 2002). The teaching style and content have to align with the culture, roots, and values of the university's context. During the interview, Ivy recognized the steps UCT is taking to facilitate a Pedagogical Redefinition Process.

"... but now that things are changing, and people are coming with new pedagogies of teaching and people are coming with new...It challenges the culture. And when things

have been done in a certain way for a specific long period of time, there is definitely some resistance from those who are not open to change... It's going through the redefinition process, and there's still a lot of work to be done at the same time. There's a lot of work to be done at this time...." (Ivy)

This study's findings uniquely contribute to the literature by pinpointing pedagogical redefinition implications in how transformation is attained (Bunting & Cloete 2004; Soudien Report, 2008). Through novel approaches to teaching and learning, emerging academics experience academia differently from the established ones. They share an academic space that is amenable and receptive to dismantling teaching systems that reinforce problematic racial and gender stereotypes. Emerging academics in this study commend the progress made in UCT's transformational process thus far and admit that more work needs to be done to attain the ideal status.

5.2.3 Fragility in Institutional Culture

For some academics, the culture of advocacy at UCT may seem polarizing. As highlighted earlier in the review, UCT is an institution with a formidable student body reflected in its active political participation (Davis, 2015; Cooper & Subotzky, 2001). During the interview, Eva admitted to being intrigued by the polarizing nature of political participation by both the students and the staff.

"...I arrived like two weeks before Rhodes Must Fall Protest Happened My experience has been both very polarized. I feel like I have encountered two phases of UCT. The first I came expecting, you know, a very conservative institutional culture, and it was very weird for me to arrive. I grew up in Cambridge, UK, and I arrived on this campus, and it was like I left England to come back to England. It was very bizarre. I definitely felt elements of the conservative British academic culture that is very familiar to me.... I also encountered a really radical side of the liberal art institutional culture certainly largely driven much more by students and by staff, but of course, our staff and will continue to be staff who involved..." (Eva)

The increased level of political consciousness and awareness creates an academic environment that is flexible to consistent structural changes. Because conversations are held continuously on issues like decoloniality, long-standing structures are always subject to

changes. This heightened political atmosphere puts new academic or administrative policies under enormous scrutiny (Tandwa, 2016; Davis, 2015). Consequently, emerging academics may struggle to develop a coherent understanding and identification of UCT or represent it. This sentiment was echoed by Joy, who explained her struggles in understanding what UCT stands for and described it as “haphazard.”

“...I think they are at the moment going through a bit of a change, and I am not sure they know what their values and traditions are currently. This is, again, my opinion, but I cannot say that I have had a very strong experience of a strong institutional culture. I think it is very all over the place at the moment... So yes, I think it is going to be a long while before we see, I mean, an actual institutional culture being developed. I think it is very transitional at the moment...” (Joy).

For academics like Joy, the university's transitory state is insufficient mainly, providing no clarity on its direction and stance. Nonetheless, the emergence of political activism across South African institutions has led UCT to participate in dialogs that will ultimately bring lasting changes consistently. Emerging academics are poised to partake in these dialogs, helping to dismantle systems of oppression and marginalization that have plagued the academic community.

5.3 WORK ENVIRONMENT

5.3.1 Collegiate Culture

The second aspect of institutional culture explored was the UCT work environment and its relation to emerging academics' experience. This theme revolves around workplace interaction and relationship building among academics. The study participants portrayed a positive outlook of their work environment and were rather impressed with their receptive collegiate culture. Lia felt she had the freedom to express herself— an outcome mainly to the friendly workspace she is accustomed to.

“...I think, at least to me, it's always been a very welcoming and very open culture. And of course, my department is a relatively small department. And but.... the sense that one has a lot of freedom to do what you would like to do that you're supported in whichever way you'd like to go. And definitely just Yeah, very welcoming space if you think about...” (Lia)

A hospitable work atmosphere is instrumental in motivating academics to contribute to its growth and development (McAlpine & Turner, 2012). The support an emerging academic gets can become a defining factor in shaping their career success in academia. In such a conducive environment, ideas shared are typically well-received and constructive feedback is presented without condescension or judgment. For instance, Ann, a health science faculty member, gave enormous credit to the senior academics who helped land her a permanent position at the faculty.

“...as an emerging academic, I had a lot of support. First, because the first year on my job, I was actually on a contract post... various senior academics helped me get that post, so I feel like I was very much supported, at least in the Faculty of Health Sciences, in particular, I find very supportive of my career...” (Ann).

However, to harness others' support, emerging academics must reach out actively or get isolated. Collegiate support structures may exist in research or study groups (McAlpine, Amundsen & Turner 2013b). These groups may vary across faculties and may be distinctly separated based on subjects of interest. In acknowledging this, Jay confesses that meaningful relationships with colleagues are to be materialized through active involvement with a category of interest.

“...So, there are really much smaller groups where meaningful relationships can be formed in academia... I am saying you're going to get most of your support if you join a school or research group, and you guys have something in common to talk about and where you can learn from...” (Jay).

Studies have proven that academics face an enormous teaching load and face pressure to meet research and publication output (Sayers, 2013; Dill, 2000; Prince, Felder, & Brent, 2007). Some early-career academics may still be working on their Ph.D., while others may be looking to reinforce their research focus or interest. The existence of collaborative research groups within faculties can serve as a pillar of support to emerging academics and enable them to integrate into the system thoroughly.

5.3.2 High-Performance Environment

The work environment at UCT demands the highest level of professionalism and performance from its staff. This cuts across all aspects of academic life, including research

and teaching. Kya has been enjoying the high-intensity atmosphere, and her experience has instilled an elevated level of concentration in her job.

“...It's very focused, and at least in my department, my division where I work, everything is work orientated, and I really like that. It's not going into everyone's personal lives, or colleagues aren't really worried about what everyone is doing on the weekend. Everything is work-orientated. Even when there is argument or tension, it is something to do with work stuff and not personal stuff and not getting at people for personal but against them for personal reasons. And so, I think that was pretty good and a big difference to me...” (Kya)

Nonetheless, this environment can be overwhelming, considering its propensity to spark feelings of isolation and inadequacies in emerging academics trying to settle in. Academics who come into the institution due to their affection for their discipline may lose enthusiasm when the institution or faculty's targets become unrealistic. During the interview process with Tom, he highlighted the dangers of becoming overwhelmed by the institution's academic demands and acknowledges that these demands compel him to work harder.

“...so, it was quite a lonely place, I must say entering academia in a very high performing faculty of excellence, etc. ...They all play a role, so the environment, the culture which I entered was, as I said was very high performance. You would constantly be surrounded by various teams, academics, etc. And that can be a bit overwhelming, but it's also quite inspirational to be surrounded by those individuals....”

A high-performance work environment requires conscientiousness and discipline from academics (Figlio & Schapiro, 2017; Norton, 2013). Emerging academics are expected to utilize the institutions' resources to maintain such standards even when they seem uncomfortable. Harnessing senior academic staff feedback and accessing support groups becomes expedient in increasing the institution's organizational culture. The impact of keeping the bar high in terms of teaching or research is apparent when students also display an intense drive for success (Bentley & Kyvik 2012). As an elite university, UCT expects that its academic staff transmits this high-performance philosophy to its students. After engaging with students, Meg confesses her respect for the excellence she observed in UCT students. She recognizes that their hard work and dedication were pleasantly inspiring to her.

“...and you always get different students with different agendas. I suppose I've seen many things that have been used to the protest years as well. But for the most part, I've been pleasantly surprised with students from all different backgrounds, who will work extremely hard above and beyond to achieve academic excellence...” (Meg)

Emerging academics at UCT experience a system devoted to maintaining academic superiority, which stimulates them to contribute to its value-creating culture. Although this may become overwhelming, it has ultimately shaped their attitudes to work, desire to collaborate, and efficacy in meeting teaching and research output.

5.3.3 Individualistic Environment

One definite downside to a high-performing environment is fostering individualism, where colleagues place their independence before the group. Although every academic is saddled with charting their career progression, an individualistic work environment might be daunting to emerging academics struggling to get accustomed to the system. Without proper guidance, such emerging academics may feel alienated. This feeling can hamper their desire to perform in an atmosphere that demands consistency in excellence. For Kim, this individualistic culture makes her very vulnerable to making unintentional mistakes, which she fears could prove costly to her survival system.

“.... I feel like it's an individualistic approach; you know, it's different. And maybe also with the structure of how things... each one is in their office; each one does their own thing. If you encounter a situation, it's as if you have to do it on your own. You have to figure this out. I think where I came from, and we had clear guidance on how to do things.... I would know that if I am faced with a situation, there's a process... Right here, it's as if we learn from your mistakes, and that went really against my grain...” (Kim).

Emerging academics who contributed to this theme expressed frustration with the lack of collective support in their faculties. This is a result of the excessive investment of other scholars in their duties or tasks. Despite the support structures and collaborative groups in place, some academics still feel detached from their work environment. When asked about her UCT individualistic environment experience, Ala admits to never feeling involved in the culture. This is due to her lack of participation and profound investment in her research.

“...I have done five different degrees, and four of them were at UCT, attended four graduation ceremonies, and did an orientation at UCT, but I didn't really enjoy the activities or want to participate. yes, maybe it is just that I do not really want to participate, and I think maybe a reason I did not want to participate is I am so invested in my work independently, and maybe I am not making time to fully involve myself in the culture...” (Ala)

From this finding, it is evident that that feeling of connectedness is also a function of the personality and inclination of the emerging academic. Some academics work best when they work independently and focus strictly on individual goals rather than the collective (Hardre, Beesley, Miller, & Pace, 2011). On the other hand, others are motivated to work on a collective goal with similar targets (Fensham, 2004). Regardless, the faculty's ethos or norms within which they operate lay the foundation for an emerging academic to adopt a collectivist or an individualistic principle of operation. Suppose the culture is one where most academics conventionally work together on disciplinary or interdisciplinary projects. In that case, emerging academics will realize that adopting this culture is critical for their progress or survival.

6 CHAPTER SIX: GOVERNANCE AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

6.1 OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

This chapter analyzes the impact of UCT's policies on the experiences of emerging academics. It further provides an extensive analysis of infrastructural resources, micromanagement, and the effects on academics' performances. Finally, this section reveals perceived barriers to implementing and implementing possible mitigation strategies proposed by emerging academics during the interview. Summarily, the chapter delved into the prescriptive and rigid systems of performance appraisal of UCT and the impact of industry appeal on the overall academic system.

6.2 GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

6.2.1 Lack of Administrative Focus

The perceived lack of administrative focus poses a challenge to emerging academics. This challenge is more evident in the event where academics face difficulty in formulating teaching or research content. For example, Meg confesses that she has experienced several bureaucratic gridlocks due to the absence of definite procedures to access funding or valuable teaching resources.

"... I must say, sometimes it did feel like there can be a lot of bureaucracy and gray areas, I think the higher up you go. And when you get involved with more of the administration, I think that can sometimes be frustrating. I did feel like I sometimes run into gray areas where I sometimes get a definite no or a definite yes. And so, there was some confusion there. I think that that was a bit more frustrating for me..."
(Meg)

The issue here is not that the culture does not support these resources but that administrative channels to accessing them appear fluid or blurry, leaving these emerging academics exasperated. When asked about their perception of university governance and administration, some interviewed participants raised concerns about their academic focus. This boils down to what they feel the institution prioritizes when evaluating the progress of a visionary. For Joy, she struggles to comprehend the institutional balance between research

and teaching. This challenge serves as a deterrent in crafting her personal growth or promotional plan in the institution.

“...I think UCT needs to decide whether it is teaching-focused or research-focused or whether it really does want the balance from the two because, at the moment, the promotional structure is set up to really only or to strongly prioritize research over teaching, which is fine if that is what the university wants... I am supposed to be currently heavily prioritizing research when it comes to being able to make your way up through the ranks, which means that very little motivation ... It is incredibly difficult to do well at UCT if you are teaching-focused...” (Joy).

Emerging academics like Joy believe that clarity on the type of institution UCT will go a long way in impacting her plans for an academic future. Inquiries into academia's nature in contemporary times affirm that a research-oriented institution's culture will differ significantly from teaching-oriented (Browne, 2010; Bentley & Kyvik 2012; Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom 2005. Juxtaposing it with this study's findings, if UCT leans to any of these academic directions (research or teaching), its culture and values will fully reflect this learning. This will ultimately be beneficial to the long-term adjustments of early career academics.

6.3 PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING SYSTEMS

6.3.1 Ample Research Support

Institutions with a strong research culture typically put systems to enhance research output (Vandeyar, 2010; Vice, 2015). For the most part, such systems contain beneficial incentives and fewer barriers to actively inspiring emerging academics to participate in quality research production. The academics interviewed in the study unanimously conceded to the robust research culture at UCT and agreed on its significant contribution to the performance evaluation matrix. One of the most meaningful ways to encourage participation in research is through the assurance and provision of sufficient funding. During the interview, Eva admits that the financial assistance she received from her supervisor empowered her to perform optimally.

“I mean only flip side you know my boss who was in the center was really generous and gave me some of his own research money to do a small research projects and that

obviously this performance-enhancing, I think you know having access to research funds is essential, and it's not always easy for early career to get that kind of money, and he gave me that financial support at the time I was registered as a Post-Doc, so I was able to access any of the likely university early-career grants, and so on. Yes, so that was great..." (Eva).

UCT provides an array of funding opportunities for its research and academic staff. Although these funding avenues are competitive, the formation of the Emerging Researchers' Program (ERP) has been instrumental in targeting early career academics and has been functional in providing workshops that refine these academics' research skills. Ivy acknowledged the considerable role the ERP has played in educating her. She reports that the program ensures she is continuously connected to a network of excellent academics for support.

"...It has been amazing. I think that's one of the most underrated structures in UCT. But the work they do... they're doing the Lord's work; I'm not going to lie to you... They are doing the lord's work... I think you will not know of the programs, and you will not engage in those programs if you don't make the time for yourself to be there and actually see what is actually happening... So, when I first came to UCT, my master's supervisor and my Ph.D. supervisor sent me directly to them and asked me to get in touch with them... and the workshops that we have.... even now, I've got two Ph.D. support group meetings where we share our frustrations with our research and everything... and where they are also platforms and workshops on supervision, research supervision, and so forth. So, it's a unique structure or service at UCT..." (Ivy).

Findings from this study reveal that emerging academics feel enormous pressure to establish their research specialization (Trotter, 2016). This is further worsened because such ones are subjected to an extended probationary period that could be unsettling. Nonetheless, ample research support through access to funding and projects by the ERP eases the burden and enriches their performance.

6.3.2 Academic Independence

The ability of academics to harness their intellectual curiosity and engage independently augments their contribution to the institution (Henkel, 2011). In establishing their relevance to the institutions, these academics like Ann feel valued when trusted with the freedom to choose a research area and develop teaching content.

“I guess some factors that enhance my performance are sort of academic freedom, like things aren't prescriptive like I'm not told that this is exactly what I need to do. In every sphere, like in teaching and research and outreach and all those things, I'm mostly allowed to develop my own material, develop my own research directions. I think that's an encouraging setting that enhances my performance...”

The domain of learning in academia is immeasurable. There is always an opportunity to learn and share novel ideas, especially when academics from different disciplines collaborate (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015; Trotter, 2016). Academic independence offers them a chance to examine and discover knowledge and skills that increase their experience's wealth. For Jay, the independence and freedom offered him a platform to learn new software pertinent to the consolidation of his research output.

“...you are not micromanaged, so that allows you to do what you want; focus on the things you feel you need to do. So, for example, I'm doing research now, and I want to; I feel like I need to learn a new software package, and I spent a month learning that package, and after that, I can do my research...” (Jay).

Although the institution might give guidelines or establish principles, academics must adhere to developing their teaching content. The autonomy to determine a considerable amount of the content ultimately stimulates innovation (Scott, 2005; Henkel, 2011). Amy expressed concerns over the administrative burdens of teaching a large class. However, what keeps her motivated is her freedom to develop course content that aligns with her teaching style and helps her students.

“...think the fact that we're not being micromanaged at all by the college accounting, there's a lot of freedom in terms of how you structure your course, how you structure your lecture, how many days a week you work from home as long as your output is like steady and meets the quality requirement thing. There's not a lot of, and it's not a structured environment where you feel micromanaged...” (Amy).

The notion that academic freedom enhances performance has been documented in the literature (Kulski & Groombridge, 2004; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013; Delanty, 2001). Findings from this study revealed that emerging academics believe that this freedom should not be merely research-focused but should be extended to the development of teaching content. This is why the central theme generated is academic independence- a representation of autonomy to create content they deem fit, provided it fits within the institution's ethical boundaries.

6.3.3 Departmental and Collegiate Support

For some, performance is symbolized by active engagement in the structural decision-making process. This signals a commitment to departmental leadership and the intrinsic desire to improve learning (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Val confesses to experiencing no barrier, as indicated by his department members' acceptance and acknowledgment of his opinions.

“Basically, they involve me in decision making, and even though I feel like I am a new person, they take my opinion very seriously, so I think in my department there haven't been any barriers yet; hopefully, there won't be any...”. (Val).

It is apparent that an emerging academic could struggle in a couple of areas but hesitate to show this weakness. An atmosphere that provokes knowledge sharing enables these academics to open up about their concerns, thereby inviting help from others (Chalmers & Thomson, 2008). Amy disclosed that an ecosystem of sharing inspired her comprehension of several areas in her discipline. She was made to feel like a fundamental part of the group, in which her involvement was substantial despite how little she perceived it to be.

“...another factor is like most of the lecturers at UCT who have been there for quite some while are very, they're very open to the idea of sharing the knowledge and sharing content that they've worked on or sharing the slides. And I think that culture, of like taking hands and helping each other and like transferring the knowledge that you've gained through experience, versus letting someone just sink or swim by themselves has also been contributing to my success, just the fact that you know that people do have your back and that people are very like forthcoming with sharing the experience and sharing the knowledge and mentoring...” (Amy).

Findings from this study show that encouraging academic staff engagement keeps them actively involved and elevates their performance. Emerging academics in this system become unafraid to take risks and are more exposed to constructive feedback (Hardre,

Beesley, Miller, & Pace, 2011). For emerging academics with these leadership instincts, their functioning is boosted by the enormity of worth placed on their administrative contributions and receptiveness to their ideas.

6.3.4 Industry Application

One of the most important reasons for completing a degree in an institution is to apply teaching content to solve practical problems. Val, for instance, sees industry application as the principal driver of his peak performance in academia. His previous work experience outside academia serves as a source of inspiration to prioritize practical training when dealing with his students.

“The degree that I am teaching on is a degree I did myself, so I took this degree, and then I worked in the industry for a year, and then I came back. So, working in the industry and seeing how what you learned can be put into practice is also a sort of motivation to succeed because I can put the pictures together, so I try to put the picture together for students as well if that makes sense...” (Val).

While application to the industry is conventionally perceived as a learning outcome, findings from this study reveal that it can also be channeled toward stimulating emerging academics to strive for excellence in their careers (Bunting & Cloete 2004; Bexley, James & Arkoudis 2011). This relatively novel perspective serves to highlight the gratification some academics experience from just teaching. Industry application is critical to curriculum development, and every academic has a responsibility to update their instructional materials to align with industry needs consistently.

6.3.5 Excellent Resources

For emerging academics to build sufficient expertise in their discipline, institutions must be proactive in providing a sustainable and effective learning infrastructure. At UCT, these provisions include high-speed internet, access to international journals, VULA to facilitate online learning, and paid software packages for academics who seek to create independent content. During the interviews, Meg commended the institution for its resounding determination to provide tools that strengthen teaching and research quality.

“We have amazing lecture halls, we have amazing electronic equipment, and we have a great IT infrastructure always ready to help if there's a problem. And now, even with online teaching, I've been so impressed by the various online platforms that we have available, and although it took some extra work on my part to move all my lectures online and created lessons into VULA. All those resources were available, and there was always someone at UCT available to help me in case I got stuck anyway...” (Meg)

For Ivy, the fulfilment she experiences goes beyond just the utilization of resources. It also extends towards equality and equity systems. She has never felt discriminated against and is very impressed with the degree of support she gets from her faculty.

“I would be lying. If I say that I was not, or I'm not, given the support I need to make it at UCT, I would be lying. If I say that I'm being racially discriminated at UCT, I would be lying out of my teeth if I say that I'm not being given an opportunity to succeed as an academic at UCT. They are more than enough support structures within the faculty and within the university that are put in place for us to succeed” (Ivy).

Findings from this study revealed that technological and innovative infrastructure is vital to the job satisfaction experienced by its emerging academics. This infrastructure's impact can only be sustainable if UCT retains its commitment to equity and eliminates all forms of discrimination. Emerging academics can only benefit from these resources by learning how they operate and by proactively utilizing them in their research and formulation of teaching content.

6.4 PERFORMANCE BARRIERS

6.4.1 Rigid Performance Evaluation Systems

Despite their affection and passion for their discipline, emerging academics also have a keen desire to climb academia's hierarchical career ladder. For this progression to be attained, the institution is continuously evaluated using specified milestones (Figlio & Schapiro, 2017; Fitzmaurice, 2013). These milestones contain contingencies and prerequisites which every academic within the system seeks to fulfill for each promotional phase. Based on the UCTs system of evaluation, academics need to meet certain qualities for research output.

They are aware of the need to be socially responsible and to realize several teaching requirements. For some academics, these standards are rigid and ubiquitous and do not take careful account of the relative nature of the specificity of each discipline.

Amy confesses to her struggles in fulfilling the required research output. Her discipline weighs enormously on pragmatically resolving industrial finance and commercial applicability issues rather than discovering unexplored areas in knowledge.

“I think the field that we're in as Chartered Accountants is, we are trying to become Chartered Accountants. We don't really have a lot of exposure to research. So, when you go on to university, and you hear that as part of the expectation of being an academic is that you need to do this research, or you need to do your masters... and a Ph.D. It's quite daunting initially.... I think if you're an engineer or a doctor and you are very passionate about finding a cure for cancer, then I can see that the research component is important to you because you're making a life-changing contribution to society. Whereas I think we work with financial accounting and taxation, but when you're not really impacting lives with the research you're doing... I've been struggling personally with as an academic, is the pressure to do research in this field. But I feel that this field is not really contributing to humanity in the bigger picture. It's like, contributing to knowledge, but it's not making a difference in one's life...” (Amy).

Emerging academics like Amy strongly opine that research standards are too prescriptive, and the unwavering adherence to them is disadvantageous to successful assimilation into the institution. A more nuanced approach that considers the nature and scope of each discipline will be much more desirable. Sue asserts that most academics struggle to handle the enormous teaching load and are still required to fulfill the research output.

“...and I think for a lot of academics, that is a huge deal. You know, how do you how do you balance the two because they take a lot of work both of them at the same time, some people succeed more in one, some people succeed in the other. But like I said, if you don't meet the entire criteria, you do not get promoted....” (Sue).

Sue goes further to express her discontent with the intensive administrative responsibilities of academics. Although studies stipulate that administrative duties and organizational skills are indispensable for academics, Sue believes that the time-consuming

nature of administrative tasks puts every academic in a harmful situation, especially with regards to meeting up to promotional requisites,

“...you spend a lot of time on these basic administrative things that really take time. And then sometimes it's to the neglect of trying never to guess or trying to be part of workshops and collaborative initiatives... and so what I'm trying to say to you is that teaching is not a challenge for just teaching, but in terms of other areas of professional development...” (Sue)

There was a consensus amongst the emerging academics that the teaching load at UCT is burdensome. This is not because they do not enjoy teaching, but because the promotional requirements are asymmetrical to the teaching heft. According to Tom, this becomes labor-intensive, making it almost impossible to build a sufficient research portfolio.

“...I think the barrier is definitely within my faculty when coming in is the teaching load... that often gets placed on a new academic entering the faculty...because teaching is very labor-intensive, very time-intensive...and then what compounds that is the realization by yourself that you've got this research portfolio, and the thesis presents that you need to develop...” (Tom).

The emerging academics interviewed voiced concerns for the high expectations of the institution, even in unfavorable conditions. One such circumstance is the COVID-19 pandemic that ravaged the global community when the interviews were conducted. UCT announced an Emergency Remote Teaching that mandates academics to continue their teaching using strictly online platforms. Notwithstanding that this was unique and detailed, academics like Ivy expressed their apprehension for the system. She believes that situations like this reinforced the lack of empathy and understanding in the institutional dictate for teaching and administration.

“.... Emergency Response Teaching is a huge barrier to everyone's optimal performance as anything. So, as it's a barrier to optimal performance as a human being and as a parent and as a teacher and as an academic, I think it's a barrier to all students' optimal performance. So, I think that would be the best thing for us to reevaluate these are not in no way actual teaching. It's an extremely compromised project; what's trying to be done now and taking the kind of time involved in what we're being forced to do now is ridiculous. I mean, you can't. I'm in my office right now, because I can't do this at home, because I've got a two year old and because the

internet isn't good enough. Still, I'm coming to the office, and that means coming into the world at a moment when there's a pandemic, and that's highly dangerous and unsafe. And I wish I didn't have to do it..." (Liz).

Publication of academic research in top-tier journals can be intellectually intensive (Trotter, 2016; Korica & Molloy, 2010). Although an academic's responsibility is to both impact and create knowledge, the bone of contention ensures that the effort ratio's reward to effort ratio is fair to all.

6.4.2 Industry Poaching

One of the most notable criteria for ranking an institution is the strength of its academic staff. The fertility of its educational and intellectual resources drives its students' excellence and how progressive its policies are (McAlpine, 2012a; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2011). However, academia faces a severe threat as the industry offers more robust financial and welfare packages. Inevitably, academics are pulled away or poached by the industry, leading to a significant decrease in intellectual potency. While studies have shown that the market or industry influences both curriculum development and research focus of academics (Manning 2013; Dill, Massy, Williams, & Cook, 1996; Sayers, 2013); this study's findings reveal that this could lead to a mass exodus of academics to the STEM-related industries. The bearing this could have on academics still within the system is overwhelming, as they are now tasked with more responsibilities than they can handle. Emerging academics in this study suggest that more financial and social incentives must be put to keep academics within the system.

6.4.3 Unsupportive Work Environment

Some emerging academics questioned the frail support they have received since joining their faculties. In a high-pressure atmosphere, academics may need direction in navigating the system, and an absence of this could lead to feelings of desertion or abandonment. While emerging academics need to be given the independence to make decisions, caution must be taken to ensure that they do not wander off without adequate

supervision. Kim experienced situations where she was left confused about the appropriate course of action to take.

“I think the lack of support for me, and you know why I say that is because you are left to make decisions on your own, and you may not have your managers backing that's If you've done that... This is important, and this is important because right now, I feel like I have had my hands in everywhere and not sure what is the priority...”
(Kim).

For Zoe, the support provisions at UCT are encouraging but deficient in providing sustenance for fulfilling the immense work requirement. Consequently, emerging academics are left struggling to find their footing leading to severe mental health challenges

“...I don't find the climate very supportive. I mean, I've had many people trying to stay alive and just people. I find a lot of people actually with mental health issues, which, for me, it's very sad. We all come on scene and are okay as students, and then we join the academic environment, like people are really barely coping...” (Zoe).

Having the capacity to cope with multiple academic responsibilities requires conscientiousness and organizational skills (Middleton, 2009; Fataar, 2003). But the danger of multitasking is that emerging academics may become vulnerable to burnout and be ineffective in all areas. Kim expressed this concern because she still has to complete her Ph.D. and incorporate her study into her academic obligations.

“...yeah. multiple roles, you are a convener, you are a lecturer, you are also going to be a student because Ph.D., so it feels like so many roles in my neck... if I think about my program, I'm supposed to have a Ph.D. in three years. That like gives me just a shocker because that's much and like just teaching convening and doing it under supervision...” (Kim).

The worst part about being an emerging academic is the job uncertainty they face due to the lengthy probationary period at UCT. The probationary period for a new academic at UCT is three years, making them susceptible to performance anxiety. Although the probationary period is put in place to ascertain institutional fit and preparedness, Liz concedes that the uncertainty could deter optimal performance.

“...they, of course, as early career academic, which I know is your focus, and we were on probation for three years. So, compared to some other, more permanent staff

that have been here for longer, I'm more precarious, even though I understand having a permanent job in the academy in the first place makes me look way more secure than many scholar employees..." (Liz).

For Eva, her period of uncertainty was during her Postdoctoral program. During this phase, she was always hesitant to contribute to departmental growth. It also kept her in enormous self-doubt as to what her responsibilities were in the job.

"...I think the institutional uncertainty for Post-Doc research was a real barrier. You know, I was really not certain where I stood within the institution, and I think not being certain about what this position meant in terms of duties and expectations was difficult... You know, am I a student? Yes, I am registered as a student, but I do not identify as a student because I have got my Ph.D. and I am not engaged in any courses, but I am not really a member of staff, I am not expected or invited to go to staff meetings..." (Eva).

It is important to note that UCT does give an outline of what the job responsibilities are. Still, the emerging academics that contributed to this theme admitted that job insecurity creates a feeling of role ambiguity and makes them question the scope of privileges they enjoy. As an institution, the demands on emerging academics do not solely arise from university governance and the students. Emerging academics who are anxious about their jobs' certitude also have to deal with students who petition for so much more. Amy lays out this sentiment vehemently as she believes that these unrelenting student demands can be a barrier to an academic's successful performance.

"...I think on the other hand, something that's also quite challenging is our students are very demanding, I think because we do offer them so many resources. And I also think just the generation that we are dealing with or used to instant gratification and immediate access to everything. So, I do think something that also puts pressure on a lecturer is the expectation from students that you are always on, that you need to be accessible via WhatsApp at like 11 o'clock on a Saturday night, which is not always, like possible..." (Amy).

Granted, academics have documented extensively in the literature (Smith, Deepwell, & Shrives, 2013; Reed, 2012; Pick, Symons & Teo, 2015). However, this study's findings qualitatively reveal the impact of these responsibilities on emerging academics struggling to acclimatize themselves to the institution. The effect can be particularly dismaying for

academics who find themselves in a lengthy probationary period. The findings also underscore the importance of a formalized indication and training for emerging academics to have a lucid picture of what the job entails. Most scholars starting a career in academia have not been trained for their administrative and management aspects. This training also needs to be prioritized.

7 CHAPTER SEVEN: ANALYSIS – IMPACT OF IDENTITY AND RELATION TO THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

7.1 OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the impact of personal background on how academia is experienced. It explores the themes that arose from emerging academic participants' accounts of how their racial identity shaped their assimilation into their faculties. The chapter further discusses the prevalence of sexism experienced by female academics who identified it as a limiting factor to their workplace functioning. A novel theme explained in this chapter is ageism, a theme that conveys the constant condescension younger academics face from their colleagues. In addition to these contents, this section addresses the superordinate theme of student relations wherein academics gave detailed accounts of how their personal stories have enabled them to connect with their students. The analysis provided a broad overview of how this strategy encourages students to model positive behaviors that would lead to their career success as emerging academics.

7.2 RACIAL AND GENDER IDENTITY

7.2.1 Systemic Inequalities

The metric of evaluating performance can be considered fair when all, irrespective of their backgrounds, are given an even platform to compete. For emerging academics to stay motivated to attain their personal goals or milestones, they must sense that the 'playing ground' is leveled. Their efforts are recognized compared to others (Tefera, Powers, & Fischman, 2018). During the interview process of the current study, Ray affirmed his dissatisfaction with the perceived unfairness of the performance evaluation system at UCT. He attributed this inequitable structure to his background as a person of color. He strongly expressed his belief that others of different races comparatively put less effort but attain beneficial outcomes.

“...I fall in the category of non-whites, and so, I don't get the same respect as the opposite classing in this area... doing the same module... if not even more than all of them... why should I have to be still proving myself where other people who are working less and getting more benefits than myself from all of this... Is it because I'm

of a certain demographic? One and if it is, then why does that culture still exist..."
(Ray).

For Ray, the problem is systemic, and he questions why it still exists and challenging the fact that it is taking a significant amount of time to fix. For academics with experiences similar to Ray, their efforts may never be acknowledged in the academic space because they believe it is fundamentally and historically skewed. As UCT seeks to create a ubiquitous administrative structure that is fully inclusive, initiatives have been introduced to encourage all, irrespective of ethnic identities, to participate in its academic growth fully. While this is an encouraging development, Zoe believes that it is counterproductive to her evolution as an academic. She believes others often judge her role as one just to fill a space rather than a fair attribution to the merits of her qualifications.

"...so of course we were all the time you are kind of seen as someone who has to help out with the IT issues, I cannot be helping Ph.D. students because I don't have the experience and probably yes, even it said that at times Its not just white colleagues that make you feel like you are equity... it's like we got the jobs because UCT has decided to transform, not because we've got the same Master's qualification as colleagues did..." (Zoe)

The pressure to perform exceedingly well may also come from the communities that emerging academics seek to represent in the institution. Some emerging academics, like Tom, feel a level of accountability to the minority communities they come from, which informs their will to leave a legacy in academia.

"...being a person of color, entering a university such as UCT, you've got to have quite a bit of patience externally and internally... internally being that you realize the responsibility that has been placed upon you, not only to... your students that you teach, etc.. but also from the community from which you come or from which you find yourself now, because it's such a small percentage of the population that consider or are fortunate enough to call themselves academic, you've got a quite a significant role to play in society..." (Tom).

Asides from the perception that her position as an academic is ascribed to solely filling equity quotas, Zoe also admits to battling with a system where she is not considered an expert due to her gender. This notion is not perpetuated by her colleagues only but also by students. Such ones are schematically conditioned to believe that only people of a particular

gender and age can attain the academic legitimacy to be qualified to teach a specific discipline, leaving female academics like Zoe with the additional burden of proving their worth.

“...It's even worse if you are female because the expectation is that you should be some 50- year-old white male who supposedly knows everything and is an expert in everything. So, the problem then becomes... now you kind of have to prove yourself to students... to colleagues that, well, I actually earned this job. I know what I'm doing. It was not just an employment equity; it was not just transformation. I actually qualified to be teaching this class. I'm qualified to be doing the same research or having the office next door.... Yeah, we kind of have to do twice as much as our white colleagues....” (Zoe)

The experience of subtle sexism amongst female academics is prevalent and has stifled the gratification that they could have experienced in their workplace (Morley, 2014; Seierstad & Healy, 2012). The gender dynamics may create scenarios where negative stereotypes about women are reinforced (Dixon, 2013). This becomes apparent in male-dominated faculties. Ida admits that in the engineering faculty where she teaches, she has experienced uncomfortable conversations and has been on the receiving end of false labels to her gender identity.

“...I am a black female, and I am originally, I am not from South Africa. I am originally from Tanzania, so that has kind... of formulated my experience a bit because it was always weird, especially when I was a new academic at the University. I was probably the youngest member of the staff... I was, you know, black and female in a majority male department... it was a bit daunting... there were the odd one or two conversations that were, you know... not great, but I think that's just part of life, you take it.... ...Yeah, and even then, I always get reassurance from other people; in the department that you know... I shouldn't take stuff like that too seriously...” (Ida).

The strengthening of stereotypes against emerging female academics could lead to feelings of exclusion and isolation. The sense of exclusion becomes evident when emerging female academics feel no one understands them nor is willing to empathize with their struggles (Moss & Richter, 2011; Barg, 2009). This consequently results in isolation, causing them to withdraw from colleagues or research groups crafted initially to serve the purpose of support systems.

The anxiety that results from being in a work environment that could be triggering or one where work associates are not passionate about the social issues that define female emerging academics also expressed a female emerging academic. Eva confesses that while her research inclinations typically tilt towards social issues that affect black women, it is daunting to work in an environment where colleagues show little desire to explore these issues' relevance.

“...The feeling around the space, I would say, and I think you know conversations with colleagues... I often felt like yes, they did not necessarily feel passionate about the things I felt passionate about, and that would be.... you know, even in the sense of the research... as you know, my research reveals certain ways that women, particularly black women, are being discriminated against in public... In the medical system... in the contraceptive delivery system in this country... and feeling like... you know discovering or becoming aware of those patterns and knowing what's important for my work. It was also important for my feminism and feeling like you know when I try to share those things with my colleagues, it was just silence...” (Eva).

The racial and gender identity of emerging academics could deter them from successfully adapting to the workplace. This is because some academics may find themselves in faculties or disciplines filled with people who may harbor biases or stereotypes against their identities (Luvalo, 2019; Parsons & Priola, 2013). This study's findings show that coworkers or students may not express these stereotypes blatantly but happens inadvertently. However, when such stereotypes are defined, they become disincentives and may make the workplace hostile to emerging academics.

7.2.2 Whiteness Experiences

Although white emerging academics are often perceived to be privileged, this study's findings highlight the struggles of some who believe their whiteness has put them in a position of limited opportunities. Conversations around race mostly revolve around segregation and its historical effect on minorities (Chetty & Merret, 2014; Cooper & Subotzky, 2001). Policies to mitigate this negative historical precedence have also impacted white emerging academics within the institution. Academics like Ala expressed her enormous

appreciation for transformational strategies at UCT and admitted that her white racial background had limited her research funding prospects.

“...actually, this is a point where my racial background has not been in favor... So, I am identified with being a white South African, and many opportunities for funding are for people being previously disadvantaged or to enhance transformation. So sometimes I have been unsuccessful purely because of my demographics, and so that is a barrier...” (Ala).

Highlighting white academics' experiences at UCT helps craft a more inclusive strategy for transformation and suggests the best possible empathetic approach to conversations about whiteness. Eva concedes that having a platform and the freedom to have conversations about her whiteness was a turning point for her when she arrived at the institution.

“...It was a profound experience to arrive in 2015 and to be immediately engaged on what it means to be a white person at a South African institution, and of course, my first colleagues were white as well- two white men. I had one African colleague who left after two years, the senior lecturer in the department, and he and I had a very good relationship. We were able to engage in conversations around, you know, the whiteness of UCT. you know he would share his experience of being a black academic with me, so it certainly was something that I spent a lot of time thinking about and trying to be in a constant space of awareness...” (Eva).

Intersubjective dialogue on racial experiences enriches the work environment and guarantees that emerging academics form a deeper appreciation for their colleagues (Tabensky & Mathews, 2015). Findings from these interviews highlight that feeling discriminated against does not entirely hinge on the distribution of resources. The alliances that emerging academics form do not undermine any aspect of their lived experience. Amy expressed her thoughts on this when she disclosed that even if she falls within a white minority, her encounter with other cultures has been an enriching experience.

“...I've also never felt like if anything, I think at UCT, if you are white, you are more in the minority. Whereas when I was at Stellenbosch, I'm Afrikaans speaking... So, Stellenbosch was very easy for me to fit into the culture because everyone was Afrikaans. Everyone, like had the same background as me growing up and going through university, when I came to UCT, a completely different culture.... it was very

interesting to learn about all these different cultures. For the first time, I actually felt that I'm in an environment that is more representative of South Africa is actually like... because South Africa does not just consist of white Afrikaans speaking people. And I really enjoyed it, but I've never felt being discriminated against because I am white, or because I'm female..." (Amy).

7.2.3 Experiences of Ageism

During the interview, a novel and unexpected finding was ageism, which impacted two of the youngest emerging academics in the study. As used in the current study context, ageism suggests the negative effect of stereotypes and discrimination due to the age of an emerging academic (Bayl-Smith & Griffin, 2014; Greenberg, Schimel, Martens, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 2001). For these academics, both senior colleagues and the students regard them with condescension or undermine their contribution due to their age. During the interviews, Kya spoke extensively about the challenges of teaching in a faculty where a couple of her students are older than her. This youthfulness puts her in a dangerous position when trying to connect with them and makes them doubt her competence in teaching individual courses.

"... I mean, I'm 23 years old, and there are not many lecturers who are 23 years old... it is a personal factor, or that has influenced my teaching because I feel that I have to... I mean, some of my students are older than me.... And so, it's kind of like, I don't know, It's kind of like you feel like you have to teach in an absolutely perfect way because they kind of like, Who are you to be teaching me, you're like a kid yourself, you know? So, I think age is a big thing" (Kya).

Students who perform excellently and show great promise are often thrust into academia due to the increased value. This accelerates their career progression and puts them in academic leadership at a very young age. Ultimately, they have a responsibility to interact with colleagues that may be twice their age. These young academics may rank higher in academic qualification and positional hierarchy in exceptional cases than associates older than them. Her contributions often get undercut for Kay, which demoralizes her genuine intent to participate in educational meetings or gatherings.

"... I know my colleagues know I'm just straight out of university, and so I've never directly been made to feel that my opinions aren't considered. But I feel like they're

not held in as high regard as other people who have been in the field for longer... I know, I do know; you definitely feel intimidated to sit into a meeting where there are people who've been in the field for longer than you've been alive, you know. And so, you sometimes you are reluctant to even give your opinion because of that..." (Kya).

Ageism in the workplace is conventionally positioned to be experienced by the elderly or senior associates (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; DeArmond et al., 2006; McCann & Giles, 2002). On the contrary, this study's findings give more in-depth insights into ageism's impact on younger or emerging academics. Entry into academia naturally places a burden of proof on emerging academics who often start with a probationary period. This pressure is heightened when these academics are frequently made to feel inferior despite their remarkable qualifications.

7.3 IMPACT ON STUDENT RELATIONS

7.3.1 Empathy and Receptiveness

Emerging academics were once students, and a number of them may still be enrolled in advanced programs. This background is highly critical to their display of empathy and receptivity to the plights of students. In exploring the impact of their educational background on students' relations, emerging academics revealed their unwavering commitment to ensure that their students do not experience hurdles similar to what they faced (Ioannidou & Konstantikaki, 2008; Wilson, 2011). For Sue, one of the unique limitations was that of computer literacy. Her disadvantaged background meant that she was behind most of her peers in a tertiary education system that necessitates computers. A retrospective glance at these experiences aided her increased connection to students of comparable backgrounds.

"I came from a disadvantaged school, a public school, for that matter. So, when I went into university, I had to really catch up with many things that sort of appeared.....in my school we didn't use computers, for example. So, coming to university and being told that I have to type all my assignments was a bit of a challenge.... also, I didn't, for example, have any white teacher in my schooling, so all the way from primary to high school, I never had a single white Teacher. So, what that did for me was that it made me not really want to raise my hand in class because that space was just a strange, unfamiliar space for me to have white classmates and a

white lecturer.... So, it also taught me that sometimes you have to move towards students and not wait for them to come to you, because sometimes you don't know what they're thinking, you know, you don't know what their fears are, what their insecurities are..." (Sue).

As documented by researchers Kuh et al. (1999) and Wilson (2011), academics who have experienced the difficulties of financially disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds tend to be more empathetic in their students' treatments. Although they still uphold the principles of excellence and grit in students, they adopt teaching and conversational styles that facilitate optimal performance in all students. During the interview, Meg confessed to having struggled with the language barrier as a student. Being made to speak a language that is not her first or home language put her at a disadvantage compared to her peers who had a firm grasp of the English Language. This experience continually propels her to use apt and straightforward words to convey her teaching content to her current students.

"...I think the fact that English isn't my home language and I actually learned to speak it much later in life definitely helped me to think about just how I present... and how I speak. I think I speak in a simple way... and I think the fact that I have English as a second language has helped me empathize more with students who have English as a second language, which sometimes it's the majority of students in my class... So, I tend not to use very fancy words, you know, I try to think about how to explain concepts in simple terms. So, I think that has actually helped my teaching to you know... the audience that I have if that makes sense..." (Meg).

The ease of communication between students and academics eliminates the existing power distance and guarantees that students do not experience alienation from their educational environment. Peer relations with others from affluent backgrounds could reinforce the belief that they are inadequate and ultimately push them towards isolation. Sue divulges her experience of being isolated while studying, encouraging students to approach her anytime they face similar difficulty or feel the urge to.

"...I tend to take the approach of moving towards students because I have experiences of feeling isolated and alienated from the space... perhaps maybe my accent wasn't as polished enough, or I just didn't feel like you know... Yeah, and I never really had that teacher's pet thing in high school either. I just did my own thing. But I think I would have performed better had I had the confidence to interact with

lecturers to ask questions in class. So, what I am basically saying is that level of confidence took away from my experience as a university student..." (Sue).

This theme's findings reflect the qualities of humility and humanity displayed by emerging academics towards their students. Their educational background and experiences have stimulated them to do more than just satisfy their teaching duties and engender an atmosphere where students feel inspired to express themselves. By keeping an open-door policy, displaying empathic listening, ensuring simplicity in communication, and adopting openness to student feedback, emerging academics are at the forefront of establishing an all-encompassing edification model.

7.3.2 Inspiration to Students

One of the salient cornerstones of success in academia is rigor, and the excellent performance of early-career academics displays this during their time as full-time students. Academic exceptionalism drives them to invest personal resources for learning (Fensham, 2004; McAlpine, 2012a). Their presence and achievements should encapsulate their students' aspirations, and their drive should generate a deeper appreciation for their discipline amongst students. Dan passionately and actively expresses this sentiment by designing his teaching to include strategies for engendering disciplinary affection in his students.

"I am passionate about giving people the option because this field, as you would know from your field as well... academic is not an easy path for anybody... I do not want to force students into spaces just because you know there is an opportunity there.... but I want to give students who are approaching the subjects on the perspective of "I found this really interesting I love it... but this is not for me...I can't make a career, "... and those are the student I want to catch and say, "yes you can.... it is quite possible for you to do that, and you can have a rich, rewarding life and career based on philosophy... and I am hoping that that would result in more student of color entering into the field... and if in 10 years we are at a stage where it is more representational of the demographics of the country..." (Dan).

Academics like Dan are always honored to display their immense affection for what they teach or specialize in. This passion is positively contagious as it seeks to eliminate all doubts from the students who may be inclined to pursue a career in academia. For other

academics, their developmental stories, victories over challenging career obstacles, and personalized narratives are woven into their teaching to reach out to hesitant students. This group of academics aspires to become a crystalized personification of the success stories their students envision. Ivy confirms that her action and the encounters throughout life has fashioned her into a model deserving of emulation. Ivy asserts that her students can see themselves through the identification process, which has become one of the principal determinants of their success.

“I think my background is a strength... It's a strength in the sense that I come into the classroom, and I'm not just relatable, but I can relate in the sense that I am not just a symbol for transformation... But I am the transformation that my students have been waiting for... you know, coming from Venda in Limpopo... any opportunity for you to come out and succeed and actually be something out of that place could be nothing short but by the grace of God actually is a strength for me.... I go into the class, and I find students who come from the same place, and when they see me on that platform, they are inspired and not just because I look like them... but I'm pretty darn good at what I do. So, I feel like that is a strength opportunity for me; it is not a weakness at all... I feel like it's a strength, and I'm representing my community within the space. So, it's essential for me, and I'm very proud of where I come from.” (Ivy).

Social learning theories stress observational learning's essence in shaping behavioral outcomes (Bandura, 1977; McLeod, 2016). Emerging academics who seek to adopt this teaching style perceive their career milestones as the most effective way to influence their students. Such ones share their reading styles, study patterns, strategies for handling pressure, and current real-life accounts of how they resolve personal difficulties. Their students are then reinforced when they relatively align their academic lives to that of the emerging academics, which yields the desired results.

8 CHAPTER EIGHT: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

8.1 OUTLINE OF CHAPTER

This concluding chapter presents the implications of the findings and their impact on the overall body of knowledge. It elucidates how this research's results can be instrumental in shaping theory, practice, and public policy around early-career academics' experiences. As stated, this study's sample objectives are to explore the knowledge of emerging academics with a focus on the factors that either enhance or inhibit their performances while systematically identifying the impact of social identities (class, race, gender) on how emerging academics experience UCT. This section delineates the study's findings and its novel contribution to further research in line with these objectives. It equally identifies the methodological and theoretical limitations of the course. These limitations included the logistical challenges faced when conducting the study and the conditions that served as a deterrent to a smooth data collection process. Finally, this chapter gives recommendations for future research. These recommendations aim to strengthen future discourse on academic experiences and mitigate the restraints faced when conducting this study.

8.2 CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY

The ensuing paragraphs highlight the overarching implications of the study and its contributions.

8.2.1 Renewed Sense of Academic Autonomy

As outlined earlier, one of the four principal constructs of the identity-trajectory framework is agency. This implies the innate drive in academics to overcome challenges and enjoy the freedom of choosing their preferred research trajectory (McAlpine, Amundsen & JazvacMartek 2010). Current findings show that emerging academics want a renewed sense of autonomy in academia. Rather than the mere freedom to choose a research trajectory as conventionally perceived, they have the independence to design their curricula and identify teaching content that they feel is suitable for their student. Despite the ongoing marketization of institutions, some emerging academics at UCT are satisfied and content with the degree of professional freedom and autonomy they have received from the institution.

8.2.2 Acknowledging the Contextual Narratives in Curriculum Development

Defining what it entails to be an academic has traditionally revolved around academic roles, responsibilities, and duties. These duties typically involve engaging in cutting-edge research and teaching. This study extends this definition to include teaching content as both a fundamental responsibility and an essential tool in reflecting the African communities' contextual narratives. Emerging academics in this study conceded that a fully functional academic must aspire to reiterate African knowledge's importance and channel it into curriculum development.

8.2.3 The implication of Representation and Advocacy

Representation and advocacy were identified as principal components in defining an emerging academic. As outlined earlier, intersectionality theory points to the essence of creating an academic space to engender adequate representation (Tefera, Powers, & Fischman, 2018). These contents reflect the sense of pride felt by academics to embody the communities from which they emerged and to use their acquired position as a tool to encourage others from these communities to seek out higher educational opportunities. The implication of this is that, to most, academia is not a mere job or mandatory occupation but one that exemplifies a symbolic victory for their families, societies, and the background they grew up in.

8.2.4 Impact of Prescriptive Standards of Performance

The institutional strand of the identity trajectory framework points to the impactful interaction between academics and their institutions (McAlpine 2012c). This places the institution in setting performance standards and matrixes for academics (McAlpine, Amundsen & Turner 2013b). Contrary to the view that academics must strive to uphold specific prescriptive standards and aim towards an ideal, this study's findings place higher significance on an emerging academic's interminable character-building process. This process requires a reflective evaluation of goals and capacity and a conscious effort to attain growth and development. The intellectual atmosphere stimulates grit, resilience, and character strength, qualities that are perceived to be essential for a productive and enduring career.

8.2.5 Connectedness a factor in improving Student-Lecturer Relationship

In addition to the established qualities of intellectual curiosity, robust research aptitude, and communication skills, this study contributes another layer to archetypal traits of an academic, which is connectedness. The quality of connectedness represents an instrumental decision by an emerging academic to reduce the power distance between them and their students and present themselves as humble and relatable. This does not involve the complete elimination of professional boundaries but instead consists of creating an atmosphere where students see a reflection of themselves in the academic and equally experience the freedom to share their unique chronicles or insecurities that negatively affect their performance.

8.2.6 The Need for Recognizing Admin-Intensive Responsibilities

A generally shared consensus is that an academic's role involves research, teaching, and social responsiveness. While these roles were consistent with the findings from the current study, this study's contributions further identified the often-neglected administrative responsibilities of an academic. These responsibilities include the organization of plans such as the class roster, the implementation of tutorial structures, marking and evaluation of assessment, consultations with students, and many more activities. Although these responsibilities are tied to research or teaching responsibilities, they are consistently intense, burdensome, and time-consuming. Undermining these tasks deters the gratification of academia by emerging academics.

8.2.7 The Implication of Transitional Transformation

The progress of UCT in facilitating a more inclusive space of academic staff development and learning was acknowledged. However, this progress is undermined by its grapple with its apartheid history and the depth of national structural inequalities that have penetrated the university. This struggle birthed the unique theme called “transitional transformation,” a theme conveying emerging academics’ opinions that UCT’s institutional transformation is transitioning. Although the rise of recent protest movements has led some to opine that this progress is inadequate, its highly politically conscious environment and

academics' freedom to continually challenge existing structures are recognized as steps in the right direction.

8.2.8 Pedagogical Redefinition Process

This relates to the intellectual strand of the identity trajectory framework, where academics are mandated to take an active role in constructing efficient teaching practices ((McAlpine, 2012a. Hounsell, 2011). A unique theme that surfaced from this research is the importance of pedagogical redefinition in shaping an academic's transformative experience. The implication of this is to expedite conversations about the method and practice of teaching related to racial and gender equality. Transformation goes beyond a mere increase in numerical racial quotas. Still, it involves engendering collaborative lecture spaces for all in the diverse crop of students to contribute their perspectives to teaching content.

8.2.9 The Implication of Ageism to Young Academics

The experience of ageism among young academics is a striking finding from this study. Many young scholars are thrust into the academic space at a relatively young age due to their stellar and outstanding academic records. Some might be similarly positioned as older colleagues, resulting in reported condescension and apparent discrimination experiences. The ideas of such ones are undermined and judged as immature even by some of their students. Although ageism is conventionally known to occur as bias against the old, this study reveals its prevalence among young academics. Its majority, such as these, could drastically impact their teaching experience and deter their drive to collaborate.

8.2.10 Uneven Benchmarks for Evaluating Performance

The prescriptive standard for evaluating the performance of emerging academics has become difficult for their growth in academia. The benchmarks for both research output and teaching quantity have been generally perceived as unfair or unmerited. If promotional or career progressing yardsticks are weighted heavily on research, more should be done to reduce the expected teaching load of emerging academics. There is a consensus amongst

academics of the current study. In the existing literature, while an institution reserves the right to set targets for its academics, these targets' applications should be evenly moderated.

8.2.11 Impact of Student Massification

Students' massification has created a space where emerging academics struggle to keep up with the institutions' demands. Fewer academics are present to handle the enormity of teaching responsibilities, leaving them to fall on emerging academics. Participant academics in technical disciplines like engineering and computer science admitted to the industry's increased poaching of academics, resulting in many vacancies. Although students' massification has been perceived as favorable to students' technical development, academics from this study have voiced their discontent in the insufficient agency in the university administration to make up for the intensity of resulting complications.

8.2.12 The Need for Recognizing Teaching Quality

Most emerging academics expressed their genuine interest in and passion for teaching. This has facilitated the investment of enormous effort in the improvement of teaching quality. While education has been known to attract and improve students' quality of life, this study highlights the yearning by academics to be rewarded for their teaching value. Teaching is often perceived as just an obligation to be fulfilled rather than earning sufficient incentives for its eminence. This will ultimately eliminate the concerns that the enormity of the teaching load is unrewarded.

8.2.13 The Impact of Collaboration in International Domains of Research

In a bid to harness their intellectual curiosity in the knowledge-creating process, academics seek engagement with international research domains. Hence, interdisciplinary research and collaborations are conventionally core aspects of being an academic. However, findings from the current study indicate a need for a change in the process by which this is done. Emerging academics expressed that the international collaborative experience will be more meaningful if African scholars leverage African stories and the issues faced by their

committees. The leveraging procedure involves sharing these narratives when collaborating internationally and ensuring that they give the international community well-rounded information on local communities' issues.

8.2.14 Importance of a Formalized Induction Training

Institutions like UCT are under enormous pressure to rank high in the continental and worldwide university indexes. The burden of responsibility is consequently placed on its academics. As emerging academics enter the system, more must be done to ensure that they get the support required to cope with the high-performance atmosphere. Although they admit there are encouraging support systems in place, these systems must be targeted and inclusive of a formalized induction training to assist academics in finding their footing. While academic independence or autonomy improves engagement, the lack of initial structural direction may lead emerging academics to feel neglected and isolated.

8.3 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

This research was focused specifically on emerging academics at the University of Cape Town, a setting ultimately limiting the scope by which we can make overarching statements on academic experiences. It is important to note that educational experiences could differ across all institutions in South Africa and across the globe. Although UCT's environment provides a foundational understanding of the evolution of history with universities in South Africa, it may not portray a perfect representation of other academics' experiences in different institutions.

The research methodology used in this study offered a platform for personal and anecdotal impressions of academic experiences. While these narratives proved instrumental to developing a coherent conclusion, they are also vulnerable to the subjective researcher bias, which could have influenced the nature of follow-up questions or how themes were generated. As a result, caution needs to be taken when establishing conclusions from the findings of this study. Additionally, understanding the principal researcher's reflective position can aid in a nuanced understanding of the study.

Despite the assurance of confidentiality stated in the signed consent form, some emerging academics were hesitant to provide complete information and freely express their opinions on the institutional nature of UCT. Statements such as “I don’t want to get into trouble” “I wouldn’t want to say much about that” were repeatedly made and inferred by some academics, suggesting their lack of confidence in the assured ethics. This proved to be a limitation to the study and fully reflected the institutional structures' power struggle. These academics believed that expressing unchecked criticism for the institution and its administration could be costly, even in a safe space.

The study was conducted in the heat of the global COVID-19 pandemic. All university activities were conducted online, and there were standing restrictions on in-person meetings within the campus premises. In adherence to this, all interviews were conducted online using Microsoft teams. This led to several logistical and technical issues, as some interviews were challenging to complete due to the fluctuating network connection. Also, the recording of others did not produce the clarity an in-person interview would have provided. Opportunities to see the academic's facial and bodily reactions to the questions were limited, and chances to probe further based on non-verbal cues were restricted.

8.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.4.1 Recommendations for Advancing Institutional Systems, Culture, and Academic Experiences

8.4.1.1 *The clarity in Academic Focus:* Institutions like UCT need to have some clarity in their academic focus. This entails unambiguously stipulating academics if it is a research or teaching-oriented university. It will be of more significant benefit to channel promotional criteria and provide incentives to academics based on their focus. Academics currently face an enormous teaching load that they are rarely rewarded for. This creates uncertainties in their teaching approach and may effectively lead to a low work-life balance.

8.4.1.2 *Reduction in Financial constraints for Academics:* The bureaucratic barriers academics face when applying for funding are a significant setback to inspiring optimal performance. Although academics need to be held accountable for their funding requests, easing the process, especially for emerging academics, could be a meaningful step in encouraging active research participation.

8.4.1.3 *Facilitating a Sense of Community for Struggling Academics:* Communities for emerging academics should not be restricted to collaborative research groups. Several scholars continue to struggle with the admin-intensive nature of their responsibility as the atmosphere could be isolating and individualistic, culminating in severe mental health challenges. Although structures like the Emerging Researchers' Program have been instrumental in building a community, the institution should go further in creating supportive groups, team-building exercises, and frequent social events to help alleviate the overwhelming pressure of its high-performance environment.

8.4.2 Recommendation for Future Research

8.4.2.1 *Adaptation of A More Comprehensive Research Design:* For a holistic and more substantial comprehension of emerging academics' experiences, future research should employ case studies and a longitudinal approach. Case studies require a systematic investigation into the adventures of a few academics. The complexities of the academic space necessitate an understanding of the thought processes involved in making day-to-day decisions, interacting with colleagues, dealing with students, developing teaching content, administrative activities, and research trajectories. When this is done in collaboration with the longitudinal approach, it will give an all-inclusive detail of academic overtime progression. The repeated observation and evaluation of these academics' overtime will be instrumental in measuring the pace by which they adapt to the system and gauging institutional policies' effect on their career progression.

8.4.2.2 *Psycho-Social Approach to Exploring Experiences of Academics:* A psycho-social approach to exploring the perceptions and experiences of academics will help procure solutions to the mental health challenges they might face. This includes exploring factors such as personality, taking a deeper dive into their stress coping mechanism, and their issues around their adaptive strategies. The clinical approach will also give a sound understanding of the individual differences shaping their perception of the academic space and contribute a profound psychological layer to academic identity development's sociocultural conceptions.

8.4.2.3 *A Streamlined Faculty-Based Approach to Data Collection* A disciplinary-based approach to exploring emerging academics' experiences will also be beneficial. This requires that future research consider that each faculty or discipline has its unique approach to dealing with their academics. The overarching institutional requirements may be similar, but the faculty structures may be different. Distinctions like these and many more instrumentally shape academic experiences. Future research can provide more specificity and understanding in its resolutions to ameliorate emerging academics' experiences by focusing on a faculty or two and performing a comparative analysis between them.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Invitee,

My name is Odiase Osareme Nathan, I am a Master of Social Science in Psychology Student at the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town.

I am kindly requesting your participation in my study titled: **An Exploratory Study on the Experiences of Emerging Academics at the University of Cape Town (UCT)**

The study seeks to explore your experiences as an emerging academic at UCT. A semi-structured interview will be conducted, and the conversation will revolve around the experiences that have shaped you as an academic at UCT

To participate in this study, you should be between 6 months and 5 years into your academic (research and/or teaching) career at UCT

The interview will take a semi-structured approach and will last approximately 60 minutes and no longer than 90 minutes

Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you would like to participate in the study, please contact

Name: Odiase Nathan Osareme
Position: Principal Researcher, MSc Student
Institution: University of Cape Town
Phone number: +27 (0)63 022 1092
Email address: nathanosas@gmail.com

Your participation in the research will be of great importance to the quest for institutional transformation at UCT and in South Africa.

I am immensely grateful for your consideration.

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

Informed Consent Form

Title of Study

An Exploratory Study on the Experiences of Emerging Academics at the University of Cape Town (UCT)

Principal Investigator: Odiase Osareme Nathan

Research Supervisor: Professor Shose Kessi

Co-Supervisor: Dr. Mandisa Malinga

Department of Psychology

University of Cape Town, South Africa

Email: nathanosas@gmail.com

Purpose of the Study

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to explore factors that impact your experiences as an academic. The study will seek information about your background and how you experience the institutional environment, including your interactions and relationships with others and your performance in academia.

Study Procedures

- The interview will take a semi-structured approach and will last approximately 60 minutes and no longer than 90 minutes.
- Before the start of the interview, you are required to fill out and sign this informed consent form clearly noting the confidentiality agreement.

- The interview will be audio recorded for data analysis purposes
- Follow up questions will be asked based on your responses and the context
- Please note that you can pause, break or end the interview at your discretion

Risks, Benefits, and Compensation

Revealing experiences may cause personal distress especially if they relate to harassment, discrimination, bullying and other uncomfortable situations encountered. If this occurs, the researcher will engage in empathic listening by creating a warm and receptive space for you to share. Afterwards, you will be referred to the UCT Counselling Services, The Office for Inclusivity and Change (OIC) or the Office of the Ombud depending on the issues arising from the interview.

If the situation allows, refreshments will be provided after the interview.

Confidentiality

Your response will be reported as anonymous. Your name and email address will be taken strictly for a follow-up interview, if necessary. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality, including the following:

Keeping notes, interview transcriptions, and any other identifying participant information in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher.

Anonymity will be preserved throughout the research, and data will be kept confidential.

Pseudonyms will be used in any publications emanating from this research, and any related identifying information will be modified to preserve anonymity.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be required to sign this form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher or the institution.

Contact Information

If you have questions at any time about this study, or you experience adverse effects as the result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher whose contact information is provided below.

Name: Odiase Nathan Osareme
Position: Principal Researcher, MSc Student
Institution: University of Cape Town
Phone number: +27 (0)63 022 1092
Email address: nathanosas@gmail.com

For questions about your rights as a participant, please contact

Name: Mrs. Rosalind Adams
Position: Postgraduate Administrative Assistant
Institution: University of Cape Town.
Phone Number: +27 (0)21 650 3417
Email address: rosalind.adams@uct.ac.za

Consent

I have read, and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Consent to be audio recorded

I also understand that this interview will be recorded for data analysis purposes.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Potential Questions and Interview Guide

1. What does being an academic mean to you?’ and what does it involve?
2. What qualities do you think an academic in this context or institution should ideally possess?
3. What is your perception of the institutional culture at UCT?
4. What metrics do you use to evaluate your performance as an academic, and does this align with the institutional standards?
5. To what extent does your background or orientation (race, gender, socio-economic status) shape your experience as an academic?
6. Do you feel the standards of performance are fair for your career development as an academic?
7. What factors would you say enhance or are barriers to your performance?

APPENDIX D: DEBRIEFING FORM

Debriefing Form

Thank you for contributing as a research participant in the present study. The study seeks to explore your experience as an emerging academic at UCT.

The goal of this research was to identify

- What defines or has defined you as an emerging academic.
- What factors impact or have impacted your academic freedoms.
- How you have been challenging disciplinary standards of performance and if this has been successful.
- The extent to which the institutional culture at UCT impacts your performance or experience as an academic.

If you know of any friends, colleagues, or acquaintances (who are in the first 5 years of their research and teaching careers at UCT study), please refer them as it will be helpful to the completion of the study. I greatly appreciate your cooperation.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to ask the researcher Odiase Nathan Osareme (email: nathanosas@gmail.com; telephone: +27 (0)63 022 1092).

If you feel psychologically distressed by participation in this study, I encourage you to contact the ICAS (Independent Counselling and Advisory Services)

UCT staff wellness contact number (Toll-free): 0801 113 945 from a Telkom line (available 24 hours a day) Or send a USSD code *134*905# to request a callback.

Email: uct@icas.co.za

For any experience relating to sexual harassment, bullying, and discrimination, please contact The Office for Inclusivity and Change (OIC): Rashieda Khan (Survivor Support) Office Tel: +27 (0)21 650 3530

24/7 Hotline (sexual assault emergency response): 072 393 7824

Respondents in sexual and gender violence matters may contact Francois Botha (Relations Strategist) Office Tel: +27 (0)21 650 5948.

The Office of the Ombud provides a safe and objective place where people can air their concerns, receive referrals, find out about relevant policies and procedures, and discuss formal and informal options for addressing their concerns.

Ombud: Zetu Makamandela-Mguqulwa (email: ombud@uct.ac.za)

Tel: +27 (0)21 650 4805

Note: The ICAS is a free telephonic counseling service for stress, relationships, HIV & AIDS, depression, trauma, burnout, anxiety, health issues, substance abuse, family matters, conflict, change, work issues, diversity, bereavement, legal and financial issues.

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX E: OVERALL TABLE OF THEMES**Definition of an Academic and Characterization of Academic Qualities**

| Superordinate Theme | Sub-Themes | Participants Contributing to Theme |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Defining an Academic | A Sense of Expression | Ray |
| | Subjective Self Inquiry | Ray |
| | Character Building Process | Sue |
| | Academic Teaching | Zoe, Eva, Ann, Ivy |
| | Continuous Learning | Kim, Amy, Ivy |
| | Social Responsiveness and Leadership | Eva, Tom |
| | Student Supervision | Ida |
| | Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration | Ivy |
| | Project Management and Administration | Ann, Ala |
| | Engaging in Creative Projects | Lia |
| | Overall Student Empowerment | Kya, Joy, Amy, Ivy |
| | Context-based Research and Teaching | Ala, Zoe, Tom, Val, Ivy |
| | Advocacy and Representation | Ivy |
| | Least Morally Compromising Atmosphere | Liz |
| Achievement of a Lifelong Goal | Dan | |
| International Research Domains | Dan | |
| Ideal Academic Qualities | Integrity | Sue |
| | Intellectual Curiosity | Zoe, Eva |
| | Critical Thinking | Ray |
| | Empathy and Relatability | Kim, Dan, Ala, Sue |

| | | |
|-------------------|--|---------------|
| | Assertiveness | Kim |
| | Relentlessness and Dedication | Jay, Joy, Ivy |
| | Passion and Interest | Joy, Amy, Tom |
| | Autonomous Learning Skill | Jay |
| | Effective Communication Skill | Ann |
| | Innovativeness | Lia |
| | Excellence in Chosen Discipline | Meg |
| | Commitment | Kya |
| | Patience | Val |
| | Humility | Val |
| | Self-Awareness | Ivy |
| | Clarity | Dan |
| Academic Freedoms | Research Liberty and Autonomy | Kya, Jay |
| | Pursuing Personalized Research Interests | Ida |
| | Industry vs. Individual Reach | Meg |

Institutional Culture and Academic Systems

| Superordinate Theme | Sub-Themes | Participants Contributing to Theme |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Transformation and Inclusivity | Transformation Unreflective of National Imperatives | Ray |
| | Inadequate Transformation | Ray, Val |
| | Significant Progress Towards Inclusivity | Sue, Ida |
| | Transformation in Transition | Sue, Ala, Ivy |
| | UCT Grappling with Apartheid History | Leo, Ivy |

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|----------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| | White Dominated and Eurocentric | Zoe |
| | Polarizing Political Culture | Eva |
| | Haphazard Institutional Culture | Joy |
| | Sufficient Representation and Diversity | Ivy, Liz |
| | Undergoing Pedagogical Redefinition Process | Ivy |
| | Support from Black Academic Caucus | Liz |
| | Epistemic Injustice | Dan |
| Work Environment | Individualistic Work Culture | Kim, Jay |
| | Lack of Recognition | Kim |
| | Insufficient Cover for Justified Absence | Kim |
| | Sufficient Ideological Freedom | Jay |
| | Receptive Environment | Jay, Lai |
| | Existence of Collaborative Research Groups | Jay |
| | Collegiate and Receptive Culture | Jay, Lai, Ann, Dan |
| | Focused Professional Environment | Kya |
| | Profound Academic and Student Excellence | Meg |
| | Feelings of Disconnection to Workspace | Ala |
| | Overwhelming Pressure for High Performance | Tom |
| Governance and Administration | Grey Areas in Administration | Meg |
| | Positive Administrative Changes | Joy |
| | Lack of Clarity in Academic Focus | Joy |

Intense Teaching Responsibilities Amy

Funding Unattached to Publication Count Dan

Experiences of Performance Evaluation Framework

| Superordinate Theme | Sub-Themes | Participants Contributing to Theme |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Personal Targets and Standards | Publication in International Journals | Dan |
| | Student Feedback and Evaluation | Sue, Kya, Amy |
| | Evaluation from Colleagues | Sue, Kya |
| | Strong Interpersonal Skills | Sue |
| | Positive Student Development | Sue, Liz |
| | Alignment of Personal Values | Eva |
| | Successful Task Completion | Jay |
| | Attracting Funding | Ann |
| | Meeting up to Standards of Perfection | Lia |
| | Successful Research Collaborations | Ida |
| | Curriculum and Course Development | Joy, Val, Dan |
| | Improvement in Teaching Quality | Tom |
| | Assuming Leadership Responsibilities | Tom, Ivy |
| Institutionally Imposed Evaluations | Strict Adherence to Research-Based Promotion | Ray, Sue, Zoe |
| | Lack of recognition for Teaching Output | Ray, Sue Meg |
| | Lack of recognition for Research Output | Zoe |
| | Strict Adherence to Prescriptive Standards | Ann, Ala |
| | Unfair Standards (Accounting) | Amy |

Low-Performance Standards

Ivy

Support Systems Structures and Systems

| Superordinate Theme | Sub-Themes | Participants Contributing to Theme |
|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Performance Enhancers | Strong Research Culture | Ray |
| | Absence of Micromanagement | Kim, Jay, Amy |
| | Easy Access to Research Funds | Eva |
| | Academic Freedom and Independence | Ann, Ala |
| | High Quality of Student | Ann |
| | Collegial Support | Ann, Amy, Ivy |
| | Excellent Resources and Facilities | Meg, Ivy |
| | Emerging Researchers Program | Ala |
| | Involvement in Departmental Decision- Making Processes | Val |
| | Experience in Industry | Val |
| Excellent Equity System | Ivy | |
| Performance Barriers | Intense Teaching Load | Sue, Meg, Tom |
| | Challenge Balancing Research and Teaching | Sue, Amy |
| | Strict Adherence to Research-Based Promotion | Zoe, Amy |
| | Enforcing Eurocentric Standards | Zoe |
| | Unsupportive Work Environment | Zoe, Kim, Eva, Lia |
| | Multiple Academic Responsibilities | Kim |

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|--|---------------|
| Inadequate Management | Kim |
| Challenge Establishing Work-Life Balance | Kim |
| Job Uncertainty with Probationary Periods | Eva, Liz, Dan |
| Inadequate Systems for Interdisciplinarity | Eva |
| Excessive Bureaucratic Barriers | Jay, Lia |
| Absence of a Formalized Induction and Training | Ann |
| Absence of Start-Up Funds | Ann, Ala |
| Insufficient Lecturers | Ida |
| Experience of Condescension Due to Young Age | Ala |
| Toxic Colleagues | Ala |
| Industry Poaching of ICTS Personnel | Joy |
| Demanding Students | Amy |
| Emergency Response Teaching | Ivy |

Impact of Background (Race, Gender and Socioeconomic Status) on Experiences

| Superordinate Theme | Sub-Themes | Participants Contributing to Theme |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Impact of Racial and Gender Identity | Systemic Racial Inequalities in Performance Evaluation | Ray, Zoe |
| | Systemic Gender Inequalities in Performance Evaluation | Zoe, Eva |
| | Patronized to Fill up Equity Quotas | Zoe |
| | Awareness of Gender Dynamics and Stereotypes | Eva, Joy |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| | Feeling of Exclusion and Isolation | Eva |
| | Engaging in Conversations about Whiteness | Eva |
| | Sufficient Equality and Fairness | Kya |
| | Experienced Subtle Sexism | Ida, Joy |
| | Whiteness as a Deterrent Funding Opportunities | Ala |
| | Experienced Whiteness as a Minority | Ala, Amy |
| | Pressure Emerging from Racial Representation | Tom |
| | Inspired by Racial Representation | Val |
| | Emerged from a Family of Activists | Liz |
| Impact of Age | Experienced Condescension due to Young Age | Kya |
| Impact of Socio-Economic Status | Sense of Fulfilment | Kim |
| | Increased Awareness of Privilege | Ann, Lia, Amy |
| | Stringent Socio-Economic Challenges | Joy |
| Impact on Student Relations | Fairness in Students Assessment | Ray |
| | Increased Student Connection | Sue |
| | Increased Approachability and Receptiveness | Sue |
| | Deeper Appreciation of Diversity | Kim |
| | Increased Empathy | Kim, Kya, Meg, Dan |
| | Developed Sense of Humility | Kim |

| | |
|--|----------|
| Improved Simplicity of Expression | Meg |
| Challenges of Race Relatability with Students | Meg |
| Presence as an Inspiration to Students | Ivy, Dan |
| Promotion of an African Perspective | Ivy |
| Aspiration to be the Ideal | Dan |
