

THE IMPACT OF MOTIVATION ON ACADEMIC SUCCESS:
USING THE IMPOSTER PHENOMENON TO UNDERSTAND THE
EXPERIENCES OF A SELECTED GROUP IN A 'BLACK'
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigated the impact of motivation on academic success by using the impostor phenomenon to understand the experiences of a selected group in a Black Higher Education institution.

The researcher used a questionnaire, interviewed and observed research participants. Questionnaires were sent out in the first week of term to ascertain maximum number of participants as well as receive demographical information. The *Impostor Phenomenon questionnaire [IP; 6]*: which is a 20- item scale developed by Clarence (1985), was used to assess impostor feelings, that is, feelings of not being deserving of one's success with an associated fear of being found out as a "fake" . The interview was used to obtain narrative information that would have been difficult to gather through the questionnaire. Recordings from the interviews and observations during interviews were captured, forming data for the final analysis.

The study revealed that a positive student –teacher relationship enhanced positive self- concepts in students. This support from teachers was found to engender goal motivations despite situational conditions. I have argued in this study that the social, gender based disparities expressed as culture in South African society, impact negatively on the maintenance of intrinsic motivation. The study also supports the impression that psycho-social development of students needs to be integrated into student's academic lives for a holistic understanding and possibly enhance their academic performance. Findings in this study were found to correspond with other studies of resiliency, especially among traditional African women.

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John 3.8

“The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell

Where it comes from or where it is going.

So it is with everyone born of the spirit”.

DECLARATION

This is to declare that this
dissertation represents my own
work both in conception and in
execution.

Dr. Rossano S. Wells

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Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
DECLARATION.....	iii
CONTENT.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF TABLES	viii

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Research Problem and Questions.....	4
Justification for the Research.....	5
Methodology.....	6
Definition of Terms.....	7
Delimitations.....	8
Outline of Thesis.....	8
Conclusion.....	9

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction.....	10
Cognitive Development viewpoints.....	12
Piaget’s cognitive learning Theory.....	12
Psychoanalytic Theories.....	14
Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory.....	16
Critique of Cognitive- Developmental Theories...	20
Motivation Theory.....	21
The Impostor Phenomenon.....	22
The Academic Setting.....	25
Self-concept.....	29
Competency Beliefs.....	32
Classroom dynamics.....	38
Social support.....	39
Gender issues in schools.....	40
Culture and race influences.....	41

III. METHOD

Methods in Academic Motivation Research.....	44
Overview.....	44

Participants.....	45
Instrumentation.....	47
Procedure.....	48
Research Design.....	49
Issues on Reliability and Validity.....	50
Reliability.....	50
Validity.....	50
Ethical Considerations.....	51
Conclusion.....	52
IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	53
Part I.....	53
Experiences, perceptions or thoughts on Motivation and Success as a female.....	55
Gender.....	57
Race or Cultural issues.....	70
Self-confidence	81
Factors contributing to success.....	84
Background	84

Drive	87
Intrinsic motivation.....	89
Role models or mentors.....	92
Negative feelings: Inferiority, gender bias,doubt	93
Conclusion.....	96
Part II	97
Discussion.....	98
Conclusion.....	103
V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	104
Summary of Conclusions about Research Questions...	105
Unique Contributions of the Study.....	109
Implications for Policy, Research and Practice.....	110
Implications for Theory.....	112
Limitations and Criticism.....	113
Indications for Further Research.....	115
VI. REFERENCES	117
VII. APPENDICES	128
Appendix 1: The Research Study Invitation.....	128

Appendix 2:	The Biographical Data Questionnaire...	129
Appendix 3:	The Impostor Phenomenon Scale...	130

VIII. LIST OF FIGURES

1.1	Hierarchical model of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation.....	34
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IX. LIST OF TABLES

3.1	Demographics of the sample.....	46
4.1	Transcription symbols.....	54
4.2	Impostor feelings scale scores.....	97

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the understanding of the conceptions of motivation among women of all races in South Africa. Further it explores the relationship between conceptions of motivation and the self (personhood), experiences of the impostor phenomenon among academically achieving women and the social context in which one develops. The study is motivated by the fact that previous research on the impostor phenomenon has been dominated by psycho-social approaches in Western ideology and countries and less on the African context.

Cognitive- developmental approaches (e.g. Piaget, 1963; Vygotsky, 1978; Erikson, 1974) although quite influential, are studies focusing on western conceptualisations of cognitive development. These approaches maintain that psychological processes, including motivation, are free of contextual influences. For instance, Piaget (1963) posited a sequence of four structurally defined stages of cognitive development, allegedly invariant in sequence and universal across cultures. Further, they define the highest and most adequate stages of cognitive development solely in terms of the principles of psychological performance or academic accomplishment, to the exclusion of considerations arising out of culture and social context. According to cognitive- developmental approaches, decisions at the most advanced level of cognitive appraisal are made from objective, detached position, independently of historical and social influences.

Cross cultural studies have failed to support the universality hypothesis. Research has consistently shown that people from indigenous societies tend to stabilise at different levels to western societies. The present study maintains that differences in cognitive development and achievement occur because the notion of an autonomous self, on which cognitive-developmental approaches are based, is not universal. From a traditional African point of view, mature selfhood entails living interdependently with others (Ikuenobe, 1998; Mentiki, 1984).

There has been a growing awareness of the meta-theoretical, theoretical, and methodological limitations of cognitive-developmental approaches to motivation and academic success. These critics have pointed out that cognitive-developmental approaches do not take into account the multi-dimensional nature of the motivation realm (Vallerand, Pelletier, Blais, Briere, Senècal & Vallière, 1992). Amongst many, these may relate to the role of psychological needs in the motivational sequence, individual differences in needs, the need for relatedness and the hierarchical structure of motivational processes (Grouzet, Vallerand, Thill, & Provencher, 2000). Cognitive-developmental approaches seem to disregard, specifically from a traditional African context, relationships between gender, culture and power.

In psychology, these largely disregarded factors were given attention by Gilligan (1977, 1982), who questioned the assumption that psychological maturity involves an increasing differentiation of the self from the social and cultural context. Her research illustrates that, for women in particular, embracing delay in one's cognitive development (e.g. by

not pursuing tertiary education or male dominated academic fields), exists simultaneously with higher levels of cognitive appraisal. The present study explores some (African) perspectives that may have been marginalized because of researchers' reliance on Western psychological assumptions about the self, motivation and academic success.

This study is also motivated by the increasing awareness that psychological science is a cultural manifestation (Gergen, Gulerce, Lock, & Misra, 1996). Psychology is based on culturally determined conjectures about the nature of reality and personhood. Traditional Western approaches to knowledge, for example, assume that individuals are unique, with a mind that is separate from the body. These suppositions are neither universal nor timeless, but determined a shift from religion and community orientations to materialistic outlook toward social inquiry (Cushman, 1990). This resulted in social inquiry being based on principles that are valid regardless of time, place and context. Consequently, cognitive-developmental approaches sought to reveal timeless and universal stages of cognitive appraisal, motivation and success.

The awareness that knowledge is mediated by both social and cultural practices has engendered a critique of the universality of presuppositions derived from western psychology. Some authors e.g. (Shweder, 1991) argue that cultural influences and social practices transform the way people view the world, resulting in divergences in psychological processes such as thinking, self and motivation. In essence, to be able to understand motivation in multicultural contexts, we need to address the cultural meaning systems through which people make sense of themselves and their contextual world.

The present study investigates psychosocial factors that contribute to the impostor phenomenon among women resulting in the inhibition of motivation and academic success. South Africa is comprised of a multicultural society, as well as people exposed to multiple worldviews and social realities. The challenge is therefore not to investigate exclusively African psychological phenomena but with reference to different social and cultural practices. This thesis argues that this undertaking can be realized by adopting Clance's (1978, 1988) ideas. However, dialogism is considered an appropriate complement and framework for investigating motivation in a multicultural society, as it provides for influences of multiple social practices on psychological development.

Research Problem and Questions

The purpose of this research is to study the impact of motivation on academic success. It seeks to use the impostor phenomenon to understand the experiences of a selected group in a Black higher education institution. Contextual influences on motivation, such as gender-related beliefs, family influences, cultural influences, self-concept and other psychological variables are explored. Questions addressed in this study are listed below and the theoretical issues pertaining to these questions are detailed throughout the literature review.

- Does a relationship exist between motivation and academic success?
- Does the teacher-student relationship play a role in motivation and academic success?
- Does culture and gender, play a role in motivation and academic success?

- How does the experience of the Impostor Phenomenon impact on motivation?

Justification for the Research

It is envisaged that this project will underline and add value to the projected interventions in institutions of higher learning (Freire, 1972). The investigator is of the opinion that pertinent knowledge will be attained to advance both learning and teaching objectives for academic success and throughput in line with the national project of the Department of Education in South Africa.

When psychology was introduced in non-western countries, it was brought as part of the general transfer of knowledge. Modest attempts were made to understand people's psyche from their contextual space, and hence a continuous reference to conceptual presuppositions derived in western culture. It is now accepted, with the advent of cultural psychology that psychological processes are culture-bound (Gergen et al, 1996).

Research of this nature can be of considerable value in promoting sound methods to enhance student academic motivation; especially as such research can identify (the) negative academic processes, which may be eliminated by means of various corrective procedures (Leedy, 1993; Neuman, 1997). In this regard the proposed project complies with the overall aims of the national project of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Department of Education (DoE) in South Africa and may inform policy on the issue being investigated. These relate to

issues in higher education institutions such as academic throughput, access to HEI's and gender equality within such institutions.

Methodology

Cognitive developmental approaches to research in the study of motivation have often used western scenarios. These scenarios are based on the assumption that principles of psychological development are the defining and universal features of the cognitive-developmental sphere. The use of these presuppositions is intended to elicit standard concerns of psychological processes to cognitive development and motivation for academic success, to the exclusion of cultural and societal influences in context.

Given that the purpose of this study is to investigate culturally situated understandings of motivation, the aforementioned approaches were found inadequate. As an alternative, data were collected and analyzed using guidelines for thematic analysis (Researchware, 2003). Participants were invited to narrate their experiences in academia. Probing questions were asked that elicited influences such as culture, family, community, and other factors, that impacted on their motivation. The interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed. The transcripts were then analyzed using guidelines for thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998, Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It organizes and describes research data set in rich detail. The method involves reading the participant's response numerous times, each reading focusing on the narrator's lived experience and the emerging themes. Data was further analyzed using Nvivo8 software. For the purpose

of this study, the interview also took into account pertinent factors that from a traditional African cultural context, would add value to the understanding of the impostor phenomenon amongst academically high achieving women.

Definition of Terms

This section introduces and defines key theoretical terms used in the study.

Motivation: from an educational viewpoint, *motivation* is a multifaceted construct that encompasses a variety of meaningful connotations pertaining to learning and educational development (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, Entwistle, Nisbet, Entwistle & Cowell, 1971). Pintrich et al (1990) identified three main categories of concepts relevant to motivation in the educational setting viz. Personal beliefs, purpose for engagement and affective reactions in relation to the activity.

The Impostor Phenomenon: The concept, ‘impostor phenomenon’, is used to describe an internal experience of ‘intellectual phoniness’, which appears to be particularly prevalent and intense among high achieving women. According to Clance (1985), this phenomenon refers to deep-seated feelings of ‘intellectual phoniness’ which may relate to early family dynamics and to later introjections of societal sex-role stereotyping.

Despite their outstanding academic and professional achievements, women (or female students) harbour resilient doubts of their own abilities, fearing that others will discover that they are not ‘truly’ intelligent, but are in actual fact, impostors (Thompson, 1996). In

other words these women find innumerable means of negating any external evidence that contradicts their belief that they are, in reality, unintelligent (Clance and Imes, 1978).

Academic success / achievement: this concept refers to the accomplishment of an important developmental task. Several authors have stated that cognitive competence in school and other social settings are markers of, and a prerequisite for, resiliency (Bernard, 2004,; Jew, Green & Kroger, 1999; Masten et al., 1999; Shonk & Cicchetti, 2001).

In the South African context, academic success, to a large extent, can be seen as a measure of resiliency, even though in other societies it might be considered an ordinary developmental task. Understanding the process and the cultural context within which it occurs can be informative for families striving to break the cycle of poverty. It also informs policy in higher education institutions as well as measures to be put in place to enhance career pathing and throughput.

Delimitations

The sample in this study comprised of women academics from all race groups in South Africa. Findings therefore apply potentially to everyone within this framework. The generalisability of this study is limited by its small sample size; however, it offers some insight into how a particular group of individuals were able to survive adverse environments and how they achieved academic success and their experiences of the Impostor phenomenon.

Outline of Thesis

This thesis consists of 5 chapters. The present chapter presents the background and scope of the study. Chapter 2 discusses cognitive-developmental approaches to motivation.

Different theories namely, Piaget's theory of cognitive learning, Freud's theory of psychosexual development and Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory are presented. The underpinnings of cognitive-developmental approaches to motivation are presented. Arguments highlighting that these approaches fall short because they attempt to understand motivation independently of the psycho-social, cultural and contextual dynamics. Motivation theory, gender issues in schools as well as the academic setting are presented. This chapter concludes with the introduction of the impostor phenomenon. This phenomenon makes it possible to understand psychological processes as they occur in context.

Methods used to collect and analyze data are discussed in chapter 3. Results are presented and discussed in chapter 4. Chapter 5 draws conclusions of the study. Implications for policy development and social service delivery are indicated, as are recommendations for future research.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the background to motivation and academic success, research. Previous studies in psychology have been based solely on western influence and presuppositions. It is, however, imperative that for psychology to have an impact in non-western countries and cultures, it is important that social phenomena be explained with reference to contextual concepts and understanding. This study explores understandings of the experience of the impostor phenomenon as it impacts on motivation for academic success. Data was collected and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide for thematic analyses. The outline of the thesis was provided.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Since the 1960s comparative education has emerged as a valid field of study. Comparative education is a loosely defined field focusing generally on the education system of a country or countries within its particular natural and cultural context. Against this background a broad range of related issues and topics are studied using a diverse set of theoretical perspectives, research paradigms and methods which results in a field with a strongly multidisciplinary character (Arnove, Altbach & Kelly 1992). Its wide scope includes university students and scholars, educational consultants, administrators of large international agencies and others.

An extensive range of aims have been attributed to comparative education (Dekker, 1996; Connell, Spencer & Aber, 1994). Comparative education can provide guidelines, models or advice derived from the study of educational policy, programmes and practice in various parts of the world which can lead to the improvement of existing systems of education. It can deepen our understanding of our own education and society by providing an international perspective on national educational debates and issues. Moreover it provides the basis for more informed decision making regarding educational matters as cognisance is taken of educational dilemmas and reform in other parts of the world.

It is envisaged that these introductory remarks on the domain and aims of national and international education make it clear that the field is marked by a wide diversity in its content, approach and methods of inquiry. In this light, educationists are inclined to adopt a broad variety of theoretical positions. In the present day new research paradigms have emerged such as, conflict theory, critical theory, feminist theory and lately complexity theory, which are just a few of the alternative theoretical perspectives which guide research in the field. There has been a gradual change from a reliance on quantitative research and the collection of psychometric data detailing the outcomes of schooling.

More recently increasing emphasis on and interest in microanalysis; the case study of an individual school, classroom or programme, is encountered in comparative literature. Likewise, earlier studies focused mainly on descriptions of the formal and observable aspects of schooling, whereas today, influenced by conflict theory, the emphasis has shifted to qualitative studies. These investigate the less concrete and less visible, that is the processes of schooling, and assesses the effect of values, ideology and culture upon school practice and its outcomes.

It is against this background that this research will be written. The purpose of this perspective is not to decide the issues conclusively, but rather to contribute to the educational debate. For this reason, discourse on crucial issues has been regarded as more important than giving clear-cut answers or final solutions to existing educational dilemmas and career pathing.

Cognitive- Development viewpoints

Schaffer (1993), states that Jean Piaget (1896-1980), a Swiss developmental psychologist, was a contemporary of B.F. Skinner. What set Piaget apart from his contemporaries was his remarkable detail with which he observed children's developmental changes, and his emphasis on qualitative (as opposed to quantitative) differences in how children of different ages think and problem solve.

Piaget's Learning Theory

Piaget (1963) posits that all children begin life with roughly the same skills and with built-in drives and strategies to adapt to their surroundings. He also postulates that they encounter highly similar environments in many important respects; a social environment where there is child care by adults, siblings and friends are usually present. Accordingly, since all children confront similar environments with the same initial cognitive skills, their cognitive development should move through similar stages.

In this light Piaget posits that children pass through an invariant sequence of four stages:

- Sensorimotor stage: birth to 18 months
- Preoperational stage: 18 months to 6 years
- Concrete operational: 6 to 12 years
- Formal operational: age 12 onwards.

Piaget posits that cognitive development proceeds from the child engaging in egocentric thinking, failing to take the viewpoint of another. He further conceives that for the child to have the ability to decentre, he or she should be able to take another's perspective (cognitively) and imagine or create images as the other should be doing. This describes the child's acquisition of the ability to mediate; encompassing thinking that uses symbols, such as words or images, to represent objects or events in one's environment.

This process takes place covertly, inside our heads. Accordingly, this mediation represents an important achievement for the child as it frees thinking from the direct control of immediate external objects (environment) and allows thinking about the world in the absence of direct contact. It allows the ability to escape from the present and think about the past and future. As mediation develops, a learner becomes more skilled at anticipating, planning, imagining, creating, and solving. The student, for example, can reason about things of which he has no firsthand experience, the ability to think and reason in abstract terms.

Clearly, Piaget's theory is concerned primarily with the cognitive or intellectual areas of human development. His cognitive theory has generated research in children's thought processes and has given rise to a renaissance in education that places the child in a central position in the learning process. According to Piaget, cognitive development of the child involves not random movements but rather goal directed attempts to deal with and make sense of the world. This places less emphasis on the environmental manipulations advocated by behaviourists. It has encouraged and highlighted the importance of complex

thinking and intrinsic motivation. Consequently, learners in higher education are expected to display complex cognitive abilities in their engagement with academic pursuits.

Nevertheless, cognitive –developmental theory is not without criticism. Some emphasise that the stages as depicted by Piaget are not as distinct as they may appear. Others point out that the theory largely ignores how peers and adults, together, influence cognitive development; and that it gives the impression that adults can do little to change a developmental problem other than let the child grow out of it.

Notwithstanding, the fore going, Piaget was of the opinion that culture, environment, and other factors can accelerate or retard cognitive growth and that age norms are merely approximations.

Psychoanalytic Theories

The primary focus of psychoanalytic theory is not how children learn new behaviours or associations (learning theory), nor does it delve into how learners gradually become more sophisticated in their thinking and reasoning (cognitive developmental theory). Instead, it attempts to explain a broad range of phenomena that is termed “personality”: our temperaments, traits, character, moods, attitudes, habits, anxieties, fears and values. It thus looks at those qualities of a person that influence what he or she does across a wide variety of situations.

These theories assumed that individual and collective action and thought were a result of inherited and innate instincts. These are considered unlearned, prewired and genetically transmitted forces which help all species survive. Instinct theories did not last long as they were subjected to vigorous debate and were soon replaced by drive theory.

Drive theory (Freud, 1923), posits that motivation is all activity directed toward reducing the tension triggered by needs and drives. Erikson (1974) emphasizes a more cognitive drive, which he calls a drive for identity. For both theorists, these drives create an internal psychic energy that is the motivating force behind all human actions (Schaffer, 1993).

It appears though that drives consist primarily of two types, namely, primary and acquired. Consequently, primary drives are forces within the individual that are triggered by biological needs such as hunger and thirst. These drives produce random activity which is directionless until the need is satisfied. Skinner's animal experiments are a good example for this position; and the fact that whatever satisfies the biological needs becomes learned through the process of drive reduction. Acquired drives are like desires and do not spring from a biological need. Rather, they are acquired through a process of association with a primary drive. It turns out then that according to drive theory, all activity is directed toward reducing the tension that is triggered by needs and drives. Drive reduction, therefore, is the psychological mechanism underlying both activity and learning.

Early experiences are noted by both Freud and Erikson as important in the development of personality, but that infancy and early childhood experiences exert the most profound impact on its formation. Both Freud and Erikson propose that personality development occurs in distinct stages. Each stage confronts the child with a particular conflict or challenge. At each stage certain skills must be learned to enable the child to advance successfully to the next stage.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural perspective

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory focused not on what learners do on their own to alter or accommodate existing schemata to new experiences, but rather on what the learners and adults (or peers) do together to promote learning and development (Vygotsky, 1986).

Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the following:

- The role of culture
- Social relationships
- Social interaction
- The zone of proximal development

According to Vygotsky, how learners think about their world depends on whom they spend most of their time with. The principal theme of Vygotsky's theory is that a learner's cognitive development takes place in a social context. Throughout their lives learners are surrounded by parents, siblings, relatives, teachers and friends. This allows

for learning to occur as they share information with others. Media also plays an important role in the development of new intellectual skills.

Interpersonal encounters with parents, teachers and friends allow learners to acquire knowledge about their culture and history. This cultural knowledge includes shared beliefs, patterns of interacting with people, ways of viewing the world and language (Borich and Tombari, 1995). Cognitive development, as Vygotsky (1978) views it, is a child's increasing mastery over the important culturally determined developmental tasks brought about by social agents. Such mastery may not take place in stages, as Piaget posited.

Learning and cognitive mastery happens at two levels. First it takes place at the social level in which instance the learner interacts with parents, teachers or peers and learns the specific knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and patterns of thinking and reasoning that are important in his culture or community. At the next level, cultural and historical knowledge is transformed into schemata within the learner, much as Piaget would predict. At this level the child masters developmental tasks involving reading, mathematics, and science and solve them independently because he has practiced these tasks under adult supervision. Vygotsky is of the opinion that the mechanism responsible for this cognitive development is social interaction. He and many researchers posit that learning, indeed, is inherently a social activity (Vygotsky, 1978; Marshall, 1992; Shuell, 1996).

The zone of proximal development is Vygotsky's most efficient context for cognitive development; a metaphor describing the range of skills and abilities bounded by what a learner can do independently and what a learner needs adult assistance with which to perform. According to Webb and Palincsar (1996), learning in classrooms is not done in isolation but it occurs in a contextual manner found in the relationships between learners, teachers and peers. Piaget, in describing the process of cognitive development; proposes that a state of imbalance is created in the learner whenever he encounters something that cannot be assimilated into an existing schemata.

Vygotsky, on the other hand creates a different metaphor to describe the context within which cognitive development takes place. His metaphor is the zone of proximal development. This zone, when stimulated by the teacher, affords the learner the greatest opportunity to respond and encompasses the range of skills or abilities delimited on one side by what the learner can do independently and on the other side by the skills that the learner needs adult assistance to perform. Accordingly, there will be as many 'zones of proximal development' as there are developmental tasks to master.

An example suffices here: A science student may be able to independently solve chemistry or physics problems with one unknown, with assistance solve equations with two unknowns, and not even attempt to solve math simultaneous equations with two unknowns. Here the student's zone of proximal development (that is the most practical target for instruction) is that range of chemistry, physics or mathematics skill circumscribed on one end by solving equations or problems with one unknown and on the

other end by solving simultaneous equations with two unknowns. The zone of proximal development has also been called the “*zone of maximum response opportunity*” (Borich, 1996).

Finally, Vygotsky sees cognitive development taking place within the zone of proximal development; when adults present instruction just above the independent functioning level but not at a level that frustrates the learner. Accordingly the zone shifts upwards as more skills are learned. In this manner the social interaction between teacher and learner allows for the ‘ying- and – yang’ learner response and teacher reaction. These sequences afford the learner to increasingly attain skills to climb to the next rung of the learning ladder.

From the foregoing, it is evident that social, cognitive and personality development of individuals is multivariable. It is also essential to concede that no mention of a differential gender (sex) superiority forms part of individual development. Contextualising the foregoing theoretical approaches or arguments to development, race does not seem to be a significant variable in the acquisition of developmental skills and ability. This begs the question of “why race or gender tends to be crucial factors in academia within the South African context?”

Or is the phenomenon a universal dilemma? The latter serves as a precursor to the gist of this intellectual project. It introduces a central concept: ‘the impostor phenomenon’, that impacts on motivation and success among high achieving women in academia.

Critique of Cognitive-Developmental Theories

Learning theorists focus on how environmental influences affect the behaviours people acquire as they develop. Although they acknowledge that some learning occurs by means of inborn processes, the overwhelming majority of social, cognitive, and language development is due to nurture and not nature.

Learning theorists reject the notion that there are universal patterns of development. Thus, they focus almost all their attention on how humans acquire individual defences. They reject the notion that development occurs by means of stages and transitional periods. Rather, they view development as a lifelong process of learning new skills as a result of interaction with the learning environment. They emphasise that this learning environment is social, as other people provide the conditions for learning development. It is developmental, as children's behaviour becomes more complex, their parents relate to them in more complex ways.

Lastly, learning theorists posit that learning is interactive; children are not only shaped by the environment but also shape the behaviour of those in this environment. Learning theorists appear to have made a major contribution to improving instruction in basic academic skills and the treatment of childhood developmental difficulties such as mental retardation and childhood depression. Their stresses on objectivity and strong advocacy for observable behaviour have influenced controlled research and careful psychological explanations. However, the fundamental criticism of behaviourism is that it promotes a view of learners as basically passive and at the mercy of environmental forces such as

reinforcement and punishment; with little participation on their own learning and development. Does this signify (the) reinforcement of the impostor phenomenon, as women are perceived to be at the mercy of their environmental demands, patriarchal structural conditions in academia or gender bias?

MOTIVATION THEORY

Is motivation an inherited trait like one of the three temperaments (activity, adaptation, emotionality) or is motivation a characteristic that is influenced by reinforcement and consequences that strengthen some behaviours and weaken others? In other words, is motivation something innate that we are born with and that can be created and strengthened by reinforcers external to the learning task, or is it something interwoven with the learning process itself?

The foregoing suggests that there are two types of motivation. The first one refers to the capacity to engage in an activity for its own sake, commonly known as intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is motivation that is influenced by reinforcers or factors outside the individual psyche. Although literature seems to concentrate on intrinsic motivation to explain student success, it is the author's contention that both should be accorded equal attention. With reference to the South African academic environment, it has become evident through research that students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds fall victim to extrinsic motivational factors in their academic pursuits (see, for example, Ruth, 1996).

Theorists in the study of motivation have generally concerned themselves with four questions representing stages in the processes assumed to be present in motivating behaviour. They are:

- What initiates action?
- What direction does such action take?
- Why, how strong is the action?
- Why does action terminate?

By action is meant not only obvious movement, but also mental action: you can solve a problem in your head without appearing to do so. A detailed discussion of the speculations each major theorist has made in an attempt to address these questions is presumed not profitable here. However, the most prominent views that have survived in each theory will be placed in perspective.

The Impostor Phenomenon

The concept, 'impostor phenomenon', is used to describe an internal experience of 'intellectual phoniness', which appears to be particularly prevalent and intense among high achieving women. According to Clance (1985), this phenomenon refers to deep-seated feelings of 'intellectual phoniness' which may relate to early family dynamics and to later introjections of societal sex-role stereotyping. Despite their outstanding academic and professional achievements, women (or female students) harbour resilient doubts of their own abilities, fearing that others will discover that they are not 'truly' intelligent, but are in actual fact, impostors (Thompson, 1996). In other words these women find

innumerable means of negating any external evidence that contradicts their belief that they are, in reality, unintelligent (Clance and Imes, 1978).

Deaux (1976), states that women consistently have lower expectancies than men of their ability to perform successfully on a wide variety of tasks. In line with their low expectancies, women are inclined to attribute their successes to temporary causes, such as luck or effort, in contrast to men who are to a great extent likely to attribute their successes to the internal, stable factor of ability. Conversely, women tend to describe failure with lack of ability, whereas men more often attribute failure to bad luck or task difficulty (Clance et al, 1978). These assertions are based on a review of experimental findings of attribution theorists, as posited and confirmed by research on sex differences in the attribution process.

Literature further explains the phenomenon in relation to family dynamics where early childhood experiences shape and inform career choices. Pruyser (1980) posits that the psychoanalytic vantage point is psychological determinism. Psychoanalytic theory assumes that the work that any person undertakes in almost any environment, excepting only the extremes of slavery and imprisonment, is to some extent determined by personal choice, made at several levels of consciousness. It also posits that childhood experiences (both positive and negative) and familial heritage have a major influence on how people engage in later life. Occupational choices enable them to replicate significant childhood experiences or satisfy needs that were unfulfilled in their childhood. This speaks to the

differential socialization of male and females and their resultant differential career choices in later life.

McKelvie and Frieland (1978) described familial influences on success or career choices, linking people's behaviour and feelings about themselves to the existential need to find and assure a position of belonging. Family constellation patterns, values and roles have a determining effect on individual behavioural patterns. This behavioural phenomenon pertains in almost all spheres of work, where there is human interaction. Although literature is not conclusive regarding the impostor phenomenon, however, most results support the position that more females than males experience it.

It is, thus, imperative to bear in mind that we continually manage the impressions we make on others, even children, and that these are important for monitoring the behaviour of others. It has become quite apparent that the world of face-to face interaction is patterned according to subtle but powerful norms and expectations about what is appropriate: a kind of moral order. It is this very subtle moral order that is found persisting in academia and engenders the impostor phenomenon among high achieving women.

The impostor phenomenon negatively impacts on the self-efficacy of these women, ultimately influencing their willingness to expend effort and persistence in their activity of choice. Notwithstanding the foregoing, these women are also found to be quite resilient in their quest for recognition and acceptance, hence the ever present questions

about their true ability in relation to their (roughly) stagnant progression to higher levels of academia.

The Academic Setting

A close examination of the distribution of women in science and academia presents a picture of uneven advancement. In a 1991 report, the National Research Council stated that while women received 50 percent of bachelor's degrees in the life sciences, they received 31 percent in computer and information sciences, 30 percent in the physical sciences, and 14 percent in engineering. Attention to the issue of under-representation of women in science and academia has been driven by several concerns: equity for women (Zuckerman, et al, 1991; NRC, 1991); feminist critique of the epistemology of science (Sassen, 1980; Schiebinger, 1989), feminist theory and research (Griffiths, 1995; Rayman and Brett, 1995) and institutional constraints, cultural and race perspectives impacting on women in academia (Walker, 1998).

Studies conducted in academia reveal that academic women in South African universities do not fare as well as men in these careers. Women are represented in larger numbers in lower ranks and few are found in the professoriate or the governing bodies. These assertions, according to Walker (1998), may seem to be blunt generalisations, yet they appear to capture the patterns and culture obtained across university systems on a global scale.

Further studies posit that women are characterised as the ‘other’ academics that face more subtle and more deeply embedded practices of exclusion, despite the rhetorical claims to egalitarianism which permeate higher education (Acker, 1994; Brooks, 1997; Luke and Gore, 1992; Stanley, 1997). It follows from the foregoing that women academics find themselves a muted group devoid of a voice for self expression. This culminates in women learning to express themselves in terms of the dominant (male) group thus suppressing and repressing alternatives. According to Delamont (1989), these negatively impact on women by limiting themselves or identities they are free to become as the hegemonic culture defines women as somehow ‘naturally’ lacking.

Griffiths (1998) notes:

The construction of self begins with the material circumstances of particular bodies, marked by sex, race, abilities and sexual pleasure, growing up in material circumstances such as riches or poverty. These material conditions interact with social and political circumstances over lifetimes which begin in babyhood and go through changes of a long adulthood. Thus it can be described using the metaphor of web, made with threads which are linked to other threads which are already in place.

The foregoing attests that identity is shaped by the surrounding social, political and historical forces, but at the same time individuals try to influence their own personal identities. Thus, the moulding of our academic identities is constructed within social life,

the patterning is constrained in conditions where male and masculinity carry greater cultural prestige, and femininity is incomplete. In other words, seemingly, women have to always struggle to construct their identities in line with the socio-political settings of their male counterparts. Other authors like Walkerdine (1990) explain this phenomenon by illuminating that ‘an academic woman simultaneously confronts the unbearable splitting of identity between the powerful person (the academic) whom she cannot recognise as herself, and the powerless being that lacks confidence (the woman)’.

It follows from the above that the struggle for women to perform both academically and as female must at times be overwhelming. Walkerdine (1990) posits that “women’s intellectual success threatens masculine rationality so that it is risky for women to construct transgressive identities which step over the gender divide or challenge acceptable ways of being”; such as the good girl. The suggestion is that women’s complex uncertainties and vortex of desire are invested in both being the object of male fancy and as well as the construction of self-identity. This phenomenon engenders immensely unbearable contradictions in the life-space of women intellect and psyche.

Notwithstanding the above, there are women whose convictions steer them in this very cumbersome direction. On a psychological plane, these women have to wrestle with finding consistency and homeostasis in their social lives, a quest whose attainment confers a stigma of eccentricity or being uncongenial. Acker (1994) puts it very succinctly by stating that women are then left with a near-impossible dilemma of balancing feminine attributes, which are seen as inappropriate to the job, and masculine

ones seen as unacceptable to women. It is exactly these overwhelming and persistent contradictions in women in academia that tends to frustrate and engender within them the impostor phenomenon.

The impostor phenomenon may not rest only with women in academia, but is an objective entity which has been depicted in variable forms in the media. A discourse of the given factors suggests a monolithic and gendered pressure in the structure of and management of women whose goal is the realization of their academic motivation and accomplishment. The effect of the impostor phenomenon on high achieving women may entail the splitting of oneself as a woman, wife, mother, caregiver at home; and life in the world of work as academic, professor or director of a school, department or organisation. By its very nature, this splitting brings forth a tendency to question the authenticity of their qualifications, realistic abilities in the face of a gendered construction of the academic sphere of work.

Despite the pervasiveness of this phenomenon, literature attests to the comparative silences in this gendered and classed construction of the shaping of experiences and identities of women in academia. However, it is not exactly clear whether ‘gender’ (sex) far outweighs the otherness of ‘race’, in South Africa or universally, in the formal institutions of academia.

This research will delineate issues pertaining to motivation as a variable for success with special focus on the concept of the impostor phenomenon as depicted above. It is the

author's contention that an investigation of the impostor phenomenon is pertinent in academia as it confounds the quality and measure of throughput in institutions of higher learning. It is the express aim of the author to highlight and inform the academic community vis-à-vis the pervasiveness of this phenomenon, as well as its effects on high achieving women.

However, for clarity of discussion, two sets emerge out of the various constructs. One set involves self-perception constructs and include the individuals' sense of competence and agency to achieve different outcomes. Another set depicts the purpose individuals have for engaging in different activities and their interest in and value of the activities (Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998), notwithstanding racial, gender and cultural experiences.

Self-Concept- Locus of causality / Control

Recent theory and research on self-awareness, inspired by the initial findings of Duval and Wicklund (1972), has suggested that qualitatively distinct styles of attention and consciousness can be involved in the ongoing process of self-regulation (Carver & Scheier, 1981). Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss (1975) have distinguished between private self-consciousness and public self-consciousness as two autonomous, but not necessarily exclusive, types of attentional focus with important behavioural, cognitive, and affective implications for regulatory processes. Accordingly, private self-consciousness refers to the tendency to be aware of one's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and motives, that is, the internal, private aspects of self. Public self-consciousness, on the other hand, is the tendency to be aware of and to focus upon oneself as viewed from the outside by others.

The two forms of self-focus have been related both to relatively stable dispositions and to situational states that can be induced by specific environmental stimuli. The Self-Consciousness Scale has been used to measure and investigate stable individual differences on these dimensions (Fenigstein et al., 1975). Public and private states of self-awareness have been situationally induced by various experimental manipulations (Carver & Scheier, 1981).

The results suggested a functional equivalence between the two types of situationally induced states and the two dispositions of public and private self-consciousness, respectively. Following Fenigstein et al. (1975), they used the term self-awareness to refer to the state concepts and self-consciousness to refer to the corresponding dispositional concepts. However, Plant and Ryan (1985) posit that although both public and private forms of consciousness play significant roles in self-regulation, both phenomenological and empirical analyses suggest that there are important differences between them.

It follows from this, that if one is regulating one's behaviour on the basis of anticipated or imagined external expectations or viewpoints, this is likely to facilitate, in the terminology of de Charms (1968) and Deci (1975), an external perceived locus of causality, since the projected "external" factors are perceived as mediating one's actions. Then again, behaviour guided by one's own attitudes, feelings, and values is less likely to be perceived as having an external perceived locus of causality and may even be expressed as having an internal perceived locus of causality. Associated with the

foregoing, cognitive theory affirms that factors that facilitate an external perceived locus of causality tend to weaken intrinsic motivation for an activity, while those that promote an internal perceived locus of causality tend to maintain or enhance intrinsic motivation.

Returning to the issue of attentional focus, public self-consciousness would seem to be related to internally controlling regulations. By focusing on oneself “as if” through the eyes of an evaluator, one is likely to pressure oneself to perform as that “projected” evaluator would want. Thus, the highly publicly self-conscious person is hypothesised to be concerned with how he or she “should” perform and thus to control him- or herself to perform that way (Plant & Ryan, 1985). As noted above, this tends to promote an external perceived locus of causality/ control and thus decrease intrinsic motivation.

Although intrinsic motivation is regarded as most important, namely academic self-regulation and activity perception; however, cognisance has to be taken in respect of other psychosocial variables that impinge on success. McCaslin and Good (1996), state that there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of social influences on learning and motivation.

Other researchers posit that dispositional aspects, surveillance evaluation, and mirror manipulation have a negative impact on intrinsic motivation; influence private perceived locus of causality; resulting in diminished interest in performance (Plant & Ryan, 1985; Lepper & Greene, 1975; Carver & Scheier, 1978; Pittman, Davey, Alafat, Wetherill, & Kramer, 1980; Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Froming, Walker, & Lopyan, 1982). The

effects of some of these latter mentioned variables on motivation and academic success, with special focus on females and the impostor phenomenon will be following in later pages of this study.

Firstly, these may relate to the nature of lecture theatres / classrooms, teacher practices, teacher-student relations as well as social relations between student peers. Secondly, such interactions provide different roles and opportunities for learners and teachers alike, influencing how, what and why of learning for students. Furthermore, extrinsic factors also impact on an individual's self esteem, self confidence, and motivation to succeed. Herein rest the implications of motivation and academic success.

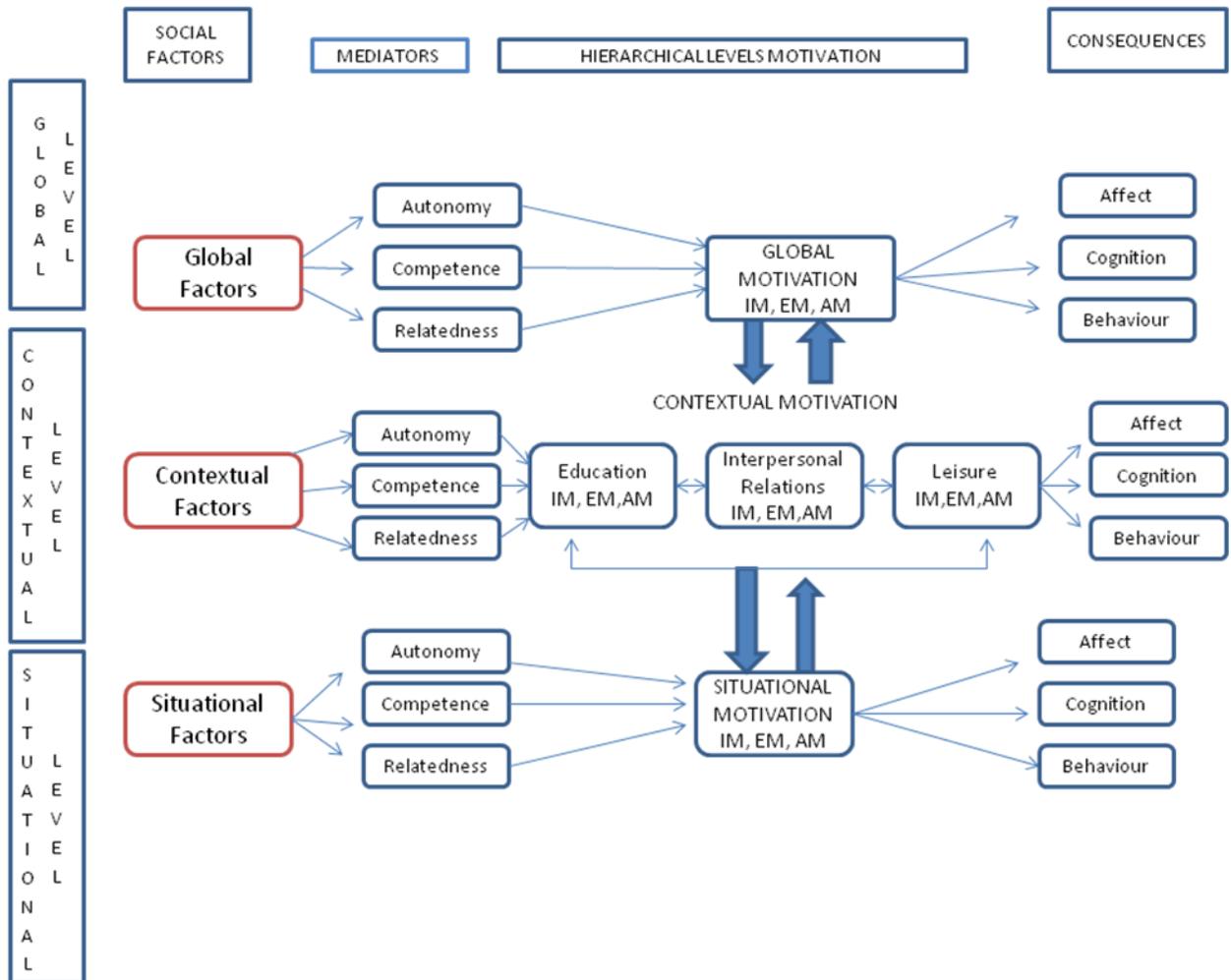
Whilst the foregoing is pertinent to the present study, a special focus will be on the Impostor Phenomenon. This experience has been shown to relate to negative self-evaluation amongst high achieving women, informs this study. How does this phenomenon relate to and influence motivation and academic success amongst women? In essence, this study will address pertinent variables that impact on motivation and academic success of individuals, especially females.

Competency beliefs

Competency beliefs play a significant role in individual motivation and success. However, pertinent in the understanding of the competency beliefs are background, personal and environmental factors. These factors further relate to three dimensions of motivation, namely, aspiration, mastery and career (Farmer, 1985).

Aspiration relates to the degree of personality characteristics that prevail to enhance and reach one's set goals. In this way, the desire for success galvanises the individual towards attaining those goals. Mastery, on the other hand connotes a state of confidence that has reinforced over time. It is at the level of attained confidence that an individual does not feel like an impostor. However, some individuals do experience impostor feelings, even though having attained mastery of their given academic challenges. This is a pertinent factor to the present study. It seems that at the career level, and for this study focus, women tend to experience these impostor feelings in their respective careers. This study will attempt to explain how motivation is affected in women who experience the impostor phenomenon.

Figure 1.1 *The Hierarchical Model of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation*, by R.J Vallerand, 1995.



The above (diagram 1) depicts the different types of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) at three levels of generality. Considers how these various motivations are related as well as the determinants and consequences of these motivational representations.

A requirement from the diagram is that motivation should be considered from a multidimensional perspective. Thus intrinsic and extrinsic motivation should not be considered in a dichotomy. Rather, these constructs should be considered on a continuum in which different types of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation range from a high to a low level of self-determination. Vallerand et al (1992, 1993) posits intrinsic motivation as to know, to accomplish, and to experience stimulation. Deci & Ryan (1985) explain the diagram in terms of integrated, identified, introjected, external regulations and finally amotivation (or the relative absence of motivation). These aforementioned constructs are well delineated on the diagram.

It follows from the forgoing, that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, competency and amotivation take place within the individual at three hierarchical levels of generality. These levels are the global (or personality), contextual (or life domain), and situational (or state) levels.

The global level refers to a broad disposition to engage in activities with an intrinsic or extrinsic orientation. It sits on top of the motivational hierarchy. Contextual motivation, on the other hand, refers to motivational orientations that are specific to various contexts such as education, leisure, and interpersonal relationships. According to Blais, Vallerand, Gagnon, Briere, & Pelletier (1990), these are the three most important life contexts for college- university students. This second level of generality sits at the intermediate level of the model. Finally, situational motivation refers to the last level of generality. It concerns the here and now of motivation, a third important element of the model.

It is important at this stage to underscore the different aspects of the motivational model. Firstly, motivation and resultant competency beliefs result from social factors at all each of the three levels of generality. Secondly, the impact of social factors on motivation is proposed to be mediated by perceptions of competence, autonomy, and relatedness at each of the three levels (Vallerand, 2000). It stands to reason that the need for self-determined motivation is important for engaging in activities at the three levels of generality.

Finally, it should be noted that there exist variable motivational dynamics between the three levels. One of these motivation dynamics refers to the interplay among the different types of contextual motivation (see the sideways arrows in the centre of the above diagram). However, whether the foregoing is universal and engenders competency beliefs in all individuals is a question of interest in this study.

Quite importantly is the realisation that the final element of the model is that motivation generates psychological results. This can be viewed on the right hand side of the diagram. Noted on these outcomes are that they can be, cognitive, affective, and behavioural in nature.

The above factors are considered very important for the present study. Women, especially those from a traditional African background, seem to be particularly vulnerable at all the levels of influence. These are depicted in the diagram, as Global Level, Contextual Level and Situational Level. This further collapses into mediating factors that impact on the

individuals' autonomy, competence and relatedness to education, interpersonal relations and ultimately leisure activities.

At the Global level, we find that the individual's personality plays a crucial role in relation to motivation. Within the social milieu that traditional African women find themselves, cultural determinants impact on how their personality is moulded and nurtured. This study is particularly interested in highlighting how some of these women emerge out of social milieu and attain academic success. In South Africa particularly, traditional African women still experience stifling academic, social, psychological, cultural, religious and economic factors. However, despite the foregoing, some women are found in strategic positions of power and influence in academia and corporate world (Masten, Hubbard, Gest, Tellegen, Garmezy & Ramirez, 1999).

Both the Contextual and Situational levels seem to yield similar constraints to women. Some women are denied academic pursuits or success by their husbands. Some experience bias in their married life, by having to always follow their husbands wherever they gain new employment. This move may often be to the woman's loss in both financial gain and promotion in their field of expertise. It appears that amongst traditional African women, culture is often branded by their husbands as a mechanism for control and enhancement of subordination.

The impostor phenomenon appears to become somewhat entrenched in women under these conditions. This further suggests that motivational strategies such as rewards and

threats undermine their autonomy and thus leads to nonoptimal outcomes such as decreased intrinsic motivation, less creativity, and compromised competency. Finally, this suggests, albeit biased, nonoptimal outcomes or poor problem solving for these women.

The following chapter will highlight some of these posited factors. However, whether these mentioned factors are innate and universal, not much research has confirmed this issue.

Classroom dynamics on motivation

Researchers studying teacher influence on motivation initially focused on the impact of teachers' personal characteristics and teaching style on children's overall achievement, motivation, satisfaction, and self concept. Many focused on the association between teacher warmth or supportiveness and student motivation and performance. However, according to Dunkin and Biddle (1974), the results of this early work are difficult to interpret.

However, more recently, researchers have separated factors such as teacher warmth from teacher instruction and managerial style. Results from these studies indicate that the effects of classroom dynamics are reliant on other aspects of teachers' beliefs and practices. In this regard, Moos and his colleagues demonstrate that student satisfaction, personal growth and achievement are maximised only when teacher supportiveness are

accompanied by efficient organisation, stress on academics, and provision of focused, goal-oriented lessons (Fraser & Fisher, 1982; Moos, 1979; Trickett & Moos, 1974).

Social support

This social context influences the students' performance, self-concept, self-esteem, competence belief and motivation. Herein, especially in South Africa, lie some of the pertinent variables that impact on individual motivation, viz. race, gender, culture and the psychological impacts (e.g. self-concept). The aforementioned variables inform this study, as they appeal to the contextual domain prevailing in South African schools, as well as, some (previously disadvantaged) institutions of higher learning

Research studies into factors that impact on an individual's motivation and success in academia reveal a multifaceted process. These multiple aspects of motivation influence students' choices of different activities or careers and their performance. This research has often been done in studies within the academic field (e.g. Meece et al., 1990; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Researchers posit various constructs that are crucial aspects of motivation. Also, there is growing interest in how different kinds of motivation, particularly social and academic motivation, influence students' performance (e.g. Juvonen & Wentzel, 1996). These authors discuss how social and academic goals may interact to influence students' performance and how different classroom factors influence both social and academic goals. In South Africa, school and classroom factors appear to impact negatively, predominantly amongst black schools. Teachers in black schools have to contend with both lack of resources and overcrowded classrooms,

resulting in loss of individual attention and remedial intervention by teachers for their needy students.

Gender issues in schooling

In all societies and at all times the education of girls and women has been considered less important and has assumed a different form from the education of boys and men (Gilbert & Taylor, 1991). However, influenced by a number of psychosocial factors, it seems that social scientists have begun to reappraise the role played by the schooling system in determining the status of life outcomes of students. Also, there is a growing interest in how different kinds of motivation, particularly social and academic motivation, influence students' performance (Juvonen & Wentzel, 1996).

In education, which is a set of applied fields of study, students initially have to contend with sex differences which are presumed to be natural as well as literature on school practices that deliberately reinforced differences in male and female education and social outcomes. This brought about emergent debates and challenges, especially from the feminist scholars, culminating in changes in education practice. The feminist research focus was, contrary to most traditions in educational scholarship, on the process of education and activities in educational institutions rather than the outcome of that education (Dekker & Lemmer, 1993).

It is important to note that education institutions, as agents of socialisation, impact heavily on how students perceive their social roles. Certain expectations emerge which

are often based on stereotyped beliefs. As such, this gender role socialisation plays a dual significance for students. On the one hand, it provides them with a model for present behaviour and on the other; it prepares them for adult life. Differential gender role socialisation for boys and girls occurs; largely through the processes of formal schooling and the effects thereof are best discerned in unequal educational outcomes such as the different patterns of achievement, aspiration and self-evaluation shown by males and females. The abovementioned informs this study, with special reference to understanding the experiences of “impostor phenomenon” of a select group in a higher education institution.

According to Pauline Clance (1985), this term is used to designate an internal experience of intellectual phoniness, which appears to be particularly prevalent and intense among high achieving women. Symptoms of the impostor phenomenon are common to individuals whose self is not fully or healthily developed as defined by self-psychology (Kohut, 1984).

Culture and race influences on motivation

Segregation is defined as ‘an interlocking system of economic institutions, social practices and customs, political power, law and ideology, all of which function both as an end in one group’s efforts to keep another (or others) in their ‘place’ within a society that is actually unified’ (Cell, 1982). These practices were enforced in South Africa during the predemocratic era. These practices have had a pervasive negative psychological impact on society irrespective of racial background. However, it seems that the effects are more

pronounced amongst the black people of this country. It follows from the foregoing that the effects of a cultural context on human development are far reaching and encompasses cognitive, emotional, physiological, social as well as economical setbacks impacting negatively on the individual's wellbeing and career pathing (Nsamenang, 1992).

It is disconcerting that the above mentioned dynamics become enshrined, even in institutions of higher learning. Dube (1985) indicates that as early as 1882, racism was already entrenched in the educational system e.g. "native education" in 1920. Academics and students have at some contextual point engaged in some form of introspection with regard to their academic pursuits and success. A concept that has emerged as particularly important in this respect is that of "motivation".

The variables of special focus are, amongst many, intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation. Culture plays a crucial role in forming and informing decision –making skills. These may pertain to whether one pursues further study or not as well as the circumstances impinging on the individual. Factors relating to married woman versus the single women, single parent families, divorced women and single women in academia, were also considered in relation to the experiences of the impostor phenomenon.

According to Dube (1985) education in South Africa has been characterised by the intention to make both African and white children believe that they, by nature, have different destinies. Race is also an important variable of interest, which is considered pertinent in this study. How does race make women similar or different in their academic

persuasions? Researchers, (Dovey & Mason, 1984), posit that schooling in South Africa was segregated along racial lines, primarily to reinforce the privilege of the minority white group at the expense of the majority black group. Could it be race or culture that supersedes the kind of decisions women make with regard to academic success.

Women in an academic institution of higher learning participated in this study to develop a better understanding and impart important knowledge about the “Impostor phenomenon” and its impact on motivation and academic success. Literature has shown that such impostor feelings influence a person’s self-esteem, professional goal-directedness, and locus of control, mood, and relationships with others (Bellamy, et al, 1991; Clance, 1988; Gottdiener, 1982; Toppin & Kimmel, 1985). Given the interpersonal impact of impostor feelings, their presence may affect how faculty interact with students, how available faculty make themselves to students for advising, supervision, and other academic activities.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYSIS

METHOD

Overview

This chapter describes the method used in the study. First, participants received an envelope with induction information delineating what the study was about and requesting participation in same. They then received a biographical data questionnaire which captured pertinent information such as academic status and race amongst others. An I.P. Scale, designed by Clance (1985) was administered, so as to assess their experiences and level of the “Impostor Phenomenon”. Following this, all participants were interviewed to collect supplementary information associated with variables of interest.

Data collected, as well as observations, during the interviews was analysed using the guidelines by Boyatzis (1998), Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis. This method was chosen for its advantages when dealing with qualitative data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Some of these advantages relate to the generation of unanticipated insights, allowance for social as well as psychological interpretations of data and it can be used for producing qualitative analysis suited to informing policy development (Boyatzis, 1998; Kvale, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Participants

The sample consisted of 25 faculty members of a major University of Technology in Kwazulu- Natal, who volunteered to participate in the study by responding to both a questionnaire and interview processes. Participants ranged in age from 27 to 58; and ethnic composition was 5 white females, 16 black females, 2 coloured females and 2 Indian females. Of the participants, 2 had doctoral degrees, the rest held masters, honours, bachelor of technology degrees or some qualifying credentials. The demographics of the sample are shown in Table 1.

There were 13 isiZulu speakers, 2 isiXhosa speakers, 1 Sotho speaker, 6 English first language speakers, and 3 English second language speakers. A total of 6 respondents were from predominantly rural backgrounds, while the remaining 19 were from predominantly urban areas. In the South African context, the distinction between rural and urban backgrounds is significant.

People from the rural areas are exposed to harsh cultural determinants that tend to impinge on their development. Women, especially fall victim to traditional cultural constraints with regard to further education. In contrast, those from urban areas tend not to be stifled by such cultural determinants, although some families still observe cultural rituals. Women from predominantly urban areas tend to be more educated than their counterparts. However, the trend seems to be changing with passing years and through psycho-education during rural community outreach programmes in higher education institutions.

Table3.1 The Demographics of the Sample

Urban	Race	Qualification	Rural	Rank	
3	White: 3	2 Masters 1 PhD		Lecturers Director	
2	Coloured: 2	1 Honours 1 B.Tech		HoD Lecturer	
3 1 1 3 2	African : 16	1 PhD 5 Masters 1 B. Degree 2 Honours 5 B. Tech 2 Diploma	1 2 1 2	Dep. Registrar 2 HoD 1 Dean (R) 2 Lecturers (U; R) Ass. Accountant 1 Lecture 1 HR Officer (R) 2 Lecturers 2 HR Officers (R) 1 Secretary 1 Fin. Assistant 1 Cashier	
1	Indian : 1	1 Masters		Senior lecturer	
	Asian: 1	1 B.Sc	1	Lecturer	
2	European: 2	2 Masters		2 HoD	

Key: U: urban schooling; R: rural schooling

Instrumentation

Biographical information questionnaire: The questionnaire was developed to ascertain issues pertaining to gender, age, race, rank, highest academic qualification, educational background, years of service and tenure status at the university. Short-answer questions requested concrete information only, such as original major choice upon entry into the university. Respondents were given room for additional comments at the end.

Impostor Phenomenon questionnaire [IP; 6]: The IP is a 20- item scale developed by Clarence (1985), to assess impostor feelings, that is, feelings of not being deserving of one's success with an associated fear of being found out as a "fake". Questions were multiple choice, short answer, Likert-type scales and rankings. Participants rate each item on a 5-point scale ranging from *not at all true* (1) to *very true* (5). A total score is derived by adding all ratings; scores range from 20 to 100. The higher the person's score, the stronger are that individual's impostor feelings

Interview: The interview was used to obtain narrative information that would have been difficult to gather through the questionnaire. Participants were encouraged to share as much information as possible. Information covered issues ranging from own perception regarding success or failure to realise set goals, to impinging factors such as racism and gender bias in given situations.

The questions also tape-recorded were on pertinent issues like culture, family background and pervasive socialisation dynamics. Systemic bureaucratic, paternalistic tendencies that

prevail in institutions of (higher) learning were also provoked by the interview. Dynamics pertaining to women's locus of control, personality traits, being married versus single, culture and status in academia were addressed conversant with the Impostor Scale. The questions were mostly open-ended thus allowing the respondents to expand on their response information. Ultimately, they had to share information regarding some of the subtle but effective reasons for their persistence in their fight for recognition and success in academia.

NB: Please refer to appendix A for the data collection instruments.

Procedure

Data collection was accomplished by sending research protocol through campus mail as well as by e-mail to all research participants, i.e. full-time-tenured faculty members at the university. Research packets consisted of a cover letter outlining the basic purpose of the study, informed consent form, biographical data sheet, IP and a self-addressed return envelope. The biographical data sheet inquired about gender, age, rank, years of service, tenure status, ethnicity, and educational background. To ensure anonymity, subjects were instructed to return informed consents separately.

Participants were first asked to complete a questionnaire that gave the researcher general information about the participants. The researcher guaranteed the participants that all information provided would be confidential and reported in an anonymous manner. Next,

each participant was asked to participate in a semi-structured interview that lasted between 90 and 120 minutes.

Participants were invited to narrate their experiences in academia. Probing questions were asked that elicited influences such as culture, family, community, and other factors, that impacted on their motivation. The interviews were tape-recorded and the researcher asked participants several open-ended questions aimed at eliciting information on how they had achieved motivation and academic success.

The transcripts were then analyzed using guidelines for thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998, Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It organizes and describes research data set in rich detail. The method involves reading the participant's response numerous times, each reading focusing on the narrator's lived experience and the emerging themes. Data was further analyzed using Nvivo8 software. For the purpose of this study, the interview also took into account pertinent factors that from a traditional African cultural context, would add value to the understanding of the impostor phenomenon amongst academically high achieving women.

Research Design

The design of this study involved the three predictor variables from the Impostor Phenomenon Questionnaire and transcribed data from the interviews. A thematic analysis

of the narrative data from the interview, following the guidelines by Boyatzis (1998) as well as that by Braun and Clarke (2006), was conducted. Themes that emerged were coded and collated in the final analysis. Information from the IP scale and interview were collated to ascertain the whether the impostor phenomenon actually existed amongst the research respondents.

Issues of Reliability and Validity

Reliability

According to Raimond (1993), reliability is concerned with the findings of research and relates to the credibility of the findings. Other authors posit that it is concerned with the extent to which the research process is consistent and stable over time and across researchers and methods (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Following their recommendations, data were collected from a variety of participants and settings. Interviews were transcribed within 48hours after being conducted. However, some interviews lasted longer than others, so as to accommodate cultural differences between the participants. It was noted that during interviews, African and Indian participants tended to deliberate much longer on cultural values before responding.

Validity

Validity is considered as, the extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is really happening in the situation. An effect or test is valid if it demonstrates or measures what the researcher thinks or claims it does (Coolican, 1992). However, validation in qualitative research is not concerned with establishing a correspondence

between findings and the real world. It purports to demonstrate that some interpretations of text (human actions, experiences) are more probable than others (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are particularly important in qualitative studies because they involve verbatim interview transcripts, rather than statistical summaries of variables (!). The researcher was always aware of the importance of the relationship with participants.

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the research procedures to follow. This was done to obtain their informed consent to participate in the study. Following this, permission to record the interviews was also obtained. They were also assured of anonymity once their identifying information was removed or coded. Interviews were conducted in the participant's offices so as to minimize power differences between researcher and participant, as well as to engage with them in their own comfortable space. Data collected in the interviews would be kept under lock and key to safeguard confidentiality. To further ensure confidentiality, the researcher transcribed the data which limited access to the data collected.

The trust engendered with participants enhanced their willingness and openness during interviews. The researcher relied on his skills as a trained therapist to handle narrated dilemmas involving painful emotional experiences.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a brief discussion of the method used in the research study. Procedures used to collect and analyze data in the study were presented. The last section addressed the reliability, validity and ethical concerns as they applied to the study. Results are presented and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: PART 1

The first research question concerned a relationship between motivation and academic success. The respondents highlighted an association or interdependence between people and their social milieu. This information seems to relate and respond to the hierarchical model of motivation which depicts three levels at which motivation relates (ref. pp 34).

The data analysis produced a number of interesting and pertinent themes for the study. However, only those interview extracts that highlight broader aspects of the conception motivation and academic success have been chosen. These will also be put in context with the respondents' experiences of the impostor phenomenon and how this impacted on their motivation for academic pursuits. This has been done to give a voice to a dimension of psychosocial experience that is usually silent in the literature. Transcription symbols employed in the extracts are described in table 4.1 (page 54).

The interdependent levels that emerged: relation to (a) background, (b) gender, (c) socialisation (family), and culture. These themes had numerous sub-themes that elucidated the respondents' narrative. It is information contained in the sub-themes, which gives a better understanding of the challenges that the respondents were dealing with on a daily basis.

Table 4.1 Transcription Symbols

Symbol	Meaning	Examples
.....	Indicates a pause	And uh....it was mere chance that i found an environment that i enjoyed
CAPITAL LETTERS	Indicate changes in the tone of voice. The tone is louder compared to the rest of the interview. This was understood to denote a stronger conviction about the point of view.	THIS LADY FOR DA...HELLEN ZILLE, IF SHE SAYS SOMETHING, YOU FIND THAT SOME PEOPLE ARE NODDING.
[]	The words between square brackets have been added by the author, where the meaning may be inferred from the context.	So yes, [if you have found the motivation that you need], you need something to grab you.
<i>Italics</i>	Indicates the narrator's emphasis	<i>That's worse; you can't compare a black female with a white female.</i>
()	The author has added the words between parenthesis: - To add clarity, where it was difficult to determine the English translation of the narrator.	Even at homes, you find that boys are treated well more than boys (more like men than boys)

The following extracts illustrate the idea of the connection between experiences or development background and perceptions on motivation and success as a female. The extracts were drawn from an interview with some of the respondents, as coded below. Having described their experiences, they were asked to comment on the role of ‘background’ or upbringing in motivation for academic success. Their responses to the background questions are as follows:

I. Experiences, perceptions or thoughts on Motivation and Success as a female.

[DS300015-17-McG](#)

INT: In your personal experiences in terms of upbringing, culture, race, what can you tell me?

RESP: Okay my background is actually very interesting because first of all I didn’t do an A level, I did an O level and I actually left school in standard nine. And uh...it was mere chance that I found an environment that I enjoyed, walked into it or was invited into a laboratory and thought okay that is what I wanted to do. How was I going to do it, I went back to school. So yes, [if you have found the motivation that you need], you need something to grab you and *I was fortunate that it happened while I was young*. A lot of people don’t know what they want to do or they don’t have the exposure to the environment so from my personal background, I was very fortunate.

This passage highlights the significance of a developmental background in the acquisition or non-acquisition of motivation for academic success. It also suggests the plight of other females who may not realise the importance or impact of their given developmental social milieu. People are connected to others and the environment within which they function. The significance of this connection lies in the understanding that the context within which one develops plays a pertinent role in shaping their cognitions and future pursuits in life.

[DS300021-Mdtn](#)

INT: Do you feel that you are receiving the accolades that are due to you in terms of your contribution in academia?

RESP: I think so yes. Uhm...*I think I am quite a good lecturer*, and in my department, we in general, [most of us] get on very well and we respect each other for what we are [better at..], you know. And I think I do get that respect from my colleagues, from HoD. I don't have [racial] problems with that at all.

Here we note that the respondent feels positive about being acknowledged in her department. This positivity suggests that the respondent experiences less externalised motivation. The emphasis on “being a good lecturer” translates to a positive self acceptance, self-concept and also suggests inherent motivation. External factors are perceived as not negatively impacting on the respondent's environment or on the work at hand. There are no indications or suggestions of being treated differently, solely on being female. However, more factors are still

to be investigated to give an indication of the experiences of the impostor phenomenon.

2. Gender issues

[DS300008-Ras](#)

RESP: Erh....i think at the present moment it is nice to be a female because there is this Affirmative Action so you find that when you apply, females are given the first priority.

INT: Those are your thoughts?

RESP: Yaah.

INT: What are some of your experiences in terms of motivation and academic success as a female? You can look at South Africa; you can look at where you come from, townships, wherever or the city being female.

RESP: I think it's because of the upbringing. *Maybe the upbringing contributed much to sex. You find that males were given first priority and even now, males are given first priority.* [Even at homes], you find that boys are treated well more than boys (emphasis) so I think that is more of what....upbringing.

Here the respondent gives an indication of the impact of culture on gender. Further, this suggests privileged treatment to males than females. Also one notices the emphasis on upbringing, developmental issues that pertain in families or societies within the traditional African culture. An underlying connotation of “not being important as a female” is further suggested in this communication. Hence the negative perceptions that prevail amongst black females with respect to family

support and nurturance in pursuit of further education and requisite career choices. It will be established how the experience of differential developmental nurturance impacts on and engenders the experience of the impostor phenomenon within this respondent.

INT: What would you say about race in females, being a black female, being a black academic female?

RESP: *That's worse; you can't compare a black female with a white female.* Something that is said by a black female will be undermined but if a white female comes and says the very same thing, you'll find that that statement will be considered.

INT: Give me an example, such as?

RESP: For instance, if you get into politics, sometimes you find that this lady for DA...Helen Zille, if she says something, you find that some people are nodding. But definitely if you take a female and she utters the very same statement, you won't get the same response.

INT: And in academia, in academic institutions, do you think that also pertains, does it also happen?

RESP: Yes, for instance which institution of higher education has a female vice-chancellor? *At least in this one we have a female dean. It's for the first time.* All these years, deans were males, principals and vice-principals so you can see, there's a thought.

INT: And your own experiences, being a black female academic in a Maths programme?

RESP: When we were still in school even educators used say Maths is for males so we were just surprising them by passing Maths being female because they had that

perception, even our lecturers. At University level I didn't have female lecturers, for all my studies. I think that was also influenced by the fact that females during that time were not given the opportunity to further their studies so that is why we don't have many females doing science and mathematics. It's unlike now because things have changed.

The above suggests, once again, the perpetual stigma that black females encounter in their daily functioning. This seems, according to the respondent, to also filter into politics as well as in academia. Despite exceptional academic performance by some (Black) females, this however, appears not to be influential in informing their progression in assuming higher positions in academia. Notwithstanding the above, the respondent also attests to changes in some instances. However, these still seem to be few and far apart.

[DS300011-dr.M](#)

INT: How would you describe your feelings in your present occupation or in your position right now?

RESP: I have to use the most appropriate words, [the politically correct words]. Most times I try to accept it although it's difficult that you know I have qualifications than my head of department but he was chosen over me for various reasons which are only known to management because we were all interviewed for that position. One of the things that came up in my interview, uh...[the question which was asked] was, *how would I handle working with the senior males in the department, do I think that uh...being younger than them, would I be able to cope running the department ?* And that came out; well I

perceived it as an extremely strong question that the whole selection process was based on the fact that I was number one, *a younger female working under older men, number two, that I was a FEMALE TRYING TO CONTROL MALES. IT CAME THROUGH AS A CHALLENGE*; I don't really look at it as a challenge because my response to that was, if you are in position of leadership, you should create a culture of inclusiveness because if you do create a culture of inclusiveness people know their role and when people know their role, they are comfortable in their positions. It's just when they're undecided there's...when they're undecided as to what their role is in an organization or a department or any cluster that people feel threatened. But if you give them defined roles to play and have an interactive session at all times, like I said a culture of inclusiveness...you've eliminated that threat of not knowing what you're doing, *what's my role, what's my position, will my views be listened to...uh...that's the way I look at it.* You don't necessarily have to agree but if you create a culture of inclusiveness where people are allowed to table their views or their observations or their suggestions and then brainstorm from there because sometimes all suggestions are not good but one or two from this person and that person. It may not look like it's going to work but you can only be able to know it's not functional if you plan a strategy and you implement that strategy. As a scientist for many years, my only validation is to have data and to analyze that data before just making statements that it's not going to work. We'll never know that it's not going to work if we haven't implemented it and if it's fallen flat, then of course it's not working. Sometimes when you do these things the null hypothesis also teaches you something. You don't have to get a positive skew all the time. The null hypothesis gives out the information that, yes this has been tried and hasn't worked. So somebody needs to

do it for other people to know it doesn't work. Coming back to the question, how do I feel about it? *I think I've worked beyond it because I have set my goals and I have achieved my goals although it's against the odds, it's against all odds in the department because I experienced tremendous resistance in every area.* I HAD WORKLOAD INCREASED, *I had my students' practical sessions messed around with, I was shut out of the laboratories, and the keys were taken away from me.* There were numerous challenges which many, many days I cried all the way home but when I got home; I realized that I'm a big girl now.... (Laughs) and I'm actually doing what they [men] want me to do- if I stop and that was not...I also have an extremely strong personality, I will stop something when I am ready to do it, not when somebody pressurizes me to do it. So at the meeting I did tell them, you know, I will leave when I am ready to leave, not because you all are pushing me out of the system so it took me three or four years to work through it but I see now, once I've achieved that PhD, they've found another live mouse to play with, I'm now the dead mouse you know. So the cats [men, managers] look for some activity and go around and it's not exclusive to my department or to Mangosuthu. It's a general industry thing, you know. If you listen to many people [females], they go through it and many give up but I say when you give up, you're doing exactly what your opposition wants you to do. You either walk around the obstacle or you try and corn that obstacle, whichever part you chose but uh...it shouldn't block you from your goals forever. So in terms of how I've overcome that issue of not you know, [of being over-qualified and under positioned], I have just set new goals for myself and I work towards new goals for myself and I work towards those goals. So now the PhD is

over, my new target is aiming for publications and the publications hopefully will take me onto.... [higher ground].

The respondent, an Indian PhD graduate, is expressing an immense feeling of despair; firstly as an academic and secondly as an academically qualified female for a position in the department. Her plight is noted in her narrative of the underlying current and seemingly biased questioning of her abilities. Despite her academic qualifications, she perceives her role as well as her academic achievements being under scrutiny. As she explains her experiences in the interview and in her capacity as a lecturer, the system [men] tend to protect their own at the expense of undermining and setting women up for failure. There is a question of validation; her academic achievements, gender, age versus her male counterparts. How these experiences inform her feelings of the impostor phenomenon will be noted in ensuing pages.

[DS300014-Mrs.Ndme](#)

INT: And how would you describe your feelings in your present position?

RESP: In my present position what I must say is I'm not sure whether it's an advantage or disadvantage to be promoted to a perceived higher position, I am not sure. I will give you a brief understanding of what happened when we came here. It was me and another male and remember [you know] my boss is a male. I could see that *as much as I can give an opinion but with my male counterpart, if he gives same opinion, he would take it as much better than what I have said although it could be the same thing*. But now that I am

alone I can say he appreciates what I am doing and he understands me and he trusts me, *I may say that*. But at that time I used to feel, oh, okay, what's the use for me to give an opinion because even if I say it, it won't be taken unless it was said by somebody or approved by somebody [a man]. That was it.

INT: Would you think that probably most females are in a similar position?

RESP: Definitely yes. You know sometimes you'd feel 'oh okay *maybe I'm just window dressing here* so for me what's the use of thinking or coming with innovative ideas if they are not going to be implemented or at some stage you realize that even if you can give them an opinion, they don't take it at that time but maybe a week a later you can see that what is being implemented now is what I initiated it's just that it wasn't initiated at that time but now the bad thing is, they don't say "your idea was very good and that is why we have implemented it now". It always comes like it's a new thing that somebody has come up with and therefore we have to follow it and then it's only you who says, 'oh okay, now they think it was a good idea, now we are implementing it, okay it's fine'.

INT: In terms of your own experiences from where you come from, given your background up to where you are today...what can you say in terms of culture, race and gender as an influencing your academic success?

RESP: I'm not sure whether it did play any influence because as a black woman in most cases you have to prove yourself. If a man can prove himself ten times, *you have to do it twenty times*. I think if...the fact that I am a woman and a black woman at this time, I wouldn't be here if people are considering that. *I think where I am is because of my struggles, really, nobody has done anything for me... Even to worry, do you want to study...what do you need or do you want to do this, what do you need?* But you know, as

I grew up I thought that it's something that is in me because even in my family, I'm the last born but I used to be an initiator in everything. Even if we want to renovate in the house, I've got to initiate, 'hey guys let's do this, let's do that'. Even in my family, you know, most of the things that happen in my house, I am the initiator so I thought that it's something I was born with.

The respondent, an African Masters graduate, shares both thoughts and feelings that have been narrated by other female academics. Similarly, feelings of being unworthy, doubting academic success, questioning ones role; seem to be the common thread prevailing within academia. Women are made to feel like second class academics despite their proven academic qualifications. It also appears that females have to work twice as hard as their male counterparts as academics and to be accepted as such.

[DS300015-17- McG](#)

INT: how would you describe your feelings in your current position?

RESP: I've gone through...I am probably in a mode of acceptance at the moment but I've been exceptionally frustrated. *In the eighteen years that I've been here, I have the qualification but have never had the break.* I have applied for HoD position; I have applied for senior lecturer position and on both counts I have never made it so YES, IT IS FRUSTRATING.

INT: In terms of these hindrances if I may call them what would you relate it t?

RESP: Not wanting to be obvious, it is a male dominated environment so I am going to say that it has impacted on me. Uh...management at top levels have always been male, not that I am saying they are not good at what they are doing, they are. It is that females have never been perceived as being capable of being in positions where previously were dominated by men. And having been in interviews with men in hindsight I have to agree that some of the positions I have applied for, a better person [man] has got the job but yaah...let's leave it at that. ...I was going to say that but for senior lecturers, I mean that to me is more an advance in this university and for the department rather than being levelled out as lecturer for all these years. I hope that makes sense.

The respondent, lecturer, is a married, White Masters graduate. Once again, the narrative indicates how female academics feel in academia. The shared information further reinforces how demeaning, often times, these females are made to feel. Their plight is seemingly couched in the systems beurocracy, gender bias and the discourse of male dominance.

[DS300019- Mrs. Ndiz](#)

INT: In terms of your specific position as a female, it's...

RESP: Male dominated?

INT: Male dominated, can you tell me more about that?

RESP: Well, that's a challenging one because Maths as a field is demanding and as a female, one has many things that one needs to respond to. I mean if I could turn back the hands of time, *I would have finished all my studies before I embarked in other*

responsibilities, being female you know, getting married, having children, what have you because it's very difficult to do that and be a Mathematician. Erh... Maths is not a social field. If you specialise or do Mathematics, you talk only to very few people who are able to understand. And as a mother you are very much social, you are supposed to talk to all the people. *That is why then for my PhD I have decided to deviate a bit from pure Mathematics but to Mathematics Education.* I am looking at teaching of Mathematics and factors that affect the teaching and different ways of teaching and everything like that which talk more to human beings than just a pure hard core science. So, yes it is challenging but if you were to focus on it without these other baggages of being a woman, one can make it right to the top. *It's not about the capability, it's about the demands that our society, our world puts on us which makes us not responsive or successful.*

The respondent, a married African Masters graduate, shares her experiences, thoughts and feelings about being female, an academic and be married. Her narrative revolves around the difficulty faced by one as a mathematics lecturer. She highlights the influence and demands of society on gender issues. According to the respondent, there is a dire need for societal change to enhance female acceptance and progression in academia.

INT: Your gender, female, married?

RESP: Same thing, it's a challenge, especially with married. *Married is even more challenging* because the tendency, I don't know whether there is a study, the higher women go as far as positions are concerned, leadership, management. *I don't have a*

*study but most of the women I have interacted with, it's either they are single or divorced. So it's like the two cannot co-exist and what I have found is, it calls for a lot of juxtaposition because I am here, I am commanding men, I'm reprimanding men. And then I go home, I'm with my husband. I am now supposed to take a position of a subordinate and sometimes are now supposed to ...yes...I'm supposed to, you know, in a marriage it's a give and take and when you say give and take, it means there will be times when you take something that you really do not believe in but you take it. So I take, or stand or live with decisions which it was in my office, I would not have stood them so it calls for that. But I believe that it is a challenging position for women. There are many forces pulling you. One force says, as a woman, you need to push, you need to drive. But there is another force which says if you believe in family values, if you believe in a functional home, you need to strike a balance at some point. You need to know when to code-switch from being a driver and to being a supporter because that is what I would be in my house. So I've....fortunately for me though, the two are working very well you know. In other words I could say I'm. ...but I don't accord the success to me, there are many other factors that come in because the attitude of the person you are married to also plays a role, the support that he gives you also plays a role, you know. Whether he feels threatened or confident, *I mean when you shine, does he shine with you or does he feel overshadowed by you?* That also comes in so I will not accord the success of the two roles to myself but it's a challenging area, very much challenging.*

Here, the same respondent shares information about the impact of culture on gender. Although she has the qualification and the position that go with it, she still

finds herself having to juggle between being an academic, a Dean in command of a faculty and males; being a married woman whom at home is expected to behave according to cultural rules. She shares her dilemma as the need to strike a balance in her daily functioning between academia and home. She indicates the stifling and pervasive nature of her cultural demands on her capabilities. Firstly, she may not use the same objective skills as an academic to argue a point in the marriage and secondly as a married female, she has to follow her husband's lead.

[DS30007-DR. Mne](#)

INT: The third one will be, what experiences, perceptions or thoughts can you share with regard to motivation and success as a female?

RESP: As a female?

INT: Yes.

RESP: You probably will have to have a very different approach to your male colleagues.

An assertive female is seen as aggressive so you should always try not to be seen as aggressive in anyway where an aggressive man is seen as a leader. With a female, to move forward, you should try to keep your dignity. Am I sharing with other females now as a female how to move on? Uh...not to be discouraged by things that don't work, you know to find alternatives. If you have a goal and one strategy doesn't work, try to find other ways to reach the same goal. Never get involved in gossip and politics, internal politics because in an office like this if you are in a management position, you should support all staff members, irrespective of their feelings so it should be a bit like Switzerland so you should refrain from opinions. *You will be exposed to a lot of*

backstabbing and victimisation. Uh...the big thing there is to be honest. As soon as...don't get involved and then the issue will always end in a crisis and then you must tell the truth. Always be honest. Always keep your emotions under control; never cry in public...you know those kind of things will help you to succeed. Gender issues okay. With culture it is really, for me, not much has changed since I'm not of the previous regime. They had the Broederbond, *and certain surnames were seen as pure Afrikaans and the rest had no choice so I had huge fights just to be treated fairly. Promotions were troubled because people who were born to the right family just sailed through the system and they were unfairly advantaged* [So that happened then]. Now, it's just the same. *At this stage you need to be black to be important so nothing much has changed in my life,* [you know], *it's just the same.* If you can say, first I battled with the in) now I battle with the Zulu bond just the same. Same story different race so from my point of view, nothing much has changed, I don't think it will in my lifetime. Uh...I think there is lot of opportunities now with Affirmative Action for black men but I'm not too sure whether they'll really look after the black women. I think they will do exactly the same as they did in the previous government. *They will appoint black women in positions where they can't make too much damage and if they are noisy, they will sort of like contain them.* They will be silenced and sidelined. So I will be surprised if women really moved into things. Usually they will promote women who can be.... [who will behave as told], not the ones who will think independently so you will need to hide that if you are an independent thinker. That will be career limiting.

The respondent, a White PhD graduate shares her experiences as a female in academia. The narrative is informative in that it highlights facts about gender as

crucial in the acceptance-non-acceptance of an individual in academia. We note that the narrator had to struggle for recognition amongst her race; bias based on family lineage. She also attests to the fact that women, both Black and White, struggle for recognition. It also appears, from the narrator, that sometimes women are put in positions only as a management strategy to.... “contain them”. Once again, we note the suggestion of women having to question whether their promotion or progress is due to their academic effort, fluke, luck or other external factors. This engenders the feelings of being an impostor...the impostor phenomenon.

3. Race or Cultural issues

[DS300008-Ras](#)

INT: In your personal experiences in terms of upbringing, culture, race, what can you tell me?

RESP: I think that needs to be changed but it will take some time. It will take some time because we have to change the mindset and to change the mindset of whom, [that is the challenge], that's from the top. Especially, if I can divert a little bit, for instance us [women] who are married, there is that perception that you are uMakoti [wife, outsider] so you have to obey the rules of this family, you see. And you don't have a say, you can't say much so that still goes along the problem of being a female *that you are not given that recognition that you can say something that is senseful, that can uplift the family.*

When you start to raise your voice, they say “oh, makoti is talking so much” so wherever you go if you are a female, you must be submissive.

INT: If I hear you correctly, you are saying that even though you have the expertise your final success is actually dependant on your husband’s decisions.

RESP...Yaah, it’s true, it’s true. Sometimes you find that if he doesn’t agree and you push it, then it becomes an issue in the family that ‘oh, she’s not respectful’, things like that. Females are still having this problem of being deprived in some ways. *If he wants to up and move to Cape Town, then you have to follow him regardless of...*

This narrative from a African B.Sc. Honours (Mathematics) graduate, lecturer, sheds more light into the challenges imposed by cultural demands. Her experiences as a married academic indicate pervasive negative impacts of culture on the self-confidence and self-esteem of said women. Her academic and self developments appear to be determined by her husband and in-laws. She attests to this by stating “*If he wants to up and move to Cape Town, then you have to follow him regardless of...*” - “*females are still having this problem of being deprived in some ways*”. Although an authority in her lecture space, this seemingly gets eroded when in the role of wife and uMakoti in her social space.

[DS300011-dr M](#)

INT: What can you share about race or culture in relation to your motivation and success academically?

RESP: In terms of gender, in terms of race, my feelings about race right now is I'm not sure it's shared by many people but I think the race issue needs to stop if we need to improve this country. It's a very demotivating factor, okay fine apartheid government messed it up, we can either dwell on that past or we can make things different. If we are going to continuously promote this system where demography needs to be representative all the time and we are forced to do that, we are not going to have a fully functioning institution or organization irrespective of where it is because we then basically using people as window dressing and it puts pressure on those who knows. The way I feel is, I came from a historically disadvantaged background and I worked my way up and we are fifteen years into democracy now, *I think the playing fields should be evened out. You take the best man for the job.* It's important for us to start looking at that, taking the best man for the job. The other things when you start choosing on race, well to me, it's very demeaning to be chosen because I'm a female Indian. I must be chosen by my work experience and the CV i present to you.

The respondent shares issues of race as demotivating and a factor that should not be influential in decision making circumstances. However, race or culture seems to be an attribute used in the selection and promotion of academics in this and other institutions of higher learning. Her narrative also suggests that the “playing fields are not evened out...” between males and females, culminating in what she refers to as window dressing. She suggests in this narrative that one should be selected on merit and not on race issues.

INT: From your own experience given your age, where you come from, what can you say in terms of your culture as a black female or your race in terms of where you are now as a black female?

RESP: The fact that I'm a black female, still people look at me like a black female, like 'what will you get from that person', until I prove myself that "hey don't look at me in terms of who I am or how I am or how I look, just look at me and maybe I can tell you or what I have in my mind to assist you in whatever you want". My field as a medical technologist...*the problem is mostly we've got Boers in this profession so we used to be very much undermined so as a result even before we came, they have never taken black students for biomedical technology, female students....worse black female students because we used to ask, how come there are no old people working in the pathology laboratory? They told us blankly, "This field is not for you, you are also not going to make it" so fortunately we struggled.* Fortunately we opened doors for others because we had to prove that this thing can be done by females as well and worse, black females. But still when we have meetings with management, most of the managers are white and they are males and they are Boers, *still they just decide to talk in Afrikaans, knowing very well that you can't speak Afrikaans in a meeting.* So we still have those things that you know, they [white males] have in their minds that 'these people [black females] are not supposed to be in this field'.

This narrative highlights the atrocious nature of the environment that some Black students have to endure in their endeavours for academic success. The narrator

brings us into her world, a world devoid of encouragement and nurturing for sought after self-development in academia. She opens for us an environment expertly set aside for a particular race and culture and so much for the other-Black, in this instance. Following on this exclusiveness in terms of race, these students had to further contend with the fact of being female in a male dominated career. As she succinctly puts it: *“the problem is mostly we’ve got Boers in this profession so we used to be very much undermined so as a result even before we came, they have never taken black students for biomedical technology, female students....worse black female students because we used to ask, how come there are no old people working in the pathology laboratory? They told us blankly, “This field is not for you, you are also not going to make it” so fortunately we struggled.* What the narrator shares with us here indicates the plight of students just because of their colour, race and gender. These shared experiences suggest psychological challenges that would have an impact on the said student’s academic success; the questioning of self-confidence and self-esteem in comparison to her counterparts.

[DS300019 Mrs. Ndlz](#)

INT: What can you say in terms of your culture, in terms of your race, in terms of you being a married woman and where you are today?

RESP: Well, that is a very complex one and sometimes I feel like that is the one that one experiences alone. You know some of the things, you can experience as a group, for example, under qualified you are a group but when it comes to your culture, you

experience that as an individual now because the culture defines who I am. *And you know, it's very, it's difficult, even if you are black people of the same cultural background, you will find that when you zoom in, you still have individual differences.*

The way people value some things in their culture is not the same. Some will value a particular component and the other person will choose something else. And I found that...I wouldn't say a challenge but what I ...I mean I observe this and it sort of fascinates me to look at it and say there are many black women but they are individuals in their own rights and they respond in their own rights to culture as well. And erh...my take is believing in what you are as an individual and not trying to have a group moving with you. If people tend to or want to move with you, fine! But if nobody moves with you, again that is fine. *But that calls for one to believe in who one is. What I value in life then is to meet what is expected of me.* In other words, I do not want to define me or if I am a dean, I want people to look at me as a dean. If I am a lecturer, students should judge me on my deliverables as a lecturer. Do I teach them, do I care for them as students and then they can infer and say "this person does her work so good", it means the culture, whatever it is, is good because it's able to bring this best person to us, you know. So I don't put culture and everything on the forefront but I believe in delivering what is expected of me and then in turn people tend to respect the values that I expound.

Here the respondent looks at culture as a unifying force and not as dividing and punitive. However, despite the positive nature of culture, the narrator posits that the effects are felt at an individual level. She narrates positive self-worth due to

cultural nurturance which enhances self-confidence and less self questioning of one's worth as a female in academia.

[DS300022-Mado](#)

INT: What can you say about your culture, your race on where you are today?

RESP: Culturally...let me think about my culture...well race wise, I will start with race, race wise you know, *I have that thing pushing me from within to say there is a gap there, especially in my discipline. There are too few Africans there.* There is a place for us. As much as it's the same discipline but there could be another perspective from people of my own race group. We haven't made much of a contribution in the discipline, in the development of knowledge. Errh...I think you know there is a role. Sometimes people will say, 'why don't you leave and go and start up your training company and as much as I'm committed to teaching, I always say "no" I think I still have a role to play there to close that gap or even if it's not fully closed, narrow the gap. Uhm...there are you know problems race wise because I remember one nasty experience when I started acting as an HoD, there were about seven men and I was in charge of them, errh...six Africans and then one Indian. *Much to my surprise, the Indian was the most cooperative, rest weren't and one of them even told me that they had a problem reporting to a woman* , but I understand you know culturally those are the things but I am a very conservative somebody when it comes to that because of my culture as well. You know, I submit to some extent but I always believe that when it comes to work, you shouldn't do those things to the level of not being able to do what you're employed to do. But sometimes it does inhibit me from venturing into certain things because you know culturally there is

that thing that they [men] think “oh, she’s too forward”, maybe she does that and sometimes I do it and I know when I go back I’m like ‘did I not overdo it, did I you know’. But I’m slowly learning as a woman not to be stopped by those [what men think] things. But uh...mixing with other colleagues, I must say, I haven’t experienced anything that would make me think that they are racist, you know. Most of my colleagues are Afrikaans, men mainly, the professors and all that. Instead of feeling that I find them to be, maybe because of their age their older, to be willing to assist one to develop, even from the African side as well. And they listen and they take that interest and they want to do things with you jointly, not because, I haven’t felt that they want to make the numbers or anything because in some instances they have nothing to gain but you know, I find them to be more than willing to join hands. Well among peers, well you will find that feeling of uneasiness, you know. By peers I mean those who are in the same age group or maybe we started around about the same time who are not yet professors or doctors. I find them to be....it actually bothers me sometimes...they appear not to be comfortable around me, I don’t know why but I have actually seen them avoiding me. Maybe at conferences, oh Mpume is there; let me not go there or if I’m going to present, sometimes they even withdraw. And sometimes I feel guilty because like ‘oh maybe, do I ask too many questions or do I embarrass people and all those things and you know, do I have a dominant personality? But among peers it’s like as much as well, all of us have Master’s degrees, you know, I don’t know if others are pursuing Phd’s and all that but they seem to you know...yaah...without saying it but you see that yaah,...there is that.

The narration sheds information to the effect that black males do not embrace having to report to female authority. She considers her experience as inhibiting female progress in academia and engenders a sense of self-reproach amongst females. They tend to constantly question their role and worth under such hostile confrontations and subsequent lack of acknowledgement by male subordinates. In contrast, she however, concedes positive relations and support from older white males than from her peers or men from her cultural and racial background. Seemingly race and culture have an influence in how men relate to or acknowledge their female counterparts in academia, more so if females are in positions of higher authority and they (men) have to report to them (females).

[DS30007-DR. Mne](#)

INT: And how do you think culture, race or your gender has an influence in terms of where you are today, where you come from and where you are today in terms of your success?

RESP: You know Ross it would be really wrong to say that it doesn't have an influence. Being a woman today is better but it's not much. Uh...so being a female is a bit of a disadvantage. So they [men, management] will appoint you to make up numbers in gender equity but they will always try to sideline you in some way so that you don't have as much power as you should have. Sometimes the men that report to you will have direct access to the top and they will overrule you...*you know in past experience there is always that kind of brotherhood that complicates you.* Men will go to the toilet, well into the toilet, and make important decisions and never even think that women were never part of

that or they will go off play a game of golf so they do that brother thing or man thing and not realise that women are excluded from that decision-making process, *you are sometimes or often caught totally unawares on the mainstream activities and line of thought*. What are we talking about, I lost my story now?

The narrator shares strong feelings about how men tend to isolate females in decision-making processes. Despite being in a position of authority, they (men) undermine them by not following procedures or communication protocol. As posited by the narrator, men in her department tend not to report to her but bypass her authority and report directly to senior management. Further, she posits that women are used for window dressing just to adhere to legislative regulations for gender equity in the workplace. However, she contends that these women (herself) are made ineffective in their roles by lack of senior management support.

[DS30009-Mrs. Zawk](#)

INT: Anything about race, culture in terms of motivation and success for females?

RESP: Yaah, look for me it's very difficult to comment on that. I find it very difficult...look I don't understand the culture...not culture; I don't understand the difference of race. When I came to South Africa, it was just about the time when apartheid was falling apart. In my culture, people respect each other, I don't see people as black people or Indian people or...yaah...like my son went out with an African girl and I didn't have any problem with it. In our culture it's okay if you marry a person from another race as well. I never understood. I know after so many years naturally that racism

is existing both ways. I can see like sometimes people coming from African culture they have a lot of uh...naturally if somebody was oppressed, it's human nature that you try to recover and it's like a rebellious part of human nature. So I can see and of course I live in this country so I can see that people look down or they will abuse the situation. Really, this is one part that I find myself somehow like...I cannot understand, I cannot see people, I truly honestly cannot see. Like I would never...like I have what we call black or African boss and I would never look at him, "oh no he doesn't like me because I'm white and he's not white". I would never, he's my partner. He sometimes gives me a hard time for whatever reason but I never think "oh no, he doesn't like me because I'm yaah..." And also I don't look at "oh no, he's jealous because I'm female or something like that, even though we joke very often and he says "females can't do this and that" but I would never seriously consider that.

The narrator, a white female from Europe, an engineer and head of department; sheds light into how her different background and socialisation afford her a totally different perspective on the South African racial and cultural discourse. As stated in the extract, she experiences no differential treatment by male counterparts in her department.

4. Self-Confidence

[DS300014-Mrs. Ndme](#)

Here at Mangosuthu, it was a bit intimidating. Looking at my background, having been supported by a woman so, I didn't have an idea on working with males of course. Again while I was still lecturing, I was still lecturing, *I had a very low self-esteem*. As I am saying, maybe my whole life was through God's plan. I got selected to go overseas to do a leadership course. And I remember and I will always remember that when I came back, *I was a new person in terms of presenting myself, confidence; I gained a lot of confidence and I could see I could do anything*. I could talk to anyone, be it a woman or a male as compared to before so now, I'm here as a QA [Quality Assurance] person.

Here we note the influence of a limited background development. The narrator was initially lacking exposure to male dominated fields, which culminated in her perceived low self-esteem. Even when she qualified to lecture, she seemingly did not receive the nurturance and support in her field to enhance her self-confidence and self-esteem. However, she indicates that desired changes only took place when she was exposed to USA culture, which allowed her the opportunity to receive and experience positive support and encouragement devoid of gender issues.

[DS30007-DR. Mne](#)

INT: In terms of where you are right now as Dr. Minnie, do you question your own academic abilities that you are here by chance?

RESP: How did I end up at Mangosuthu?

INT: In terms of your academic success as Dr Minnie?

RESP: Because of my academic success, you know, *I probably published much more than men my age when I was still in the lab*. You know, they would publish around about 4-5 papers, I had fifty scientific papers. They would present things at conferences; I had more than a hundred papers presented at conferences *so I really worked hard to be acknowledged as a woman in research*. *So I think that I am here just purely on hard work and probably because of good communication skills*.

Although very positive about her academic achievements and progress, the narrator espouses her hard work as the only factor that could secure her acknowledgement as a research scientist amongst men. She seemingly had to work twice as hard as her male counterparts in this male dominated academic area.

[DS30009-Mrs. Zawk](#)

INT: To what would you attribute your past and present success?

RESP: Uh...personally, as a person, uhm...perseverance, hard work, discipline, erh...first I would actually put discipline, hard work, perseverance, being compassionate and passionate about what you are doing.

INT: And as a female in this position?

RESP: Uh...it's about being confident and confidence comes with being competent. If you feel that you are competent, if you are sure about your value, it is sometimes very challenging, it's very frustrating but gradually like after so many years in my case, I found people are respecting me because they now treat me as a partner. Beginning is always difficult, people look, specifically in male dominated fields; people sometimes look down on females or the perception is that they are good for other jobs, not engineering. But once you start showing your ability, showing that you are competent, showing that you are hard working and believe in what is required of you to do, it settles.

Self –confidence dependant on hard work. However, this is seemingly defined by acceptance by male counterparts. According to the narrator, engineering was, and still appears to be a male protected domain. Although it is seemingly not the case in Europe, the narrator posits that she had to work very hard to be eventually accepted as an equal or partner in the engineering field and as an academic.

II. Factors contributing to success

Background

[DS300015-17-Mrs. McG](#)

INT: What would you say about your background?

RESP: In relation to?

INT: To your career where you are your self-motivation.

RESP: Okay my background is actually very interesting because first of all I didn't do an A level, I did an O level and I actually left school in standard nine. And uh...it was mere chance that I found an environment that I enjoyed, walked into it or was invited into a laboratory and thought okay that is what I wanted to do. How was I going to do it, I went back to school. So yes if you have found the motivation that you need, you need something to grab you and I was fortunate that it happened while I was young. A lot of people don't know what they want to do or they don't have the exposure to the environment so from my personal background, I was very fortunate.

Here the narrator shares the importance of seeking opportunities, despite a limiting developmental background. She sheds light into how she did not give in or give up, but sought the opportunity to pursue further study. This scenario is often found amongst black and African people and not so much amongst white South African people. This narrative also informs us about the similar plight of women regardless of race.

INT: To what would you attribute your past and present success as a black female?

RESP: Mhhh...well I would say my family background. I grew up with...*I was raised by my granny* because my mom and dad, they did not have a house so they stayed away from Durban *so my granny raised me single handedly because she was a widow but very strong I must say, hard working.* You know the values she instilled in me was that you have to earn, you know, anything prestigious it has to be earned, you know, *work very hard for what you have.* She used to work as a domestic worker but she would top up, you know by selling, baking, using her hands, that's what she used to say and sawing things and church as well. You know that belief that it's not going to be easy even if you are hard working, you know, you'll come across difficulties. She conscientised me very early, especially as a female, of the element of jealousy. She would tell me about my strength and she would tell me that "you are likely not to attract negative feelings from people because of this and that in you".

The narrator suggests that a positively nurturing background is an important contributing factor in one's academic progress. She also shares the importance of values and the reinforcement for hard work in pursuing desired goals. Such a nurturing developmental background engenders the willingness to persevere and not expect handout from others. Once again the element of hard work seems to be a common thread amongst females in academia.

INT: How would you describe your background and where you are today?

RESP: Uh...look, I mean...I am a little bit of a specific case, yeah. I came from a different culture, from a different country and that was even harder. Well luckily for me I never had a language problem when I came. I have been in South Africa for twenty years, worked in Mangosuthu for fifteen. Uh...luckily for me I never had a language problem, I might have a different accent but people understand that I don't have a communication problem. That might sometimes uh...it's actually sometimes challenging to find yourself in different uh culture. The place that I come from it's not that rare that females are engineers. *When I started fifteen years ago, I actually faced some hostile attitude from old-fashion males*, If I may put it that way but look my motto and my philosophy is 'don't let people get to you'. If you work to achieve something, set your goal. If you have your goal, if you have your vision then you will get there just don't give up. I believe that there is a lot of hostility, I believe that there is a lot of conflict situations in any environment, working environment. Men can be very stubborn and I'm serious now and I find also funny enough that sometimes the fact that I come from a different culture made me richer in my experience. Let me quickly explain, what I mean is that if somebody is from South Africa as a female engineer, she would probably...in her upbringing, she might be coming from a family which is male dominated so she might be a bit uncertain and have doubts. I never had it. I knew that this is what I wanted to do. If I had another chance in my life, I'd still do engineering and that helped me because I was very confident. There was...I didn't have that upbringing...stigma that 'no females cannot perform. I was very sure.

The narrator contends that a positive background upbringing or development engenders setting goals without fear of reprisal from the opposite gender. As she states, her cultural experiences empowered her to delve into a male dominated career without hindrances. She attests to a realisation that in South Africa, things would have been different for her. This realisation confirms what most women in our country have to contend with in their career decision making process.

Drive

[DS300011-dr M](#)

So I think it's very important that even in your darkest moments, you learn to channel your energy positively. When you put too much attention on what's going in the Jones' life, you put too much of pressure on an already stressful existence. *But if you want to know the secret of my success, it's not a secret; it's a lot of hard work*, a lot of avoiding people that create negativity.

According to the above narrative, the motivation or drive towards achieving one's goals is a reciprocal process. The narrator posits that, although intrinsically motivated, other factors like role models play a significant role in maintaining this motivation. Hard work and an awareness of negative elements, allow for this realisation.

RESP: The first experience is that of somebody believing in you. That has a tendency of motivating the individual himself or herself; okay in this case it will be myself. You know, if somebody says, "I know you can do this". Even if you had doubts but if somebody says that "I know you can do this" and pushes you in that direction...you...I have reached a point where, I mean I have had instances where I have reached a point where I say "then it means I can do it". Even right at the beginning. You know, I've got wonderful stories of whatever...going for my junior degree, somebody said I know I can travel from a very rural area to Petersburg in Limpopo. I have never been past KwaZulu-Natal, outside KwaZulu-Natal but gave me the room number in the hostel and said "you will arrive and knock on this door". I had never been there but "I know you can do it" and I did, I did it. The transition from grade 12 to Maths 1 in particular was a hard one but again, motivation as I am saying, if somebody says "I know you can do it", that has a tendency to motivate. Also then, what I found to be a motivating factor with me was grounding, knowing who I am and the sense of...yah...the sense of grounding you know. By being grounded, I mean feeling responsible to my family, to the people I live with. So there are times when I want to succeed, not because of myself but because I can account...not necessarily accountable but responsible to those people. I know that my success at the end will not only benefit me but is going to benefit people that are around me. That is what I accord to grounding, that I am not alone. I've got a pool of people around me. Uh...Well what is motivating me these days again is...what can I say, the position of being uneasy. That is my current drive. I am uneasy in the position I'm in as far as my qualifications are concerned. I must say that and the uneasiness...I feel this

wherever I go. In other words, the inferiority complex when I look at myself I feel that I'm not... good enough. So that is pushing me to improve, to work on myself such that I become confident in a particular area, to work on that area.

In this narrative, one recognises a combination of factors. Self determination or drive seems to be the most important variable to the narrator. She, however, also acknowledges the environment as well as people around the individual as important contributing factors to one's success. Finding a person that encourages you also plays a significant role in enhancing motivation. She also mentions "grounding" – as the ability to be responsible to and for those one lives with; as a contributing factor in her academic success. Mentors-"the pool of people around her" suggests another important factor in her academic progress and attainment of her set goals.

Intrinsic Motivation

[DS300008-Ras](#)

INT: How would you describe your motivation for academic success?

RESP: Mine is internal because as I am a lecturer for Mathematics, I used to like Mathematics. It's the subject that I was having most interest in so it's internal, I like it. Then there are also some external factors because you see that so and so is this, Mrs. Ndlanzi is a dean, oh if I can be a dean one day, yaa....

The respondent highlights her motivation for academic success as intrinsic or internalised. However, she also acknowledges the role played by external factors in the reinforcement of one's motivation.

[DS300011-dr M](#)

INT: To what would you attribute your past and present success?

RESP: Uh...I think I have a lot of perseverance, abundance of that. Things do go wrong, there are lots of challenges. Uh...the thing is, you need to sit down and figure out how you are going to overcome those challenges not to just give up....perseverance, perseverance, perseverance and of course, you need to think logically and rationally in most of these cases. Sometimes it gets to a point where you throw your toys out of the crib so to speak but uh...you take some time out you know a few hours, maybe a day or two then you get back on track.

Perseverance coupled with the drive to attain her set goals is the key for the respondent. She acknowledges that it takes a lot of one's drive to attain set goals as one may be confronted with multivariable challenges. Her narrative suggests that she is internally driven to counter external factors that may negatively impact on her set goals.

[DS300015-17-Mrs. McG](#)

INT: To what would you attribute your past and present success?

RESP: Certain people definitely are mentors in one's life and I've had different mentors at different ages. *But mostly, mostly it's self motivation and if you have that self motivation and correct environment or mentor, it possibly, it probably would lead to success.*

The above response also suggests that although one may have positive mentors in one's life, however, it takes more than just mentoring. She posits that one also needs self-motivation and a conducive environment for success to occur. She shares that she had mentors, but ultimately her academic success was due mainly to self (intrinsic) motivation.

[DS300020-Mrs. Jina](#)

INT: To what would you attribute your past and present success?

RESP: I think firstly in terms of my position, I would say firstly my...erhh enthusiasm, right, also the fact that I needed to progress from the situation that I was in and the fact that I am passionate about my job.

Narrator suggests not only internalised motivation, but a mix of this and a passion or enthusiasm for one's set goals. Her enthusiasm appears to have been the driving factor in realising her success.

[DS300021-Mrs. Mdtm](#)

RESP: Uh...hard work, determination. *Obviously I grew up in the old South Africa so I was fortunate to get a better education than students of [black] schools.* Uh...and that's politically incorrect but it's true. I came from a family who didn't...quite poor, didn't believe in education and certainly not for women so I got loans and scholarships so that's why I say, you know quite a lot of determination. I did it because you know, I wanted to.

The narrator suggests a combination of both determination (intrinsic motivation) and a nurturing environment. She contrasts the different education systems that prevailed in South Africa; family background or developmental factors as important contributing factors. However, her narrative also indicates that despite a privileged schooling environment, her intrinsic determination was the key for her academic success.

Role models or Mentors

[DS300008-Ras](#)

INT: Being a black female, academic, how would you describe your own motivation and success to where you are today?

RESP: You will always look for role models. If you have someone who is a role model then you always want to be what he or she is. There was a lady when I was still in high

school who was a graduate, driving a nice car. Although she was not an academic, she was just a lawyer but she was my role model.

The importance of role models is depicted in this narrative. Although self-driven, the respondent acknowledges the impact of external factors in one's academic success. As stated by the respondent, the role model does not necessarily have to be in the field of interest for one to emulate.

NEGATIVE FEELINGS-Inferiority, gender bias, doubt, bureaucracy

[DS300013-DS300014-Mrs. Ndme](#)

INT: What if at all would be your fears in terms of being a black female in academia?

RESP: Well, if you look at the history of this institution or many other institutions that you know of, there is no progress, there isn't much progress in females and I know maybe by the time I decide to leave here, it will be because I have reached the ceiling, not that I do not want to be in a higher education institution. You know, I may leave the ceiling now because I can see that there is no progress, I can't go any further in this institution because I'm a black woman, you know it's that. If you are a female here, you can see that, okay now it's like I was told my destiny is up to here and you can't do anything so I know that time will come for me as well.

According to the above narrative, we realise the limiting situation that this black female academic finds herself in. However, the narrative also suggests that she is not the only female academic who experiences these limitations on academic progress. She further indicates that as a black female academic, her destiny is seemingly already channelled for her. She does not foresee any upward progress or development in this institution of higher learning. She relates the plight of female academics to the institutions' historical background; men in charge and being the decision makers.

[DS300015-17-Mrs. McG](#)

INT: What are some of the difficulties, if at all, that you can share in terms of your motivation and success in academia and in the academic institution?

RESP: Hindrances, definitely in this institution has been management and unfortunately in the last couple of years it's been tainted with fear. Fear of job loss, fear of being able to say what you want, fear that you know...it's just an ethos that has developed here. It has impacted on me and other staff members. Uh...what I might do is hypothesise because you see I am talking from self. If I had to hypothesise, I would say that at the moment women are facing an enormous challenge in their own coming...coming to terms with their own abilities and fears that were maybe there as perceptions but now they are becoming real, "I can do this, I am offered this". So I think you are going to see an exponential change in women in business but I also think there is going to be a level of incompetency's which people haven't perceived and if you are so self-important and so

confident, you are not going to see the level of incompetence and that is maybe a fear that people should actually be able to look at in new growth.

This narrative suggests that there are many discourses that prevail in academia, especially for female academics. The respondent begins by indicating the stifling environment in terms of management, who are male. Seemingly, management has instilled a culture of fear amongst these academics. Some of the fears revolve around self-expression, fear of job loss which has, according to the respondent, become a norm in this institution. Further, she reflects on the challenges facing females in academia. These challenges require that females confront their competencies in academia. This suggests that females often question their capabilities provoking the cultivation of the impostor phenomenon.

[DS300022-Mrs. Mada](#)

I do feel....I am a very confident person, but sometimes *I do feel some slight feeling of inferiority*- in the sense that the publication part hasn't been achieved as yet as much as I'm there. There's nothing that my other colleagues or peers who have achieved say that I don't understand, but for me, I don't know, maybe I'm hard on myself. I do sometimes feel that, you know, I think there is that area of inadequacy that I need to work on so that I feel like comfortable being there. Which doesn't inhibit me from you know, saying the things that I want to say.

This narrative sheds, once again, the feelings of inadequacy that female academics have to deal with. Despite being a confident person, the narrator invites us into her private world of feeling like an impostor: “ *I do feel some slight feeling of inferiority....*” It seems though that the respondent deals with these unsettling feelings and thoughts by rationalising through comparison with her peers. It would seem also that she motivates herself by acknowledging the gaps in her academic development.

Conclusion

The forgoing has revealed the different factors that either impinge or enhance motivation amongst the select group of female academics in the institution of higher learning. The information shared by the research respondents, representing the multicultural, multiracial and multi-linguistic society in south Africa; indicated some of the pertinent issues that need to be focused on in order to improve policy on education and throughput. Although the shared narratives emanate from respondents from different cultures and race, however, the information suggested shared psychological similarities amongst these female academics. The following section of this chapter, Part II, focuses on the impostor scale results and meaning thereof.

PART II

III. Impostor Feelings Scale Scores

Table 4.2

Code	Age	Status	Religion	Education	Qualification	Race	Rank	Tenure	I.P.
Wal	48	M	C	R	Ma	A	Lecture	4	46
McG	58	M	R. Catholic	C	Ma	W	Lecture	17	33
MB	34	S	C	U	B. Tech	A	Lecture	6	49
Ndlz	43	M	N. Baptist	R	Ma	A	Dean	10	47
Mte	40	M	C	U	B. Tech	A	Lecture	10	48
Vx	38	M	R. Catholic	R	B. Tech	A	Admin	20	60
Sind	27	S	C	C	Dip	A	Fin Ass	2	46
Ba	45	M	C	C	Ma	EU	HOD	11	57
Nonh	37	M	C	U	B. Com	A	Ass Acc	11	35
Cyn	39	S	C	U	Matric	A	Cashier	13	40
Shez	52	W	C	U	B. Tech	A	Secret	19	43
Mkw	49	M	FLM	R	B. Tech	A	HR Off	19	44
Ndme	45	W	C	U	Ma	A	QA Off	12	61
Zawk	52	M	R. Catholic	C	Ma	EU	HOD	15	48
Mne	46	D	Pagan	C	PhD	W	Director	8	31
dr.M	50	M	Hindu	U	PhD	Indian	S. Lect	10	42
Mada	36	S	C	U	Ma	A	HOD	8	46
Pil	40	M	C	U	B. Tech	C	Lecture	12	48
Mdtn	50	M	C	C	Ma	W	Lecture	3	61
Mhl	45	S	C	R	PhD	A	Dep. Reg	3	28
Ng	29	S	C	R	Hon	A	HR Off	3	38
Val	50	D	C	C	B. Sc	Asian	Lecture	15	50
Ras	40	M	R. Catholic	U	Hon	A	Lecture	3	51
Ww	28	M	C	R	Hon	A	Manager	1	57
Jina	50	M	Hindu	U	Hon	C	Lecture	25	45

Discussion

The Impostor Test was developed to help individuals determine whether or not they have IP characteristics and, if so, to what extent they are suffering. There are three subscales within the test: fake, discount (success / ability), and luck (success through external sources; not internalising ability).

If the total score is 40 or less, the respondent has few Impostor characteristics; if the score is between 41 and 60, the respondent has moderate IP experiences; a score between 61 and 80 means the respondent frequently has Impostor feelings; and a score higher than 80 means the respondent often has intense IP experiences. The higher the score, the more frequently and seriously the Impostor Phenomenon interfere in a person's life (Clance, 1985).

The following is noted from the IP scale scores:

IP score range	Number of respondents
➤ 40	6
41- 60	17
61 – 80	2
81 >	0

The results suggest that out of the sample of 25 respondents, only 6 respondents experience few Impostor characteristics in their life. These six respondents were from

both white and African racial backgrounds. Their academic status ranges from Matric to PhD graduate levels. Their narratives seemed to suggest strong internalised motivation for academic success. It is also noted that their education background was privileged in that most attended previously model C schools. These schools were well equipped and incalculably different from the Black Township or rural schools; attended mostly by African students (Dube, 1985; Mentiki, 1984). A summary of the narratives from this group of respondents indicates that they had positive support from their immediate families. However, one shared experiences of cultural isolation within her white Afrikaner society. The other respondent posited racial disparity in the post apartheid South Africa within her working environment.

From a theoretical perspective, these respondents appear to confirm the hypothesis that a stimulating environment enhances cognitive development (Piaget, 1963; Vygotsky, 1978; Erikson, 1974). According to these cognitive perspectives, cognitive development depicts the thought processes and the ensuing behaviour that reflects those thought processes. The above theoretical assumptions appear to be supported by the narratives shared by the respondents' developmental background and schooling environment; Model C schools in affluent areas. Of major interest is the fact that these respondents are engaging in continuous self development in academia. None, in their shared narratives suggested the notion of or feelings of either being a fake or doubting their academic abilities or performance.

The second group of respondents, those with an IP score between 41 and 60, shows that 17 from the sample experienced moderate Impostor characteristics in their life. It would seem that these individuals have to contend with these feelings of doubt and self-questioning to a degree that hampers their self-confidence and motivation for success.

This group's academic level ranges from B. Tech, Honours, Masters to PhD qualifications. There are 11- Africans, 1- Asian, 1- Indian, 2- Coloureds and 2- Europeans. These respondents are also representative of the different academic faculties as well as non-academic support departments in the institution. It is notable that most of these respondents are lecturers and Masters graduates compared to the previous group.

It is also attention-grabbing that the only two Europeans in the whole research sample fall into this group. The expectation would be for the Europeans, given their advantageous backgrounds and comparatively stimulating educational environments to fare much better than their African counterparts (Kim, Park & Park, 2000). Narratives from the African respondents seemed to confirm a vast lack of both positive family backgrounds (some through poverty) and well equipped schools for academic stimulation and appropriate support. However, many seem to have persisted and have attained some of their set academic goals. Literature (e.g. Ramey, Ramey & Lanzi, 1998) seems to support this pervasive African realisation.

This is intriguing as it contradicts the theoretical assumptions posited by cognitive theorists. This realisation seems to question whether cognitive development is stage distinctive as Freud, Piaget and Erikson maintained or is a continuous process. Literature appears to support the notion of multiple variables to be influential in this process (e.g. Shweder, 1991; Fraser & Fisher, 1982; Moos, 1979; Trickett & Moos, 1974; Shotter, 1989). It is imperative to acknowledge that the study of child development generally and child cognitive development specifically has evolved, a change or shift towards qualitative change (Parke, Ornstein, Rieser, & Zahn-Waxler, 1994).

The high number of African respondents in this group seems to suggest that African people appear to engage in a continuous process of self-questioning. Their political and educational arena seem to suggest that most of these African respondents question whether or not they are in their present positions through their academic achievements or otherwise. Is it by chance that they attained their qualifications (fake) or not? Better still, many of the African respondents seem to be constrained by cultural contexts in which they find themselves. Those who are married shared in their narratives the negative impact marriage imposes on them and their aspirations for academic success and self development (Nsamenang, 1992).

Many state their fears, how they constantly evaluate their academic progress in relation to others and yet, still others question academic abilities. Quote: *“I am a very confident person but sometimes I do feel some slight feelings of inferiority....”* yet another: *“I do sometimes feel that, you know, I think there is that area of inadequacy that I need to work*

on...” These two extracts, from a number in this group, depict the Impostor feelings that tend to inhibit motivation amongst female academics. Both narratives were shared by females who are in superior positions, head of department; both had attained masters’ degrees in their field of study and interest.

The third group comprises of those female academics whose IP scores range between 61 and 80. According to Clance, (1985), a score between 61 and 80 means the individual (respondent) frequently has Impostor feelings. Only two (2) respondents from the whole sample received scores in this range. Once again, these respondents have attained high academic qualifications, masters’ degrees. Both are senior lecturers, African and White, married, attended urban schooling and in the same science faculty.

Although their backgrounds may be different, it seems that they share similar experiences within the working environment. Both attest to a lack of support from management, no mentors and also a lack of acknowledgement from management. Both appear to question their worth and role within the institution despite positive results and feedback from students and peers.

One shares this narrative: *“in my present position what I must say is I’m not sure whether it’s an advantage or disadvantage...maybe I’m just window dressing here...”* ; while the other states: *“ you can make a suggestion but it is not accepted at first...but then when a male makes the same or similar suggestion ..it is then taken and accepted as if it’s their [male] idea..”* . These narratives seem to display an overwhelming and defeatist

environment within which these female academics find themselves. Once again, theoretical underpinnings of the cognitive approaches appear to be refuted. However, literature (Quota, El-Sarraj & Punamaki, 2001; Walsh 2003) perhaps best describes the concept of resilience amongst individuals who experience such frequent Impostor feelings in general, and the two females specifically. The African female was only 11 years old when the political upheavals in the South African education arena demanded a profound change. These results seem to refute the universality of theoretical assumptions as posited by Western cognitive approaches, but however, appear to support literature studies in the demand for a holistic approach and understanding of contributing factors in cognitive development (Shotter, 1989; Quota, El-Sarraj & Punamaki, 2001; Walsh 2003).

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the results of the narratives shared by the different female respondents in the study. Discussions of individual transcriptions were engaged using guidelines for thematic data analysis. Various psychosocial contributing factors were highlighted as well as the Impostor feelings scale results. IP scale results were tabulated as well as their meanings. Finally, a discussion of the IP scale experiences / results and meanings was also engaged in. This study highlighted results that either supported or refuted theoretical presuppositions as posited by cognitive approaches. It would seem from literature studies that there is a negative relationship between the experiences of the Impostor phenomenon and motivation for academic progress.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Using a qualitative research design, this study attempted to explore the factors that contributed to motivation for academic success among a group of female academics and support staff in a higher education institution in South Africa. The study also sought to describe whether and how the select group of females experienced the impostor phenomenon. These females are well achieving academically, and according to Clance (1985), such women tend to question their abilities resulting in feelings of inadequacy or being a fake.

Traditional cognitive approaches posit universal stages of development. However, these stages have not been empirically demonstrated to occur in all cultures. I have argued that traditional cognitive theories assume an abstract view of the self. I also argue that developmental studies seem to ignore ‘contextual’ factors that are pertinent in understanding cognitive developmental issues impacting on traditional African people in general and South Africans in particular-this study. In essence, developmental studies of multiple factors are badly needed. We seem to know very little about how these kinds of multiple factors emerge during childhood and whether the relation of these multiple factors to performance varies across age and context.

The purpose of this research is to study the relationship between motivation and academic success. It seeks to use the impostor phenomenon to understand the experiences of a selected group in a Black higher education institution. Contextual influences on

motivation, such as gender-related beliefs, family influences, cultural influences, self-concept and other psychological variables are explored.

The study posed four main research questions:

- Does a relationship exist between motivation and academic success?
- Does the teacher-student relationship play a role in motivation and academic success?
- Does culture and gender, play a role in motivation and academic success?
- How does the experience of the Impostor Phenomenon impact on motivation?

Data were collected using interview, biographical data and the Impostor phenomenon questionnaires. The IP scale questionnaire was originally developed by Clance (1985). Twenty five participants were interviewed: 16 Africans (14 isiZulu speakers, 1 isiXhosa speaker, and 1 Tswana speaker), 2 English speakers of Coloured origin, 5 whites (2 of European origin and 3 Afrikaans speakers), 1 English speaker of Asian origin and 1 of Hindi origin. The narrative approach was chosen because it is most suited to studying human experience. Analysis followed using guidelines recommended by Boyatzis (1998), Braun & Clarke (2006). The methodology was chosen as it is more concerned with making sense of human experience from within the context and perspective of human experience.

Summary of Conclusions about Research Questions

Participants in this study regarded internal motivation as the most important contributing factor to their academic achievements. Many narrated social conditions that were very demanding and frequently negatively impacting on their goals. Many studies (e.g. Grouzet et al, 2000; Jew et al, 1999; Gilligan, 1982; Froming et al, 1982) found similar results.

It would appear from the different narratives that apparently, the influence of situationally induced performance goals on children's self-evaluations depends on the children's age and cognitive sophistication. Many studies have suggested a strong negative relationship between dispositional social anxiety and intrinsic motivation. However, this study has found that many females have endured and attained their set goals as a result of their high levels of intrinsic motivation. Results in this study seem to correspond with findings in these previous studies, social comparative motives of ability in kibbutz (rural) and urban children.

This study also found that a positive student –teacher relationship enhanced positive self-concepts in students. This support from teachers was found to engender goal motivations despite situational conditions. Teachers that trust, value, respect and identify with their students and the families and communities that surround them foster resiliency (Greene, 2002). This seems to be true, as found in this study, for participants whose educational development was mostly in rural areas in South Africa. The opposite seemed to pertain for many participants who did not receive the expected support from teachers. With

reference to this study, many participants found it difficult to engage in further professional or post graduate studies because of the lack of support from mentors. One of the participants shared pessimistic experiences of negative racial factors that were strategically employed to deny black, African women specifically and men generally from pursuing professional studies in biomedical sciences. However, this participant endured and eventually achieved her set goals. This corresponds with Gilgun's (1999) research, which indicated that human agency and the will to do or be something has a major, perhaps central, role in resiliency.

Cultural factors were highlighted by married women, as these influenced their ultimate decisions. A few shared experiences of a dire lack of support from their husbands, a lack informed by fear that the wife would threaten the power dynamics in the home. One participant shared the conflicting and confusing situation she had to endure. She had to decide on strategies that would enhance her family life by denying herself the right to argue on pertinent issues because she would be regarded as a 'disrespectful wife (*umakoti*)' in her community. In a sense, traditional African culture imposes that all people work toward ensuring that equilibrium is maintained by fulfilling their obligations.

Yet, another Afrikaans speaking participant shared her experiences of cultural dynamics within the Afrikaner race. She shares experiences of being denied access or opportunities because of her not belonging to a particular blood-line. Many, however, also pointed out how African culture sets limits on female advancements in a male dominated world. Gender based disparities seem to favour males in traditional African culture, oppressive

to female psychological, economic and social advancement. Accordingly, these women tend to exhibit low self-evaluations of social competence and self-worth (Ryan, Plant, & Connell, 1984). Butler (1990), Butler and Ruzany (1993) found that patterns of socialization influence both ability assessments and reasons for social comparison. Narratives from many participants in this study appear to correspond with results emanating from studies conducted in this area (Griffiths, 1995; Gergen, 1996; Gilligan, 1977).

I have argued in this study that the social, gender based disparities expressed as culture in South African society, impact negatively on the maintenance of intrinsic motivation. This study has indicated how the experiences of the impostor phenomenon compel feelings of phoniness, not being as capable or adequate as others perceive or evaluate them. The results in this study also found that the common symptoms of the impostor phenomenon included feelings of phoniness, self-doubt, and the inability to take credit for one's achievements (Plant & Ryan, 1985). Findings in this study were found to correspond with other studies of resiliency, especially among traditional African women.

The majority of participants in this study received scores suggesting the existence of frequent impostor feelings in their life. It is pertinent to note that the majority of these participants were representative of the African race. It could be argued that situational factors seem to play an important role in the psychological development of individuals. These results highlight the importance of taking into account worldviews in studying psychological processes. The nature of human relations, or how the self is conceived in relation to others, is an important dimension of worldviews. Oyserman and Markus

(1998), posit that psychological (cognitive) development requires one to develop an understanding of what it means to be a competent member of one's society. These observations raise interesting issues that need to be acknowledged in informing policy on equal access to education regardless of race, gender or culture.

The study also investigated the interface between gender, race, culture and motivation. The results indicate that gender (identity), particularly plays a major role in how females process and arrive at situationally induced and pertinent cognitive decision-making. Discrepancies between culturally determined social positions for men and personally determined positions by females, often led to tensions in the families of most African participants. These tensions seem to support the view that the individual-society antimony is (still) unlikely to be helpful in cross-cultural research (Oyserman & Markus, 1998). Further, these tensions and findings of this study, seem to indicate a strong relationship between (many participants who experienced) such tensions, and the resultant frequent experiences of the impostor syndrome.

Unique Contributions of the Study

The first contribution of the study is of a methodological nature. It is believed that this study is the first to be conducted in a traditional black institution of higher learning using the impostor phenomenon scale to investigate motivation and the experiences of impostor feelings. The method is appropriate for studying the dynamic relationship between traditional African and traditional Euro- Western conceptions of psychological

experience. Most important, it could be used to study pertinent topics such as racial identity and choice of academic institution, emerging gender identities in a multicultural post apartheid South Africa.

The study also contributes to our understanding of important issues that impact on academic pursuits, retention and throughput in higher education institutions. It has highlighted crucial factors to be considered in the advancement of women in academia, especially female children in traditional African contexts. The study could also contribute in informing academic support structures in their engagement with students at risk. These students are found to be concentrated in rural areas, mostly inhabited by black African people. Policy may be informed by some of the findings in this study to engender parity in the academic realm.

Implications for Policy, Research and Practice

The results of this study have several implications for research and education policy. Importantly, the study has implications for embracing particular ethical and professional issues in research. Particularly, it has implications for ethical conduct when engaging with human variables. The study is deemed pertinent for professional practice, be it in academia when engaging in dialogue with students or research in culture bound environments. It also has implications for informing holistic intervention approaches that are effective, appropriate, and professional that suggests good practice in venues of health

and education. These environments include student counselling and career development directorates, wellness centres and clinics.

The researcher is required to understand and engage with the life-world of others, their contextual views and perceptions of self in the world. Traditional western ethical approaches seem not to be in sync with traditional African cultural expectations and discourses in these societies. The importance of this concern is embedded in the constant need for advocacy and professional research in the review and development of ethical guidelines for conducting research in cross-cultural or health related contexts.

The need for informed consent may sometimes impede research, when such consent becomes the prerogative of the community versus the individual. In community based traditional African contexts, individual consent often becomes problematic because of the emphasis by traditional African approaches on family and community. Issues of situationally induced decision-making processes were highlighted in the study. It is also imperative to note how these processes tended to be biased against females often in traditional African societies. Previous studies found a negative relationship between violence and study habits. Results in this study seem to correspond with these studies (Gilgun, 1999; Quota, El-Sarraj & Punamaki, 2001). Such results provoke the need for interventions that are in touch with the psychosocial dynamics of students within schools and institutions of higher learning.

Implications for Theory

Conceivably the most important implication of this study revolves around how we theorize about psychology in general and some of the psychological issues specifically. Cognitive- developmental approaches (e.g. Piaget, 1963; Vygotsky, 1978; Erikson, 1974) although quite influential, are studies focusing on western conceptualisations of cognitive development. These approaches maintain that psychological processes, including motivation, are free of contextual influences.

For instance, Piaget (1963) posited a sequence of four structurally defined stages of cognitive development, allegedly invariant in sequence and universal across cultures. Further, they define the highest and most adequate stages of cognitive development solely in terms of the principles of psychological performance or academic accomplishment, to the exclusion of considerations arising out of culture and social context. According to cognitive-developmental approaches, decisions at the most advanced level of cognitive appraisal are made from objective, detached position, independently of historical and social influences.

In the South African context, it can be said that the psychology subject is not often enough embracing the many important factors impacting on indigenous African perspectives. If psychology as a discipline is to secure an influential space among traditional African cultures, then it has to be seen to be making necessary and effective changes for intervention. However, this is not to imply the indigenization of psychology in South Africa, as both Western philosophy and the African perspective or worldview

need to strike a balance. Such a balance requires a form of dialogue between the two worldviews thus preventing some form of isolation of one from the other.

In this regard, it is notable how Vygotsky's sociocultural theory appears to correspond with prevailing African worldviews. In essence, what is needed are theoretical, philosophical and cultural methodologies that are holistic in approach. I have argued for the development of contextualized understanding of psychological factors that impact on human discourses in life.

Limitations and criticism

Twenty five participants were interviewed: 16 Africans (14 isiZulu speakers, 1 isiXhosa speaker, and 1 Tswana speaker), 2 participants of Coloured origin, 5 whites (2 of European origin and 3 Afrikaans speakers), 1 participant of Asian origin and 1 participant of Hindi origin. Although the sampling in this study seemed purposive, one can assume that the results can be generalized to other academics in traditional universities or universities of technology. The study appears to have covered a wider spectrum of the multiracial and multicultural South African society.

A limitation that arises is the fact that the study was conducted in a traditionally black university of technology. Further, it was limited to university lecturers. However, the study has demonstrated that this line of investigation, regarding motivation for academic success and the experiences of the impostor syndrome, is worthy of future pursuit.

Finally, studies conducted with academia in other universities, be it racially inclusive or culturally exclusive are needed.

Perhaps the greatest limitation of the study is owing to the conception of motivation. Interviews were conducted with participants from different racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds; and language has a life of its own with regard to expression of life-worlds that are sometimes lost in interpretation. However, I have tried to minimize such errors and hope that these will be eradicated in future studies.

What is needed now is a clearer categorization of motivation constructs in terms of their generality and specificity. Such a categorization would lead to a better understanding of which constructs are more likely to be influenced by different environmental factors and social influences and which may be more stable across different environments. This conceptualization would allow for a clearer understanding of how characteristics of the person interact with characteristics of the situation to influence learning outcomes (Wigfield, 1997). Thus, the relatively unexplored relationship between styles of self-conception / consciousness and motivation is a significant area for further study.

Finally, the study may be limited or criticized on grounds of the researcher's choice of a qualitative approach. Qualitative studies are often criticized for supposedly having a lack of objectivity. However, from a qualitative approach, unlike their quantitative counterparts, subjectivity is an integral part of the research process. In addition, reliability and validity always pose potential problems. The reliance on self-report scales raises issues regarding misinterpretation by participants which present additional potential limitations.

Indications for Further Research

The findings support the assumption that improved affective factors correlate with improved adjustment and academic functioning. The psychosocial variables which the study aimed to explore are significant predictors of adjustment, motivation and academic success. The responses to the questionnaires suggest that our sample has high levels of intrinsic motivation and is committed to their studies.

However, the results also suggest above average characteristics of the impostor phenomenon (Clance, 1985). These characteristics induce feelings of inadequacy in their academic attainments. These suggest that intervention at institutions of higher learning; student counseling and career development centres; should always strive to facilitate resiliency in students.

Possible studies are indicated, one that compares those who are resilient in disadvantaged communities with those who are not successful. Another study, that interviews participants at five-year intervals (making this study a longitudinal one) and continuing to assess how participants who succeed academically experience impostor feelings.

The study also supports the impression that psycho-social development of students needs to be integrated into student's academic lives for a holistic understanding and possibly enhance their academic performance. This study invites psychologists working in academic institutions and universities in South Africa to engage in this research interest.

Finally, as I hope is clear from the research findings, much has been learned about the nature of students' motivation and how it is influenced by the social learning environments, students' experience. The complexity of these relations, as well as their situation specificity, means that much work remains to be done in this area.

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APPENDIX 1

Invitation for research participation

2008-04-08

Dear Prof / Dr / Ms
Mangosuthu University of Technology

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH STUDY

I am presently engaged in a PhD (Psychology) study focusing on women in academia. The study is interested in ascertaining information relating to a psychological concept known as the Impostor Phenomenon.

This phenomenon is believed to be prevalent amongst highly achieving women. By definition, women experiencing this phenomenon tend to consider themselves impostors or fakes. This belief is present despite factual information to the contrary. As there may be a host of variables or factors influencing such belief, the author is interested in finding out if this phenomenon exists amongst women in academia.

South Africa, given her multicultural dynamics, presents herself as a veritable place to conduct such a study.

The study adheres to all ethical standards and your confidentiality is guaranteed.

Kindly complete the two attached documents, ensuring that you send the confidential biographical data questionnaire responses separately. A short interview will also be conducted.

I thank you in advance for participating in this study.

MR. R.S. WELLS
Counselling Psychologist
Student Counsellor

APPENDIX 2

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA QUESTIONNAIRE

1. AGE: 2. RELIGION:
3. RACE/ETHNICITY: African Coloured Indian White
4. Marital status:
5. RANK:
6. EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:
-
7. HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION: Diploma B-Tech Degree
 Undergraduate degree 3yr
 Undergraduate degree 4yrs
 Honours M-Tech degree
 Masters D-Tech degree
 Doctoral degree Prof.
8. TENURE STATUS (e.g. full time, professor):
9. YEARS OF SERVICE –CURRENT POSITION:
10. YEARS OF SERVICE – CURRENT EMPLOYER:

Please send completed forms to: Mr. R.S. Wells
Counselling Psychologist / Student Counsellor
Mangosuthu University of Technology
Tel: 031-907 7185
Fax: 031-907 7103
Cell: 083 950 4454

APPENDIX 3

IP SCALE

Do you discount your success, or doubt that it will continue? Do you feel like a fake? Do you think that your success is due to luck and not your own internal abilities? Take this test and find out if these experiences are true for you.

The Clance IP Scale*

© Pauline Rose Clance

It is best to give the first response that enters your mind rather than dwelling on each statement and thinking about it over and over.

1. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task.

1

2

3

4

5

**(not at all
true)**

(rarely)

(sometimes)

(often)

(very true)

2. I can give the impression that I'm more competent than I really am.

1

2

3

4

5

3. I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me.

1 2 3 4 5

4. When people praise me for something I've accomplished, I'm afraid I won't be able to live up to their expectations of me in the future.

1 2 3 4 5

5. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success because I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people.

1 2 3 4 5

6. I'm afraid people important to me may find out that I am not as capable as they think I am.

1 2 3 4 5

7. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best.

1 2 3 4 5

8. I rarely do a project or task as well as I'd like to do it.

1 2 3 4 5

9. Sometimes I feel or believe that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of error.

1 2 3 4 5

10. It's hard for me to accept compliments or praise about my intelligence or accomplishments.

1 2 3 4 5

11. At times, I feel my success has been due to some kind of luck.

1 2 3 4 5

12. I'm disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more.

1 2 3 4 5

13. Sometimes I'm afraid others will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack.

1 2 3 4 5

14. I'm often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment or undertaking even though I generally do well at what I attempt.

1 2 3 4 5

15. When I have succeeded at something and received recognition for my accomplishments, I have doubts that I can keep repeating that success.

1 2 3 4 5

16. If I receive a great deal of praise and recognition for something I've accomplished, I tend to discount the importance of what I have done.

1 2 3 4 5

17. I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am.

1 2 3 4 5

18. I often worry about not succeeding with a project or on an examination, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well.

1 2 3 4 5

19. If I'm going to receive a promotion or gain recognition of some kind, I hesitate to tell others until it is an accomplished fact.

1 2 3 4 5

20. I feel bad and discouraged if I'm not "the best" or at least "very special" in situations that involve achievement.

1 2 3 4 5
