

Mobilising women in the space between education access and socio-economic empowerment: a human rights perspective

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DECLARATION

I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Delia Chetty', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Signature

May 2016

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ABSTRACT

The Millennium Development Goals instituted by the United Nations (2000), serves as a global framework for the advancement of women's education and empowerment amongst other objectives. Similarly, South Africa's Bill on Women Empowerment and Gender Equality (WEGE) (South Africa, 2014a) serves as a national legislative framework for the socio-economic empowerment of women through the conduits of education and training amongst other ambits. The WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) gives effect to the letter and spirit of the country's progressive Constitution (South Africa, 1996a), which is founded upon the democratic virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom. Employing these ternary emancipatory intended legislations as groundwork, this study explores the extent to which the human right to education navigates women's access to education towards social and economic empowerment.

Notwithstanding such liberal legislations in place, universally and on the threshold of South African soil, I argue that women are perpetually subjected to multiple forms of discrimination, which nullify their human rights. To substantiate this, I have combined a range of statistics with the lived experiences of women and girls' and the atrocities that besiege them at various junctures. Such accounts reveal the falseness of the assumption that if women are accorded their human right to education, this self-same right will automatically beget to their social and economic empowerment. There is a silent ignorance on the reality that between the continuums of access to education and empowerment there is a space at the epicentre where the complexities of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age converge.

The main objectives of my research study were:

- To explore to what extent the human right to education takes account of the underlying assumptions that education access leads to socio-economic empowerment
- To investigate how the WEGE Bill mobilises women's socio-economic empowerment from a poststructuralist feminist discourse perspective
- To explore how the complex processes embedded in the space between access and socio-economic empowerment for women can be unpacked to better understand the notion of the human right to education

In addressing the underlying assumptions about access to education and socio-economic empowerment in relation to a critical analysis of the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) I draw on the theoretical framework of intersectionality to unpack the complexities and demonstrate how a woman's identity is intertwined with social and cultural categories. This reveals the compounded layers of oppression and marginalisation that eclipse women.

This study was situated in the paradigm of a poststructuralist feminist discourse and used a qualitative, autoethnographic methodological framework. My autobiographical narrative served as the data-generating instrument and Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) "plugging in" theory and McCall's (2005) intra-categorical intersectional approach as the data analysing method. Essentially, my autobiographical narrative was plugged into the theory of intersectionality as a concept.

The analysis of my autobiographical narrative reveals three meta-events (disruptions) i.e. personal, educational and relocational. Each disruption is consequently examined to determine how the theory of intersectionality unfolds in the moments of disruption and what its resultant bearing on the democratic virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom is. The extent to which the disruptive moments narrow or widen the space between the continuums of access to education and socio-economic empowerment is also explored. By interpreting the intersections of the meta-events, the intersectional categories specific to this study are synthesised and discoursed according to the intersectional theory and the notion of human rights.

The analysis drew both on aspects of "plugging in" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) and the power of disruptions through intra-categorical intersectionality. This allowed for new proliferation of factors and unveilings to come to the fore which heralded the way for me both to expand and challenge the theory of intersectionality.

Keywords: Human right to education, access to education, socio-economic empowerment, democratic virtues (human dignity, equality, freedom), intersectionality, autoethnography

OPSOMMING

Die Millennium Ontwikkelingsdoelwitte, wat deur die Verenigde Nasies (2000) opgestel is, dien onder andere as 'n globale raamwerk vir die bevordering van die opvoeding en bemagtiging van vroue. Soortgelyk hieraan, dien die Suid-Afrikaanse Wetsontwerp oor Vroue-bemagtiging en Geslagsgelykheid (Suid-Afrika, 2014a) onder meer as 'n nasionale wetgewende raamwerk vir die sosio-ekonomiese bemagtiging van vroue deur middel van opvoeding en opleiding. Hierdie Wetsontwerp (Suid-Afrika, 2014a) verbind dit daartoe om gehoor te gee aan die letter en gees van die land se progressiewe Grondwet (Suid-Afrika, 1996a) wat berus op die demokratiese deugde van menswaardigheid, gelykheid en vryheid. Teen die agtergrond van hierdie drieledige, bevrydende wetsgewende deugde, poog hierdie studie om die mate waartoe die mensereg tot onderwys vroue se toegang tot onderwys met die oog op sosiale en ekonomiese bemagtiging, te ondersoek.

Ten spyte van die liberale wetgewing wat, beide universeel en in Suid-Afrika in plek is, is ek van mening dat vroue voortdurend onderworpe is aan meervoudige vorme van diskriminasie wat hul menseregte direk in gedrang bring. Ter ondersteuning van hierdie stelling het ek 'n reeks statistieke, tesame met die geleefde ervarings van vroue en dogters, gekombineer om aan te toon hoe hulle steeds op verskeie stadia slagoffers is van gewelddade. Hierdie voorbeelde openbaar die onjuistheid van die aanname dat indien vroue 'n reg tot onderwys gegee word, dit outomaties sal lei tot hul sosiale en ekonomiese bemagtiging. Daar heers 'n swygsame onkundigheid oor die realiteit dat, tussen die kontinuuums van toegang tot onderwys en bemagtiging, daar 'n middelruimte is waar die kompleksiteite van ras, geslag, seksualiteit en seksisme, en ouderdom ineenloop.

Die oorhoofse doelwitte van my studies was om:

- te verken tot watter mate die mensereg tot onderwys rekening hou met die onderliggende aanname dat onderwystoegang lei tot sosio-ekonomiese bemagtiging
- te ondersoek hoe die Suid-Afrikaanse Wetsontwerp oor Vroue-bemagtiging en Geslagsgelykheid (Suid-Afrika, 2014a) vrouens mobiliseer tot sosio-ekonomiese bemagtiging van 'n poststruktureel-feministiese diskoersperspektief
- te verken hoe die komplekse prosesse onderliggend aan die ruimte tussen toegang tot onderwys en sosio-ekonomiese bemagtiging vir vroue, onthul kan word om 'n beter begrip van die mensereg tot onderwys te vorm

In die aanspreek van die onderliggende aanname oor onderwystoegang en sosio-ekonomiese bemagtiging, tesame met 'n kritiese analise van die Suid-Afrikaanse Wetsontwerp oor Vroue-

bemagtiging en Geslagsgelykheid (Suid-Afrika, 2014a), steun ek op die teoretiese raamwerk van interseksionaliteit om sodoende onderliggende kompleksiteite te ontbloot en aan te toon hoe 'n vrou se identiteit vervleg is binne sosiale en kulturele kategorieë. Hierdie proses ontbloot die veelvlakkige lae van onderdrukking en marginalisering waaraan vroue onderworpe is.

Hierdie studie berus op 'n paradigma van poststruktureel-feministiese diskoers en gebruik 'n kwalitatiewe, outo-etnografiese metodologie. My outo-biografiese narratief het gedien as die data-genereringsinstrument, terwyl Jackson en Mazzei (2012) se teorie van “plugging in” tesame met McCall (2005) se intra-kategoriele interseksionaliteitsbenadering gedien het as metode van data analise. My outo-biografiese narratief was sodoende geïntegreer met die teoretiese konsep van interseksionaliteit.

Die analise van my outo-biografiese narratief het op drie meta-gebeurtenisse (ontwrigtings) gedui, naamlik: die persoonlike, opvoedkundige en hervestigende. Elke ontwrigting was gevolglik ondersoek om vas te stel hoe die teorie van interseksionaliteit ontvou in oomblikke van ontwrigting en wat die invloed daarvan is op die demokratiese deugde van menswaardigheid, gelykheid en vryheid. Die mate waartoe die ontwrigtende oomblikke die ruimte tussen die kontinuuums van toegang tot onderwys en sosio-ekonomiese bemagtiging vernou of verbreed het, was ook verken. Deur die interpretasie van die kruispunte in die meta-gebeurtenisse, was die interseksionele kategorieë wat betrekking het op die studie, gesintetiseer en in diskoers met interseksionele teorie en menseregte gebring.

Die analise het berus op beide die “plugging in” teorie (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) en die gesag van ontwrigtings deur middel van intra-kategoriele interseksionaliteit. Dit het nuwe prolifererende faktore na vore gebring en onthullings teweeg gebring wat my in staat gestel het om die teorie van interseksionaliteit te verbreed en uit te daag.

Kernwoorde: Mensereg tot onderwys, toegang tot onderwys, sosio-ekonomiese bemagtiging, demokratiese deugde (menswaardigheid, gelykheid en vryheid), interseksionaliteit, outo-etnografie

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
OPSOMMING	vi
FOREWORD.....	xi
 CHAPTER ONE: DESTROYING PLANET EARTH IN LAUNCHING THE SPACE SHUTTLE	 1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS IT REACHES ITS TARGET YEAR.....	2
1.3 ATROCITIES AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS ON A GLOBAL SCALE	5
1.3.1 Education access, gender inequalities and consequent barriers to women empowerment.....	5
1.3.2 Atrocities borne by women and girls across the world	6
1.4 ATROCITIES AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS ON SOUTH AFRICAN SOIL	11
1.5 INTELLECTUAL CONUNDRUM	16
 CHAPTER TWO: BREAKING THROUGH THE ATMOSPHERE INTO MICROGRAVITY	 23
2.1 INTRODUCTION	23
2.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH	23
2.3. RESEARCH QUESTION	23
2.3.1 Main Question.....	24
2.3.2 Sub-questions	24
2.4 AUTOETHNOGRAPHY	24
2.4.1 Advantages of autoethnography	26
2.4.2 Criticisms of autoethnography.....	28
2.4.3 Reasons for employing autoethnography in this study	29
2.5 PHILOSOPHY: POSTSTRUCTURALIST FEMINIST DISCOURSE...	30
2.6 DATA GENERATION: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE	33
2.7 DATA ANALYSIS.....	34
2.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND ETHICS	35
2.9 CONCLUSION.....	37

CHAPTER THREE:	ENCOUNTERING DIFFERENT PLANETS.....	38
3.1	INTRODUCTION	38
3.2	HUMAN RIGHTS	38
3.3	HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONNOTATIONS OF THE CORE DEMOCRATIC VIRTUES	39
3.3.1	Human dignity	40
3.3.2	Equality	41
3.3.3	Freedom	42
3.4	THE HUMAN RIGHT TO EDUCATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE WEGE BILL	43
3.5	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: INTERSECTIONALITY	48
3.5.1	Discourses in intersectional theories	49
3.6	CATEGORIES OF INTERSECTIONALITY APPLICABLE TO THIS RESEARCH STUDY	50
3.6.1	Race	51
3.6.2	Gender.....	54
3.6.3	Sexuality and sexism	56
3.6.4	Age	59
3.7	CONNECTING THE CATEGORIES OF INTERSECTIONALITY	60
3.8	UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTING CATEGORIES IN RELATION TO THE CORE DEMOCRATIC VIRTUES FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE	64
3.8.1	Race and its denotation in relation to human dignity, equality and freedom.....	64
3.8.2	Gender and its denotation in relation to human dignity, equality and freedom.....	66
3.8.3	Sexuality and sexism and its denotation in relation to human dignity, equality and freedom.....	67
3.8.4	Age and its denotation in relation to human dignity, equality and freedom.....	68
3.9	CONCLUSION.....	69
CHAPTER FOUR:	PERUSING THE MILKY WAY THROUGH A MAGNIFYING GLASS	71
4.1	INTRODUCTION	71
4.2	AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE: MY EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY	71

4.3	META-EVENTS (DISRUPTIONS).....	82
4.3.1	Personal disruptions (divorce).....	82
4.3.1.1	Support structures.....	84
4.3.1.2	Value system	85
4.3.2	Educational disruptions (education access)	88
4.3.3	Relocational disruptions (physical, professional and spaces of mobility)	92
4.4	INTERPRETING THE INTERSECTIONS OF THE META-EVENTS (DISRUPTIONS)	95
4.5	CONCLUSION.....	97
CHAPTER FIVE:	DISCOVERING A GALAXY BEYOND THE CURRENT UNIVERSE	99
5.1	INTRODUCTION	99
5.2	RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES THAT UNDERPINNED THIS RESEARCH STUDY	99
5.2.1	Main Question.....	99
5.2.2	Sub-questions	99
5.2.3	Objectives of the research	100
5.3	OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY.....	100
5.4	REVELATIONS FROM THE PROCESS OF PLUGGING IN.....	103
5.4.1	Aspects of plugging in	103
5.4.2	Power of disruptions through intra-categorical intersectionality	105
5.5	POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	107
5.5.1	Universality of women and girls.....	108
5.5.2	Lack of engagement with other intersectional categories	108
5.6	SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	108
5.6.1	Ontological disruptions and the powerful impact they can have on personal empowerment.....	109
5.6.2	A review of policies and procedures in educational institutions	109
5.7	CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS.....	109
REFERENCE LIST		112
APPENDIX A		136

FOREWORD

To the reader,

Before you engage with my research study, I would like to invite you on a journey with me, as we traverse a diversity of landscapes.

Before we embark on this journey, it is imperative that I draw your attention to a few connotations associated with this study.

The word 'journey' is given prominence in this study for two reasons. The first is that within each chapter of my study, I employed the concept of a journey which depicts the essence of that chapter in its entirety. The second is that my autobiographical narrative incorporated within this study is established against the backdrop of a journey.

Each chapter of this study is a stage in the journey. Chapter One provides the statistics; Chapter Two recounts the methodology selected; Chapter Three explores the literature; Chapter Four presents the data analysis; and Chapter Five draws the threads together. The stages of the journey are reflected in the titles of the chapters:

- Chapter One: Destroying planet earth in launching the space shuttle
- Chapter Two: Breaking through the atmosphere into microgravity
- Chapter Three: Encountering different planets
- Chapter Four: Perusing the milky way through a magnifying glass
- Chapter Five: Discovering a galaxy beyond the current universe

In addition to the concept of a 'journey', I created metaphors of 'space'. This was executed for two purposes. Firstly, the research question underpinning this study speaks about the space between education access and socio-economic empowerment, which is also alluded to in the intellectual conundrum in Chapter One. Secondly, it resonates with the concept of 'thirdspace' which is posited and explored in Chapter Three of this study.

At this juncture, having done the 'pre take off' briefing, I request you to take your seat and let the journey begin...

CHAPTER ONE

DESTROYING PLANET EARTH IN LAUNCHING THE SPACE SHUTTLE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a discourse on the human rights violations that scourge both women and girls on a global scale. The suppression of their human right to education coupled with the myriad of gender inequalities and the subsequent sexual violence that they endure underscores the multiple layers of oppression that plague both women and girls around the world. In conjunction with the discourse on human rights violations, I provide a range of statistics that exemplify the gravity of these abuses.

Although the ensuing statistics represent numerical figures, what cannot be overlooked is the fact that every number represents a face. Whether these women and girls are known or unbeknown to us, the magnitude of their sufferings should not be lessened or disregarded in any way. Our humanity should compel us to reverberate and reciprocate the human dignity that each of us was born to possess surpassing all notions of race, class, culture, religion, nationality, sexuality and sexism, and age.

As achieving universal primary education and promoting gender equality and women empowerment are constituents of the Millennium Development Goals (henceforth MDGs) established by the United Nations (United Nations, 2000) I begin this discourse by accentuating these MDGs and outlining its progresses or lack thereof between the continuums of its fifteen year existence and its current status in 2015.

I have elected to use the MDGs as a point of reference in this chapter as they serve as a global framework for collective action to improve the lives of marginalised individuals (United Nations Industrial Development Organization, 2009). In addition, the objectives of access to education and women empowerment contained therein are parallel to the purpose of my study and the analysis that I present in the chapters that follow. Furthermore, it establishes the backdrop for understanding why the statistics provided herein surpasses mere notation and becomes central to the human rights debate and its aim of an equitable society.

Subsequently, I give prominence to the global sufferings of women and girls to demonstrate that injustices and discrimination distinguish no borders and do not choose to exist in isolation. Instead these are phenomena that shadow many women and girls the world over, cutting across boundaries of race, culture, age and socio-economic status. Whilst the global account forms the basis of my motivation into the vast inequalities that women and girls are subjected to,

I eventually focus this chapter on the South African context to reveal the atrocities that occur on home soil.

Ultimately, the aim of this chapter is to expose and 'bring to life' the dynamic complexities and multifaceted brutalities that both women and girls universally endure and which seem to either go effortlessly unnoticed; confronted without a sense of urgency or is overlooked as time elapses.

1.2 THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS IT REACHES ITS TARGET YEAR

Women are in double jeopardy. Discriminated against as women, they are also as likely as men, if not more so, to become victims of human rights violations...Today, what unites women internationally - transcending class, race, culture, religion, nationality and ethnic origin - is their vulnerability to the denial and violation of their fundamental human rights and their dedicated efforts to claim those rights. (Amnesty International USA, 2005)

In September 2000, world leaders joined forces at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations and agreed on a gallant vision for the future, through the establishment of the Millennium Declaration (United Nations, 2000). Ban Ki-Moon, secretary-general of the United Nations, articulated in his foreword of *The Millennium Development Goals Report* (MDGR) (United Nations, 2014a:3) that the MDGs which were derived from the Millennium Declaration constitute a pledge to uphold the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom. The declaration which was ratified by all 189 member states (at the time) of the United Nations reflected an unparalleled commitment by the world's leaders to confront the most basic forms of injustice and inequality in the world (World Health Organization, 2005:3) and prioritise efforts to reduce poverty, empower women and increase access to education amongst other essential services (United Nations Development Programme, 2010). The MDGs which instituted a blueprint for confronting the most persistent development challenges of society encompasses eight goals and a suite of measurable time-bound objectives – all with a target date of 2015. An important factor to take cognisance of is that in the same year that the world leaders ratified the MDGs, the six Education for All goals (henceforth EFA goals) were also adopted by the governments of the world (Education International, 2009:4). Globally, the MDGs and EFA goals form the most pivotal frameworks in the sphere of education. Although the EFA goals were launched by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (henceforth UNESCO), the MDGs and the EFA goals are complementary (Wang, 2013:3) with the EFA goals contributing to the global aim of the MDGs, particularly MDGs 2 and 3. With both policies reaching their target year and with their objectives not fully attained, new education objectives will be set in the Agenda for Sustainable Development, (which will build on the MDGs) at the end of 2015 (World

Federation of United Nations Associations, 2015). This will allow for one single education agenda for the subsequent fifteen years.

Goal 2 of the MDGs pertains to the universal achievement of primary education with Target 2.A specifying that by 2015, boys and girls across the globe will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling (United Nations, 2014a:16). Whilst developing countries made substantial progress towards universal primary education between 2000 and 2012 and attained an enrolment rate of 90%, there were still 58 million children out of school in 2012 (United Nations, 2014a:17). An estimated 50% of out-of-school children of primary school age live in conflict-affected areas, with Sub-Saharan Africa contributing to 44% of these children (United Nations, 2014a). Gender, alongside poverty and geographical location are the most pervasive factors linked to disparities in school attendance by children of primary and lower secondary school age. In a global survey conducted by the United Nations between 2006 and 2012 of the poorest households in developing countries, girls from rural areas were more likely to be excluded from education than boys (United Nations, 2014a:17).

With such a colossal proportion of out-of-school children, it negates the aims of the MDGs. Related to this, in a recent global monitoring report on the EFA goals (UNESCO, 2015a), UNESCO awarded a pass grade to only one third of the world's countries for efforts to provide universal primary education (UNESCO, 2015b). Evidently, from the statistics provided in this report it demonstrates that most governments have failed on the pledge they had undertaken 15 years ago. Only 52% of countries have achieved the goal of providing universal primary education, 10% are close and the remaining 38% are far or very far from achieving it. Resultantly, UNESCO's current plan is for governments to mandate at least one year of compulsory pre-primary education with the aim of free education for all children alongside abolishment of fees for tuition, textbooks, uniforms and transport (UNESCO, 2015b). Irina Bokova, UNESCO's director-general, maintained in the report that although gender parity at the primary and secondary levels of education has improved, girls' education is often hampered by early marriages and pregnancies (UNESCO, 2015a:169).

Goal 3 of the MDGs pertains to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women with Target 3.A stipulating that by 2015 gender disparity in all levels of education must be eliminated. Although trends in the gender disparity index demonstrate gains in all developing countries at all levels of education, in Sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania, Western Asia and Northern Africa, girls still face barriers to entering both primary and secondary school (United Nations, 2014a:21). In countries such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, gender parity is yet to be achieved (United Nations, 2014a). Whilst women's status in the labour market is improving, gender disparity still exists with Northern Africa having one of the lowest proportions

of women in paid employment with no noticeable increase by 2012. Even though the proportion of women in active political life continues to increase, the percentage of female Speakers in Parliament, for instance, increased by only 0.6% between 2012 and 2013. This suggests that there may be a glass ceiling for women in some countries (United Nations, 2014a:23).

An antithesis to women empowerment, is the endemic violence against women and girls which remains a universal phenomenon. Women and girls are subjected to multiple forms of violence – physical, sexual, psychological and economic – both within and outside their homes (United Nations Women, 2011a). This endemic serves as an impediment to the achievement of the objectives of gender equality and women empowerment and violates and nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms (United Nations Women, 2014a:76).

According to statistics in *Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women* provided by the United Nations Women (2014b) relating to violence against women and girls, it is clear that a pandemic exists in diverse forms. The statistics reveal the following:

- According to a 2013 global review of available data, 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. Some national violence studies indicate that up to 70% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime from an intimate partner.
- It is estimated that of all women murdered in 2012, almost half were murdered by intimate partners or family members.
- Globally, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children (below 18 years of age). 250 million were married before the age of 15.
- Among married girls, current and/or former intimate partners are the most commonly reported perpetrators of physical violence.
- Around 120 million girls worldwide have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point in their lives.
- More than 133 million girls and women have experienced some form of female genital mutilation in Africa and the Middle East.
- Women and girls represent 55% of the estimated 20.9 million victims of forced labour worldwide and 98% of the estimated 4.5 million are forced into sexual exploitation.

Judging by these statistics, while the founding of the MDGs is essential and commendable, at the genesis of its target year, it is compelling to analyse its current shortcomings and determine the space between its objectives on paper versus the lived experiences of women and girls.

1.3 ATROCITIES AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS ON A GLOBAL SCALE

To substantiate the shortcomings of the MDGs, I draw on the diverse atrocities that are inflicted on both women and girls globally. I allude specifically to the contexts of education access, gender inequalities and the barriers to women's empowerment in line with MDGs 2 and 3. It is crucial to note that it is on the very soils of the countries that have ratified the MDGs vowing to eliminate the injustices and inequalities in the world wherein such atrocities are actually transpiring.

1.3.1 Education access, gender inequalities and consequent barriers to women empowerment

Education is a fundamental human right and a key driver of economic growth and social transformation. It functions as a foundation of women's empowerment (United Nations Women, 2011b) and is one of the gateways to human development. In addition, when women and girls acquire the essential skills and competencies that education affords them, they are empowered to make informed decisions on critical aspects of their lives (ibid.). Although a basic human right, many women and girls universally remain deprived of education as the United Nations Women (2011b) corroborates that while significant progress has been achieved in giving women and girls' equal access to education, this achievement remains restricted in many parts of the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa as well as Western and Southern Asia.

Access to education for women and girls in many parts of the world has faced an arduous battle due to the history of conservative patriarchal customs. Despite liberal state Constitutions and treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (henceforth UDHR) (United Nations, 1948), gender inequality proves to be a continuous pervasive phenomenon in society. Women, throughout the social order, have traditionally been relegated to a subordinate status and for a long time have generally been excluded from recognised interpretations and interpretations of human rights. Consequently, women's and girls' experiences of human rights violations have been virtually ignored (Amnesty International USA, 2005). The incongruity though is that most of the casualties of war are women and children, most of the world's refugees and displaced individuals are women and children, and most of the world's poor are women and children (ibid.). Yet due to persistent discrimination against women and women's virtual invisibility, the violations of human rights continue with no clear indication of diminution (ibid.). In addition, the prohibition of same-sex relationships or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) relationships in countries such as India, Nigeria and Russia serve to further violate human rights and precipitates negative consequences not only for LGBTI individuals and communities but for societies as a whole (ASSAf, 2015).

Throughout much of the world, families and societies treat boys and girls differently, with girls disproportionately facing privation, lack of opportunity and lower levels of investment in their education (Tanzim, 2011). This form of gender-based discrimination continues into adolescence and remains an imprint on the footpaths to adulthood. Unequal power relations between males and females lead to extensive violations of human rights. Tanzim (ibid.) argues that among the most persistent and pernicious of these violations are early or child marriages, sexual violence, sexual trafficking and rape.

At this juncture, I draw attention to the diverse global atrocities and multiple oppressions that plague both women and girls and deny them the very essence of human rights. Whilst some of these atrocities make headline news, it is important to be mindful of the countless number of women and girls whose brutalities and marginalisation are often hidden and suffered in silence and secrecy.

1.3.2 Atrocities borne by women and girls across the world

In this section, I not only present various statistics but include seven snippets of the lived experiences of some of the women and girls who suffer multiple forms of brutality. I chose to include this segment because numbers alone - even those that measure aspects perceived as important - are meaningless unless they are presented in context (Few, 2009:5). In addition, irrespective of how large the numbers may be, providing lived experiences has a more profound, tangible and lingering effect as is further discussed in Chapter 2. In line with this assertion, I now expose these lived experiences in various contexts.

Boko Haram, a militant Islamic group in Nigeria, whose name infers “Western or non-Islamic education is a sin” is against those individuals in Nigeria known as “yan boko” which is literally translated as “child of the book” (Walker, 2012:7). The group’s high profile attacks such as the abduction of nearly 300 school girls from their dormitories mostly aged between 16 and 18 (Blanchard, 2014:5) who were writing their final examinations in 2014 is a fraction of what is suffered by girls trying to gain an education. Since their abduction, the apparent leader of the militant group, Abubakar Shekau, claims that the school girls have been converted to Islam, married off to jihadists and are now “in their marital homes” (Linning, 2014). In response to this brutality, Michelle Obama, first lady of the United States succinctly articulated that “this unconscionable act was committed by a terrorist group determined to keep these girls from getting an education ... grown men attempting to snuff out the aspirations of young girls” (Obama, 2014). In another recent insurgence, these Islamic militants murdered the women and girls that they had taken as ‘wives’ along with other enslaved captives in the Nigerian town of Gwoza. Shekau’s view was that if the women were not killed, they would not join them in

'paradise' (Agence France Presse, 2015). According to witnesses, women were gathered in large numbers whilst militants opened fire on them. The militants have also repeatedly used young children as human bombs and are targeting women and girls predominantly for horrific abuse including sexual violence and enslavement (Mis, 2015). These malevolent acts alone demonstrate how the fundamental human rights and freedom of women and girls are being desecrated by a patriarchal military group so intoxicated by and entrenched in its deranged dogmata. Furthermore, there are no organisations on the ground in Nigeria that are closely documenting the various human rights violations however, reports have emerged of the killing and maiming or forced recruitment of civilians and the abduction, rape, sexual violence and forced marriages that women and girls are subjected to (Caux, 2014).

UNESCO's *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* (henceforth EFAGMR) (UNESCO, 2012) which provides a global scorecard, ranking the extent of education deprivation in countries around the world, states that 51% of the poorest females aged 7 to 16 in Nigeria have never been to school. The report maintains further that the average years of education for the poorest females aged 17 to 22 in Nigeria is 4.1 years.

The shooting and attempted murder of Nobel peace prize laureate, Malala Yousafzai in 2012 underscores the sufferings and oppressions that plague women and girls who pursue their human right to education. Yousafzai, a teenager, renowned for her advocacy of human rights in education, particularly female education, defied the Taliban (a militant Islamic group) in Pakistan and demanded that girls be allowed access to education.

The following incident further demonstrates the level of depravity of the Taliban. In December 2014, they staged a terrorist attack on an army-run public school in Pakistan killing 145 students, teachers and soldiers (Saifi & Botelho, 2014), rendering the massacre as the bloodiest in the nation's recent history. The Taliban, who confessed responsibility for the attack, declared that it was undertaken as 'revenge' for the continuous military operation in Pakistan's tribal regions (Malik, 2015:1). What makes such atrocities difficult to digest is the reality that society has reached a point wherein vengeance is accorded more distinction than human rights. In a country in which human dignity is disparaged and access to education is decried it is no perplexity then that Pakistan ranks in the bottom ten countries for the proportion of poorest females who have never spent time in a classroom (Rose, 2012). According to the EFAGMR (UNESCO, 2012), 62% of the poorest females aged 7 to 16 have never been to school and for the poorest females aged 17 to 22, the average years of education attained is 1.0.

The Islamic state of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an extremist Islamic rebel group published a manifesto entitled *Women of the Islamic State: Manifesto and Case Study* for women residing

under their regime and proposes to “clarify the role of Muslim women and the life which is desired for them” (Winter, 2015:12). The manifesto which was published in Arabic and translated by Charlie Winter from the counterterrorism think tank group, Quilliam Foundation, asserts that the extremist group believes the purpose of a woman’s existence is the divine duty of motherhood and hence should pursue a sedentary lifestyle. It prefers women “to remain hidden and veiled and to maintain society from behind this veil” (Winter, 2015:22). Furthermore, the manifesto declares that women should stay in their houses, participate in an educational curriculum that concludes when the woman is 15 years of age, sanctions the legitimacy of child marriages for girls at the age of 9 and provides women an escape from what they perceive as harsh dictates of Western feminism (Spencer, 2015). With women’s access to education being so stringently controlled, congruently, the curriculum is strongly focused on religious education, skills in textiles and cooking with relegation of basic science skills (ibid.). Moreover, through such inhumane decrees enforced on both women and girls, how can human rights, human dignity, equality and freedom ever take root?

The EFAGMR (UNESCO, 2012) records that, 32% of the poorest females aged 7 to 16 in Iraq have never been to school and the average years of education attained for the poorest females aged 17 to 22, is 3.0. Considering how widely the manifesto has been propagated and its requirements, these statistics will undoubtedly proliferate. To substantiate my statement I refer to the influx of young girls who have relinquished their freedom, education, families and countries to join the militant group. According to Ebrahim (2015) ISIS propaganda is arguably the most dangerously effective in the world today with an alarming number of teenage girls being lured by the extremist group. Halliday (2015) corroborates that 60 British women and girls are believed to have travelled to Syria to join ISIS militants. In the South African context, a 15 year old girl from Cape Town was intercepted in April 2015 minutes before her flight departure to join the ISIS group (Hartleb, 2015). Evidently, the militants’ powerful propaganda has found fertile ground amongst a global audience and most disturbing is the reality of how these women and girls perceive themselves by responding to its mandate. They seem willing to embrace a life of subservience.

Whilst the savageries highlighted above seem to only depict Islamic extremist groups in predominantly Islamic countries, it is not my intention to single out any one particular religious group or affiliation. It is rather a demonstration of lived experiences (on the very soils of countries that have endorsed the MDGs) that contribute to the oppression and marginalisation of women and girls and their struggles against the suppression of their human right to education. The violation of women’s and girls’ human rights remains an omnipresent phenomenon in every society in the world and is not confined to any particular political or economic system (Amnesty International, 2006:3).

In India, a country underpinned with a democracy (D'Ambrogio, 2014:1), education access and gender equality are still not accorded its rightful place. Despite a Constitution (India, 2007) that warrants equality and non-discrimination on the basis of gender, India still remains a primarily patriarchal society. Injustices such as lack of access to education for females, early marriage, dowry deaths, honour crimes, violence against women, trafficking and male inheritance and property ownership contribute to the multiple forms of oppression that persecute women and girls (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2010:2). For most girls, attending school is not an option due to religious reasons, family responsibilities, cultural pressures and protecting family honour (Singh, 2012). According to statistics by the EFAGMR (UNESCO, 2012), 30% of the poorest females in India aged 7 to 16 have never attended school and the average years of education achieved for the poorest females aged 17 to 22 is 2.9.

Sharon (2014:147) maintains that violence against women in India is an issue that is rooted in societal norms and economic dependence. Female feticide, domestic violence, sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence represent the reality of most women's and girls' lives in India. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, every twenty minutes, a woman is raped in India (ibid.). This assertion brings me to the poignant case of Jyoti Singh and her ultimate death as a result of a sadistic, brutal rape attack in December 2012. In a country where male preference and female feticide is common (Pande & Malhotra, 2006), Singh was fortunate to be raised by parents who valued her identity as a woman and her human right to education (Farhoud & Andrabi, 2013). As a final year medical student having just completed an examination, Singh and her male friend were on their way back home from a cinema and were lured into a charter bus where Singh was gang raped by five men and a seventeen year old juvenile. She fought her way through the ordeal and was eventually eviscerated and thrown onto the street. She survived for only a few days before she died. However, she was able to provide details of her horrific story via statements to the magistrates (Bashir & Midlane, 2015). This brutality which exposed a society in crisis generated widespread protests in India with a demand for change in its attitude towards women and rape (Rahman, 2015). Following Singh's violent death, Leslee Udwin, a British filmmaker produced a documentary entitled *India's Daughter*, which has already aired in many countries in 2015 amidst much protest and an eventual ban on the documentary in India by the Indian government on the grounds that it would "damage India's reputation abroad" (Frater, 2015). This reaction compels one to ponder: is a country's reputation more valuable than the human life that inhabits it?

The documentary charts the story of what happened on that moving bus and interviews one of Singh's attackers, Mukesh Singh who showed no remorse for his actions and stated that his victim would not have been killed if she had not fought back against her attackers. "She should just be silent and allow the rape ... the 15 or 20 minutes of the incident, I was driving the bus,

the girl was screaming, 'Help me, help me.' The juvenile put his hand in her and pulled out something. It was her intestines ... We dragged her to the front of the bus and threw her out" (as cited in Roberts, 2015). His further abhorrent response to the attack is as follows:

A girl is far more responsible for rape than a boy....A decent girl won't roam around at nine o'clock at night....Housework and housekeeping is for girls, not roaming in discos and bars at night doing wrong things, wearing wrong clothes (as cited in Rahman, 2015).

Singh's disturbing opinions are not those of a lone man. Even more startlingly they are echoed by his defence attorney, Manohar Sharma, who articulated his misogynistic views as follows:

You are talking about man and woman as friends. Sorry, that doesn't have any place in our society. We have the best culture. In our culture, there is no place for a woman (as cited in Rustad, 2015).

I allude to the repugnant comments of the rapist and his attorney which reveal the manic patriarchal attitude that many men have towards women. More disturbing is the fact that if someone in the legal profession can hold such substandard views of women and reduce them to being second class citizens, how can the suffusing culture of patriarchal attitudes ever be eradicated? Kapur (2012) an Indian global law professor aptly corroborates my views on the attitudes of men when she explicates that:

the grooming of young men to have a feeling of entitlement by Indian parents breeds a sense of masculinity and male privilege. Son preference simultaneously erodes the possibility of respect for women, as girls are seen as unwanted or burdensome. Such inequalities produce the very hatred against women in the public arena that we are witnessing throughout the country. When women do not cower or display their vulnerability - thereby inviting the protection of the virile Indian male - what follows is a sense of emasculation and aggrievement on the part of these men.

The paradox that this merciless incident demonstrates is this: a woman, who triumphed against the odds of cultural norms and entrenched societal traditions of male preference and female feticide, pursued her human right to education only to die such a brutal death owing to the prevalent rape culture and gender discriminations that permeate every level of that very society. Why is it that a woman's identity in society can be regarded with such abhorrence?

Whereas the above literature refers to atrocities on an international scale, with the aim of providing a rationale into the multiple oppressions and human rights violations that women and girls across the globe endure, I now focus my study on the South African context to emphasise the multidimensional, compounded oppressions that women and girls suffer on the backdrop of

South African soil. Although not an extremist, militant country, South Africa cannot be exempt for its role in human rights violations against both women and girls.

1.4 ATROCITIES AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS ON SOUTH AFRICAN SOIL

Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression...unless we see in visible practical terms that the conditions of women in our country has radically changed for the better and that they have been empowered to intervene in all aspects of life as equals with any other member of society. (Mandela, 1994)

Women's struggle for liberation in South Africa has been driven by systems of apartheid and patriarchy. Through the legacy bequeathed by these systems, women's struggle for gender equality has been an ongoing battle and will continue to be so throughout the twenty-first century (Hutson, 2007:83). In addition, Hutson (2007:86) upholds that women in South Africa have had a long and assiduous struggle towards their equality and still have a long road ahead to ensure that their freedoms and liberties are no longer suppressed. Despite the birth of a constitutional democracy in 1994 according rights and liberties to all its citizens, without distinction of race, class and gender, a real assertion of women's rights that would beget substantial equality still seems out of reach. In addition to its laudable Constitution (South Africa, 1996a), the country also boasts another means of advancing gender equality and women empowerment through the proposed Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (henceforth WEGE Bill) (South Africa, 2014a). Regardless though of such regulations in place, the injustices against women and girls still persist. Excessive levels of gender-based violence and sexual violence coupled with women living in appalling socio-economic conditions, particularly in rural areas, refutes the decree of equality and empowerment (Morandi, 2010).

As a member state of the United Nations, South Africa has ratified the MDGs, pledging allegiance to the achievement of these goals. At this juncture, I draw on the statistics pertaining to education in line with goal 2 of the MDGs. A report entitled *South Africa's Children: a review of equity and child rights* (SAHRC, 2011) compiled by the South African Human Rights Commission (henceforth SAHRC) in conjunction with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (henceforth UNICEF) affirms that significant progress has been made in the realisation of the human right to education. Near-universal primary education has been achieved in all provinces however nationwide, 582 000 children of school going age are out of secondary school. Whilst the state glories in its attainment of near-universal access to primary education, of the number of learners enrolled in Grade 1, only half make it to grade 12 (Modisaotsile, 2012:1). Factors such as violence in schools, rape and sexual abuse often at the hands of teachers, has been a marked feature of the schooling experience of many girls.

Alongside sexual abuse, pregnancy and poverty are amongst the reasons for the high drop-out rate of girls in secondary schooling (Modisaotsile, 2012:3). Another reason for the high drop-out rate is related to rural schools. These schools are difficult to access and while significant infrastructural improvements have occurred since 1994, the *National Education Infrastructure Management System: National Assessment Report* published by the Department of Education (South Africa, 2007) maintains that many rural schools still lack clean running water, electricity, libraries, laboratories and computers (Gardiner, 2008:13).

Although the achievement of near-universal primary education is laudable, the quality of education being administered is highly questionable. To substantiate this claim, I refer to the country's Annual National Assessment (ANA) results. According to these ANA results (South Africa, 2014b) the national average for performance in Mathematics by intermediate phase learners is as follows: Grade 4: 37.3%; Grade 5: 37.3% and Grade 6: 43%. These statistics show that the majority of learners in Grades 4 and 5 failed the standardised national assessments for Mathematics. The Grade 9s' dismal performance of 10.8% reflects an education system in crisis. With such poor performances reflected in several grades, it is no wonder that majority of the learners who pass Grade 12 do not meet the minimum requirements for university entrance (Modisaotsile, 2012:1). To further substantiate this argument, I ruminate on the Grade 12 pass rate for 2014. According to the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Examination Technical Report (South Africa, 2014c:59), the overall pass rate achieved was 75.8% - a decrease of 2.4% from the previous year's pass rate. Most disconcerting is that of the total number of learners who wrote the NSC examination in that year, only 28.3% qualified for provisional admission to a Bachelor's programme at a university (Matshediso, 2014).

It also comes as no surprise that the *Global Information Technology Report* by the World Economic Forum (2014) ranked South Africa 146th (third last) out of 148 countries in the section pertaining to 'quality of the educational system'¹. Furthermore, the report indicates that in the section pertaining to 'quality of math and science education', South Africa ranked last out of 148 countries. This crucial argument comes to the fore: whilst education access is available in South Africa, does this very access automatically lead to the socio-economic empowerment of women? If the quality of education is so poor particularly in subjects such as mathematics and science, how can it lead to the empowerment of women? In effect, does this not exacerbate women's economic handicaps? Hutson (2007:84) maintains that without economic power, women have no power.

¹ Nigeria, Pakistan and India fared better in this section as compared to South Africa.

From my perspective, what I find particularly concerning is the reality which no United Nation or national statistical document has captured. This is the violation of women's human right to education access in South Africa. Whilst there are discourses surrounding educational impediments faced by rural women (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2012), not much thought and attention is given to other marginalised women in this country who experience these injustices. Much emphasis is placed on enrolment at the primary and secondary levels at schools however men who preclude women from furthering their education is a reality that no agency has sought to investigate. Through my own lived experiences, I can attest to this circumstance being a stark reality.

Examining gender equality and the empowerment of women as per goal 3 of the MDGs, it is evident that women and girls in South Africa are no exception to their counterparts abroad as they suffer multiple oppressions and brutalities on a daily basis. In a violence-saturated country, almost numb to gruesome everyday atrocities, it is no surprise that in the 2013/2014 official crime statistics released by the South African Police Services, the murder rate increased for a second consecutive year for the first time in 20 years (Institute for Security Studies, 2014:1). A total number of 46 253 cases of rape was recorded. Given the Medical Research Council's estimate that only one in nine rapes is reported to the police (ISS, 2014), the number of rapes in the country is evidently much higher than numbers recorded by the police. A policy brief by Genderlinks (2014:1) asserts that South Africa is ranked one of the five regions in the world with the highest rates of femicide, a rate that is six times higher than the global average.

To illustrate the above statement, I recount the horrific rape attack and resultant death of 17 year old Anene Booysen in February 2013. Booysen had been socialising with friends at a pub and was last seen leaving with her assailant, Johannes Kana (September, 2013). Her body was later found at a construction site after she had been raped, severely beaten and disemboweled (Neille, 2013). The magnitude of her injuries were said to have shocked the doctors who treated her (ibid.) whilst her mother asserted that if she had not seen Booysen's shoes, she would not have known that it was her own child (Msimang, 2013).

The fragment of this lived experience is but one of the countless stories of women and girls in South Africa that many do not live to tell. The value of their human lives are marred and denigrated by a hostile patriarchal mentality that has managed to infiltrate every inch of society. Are such injustices not enough to awaken people in society to the desperate need for action?

The following statistics from the Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children (SBCWC) (2014) substantiate my statement above about the brutalities that women and girls endure.

These statistics were also publicised on a South African online news interview with Shaheema McLoed from the SBCWC (McLoed & Sukdeo-Raath, 2014):

- a woman is raped every four minutes or killed every six hours by her male partner;
- one in five women are forced into sex by her male partner;
- constructions of masculinity and patriarchy have resulted in a readiness to use violence to assert power;
- the chances of a girl being raped in South Africa are much higher than her chances of completing secondary education.

Based on these statistics, one might argue that despite 20 years into a democracy and numerous laws advocating women's rights and empowerment, South African women still remain bound in patriarchy wherein men are the primary authority figures and women are their subordinates - whether it be in the home, workplace, societal institutions or in intimate relationships.

According to a survey by Ipsos (2014), a leading research company, published in a news article on Women's Day 2014 (SAPA, 2014a), 22% of South African women still believed that "their place is in the home", and 27% of men agreed with this sentiment. In the sphere of education, 21% of women felt that boys have more rights to education than girls and 23% were of the opinion that men had more rights to employment than women. Most disconcerting is the significant proportion of 34% of both men and women who believe women should be kept in their place. This brings me to de Beauvoir's (2010) sentiments wherein she contends that women are often very well pleased with her role as the other. Although decades since her work on *The Second Sex*, her views on how women perceive themselves, still resonates truth today.

Still debating within the South African context, I move to the attitude of public figures. It proves an indignity when the president's perceptions of women are so derogatory that he had to be admonished by the Commission for Gender Equality for his statements made during an interview on the programme called *People of the South* (SAHRC, 2015a:23). President Zuma, while speaking about his daughter's marriage, claimed that he was happy about his daughter's marriage as he "wouldn't want to stay with daughters who are not getting married because that in itself is a problem in society. I know that people today think that being single is nice. It's actually not right. That's a distortion". He further articulates that "You've got to have kids. Kids are important to a woman because they actually give an extra training to a woman, to be a mother". How do these sentiments coming from the leader of a nation help to restore the imbalances of gender equality that has pervaded our society for centuries, or could it simply be

a manifestation that even at the highest level of a democratic government, patriarchy, chauvinism and disdain for women have found themselves familiar companions?

To exacerbate the gender inequalities evident in the country, the Ipsos survey (2013) reveals further that only about three in every ten South African women are formally employed in comparison with 44% of men who are employed. The gender wage-gap demonstrates that 36% of women earn less than R10 000 per month as opposed to 32% of men earning the same amount. On the other continuum, 8% of men earn more than R10 000 per month as opposed to 5% of women earning the same amount. The average monthly income of females is a modest R5, 863.94, while the average monthly income of males is R8, 663.04 (Ipsos, 2013).

While South Africa has arguably one of the most progressive Constitutions (South Africa, 1996a) in the world, built upon the democratic virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom and which broke new ground internationally with its aim to protect women's rights and promote gender equality, as citizens within this republic why are women still perceived as a minority, second class group, created for some arbitrary purpose? The fact that women's rights are being fought for the world over solicits the question: Why is it that women are not entitled to human rights based on the fact that they are human beings but rather that these rights are accorded on their social identity?

Although the country commemorates National Women's Day on 9 August annually and participates in the global 16 Days of Activism campaign for No Violence against Women and Children, with such escalating atrocities and inequalities on women and girls it beggars the question: Is a single date inscribed on a calendar symbolising the celebration and honour of women in this country, adequate to bring about much needed change in men whose attitudes are entrenched in gender bigotry? Is wearing a white ribbon on a lapel for 16 days enough to show solidarity and transform a society? Is the hotchpotch of hash-tags on various media platforms enough to bring about unconformity to a society embedded in patriarchal norms?

The suffering of women and girls is a testimony to a blind spot in society. Although it has a much lauded Constitution (South Africa, 1996a), until it's statutes are applied and become the informing vision of each of its citizens, as a government South Africa cannot rest on its laurels of a few accomplishments while women and girls are being treated with such abhorrence.

In reflecting on the shortcomings of the MDGs which served as a point of reference in this chapter, through examination of the various atrocities and statistics presented above, I am of the view that whilst the launch of the MDGs was creditable, its execution has been feeble. Not only did the MDGs lack strong objectives, explanatory value and analytical power (Deneulin &

Shahani, 2009), according to the United Nations *Gap Task Force Report* (United Nations, 2014b), it acknowledges that “persistent gaps between promises made and delivered by developed countries hold back greater progress on the MDGs”.

1.5 INTELLECTUAL CONUNDRUM

I am firmly of the view that as women, our existence is no arbitrary occurrence. Although the various discriminations and atrocities enacted on and against many women compels me to question my positionality as a woman in society and how it influences me, in undertaking this study I wanted most importantly to expose the multifaceted compounded oppressions and complexities that besiege women and girls and to unpack the causes of these underlying complexities which inevitably impede the progression of women’s empowerment. Young (2005:95) takes the view that it is not possible to have one definitive definition of oppression as different or combinatory factors constitute the oppression of different groups. Consequently, she presents five faces of oppression i.e. exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence which take account of all oppressed groups and the manner in which they are oppressed (ibid.).

Transcribing this chapter was a fundamental function to this study in exposing the multiple complexities that plague women regardless of their geographical location, racial identities and economic status. The distinctiveness alone of being a woman attracts prejudices in every facet. It was crucial for me to accentuate that behind every statistic lay a lived experience that could not be unheeded in the human rights discourse. I chose to present statistics interspersed with lived experiences as in so doing, I was able to create a platform to allow the voices of these women and girls to be heard.

In linking with the nucleus of my study, which seeks to explore the extent to which the human right to education navigates women’s access to education towards social and economic empowerment, by simultaneously revealing the various statistics and the lived experiences pertaining to women’s access to education, it helped to identify the intellectual conundrum in this study and the necessity for such a study to be undertaken. Firstly, this chapter illuminated two conundrums pertaining to access to education: 1) in some of the countries mentioned access to education for both women and girls is a negation primarily due to societal norms and patriarchal attitudes and 2) whilst access to education is available in many countries, this does not automatically lead to women’s socio-economic empowerment as for many women and girls, accessing their human right to education equates to either survival or death. Congruent with the conundrums identified in this study, herein, lays the locus of the assumption that exists - that for as long as women are granted access to education, then this access will automatically lead

to their social and economic empowerment. This assumption is further coupled with a silent ignorance of the space that exists between the continuums of access to education and socio-economic empowerment. By this I mean that there is a supposition that ostensibly no space lies in the epicentre of these two continuums however, this chapter demonstrates the contrary in that between these two continuums, there is a space that lies in the epicentre wherein all the complexities such as race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age converge.

It is upon this premise that I seek to challenge the assumptions underlying theories that access to education will lead to social and economic empowerment by exploring the human right to education (through my lived experiences) in this study. I intend to demonstrate that despite all the legislation vehemently protecting our human rights, a space between access to education and empowerment is existent and the various complexities that lie in this epicentre will be unpacked through the lens of intersectionality in Chapter 3.

Throughout much of this chapter, I have also tried to engage the reader in dialogue by sharing my own views and asking a few pertinent questions to provoke thought within the reader and me. Although many explicit forms of violence (faces of oppression) have been depicted herein, it is crucial to take cognisance of the more implicit forms of injustices such as the violation of women's human right to education. This perspective brings me to the research problem underpinning this study.

The UDHR (United Nations, 1948) which was established after the atrocities of the Second World War etched the moral foundations of human rights. The discipline of human rights is a colourful field with various perspectives and experiences. According to Nickel (2010:1) human rights are moral principles that set out certain standards of human behaviour and are regularly protected as legal rights in national and international law. They are usually understood as inalienable fundamental rights to which an individual is inherently entitled simply because the individual is a human being (Sepúlveda *et al.*, 2004:3). Upon proclamation of the UDHR (United Nations, 1948), the General Assembly asserted that "every individual and every organ of society shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms" (Glendon, 2004:4).

In line with the UDHR (United Nations, 1948), Section 29 of the South African Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) declares that, "Everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education". It is important to note that this right is for all citizens without reference to any limiting criteria. This clause does not imply that there are any possible limitations.

Education is seen as universally important and invaluable. As the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Anan so aptly articulated in his preamble of the State of the World's Children address (UNICEF, 1999): "Education is the single most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women, protecting children from hazardous and exploitative labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights and democracy, protecting the environment and influencing population growth. Education is a path towards international peace and security".

With the injustices suffered under the apartheid system in South Africa and its abolition, the birth of democracy paved the way for the establishment of the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) which includes the Bill of Rights (South Africa, 1996b) in Chapter 2. The Bill of Rights (ibid.) is the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the human rights of all people living in this country and affirms the democratic virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom. In addition, the enactment of the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) gives effect to the letter and spirit of the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a), by promoting women empowerment and gender equality. It can be viewed as an instrument of transformation and the realisation of rights for women in South Africa as it entrenches constitutional virtues, human dignity, non-sexism, equality and human freedoms. The WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) affirms the commitments to the promotion of gender equality and the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of gender, as provided for in the Bill of Rights (South Africa, 1996b). Furthermore, it makes provision for the social development of women by means of education and training.

Historically, South Africa's post-apartheid government inherited an education system riddled with inequalities and segregation. The *SAHRC Economic and Social Rights Report* (SAHRC, 2001) states that the system was racially fragmented and characterised by an inequitable distribution of resources with former white schools receiving more resources than schools of other racial groups. The system also had a lack of suitably qualified educators for the vast majority of learners. Tertiary or higher education was mostly restricted to the children of relatively affluent families with the majority of students not having the means to access higher education.

Despite South Africa's progressive Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) and its extensive provisions and boldness in terms of the vision it seeks to advance, the tangible test of the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) cannot lie in the sufficiency of its text but in the effect that it has on the rights of citizens that it seeks to protect (SAHRC, 2006:1). In President Zuma's foreword to the launch of the Twenty Year Review (South Africa, 2014d) he acknowledges that whereas South Africa has achieved vast progress in the first 20 years of its democracy, as a nation it also faces considerable challenges. One of the primary challenges, in addition to inequality, is how to free the potential of each person, as a prerequisite to positioning people in

a way that allows them to contribute to the enjoyment of their own human rights and that of others. The human right to education is a critical right in the realisation of this objective (SAHRC, 2006:1).

The importance of a thriving education system was reiterated in the SAHRC Report (2006) which states that the human right to basic education is a central facilitative right in our constitutional democracy. It is aimed at providing opportunities and gateways for ensuring the promotion and protection of all other human rights. Effective quality teacher education and the continuing professional development of teachers is crucial to the well-being of any education system. According to the seven roles of an educator that are stipulated in the Education Labour Relations Council (henceforth ELRC) Policy Handbook for Educators (Brunton, 2003), one role is that of: scholar, researcher and lifelong learner. It states that “the educator will achieve ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth through pursuing reflective study and research in their learning area, in broader professional and educational matters, and in other related fields” (South Africa, 2003:48).

Possessing an unrelenting fervour to pursue my goal and the right to further my education and further develop myself in the teaching profession, my human right to education was violated by one of the very institutions that are meant to advocate and nurture education. The question that this situation raises is: Can heads of educational institutions foster education and advocate professional development and simultaneously flout the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) and educational legislation by denying educators their constitutional human right to education? Does the human right to education even exist in the very fraternity meant to endorse and nurture it? This situation further begets the question that although our human rights are protected in the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a), how many of these avowed rights are actually applied in practice? In other words does the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) and legislation such as the ELRC Policy Handbook for Educators (Brunton, 2003) and the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) – execute its rights in practice or on paper only? In as much as the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) offers its citizens the human right to education without discrimination, through my lived experiences as a female educator, I have encountered and can attest to a discernible contradiction. These lived experiences will be revealed through my autobiographical narrative later in this study (4.2).

Being employed by an institution that epitomises education, one would assume that ensuring the human right to education for its employees is fundamental to its structure. When I was denied my human right to education, I was also subjected to a barrage of aggressive utterances and unethical and unprofessional behaviour by the head of the institution. Furthermore,

escalating the matter to the Department of Basic Education, unlocked my eyes to the realities of how such an institution operates in practice.

It is against the backdrop of this phenomenon I have experienced that I feel compelled not only to understand my place in society as a woman educator and how it shaped me but also to understand the causes of the causal complexities that prevent the progression towards women's empowerment. In a transforming society such as ours, without lack of intended emancipatory legislation, such as the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) rooted in the Bill of Rights (South Africa, 1996b), both of which are meant to uphold women's rights, is there really a need for the implementation of any further legislation if the existing ones cannot live up to their expectations and improve the lives of women? In actuality, why are there no parallel legislations underpinning and addressing the complexities that women struggle with during their journey from education access to empowerment?

Whilst the objectives of the Bill of Rights (South Africa, 1996b) and the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) sound laudable and the salient human right to education is professed in both, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is a dangerous underlying assumption that access to education will automatically lead to women empowerment. Amongst some criticisms of the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a), in the public submissions to the government, is its excessively broad definition of gender equality outlined in Chapter 3 and the lack of serious engagement with patriarchal structures in society (Bliss, 2014). The persistence of patriarchal attitudes and the deep-rooted stereotypes in patriarchy cannot be overlooked as they present a major impediment to the progress of women's empowerment. Furthermore, the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) appears to exclude intersectional discrimination. This yields a crucial disparity because of the various kinds of intersectional discrimination that women experience which is further exacerbated by racial and class differences. The WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) should address the compounded effects of intersectional discrimination but falls short of doing so. There seems to be a disparity amongst all existing legislation advancing women emancipation in that the space that lies between the two continuums mentioned earlier in this section, fails to be addressed and yet this is the actual locale wherein the complexities of intersectionality manifest.

If the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom are applicable to all human beings including women and girls, then any discrimination or atrocities enacted upon them nullifies these virtues. These virtues cannot take root in a society that discriminates against any of the entities that these virtues were intended for in the first place.

Despite numerous legislations advocating equality, women and girls still live in a predominantly patriarchal society with factors such as wage discrepancies still being practiced (Ipsos, 2013). Even though South Africa boasts access to near-universal primary education, many girls in this country, particularly in rural areas, confront the oppressions of abuse, poverty and child-headed households thus hindering their access to education (Gardiner, 2008; Modisaotsile, 2012). The quality of education being administered and the poor results attained, as demonstrated earlier in this chapter, do not augur well for the empowerment of women and girls. If elementary subjects such as mathematics are not being properly inculcated or grasped, this will undoubtedly lead to economic shortcomings and handicaps in their adulthood thus refuting the goal of women empowerment. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2012) maintains that women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development and the achievement of all the MDGs and increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skill development and market information. In addition, it also creates a multiplier effect for economic growth (United Nations, 2010:9). To enable women to have control over their own lives and exert influence in society, their economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to the strengthening of women's rights (OECD, 2012).

Furthermore, there does not seem to be much consideration given to the plight of women who are denied access to an education. To meet international targets such as the MDGs (United Nations, 2000) South Africa has been quick to place an emphasis on its school enrolment achievements however, women who wish to pursue their human right to education and face impediments through avenues of patriarchy, for example, is overlooked. If the government places such great importance on girls' primary education (rightfully so) but there is limited evidence of action to elevate this importance to their secondary and tertiary education access levels (SAHRC, 2011), with the same fervour and urgency then in my opinion, the whole notion of access to education for all is debatable. Whilst several emancipatory intended legislations for women in South Africa exist, these legislations have not been able to effusively conquer the patriarchal structures and attitudes that have long imbued our society.

When reflecting on the atrocities that beset our fellow counterparts on home soil, one is compelled to wonder exactly how many more carnages have to occur before action is taken. Yes, marches are embarked on, news agencies splatter the stories on their front covers, social media is ablaze with comments and dicta yet still these atrocities continue unabated. For many, simply commenting on the atrocities purports their role in taking some form of action. If we continue to remain in the luxury of silence that has blanketed many in society, women will always be treated as the other or as second class individuals whose identity occupy no

meaningful existence and this will only serve to replicate a vicious cycle for present and future generations.

Whereas South Africa can be commended for commemorating its women through public holidays and national celebrations, a solitary date on the calendar is simply inadequate to evoke a mindfulness or awareness of women's human rights in society. For as long as men whose bigoted attitudes remain concrete, no matter how many public holidays or celebrations are observed or the multi-coloured ribbons we may adorn, fighting for equality will be an endless and ineffectual battle.

As a woman living in a 'democratic' society, I am of the view that there can be no triumphant and veritable celebration in a democracy when women in my own nation and beyond do not experience the rudiments of the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom; when they are being denied their fundamental human rights and suffer brutalities daily.

Ultimately, after unabridged reflections of this chapter, women and girls undeniably have a long and onerous journey to travel on their road to egalitarianism seeing as the democratic virtues continue to remain an elusive right.

In the subsequent chapter of this research study, a detailed description of the objectives and research questions underpinning this study are discussed in conjunction with the research methodology.

CHAPTER TWO

BREAKING THROUGH THE ATMOSPHERE INTO MICROGRAVITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the research design, methodologies and processes used in this qualitative research study. Included herein are the procedures that were undertaken in each step of the research design. This study employed an autoethnographic methodological framework situated within a poststructuralist feminist paradigm. The data generating instrument and data analysis methods which were applied are also discussed in conjunction with the trustworthiness and ethical considerations that were applicable to this study.

The choice of the research methodology was determined by the objectives and research question underpinning this study and which are stated beneath.

2.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The main objective of this autoethnographical study was to explore the extent to which the human right to education navigates women's access to education towards social and economic empowerment. This was achieved by questioning the human right of access to education and the underlying assumptions underpinning it. The following sub-objectives contributed further to the research study:

- To explore to what extent the human right to education takes account of the underlying assumptions that education access leads to socio-economic empowerment
- To investigate how the WEGE Bill mobilises women's socio-economic empowerment from a poststructuralist feminist discourse perspective
- To explore how the complex processes embedded in the space between access and socio-economic empowerment for women can be unpacked to better understand the notion of the human right to education

2.3. RESEARCH QUESTION

This section identifies the main research question followed by the subsidiary questions that guided the research study.

2.3.1 Main Question

To what extent, if any, does the human right to education mobilise women in the space between access to education and socio-economic empowerment?

2.3.2 Sub-questions

- How does the human right to education address the underlying assumptions that access leads to socio-economic empowerment?
- How does the WEGE Bill mobilise women's socio-economic empowerment from a poststructuralist feminist discourse perspective?
- How can the complex processes embedded in the space between access and socio-economic empowerment for women be unpacked in order to better understand the human right to education?

According to Punch (2006), research designs characteristically consist of five elements i.e. methodology, paradigm, sample, collection and analysis. As a result of the autoethnographic nature of this study, I am both the participant and the researcher in this study and hence a sample element was not applicable and is therefore not discoursed. A discussion on the selected methodology for this study now ensues.

2.4 AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

According to Chang *et al.* (2013:11), autoethnography is the study of self. It involves writing about individual experiences in one's life within the context of family, work, schooling and society and interpreting the meanings of the experiences. As such, an autoethnographic perspective offers the researcher a way forward as it allows the researcher the opportunity to be an 'insider' and very much a part of the research as opposed to being an 'outsider' in the research and being detached. Acknowledging the role of self in the research process helps the researcher to make sense of their experiences. As a researcher, who was resolute about being a part of this research and sharing *my* autobiographical narrative, my perspectives about research, as well as the methodologies I undertake, and the questions I pose have all been constructed upon my beliefs, attitudes (prior knowledge) and experiences hence Denzin (1989:12) corroborates "interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher". Seeing that the personal is the domain for autoethnography, a study using this methodology provides evidence and analysis applicable to a context that extends beyond a reconstruction of lived experience into the profoundly personal and transformative (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005:303). Furthermore, Wall (2008:39) asserts that autoethnography is a captivating

and promising qualitative method that has emerged from postmodern philosophy, which offers a way of giving voice to personal experience for the purpose of broadening sociological understanding. Nieuwenhuis (2007:78) maintains that qualitative research is based on a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena and in which the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest. In other words, research is conducted in real-life situations and not in an experimental situation.

As researchers, it is imperative to question the purpose and potential outcomes of scholarly research. By profoundly questioning the personal acceptance of social and academic hegemony and further examining the subsequent implications of action, research methods such as autoethnography provide a framework for methodical inquiry that connects the tensions between personal/social, theoretical/practical and the self/other to inform theory and to emphasise the lived experience and the struggles within it (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Since autoethnography, with its inherent social construction of knowledge, identity and culture, centres on the exploration of self in relation to others and the space created between them, disciplines like education are pertinent grounds for autoethnographic study. As a form of critical pedagogy, autoethnography often places importance on a transformative or emancipatory process for the individual and in the more broadly constructed social relations in which the individual participates (Starr, 2010:2).

More characteristically, autoethnography is both an interdisciplinary method and a text that creates a self-narrative where the purpose is to reflexively critique the 'situatedness' of self in relation to others in a social construct (Spry, 2001:710). The researcher's own experience, as Starr (2010:3) points out, is the focal point from which a new understanding of the culture in question is revealed through the holistic view that comprises the research, writing, analysis and dissemination as a link between the personal and the cultural and the political and social.

The choice of design for this study was informed by my personal (autobiographical) narrative which is presented in Chapter 4 of this study. The personal narrative approach to autoethnography is based on the authors who view themselves as the phenomenon and writes reminiscent narratives specifically focused on their academic, research and personal life (Ellis *et al.*, 2011). Reed-Danahay (1997:9) states that autoethnography is a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context and can be undertaken by an autobiographer who situates the story of their life within a story of the social context in which it occurs. Autobiographical narratives intend to understand a self or some attribute of a life as it intersects with a cultural context, connects to other participants as co-researchers, and invites readers to enter the author's world and to use what they learn there to ruminate on, understand and manage their own lives (Ellis, 2004:46). For Ferdinand (2009) though, autoethnographies are much more

than stories as she posits that it should also strike an emotional chord with readers, causing them to think and feel. She maintains that readers should not only read a text but they should experience it, allowing it to pervade their minds by stirring their inmost thoughts and revelations. The words transferred to paper should bring them to a fever pitch or an emotional climax. The reader should leave the text with an intimate understanding of the author's experience and the ways in which it may relate to their own lives. In addition, DeVault (1997:221) states that a personal narrative works best when it reads easily and provides the impression of direct access to an individual reality. The author thus captivates the reader by 'telling it like it is'. Custer (2014) argues that there are seven lenses that autoethnography encapsulates: 1) it changes time; 2) requires vulnerability; 3) fosters empathy; 4) embodies creativity and innovation; 5) eliminates boundaries; 6) invites and honours subjectivity and 7) provides therapeutic benefits.

Taking into consideration the theory of autoethnography and what it can encompass, using this methodology was most applicable to my study as it allowed me the emancipation to: articulate my lived experiences through past, present and future increments, expose my vulnerability, elicit empathy whilst using creativity in the art of writing, journeying through 'boundarylessness', welcoming subjectivity, experiencing therapeutic gains, and finally 'telling it like it is' by means of an autobiographical narrative.

2.4.1 Advantages of autoethnography

There are many scholars who have acknowledged the advantages of using autoethnography as their chosen research method (Sparkes, 1996; Wall, 2008; Ferdinand, 2009). This method is unconventional and challenges canonical, traditional ways of performing research and representing others (Spry, 2001). Since autoethnography can be regarded as more of a philosophy than a well-defined method (Wall, 2006), the creation of an autoethnographical text allows for substantial creative latitude (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). In addition, researchers have found that autoethnography provides opportunities to study areas that would not be easily or so profoundly expressed using other methods (Ngunjiri *et al.*, 2010) including those discussed in my autobiographical narrative (such as loss and pain). While these areas could be studied using other qualitative methods such as ethnography, employing autoethnography allows researchers to excavate into their own experience and related emotions in ways that might not be possible if they were being interviewed by someone else. Chang (2008) endorses autoethnography as a method that is friendly to both researchers and the readers. In addition, it not only enables researchers to access personal data with ease but also to communicate with readers with their vulnerable candidness. Corroborating this view, Starr (2010:3) asserts that autoethnography has the capacity for the creation of dialogue and social change. For Sparkes (2002:221) autoethnography can inform, awaken and disturb readers by demonstrating their

involvement in social processes about which they might not have been consciously mindful of. Once readers are aware, they may find the consequences of their involvement (or lack of it) unacceptable and strive to change the situation. In such circumstances, the prospective for individual and collective re-narrating is enhanced.

Autoethnography also allows the researcher to accentuate voices that are sometimes silenced as DeVault (1997:226) corroborates that the personal account makes excluded voices hearable within a prevalent discourse making it compelling in part because it reveals in clear detail those whose presence might not be perceived if they spoke abstractly (ibid.).

Furthermore, autoethnography allows the researcher to speak a language that the audience can understand, as can be seen in my autobiographical narrative. If a researcher's voice is omitted from a text, the writing is reduced to a mere summary or an interpretation of the works of others, with nothing new added (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Taking this route would have negated what I intended to achieve in this study. As I was determined that this is *my* autobiographical narrative in all its varied landscapes that I wanted to convey, Wall (2006:3) sums it best when she articulates that an added advantage of using an autobiographical narrative is that an individual is best situated to describe their own experience more accurately than anyone else.

Ferdinand (2009) asserts that autoethnography demonstrates there is much more to research than traditional empiricism, surveys or statistical studies which only reveal a small part of a larger story. Readers are more likely to remember lived experiences as opposed to numbers hence I provided 'snippets of lived experiences' in conjunction with the statistics in Chapter 1. James (2004:62) maintains that lived experiences are memorable in ways that statistical studies are not. As they are recalled and assigned meanings, lived experiences are not right or wrong. Whilst facts can be challenged, a person's lived experience 'just is'. One of the most powerful ways to gain understanding of the other is to hear or read their story which is spoken or written in their own words.

In a sphere of methodological variances, a core stance for autoethnographers is the view of research and writing as socially-just acts (Holman Jones, 2005:764). Instead of an obsession with accuracy, the aim is to produce analytical, accessible texts that transform us and the society we inhabit for the better.

2.4.2 Criticisms of autoethnography

Autoethnography as a research method has not escaped criticism. Some scholars dismiss autoethnography as evocative, self-indulgent personal writing that conveys limited significant impact in the scholarly genus (Anderson, 2006:373).

As part ethnography and part autobiography, Ellis *et al.* (2011) claim that autoethnographers are often criticised for the presumption that they seek to achieve the same goals as more canonical work in traditional ethnography or in the performance arts. These authors further posit that critics want to hold autoethnography accountable to criteria that is normally applied to traditional ethnographies or to autobiographical standards of writing consequently censuring autoethnography for either being too artful or not sufficiently scientific or vice versa. However, autoethnography as a method attempts to disrupt the dichotomy between science and art (ibid.).

Additionally, autoethnography is dismissed as being “insufficiently rigorous, theoretical and analytical as well as too aesthetic, emotional and therapeutic” (ibid.). Performing too little fieldwork, observing limited cultural members and not spending enough time with others are other criticisms of this research method (Buzard, 2003). The use of personal experience in autoethnography is also critiqued for supposedly producing biased data (Anderson, 2006), with a further accusation of autoethnographers being naval-gazers (Madison, 2006), or self-absorbed narcissists who do not satisfy traditional scholarly conventions of hypothesising, analysing and theorising. Although the question of objectivity is raised, through traditional ideas on objectivity, autoethnography demonstrates that “every view is a way of seeing, not *the* only way” (Wolcott, 1999:137). Similarly, my autobiographical narrative was penned in the knowledge that it is but one way of seeing myself and society; I lay no claim to it being the only way.

Furthermore, my views contrast with those of Moro (2006) who believes that it takes a “damn good” writer to write autoethnography. Whilst I do not aspire to be a Pulitzer prize-writer, I believe that every individual has a narrative to tell (including scholars who disparage autoethnography) and should be allowed to impart their narrative on any platform that can bring about reflection and transformation for both self and society. Congruently, I take the view that this is *my* autobiographical narrative, which gives me the authority to pen my own words, thoughts and feelings in a manner that resonates with me and others. If *my* autobiographical narrative has the ability to cause individuals to step into my world and simultaneously reflect on their own lives, I believe that in itself is more powerful and profound than simply ensuring expertise as a connoisseur writer.

2.4.3 Reasons for employing autoethnography in this study

Before embarking on this research study, I was compelled to reflect on my lived experiences and the arduous journey that got me to this point. Had I not rose up to challenge the injustices that befell me, this research would probably not have progressed in its current undertakings. This thrust me into telling *my* autobiographical narrative – not for public acknowledgment but rather to understand myself and the world around me better and to render a voice to injustices that are often silenced or unseen. Since the autoethnographic research method was new to me, I was initially sceptical as I did not fully understand its complex nature and felt that I was being sent “into the woods without a compass” (Ellis, 2004:120). As Ellis (ibid.) motivates, autoethnographers should deal with the uncertainty of the process so that sufficient time is taken to “wander around a bit and get the lay of the land” (ibid.). This was precisely how I proceeded. As a researcher, I was determined from the outset to be very much a part of this research as opposed to being distanced. In other words, I was comfortable with myself as the other (Spry, 2001:721). I wanted to use myself as a lens through which to understand a wider culture and the phenomenon of how women’s human rights are violated, as well as the multiple complexities that besiege them and convey a narrative that resonates with others, not only in the world of academe but with individuals from all walks of life who choose to read my autobiographical narrative. As Holman Jones (2005:765) summarises:

[A]utoethnography is setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation...and then letting it go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives.

In addition, using the autoethnographic method allowed me to enter into a discourse with the literature rather than just interpose my viewpoints into the lacunae in the literature. Also, putting pen to paper provided a sense of liberation as lived experiences essentially lie at the heart of autoethnography.

Wall’s (2008:48) argument that she undertook her project not to “heal or indulge myself” resonates with me. I was driven by the relentless conviction that it was critical for me to share my insights and experiences of human rights violations in education and women empowerment and to contribute to the body of scholarship. I aspired for readers to understand my position whilst questioning their own. I wanted to make them a part of the research process by telling my autobiographical narrative and allowing them to enter the intimacies of my world and to think about their own lives in relation to mine. Through writing my autobiographical narrative, critical concepts such as race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age came to the fore with bold

statements uttered. It was the useful tool of autoethnography that could allow me such freedom and nuances to explore.

Also, as an Indian woman, I discovered in autoethnography an unconventional approach that allowed for the raw intimacies of my world to be scrutinised, something that not many Indian women are yet comfortable with however it is important to note that there have been a few South African Indian scholars before me who have courageously journeyed this path (Perumal, 2004; Moodley, 2013).

For me, the advantages of autoethnography far out-weighed any of its disadvantages or criticisms. Whilst other research methods could have been employed, few could have allowed me to gain such an intimate understanding of my own life and the ways in which it relates to those of other women. Autoethnography allowed me to see myself anew and understand not only myself in deeper ways but others as well. Ultimately, this autoethnographic study provided me with an avenue to do something meaningful for myself and society (Ellis, 1999:672).

Although it is ultimately only the researcher who will ever genuinely know the personal advantages of an autoethnographic experience, the focus should rest not on this, but on what was learned from this study and how this study informs society of a) the value of women, b) the importance of a woman's voice and c) a deeper philosophical understanding of the word 'other'.

2.5 PHILOSOPHY: POSTSTRUCTURALIST FEMINIST DISCOURSE

Poststructuralism refers to a variety of theoretical perspectives that can be seen to deviate from the tenets of structuralism (Fawcett, 2008). Delanty and Strydom (2003:323) define poststructuralism as a method of deconstruction, the objective of which is to break up the established structures of thought – discourses, in particular those of the sciences – which sustain power relations. Weedon (1997) a feminist poststructuralist scholar views poststructuralism as a range of theoretical positions developed in and from the work of theorists such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Her view is that for poststructuralists, language constitutes social reality (ibid.). Poststructuralist thinking distinctly demonstrates that the very act of speaking about experience is to culturally and discursively constitute it (Maynard, 1994). In poststructuralist research practices, Fawcett (2008) maintains that emphasis is placed on identifying meanings that are context specific and that relate to the fluctuating discursive practices in operation.

It is important to note that while critical theory focuses on both the political and ideological aspects of society and is also emancipatory in nature in that it gives voice to marginalised

individuals and groups, it serves as an underpinning to poststructuralism. Since elements such as language, vocabulary and discourse were analysed in this study, using poststructuralism as a philosophy was most applicable.

In Weedon's (1997:20) view, what feminism brings to poststructuralism is the ability "to address the question of how social power is exercised and how social relations of gender, class and race might be transformed". Feminist thinking, however, draws on more than poststructuralist perspectives. In the context of liberal and radical feminism, for example, other discursive frameworks are required (Weedon, 1997). For Weedon (1997:20) poststructuralist feminism must address two fundamental concerns. Firstly, it needs to make political assumptions explicit by explaining assumptions underlying the questions asked and answered by other forms of feminist theory. Secondly, it needs to locate the social and institutional types of discourse derived from and augmented in feminism within poststructuralist and other frameworks. In order to produce a form of poststructuralism that can meet feminist needs, essential features of poststructuralist theory have to be recognised. Weedon (1997:40) further regards feminist poststructuralism as "a mode of knowledge production which uses poststructuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change". In other words this theory adopts the view that language is always socially and historically located in discourses; and that discourses represent political interest and these constantly compete for status and power.

Poststructuralist feminist perspectives emphasise the power and subjectivity embraced by the interaction of individuals within social, political and economic contexts and "analyses structures that lie behind or beneath things" (Johnston, 2006:187). Whilst language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organisation and their likely social and political consequences are defined and challenged, Weedon (1997:21) argues that it is also the same place in which our sense of self and our subjectivity are constructed. A key feature of feminist poststructuralism is deconstruction, which aims at setting up processes to demystify structures and expose them to inspection and analysis (Barrett, 2005:80). Accordingly, this notion directed me to the work of Jackson and Mazzei (2012) who by drawing on poststructuralist philosophers, employ the analytical process of "plugging in", using concepts such as deconstruction and the technique of "thinking with theory" across the data to illustrate how knowledge is opened up and bourgeoned. Employing the use of poststructuralist analytical processes and techniques produces many different readings of the text (Fawcett, 2008) hence similarly in the work of Jackson and Mazzei (2012:8), as the authors read the data, something different transpired in the moments of "plugging in". Adopting their approach, as I began to read my data (autobiographical narrative), I found it allowed for multiple and different readings of the texts to emerge thereby adding depth and profusion to the study.

As feminist poststructuralists explore what is mostly excluded from history, such as the lives and experiences of women as well as the silences that represent women and their lived experiences (Luke, 2011), this theory was well suited to the inclusion of my autobiographical narrative.

Considering that my intent in this study was to challenge the theories and add to the body of knowledge about women's empowerment from a critical perspective in current society through my own and other women's lived experiences, a poststructuralist feminist paradigm was most applicable as it extended critical theory and provided a lens that made it possible to recognise multiple ways of knowing, understanding, interpreting, making meaning and defining 'truths' in contrast to a narrow focus on rational and logical ways of knowing (Simmonds, 2013). Lastly, this theoretical paradigm served to outline my autoethnographical methodological framework, the theory of intersectionality and the method of data analysis implemented within this study.

Baxter's (2008) work on feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis (FPDA) remains largely a form of analysis however it does retain the underlying principles of poststructuralism and feminism and therefore complements my choice of philosophy. I employ Baxter's (2008) theory in this context not as an analytical tool but as a philosophical lens. At this point, I briefly explain how her theory on FPDA relates to my philosophy and further served to establish a transformative quest (Baxter, 2008).

Baxter's (2008) philosophy on FPDA, which is based on Weedon's (1997) theories of feminist poststructuralism was developed as a method of analysis in which Baxter (2008) sees FPDA as offering a distinctive theoretical and methodological approach for linguistic researchers. Instead of focusing on a 'critical' approach to discourse analysis, she argues that FPDA is "an approach to analysing intertextualised discourses in spoken interaction and other types of text. It draws upon the poststructuralist principles of complexity, plurality, ambiguity, connection, recognition, diversity, textual playfulness, functionality, and transformation" (Baxter, 2008:245). The 'feminist' aspect of FPDA considers 'gender difference' to be a predominant discourse among other discourses when analysing all kinds of text. Baxter (2008:246) maintains that FPDA has three key propositions:

- FPDA does not have an emancipatory agenda but a transformative quest. So, in relation to gender and language studies, FPDA challenges ways in which modernist thinking tends to structure thoughts in oppositional pairs, positioning one term over the other
- FPDA believes in complexity as opposed to polarisation of subjects of study. In other words males are not polarised as villains nor are females polarised as victims in any

oppositional sense but argues that female subject positions are complex, shifting and multiply located

- FPDA is anti-materialist in tendency denoting that social realities are always discursively produced and from the moment of our birth, we enter a social world that is infused by competing discourses

For the purposes of this study, Baxter's (2008) FPDA in conjunction with Weedon's (1997) theory of poststructuralism formed the philosophical lens (poststructuralist feminist discourse) through which this study was undertaken.

2.6 DATA GENERATION: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE

Riessman (2002) states that in a recent reflexive turn, in which researchers acknowledge that they are actors in their own study, scholars in autoethnography and other disciplines are creating their own narratives, connecting their biographies to their research materials. Labov (1972:359) defines narrative as "one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which is believed to have occurred". Through the use of autobiographical narratives, individuals define themselves via their own voice to connect the present with the past and the future (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007:17). Denzin (1989) suggests that autobiographical narratives shape how lives are told and create real appearances of real people. They entail suppositions of culture, family, class and gender; the position of authors and observers as well as the supposition that honest statements are distinguished from fictions. He further suggests that meaning derives from the interaction between writers, readers and the text (Denzin, 1989:17).

In terms of its structure, a narrative of personal experience is regarded as complete when there is a beginning, middle and an end. The chronological sequence of events is a crucial ingredient in any narrative. Labov (1972:360) identifies six structural elements in the narratives he studied: abstract (what is the story about), orientation (who, when, where), complicating action (then what happened), evaluation (so what), resolution or result (what finally happened) and coda (signs off the narrative as it returns to the present time of the telling to give the 'floor' to the hearer). However, he observes that while some of these elements are optional, the most important thing is that in narrations, the sequence of narrative clauses must match the sequence of events as they occur. As such, a close study of fully formed narratives should depict a well-formed structural pattern showing these six elements.

In this study, I presented an autobiographical narrative as the data generating instrument. I chose this approach because of its capacity to speak a universal language that can traverse

generational and cultural boundaries. For the purposes of this study, I drew merely on the elements of Labov's (1972) technical structure and not on his methods of analyses. Whilst the autobiographical narrative encompassed Labov's six structural elements it does not strictly adhere to them. It does however, include Labov's schema and consists of a chronological sequence of events (Andrews *et al.*, 2013:29). Elements such as race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age together with other social complexities were constituted within this autobiographical narrative. By means of an autobiographical narrative, the reader could be placed in the shoes of the narrator and hence allowed the reader to enter the moment of the experience being described. Furthermore, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000:181) assert, "life experience is complex and contradictory, and narrative is well suited to expressing that complexity and contradiction".

2.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) use various theoretical perspectives that can be characterised as belonging to a poststructuralist framework through which to analyse data and push against the interpretivist traditional methods of analysis. These authors maintain that data interpretation and analysis do not occur via mechanistic coding, thematising and writing up transparent narratives which inadequately critique the complexities of social life as such simplistic approaches preclude dense and multilayered handling of data. These authors challenge qualitative researchers to use theory to think with their data and use data to think with theory, a process they term "plugging in" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) as through this method, we situate ourselves at the threshold between theory and data. Furthermore, "the consequence of thinking with theory across the data exemplifies how knowledge is opened up and proliferated rather than foreclosed and simplified" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012:vii).

For the purpose of analysing the data generated in the research, I used the "plugging in" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) method as this approach enabled multiple perspectives to emerge from the data and entailed three manoeuvres:

- 1) disrupting the theory/practice binary by decentering each and instead showing how they constitute or make one another; 2) being transparent in what analytical questions are used and how these questions are used to think with emerge in the middle of plugging in; and 3) repeatedly working the same data chunks thereby creating new knowledge and showing the suppleness of both theory and data when plugged in. (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012: 5)

Consequently what is practiced is a flattening of attentiveness to how each constitutes the other and how each, as supple, emerges as something new in the threshold (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

Jackson and Mazzei (2012:5) argue that instead of using theoretical frameworks it can be useful to draw more specifically on theorists or more concrete specific concepts. They contend that drawing on different theorists and concepts, makes it possible to challenge simplistic treatments of data and traps that make researchers sacrifice complexity in their analysis. In line with this assertion, I framed my analysis for this study in the theory of intersectionality. As a theory, intersectionality can be used to analyse how social and cultural categories interlock (Knudsen, 2006:61) and also provides poststructural theorists with an opportunity to demonstrate that their theoretical understanding can be applied to enhance the lives of women, while retaining their stance on the construction of identity (Davis, 2008). In addition, McCall's (2005:1774) intra-categorical intersectional approach which is further discussed in Chapter 3 uses marginalised intersectional identities as an analytical point of departure in order to reveal the complexity of lived experience within such groups. Therefore, by employing the theory of intersectionality, I was able to plug the data of my autobiographical narrative into this theory which resulted in new and multiple ways of analysing and understanding the data thereby inviting complexity as opposed to sacrificing it. As intersectionality emphasises the complexity of women's lived experiences, by dissecting these experiences through "plugging in" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) the data of my autobiographical narrative, it reveals and demonstrates the multifariousness, and aims to accentuate the injustices and enhance the lives of other women. In addition, in the course of "plugging in" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) the theory and the data, the texts constitute one another and in so doing, new ways of thinking about both theory and data are created.

"Plugging in" to create something new was a constant, continuous process of making and unmaking (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012:1). The assemblage which is the process of making and unmaking required the method of arranging, organising and fitting together. Ultimately, the application of the "plugging in" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) method provided new ways of thinking, analysing and conducting research and moved my understanding of doing qualitative research along new trajectories.

2.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND ETHICS

Trustworthiness, as Nieuwenhuis (2007:113) asserts, is of paramount importance in qualitative research. Riessman (2000:22) contends that trustworthiness of narratives cannot be evaluated by applying conventional correspondence criteria. There is no canonical approach to validation in interpretive work, no techniques or formulae that will ensure this (ibid.). To ensure trustworthiness is imbued in this research, the testimony I present in the autobiographical narrative can be traced to factual evidence and accuracy, such as documentation, as Bochner (2002:86) asserts that a narrator's described experiences should comprise of factual evidence. In addition, Riessman (2000:23) states that "narratives are not suitable for studies of

considerable numbers of nameless, faceless subjects". As the author of my autobiographical narrative, I did not assume a pseudonym or fictitious persona but instead took ownership and responsibility by making my identity visible and employing an authentic voice throughout the autobiographical narrative. Aguirre (2005:150) corroborates that it is the character of the personal narrative that makes it valuable as a method for grasping everyday life as it provides essence to the narrative and identity to the narrator. The subjectivity of the personal narrative has caused some critics to argue that it is dubious since it does not fit conventional methods that can be used to evaluate its validity and that the narrator is perceived as a potential source of bias (Baron, 1998:63). However, I would argue that the subjectivity I employed to interpret my lived experience, combined with the understanding I have about who and where I am, allowed me to create an autobiographical narrative that captures a lived, and living experience; an experience that garners cores of truthfulness when others can identify a part or whole of their own lived experience in the narrative (Aguirre, 2005:150).

To ensure trustworthiness in the process of analysing the data, I employed the strategies advocated by Jackson and Mazzei (2012:31) by revisiting the data repeatedly consequently compelling me to attend not simply to themes and patterns within the autobiographical narrative but also "those places of inconsistency, uncertainty and of productive rending". Using Richardson's (1994:522) concept of crystallisation enabled me to shift from viewing something as a "fixed, rigid, two-dimensional object" to seeing it as a crystal, which allows for an "infinite variety of shapes, substance, transmutations, multidimensionalities and angles of approach". Crystallisation thus provided a more complex, deeper understanding of the phenomenon and strengthened the trustworthiness of the data analysis in the research study.

Ethics has become the cornerstone of effectual and meaningful research (Kour, 2014:133) therefore adhering to ethical standards is a critical ingredient in the research process. The use of autoethnographic (personal experience) methods is justified through the acknowledgement that individuals do not exist apart from their social context. The intricate connection between the personal and the social domain makes it impossible for me to speak of myself without also mentioning others which creates an ethical conundrum (Wall, 2008:49). Consequently, researchers have the obligation to ensure that they acknowledge and protect the rights and general well-being of their participants, irrespective of the nature of their research (Kour, 2014). Given that there was no empirical research with human subjects or participants in this study, ethical clearance was not sought however in order to meet the requirements of ethical research, the name of the institution and the identity of individuals were not disclosed in my autobiographical narrative. This was executed to ensure confidentiality and the anonymity of the individuals concerned. In addition, pseudonyms that were analogous to each individual's ethnicity were used.

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on the research design, methodologies and processes used to achieve the objectives of the study, which were to explore the extent to which the human right to education navigates women's access to education towards social and economic empowerment by questioning the human right of access to education and the underlying assumptions grounding it. It began with a discourse on autoethnography as the selected methodological framework and then progressed to a discussion on poststructuralist feminist discourse as the most appropriate research paradigm relevant to this study. The chapter also elaborated on the generation of data, with particular attention paid to my autobiographical narrative, and the analysis of the data and the process used to describe and examine it. The chapter then concluded with a discussion of the measures taken to enhance the study's trustworthiness and the ethical issues that were pertinent to the study.

A detailed review of the literature is presented in the next chapter of this research study.

CHAPTER THREE

ENCOUNTERING DIFFERENT PLANETS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This review of the literature provides a discourse on human rights and its founding democratic virtues. As access to education is a fundamental human right, South African legislation, in particular, the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a), is critically analysed to determine its role in mobilising and empowering women within the educational and socio-economic context. The theoretical framework well suited for this study is shaped by Crenshaw's (1989:139) theory of intersectionality which analyses how identity and various social and cultural categories intermesh hence providing a broad lens for my autoethnographical study.

Whilst Knudsen (2006:61) maintains that in the intersectionality theory, dynamic associations between various categories are examined, I have selected four specific categories (race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age) for further examination, as these categories form the quintessence of my autobiographical narrative and lends enhancement to the complexities of intersectionality. Further to this, these categories are unpacked to understand their meaning in relation to the core democratic virtues.

Ultimately, the aim of this chapter is to unpack women's positionality in society, particularly within the spheres of education and socio-economic empowerment, in terms of what new and existing legislation accords them on paper compared to the lived experiences of women (still entrenched within a patriarchal society despite 20 years of democracy) when the various categories of intersectionality traverse at the crossroads.

3.2 HUMAN RIGHTS

The concept of human rights accentuates that all human beings are entitled to certain standards of treatment and freedoms, affirming their moral equality. For the purpose of this study, I frame my analysis and discussion of human rights based on Vasak's (1977) theory of second generation rights which is grounded in the precepts of equality and socio-economic rights. *The United Nations Human Rights System* (United Nations, 2008a) declares that human rights are rights inherent to all human beings irrespective of their nationality, place of residence, sex, gender, national or ethnic origin, race, religion, language or age and military status. Every individual is equally entitled to their human rights without any form of discrimination. These rights are all "interrelated, interdependent and indivisible" (United Nations, 2008a:v).

The United Nations Charter (United Nations, 1945) and the subsequent UDHR (United Nations, 1948) include within it the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom (as keywords) in its preamble. As a foundational, constituent treaty, all member states are bound by the articles in the Charter (United Nations, 1945). Article 103 in Chapter 16 of the Charter (United Nations, 1945) states that obligation to the United Nations prevails over all other obligations under other international treaties. As South Africa is a member state of the United Nations, it is compelled to abide by the treaty. It is not perplexing then that South Africa adopted the same virtues in its Constitution (South Africa, 1996a).

The Bill of Rights (South Africa, 1996b), which is enshrined in the South African Constitution (South Africa, 1996a), asserts the rights of all individuals and is the cornerstone of the new democratic dispensation in South Africa, born after the abolition of apartheid in 1994. The virtues averred in Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) identifies human dignity, equality and freedom as founding democratic virtues and enjoins the State to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights declared in the Bill of Rights (South Africa, 1996b). Hoffman (2013) of the Institute for Accountability of Southern Africa argues that the notion that every individual has inherent dignity and the right to have that human dignity respected and protected, denotes a complete break with the discriminatory core of the apartheid era. There is no human dignity in exclusion and being discriminated against in any manner.

3.3 HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONNOTATIONS OF THE CORE DEMOCRATIC VIRTUES

In line with the purpose of this study, it is crucial to grasp the concept of human rights and the connotations of the core virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom. For this objective, it is important to note that definitions of these core virtues are not without their challenges (Fuo, 2011:6).

Vasak (1977) advanced the theory of three generations of human rights: civil-political, socio-economic and collective developmental. The division of human rights into three generations and their respective categories align with the three tenets of the French Revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity. First generation rights deal with freedom (liberty) and refer fundamentally to civil and political rights that protect individuals from state power. These rights include protection from proscribed discrimination, freedom of speech and freedom of religion, for example (Vasak, 1977). Second generation rights pertain to equality and encompass economic, social and cultural rights. They ensure the right to education, the right to be employed and the right to equal working conditions amongst others (Vasak, 1977). Third generation rights are collective rights and relate to the principles of fraternity. They comprise of a wide-ranging class of rights that have obtained recognition in international covenants and

treaties, but have attracted more debate than the preceding types (Twiss, 2004:40). No single generation can be accentuated to the exclusion of others without endangering individuals and communities over time, including endangering the very interest represented in the type or generation of rights being privileged (Twiss, 1998:276). For the purpose of this study, I focused specifically on second generation rights which encompass social rights and pledge the human right to education.

3.3.1 Human dignity

As the South African Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) is based on a liberal framework, I have elected to use the work of Kant and Locke in my discourse on human rights as they are liberal philosophers and theorise from a liberalist approach.

The modern concept of human dignity and its foundational role in moral thought can be owed to the work of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (Christiano, 2008:1). Kant's work in *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), which was translated by Thomas Abbott in 1883, asserts that human dignity is a "quality of intrinsic, absolute value, above any price, thus excluding any equivalence". In other words, anything that retains a price can be substituted by or exchanged for something else that is its equivalent, whilst anything that is beyond price can concede no equivalence as it holds intrinsic value. It necessitates that all human beings be treated as an end and not a means. Schachter (1983) concurs with the views of Kant (1785) in that he perceives human dignity as a term that describes the intrinsic worth of a human being and demands that this intrinsic worth be respected. Based on the premise of these suppositions, it can be enunciated that human dignity is sacrosanct and must be venerated.

Whilst Glensy (2011:67) maintains that "human dignity is a capacious concept, the basis of human dignity can be said to lie in the autonomy of self and a self-worth that is reflected in every human being's right to individual self-determination". For Schachter (1983) the concept of human dignity encompasses an ethical fibre and surpasses a rigid legalistic conception. Chaskalson (2000) contends that respect for human dignity and all that emanates from it, is a characteristic of life itself and not a concession granted by the state. Central tenets of human dignity include prominence on the will and consent of the governed, substantial equality, freedom, individual and shared accountability (solidarity) and distributive justice (Schachter, 1983). Sharing similar sentiments is Réaume (2003:667) who asserts that human dignity implies a right to autonomy, self-determination, self-respect and self-worth which is also related to integrity and empowerment. Every individual should accordingly be entitled to their own choices, beliefs, attitudes, ideas, preferences and feelings. Violation of human rights occurs when individuals or groups are marginalised (Réaume, 2003), dehumanised or subjected to

degrading and humiliating treatment such as torture, rape, social exclusion, labour exploitation and slavery (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2011:3).

Without the virtue of human dignity, none of the protections offered in the various human rights legislations can have bona fide meaning. Within a democratic society, the criticality of human dignity cannot be underrated (Glensy, 2011:68).

3.3.2 Equality

As a founding Constitutional virtue, equality is explicitly stated alongside human dignity and freedom. Dworkin (2000:2) asserts that equality is a contested concept in that “people who praise it or disparage it disagree about what they are praising or disparaging”. MacNaughton (2009) concurs with the views of Dworkin as she asserts that the principle of equality is central to human rights yet its meaning continues to be extensively debated. Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:37) define equality as a state or condition of being the same, particularly in terms of social status or legal/political rights. On the other hand, Gosepath (2011) asserts that equality implies similarity rather than ‘sameness’ and signifies correspondence between a group/cluster of different objects, persons, processes or circumstances that have the same qualities in at least one respect but not necessarily all respects.

In Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government* (1690) human equality is fundamental to his political theory. Locke (1690) postulates that “there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection”. He further posits in section 2.6 (1690) that because human equality is paramount, “no one ought to harm another in their life, health, liberty or possessions”.

Ascribed in section 9 of the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) it explicates that (1) everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law and (2) equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. Whilst equality is laudably noted in the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) and given prominence, Wiecek (2007:233) states that the meaning of equality as a constitutional virtue remains “disputed, disparaged and even denied today”. Wiecek’s (2007:234) views on equality fit neatly into the South African context in that he perceives equality as having a “race-transcendent” status before the law in which all people are under the law’s discipline and may claim the law’s protection. Equality advocates that every individual should enjoy the same human rights and prospects as other individuals, neither increased nor reduced because of the racial category assigned to them

(Fuo, 2011). As a virtue, equality should not be merely formal or ostensible but rather legitimate (Wiecek, 2007).

In essence, equality prevents the gravest profusions of discrimination and acknowledges that human beings, by virtue of being human, should be treated with the same amount of respect and dignity.

3.3.3 Freedom

The concept of freedom is often varied and contentious in its definitions, being largely dependent on the philosophical, ideological and social backgrounds of individuals (MacCallum, 1991). Nikolai Berdyaev, for instance, often regarded as the philosopher of freedom, argues that freedom predates existence hence placing the concept of freedom on the uppermost metaphysical level. He asserts his interpretation of freedom as:

Freedom is my independence and the defining of myself from the inside and freedom is my creative force, not the choice between the good and evil that I am faced with but my creation of good and evil. The situation of choice itself can cause the feeling of oppression, indecisiveness, or even the feeling of absence of freedom. The liberation comes when the choice is made and I move along my creative path. (Berdyaev, 1991)

According to Kant's (1785:63) interpretation of freedom, "will is a kind of causality of human beings insofar as they are rational" and freedom would be a product of such causality that it can be independently efficient of "foreign causes" determining it. Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* (1690) argues that in the state of nature, human beings are "perfectly free to order their actions and dispose of their possessions themselves, in any way they choose, without seeking anyone's permission".

Kant (1785) is critical of liberalism on the ground that the ability to act on one's choices with minimal external constraint is essential but not an adequate condition of freedom. In other words, for a woman to execute her choice or will, experiencing minimum external restrictions is necessary but in itself not a sufficient condition of freedom. Paradoxically, it is the minimal external restrictions that shape the space between their human rights and their empowerment.

For Kant (1785) the notion of freedom is inseparably connected with the concept of autonomy and he argues that freedom not only requires that individuals be permitted to act in accordance with their choices but also that individuals themselves are authentically responsible for those choices.

While Kant's (1785) views on freedom seem straightforward, de Beauvoir (2010), from a feminist perspective, refutes them, arguing that although a woman is a "free and autonomous being like all human creatures still she finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other".

With the meanings of these core virtues explained, it beckons for an understanding into its applicability in practice, in the various ambits of multiple dynamic intersections and this will be unpacked through an intersectional lens later in this chapter. Access to education remains a fundamental human right yet with several existing national and international legislations in place, this human right is still being repudiated and violated and therefore summons a deeper examination of the complexities of this phenomenon. I begin this discourse with the notion of education rights and subsequently analyse the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) in its capacity (or lack thereof) to mobilise women in the space between their human right to education and socio-economic empowerment.

3.4 THE HUMAN RIGHT TO EDUCATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE WEGE BILL

The three most elemental virtues in any accessible and democratic society are human dignity, equality and freedom (Goolam, 2000:1). This trinity of virtues should be central to the protection, promotion and flow of all other human rights. One of several rights conferred on human beings is the right to education which is a fundamental human right and essential for the exercise of all other human rights. It advocates individual freedom and empowerment and concedes important development benefits (UNESCO, 2014). Education is a powerful tool by which individuals who are economically and socially marginalised can elevate themselves out of complexities and participate fully as citizens (UNESCO 2014).

While the human right to education is informed by both national and international legislation, masses of individuals remain deprived of educational opportunities. Although the human right to education is clearly affirmed in the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) as a country, it is also failing to educate *for* human rights which essentially forms part of the human right to education (du Preez, 2012:53). The objective of the recent WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) is to establish a legislative framework and introduce measures to promote gender equality and women empowerment, which is pursuant to section 9 of the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a). Although such legislation might be deemed as a welcome step for a country grappling to accord its women their constitutionally-guaranteed rights, the potential of the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) as a powerful instrument for meaningful change is improbable. A statement released by the Portfolio Committee on Women, Children and People with Disabilities (Parliament, 2014) asserts that the adoption of the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) "marks yet another important

step towards the actualisation of the empowerment of women as well as the strengthening of existing equality laws". However, the WEGE Bill (ibid.) has provoked intense and near universal criticism from women's rights organisations. Many individuals declared that the provisions of the statute were "paltry and insignificant in the face of the vast injustices perpetrated against women on a daily basis" (Bliss, 2014).

In theory, South Africa does not fall short of penning an array of progressive legislations however, the notating of the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) and its applications fail its central audience; i.e. women. In a submission letter to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on the release of the WEGE Bill (ibid.) by the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities (henceforth DWCPD), the human rights and social justice organisation, Sonke Gender Justice (henceforth SGJ) (2014) highlighted their concerns regarding the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) and the gaps they had identified within it. Firstly as the foundation of the WEGE Bill (ibid.) seeks to promote gender equality and women empowerment, rural women along with other groups of marginalised women within our society who are disadvantaged due to deprivation of education, unemployment, poverty and disability were not adequately consulted during the process of drafting the WEGE Bill (ibid.). For the clauses of the WEGE Bill (ibid.) to be tangible and applied in practice, women at the core of marginalisation should be given the opportunity to voice their lived experiences, as it is only then that the execution of the WEGE Bill (ibid.) can realise. In addition, taking into account that the DWCPD who drafted the WEGE Bill (ibid.) is under-resourced (Davis, 2013), there is a high possibility that they may not have the necessary resources to optimally enforce and implement the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) and attain its objectives. In her editorial, Davis (2013) reveals that the Portfolio Committee tasked with monitoring the DWCPD compiled a damning report for Parliament wherein minutes of the meeting distinguishes them as a department mired in complete inertia and mismanagement, demonstrated by the physical conditions of its offices to its substandard reporting on important data. To exacerbate the situation, an article by Bailey (2014) reports that a series of irregularities and alleged corruption that occurred in the DWCPD when it was spearheaded by the former minister Lulu Xingwana, is being probed by the Public Service Commission. With such evidence brought to light, it does not augur well for the implementation of the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a). If anything, it solicits the question: Can the marginalised in our society who endure daily struggles, have confidence in such a department to successfully execute its vision or the clauses of the WEGE Bill (ibid.) that it penned?

Whilst the assertions prescribed in the WEGE Bill (ibid.) bear noble intentions, close scrutiny of Chapter 2 of the WEGE Bill (ibid.) which deals with the segment of education and training, section 4 (1) reveals that:

Designated public bodies and designated private bodies must develop and implement plans and measures in compliance with applicable legislation and international agreements, to—

(a) address the pervasive discriminatory patriarchal attitudes and the lingering effects of apartheid faced by women in the education system

Whereas this declaration sounds commendable, it is correspondingly vague. Given all the previous progressive statutes aimed at advancing women's rights that have since become paperbound, measures to address the above declaration should be clearly stated, rather than being assigned to designated public and private bodies that are not necessarily aware of or identify with the injustices experienced by women. Most often than not, it is men who are steeped in patriarchal traditions and attitudes that are tasked with developing and implementing such measures. How successful can such measures be when left solely in the hands of individuals who are oblivious to the plights and complexities of marginalised women in our society?

Subsection (b) states that designated bodies should educate and train women in order to achieve the progressive realisation of equitable and sustainable development for women and gender equality however through my lived experience of wanting to educate and train myself further in accordance with existing policy i.e. the ELRC Policy Handbook for Educators (Brunton, 2003), it made me cognisant of the fact that there is a difference between theory and practice. I was faced with prejudice, discrimination and practices which sought to deny me my human right to education and which is in direct conflict with subsection (e) of this section of the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) which asserts that:

Designated public bodies and designated private bodies must develop and implement plans and measures in compliance with applicable legislation and international agreements, to—

(e) eliminate prejudices and current practices that hinder the achievement and enjoyment of gender equality and social cohesion

There needs to be a parallel declaration that accentuates the prejudices and current practices that hinder the achievement and enjoyment of gender equality and social cohesion and the kind of protection women should be afforded in situations where their human rights are being violated. Enough is said in theory as to how generously women's human rights are catered for in legislations however there is limited legislation that deals specifically with women whose human rights are infringed upon.

Subsections (a) (b) and (c) all cite the achievement of progressive realisation pertaining to education access and training. Firstly, the *United Nations fact sheet* 33 of 2008 (United

Nations, 2008b), defines economic, social and cultural rights as those human rights pertaining to the workplace, social security, family life, participation in cultural life and access to housing, food, water, health care, and education and failure to protect these rights can have severe consequences. In other words, failing to protect a woman's human right to education will increase her chances of unemployment or unequal representation in the workforce as she will not have the required skills to either find employment or advance in her career. Furthermore, denial of these human rights can lead to violation of other human rights and are among the core causes of conflict and if the systematic discrimination and inequities in the enjoyment of these human rights are not addressed, it will only lead to further conflict (United Nations, 2008b:4). The *fact sheet* (United Nations, 2008b) further clarifies that progressive realisation connotes a central aspect of a member state's obligation to ensure economic, social and cultural rights. The member states are obligated to take appropriate measures towards the full realisation of the above rights to the maximum of their available resources (ibid.). In addition, "resource availability" reflects the recognition that the attainment of these rights can be hampered by a lack of resources and can only be achieved over a period of time (ibid.). Similarly, it means that the member state's compliance with its obligations to fulfil these measures is evaluated in the light of financial and other resources available to it. Paradoxically, whilst the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) aims to empower women socially and economically and is subject to progressive realisation measured through financial resources, the South African Reserve Bank (2014) recorded the country's gross external debt for the third quarter of 2014 as reaching an all-time high of 142,314 USD Million. This only magnifies the injustices already experienced by women as clearly the financial state of affairs in the country is so adverse ultimately impacting on resource availability.

A significant point to mention is the recent ratification of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (United Nations, 1966) by the South African government which allows them to honour their international obligations and take the necessary steps to promote socio-economic rights. In response, the United Nations said that it hoped that "the Government of the Republic of South Africa will give progressive effect to the right to education, as provided for in Article 13 (2) (a) and Article 14, within the framework of its National Education Policy and available resources" (SAHRC, 2015b). As the ICESCR (United Nations, 1966) cites progressive realisation and taking into consideration the country's current financial woes, it only adds to the anecdote of making yet another important piece of legislation futile.

Chapter 3 of the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) pertains to the equal representation and the empowerment of women with sections 7 to 12 hereto dealing with equal representation and participation, gender mainstreaming, empowering women and eliminating discrimination,

economic empowerment and socio-economic empowerment respectively. Whilst the WEGE Bill (ibid.) aims to ensure 50% representation of women in all decision-making assemblies in both government and private entities, the WEGE Bill (ibid.) does not cater for marginalised women but rather women in political parties or occupying senior management positions.

Chapter 4 of the WEGE Bill (ibid.) pertains to the authority that the Minister of the DWCPD holds with regard to governance and the promotion of women empowerment and the achievement of substantive gender equality for women. One avenue mentioned in achieving this objective is through the development of frameworks and plans by designated public and private bodies. Whilst this segment of the WEGE Bill (ibid.) may have been well-intentioned yet again it fails to address clearly how and when these frameworks and plans are to be implemented and by whom. In other words, would the people assigned to this task identify with the oppression that marginalised women endure?

There is yet another criticism to be made. The WEGE Bill (ibid.) merely duplicates the functions and provisions of existing legislation like the Employment Equity Act (55 of 1998) and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (4 of 2000). Vetten (2014) succinctly summarises the above perspectives when she states that the real conundrum of the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) is its “replication of existing rights and protections to some women – as it simultaneously neglects the equality rights of other groups of women”.

SGJ (2014) argued in their public comments to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee, that for the WEGE Bill's (South Africa, 2014a) objectives to be achieved, it must strive to effectively address patriarchy and structural unfair gender discrimination in order to address its diverse manifestations that maintain gender inequality in South Africa.

What I find most perplexing about the WEGE Bill (ibid.) is the grand assertions contained herein with a negligent rapid ascent from the social development chapter to the equal representation and empowerment chapter without any consideration for the complexities that confront women in the space between these two spheres. There seems to be an assumption amongst government bodies that advocate human rights and equality that if a woman is accorded human rights, that in itself is ‘triumphant’ and will automatically lead to her empowerment. This logic is precarious and in complete contrast with the lived experience of marginalised women who encounter multiple forms of intersecting oppressions.

In addition, the WEGE Bill (ibid.) does not address the traditional or religious practices that perpetuate women's inequality. The perplexity of the WEGE Bill (ibid.), which was penned by women for women, is that women are perceived as a homogenous group who experience the

same forms of discrimination whereas in reality, women experience various forms of discrimination and solutions need to be provided that would be tailored to these differences. It is a precarious misconception to view that all women experience the same forms of oppression as hooks (1984) asserts that the forms of oppression experienced by white middle-class women are not the same as those oppressions experienced by black², poor or disabled women. hooks (2000:27) further posits that when the experiences of all women are perceived as the same, feminism is regarded as a “white, bourgeois heterosexual female contention”.

Furthermore, as I mentioned in my analysis of the segment pertaining to education and training, the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) fails to establish adequate measures to make significant changes to the realities of the daily struggles and the human rights violations faced by the majority of South African women. As bold as some of the assertions in the WEGE Bill (ibid.) seem to be, I view it as yet another fancy paperbound collection (intended to make women feel empowered) but will be ineffectually implemented consequently rendering itself ineffective.

Further to this, the WEGE Bill (ibid.) inadequately addresses the root causes of gender inequality and neglects to acknowledge and address the compounded effect of intersectional discrimination. This brings me to the theory of intersectionality and its applicability to this study.

3.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: INTERSECTIONALITY

The concept of intersectionality can be traced back as far as 1851 when Sojourner Truth, an enslaved woman orated a speech at a women’s rights convention in Ohio, titled ‘Ain’t I a Woman?’ in which she insinuated that all too often ‘woman’ actually implied ‘white woman’ (Salami, 2012). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s scholars such as Angela Davis (1983) and bell hooks (1984) debated the dimensions of race, class, gender, sexuality and sexism. When Crenshaw (1989:139) formulated the term intersectionality, she was criticising work that treated race and gender as exclusive parts of the human experience and consequently ignored black women’s experiences. Her analysis purported to highlight that black women’s experiences of oppression differed from those of white women, whose main focus was on gendered discrimination and also from those of black men, who focused primarily on racial subjugation (Salami, 2012). Thus, according to Roseberry (2010) intersectionality, as a poststructuralist approach demonstrates how black women can become an identity category

² 'Black' and 'black' as well as 'White' and 'white' are used interchangeably in this study. 'Black', 'White', 'Indian' and 'Coloured' constitute a specific racial group in South Africa. As such, these terms require denotation as a proper noun. However, where the word 'black' or 'white' appears in lowercase, it is in keeping with the author's words or views.

that is subjected to particular forms of discrimination that disadvantage and hinder them in ways that the categories 'white women' and 'black men' do not.

The multiracial feminist movement which was led by women of colour contested the idea that women were a homogenous category sharing essentially the same life experiences (Thompson, 2002:337). This line of reasoning stemmed from the awareness that white middle-class women did not serve as a precise representation of the feminist movement overall. McCall (2005:1771) argues that the establishment of the intersectionality theory was vital to sociology claiming that prior to its development there was insufficient research that specifically addressed the experiences of individuals who are subjected to multiple forms of subordination within society.

3.5.1 Discourses in intersectional theories

Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group tries to navigate the main crossing in the city. The main highway is 'racism road'. One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street. ..She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression. (as cited by Crenshaw in Yuval-Davis, 2006:196)

Intersectionality, a conception that subjectivity is initiated by mutually strengthening categories of race, gender, class, sexuality and sexism, and age, "has emerged as the primary theoretical tool designed to contest feminist hierarchy, hegemony and exclusivity" (Nash, 2008:1). Intersectionality accentuates the 'multidimensionality' of marginalised subjects' lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1989:139). It stems from feminist sociological theory and helps to explain how systematic social inequality is impacted by the interaction of multiple and simultaneous levels of various biological, social and cultural categories, including various axes of identity such as race, gender, class, age, ability, and sexual orientation (Knudsen, 2006:61). For Knudsen (ibid.) intersectionality as a theory can be used "to analyse how social and cultural categories intertwine" (ibid.). She further posits that intersectionality entails more than gender research; the researching of differences between women and men and the diversities within women's groups or within men's groups but rather "intersectionality tries to catch the relationships between socio-cultural categories and identities" (ibid.).

McCall (2005:1771) emphasises the importance of intersectionality, calling it "the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, have made so far". From its establishment, intersectionality has had an enduring interest in one specific intersection: the intersection of race and gender (Nash, 2008). To that end, intersectionality discards the 'single-axis framework' often adopted by both feminist and anti-

racist scholars (ibid.). Instead it analyses “the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women’s [experiences]” (Crenshaw, 1991:1244).

McCall (2005:1771) states that despite the emergence of intersectionality as a major paradigm of research in women’s studies and other disciplines, there has been modicum of debate of how to study intersectionality, in particular, its methodology. McCall (2005:1773) analyses three distinct intersectional methodological approaches, namely anti-categorical complexity, intra-categorical complexity and inter-categorical complexity.

The first approach is based on a methodology that deconstructs analytical categories and commences from the theoretical supposition that categories, including race and gender, are too one-dimensional to encapsulate the complexity of lived experience (McCall, 2005:1776). The second approach takes marginalised intersectional identities as an analytic launching point in an attempt to expose the complexity of lived experience within such groups (McCall, 2005:1774). The third approach requires researchers to conditionally accept current analytical categories to record relationships of inequality among social groups and changing constructions of inequality along various and contradictory dimensions (McCall, 2005:1773).

For the purposes of this study, I have drawn specifically on the intra-categorical methodological approach as it is qualitative in nature and centres on particular social groups and analyses the complexity of lived experiences in these groups (Baer *et al.*, 2010:3; McCall 2005). In addition, I have selected to examine the following categories: race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age as they encapsulate the core nuances of my autobiographical narrative. Lastly, I analyse each of these categories from a human rights perspective to determine their meaning in terms of the founding democratic virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom.

3.6 CATEGORIES OF INTERSECTIONALITY APPLICABLE TO THIS RESEARCH STUDY

In this section, the categories of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age are unpacked to demonstrate their intersection at various junctures, as interlocking systems of oppression. In addition, the dynamic intersections of these categories illustrate the multiple and compounded layers of oppression that marginalised women in society experience.

3.6.1 Race³

The concept of race, as Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:132) posit, is the subject of extensive debate. Cornell and Hartman (1998:23) postulate that “races, like ethnic groups, are not established by some set of natural forces but are products of human perception and classification ... a race is a group of human beings socially defined on the basis of physical characteristics”. The notion that the human population consists of a number of biologically different groups is referred to as the ‘common sense’ approach in which a person’s bodily appearance and particularly their skin colour are often regarded as determining their membership of a racial group (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004).

For Mason (1994), race and racism are inextricably linked. With the increased understanding of genetics by the middle of the twentieth century, it was established that there was no scientific basis for the concept of race. Yet despite the evidence that races in the biological sense did not exist, significant sections of the population and whole societies continued to conduct themselves as though they did (Mason, 2000:7).

Within the South African context, where race has permeated every level of social discourse, during the apartheid regime which was preceded by centuries of colonialism and slavery, the government used a “Biculturalism” understanding of race which viewed the ontology of race as a mixture of culture, class, appearance and biology (Posel, 2001:59), to categorise individuals into racial groups. The four racial categories that a South African belonged to was either: White, Coloured, Indian or Black and these were consequently used to classify individuals who were then either privileged or disadvantaged on the basis of their skin colour. Since an individual’s racial heritage was at times ambiguous, a variety of tests were implemented to determine the boundary between white and non-white (Posel, 2001:65) and to aid authorities in classifying individuals accordingly. One such test was the “pencil test” (Watson, 2007:65) which entailed the sliding of a pencil or pen into the hair of the individual whose racial group was unclear. If the pencil fell to the floor, this indicated that the individual “passed” and was classified as white. If, however, the pencil stuck to the individual’s hair, their hair was considered too curly to be that of a white and the individual was classified as coloured (having a mixed racial heritage). The “eyelid test” and “nail test” was also used as well as the examination of genitalia (Posel, 2001). For non-white women, their pubic mound was examined as a bodily signifier for the purposes of racial classification.

³ As the concept of ethnicity is complex, for the purposes of this study, I have limited my discourse to the social category of race and people who were classified according to race within the South African context.

Although twenty years into a democracy, race continues to function as a dividing factor culturally, politically, socially and economically in South Africa and still has a profound impact on the manner in which people self-identify and construct identity (Laforest, 1996). Whilst equal opportunity legislations such as the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (53 of 2003) are in place, these legislations are attempting to redress the inequalities of apartheid and have unintentionally served to re-inscribe the categories of race.

According to Fenton (2003) race-thinking entails the following propositions: 1) it is conceivable to categorise human beings into a number of races, which are defined by their physical and visible differences, 2) the races also share character, capabilities and moral qualities, 3) racial inheritance makes certain that racial qualities are protected from one generation to the next and 4) the races of the world are structured in a hierarchical way, with the white race being superior to all other races. Essentially, the first three propositions made the fourth proposition conceivable.

Winant (1994:19) argues that although race manifests itself in a diverse manner today, as race and its strains are implicit, "it is possible to perpetuate racial domination without making any explicit reference to race at all" (ibid.). I expand on this viewpoint by providing two encounters from my lived experiences to substantiate Winant's sentiments. As Indians (historically marginalised group) living in a predominantly Afrikaner town in 2007 and visiting a predominantly Afrikaner shopping mall in another town, a group of White teenage boys scoffed at us (my ex-husband and myself) whilst we were walking past and remarked: "Hier kom die samoosas!"⁴. Although I was stunned, a lot of emotions were stirred in me but I did not retaliate. I was aware that one, 13 years into democracy and the racial divide was still deliberately prevalent; two, I wondered why would they automatically associate us with a certain food, which (perhaps surprising to them) was not a significant part of cuisine preferences in my household and also a food which we never habitually consume although it is considered a cultural snack; and three, more distressingly, as an educator I pondered on the rearing of these boys. Was it inculcated within them to discriminate against other racial groups? Was it being indoctrinated in the home, school or community? Surely as adolescents they were too young to have understood the injustices of the apartheid era let alone have experienced it themselves. Early in 2008, once more as a historically marginalised group, we participated in a race (contest) that was hosted in another predominantly Afrikaner town within the same province. While queuing to purchase food, a White middle aged man in front of the queue turned to us and remarked with a sardonic laugh: "Why don't you go and queue somewhere else, there are no samoosas in this queue!". His remarks caused the other White people in the queue to erupt in laughter. I

⁴ "Here come the samoosas" – English translation

had by that time become so accustomed to the constant stares and the spoken and unspoken remarks that I had fortified myself. If I was going to be discriminated against because of my racial identity, I would never allow another man's ignorance to get the better of my intelligence. Returning to Winant's (1994) supposition, whilst our racial category was not explicitly verbalised but rather the nomenclature of a cultural food associated with our racial identity, their remarks certainly constituted racism.

To offer further perspective on race and its current position within a democratic setting, the SAHRC chairman, Lawrence Mushwana, says that there has been a spike in racism-related incidents in South Africa, particularly but not exclusive to universities with over 500 cases being reported to the SAHRC in the past year (SAPA, 2014b). Mushwana stated in the media briefing (ibid.) that the SAHRC remains deeply concerned about the lack of transformation occurring in South African society, 20 years into its democratic dispensation. Statistically, 45% of the Commission's complaints in the 2013/2014 financial year were race related with the panel commissioner, Lindiwe Mokate confirming that black students were targeted in most cases (ibid.). To further validate this assertion, I point out the most recent discriminatory practices undertaken at a private school in Gauteng (SAPA, 2015a). Learners were segregated according to their race with white learners in separate classes from black learners. The regional manager of the school group claimed that this was done for the purpose of culture as children are able to make friends with children of their own culture (ibid.). This prompted a visit to the school by Education MEC Panyaza Lesufi to compel the school to rectify the situation, failing which the school's licence would be revoked (ibid.). Also, the school at that point, consisted of an all-white staff with no teachers from other race groups being employed (ibid.). This has prompted a probe into private schools in the province. So, in the third decade since the abolition of racial segregation, racism still lurks within the very foundation where transformation should have found a home. If discrimination and segregation are being inculcated in our learners, shifting their attitudes and mentality as they grow older will be extremely challenging and the cycle of discrimination will only regenerate.

According to the SA Reconciliation Barometer Report (South Africa, 2014e), which measures both progression and regression levels relating to reconciliation, Chapter 4 hereto demonstrates the levels of interracial contact and socialisation, with the poor and marginalised remaining largely excluded from social integration. While there has been an increase in the percentage of South Africans who socialise with others from different race groups (10.4% in 2003 to 23.5% in 2013), when this figure is dichotomised by class, South Africans in the higher living standards measure groups are more likely to socialise across race than the middle living standards measure groups and the lowest living standards measure groups are the least likely to socialise across race (ibid.). In addition, between 2003 and 2013, the gap between the percentage of

citizens socialising across race in both the lowest and highest living standards measure groups increased from a 17.6% difference to a 27.2% difference (ibid.). From these statistics, it is evident that the poorest citizens are excluded from interracial socialisation in relation to the middle class and wealthier citizens further exacerbating the racial divide and augmenting the interaction of race-based dimensions of social and political life.

In their discussion, Afshar and Maynard (1994:6) accentuate that diversity amongst women cannot be viewed as a static phenomenon since both race and gender interconnect dynamically in highly complex and contradictory ways. This assertion leads me to the next discussion on gender as an intersecting category of oppression.

3.6.2 Gender

The concept of gender became part of common parlance in the early 1970's. It was used as an analytical category to draw a line of separation between biological sex differences and the way these are applied to apprise behaviours and competencies, which are then assigned as either 'masculine' or 'feminine' (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004:56). Giddens (1989) draws the significant distinction between sex and gender whereby the former refers to the physical differences of the body while the latter refers to the social, psychological and cultural differences between females and males.

Connell (2002:10) asserts that, "gender involves the way human society deals with human bodies and the many consequences of that dealing in our personal lives and our collective fate". Gender roles are acquired through the various agents of socialisation such as the family, school and media (Connell, 2002). Throughout history, it is indisputable that gender has played a crucial role in society. Individuals are instantly recognised as either a man or a woman and activities are arranged around this demarcation (ibid.). Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) maintain that through the process of socialisation, individuals learn the culture of the society that they inhabit and that people identify themselves as either masculine or feminine with regard to appearance, behaviours and characteristics.

Anderson (2003:25) takes the view that sex consists of two distinct categories - men and women. A biological essentialism is reflected in these categories wherein sex is a natural, biological feature, determined by an examination of a person's body. Referring to gender, Anderson (2003:29) argues that gender involves the behaviours, attitudes and feelings associated with masculinity and femininity. Other authors have their own interpretation of gender as it is a complex and multifaceted concept. As Simmonds (2013:78) asserts, it is the

elusive nature of gender that makes it impervious to categorical reasoning and accurate gender labels.

In her work on *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990:2) demonstrates the reflexivity of thinking about the self, outside the dichotomy of sex and gender. Her view is that gender is radically independent of sex and is a free-floating artifice (Butler, 1990:7). Shanyanana and Waghid (2014:1385) denote that gender identifies those things that do not conform to the system of compulsory and naturalised heterosexuality and reveals how gender norms are socially established and maintained. Chodorow (1998) theorises that human beings are not born with perceptions of gender but rather that this construct is one that emerges developmentally. Chodorow's (1998) viewpoint concurs with that of Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:61) that:

[T]he gender order is a patterned system of ideological and material practice, performed by individuals in a society, through which power relations between women and men are made, and remade, as meaningful. It is through the gender order of a society that forms or codes of masculinities and femininities are created and recreated and relations between them are organised.

Stemming from this notion, it can be asserted that it is through the thoughts and practices of individual people in society, in which the power dynamic between men and women are constructed and through this the attributes of masculine or feminine are ascribed to each respective gender.

Simone de Beauvoir's views in *The Second Sex* (2010) asserts that women are defined and differentiated with reference to a man and not vice versa, with man being the subject and women being the other. Through women's lived experiences, my own included, I am of the view that gender order is distorted as one gender seems to be afforded more power than the other. Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) concur with my sentiments as they claim that it is not logical for gender order to be hierarchical or oppressive in nature.

To understand how the complexities of intersectionality coalesce and impede the lives of women, it is important to examine the category of gender holistically and the multiple axes of oppression that simultaneously plague women before focusing particularly on the education and socio-economic spheres and its relation to gender. As a woman embedded in a hostile patriarchal society, it is distressing to note how fellow women have been forced to perceive themselves. Haslanger (2005:159) asserts that gender constructions vary from individual to individual and from culture to culture and the manner in which they do this is determined by how the connotation of gender intersects with other social constructed categories such as race,

sexuality and sexism, and age. It would thus be an oversight if a woman's culture, traditions, religious doctrines and societal contexts were not considered in the equation.

In Hill Collin's (2000a:xi) work on *Black Feminist Thought*, she asserts that whilst the categories of race, class and gender studies were being established when she wrote the first edition, she has now broadened her analysis beyond these categories to include sexuality as a form of oppression. Her theory leads me to the next discourse on sexuality and sexism and how it compounds with other forms of oppression.

3.6.3 Sexuality and sexism

Sexuality connotes different things to different people. For some people, it could mean the physical element such as the act of sex and sexual practices; for other people it could mean sexual orientation, identity or preference; while for others it could be the psychological elements of desire and eroticism. The diverse principles and beliefs of different cultures, religions and societies affect the way in which a person understands human sexuality. Sexuality, like the other intersecting oppressions previously mentioned in this chapter, plays a significant role in every individual's life. Regardless of race, gender or age, it remains an integral part of what we do and who we are. Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:155) maintain that the concept of sexuality is difficult to define as it does not simply relate to sex. Their assertion provides rationality since we see through Rubin's (1984:293) view of sexuality that she regards sexuality as "the nexus of relationship between the genders, much of the oppression of women is borne by, mediated through and constituted within sexuality" (ibid.). In other words, besides the biological or gendered composition that it entails, it also multiplies the shape of oppression for women.

The congruence between social constructionist approaches to gender and sexuality make it possible to understand that whilst both may be socially constructed, sexuality and gender are separate but overlapping domains (Vance, 2010) which Rubin (1984:293) terms as "vectors of oppression". Hill Collins (2000a:4) explains that "oppression describes any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to resources of society". Race, gender, sexuality, age, class, nationality and ethnicity amongst others constitute major forms of oppression.

Vance (2010) postulates further that female sexuality may be thought about, experienced and acted on differently according to age, class, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual orientation and preference, religion and region. Confrontation with the multifaceted intersection of social identities points us away from simple dichotomies such as black/white or lesbian/heterosexual towards acknowledging the multiple intersections of categories and the resulting complexity of women's lived experience (ibid.). To oppose such monolithic dichotomies, intersectionality can

be viewed as a poststructuralist approach to feminism, as poststructuralism rejects such identity politics and top-down power structure (Campbell, 2013). In addition, poststructuralists view domination and power relationships ubiquitously and condense the wider struggle to individual relationships. Both intersectionality and poststructuralism maintain that there are “no ‘master narratives’ and that all knowledge and experience is partial or limited with no one ‘truth’ or reality” (ibid.).

Vance (2010) argues that the trademark of sexuality is its complexity, its various connotations, sensations and connections. Furthermore, she maintains that sexuality is simultaneously a sphere of restriction, repression and danger as well as a sphere of exploration, pleasure and agency. When focus is shifted to the pleasure and gratification facet only, it ignores the patriarchal structure within which women act but to speak only of sexual violence and oppression neglects women’s experience with sexual agency and choice and inadvertently increases the sexual terror and despair in which women live (Vance, 2010:327). From these assertions then, the concept of sexuality should be viewed as multifaceted. Vance’s (2010) stance is that an over-emphasis on the sphere of danger poses the risk of making sexual pleasure taboo.

During the time of colonisation on the African continent, sexuality in South Africa was interwoven with European religious principles and beliefs. African sexuality, preceding this period was influenced by traditional and cultural ideologies of sexuality and was relatively untouched by the western world. Reid and Walker (2005) suggest that certain notions of sin, morality and sexuality that stemmed from European norms and beliefs about the subject were indoctrinated into the African population. Another intersecting aspect that women confronted, which intermingled with sexuality, was the dimension of power such as male domination. Kolmer and Bartkowski (2010:45) argue that any analysis of women’s situations and circumstances is grounded in the assumption of power’s asymmetrical division: “woman [is] always and everywhere subject to male man”. These authors further posit that power operates in all aspects of the public and private domain with abuses of public power in colonialism, militarism and economic exploitation and private power in rape, battering, harassment and incest. If we examine the statistics provided in Chapter 1, it illustrates the injustices that women suffer in the public and private domains, at the hands of men who perceive themselves as the superior or dominant beings.

Through the ideas that colonialism begot, men and women were placed into different categories, with men being positioned in a more hierarchical position and possessing much more control and power in society. Bhana *et al.* (2007) maintain that the views from this era were heavily patriarchal, specifically in the workplace and a woman’s space was expected to

exist only in the home and with her children promoting the 'norming' of women as procreative individuals and nurturers. Retrospectively, the Ipsos (2014) statistics provided in Chapter 1 validates this premise despite the decades since the end of colonialism and apartheid. It is perturbing that a significant number of South African women still believe that their place is in the home with a higher percentage of men in agreement. Patriarchy and women subordination established within these epochs evidently still remain in existence today as Shefer and Foster (2001:385) affirm that the patriarchal culture during the 19th century as well as during the apartheid era still exists in South Africa today and is deeply embedded in South African communities across the intersections of class and race.

Foucault's (1977) views in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, which was translated by Alan Sheridan in 1995, proposes that power and control operate at multiple levels – via government and laws and via people's own personal beliefs and control of themselves. This control and power still lingers within a democratic South Africa as Hook (2004) asserts that the effects of the apartheid regime is still in existence today by the way in which sexuality is shaped and in the manifestation hereto on both micro and macro levels.

The oppression of certain races, classes and genders during apartheid also induced the oppression of certain sexual views and expressions. Interracial intimacy was legally forbidden and people who engaged in it were also ostracised by members of the community and through this, it was discernible that governmentality at that time served to further propagate racist notions and apartheid control (Hook, 2004).

Sexuality from feminist theories perspectives is located within gender inequality, meaning the social hierarchy of men over women (Mackinnon, 2010:316). In de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (2010:156) where she famously proposed: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", she draws a figurative picture depicting why women have been defined as the other and what the consequences have been from the perspective of men. From the perspective of women, she describes the world in which women must live and envisages the difficulties of their journey beginning in childhood. She concludes her picture with the premise that whilst a boys' future looks more accessible, with a superior vocation, will live in luxury and feel free, a girl's future will be relegated to being a wife, mother, grandmother, housekeeper as her mother was and providing her children with the same nurturing she herself received when she was young. In this picture, the girl is 12 years old and already her story is written in the heavens or predetermined.

Whilst some may argue that women in South Africa have experienced transformation in the workplace with some women holding positions that were previously only afforded to men, have

had an increase in their income, and experienced an identity shift in the household structure however, for the many marginalised women who experience multiple and often simultaneous forms of oppression, it is a combat to reach these echelons and sometimes the prospect of a better life just remains an elusive dream.

Taefi (2009) argues that the additional intersections of discrimination that young women experience such as race, gender, sexuality and sexism exacerbate the inequalities already being experienced as a result of their age. Thus, it becomes crucial to acknowledge the complexities of age as an intersecting form of oppression.

3.6.4 Age

Lesser (1998:87) defines ageism as unlawful or unjustified adverse discrimination based on the grounds of age. Whilst the concept of ageism is a recent one, that is generally based on the models of racism and sexism (Lesser, 1998), age as an intersecting form of oppression for women has been longstanding. Yuval-Davis (2006:195) contends that women suffer oppression not only based on their gender or racial identity but also based on other social categories of class, disability status, nationality, sexuality and sexism, and age. The Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) affirms that no individual should be discriminated against on the grounds of their age however this concept, just like race, gender and other dynamic intersecting categories of oppression, still exists within a democratic society – be it implicitly or explicitly.

Before I demonstrate how the intersection of age marginalises women, it is important to first analyse the girl as ‘child’. Taefi (2009:345) asserts that the marginalisation of girls is a universal phenomenon. Girls are marginalised within two categories, the first being within the category of children as female and the second being within the category of women as minors. Being uniquely situated as both women and children, gender discrimination and patriarchal or paternalistic attitudes towards children coalesce to intensify the marginalisation of girls (ibid.). In addition, the patriarchal system that permeates girls’ lives is reinforced by cultural norms hence further intensifying the denial of their human rights (ibid.). The dual oppression experienced by girls due to their marginalisation within the categories of children and women, reinforce one another hence exacerbating their experience of marginalisation (Taefi, 2009:347). This oppression will ultimately continue into adulthood. By that time the woman is already familiar with the multiple forms of oppression that plague her and the category of age will add as a compounded effect of intersectionality. For Calasanti *et al.* (2006:13) they argue that whilst feminist studies acknowledge the reality of ageism, they have relegated it to secondary status thereby neglecting to theorise age relations or place it at the centre of analysis. Although many

scholars such as hooks (1984) and Crenshaw (1989) have theorised on the intersections of other social categories such as race, gender, sexuality and sexism, little emphasis has been placed on the category of age. Given that the intersection of age lends intensity to the multiple forms of oppression that marginalised women experience and through the substantiation of this from my own lived experiences and those of other marginalised women, it is important to give prominence to this category hence its inclusion in my analysis of the categories of intersectionality. Chapter 1 of the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (4 of 2000) declares that:

prohibited grounds of discrimination are -

(a) race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

Age discrimination in the workplace is still prevalent in post-apartheid South Africa. Diverse issues pertaining to age amongst other categories of oppression are experienced because of a transforming and diverse workforce (Mayekiso & Snodgrass, 2008). A research study conducted by Moloto *et al.* (2014) into the experiences of stereotypes amongst staff within a higher education institution found that participants both experience stereotypes and maintain stereotypes of other employees in the workplace. One of the most dominant stereotypes mentioned by participants was the category of age. According to Sargeant (2011) age stereotyping pertains to equating certain characteristics or lack of them, with certain ages. Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) posit that because of the negative orientation of age stereotypes, it fortifies age discrimination. This form of stereotype can apply to all ages and age groups and is not specific to older individuals (Sargeant, 2011). A further assertion by Sargeant (*ibid.*) is that workers who are younger are perceived to be more dynamic and enthusiastic with regards to information technology (the field in which I teach). Findings from the study conducted by Moloto *et al.* (2014) yielded the following results under the age stereotype: older employees perceive younger employees to be conceited and technologically astute whilst younger employees perceive older employees to be begrudging and technologically challenged. In addition, younger employees believe that they are perceived as incompetent by older employees, whilst their older counterparts believe that they are perceived as mature and professional yet inefficient by younger employees.

3.7 CONNECTING THE CATEGORIES OF INTERSECTIONALITY

According to Hill Collins (2000a:18), intersectional paradigms cannot be abridged to one rudimentary type, and oppressions work together in creating injustices. Intersectional analysis therefore recognises that multiple forms of marginalisation do not operate in isolation but rather

interlocks with each other and in so doing yields a compounded effect. In other words, the categories of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age, which have been previously discussed, interact dynamically with each other and intensify the marginalisation and oppression of women. As Crenshaw (1989) accentuates that instead of merely summarising the effects of one or more oppressive categories, intersectionality theory emphasises the interwoven nature of these categories and how they can mutually strengthen or weaken each other.

Before I attempt to fuse these categories to show more clearly its parallel interlocking, I would like to provide an analogy on how these categories traverse. Similar to Crenshaw's (cited in Yuval-Davis, 2006:196) traffic analogy, I add a slightly different dimension to better understand its meaning, applicability to and implications for my own life as a woman. Whilst society is aware that women experience multilayered complexities in life, there is no one-size fits all structure for women either. A case in point being that I am an Indian woman and consequently I face racism, sexism and ageism as I journey through everyday life. I liken my understanding of how various oppressive categories intersect in my life, both figuratively and literally, to that of a global positioning system (GPS). The purpose of the GPS is to accurately calculate geographical locations and guide you as you navigate your way to your destination. There are different routes that the GPS will direct you to along your journey and usually it provides you with the quickest route to reach your destination. Should you miscalculate a point, it offers you the luxury of making a U-turn. There is always the added security of knowing that an audible voice is directing you along the way. In life, a woman travels along in her journey, establishing goals and dreams of acquiring an education or seeking better employment, for example and by achieving these goals or dreams, it would mean she arrives at her destination. The battery needed to power up/operate the GPS can be likened to the various legislations intended to uphold women's rights and empower women. It should act as the energy/driving force to ensure that these rights are realised, if unplugged though, it would be ineffective and consequently make our journey all the more arduous as we would have to be our own driving force. (I do not intend to imply here that women are not self-sufficient.) As you navigate your way, you will traverse various junctions. In this particular illustration, you could travel on racism road, which could then lead you to 'genderism' road, but not without passing through sexism and ageism junctions too. Moreover, in life we do not have the luxury of simply making a U-turn. The implication is that by the time a woman reaches her destination (attained her goal), if at all, she has already encountered multiple intersecting crossroads that have compounded the complexities and oppressions that she had to endure along her journey. The journey itself might have been long and gruelling but the intersecting of those crossroads along that journey underscores the multiple complexities she encounters.

Staunges and Søndergaard (2011:45) concur with the views of Hill Collins (2000a) in that acknowledging intersectionality requires an understanding that the categories of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age cannot be understood in isolation from each other. In addition, these authors assert that intersectionality assists researchers to recognise the “variation, complexity, confusion, ambivalence and transformation” encountered when engaging with identity and diversified categories.

To better articulate these intersections, I draw on the work of Soja (1996) and his theory of thirdspace. As a postmodern political geographer and cultural theorist, Soja gives attention to the way categories of race, gender, sexuality and sexism intersect with the spatiality of social life and with the cultural politics of difference and the identity that this propagates. Soja (1996:1) posits that the concept of thirdspace seeks to unfold alternative ways of understanding the connotations and significance of space. Thirdspace is the sphere wherein the notions of physical (firstspace) and the conceptual (secondspace) space are brought together in lived experience. He further articulates his understanding of space in which “everything comes together: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history” (Soja, 1996:57). The concept of thirdspace in this study is used to describe the space between access to education and the empowerment of women by reflecting on the complexities of their everyday life, the knowable and the inconceivable and the threads of history embedded within this space. Whereas the concept of space was previously seen as merely an empty frame, since the ‘spatial turn’ in which Soja (1989) attempts to replace the paradigm of time with one of space, space is no longer considered as inert or subsidiary to actions that occur within it (Soja, 1996:2). Through Soja’s (1996) theoretical contributions, space is now recognised across the disciplines as a force that shapes human actions. From his theory, we can infer that within the space that lies between women’s human right to education access and socio-economic empowerment, there is no stillness or static unresponsiveness that occurs. On the contrary, it is within this very space that their lived experiences and complexities intersect at multiple levels and impede the lives of marginalised women. There cannot remain an ignorant assumption to the fact that a space does exist between the two continuums of education access and women empowerment and that within this space, the various social categories of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age coalesce and compound the inequalities that women contend with.

Linking with Soja’s (1996) theory on thirdspace where everything comes together, in Jackson and Mazzei’s *Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research* (2012) the authors speak of a threshold. They assert that a threshold serves no function, purpose or meaning until it is

connected to other spaces (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012:6). The excess of a threshold is the space in which something else occurs: a response, or an effect and once the threshold has been exceeded, something new emerges. In other words within the space of the threshold, when both the theory and data are plugged in, a newness of knowledge is derived (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012:5) with the knowable and the inconceivable coming to the fore.

At this juncture, I draw a correlation to the theories of intersectionality and thirdspace and my lived experiences as set out in my autobiographical narrative. Reflecting on my autobiographical narrative, the multiple and often simultaneous intersecting of the social categories of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age are clearly evident. As an Indian woman (belonging to a historically marginalised group) caught between a rock and the hard places of racism, sexism and ageism, this already places me in a disadvantaged situation. Further to this, being a woman living in a patriarchal society and working under the authority of (White) male domination only further exacerbates the situation. Chow *et al.* (2011:3) maintain that “patriarchal traditions are among the practices that shape and differentiate the lives of women and men in several specific settings”. In his autoethnographical study on white male teachers, Botha (2012:162) asserts that evidently some white male teachers’ patriarchal cultural upbringing has inculcated within them a strong sense of their gender role, including what is apparently acceptable male behaviour. Constructions of male and female are assigned to different contexts and this kind of social positioning places the white male teachers in a dominant hierarchical position in relation to women and those in subordinate positions (Botha, 2012:164). The patriarchal system within which men were nurtured was male-centred, male-dominated and male-constructed and consequently white male teachers view power, control and privilege as their birthright (Johnson, 2006). In addition, white male teachers view themselves as powerless when they sense that they are not in control (Botha, 2012). As my human right to education could ultimately not be dictated or controlled by the head of the institution, rendering him a sense of powerlessness, the aggressive behaviour that he demonstrated also stemmed from this insecurity of not being in control. Botha (*ibid.*) upholds that some white male teachers use physical, verbal or emotional aggression despite violating other teachers’ human rights in the process. This assertion is in direct comparison and validated by the head of the institution’s actions when denying me the human right to further my education. Botha (*ibid.*) further claims that aggression and aggressive behaviour by some white male teachers is common within South African schools. This aggression can also be traced to the way male teachers themselves were socialised at school and at training institutions. Berkowitz (1993:8) posits that aggression is “the forcible violation of another’s rights and offensive action and procedure”. He further argues that aggression also encompasses issues of power and dominance, which can be interrelated to the category of sexuality.

3.8 UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTING CATEGORIES IN RELATION TO THE CORE DEMOCRATIC VIRTUES FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

The Bill of Rights (South Africa, 1996b) embodied within the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) comprises unequivocal acknowledgment of individuals entitlement toward their human rights and respect for the democratic virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom. As human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible and form the foundation of an open and free society (Timmermans, 2014), so long as human rights are valued and advocated, there can be no democracy, progression or rule of law.

Affirmed within the Bill of Rights (South Africa, 1996b) the intersecting categories of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age which have formed the basis of this research study have all taken pride of place amongst other categories with a vehement declaration against the discrimination of any individual on such classifications.

With the inclusion of the above categories and human rights resting at the core of this statute, it is essential to analyse these four intersecting categories from a human rights perspective to gauge its meaning in relation to the democratic virtues.

3.8.1 Race and its denotation in relation to human dignity, equality and freedom

Following on from my earlier discourse on race, I now proceed to analyse the causality between race and its connotations to the core democratic virtues.

The United Nations *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (henceforth ICERD) (United Nations, 1965) is a human rights conduit which obliges its member states to eradicate racial discrimination and promote understanding among all races (ICERD, Article 2). Article 1 of the ICERD (United Nations, 1965) unambiguously defines “racial discrimination” as

...any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

Considering that international treaties such as the United Nations Charter (United Nations, 1945) are based on the principles of human dignity and equality inherent in all human beings and the UDHR (United Nations, 1948) declaring that all human beings are born free and equal

in human dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the human rights and freedoms set out therein, without any form of distinction, particularly to race, colour or national origin (United Nations, 1965:1) it serves to validate that the democratic virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom, which are embedded within these conventions, are not only invaluable but also indispensable.

If dignity refers to the intrinsic worth of a human being (Kant, 1785) and is an innate right, there can be no human dignity in the discrimination based on the colour of one's skin. The Bill of Rights (South Africa, 1996b) enshrined within the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) asserts that no one may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against another on one or more grounds including race. With the atrocities of the apartheid era which was declared as an assault against human rights (Perumal, 2012:63), people of colour were dehumanised and subjected to inhumane treatment which as a result directly violated their right to human dignity (Réaume, 2003). Corroborating these views, the *South African Human Rights Commission Equality Report* (henceforth SAHRCER) (SAHRC, 2012) asserts that race was undeniably the predominant fulcrum of the oppressive apartheid past, with racial oppression and exclusion among the atrocities which rendered masses of people sojourners and second-class citizens in their own country.

Notwithstanding the fact that South Africa has ratified all three of the United Nations treaties mentioned earlier in this section and despite South Africa's impressive human rights laws and the systems in place that address discrimination, as a country it still holds a legacy of racism. Even today, this legacy permeates its society, systems and structures consequently affecting the lives of its citizens.

Perumal (2004:137) substantiates that women are oppressed simply because they are women just as others have been oppressed simply because of the colour of their skin. In endorsing her statement, when the entities of both race and gender intersect in women's lives (which it often does), they intensify the multiple oppressions that beset women thereby further marginalising women in an already patriarchal and inequitable society. Pointing back to the SAHRCER, it further maintains that racial oppression and exclusion coupled with the ideology of patriarchy desecrated women and others, "resulting in considerable effects of vulnerabilities, both for women and those who did not conform to the script of white masculinity that was ascribed to them" (SAHRC, 2012:5).

With such injustices prevailing, it undoubtedly negates the quintessence of one's right to human dignity and inevitably violates the virtues of equality and freedom. Bracey (2005) argues that human dignity remains the central aspirational virtue in the struggle for racial justice with racial

justice demanding human dignity and the acknowledgement and affirmation of the equal humanity of people of race. He further maintains human dignity that is denied on the basis of race creates racial subordination which in turn elicits dignitary harms such as individual acts of racism and communal exclusion, which result in diminished health, wealth, income, employment and social status. So, although a third decade into a democratic dispensation and with democracy intended to be inclusive, if women are discriminated against on any one or more grounds, including the basis of their skin colour, then not only is their very entitlement to human dignity, equality and freedom abjured, but the very notion of democracy can be contested.

3.8.2 Gender and its denotation in relation to human dignity, equality and freedom

Stemming from my earlier discourse on gender, I now proceed to analyse the causality between gender and its connotations to the core democratic virtues.

As noted in the United Nations Charter (United Nations, 1945), the UDHR (United Nations, 1948), the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) and many other legislative documents, human dignity is the key philosophical foundation of human rights. It accentuates the uniqueness of human beings above all creatures, above all their free will, individual autonomy and ability to make independent decisions based on reason and free moral choice (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2011:v). It is a right inherent in all human beings and is inviolable (Stoecker, 2011:9) and must be respected. The pervasive injustices endured by women as a result of their gender finds itself at odds with the assertions on human dignity. To reiterate Kaufmann *et al.* (2011), violation of human rights include individuals being marginalised, dehumanised and subjected to degrading and morally repugnant acts such as rape. From the statistics provided in Chapter 1 coupled with the reality that South Africa has some of the highest rates of violence against women (ASSAf, 2015:54), it is apparent that through the acts of rape and violence, violations of women's human dignity manifests itself on a daily basis. If human dignity implies the right to autonomy and independent choices (Réaume, 2003) and is upheld by the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) how then can such atrocities occur in society? Evidently, whilst legislations are in place, not many people are taking cognisance of the fact that gender as an intersectional social identity enlarges the complexities already besetting women and forcibly violates their human right to dignity.

Chapter 2 of the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) pertaining to equality declares that no individual should be discriminated against on the basis of: race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth. In terms of gender and equality, there never has been any equilibrium between these two entities. Despite the fact that equality as a democratic virtue is

avowed in the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) the patriarchal society which women inhabit, has never allowed them the liberty to be equal in any form or segment nor the autonomy to make objective decisions. de Beauvoir (2010) corroborates that “woman has always been man’s dependent, if not his slave and these two sexes have never shared the world in equality”. She maintains further that within the economic sphere, men and women can almost be composed of two castes; other things being equal, men hold the better jobs, earn higher salaries and have more opportunity for success than women - their new competitors.

Kant (1785) who argued that freedom is inseparably connected with the notion of autonomy and Réaume (2003) who asserts that every individual should be entitled to their own choices contrasts with President Zuma’s statement (1.4) on women choosing to remain single and choosing not to bear children (SAPA, 2015b). Clearly the concept of autonomy for women to make independent choices in all facets of their lives does not fit into his stereotype of women. Many men probably subscribe to his sentiments as they believe they have the authority to dictate women’s lives. Women who experience sexual violence at the hands of their intimate partners or criminals are categorised as submissive victims who should satisfy man’s every whims and fancies, thus denying women of the right to freedom over their own bodies.

3.8.3 Sexuality and sexism and its denotation in relation to human dignity, equality and freedom

As every human being, both man and woman possess an intrinsic worth, above all price (Kant, 1785), there is non-existence of dignity when we look at how women are perceived by men and the derogatory remarks insinuated by them. Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher claimed that: “the female is a female by virtue of a certain *lack* of qualities; we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness” (cited by de Beauvoir, 2010). This calamitous misogyny has recycled itself through each generation of the virile male in that several decades later on, such derision of women is still ingrained, embraced and practiced by men.

The current debates encircling sexuality and sexism in South Africa cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the influence of the colonial and apartheid past on the post-apartheid present (Gunkel, 2010). Alluding to the pencil, eyelid and nail tests in conjunction with the genital examination in the apartheid epoch (3.6.1), such humiliating physical scrutiny of a woman’s body demonstrated the nullification of a woman’s human dignity and autonomy over her own body. For the historically marginalised woman, not only was she already ‘othered’ by her race and gender but her body was characterised as a site of transgression and worthlessness.

The birth of the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) paved the way towards a regime of sexual regulation that is now primarily a matter of rights and responsibilities (Beresford *et al.*, 2007). The establishment of a regime of sexuality and sexism, however, has not resulted in gender equity. In actuality, in the democratic context of today, the impudence and injustices committed against women's sexuality remains unyielding. The high rates of gender-based violence and atrocities as stipulated in the SBCWC statistics (1.4) depict how such repugnant injustices juxtapose the virtues of democracy and make a mockery of one's human dignity, equality and freedom.

Section 2 of the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) prohibits unfair discrimination on the grounds of an individual's sexual orientation however the 'corrective rapes' of black lesbians exemplifies that such violence against women is part of a discriminatory response to their sexual and gender non-conformity and aims at punishing their sexuality (ASSAf, 2015:53). This serves to demonstrate that injustices against women transcend all boundaries in that no matter who and what they choose to be, and no matter what their preferences are in life, purely by virtue of being women - in a patriarchal society, she will always arrive at the crossroads of oppression with her human dignity, equality and freedom being challenged.

3.8.4 Age and its denotation in relation to human dignity, equality and freedom

Age is no precursor to human dignity. By this stance I mean that irrespective of how young or how old an individual is, human dignity should be accorded towards them based on the very fact that they are human beings. The category of age, amongst others finds itself a place of prominence in the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a), as no individual should be discriminated against based on this premise. However, despite such a liberal statute, age discrimination still encroaches upon our society consequently depriving many individuals of their right to human dignity, equality and freedom.

Age discrimination can occur at any stage in an individual's life and can be found in nearly every sphere of public life (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010). In addition, ageism can also reflect the widely accepted notion that life occurs in fixed stages (Glover & Branine, 2001:51) such as when you are supposed to start a career and when you are supposed to have children. Holding such predetermined views, however, contrasts with the right to freedom and infringes on a woman's autonomy to make life choices and decisions.

Age discrimination and age-based stereotyping counteracts the ideals of a democracy. Taking into account the statistics provided in Chapter 1, it validates that the atrocities faced by women and girls transcend the margins of age. With age limits placed on the culmination of a women's

education and the sanctions of child marriages, the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom are effectively annulled. Even within the context of the workplace, women cannot escape the intersecting oppression of age as discrimination affects both ends of the age spectrum. In other words, both young and old women alike are subjected to age discrimination with factors such as employment prospects and wage increments being denied on the grounds of age. A case in point is that as a young employee, when discussing my wage disparity with the head of human resources at my school, I was informed that despite the qualifications I may possess and the continuous furthering of my studies, I could not be placed on the same remuneration scale as another employee who has served a longer time in employment at the school and who is generally consequently older, regardless of the fact that they may possess fewer qualifications than myself. This for me projected a conundrum in that whilst I possess more than the standard qualifications that qualify me for the job and whilst I now have the freedom to further my studies in education, *still* I cannot be viewed as an equal to my older counterparts in terms of remuneration (and presumably promotion) on the basis of timeframe and my age. This evidences that the negation of equality for women on the basis of their age can occur and thrive in varied forms and contexts.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This literature review has conveyed the centrality of human rights and its groundwork in a democratic society. Whilst the fortification of human rights and the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom emanate from an egalitarian framework, its application in practice remains partial and predisposed. Despite the various emancipatory intended legislations in place, such as the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a), through critical analysis it proves to fail the very audience it was intended for as it does not accommodate the views and lived experiences of marginalised women. In so doing, it allows for the burgeoning of inequalities to beleaguer women and ultimately aids in the degeneration of a democracy. These inequalities manifest themselves in the myriad of injustices enacted on women.

Despite the explicit recognition on legislative paper of a women's human right to education, ignorant assumptions lie at its core. It is imprudent to think that within a society still imbued in patriarchy and inequalities, that a woman's human right to education will automatically lead to her socio-economic empowerment. For when travelling on her journey through everyday life, the interlocking of various social categories of oppression lie in wait for her at every junction. Cardinal to this notion is the framework of intersectionality which was adopted in this research study and allowed for the recognition and consciousness of how socially constructed categories of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age converge and superimpose themselves consequently intensifying the compounded oppressions that beset marginalised women.

Evidenced in this chapter, it becomes transparent that multiple oppressions cannot be separated because they are experienced intersectionally.

For South Africa to fully embrace a democratic society, its legislative doctrines and constitutional rights and virtues must be complementary. There can be no room for erroneous assumptions or imprecision when the rights of a human being and the betterment of a society are at stake. The emancipation of women can only truly begin when their human dignity, equality and freedom are firmly established and respected across all boundaries and their voice is counted and cemented across all platforms.

The next chapter of this research study presents my autobiographical narrative which is thenceforth used for the purposes of analysis by means of employing the theories of “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) and intersectionality.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERUSING THE MILKY WAY THROUGH A MAGNIFYING GLASS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents my autobiographical narrative which is subsequently used for the purposes of analysis. In adopting this approach, Riessman (2000) supports that narrative analysis takes the story itself as its object of investigation. Through analysis, narratives can illuminate “individual and collective action and meanings, as well as the social processes by which social life and human relationships are made and changed” (Laslett, 1999:392).

At this juncture, I invite readers to step into the intimacies of my world and journey with me whilst reflecting on their own lives in relation to mine. The reader should not feel constrained when attempting to understand my position in society whilst questioning their own. Ultimately, this autobiographical narrative aims not only to share *my* story and the complexities through life and make meaning of it but to also engender a transformative self and society.

4.2 AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE: MY EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY

My educational journey⁵

The Panorama

As I stand on the banks of the river overlooking my educational voyage, I am in awe of the magnificent landscape that surrounds me. The lush leafy scenery, hills, valleys and mountains – all so aptly encapsulates my educational journey through the years.

The Terrain:

The flora and the fauna

Having resigned from my job in the corporate sector, getting married, leaving behind family and friends in KwaZulu-Natal and relocating to the North West Province in 2007, it was a time of immense change, renewal and opportunities. It is against this backdrop that my teaching and learning journey began in the education sector. I have always valued the importance of education and had realised that as I enrolled

⁵ The verbatim dialogues to follow is based on my recollection of events

for and embarked on my educational course, that this was my calling and purpose in life. It brought out the unquenchable thirst of knowledge that I always believed I had but somehow laid dormant. The overwhelming support of my family, colleagues and superiors was invaluable, particularly the first institutional head (Mrs Khan) to employ me – and who to this day remains a formidable individual in my life. I undertook my studies with fervour, self-discipline and determination. This undoubtedly paved the way for me to excel in all of my courses and graduate cum laude in 2009, 2010 and 2014 respectively and receive the national top achiever award twice. In the interim of vast transitions, due to my husband's promotion in 2008 it was time to relocate once more, this time to the Gauteng Province. Whilst I did appreciate the quiet lifestyle and few congenial community members that I had become acquainted with in the North West Province, there were a few racial experiences that made living there unpleasant. Whilst visiting the nearby towns on two separate occasions, both my husband and I were subjected to racial discrimination and referred to as 'samoosas' by the White members of that community. I am unsure as to why they chose to specifically use this nomenclature to discriminate against us but it seemed as if they stereotyped between this particular cultural snack and our racial identity. In addition, with the presence of a Muslim community in the town wherein we lived, it was assumed that both my husband and I were Muslim which consequently resulted in a Muslim name (Ishmael) being designated to him, by a White male. I thought this rather strange that individuals would think it was acceptable to 'rename' people based on their convenience and assumptions. I suppose because of my candid rectification of the 'renaming' - by spelling out my husband's name to the White male - there was resultantly no Muslim name designated to me. In fact, after I spelled out the name to the White male, his response to me was: "Ai, jy is 'n slim meisie"⁶.

Visiting a local church and dining at restaurants also provoked some glares and glowers from White parishioners and patrons respectively. Since the Gauteng Province seemed to offer and embrace more of a sense of diversity, relocating here did provide some advantages.

⁶ "Ah, you are a clever girl" – English translation

Climbing the hill

As I began my honours degree in 2012, my life was being transformed in ways that I never would have imagined and hence altered the terrain of my journey. All I could see around me was a vista of incessant and unrelenting hills. In my personal life, I was faced with the harsh, unexpected reality of the breakup of my marriage. Fortunate to have been raised by liberal parents in the apartheid era, socialising with friends from other race groups was welcomed. Whilst I always saw beyond the racial identity of a person, it was only when a White woman became the third person in my marriage, was I consciously forced to think about the element of race. Whereas interracial relationships are more common these days and understanding that during apartheid, the White race was considered superior to all other races, I began to question my position as a historically marginalised woman and although 'colour-blind' throughout childhood and adolescence, for the first time a degree of racial inferiority temporarily swept over me.

My heart was filled with anxiety whilst my thoughts raced at a thousand miles per second. As the legal battle ensued, I felt myself drowning each day. Work became my daily escapism whilst every other waking moment had to be spent preparing for the litigation. Through all the pain and anguish and fears of the unknown, I was still aware of my studies that I had to pursue and I persevered with this knowing it would be the only thing I could hold on to. Whilst a great deal was taken away from me, it was my education that no one could strip me off. I pleaded with the attorneys to allow me those next two weeks in which to focus on my exams. I gave my all and passed all my exams with distinctions again. I knew there was hope. My education liberated me. Amongst my dignity, self-respect and belief system that still remained, it was my education that paved the way for me to progress. I knew that despite all the loss, my education was my mainstay and would surely open doors for me.

Combing the valley

The transition that followed compelled me to explore my life and find myself again. Such traumatic experiences in life can leave one feeling very vulnerable and forlorn. I needed to pick myself up again and face the next chapter in my journey. I felt weary and dejected and needed to endure the healing process. Through my eyes there seemed to be a lull in the river valley and I needed to create that flow again, to produce ripples in the water would signify motion and life. As time and circumstances evolved I knew there was something crucial I needed to attend to.

My studies awaited me. It was my final year of my honours study and I knew I had to pull myself together and give it everything I had. I did. I graduated cum laude and received the national top achiever award again. The river was fast flowing now. There was life, vitality, aim and further purpose. I stepped out of the valley ready to embrace my next educational expedition.

Conquering the mountain

I have always been an individual who strongly valued the ideals of a democracy and human rights, which our Constitution so vehemently protects. It was when my human right to education was violated, that my inner spirit rose up to address such injustices.

Having been employed at my previous school for seven years, I always performed my duties with conviction and work was always completed timeously. Not the one to engage in office gossip, I kept mostly to myself but formed an excellent, respectable working relationship with all my colleagues and superiors.

The head of the institution (Mr Dunn) a former policeman, always seemed to be satisfied whenever I further developed myself professionally and he was aware of the dedication and commitment I showed towards my studies, as he would request transcripts of my academic records and show acknowledgement thereof. Hence, it came as an absolute shock to me when after informing him that I had passed my honours and needed to attend a compulsory training programme for my MEd and providing him with all the necessary documentation, he refused to grant me leave. Little did I realise the magnitude of the mountain that would lie ahead. After perusing the documentation, this is the dialogue that ensued:

Mr Dunn: [scratching his head] I don't know how you will do this master's as I am going to overload you with work. I am going to hand over the reading campaign to you and you need to do all the certificates at school. January is a busy time and you need to be at school teaching like the rest of the staff. I can maybe grant you the Friday off for registration purposes but I will not grant you the week. Ask the university to change the dates.

Me: I have already checked with the university before approaching you and was told that the dates cannot be changed.

Mr Dunn: Well I will not allow you to attend this course. You cannot be away for a week; it is unfair to the learners.

I remained calm and professional but was in utter disbelief. I pondered over the fact that I am employed by an institution that epitomises education yet my human right to education was being denied by the very individual who is tasked with managing such a learning institute. I wasn't going to sit back and take this lightly. I know the value of education and the path I have journeyed so far to get to this point and I was not going to allow him or anyone else to jeopardise my education. My thoughts momentarily drifted to my former corporate career in the once male-dominated IT discipline. Having been the only female amongst many males for a long period, I felt that I had to continuously prove myself in my line of work however in the education discipline, although I did not feel the need to prove myself, my very human right to education was being refuted by a male who was supposedly meant to encourage and support the role of life-long learning amongst the institution's employees.

I drove to our Department of Basic Education (DoBE) district office that same afternoon to enquire about my right to study leave. I explained my situation to the labour relations officer (Mr Mahlangu) at the DoBE and he advised me on the process to follow to apply for leave. He mentioned that because we as educators do not have a sound knowledge of our rights, heads of institutions take advantage of us. Based on the grounds that it is my MEd and a compulsory session was being held for a week, Mr Mahlangu believed that I stood a good chance of having my leave approved. He requested for all documentation from the North West University pertaining to the dates and rationale of the programme to be submitted to him. He also pointed out that each time Mr Dunn came into their office, he was always nice and quiet and often showered them with gifts so he was surprised to hear of his reaction regarding my request for leave.

The following day, I had completed a leave form and attached a note requesting Mr Dunn to contact the labour personnel at the DoBE as per Mr Mahlangu's instructions. He summoned me to his office and asked me what all this was about. I informed him that I went to the DoBE to enquire about my right to study leave after he had refused to grant me leave.

Mr Dunn: [Aggressively gets up] I am disappointed in you to say the least, the least! I told you I am not granting you this leave and you still went to the department. This has severely damaged our relationship.

Me: Did I not have a right to enquire about my leave, as this is a very important course for me to attend?

Mr Dunn: Yes, you did, but did I not tell you that I am not granting you this leave. I have granted you leave before to write your exams. [But this is my legal right anyway]

Me: I have remained loyal to this school for so many years and even when other schools approach me, I turn down their offers. I didn't think you would react in this way to me doing my master's.

Mr Dunn: [Finger pointed at me] Is that a threat? Is that a threat? I don't appreciate that. I did you a favour by making you permanent after five years!

Me: [Calm and professional] No, it's not a threat and I apologise if that's what it seems. But do you not think that after five years at the school, I deserved to be made permanent?

Mr Dunn: No, I just did you a favour. I will discuss your duties and responsibilities further at the school.

Me: [Shocked, but maintaining a professional demeanour] Did you call Mr Mahlangu at the department, as he requested that you contact him?

Mr Dunn: You are just a teacher here. You don't tell me who to call. I will not call him.

I quietly walked out of his office. I did liaise with Mr Mahlangu and he informed me that a short while later, he did receive a call from Mr Dunn. I thought Mr Dunn perhaps wanted me to know he was the boss – in charge and did things on his terms but a concealed trait was that to the outside world he always wanted to look good in their eyes and never wanted to rock the boat especially with the officials at the DoBE. I still wasn't sure at that point whether or not he himself was aware that the final decision with regards to my leave was decided upon by the district director and not himself.

Unbeknown to me, he had written a letter to the DoBE stating his reasons for not granting me the leave. He made me out to be this 'glorified' teacher and mentioned

that there was no one else with my skills to teach computers to the learners in that week. The school did not have the finances to employ someone for that week. (An untruth as our school had three learnership educators to fill in for absent teachers or wherever they were needed). He recommended that I attend the MEd session during school holidays as it's unfair that I am not at school teaching like all other educators. His secretary informed me of the letter and covertly allowed me to read through the document. I was livid, stunned and found my morale being negatively affected.

I kept pursuing my leave application with the DoBE and Mr Mahlangu informed me that he advised Mr Dunn to grant me the leave. Upon completing another leave form, Mr Dunn rejected the leave and also signed off on the directors section. (This made me question his competency as even the labour personnel at the DoBE couldn't understand why he would sign off on a section clearly not indicated for him) Perhaps he felt he needed to demonstrate his power to me or genuinely believed that he had all the power to deny my leave.

Because I discussed my studies with another colleague who also valued education, she was summoned to his office the following day. This is the conversation she told me ensued:

Mr Dunn: What do you have to do with Ms Chetty's master's?

Mrs Blecher: Nothing. She just told me she graduates and will be continuing her studies and I told her to go for it. Opportunities like this don't just arise and she must do it now. I would have said the same to my own daughters.

Mr Dunn: Well now is not the time for her to do her master's. She can do it some other time.

Mrs Blecher: Do you realise what skill a teacher who is doing their master's can bring to the school?

Mr Dunn: I want you to stop encouraging her to do her master's, as you are causing disparity in the school.

On the day that I heard about the level he would stoop, to stop me from doing my master's, I lost all respect for him in his capacity as head of the institution. I still

remained professional and liaised with him regarding my job but, other than that, I chose not to upset myself further or further break down my morale.

As 2014 dawned, I felt more dissuaded to go back and work under such autocratic leadership. I deliberated over all that occurred in the past two months and wondered if race, gender, sexism, age and the element of power could have contributed to Mr Dunn's negative stance. His attitude towards me changed. Each time I had a query regarding defective computers in the lab, he casually brushed me off not wanting to get in technicians to repair the computers. As is customary at our school, when a teacher passes their exams, it is mentioned to the staff however he chose not to mention my results at all in the two months after I mentioned it to him. When tablet computers were rolled out by the DoBE in the first school term, he never mentioned a word to me but quietly asked the English teacher to accompany him on training being presented on the usage of the tablets. In my capacity as the ICT teacher at the school, it only made sense to have informed me about it. It seems his intention was to keep me out of all school matters.

In January, two days before the commencement of the MEd training, he summoned me to his office where my HOD was also present. He did not inform me that the DoBE had issued him with a letter, wherein they overturned his decision and granted me the leave (Mr Mahlangu made me aware of this and allowed me to peruse the letter and the deputy principal of the school (Mrs Naidoo) who had signed acceptance of the letter when it was delivered to the school also mentioned it to me). He simply said: "The department thinks it's a good idea for you to go on the training. You will need to complete another leave form. You must ensure that all your work is handed in before you leave". I completed the form (wherein I also saw the 'covert letter' attached and I got to peruse it again. He pulled it away immediately after realising that I had seen its contents) and informed him that all my work was done and ready for submission.

The approval of my leave obviously didn't sit well with him as he always liked being in charge and this time, it wasn't his call. Whilst I was ecstatic and relieved that the DoBE approved my leave, I knew that Mr Dunn would continuously try to stop me or put up challenges at every point in my studies and I did not want to work and study under such cruel, dictatorial leadership.

Embracing new vistas

The glorious facet about life is that no matter what one endures and how arduous their journey, the sun will always rise again the next day bringing with it new hope, new opportunities and ultimately new landscapes. I have always believed in this adage that every experience in life, be it good or bad is always a learning experience and it is the way in which you react to it, that makes all the difference.

Feeling dismayed and despondent by the unprofessionalism and autocratic leadership of Mr Dunn, the low morale it formed within me and carefully considering the impact it would have on my studies, I knew I had to venture into other unexplored terrains. Being fully aware of my demanding workload, as I taught 950 learners and simultaneously undertaking my masters studies, I knew that the year ahead with respect to the above would be a challenging one and to have a head of the institution who is adamant about placing impediments in my path to dissuade me from pursuing my studies would make the journey exceptionally gruelling.

It is vital to feel a sense of belonging in your work environment as it encourages you to thrive in your position. It is also crucial that values such as respect for self, respect for others and integrity form the underpinning and ethos of any institution. After conscientiously deliberating over my future at the school and how my leave request was handled and the subsequent barrage of cruelty that I had to endure I decided that I was not going to allow myself to be subjected to such injustices any longer.

Whilst finally being employed by the DoBE (Gauteng) in a permanent capacity has provided a sense of stability and security and whilst they did grant me the requested leave, the process was laborious and time consuming. Being employed in a governmental institution, meant there were rigorous processes that must be followed. If I were to again approach them in the future if need be, I knew the wheels would turn very slowly hence impacting on the pace of my journey.

Gazing at the landscape that surrounded me, I could see new unexplored vistas in the horizon beckoning me. I decided to apply to a private school closer to home. I had hoped that furthering my studies whilst being employed in a private sector of education would be welcomed by the head of that school thus eliminating the arduous experiences I have had to endure in my then current school setting. I also felt it was time to seek a new environment. Considering Mr Dunn's apathy towards

repairing the defective computers and maintenance in the lab, it had made our teaching and learning experience very difficult within the classroom environment. I wanted to experience being in a school where I felt heard and appreciated.

My job application to the private school was successful and I was to begin my tenure there in April 2014. It was a rewarding feeling to know that a private institution had recognised my worth and decided to offer me the opportunity to teach ICT there. I have a passion for technology and I looked forward to sharing my knowledge with the learners. The head of the institution at the new school (Mrs Govender) had offered to wait until I completed my term's notice at my previous school. We had discussed my studies and the requirements thereof. After the various terrains that I had encountered in my journey, I finally envisaged a plateau that surrounded me.

Upon handing in my resignation letter in January 2014, Mr Dunn never even enquired where I was going to, he just stated: "You are obviously cross with us therefore you looked elsewhere. [I wondered who he might have meant by us but I didn't say a word]. You are not giving in a three months' notice and it is not fair to the learners". I replied: "I have a right to hand in my notice today". [I enquired from the labour division at the DoBE and I was well within my rights to hand in my resignation even with a one month notice period]. Up until a day before I left, he had not mentioned to the staff that I would be leaving at the end of the term, something which is also customary to mention at our school.

A colleague mentioned to the staff before I left that I had achieved the award for top achiever in the country and Mr Dunn didn't seem too pleased. Many staff members commented on his half-hearted round of applause. He had thereafter summoned the colleague who had made the announcement to the staff and she informed me of the conversation that ensued. Mr Dunn had insinuated that I had requested 15 days of leave to attend my MEd course and that he was only able to grant me 5 days. He said to her that she was not aware of his side of the story and had only listened to mine. Fortunately for me, in her capacity as the SADTU representative at the school, I did liaise with her the previous year with regards to the process I should follow in obtaining my leave after Mr Dunn refused me the leave, so she was fully aware of all that had transpired. As a person who abhors a lack of integrity in people, I was appalled when I heard of the lies that Mr Dunn had spoken about me. That, in my eyes, equated to defamation of character. I did state to my colleague that she should have asked him to call me in and verify his story in her presence but I knew he wouldn't do that as the truth would be exposed and the staff would know

he was a deceiver. He also never mentioned to her that it was actually the DoBE that had granted my leave and not him. He insisted that I went about the whole process incorrectly but he failed to realise had I pursued the process incorrectly, the DoBE would not have granted me the leave. Also, had I requested 15 days of leave as he stated, surely the DoBE themselves would not have approved. Strangely enough, I thought about the school's ethos: honesty, transparency and accountability (THA). I pondered, in his capacity as the head of this learning institution, how many of these values did he breach in my situation alone and to what extent are these values practiced at all?

My time at that school came to an end. With much dedication and passion, I had completed my teaching journey with my learners whom I cherished. I wanted to instil in them the value of education and ensure that they were fully aware of and prepared for the technological era they were in. As I concluded that part of the voyage with them, my educational journey in a different topography beckoned.

Arriving at the new educational institution did bring with it transformation and unexpected events. Whilst I am currently reporting to an Indian female head, what this might bring cannot yet be defined as it is much too soon. Although I now have the freedom to pursue my human right to education, being a new employee and subsequently not in the institution's employ for a long period of time, the manager of the human resources department at the institution prescribed that I could not be placed as an equal to my fellow counterparts in terms of my salary scale because of timeframe and age.

The extensively diverse landscape to which this journey might take me now remains to be seen.

I eagerly await the next panoramic view in my educational voyage...

In the process of analysis, I have engaged with Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) theory of "plugging in" which disrupts the centring urge of conventional qualitative research and seeks to cut into the core of the data, thereby "opening it up to see what newness might be incited" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012:viii). In addition, I have read my autobiographical narrative in conjunction with employing the theory of intersectionality (3.5) which demonstrates how various social categories intersect and creates multiple layers of oppression for the marginalised woman. This theory was further used to emphasise the processes of social, cultural and material life and ways of knowing (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012:5). For this reason, it is imperative

for me to give careful attention to locating both theory and data. In other words, as du Preez (2014) maintains, instead of theory leading the analysis of data, the “plugging in” process facilitates a recursive process wherein narratives are freely brought into interaction with theories that can help researchers think through the findings.

In addition, I used McCall's (2005) intra-categorical complexity (3.5.1) as a standpoint to facilitate the process of analysis, given that my autobiographical narrative depicts intra-categorical intersections. Since this approach takes the intersectional identities of marginalised individuals as an analytic launching point to expose the complexity of their lived experiences (McCall, 2005:1774), I initiate this analysis by introducing the main meta-events (disruptions) derived from my autobiographical narrative. Thereafter, each meta-event is examined to determine how the theory of intersectionality unfolded in the disruptive moment and its consequent bearing on the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom (3.3). Lastly, I consider the extent to which the disruptive moment narrowed or widened the space between the continuums of education access and socio-economic empowerment.

4.3 META-EVENTS (DISRUPTIONS)

During the “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) of my data, there were three central disruptions that came to the fore i.e. personal disruption, educational disruption and relocational disruption. I begin with a discussion on the personal disruption.

4.3.1 Personal disruptions (divorce)

In view of the fact that intersectionality draws on how different types of social categories such as race intersect (3.5.1), as a theory it is valuable in understanding the dynamics of racial oppression. In the realm of personal disruptions, race was a prominent category and hence I begin this analysis by examining how race unfolded and manifested itself and intensified compounded oppressions that I confronted as depicted in my autobiographical narrative.

“Whilst I always saw beyond the racial identity of a person, it was only when a White woman became the third person in my marriage, was I consciously forced to think about the element of race”....This particular disruption was experienced from a very different, intimate approach and for the first time caused me to become sensitised to race. Reflecting on Winant's (1994:19) reasoning that race manifests itself in diverse ways with its strains being implicit, while racial domination can occur without explicit reference to race at all (3.6.1), this experience for me not only revealed itself in a spontaneous and atypical way but the role of a White woman in my marriage was rather explicit. Despite her knowledge of the status of my marriage (of which I did

inform her) I believed that she intentionally situated herself in my marriage. To add further perspective, although “colour-blind” to racial groups whilst growing up, here I found myself at a juncture as an Indian woman standing at the crossroads of a White woman with something in common at the epicentre: *my marriage*. What I found unique about this situation is that though belonging to a historically marginalised group, subjected to the simultaneous oppressions of race and gender amongst others, when standing at this particular crossroad, the historically non-marginalised group render you invisible in plain sight (and visible only when they choose to see you). In addition, I felt that she had placed me or herself or us both in a hierarchy with her as the superior individual and me the inferior individual as a result of race. Having grown up during the apartheid era, she was aware of the racial hierarchy in South Africa and the privileges and impunities it had afforded her based on her racial identity. Whilst I cannot assume her true reasons for choosing to be a third person in my marriage, I do believe that in her capacity as a White woman, she did use her racial identity as a possible leverage to some extent.

The many transitions, vulnerabilities and fears of the unknown that this disruption instigated, certainly augmented the multiple oppressions that had beset me. As such, it is crucial to consider its bearing on the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom on the self.

“Fortunate to have been raised by liberal parents in the apartheid era, socialising with friends from other race groups was welcomed”. Even though race was never a contentious issue growing up, the White woman’s role not only impacted on something I deeply valued (my marriage) but also pierced at my human dignity as a woman and my identity as a wife. When a disruption such as divorce is experienced, it inevitably strikes at the human dignity of an individual. Réaume (2003:667) asserts that human dignity entails self-respect and the right to choices however, “I was faced with the harsh, unexpected reality of the breakup of my marriage” signifies that I was afforded no choice or say in this disruption as it was something sudden thereby infringing on my human dignity as a woman. I view this from another perspective also in that maintaining a sense of self-respect by not begging for the continuation of the marriage allowed for my human dignity to be protected to some extent.

From an egalitarianism perspective, whilst I felt that I was being placed in an inferior position by the White woman, I also felt that I was treated as an unequal entity in my marriage. Locke (1690) asserts that individuals should be equal amongst each other without subordination or subjection (3.3.2) however the choices made by my ex-husband and the expected adaptations that I was subjected to are contrary to the ideals of equality.

Whilst both my ex-husband and the White woman in question had the liberty to order their actions (Locke, 1690), he also had the freedom to make such a disruptive decision which had huge implications for my life and I was forced to accept it. What if the tables were turned and I was in a position to dictate this disruption?

Disruptive events should not always be seen as negative as they can constitute an optimistic outcome. Central to this notion are two elements that I deem crucial in the process of helping me narrow the space between the continuums of education access and socio-economic empowerment. The first element comprised of the support structures that were present in my life and the second element encompassed my intrinsic value system. I commence with a discussion on the constituents of support structures.

4.3.1.1 Support structures

To elaborate on the support structures, I begin by accentuating the liberal parenting that I was reared with. This certainly paved the way for me to maintain a liberal outlook on life. “The overwhelming support of my family, colleagues and superiors was invaluable, particularly the first institutional head (Mrs Khan) to employ me – and who to this day remains a formidable individual in my life” signifies the role that these people played during the personal, educational and relocational disruptions in my life. My family, in particular my mother, remained an anchor during all the meta-events experienced in my life. The support of my friends and colleagues was invaluable. This was particularly true, of Mrs Blecher and her encouragement and positive attitude to further education. She responded confidently to Mr Dunn’s summoning her: “I told her to go for it. Opportunities like this don’t just arise and she must do it now. I would have said the same to my own daughters”. This helped her to see beyond the present realm into the aftermath of my studies and the positive effects it could have on my personal and professional life. Mrs Khan, who has remained a constant figure in my life through the years, is acknowledged as a support agent for recognising my worth and writing to the North West University (NWU) in her capacity as my first institutional head to allow me to commence my teaching course. Her constant motivation and encouragement in both my educational and personal disruptions have been a driving force for me. Also, having lived in the same town in the North West Province as I did, she helped to ease the transition of “leaving behind family and friends in KwaZulu-Natal and relocating”. She was one of the first congenial individuals to welcome me with open arms. When “my human right to education was being denied”, it created an avenue for me to seek assistance from the DoBE, in particular Mr Mahlangu, who proved to be instrumental in ensuring that I was able to attend my MEd training. “The department thinks it’s a good idea for you to go on the training” ... implies that as a support structure, the DoBE (and Mr Mahlangu) perceived the value in me furthering my human right to education and their

responsibility to ensure its implementation irrespective of “the wheels turn[ing] very slowly”. In addition, “being employed by the DoBE in a permanent capacity has provided a sense of stability and security” denotes that this action by the DoBE also contributed as a supportive element. The NWU also proved to be a support agency in that all relevant documentation pertaining to dates and the MEd training were made available to me for submission to Mr Mahlangu. From a greater, more significant stance, the NWU as an educational institution has allowed me to undertake and continue my studies throughout the years and has remained a constant entity through all three meta-events in my life. Furthermore, the new educational institution provided an avenue of support in that after my personal, educational and relocational disruptions, I was afforded the opportunity not only to explore new vistas but also had the freedom to pursue my human right to education and feel a sense of liberation and empowerment.

In explicating the second element that tapered the space between the continuums of education access and socio-economic empowerment, I draw on the intrinsic value system with which I approached all these disruptions.

4.3.1.2 Value system

Fundamental to my value system was again the advantage of being nurtured by liberal parents as this instilled within me the ability to be “colour-blind” and see beyond the racial identity of individuals. So whilst the White woman’s role in my marriage did serve as a form of oppression, it was her actions that directly impacted on my marriage and essentially my life that I detested and not her identity as a White woman and human being. Although “a degree of racial inferiority temporarily swept over me” during this disruption, I certainly do not view myself as any less of a woman or human being compared to the White woman.

“I know the value of education ... the unquenchable thirst of knowledge that I always believed I had” demonstrates the high value that I placed on education. As such, it would come as no surprise that the constituents of “determination, fervour, self-discipline, dedication, commitment and persever[ance]” would play a pivotal role in my educational approach. In addition, “my education liberated me” shows that not only was my human right to education access crucial but I also considered it as a source of empowerment and independence. “I was not going to allow him or anyone else to jeopardise my education” reflects the tenacious attitude I possessed which enabled me to ensure that no individual or circumstance would stand in the way of my human right to education.

“To excel in all of my courses ... I gave my all and passed all my exams with distinctions again” reveals that education was not simply a requisite for me but because I valued it greatly, it was important that I undertook it with the same intent. Upon being denied my human right to education by Mr Dunn, “I kept pursuing my leave application” denotes that the feeling of ‘giving up’ was not an option for me. Despite the “dissua[sion], dismay, desponden[cy] and low morale” I felt as a result of Mr Dunn’s “unprofessionalism and autocratic leadership” it did not deter me to “venture into other unexplored terrains”. In fact his antagonistic, patronising attitude spurred me on all the more to fight for my human right to education.

Litigations for a divorce are never always pleasant experiences and can be quite daunting. In fact, as a result of this disruption, it was the first time that I found myself caught in the labyrinth of legalities. “As the legal battle ensued, I felt myself drowning each day ... every other waking moment had to be spent preparing for the litigation”. Whilst this disruption eroded my time and was both financially and emotionally draining, “I pleaded with the attorneys to allow me those next two weeks in which to focus on my exams”. This action demonstrates the resilience I harboured to stand up to the attorneys and stall the litigation process for the sake of my education. “Whilst a great deal was taken away from me....” also opened my eyes to the discrimination that some women experience in the litigation process, in that even if married within the accrual system wherein both spouses are equally entitled to half of the assets gained during the marriage, if the husband is more financially established than his wife (in terms of his salary), it can place him in a better position to retain such assets. I did not contest the disparities though as I knew “my dignity, self-respect and belief system” remained and “it was my education that no one could strip me off”. Despite the negative feelings such as “pain and anguish and fears of the unknown” experienced during the disruption of divorce, I knew that “I needed to pick myself up again and face the next chapter in my journey”. This showed that although I felt ‘down’ and ‘fallen’, I was resilient to rise again and continue on my journey.

As my upbringing during the apartheid years allowed me to cross the racial divide and “socialis[e] with friends from other race groups”, I had already been exposed me to a sense of ‘democracy’ and guided towards valuing “the ideals of a democracy and human rights” in society. Hence, when “my human right to education was being denied”, it was “my inner spirit [that] rose up to address such injustices”. Conscious of the fact that the birth of a democracy in South Africa, had accorded its citizens an array of human rights, it compelled me to go to the “district office that same afternoon to enquire about my right to study leave”. Not only did I deem this action important for the fortification of my human rights, but by enquiring the same afternoon showed the urgency with which I approached the notion of human rights.

Although Mr Dunn was “adamant about placing impediments in my path to dissuade me from pursuing my studies” and the “subsequent barrage of cruelty that I had to endure”, “I decided that I was not going to allow myself to be subjected to such injustices any longer” reveals that I did not throw in the towel and simply accept my position as a marginalised woman and “I wasn’t going to sit back and take this lightly”. I chose rather to fight my way through attaining my human right to education.

“It is also crucial that values such as respect for self, respect for others and integrity form the underpinning and ethos of any institution”. The value of respect for self and others informs the way I conduct my everyday life. When this respect is not reciprocated, as can be seen in the tone and manner in which Mr Dunn chose to speak to me: “Finger pointed at me” illustrates the aggressive way he treated me and the disregard he held towards me because I challenged his authority by “still [going] to the department”. Furthermore, I believe that respect should be a mutual value however, “[o]n the day that I heard about the level he would stoop, to stop me from doing my master’s, I lost all respect for him in his capacity as head of the institution”. By this assertion I felt that I could not continue respecting Mr Dunn as he clearly showed no respect for me as both an individual and employee. In addition to the value of respect, integrity is a critical entity in my value system and “[a]s a person who abhors a lack of integrity in people, I was appalled when I heard of the lies that Mr Dunn had spoken about me”. This deceitful act by Mr Dunn had a fundamental effect on my “sense of belonging”, which I feel is vital in the work environment. Despite this and the various simultaneous disruptions in my life, I still chose to complete my teaching journey with my learners at the school “with much dedication”. This demonstrates that irrespective of the circumstances surrounding me, I remained committed to imparting knowledge to the learners as this was still a priority for me. My “seek[ing] a new environment” was because “I wanted to experience being in a school where I felt heard and appreciated”. This indicates that as an employee I had certain expectations, such as being treated with respect and being appreciated as these are values that I honour in my dealings with fellow individuals and colleagues and should form the underpinnings of any institution.

My decision to view my support structures and value system as positive elements meant that both elements played a critical role in narrowing the space between the continuums of education access and socio-economic empowerment. These elements proved to stand firm in the face of disruptions. I made a conscious decision to persevere with my studies whilst in the simultaneous throes of personal disruptions because I viewed my education as not only liberating and empowering but also a ‘game changer’. I felt that my human right to education access had the capacity to alter my life’s trajectory and empower and transform me in new and positive ways. In addition, the meta-event of divorce itself, although difficult to endure, created an avenue for me to become a more independent individual. By this I mean, that in the

emotional, financial, educational, spiritual and psychological facets of my life, I developed a sense of autonomy, emancipation and a greater awareness of self.

4.3.2 Educational disruptions (education access)

Since intersectionality operates on the premise that individuals possess multiple, layered identities the manner in which these identities intersect affects the lives of individuals and creates complex lived experiences (3.6.3). To illustrate this, I refer to the educational disruptions that I encountered as depicted in my autobiographical narrative.

Within the sphere of education, intersectionality finds fertile ground and creates multiple forms of oppression. Whilst the personal disruption of divorce centred on the category of race, the disruption of education access centred on four prominent intersecting categories, i.e. race, gender, sexism and age (3.6), which demonstrate the complexity that intersectionality generates.

To unpack each of these categories, I begin with the intersection of race and how it manifested itself in my autobiographical narrative. Firstly, as a historically marginalised woman, I am already 'othered' by my racial identity (3.8.3) as I journey through life. As intersectionality traverses all frontiers, my workplace remained a breeding ground for intersecting and compounded oppressions to converge (3.8.4). Taking into account the context of the apartheid regime wherein the White racial group was more privileged and made to be superior to other race groups (3.6.1), these inequalities already lay in existence. In addition, being employed in an educational institution that was regarded as a former 'Model C'⁷ school further symbolised that the legacy of apartheid was etched into the institution's history. Trying to disrupt such a legacy as demonstrated in my autobiographical narrative exposes how intersectionality comes to the fore.

As a subordinate employee to a White male, this already presented a hierarchy and variation in terms of race. In addition, being a minority member of staff seemed to exacerbate the hierarchical order and maintain the apartheid legacy of the school. Reflecting on the patriarchal attitudes and the social order in which white men were previously placed (3.7), it is innocuous to say that Mr Dunn did have a predetermined mentality of race as he grew up during the apartheid era (as part of a privileged race group). Another dimension to the category of race established itself through Mr Mahlangu's willingness to help me: "Mr Mahlangu informed me that

⁷ The Model C school was a school which only accepted White learners, during the apartheid era in South Africa

he advised Mr Dunn to grant me the leave". Being a Black man, with full knowledge of the injustices enacted during the apartheid era and working for the labour division of the DoBE, he could have perceived the discriminations by Mr Dunn toward me (a historically marginalised woman) and felt compelled to help – to ensure that the prejudices of a White male and the legacy of apartheid did not prevail.

Since race and gender are inextricably linked, by virtue of my being a woman, I am again already 'othered' (3.6.2). Having to report directly to a male in terms of work management, already creates a hierarchy placing Mr Dunn at the head of the chain of command with me being placed beneath him. Retaining such hierarchical position (3.7) paved the way for Mr Dunn to hold a preconceived idea and exert his power when it came to the matter of furthering my studies. "Well I will not allow you to attend this course" proposed that Mr Dunn may have already placed a 'limitation' on how far I could progress with my studies. He probably felt that I was not going to be considered for any senior positions at the school and hence did not see the need for me to study further or perhaps he felt threatened that an 'inferior' or 'othered' woman had the ability to supersede him in terms of qualifications. Although Mr Dunn "made me out to be [a] 'glorified' teacher", with "no one else with my skills to teach computers", it substantiated that my work ethic was not in question but rather his denial of my human right to education sprang from a chauvinistic disposition.

Evident throughout my autobiographical narrative, is Mr Dunn's aggressive and patronising attitude which stemmed from a sexist mentality. "I am disappointed in you to say the least, the least! I told you I am not granting you this leave and you still went to the department ... [Finger pointed at me] Is that a threat? Is that a threat? ... I did you a favour by making you permanent after five years! ... I will discuss your duties and responsibilities further at the school.... You are just a teacher here. You don't tell me who to call. I will not call him" denotes a sense of misogyny as he views me as nothing more than a subordinate (predetermined mentality) and an unequal individual because of his sexist attitude. This barrage of rhetoric demonstrated not only the brash manner in which he chose to engage with me and how he used language to create not only a feeling of guilt, but also exposed the element of power and control with which he managed (3.7). This attitude further showed how male domination serves as a form of oppression. He was comfortable with always being in charge (which he thought rendered everyone else powerless). "He summoned me to his office and asked me what all this was about" also signified his autocratic leadership in that I needed to submit to his authority. He expected a sense of submissiveness or subservience from me and because I challenged his tyranny, it seemed to have amplified his aggression, possibly because he felt that he was no longer in control (3.7) or needed to re-establish control. In addition, challenging his dictatorship by going to the DoBE had "severely damaged our relationship". This implied that because I did

not submit and conform to his rules and instructions, I could not have the right to work in a congenial environment. From another perspective, it implied that for as long as I had remained docile, there would not have been an issue. "Did I not have a right to enquire about my leave? ... Yes, you did, but did I not tell you that I am not granting you this leave" demonstrates that he did acknowledge my human rights yet despite this, he still refused to grant me leave. Perhaps this was because he felt that he could run the institution by his own rules and considered himself to be above the law. Also, it revealed that perhaps in his eyes, 'rules' or the law should be applied differently for different people. His previous vocation as a policeman also cannot be ignored in this analysis as such brute disposition is not required in the discipline of education yet is being practiced. It raises the question though whether or not heads of institutions are aware of the limits of their power as managers or whether they assume that in their capacity as head of an institution they automatically have full control over individuals. Mr Dunn's attitude runs counter to Galloway's (2007:105) assertion that as heads of educational institutions, they ought to reason and act in a more deliberative, participatory and collegial manner, wherein mutual respect, deliberation and participatory forms of leadership are engendered in the life-world of the school. When the DoBE overturned his decision, he announced: "The department thinks it's a good idea for you to go on the training", as a controlling male he must surely have felt a sense of defeat as a Black man occupying a more senior position than him had reversed his decision and acknowledged an Indian woman's human right to further her education.

It is important to take cognisance of the contradiction that this disruption presented. When I requested leave to attend the compulsory MEd course, Mr Dunn retorted: "...you cannot be away for a week; it is unfair to the learners". Yet, when there were "defective computers in the lab", he did "not [want] to get in technicians to repair the computers". In addition, "[w]hen tablet computers were rolled out by the DoBE, he never said a word to me "but quietly asked the English teacher to accompany him on training being presented on the usage of the tablets". This consequently served as educational implications in that not only was he withholding educational information from me that pertained to my teaching discipline, but, more critically, he was also being unfair to the learners as it "made our teaching and learning experience very difficult within the classroom environment". This unprofessional attitude served to demonstrate his "intention was to keep me out of all school matters" and exclude me from the educational operations of the school. This also denoted how his actions enhanced the multiple forms of oppression that I encountered.

Being a young employee at the institution, the intersection of age thrives in the workplace setting. In my case, as a young, determined, female educator wanting to further my human right to education, multiple intersecting categories converged to intensify the compounded oppressions. This serves to demonstrate the 'boundarylessness' of intersectionality as it

distinguishes no borders. Furthermore, if education access remains a human right, how can this be achieved when non-marginalised individuals deny me this human right and impede my full participation as a citizen in society?

As I was younger than Mr Dunn and most of the other members of staff, certain stereotypes (3.6.4) were probably ascribed to me. When Mr Dunn summoned my older colleague, Mrs Blecher, to his office, he had the following to say: "What do you have to do with Ms Chetty's master's? ... I want you to stop encouraging her to do her master's, as you are causing disparity in the school". This not only provided insight into how far he was willing to go to deter me from furthering my education, but it also indicated how he was trying to set my colleagues against me and coax them into discouraging me from pursuing my studies. To his surprise, however, Mrs Blecher did not react in the way he expected: "I told her to go for it ... Opportunities like this don't just arise and she must do it now ... I would have said the same to my own daughters ... Do you realise what skill a teacher who is doing their master's can bring to the school?" He probably did not expect such a positive response from an older member of staff and probably thought that Ms Blecher shared his archaic attitude.

When a constituent such as education is highly valued and then disrupted, it has an adverse effect on the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom. Referring to Glensy's (2011) argument on human dignity (3.3.1), where every individual has the right to self-determination, there was a direct nullification of this right when Mr Dunn declared "I will not allow you to attend this course". He had taken it upon himself to put a limitation on my education and withdraw any sense of autonomy that I had in making that decision for myself. Locke's (1690) stance on equality (3.3.2) wherein no one ought to harm another in their life, health and liberty, can also be applied to educational goals. Had another female educator who was White or a male educator decided to further educate themselves thereby surpassing his qualifications, would Mr Dunn's reaction have been different? Locke's (1690) view that human beings are "free to order their actions in any way they choose" can be rather dangerous when viewed from a dichotomous angle. Whilst Mr Dunn, in his capacity as head of the institution may have felt he had the freedom not to allow me to attend the course thereby impeding my education, his actions also directly infringed on my freedom to order my actions according to my choice. It is also crucial to draw attention to the fact that in a patriarchal society, despite the democratic dispensation, human beings are not always free to order their actions in any way they choose (contrary to Locke's assertion).

In viewing disruptive moments as a positive phenomenon, the violation of my human right to education navigated me towards a more determined approach to my education. Seeing as education is often regarded as the main conduit to achieving women empowerment (3.4), by me

rising to the challenge presented by educational disruptions, it narrowed the space between the continuums of education access and socio-economic empowerment. Since my education provided a sense of liberation for me, it was crucial for me to keep that intact and stand firm. I chose not to bask in the luxury of silence and allow the autocratic attitudes of Mr Dunn to jeopardise my education.

4.3.3 Relocational disruptions (physical, professional and spaces of mobility)

Before I undertake this section, it is imperative that I first explain my stance on relocation and its connotations in this research study. Although relocational disruption is one of the three main meta-events that was presented in my autobiographical narrative, I do not view relocation in the physical sense only but also in the professional sense. In other words, moving from KwaZulu-Natal to the North West Province and then to the Gauteng Province formed the physical aspect of relocation, but moving from the corporate sector to the education sector and from the public to private school context formed the professional aspect of relocation. In addition, I also perceive relocation as a 'space of mobility' in that I moved from a temporary to a permanent position in employment, moved to a school closer to home and also broke the routine of reporting only to Mr Dunn by venturing into different settings such as the DoBE to attain my human right to education. In addition, these 'spaces of mobility' served as a vehicle toward my socio-economic empowerment. With this standpoint guiding the underpinning of this disruption, I now discuss how the theory of intersectionality presented itself in these disruptive events.

Given that intersectional categories cannot be seceded even within the ambits of relocational disruptions, intersectionality is ever present and often superimposing (3.9). Reflecting on South Africa's apartheid epoch during which the White racial group was considered superior to all other racial groups, it is perplexing to uncover that despite decades into democracy, the legacy of racism still persists (3.6.1). To examine how the intersectional category of race unfolded in this disruption, I point to depictions within my autobiographical narrative. Having grown up in the more diverse Province of KwaZulu-Natal, I found relocating to the North West Province a 'culture-shock' in the sense that the way of life and set of attitudes in some of its communities are quite undiversified despite the abolition of apartheid laws in South Africa. "Whilst visiting the nearby towns on two separate occasions, both my husband and I were subjected to racial discrimination and referred to as 'samoosas' by the White members of that community". Firstly, it is important to take cognisance that our presence as Indians (a historically marginalised group) in a predominantly Afrikaner town could be seen as a source of disruption and hence was not always welcomed. In addition, being stereotyped as an Indian cultural snack and the gross manner in which it was hurled at us denoted a derogatory racial condescension as was discussed in section 3.6.1. It was "assumed that both my husband and I were Muslim which

consequently resulted in a Muslim name (Ishmael) being designated to him, by a White male". Although some people may argue that a name is of no consequence ('what's in a name?'), I firmly believe that an individual's name is their birth-right and an essential part of their identity and as such should not be undone or invalidated for the sake of someone else's convenience, accessibility or ignorance. Whilst I recognise that language could have been a barrier for the White Afrikaner male, the fact that my ex-husband's English name was easier to pronounce than the name designated to him, created more of a conundrum. Furthermore, by the White male's assumption that my ex-husband was a Muslim showed his lack of basic knowledge towards the diverse culture of the Indian race or perhaps he was aware and simply chose to remain patronising.

I have always considered that one of the places wherein individuals should feel a sense of comfort and acceptance, irrespective of their racial identity, is within places of worship however as depicted in my autobiographical narrative this context can lend itself as a form of disruption. "Visiting a local church and dining at restaurants also provoked some glares and glowers from White parishioners and patrons respectively". By the unkind reception we received when we visited this church, it became apparent that either our presence as a historically marginalised group was unwelcome or the parishioners were astounded to see us in their midst and did not know how to react. For this orthodox Afrikaner community, socialising with us, albeit within the confines of a church, seemed unacceptable. Furthermore, dining at restaurants in these Afrikaner communities was not always a pleasant experience as often times we were stared down and it seemed as if the White patrons secretly wished that we would seat ourselves as far away as possible from them.

As a woman, already 'othered' by my racial and gender identity, there are certain societal expectations that seem to serve as a further oppression for women. The disruptions of "[h]aving resigned from my job in the corporate sector, getting married, leaving behind family and friends in KwaZulu-Natal and relocating to the North West Province ... relocat[ing] once more, this time to the Gauteng Province ... faced with the harsh, unexpected reality of the breakup of my marriage" and the violation of my human right to education demonstrates the myriad of transitions and compounded oppressions that some women have to encounter and the consequent expected adaptations thereof. Being a strong minded individual though, as described in section 4.3.1.2, I did not "sit back" and simply accept the adaptations but instead I chose to rise up and "venture into other unexplored terrains" such as acquiring assistance from the DoBE and relocating to a new school. In the context of relocating from the corporate to education sector, "I felt that I had to continuously prove myself" as I was the "only female amongst many males" however in the education sector, I did not feel the need to prove myself because women were the majority gender group. In terms of leadership, at my previous school,

I reported to a White male (Mr Dunn) whereas in my current institution, I report to an Indian female. These relocational disruptions served to demonstrate how gender intersects in diverse and multiple ways.

The category of age can also be viewed as a form of disruption in that I was younger than Mr Dunn and perhaps as a result he did not approve of me furthering my human right to education and surpassing him in terms of qualifications (4.3.2). Another way of viewing this, however, is that Mrs Blecher, who was older than Mr Dunn and me, probably as a result of her maturity, managed to see my potential and the contribution I could make towards raising the quality of education at the school by furthering my education. Mr Dunn, however, in his younger, possibly immature mind-set did not see it from this angle, or perhaps he did and felt threatened by it. “I could not be placed as an equal to my fellow counterparts in terms of my salary scale because of timeframe and age”. This is another example of how the intersection of age created discriminations and oppressions. As one cannot rewind or fast forward the hands of time or age, this depiction illustrates that in the interlude of time, I will continue to be discriminated against and treated as an unequal on account of my age.

Although the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) prohibits unfair discrimination on any ground (3.8.2), as evidenced in my autobiographical narrative, discriminations persist. It is therefore important to consider how these intersectional categories infringed on my human dignity, equality and freedom.

Kant (1785) asserts that human dignity is a quality of intrinsic value (3.3.1) however through the condescending and insulting classification of my ex-husband and me as ‘samoosas’, with a concomitant racial inference, it infringed on our inherent worth as human beings. There can be no concept of human dignity when individuals believe that their existence on earth is superior to another individual’s and they resort to racial superciliousness to support it. The act of ‘renaming’ also constituted a flouting of human dignity in the sense that who or what gave the White male the right to ‘rename’ my ex-husband and to a name that seemed more suitable or accessible to him? “Ai, jy is ’n slim meisie”⁸ also implied that by spelling out my ex-husband’s name in order to correct the White male, made him aware that I was ‘clever’ and had recognised the possible underlying condescension, whereas before he might have thought I was ‘stupid’ to not have recognised it. Hence, the White male’s patronising assertion cast aspersions on my intelligence and also constituted a violation of my human dignity as a woman.

⁸ “Ah, you are a clever girl” – English translation

Not being treated as an equal to my fellow educators in terms of salary scale despite my possessing more than the required qualifications (3.8.4) is in contrast to Fuo's (3.3.2) stance that every individual should enjoy the same rights and opportunities as another. In other words, for as long as I am considered a 'young' employee at the institution, the virtues of equality will remain a negation toward me.

The inability to visit shopping malls, restaurants and churches in a democratic society without being subjected to racial affronts or insinuations negates the virtues of freedom. If these spaces are meant to be public domains, how can there be any notion of freedom when individuals from historically marginalised groups are subjected to racial discriminations and bigotries? In addition, Kant's (1785) notion of liberty (3.3.3) which is inseparably connected to the concept of autonomy is in direct contrast to the expected adaptations that the relocational disruptions brought with them. The multiple transitions and expected adaptations that each relocational disruption caused, was an infringement of my freedom in the sense that when moving provinces, there was no choice afforded to me in terms of the relocation. I was expected to simply relocate for my ex-husband's convenience and was expected to adapt to each disruption.

By adopting the approach that disruptive events can produce positive outcomes, I found that the various relocational disruptions exposed me to numerous spheres of change. In as much as some of the relocational disruptions required expected adaptations, it also allowed for me to become more independent, determined and resilient thereby providing a sense of empowerment for me as a woman. In addition, whilst these disruptive events imposed multiple difficulties and oppressions, I believe that they also had the propensity to ensure that I was never complacent or in a comfort zone for a long period of time and this is deemed to have had a positive impact on both my human right to education and my socio-economic empowerment.

4.4 INTERPRETING THE INTERSECTIONS OF THE META-EVENTS (DISRUPTIONS)

In the discourse on the meta-events described above, I have demonstrated how the various social categories of intersectionality such as race, gender, sexism and age converge, and often superimpose themselves within the various disruptive events and consequently intensified the compounded oppressions.

For the purpose of structural layout and ease of reference, I had separated the intersecting categories in each meta-event however in reality, intersectionality cannot be separated or abridged as they operate together to produce injustices and oppressions (Hill Collins, 2000a:18). In other words, the categories of race, gender, sexism and age interact dynamically

with each other and intensify the marginalisation and oppression of women. In line with intersectional theory, I now synthesise the intersectional categories and discuss these categories in terms of the theory of intersectionality and human rights discourse that was detailed in Chapter 3. Thereafter, I examine how the disruptions experienced in each meta-event brought me closer to the continuums of education access and socio-economic empowerment and consequently facilitated in narrowing the space between these two continuums.

Within the personal meta-event, the category of race was predominant and simultaneously produced multiple oppressions. As I proceeded to the educational meta-event, intersectionality evidenced itself when the categories of race, gender, sexism and age converged and again produced multilayered oppressions. In the relocational meta-event, intersectionality accentuated the interwoven nature of race, gender and age and effectuated compounded oppressions. Through these meta-events it becomes clear that intersectionality is not confined by specific borders, but in fact transcends them and underscores the multidimensionality of historically marginalised woman's lived experiences.

In understanding that intersectional categories cannot be treated as exclusive entities in human experience (Crenshaw, 1989) when combining the categories of race, gender, sexism and age it produces further complexities and exposes the interlocking systems of oppression. So, my combined identity as a historically marginalised, young, determined woman already attracts prejudices and inequalities. As an Indian, I experienced the injustices of racial discrimination and racial hierarchy, added to that, by virtue of being a woman, I experienced misogynistic attitudes, coupled with that, because I sought to challenge the injustices toward me rather than simply accepting my position, it paved the way for sexist attitudes. Then when one might have thought that intersectionality would 'pause', it manifested itself using my identity as a young woman. This substantiates that intersectionality is omnipresent in a woman's life and never 'pauses' or rests. While women are not a homogenous group, who experience the same forms of prejudices (3.5), intersectionality demonstrates that regardless of race, gender and age, amongst others, women are not exempt from its disposition and consequent oppressions.

As a theory, intersectionality is necessary to achieve a full and complex understanding of human rights violations in society (Bond, 2003:152). Although international legislations such as the United Nations Charter (United Nations, 1945) and the UDHR (United Nations, 1948) advocate the protection of human rights and are based on the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom inherent in all human beings, the evidences of human rights violations persist. In addition, the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) adopts the very same core virtues with the human rights of its citizens vehemently protected on legislative paper yet in one way or another

the inequalities, discriminations and human rights violations from South Africa's apartheid past still continues. In reflecting on the meta-events discussed in this chapter, not only was my human right to education violated but the very essence of human dignity, equality and freedom was disparaged. This demonstrates that intersectionality, with its superimposing nature and multiple complexities and compounded oppressions also makes room for the violation of human rights. In other words, despite the actual disruption in each meta-event and what it entailed, it also had a direct bearing on my constitutional right to human dignity, equality and freedom, all of which were infringed upon.

Parallel to Crenshaw's (1989) stance on intersectionality (3.7) intersectional categories and the oppressions it yields, can either mutually strengthen or weaken each other. Reflecting on the intersectional categories in each meta-event, I chose to view the disruptions in a positive approach as I believed that ultimately, despite the inequalities and oppressiveness that they generated, they worked to actually strengthen my resolve to fight for my human right to education and to advance in the notion of women empowerment. It is important to take cognisance of the fact that each meta-event did generate multiple forms of oppression and complexities, but I chose to use these disruptions as stepping stones rather than stumbling blocks. In so doing, I was able to considerably narrow the space between the continuums of education access and socio-economic empowerment. Whereas, the journey depicted in my autobiographical narrative demonstrated the substantial space that was hindering me from attaining my human right to education and my empowerment as a woman, these disruptions actually brought me closer to reaching these continuums.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The data analysis in this chapter revealed the main meta-events that I encountered in my autobiographical narrative. First, each meta-event was analysed to uncover how intersectional categories were manifested in each disruption. Second, the intersectional categories were analysed in accordance with its bearing on the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom. Third, the meta-events were analysed to determine the extent to which they narrowed the space between the continuums of education access and socio-economic empowerment. Fourth, to add to these segments of analysis, the meta-events were further analysed through synthesis and in conjunction with the theory of intersectionality and the ambits of human rights. Finally, the analysis examined how despite the intersectional oppressions and complexities and the violation of human rights, the disruptions in each meta-event was approached with a positive stance and steered me in ways that narrowed the space between the two continuums of education access and socio-economic empowerment.

The next chapter focuses on the revelations from the process of “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) and presents the conclusions of this research study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCOVERING A GALAXY BEYOND THE CURRENT UNIVERSE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by returning to the main research questions and objectives that underpinned this research study. Next, I provide an overview of each chapter that was presented in this study before elaborating on the revelations from the process of “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) in tandem with the intersectional theory. The possible limitations that were encountered in this research study are then explained alongside suggestions for further research that could be advantageous to a similar study. Finally, I offer a retrospective reflection on this research study.

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES THAT UNDERPINNED THIS RESEARCH STUDY

This section reiterates the main research question, subsidiary questions and objectives that formed the framework of this study.

5.2.1 Main Question

To what extent, if any, does the human right to education mobilise women in the space between access to education and socio-economic empowerment?

5.2.2 Sub-questions

- How does the human right to education address the underlying assumptions that access leads to socio-economic empowerment?
- How does the WEGE Bill mobilise women’s socio-economic empowerment from a poststructuralist feminist discourse perspective?
- How can the complex processes embedded in the space between access and socio-economic empowerment for women be unpacked in order to better understand the human right to education?

5.2.3 Objectives of the research

The main objective of this autoethnographical study was to explore the extent to which the human right to education navigates women's access to education towards social and economic empowerment. The manner in which this was done was through questioning the human right of access to education and the underlying assumptions underpinning it. These sub-objectives contributed further to the research study:

- To explore to what extent the human right to education takes account of the underlying assumptions that education access leads to socio-economic empowerment
- To investigate how the WEGE Bill mobilises women's socio-economic empowerment from a poststructuralist feminist discourse perspective
- To explore how the complex processes embedded in the space between access and socio-economic empowerment for women can be unpacked to better understand the notion of the human right to education

5.3 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This section presents an overview of each chapter of the research study. Chapter 1 provided an outline of the various human rights violations that scourge both women and girls on a universal scale. To demonstrate the severity of these abuses I drew on a range of statistics coupled with the understanding that every number represented the face of a marginalised woman or girl. Inclusion of the various atrocities and discriminations enacted on and against women and girls captured their lived experiences and exposed the compounded oppressions and complexities that besieged them and inevitably served as impediments to their social and economic empowerment. Although this study adopted an autoethnographical approach, it was essential for me to take cognisance of the lived experiences of other marginalised women and girls and create a platform whereby their voices could be heard.

This chapter was pivotal to the function of this study as it both exposed the multiple complexities that beset women and girls irrespective of geographical locations, racial identities and economic standings and established the context for the subsequent chapters in this research study.

The MDGs (United Nations, 2000) were used as a point of reference in this chapter as they not only served as a global framework to improve the lives of marginalised individuals, but their objectives of education access and women empowerment run parallel to the objectives of my study.

As the core of my research study was to explore the extent to which the human right to education navigates women's access to education towards social and economic empowerment, by simultaneously revealing the statistics and lived experiences pertaining to education access for women and girls, it lent enhancement to identifying the intellectual conundrums in this study. The first conundrum revealed that in some countries mentioned in this chapter, access to education for women and girls is negated due to societal norms and patriarchal attitudes. The second conundrum revealed that whilst education access is available in many countries, this does not automatically lead to women's socio-economic empowerment. The latter provided the locus of the assumption that exists, which is, for as long as women are granted access to education then this access will automatically lead to their social and economic empowerment. In addition to this false assumption is the ignorance towards the space that exists between the continuums of education access and socio-economic empowerment. This chapter further demonstrated that at the epicentre of this space, all the complexities such as race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age converge.

I further drew on the notion of education as a human right, particularly within the South African context, using legislations such as the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) and the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a). A brief discussion on the apartheid education system revealed the vast inequalities experienced and notwithstanding two decades of democracy, these inequalities still persist.

Despite the roles of an educator stipulated in the ELRC Policy Handbook for Educators (Brunton 2003), in wanting to further my human right to education and professionally develop myself as an educator, my human right to education was violated by one of the very institutions that are meant to advocate education. A further discussion ensued on the aftermath of my human right to education being denied. This denial of my human right to education compelled me to understand my place in society as a woman educator and how it shaped me and helped me to understand the causes of the underlying complexities that serve to impede the progression of women's empowerment.

Although numerous legislations advocate the human right to education, I drew further attention to the actuality that inadequate consideration is exercised in relation to the plight of women who are denied access to education. Lastly, after reflecting on the atrocities, discriminations and inequalities presented in this chapter, I challenged the notion of a democratic society.

Chapter 2 encompassed the research design, methodologies and processes employed in this research study. This included autoethnography as my chosen methodological framework in conjunction with poststructuralist feminist discourse as my selected paradigm. I drew on the

advantages and criticisms of autoethnography and set out my reasons for employing such a methodology in this study. I thereafter elaborated on the poststructuralist feminist discourse, its applicability to my study and how it served to outline my autoethnographical methodological framework, as well as the theory of intersectionality and the data analysis that was implemented in this study. In expounding on the data generating instrument, I called attention to my autobiographical narrative which was used for this purpose and explained my reasons for adopting this approach. Further details were provided on the data analysis which involved the “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) method of using theory to think with my data and using my data to think with theory. The intra-categorical intersectional approach and the theory of intersectionality as a concept were discussed together with reasons for their suitability in my research study. Lastly, I explored the measures taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the study as well as the ethical considerations that were relevant to my research study.

Chapter 3 provided a review of the literature which communicated the criticality of human rights and connotations of the core democratic virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom. A critical analysis of the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a), whose objective is to serve as a legislative framework and provide gender equality and women empowerment, was undertaken to determine its position as a powerful instrument for change. Despite the acknowledgement on legislative paper of a women’s human right to education, ignorant assumptions lie within and persist. The main erroneous assumption is that a woman’s right to education access will automatically lead to her socio-economic empowerment with ignorance to the multiple intersecting categories such as race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age that converge. This begot me to the theory of intersectionality and how it enhanced the multifaceted complexities and compounded oppressions in the lives of marginalised women. Finally, each intersectional category was explored in relation to the democratic virtues.

Chapter 4 comprised the presentation and analysis of my autobiographical narrative. Through the process of “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), in addition to using McCall’s (2005) intra-categorical complexity as a standpoint in the process of analysis, three core meta-events (disruptions) were identified i.e. personal, educational and relocational disruptions. Each meta-event was then analysed to determine how the theory of intersectionality unfolded in the moment of disruption as well as its resultant bearing on the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom. Thereafter, I described the extent to which each disruptive moment narrowed or widened the space between the continuums of education access and socio-economic empowerment. Lastly, I undertook to interpret the intersections of the meta-events by reflecting on the theory of intersectionality and the discourse on human rights which was presented in my literature review.

5.4 REVELATIONS FROM THE PROCESS OF PLUGGING IN

In this section, a discussion on the revelations that were encountered from the process of “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) ensues. I explore both the aspects of “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) and the power of disruptions through intra-categorical intersectionality.

5.4.1 Aspects of plugging in

When reflecting on the aspects of “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) and the findings that it produced, it became imperative for me to enquire how the theory of intersectionality defined my experience as a woman. To accomplish this enquiry, I reflected on my autobiographical narrative to consider the proliferations or unveilings that came to the fore.

In a more general revelation of the “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), the findings revealed that whilst many legislations are in place to advocate the human rights of individuals, in practice this is not always so straightforward. Through the violation of human rights, it inevitably infringes on the virtues of human dignity, equality and freedom that all individuals are entitled to. The findings further revealed the patriarchal, discriminatory structures that are still existent in society today, particularly in educational institutions despite twenty years of democracy. Furthermore, the revelations show how heads of educational institutions flout and disregard legislations such as the Constitution (South Africa, 1996a) which clearly affirms the human rights of all its citizens, the ELRC Policy Handbook for Educators (Brunton, 2003) which stipulates the role of educators, and the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a) which aims to promote gender equality and the educational and socio-economic empowerment of women. For as long as such inequalities and injustices persist, regardless of how much legislation is penned, women will always find themselves at the crossroads of intersectionality.

As intersectionality accentuates the multidimensionality of marginalised subjects’ lived experiences (3.5.1) it also points to the “limitation of gender as a single analytical category” (McCall, 2005:1771). This perspective allowed for the understanding that it is impossible to theorise about women’s lived experiences by examining only one part of an individual’s complex and multidimensional identity (Maj, 2013). Subsequent to this, theoretical considerations of other categories such as race, sexuality and sexism, and age, the relationships between these categories and how these relationships construct individual’s experiences were recognised. Not surprisingly, throughout my autobiographical narrative the intersecting categories of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age converged and operated together in influencing my lived experiences.

Upon reflections of the meta-events that unfolded, it is primarily important to take cognisance that the intersectional categories identified above already retained an underlying position. In addition, within the moments of disruption, these same intersectional categories further established themselves. This demonstrates that intersectionality and the identities of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age which were central in my autobiographical narrative, has no concept of time, boundaries, limits or capacities. It can strike in both subtle and obvious ways and seeks to make itself known. It often superimposes and can be experienced simultaneously. By these depictions I mean that despite the various concurrent disruptions that occurred in my life, the intersecting categories which were already underlying each disruption chose to impose itself at any given time, transcending boundaries and limits. It is as if intersectionality does not reach a level of capacity in the amount of complexities and oppressions that it can generate, and neither is it inclined to have a finale or denouement. If anything, intersectionality seems to have the ability to thrive when more than one category is included in the equation. This however, does not imply that if only one intersectional category is experienced, it reduces or lessens the complexities and oppressions suffered. In addition, each intersectional category had a role to play in shaping my lived experience and undoubtedly intensified the multiple complexities and oppressions that I encountered.

Another dimension of intersectionality is that it demonstrates how experiences of oppression are not identical for all women and girls as Maj (2013) accentuates that intersectionality demonstrates the historical and socio-cultural contingency of oppression. With each intersectional category converging in conjunction with undergoing various and often simultaneous disruptive moments, the superimposing nature of intersectionality and its interlocking systems of oppression became evident. It is crucial to point out, however, that despite the multiple complexities and compounded oppressions that were experienced, it also paved the way for both my emancipation and empowerment. Had I not encountered and confronted the oppressions and disruptions head-on, it would not have created an avenue of change wherein I could transform into a more independent individual and develop a sense of autonomy with a greater awareness of myself (4.3.1.2). These lived experiences, despite their arduousness allowed me to see myself anew.

Despite the complexities and oppressiveness that intersectionality can generate, factors such as my value system (4.3.1.2) helped me to rise above the impediments that intersectionality precipitates. In like manner, whilst complexities and oppressiveness were present in each disruptive event, my approach to embracing these disruptions as positive phenomena also paved the way for me towards my liberation and empowerment. All these disruptions could have had the power to limit me but instead they worked together to narrow the space between the continuums of my education access and socio-economic empowerment. They served to

strengthen my resolve and navigated me towards adopting a more determined approach in attaining my human right to education and my empowerment as a woman.

By virtue of being a woman, still living in a patriarchal society riddled with attitudes of bigotry, I acknowledge that I will almost always come to the crossroads of intersectional categories, in some form or another, as I journey through life. However, what this experience has taught me is that whilst I may not be able to control how these categories manifest and when or where they choose to manifest itself, ultimately the power resides within me to both determine the extent to which I will allow these intersectional identities to deter me and how I muster my resilience to conquer it each time.

5.4.2 Power of disruptions through intra-categorical intersectionality

Firstly, in undertaking this section, it was important for me to re-engage with the broader debate of this study, particularly the theory and discourses of intersectionality (3.5) before I examined what the revelations brought forth after the process of “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

In employing McCall’s (2005:1774) intra-categorical intersectional approach, which analyses the complexity of lived experience amongst marginalised groups, I was able to reflect on my own lived experiences as depicted in my autobiographical narrative to determine the power of disruptions. In so doing, I was able to enunciate how my experiences both expand and challenge the theory of intersectionality.

Although intersectionality does constitute reinforcing categories coupled with multiple complexities and oppressions, disruptions can be viewed as positive phenomena in the lived experiences of women (5.4.1). Progressing one step further, I argued that disruptions can also be powerful in the sense that they have the capacity to influence and navigate towards a woman’s emancipation and empowerment (5.4.1). With its interlocking systems of oppression, intersectionality sometimes has the tendency to portray women as oppressed, disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals. Whilst I have no desire to diminish the effects of intersectionality, and I acknowledge that oppressions and inequalities pursue women like a shadow, it does not always result in a defeated or subjugated self. Disruptions, in its varied contexts such as personal, educational and relocational can operate together in positive ways and have the power to reverse the intent of what intersectional identities set out to do. In embracing this viewpoint, it becomes critical for a woman to acknowledge how she perceives herself in the midst of intersectional convergence and disruptions. Thus, it is pivotal that an innate value system and a resilient attitude take up the baton and resist the effects of intersectionality.

At this juncture, I also provide insight into further perspectives that came to the fore during the revelations of “plugging in” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). Although the intersectional categories of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age did converge and intensify the complexities and compounded oppressions that I experienced, the disruptions itself, did have intersecting paradigms. Despite the extent to which these intersecting categories manifested itself and the acknowledgement of its underlying existence in the personal, educational and relocational disruptions, it was these very disruptions that also had the capacity to superimpose and enhance the multifaceted complexities and compounded oppressions. In addition, just as intersectional identities of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age transcended boundaries, disruptions have the ability to converge and transcend geographical locations, racial identities and economic standings. From reflections on my lived experiences of intersectionality combined with disruptive events, I am of the opinion that because it is often times the intersectional categories that beget disruptions, disruptions can also be considered to constitute as an intersectional form in the broader social context.

To substantiate this notion, I refer to the work of Yuval-Davis (2006:205), wherein she posits that the purpose of intersectionality is to “analyse the differential ways in which diverse social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other and how they relate to political and subjective constructions of identities”. This also denotes that intersectional scholarship should carefully separate and individually examine the different levels in which social divisions operate in the various communities in society. In other words, intersectional scholarship should analyse how social inequalities are enacted “institutionally, intersubjectively, representationally as well as in the subjective constructions of identities” (Yuval-Davis, 2006). In addition, Knapp (2005:259) argues for the need to extend beyond a micro-analytical focus of subjectivities into macro-perspectives aimed at broader structures in culture and society. To attain a more comprehensive understanding of structured subject positions, it is essential to extend the analytical range to include social theoretical approaches. Using Knapp’s (ibid.) example wherein she questions how intersectional identities intertwine in the structural make-up of society, I apply it to my specific context and question how race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age relations are interwoven in the disruptions and institutional framework of a given society and economy, in both national and transnational contexts. In addition, she raises the question of what becomes of these ‘relationalities’ under conditions of social, economic and political transformation (ibid.). To provide a clear understanding of my stance in this context, I view the personal disruption of divorce for instance, as a broader societal construct within society and not simply a by-product of intersectionality. With the escalating divorce rates in society and its ability to massively alter lives through its consequential effects on social and economic transformations, it undeniably has a bearing on the greater societal context. Furthermore, the disruption of divorce can be viewed as a form of diverse social division which

is entangled with other social divisions such as relocational disruptions and these have a bearing on the subjective constructions of identity. Hence, these disruptions should be considered in the intersectional debate and examined individually to gauge the different levels in which these various societal divisions operate. By moving beyond the micro-analysis of intersectional identities into the macro-analysis of structures in society, it can also facilitate in perceiving how disruptions, as a construct, can serve to function as a powerful agent to combat the effects of intersectionality, thereby expanding on the current intersectional discourses.

In challenging the existing theory of intersectionality, I first reflect on its history (3.5). Many African American activists, such as Sojourner Truth and female scholars such as bell hooks (1984) have debated the dimensions of intersectional categories such as race and placed black women's experiences at the core of their work and acknowledged the intersecting oppressions that informed their lives (Hill Collins, 2000b:44). Whilst their actions were undoubtedly both indispensable and laudable, I reflect on the transatlantic travels of intersectionality. Here I refer to the notion of intersectionality within a South African context. Given that I am a South African Indian woman and emanate from a historically marginalised group, this racial category was designated to me during the apartheid era and was used to identify my privileged or disadvantaged position (3.6.1). In addition, acknowledging that those labelled Black or Coloured were also historically marginalised groups, what became clear was that irrespective of the racial category that each group held, we were still considered as 'Black' or Non-White. Seeing that intersectionality acknowledges that women are not a homogenous group who experience the same forms of discrimination and oppressions (3.4), as an Indian woman, where exactly do I fit in in the intersectional debate? Whilst many scholars have theorised about intersectionality from a black women's and white women's perspective and experiences, hardly any perspectives are theorised from an Indian women's experiences. Although many Indian women are subjected to injustices, prejudices and multiple forms of subordination just as women from other historically marginalised groups, the historical and socio-cultural contexts of Indian women are different and are not always taken into consideration in the intersectional discourses. As a result of this, if it is 'expected' that as an Indian woman my identity should automatically equate to a Black or Coloured woman or that I should just 'fit in' with the general black women's intersectional debate then does that not contest the very notion of intersectionality and subsequently my identity as a woman? If my precise identity cannot find a rightful place in the intersectional debate then this serves to challenge the theory of intersectionality.

5.5 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are two possible limitations that can be identified in this research study at present.

5.5.1 Universality of women and girls

It can be argued that a limitation of this research study is the universalising of women and girls as a homogenous group. Due to the legislations that I have referred to in this study, particularly the MDGs (United Nations, 2000) and the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a), which regard women and girls as a homogenous group, my study consequently universalised women and girls. In addition, fragmenting girls' and women's identity into distinct categories would have made it difficult to capture the lived experience of their multifaceted oppressions (Taefi, 2009:346). The universalising of women and girls into a homogenous group, however, can be dangerous as Weiler (1995:37) asserts that not all women have the same experiences and hence they cannot be considered as a homogenous group. Similarly, girls cannot be treated as a homogenous group because their perceptions and experiences differ considerably as a result of their cultural, social and economic backgrounds (Simmonds, 2013:57). Furthermore, Lorber (2012:331) maintains that women and girls are not homogenous groups but cross-cut by cultures, religions, racial identities, ethnicities, social classes, sexualities and other major categories. Being cognisant of the dangers of universalising women and girls into a homogenous group, for the purposes of this study and the specific legislations employed, the universality of women and girls was applied.

5.5.2 Lack of engagement with other intersectional categories

Not having engaged with the intersectional categories such as class, ethnicity, nationality and religion can be regarded as a limitation in this study. By incorporating these categories, it could have provided a broader perspective on the lived experiences of women and girls in addition to how these intersectional categories coalesce to intensify their multiple and compounded oppressions and marginalisation. Furthermore, employing these categories could have allowed for a deeper understanding of its relation to human rights and its influence on the access to education and the socio-economic empowerment of women and girls. However, my intention in this study was to uncover the various intersecting categories that manifested itself in my autobiographical narrative and which ultimately lent intensification to the impeding of my human right to education and socio-economic empowerment. As the categories of class, ethnicity, nationality and religion did not feature in my autobiographical narrative, I elected not to engage with these intersecting categories for the purposes of this study.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following suggestions for further research are put forward in light of this research study.

5.6.1 Ontological disruptions and the powerful impact they can have on personal empowerment

A research study could explore how ontological disruptions derived from the lived experiences of diverse groups of individuals could have a profound impact on their personal empowerment. In addition, a study that is explored with the inclusion of example marginalised men's and boys' lived experiences could also contribute to an awareness of how ontological disruptions are experienced in their lives and its consequential influence. Through such studies, diverse perspectives of ontological disruptions can be identified. Exploring these avenues can have the potential to expand current discourses on ontological disruptions and allow for participants and/or researchers themselves to become aware of the positive influence of ontological disruptions in their own lives.

5.6.2 A review of policies and procedures in educational institutions

A research study could investigate the national policies and procedures in place for educators from both public and private schools to further their education in postgraduate studies. This research does not take account of other educators (female or male) from public or private educational institutions whose human right to further their education in postgraduate studies was impeded. In addition, whilst most legislation aimed at women empowerment dictates one thing on paper, its practice in educational institutions does not always reflect this. A study that investigates what national policies dictate pertaining to educators advancing their education in postgraduate studies versus the actual procedures in place at educational institutions can reveal the polarity between these two entities. If further research is conducted on the abovementioned, it could expose the possible human rights violations and call attention to policy developers and governmental heads. This could pave the way for more educators to have the freedom to further their human right to education.

5.7 CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

I consider the work presented in this research study as a significant contribution to the discourses surrounding human rights, intersectionality, education and the socio-economic empowerment of women. It further contributed to an understanding of how multiple intersectional categories converge, transcend borders and lends intensification to the complexities and oppressions that women encounter in their lived experiences. In addition, the disparagement of women's human dignity, equality and freedom as a result of intersectionality provided insight into how these virtues are simply nullified in a patriarchal yet democratic society. The violation of women's human rights, particularly in the sphere of education, has

created a deeper awareness of the struggles that some women educators contend with when they pursue their human right to education. Additionally, the assumption that access to education will automatically lead to a women's socio-economic empowerment has been challenged through depictions of my own lived experiences as recounted in my autobiographical narrative. Despite the emancipatory intended legislations such as the MDGs (United Nations, 2000) and the WEGE Bill (South Africa, 2014a), these paperbound declarations are inadequate and not always applied in practice and across all realms. This compels legislators or policy makers to consider the lived experiences of marginalised women when penning future legislation for women as it is only then that the execution of such legislations can be realised.

This study has also demonstrated the value of employing "plugging in" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) as an analytical tool as different revelations came to the fore and had the capacity to provide new insights and expand and challenge existing intersectional discourses.

Engaging with the discourses above, has shaped the process of answering the main research question of this study: To what extent, if any, does the human right to education mobilise women in the space between access to education and socio-economic empowerment? Firstly, through the lived experiences of women and girls, mine included, it demonstrated how the human right to education remains such an opaque right in the sense that many of us have to 'engage in battle' for this human right to be accorded to us, despite what legislations proclaim. Secondly, in the space between the continuums of education access and socio-economic empowerment, a multiplicity of factors proliferated such as how intersecting categories of race, gender, sexuality and sexism, and age converge and intensify the multiple complexities and compounded oppressions that women encounter. In addition, disruptive events also find ground and contribute to the repressions that women experience. Whilst intersectional categories and disruptions experienced in the space between these continuums have the ability to hinder women and prevent their progression, these constituents also have the power to mobilise women to attain their education and socio-economic empowerment. In my personal capacity, because I did not want the oppressiveness of intersectional identities and disruptions to deter me from my human right to education and empowerment as a woman, I realised it was incumbent on me not simply to rely on educational organisations and paperbound legislations to mobilise me but I needed to create an avenue whereby I could mobilise myself toward achieving my human right to education and my emancipation as a woman.

This profound speech by Sojourner Truth depicts the power that woman have in empowering and mobilising themselves despite what society may dictate.

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I could have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman?

I have borne thirteen children, and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? (Truth, 1851)

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APPENDIX A

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to attest that the master's dissertation named below has been language edited:

"Mobilising women in the space between education access and socio-economic empowerment: a human rights perspective" by Desiree John Chetty.



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2 October 2015