

**School of Population Health  
Faculty of Health Sciences**

**“A Metamorphosis of Sorts”: Exploring the Conceptualisation of  
Women’s Academic Identity in Australian Higher Education**

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**This thesis is presented for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology)  
of  
Curtin University**

**November 2021**

## **DECLARATION**

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated May 2018.

The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number: HRE2018-0606 (Appendix A), and Amendment Number: HRE2018-0606-01 (Appendix B).

Signature:

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge that Curtin University works across hundreds of traditional lands and custodial groups in Australia, and with First Nations people around the globe. We wish to pay our deepest respects to their ancestors and members of their communities, past, present, and to their emerging leaders. Our passion and commitment to work with all Australians and peoples from across the world, including our First Nations peoples are at the core of the work we do, reflective of our institutions' values and commitment to our role as leaders in the Reconciliation space in Australia.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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*I've seen people come and go, young and old, from all walks of life, but they all leave a bookmark in the story that I write (Delta Goodrem, 2004).*

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As someone who could write an entire PhD on thanking his loved ones, refining this acknowledgements section was not an easy task. This thesis would not have been completed without the contributions, assistance, and support of so many people. Even now, upon completion, this still does not feel like enough. Where do I even begin?

I would first like to thank the **52 women** who agreed and consented to participate in my research. Thank you for allowing me the privilege and time to listen to your stories and experiences. The bravery that you all showed in sharing with me some of your most personal moments in academia, and life in general, was particularly moving, and often part of my inspiration to keep on keeping on. The support you have all given my research project will be forever cherished and appreciated.

I want to express my sincere gratitude and special thanks to my supervisory team **Dr Peta Dzidic, Associate Professor Lynne Roberts, and Dr Emily Castell**, who have each made such an immense impact on me and my life, and as such, deserve a special mention as provided below.

**Peta**, where do I even begin? How do I even express my thoughts into words about how amazing and wonderful you are? Even writing this, it does not feel like enough to express how grateful I am to you for all that you have done for me. My life has been immensely impacted and changed just for knowing you. Your friendship, humour, support, advice, and guidance have been invaluable. From the undergraduate psychology days to now, you have pushed me to reach even higher, to achieve more, to take ownership of my project (and my life), and to question

everything. You have gifted me with the ability to think and provided me with opportunities to build on my knowledge and experience in my study, my work, and my everyday life. You are my hero, my mentor, but also, my friend, and I am forever grateful to you. I am a better person, and a better human, because of the impact you have had on my life. You are truly a wonderful human. Thank you.

**Lynne**, there are so many wonderful reasons to thank you for all that you have done. Your guidance and feedback in the formative stages of this project was invaluable, at a time when I was feeling stagnant, and uninspired. You then came onto the scene towards the end of the project, at a time when I needed the drive and the push to make it through the final few hurdles of this experience. Your mentorship and friendship during my university experience has been so valued. You have taught me how to be pragmatic, realistic, and strategic, and to 'own' my experiences. Thank you for sharing your wisdom, humour, wealth of knowledge and experience with me, and for taking me under your wing and providing me with so many wonderful opportunities. The growth and progression I have experienced under your supervision and mentorship could not have been experienced with anyone else, truly, so thank you.

**Emily**, reflecting on how far we have come, what a journey we have been on together! You have been by my side supervising my research and supporting me since the days of undergraduate psychology. You, more than anyone, have seen my growth and progression over time in academia. From my honours research, to teaching, to my PhD research, we've been through so many wonderful experiences together. Your mentorship, friendship, support, and humour has been a huge part of my academic (and life) journey, and words cannot express how grateful I am to you. You have also gifted me with the ability to think, to question, to see things critically, and to make sure I enjoy the process of not only study, but life in general. I cannot remember a time without you by my side, supporting me and cheering me on. Thank you so very much for everything that you have done for me. I appreciate it.

A research project is not only about the participants, or the research team, but also, the broader group of individuals who provide guidance, support, and advice along the way. As such, I also wish to thank these specific Curtin staff members who assisted at different times of the project with feedback, suggestions to enhance the overall project, and for just being amazing, wonderful, supportive humans throughout my academic (and daily) life: **Associate Professor Lauren Breen, Dr Kelly Prandl, Dr David Garratt-Reed, Professor Natalie Gasson, Dr Mara Blosfelds, Dr Hannah Uren, Dr Jemma Stewart, Associate Professor Lorraine Sheridan, Dr Trevor Mazzucchelli, Dr Frank Baughman, Dr Brody Heritage, and Associate Professor Suze Leitao.**

I would like to also express my appreciation overall to all the **staff within the School of Population Health, the School of Allied Health, and the Graduate Research School** for their support in my teaching, research, and PhD studies. The many opportunities I have been afforded have allowed for me to grow and become a better academic, and a better human being, so thank you.

To **my family, my partner, and my friends** who have supported my journey, and provided me with the love, encouragement, and push to continue. You are all my heroes. You all bring something so special and unique to my life. Specifically, I have a few people to thank and acknowledge.

**Mumsy**, you have been the one who has seen it all. You know me better than I know myself, and you have had to listen to all my rants, my moments of craziness, my brainstorming, my complaints, to see my ups and downs throughout this journey, and you have been such an invaluable part of the process. You have seen my tears, my frustration, my excitement, the rollercoaster journey that I have been on through this. Your constant love and support are so very cherished. I appreciate how you continually push me to do better, to be better, and to aim higher. Life would not be life without you. Thank you for always being there for me (your baby) only a phone call or text message away. I love you immensely.

**Dad**, thank you for always being my cheerleader, my support system, and for always reminding me that life does not have to be taken so seriously. You have made sure that every opportunity I take, that I enjoy the process, and ensured that I set the boundaries and take ownership of my life, so that I do not burn out. You care, and you care for me in such a huge way. Your visits, calls, and weekly text messages were part of what got me through this journey, so thank you. You are amazing. I love and cherish you so much.

**Aaron**, thank you for being the best big brother I could ever ask for. I know I can always count on you. Your guidance, support, and humour have made you such a crucial part of my life. I could not imagine my life without my big brother, so thank you. Thank you for listening and being a part of this journey. Even when you acknowledged not understanding a thing about my PhD, somehow, I always felt that you understood me. You always have, and you always will.

To my beautiful niece **Ava**, thank you for always managing to make me smile. Even when I felt I could not continue, you gave me the strength and the motivation to keep going. You are the love and light that came into my life during a time of immense darkness. Thank you for always understanding when I had to get my, as you put it, “*yucky work*” done, and now we can spend more time colouring in together and playing with Barbie dolls. To answer your continual question, yes, Uncle Matt can play now.

**Daryl**, my love, you came along towards the end of the journey, but at a time where the chaos truly felt unbearable. You lifted me up when I had fallen, when I was feeling as if the PhD journey was stagnant, and never ending. I would not say this lightly, but you broke down my walls and stole a piece of my heart that no one has ever had. I have never had someone who loves and supports me like you do. You instil in me the drive and the motivation to keep going. You make me feel as if I can take on the world, and there were many a time where you had to experience me broken down, exhausted, crying, and you gave me the push to build myself back up, and to keep going. No matter my mood, no matter the kind of day I was having, you

simply made it better. You are my everything, and I love you more than words could ever say.

**Aunty Paula**, you have always been such a fundamental part of my life journey, and particularly during this PhD experience, you have been such an amazing support. You always make every moment worthwhile, and your check-ins, support, and advice were so valued during this time. Whether it was to brainstorm ideas, have a vent about how I am feeling, or our morning and afternoon drives to and from campus in early 2021, you always knew the right thing to say and do. I love having you as a part of my journey, because I know that you are always on my team. Thank you for everything that you do for me, I love you so much.

To **my other family members**, who knew to avoid the question, “*How’s your PhD going?*”, but whose love and support got me through not only this PhD journey, but life in general. To **Uncle Gerard, Caitlin, Sarah, Nan, my Mumza (mother-in-law) Sylvia, Paul, Aunty Trace, Grandad, Uncle Brian, Uncle Colin, Aunty Angie, Loren, Amber, and Jamie**, life would not be life without every single one of you. Thank you all. Love each and every single one of you.

**Shan**, where do I even begin? From the moment we met, you had such an immense impact on me. I was and continue to be in awe of the wonderful, beautiful person you are. You became such a crucial part of not only my university life, but my life in general. You are the female version of me. During this journey, you became my closest friend. You became my other half, my work bestie, and my best friend. You have taught me to fight for what I want, to remember that I have agency in my decisions, and that I am strong, I am wise, and that there is always a reason for everything that happens. I love you for all that you are, and for all that you have become. Thank you for being such an immense part of my journey. Thank you for the many coffees we have had together over the years (we probably need to reimburse the university for how much coffee we drank from the machine!), the many tears we have shed, but mostly, for the many beautiful moments that we

have shared. I know that you will forever be a part of my life journey; I love you so very much.

**Ash**, you have been such an immense part of this journey as well. Thank you for supporting me through all my decisions, for listening to all my rants and thoughts, for providing your thoughts and opinions, and for always helping me to realise that life does not have to be taken so seriously. Your support means the world to me. You ground me and provide the support for me to realise that I can do anything. Being able to study and teach together has been such a blessing, and I know there has been many a moment where we have had to navigate the uncertainty but doing it together has made it all the more bearable. Thank you so much for everything. I truly appreciate you and all that you have brought to my life.

**Jacqueline**, my soul sister, thank you for being a massive part of my university, and life, journey. We've made each other better people. We've laughed and we've cried, and even though you began as my student, and me as your tutor, we've inspired and pushed each other to progress further than we could ever imagine. I cannot thank you enough for the support, the love, and the days we spent together where we both stumbled into Café Concept or Common Ground, tired, exhausted, needing coffee, but always there for one another. Love you so much.

**Rhys**, thank you for being my work partner in crime, my support, and my PhD buddy (even after you left!). Days were made easier by having you there, ready to rant with me! Thank you for sitting and listening while I drank copious amounts of coffee, ready to help in any way you could. I know I can always count on you. You are truly wonderful, thank you!

A special thank you goes out to **Jack**; I couldn't have gotten through the experience without you. Your willingness to listen and support me through the ups and downs of my PhD, and life, is forever cherished. You are a wonderful human, and I am so lucky to know you, and to have become such good friends with you. Whether it's

about PhD life, or teaching, or life in general, I know I can always count on you to help me through. Thank you.

To my honours students who I supervised over the last two years, **Chantel, Kristen, and Jazmin**, you have all given me new insights into my own research, and your constant support has not gone unnoticed. Thank you for always being patient with me, for your kind words and encouragement throughout the supervision process, and for your friendship during the chaotic (and not so chaotic times). I appreciate you all.

To the broader group of **HDR Hubbies**, thank you all, for your acknowledgement, support, kindness, and willingness to always have a chat, and listen to my endless rambling.

And finally, if you have gotten through the last few pages of acknowledgements, I want to **thank you, the reader**, who is taking the time to read through my thesis, and to take in the knowledge gained through this experience, and what an experience it has been. Enjoy!

## DEDICATION

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*This PhD would not be complete without the providing of a dedication here, for someone who was not only a true academic in all aspects, but who was also a feminist, who taught me about academia, what it means to be a strong human, and someone who knew me better than anyone. For my **Nanna Wyeth**, my hero, and my inspiration, I remember when I got into the PhD program, and how excited you were for me. Words cannot explain how losing you made such an immense impact on me. The day that you left us, is the day my view of the world changed. The day that a part of me changed. You were always such a big supporter of my decisions, my life, and most of all, my education, and I am so glad you got to see the start of my PhD journey before you spread your beautiful wings and left us. Your love and support have always guided me through life, and it still does. You were one of the people I felt my true self with. You always told me there was no one else on this planet that reminded you of me, and that I would make such a positive impact on this world. During this journey, there was many a time that I asked myself, “What would Nanna do”? Your voice guided me through this journey, and I am forever grateful for the love and support you always showed me. Part of me feels that this PhD is more for you, than it is for me, your “Oodie Poodie Little Stroodie”. My beautiful Nanna, I will always love you more (as much as you disagreed with me on that!). This PhD is for you.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Historically, women have been underrepresented in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM) within higher education. This can be compounded by the influence of the academic context, gendered identities, governance, and power differentials, on the roles, experiences, and expectations of women in academia. Little is known about how self, identity, and governance shapes women's experiences, as well as institutional practices and ways of being in academia. Additionally, the identities of women academics at different career stages, and how they change over time has not yet been sufficiently explored. While it has been noted that identities change and shift in relation to how they are formed, enacted, and challenged, the execution of how this plays out over time, especially, in relation to career stage for women in academia, has been seldom explored. I wanted to explore how the women were positioned to engage in their roles and responsibilities at each career stage, and how this can shift their perspective of how they identify within academia over time. As such, the utility of critically exploring these experiences and identities for women at different career stages was observed.

The overarching aim of the research project was to explore, through interrelated studies, how women within the Australian higher education setting conceptualise their academic identities. The project included four objectives: Objective One was to understand and critique the current state of knowledge on what factors influence the conceptualisation of women's academic identities in higher education; and Objectives Two, Three, and Four were to explore the conceptualisation of women's academic identities in early-, middle-, and later-career stage academia, respectively. The current research was approached using a social constructionist epistemology from a critical psychology theoretical perspective, and employed an exploratory, cross-sectional qualitative design. This was to develop an understanding of how women academics discussed their experiences within academia, the identities that they conceptualised, and how the discourses used by the women, as well as other academics, provided specific

subject positions and/or opportunities to conceptualise identity within the academic context.

Study One comprised a narrative review of extant literature to explore what, and how, the current state of knowledge on the conceptualisation of women's academic identities and experiences was influenced. Furthermore, the review critiqued the existing literature, and explored the influence of dominant ways of being and knowing on how research questions were asked, the theoretical constructs that were explored, and the research design decisions that were made. With an acknowledgement that research is influenced by the privileged way of being and doing, certain knowledge systems and practices are constructed and viewed as common sense. This led me to question what is influencing the conceptualisation of women's academic identities, how women experience and navigate academia, as well as how privileged knowledge systems and ways of being can be challenged. A thematic synthesis was conducted on 56 qualitative studies that were published between 2010 and 2019. The findings illustrated the critical impact of neoliberalism on academic identities and experiences worldwide, as well as the existence of normative gendered stereotypes and practices that work to impact the identities and experiences of women academics. The critique illustrated that higher education perpetuates the existence of one type of 'ideal' identity which can serve to erase women's multiple identities. Additionally, the research questions asked in the literature were grounded in gender-normative assumptions, as well as suggesting that the responsibility for change is on academics. Finally, the review observed how women are prompted to engage in resistance, but lesser focus has been on the consequences for engaging in this practice. By providing my critique, I acknowledged that future research could be more focused towards problematising the system and dismantling the practices that have perpetuated these problematic conditions (e.g., underrepresentation, discrimination, gendered stereotyping) for women in academia.

Studies Two, Three, and Four involved the conducting of face-to-face and virtual (e.g., Zoom, Skype, WebEx) semi-structured interviews, with each distinct data set analysed using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). Study Two was a qualitative study which aimed to explore how early-career women academics within

the Australian public higher education setting conceptualise their academic identities, and to explore the subject positions (i.e., identities/ways of being) that were made available through their discourse. Seventeen participants were recruited aged between 27 and 62 years. Three subject positions were identified – The Compliant Woman, who consolidates their academic positioning by following the rules and meeting the expectations of the institution; The Strategic Woman, who balances complying and safely challenging the traditional academic ways of being; and The Rebellious Woman, who outrightly challenges the conditions of academia. Discourse surrounding compliance, tolerance, obedience, the patriarchy, and survival, created subjectivities which suggested that the early-career women academics felt unsafe and insecure in academia, as well as having to work harder to prove themselves in a setting that works to exclude them. The key message was that no matter their approach, the early-career women academics felt damned in their navigation of academia.

Study Three was a qualitative study which aimed to explore how middle-career women academics within the Australian public higher education setting conceptualise their academic identities, as well as identify the subject positions that were made available within their discourse. Eighteen middle-career women academics, aged between 30 and 56 years, were recruited. Four subject positions were identified within the participants' discourse – The Pragmatic Woman, who, in the face of adversity, constructs a practical positioning in learning how to survive in academia; The Prototypical Woman, who is expected to engage in their professional and personal responsibilities by adopting ways of being and doing associated with femininity and motherhood; The Credible Woman, an ideal representation that the participants' constructed based on their perceptions of what the Australian public higher education setting expects of them; and The Super Woman, who balances her professional and personal lives, and puts the needs of the institution, and other people, before herself. Emerging within this final positioning was The Sacrificial Woman, who sacrifices the self to meet the demands of other personal and professional responsibilities. The identified discourses created subjectivities for the middle-career women academics that emphasised the need for them to work even

harder, as they were afforded less allowances, and held to higher standards, than their male academic counterparts.

Study Four was a qualitative study that explored how later-career women academics within the Australian public higher education setting conceptualise their academic identities, and the subject positions that were made available through the later-career women's discourse. Aged between 43 and 72 years, 17 participants were recruited. Four subject positions were identified within the participants' discourse – The Insecure Woman, who experienced tensions between the academic that the system required them to be, compared to the academic that they wanted to be; The Expert Academic, who is viewed by other individuals as the voice of reason within academia; The Reflective Academic, who reflects on, and summarises, their academic career, and considers whether they are satisfied with what they have achieved over time; and The Disengaging Academic, who begins to transition out of their academic roles and responsibilities. Overall, the identified discourses created subjectivities which reflected a questioning of how much one has contributed to the academic setting, what it means to have been a part of academia, as well as evaluating what it means to identify beyond academia.

The findings of the four interrelated studies indicate that while the many identities, experiences, and realities of the women were diverse, there were some common threads that linked the narratives of the early-, middle-, and later-career women. These included the embedded nature of gender manifesting through their careers, tensions surrounding survival and security, working harder than men to prove oneself, experiencing demands from multiple contexts, uncertainty surrounding how to identify both within and outside of academia, and wanting to make an impact within the setting. In contrast, the academic experiences of women influenced, and were influenced by, both distinct, and related aspects of their sense of self, which held unique meanings for their roles (personal and professional), relationships, and overall identities in ways that evolved across career stages. For example, the challenges of identity formation and conceptualisation appeared stronger at the early- and middle-career stages (e.g., experiencing conflicts surrounding what it means to be a woman within academia, how gender manifested at each career stage, ability to question and resist the status quo), and

the process of identity conceptualisation continued as the women progressed through their career (e.g., later-career women reflecting on their eventual disengagement from academia). Findings support how the conceptualisation of women's academic identities are fluid, ongoing, dynamic, and changing, which can be influenced by lived professional and personal experiences, as well as the ongoing process of development that characterises women's careers in academia. Additionally, the progression through each career stage coincided with evolution through the stages of life, where different professional skills and roles emerged as salient when women academics moved from one career stage to the next, while concurrently navigating their personal responsibilities (e.g., familial, caring roles). As such, the subjectivities that emerged at each career stage are inextricably linked to the stages of life, their careers, relationships, and personal challenges, which overall influenced the women academics' identity conceptualisation, and the meaning they attributed to their career, and to their life.

Findings from this study have methodological, theoretical, and practical implications. Methodologically, the findings are the first to thematically synthesise the literature base (Study One). Additionally, the novelty of the study design adopted in utilising a Foucauldian perspective (Studies Two, Three, and Four) in this research area is notable. Theoretically, I have explored how the use of an FDA allows for an exploration of the historical, political, and socio-cultural processes evident in academia, as well as a consideration of how language can be a powerful tool in considering how ways of being are made available, legitimised, and resisted in the setting. How the women were subjected, and have subjected themselves, as well as gathering an understanding of how women academics discussed their experiences within academia, the identities that they conceptualised, and how the discourses used by the women, as well as other academics, allowed for specific subjectivities and/or opportunities to conceptualise identity within the academic context to emerge. This can assist in reconceptualising the prototype of what it means to be an academic, extending on the framing to be more inclusive of multiple experiences. Practically, I have recommended changes that focus on both individual and systemic change. Additionally, I have focused on the importance of being reflexive to one's own biases and prejudices, which can impact how academics are

positioned to experience academia. The findings of the research make a substantial contribution to the literature by suggesting subjectivities that emerged from discourses evident in women's academic experiences, the influence of privileged forms of power and knowledge on the discourses, constructions, and ways of being embedded in academia, as well as exploring how this influences the conceptualisation of academic identities for women academics. The research findings underpin the previously identified need to reconceptualise what it means to be a woman academic, but extends on this, and suggests adopting a transformative, rather than reformative, perspective, to ensure that the traditional hierarchies and ways of being that currently exist to disadvantage women are not retained. By doing so, the discourses, practices, and ways of being which are currently legitimised can be extended upon and transformed by going beyond observing differences to intervene and promote equity and transformational, or second-order change for all academics within STEMM, and Australian higher education more broadly.

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## **LIST OF INCLUDED PUBLICATIONS**

### **Chapter 5:**

Phillips, M. J., Dzidic, P. L., & Castell, E. L. (2022). Exploring and critiquing women's academic identity in higher education - A narrative review. SAGE Open.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221096145>

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## **STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTORS**

Phillips, M. J., Dzidic, P. L., & Castell, E. L. (2022). Exploring and critiquing women's academic identity in higher education - A narrative review. SAGE Open. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221096145>

The purpose of this statement is to detail the nature and extent of the intellectual contribution by the PhD Candidate, Matthew Phillips, and all other co-authors of this study publication. Dr Peta Dzidic, and Dr Emily Castell were involved in the overall supervision of the PhD, supporting the conception and design of the study, interpretation of results, and writing of the manuscript. Matthew Phillips contributed to the conception and design of the study, and led the data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and manuscript writing.

I affirm the details stated in the Statement of Contribution are true and correct.

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Mr Matthew Phillips

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Dr Peta Dzidic

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Dr Emily Castell

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| ABS      | Australian Bureau of Statistics                              |
| ANU      | Australian National University                               |
| APS      | Australian Psychological Society                             |
| AUC      | Australian Universities Commission                           |
| AVCC     | Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee                       |
| CAE      | College of Advanced Education                                |
| CASP     | Critical Appraisal Skills Program                            |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus Disease of 2019                                  |
| CRC      | Cooperative Research Centres                                 |
| CRTS     | Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme                  |
| CSIRO    | Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation |
| CTEC     | Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission                   |
| FDA      | Foucauldian Discourse Analysis                               |
| HECS     | Higher Education Contribution Scheme                         |
| MCI      | Mills Committee Inquiry                                      |
| NHMRC    | National Health and Medical Research Council                 |
| PhD      | Doctor of Philosophy   |
| SAGE     | Science in Australia Gender Equity                           |
| STEMM    | Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine  |
| TAFE     | Technical and Further Education                              |
| TER      | Tertiary Entrance Ranking                                    |
| THE      | Times Higher Education                                       |
| UA       | Universities Australia                                       |
| UK       | United Kingdom   |
| WWI      | World War I  |
| WWII     | World War II   |

## **LIST OF CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

- Phillips, M. J., Dzidic, P. L., & Castell, E. L. (2020, November 11-13). *Using a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis in the Context of Exploring Women's Academic Identity in Australian Higher Education*. Research presented at the International Conference of Community Psychology in Perth, Western Australia (located online, originally located in Melbourne, Victoria).
- Phillips, M. J., Dzidic, P. L., Roberts, L. D., & Castell, E. L. (2021, August 26). *Comply, Strategise, or Resist? Exploring Early-Career Women's Academic Identity in Australian Higher Education using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Damned If You Do, Damned If You Don't)*. Research presented at the Mark Liveris Research Student Seminar at Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia.
- Phillips, M. J., Dzidic, P. L., Roberts, L. D., & Castell, E. L. (2021, October 14-15). *"A Woman Like Me": Exploring Women's Academic Identity in Australian Higher Education using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis*. Research presented at the International Conference of Gender and Sexuality in Perth, Western Australia (located online).

## **ETHOS**

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*Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.*

*–Ruth Bader Ginsburg (2018).*

---

## **CHAPTER 01: SETTING THE SCENE - AN INTRODUCTION**

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*No research without action, no action without research (Lewin, unknown).*

---

### **1.1 Chapter Overview**

My Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) research explores how women academics conceptualise their academic identities in the Australian public higher education setting. In this chapter, I present the background and rationale surrounding my research. I then provide the research aim and objectives, studies, and questions, provide a summary of the significance and the rationale for my research project, as well as how my project will add to the field of knowledge. To conclude the chapter, I state the overall structure and organisation of the thesis.

### **1.2 Research Background**

Historically, women have been underrepresented in the fields of STEMM within higher education. Within Australian higher education settings, women comprise approximately 50% of PhD university graduates and early-career academics, however, only occupy 20% of senior academic positions, evidencing the '*sticky floor effect*' (Science in Australia Gender Equity [SAGE], 2020a). This can be compounded by the influence of the academic context, gendered identities, governance, and power differentials, on the roles, experiences, and expectations of women in academia. While the representation of women in higher education, and more broadly the work force, has improved significantly over time, the representation of women in STEMM fields is still a prevalent issue that has received increasing attention among researchers and policymakers (Nash & Moore, 2019; SAGE, 2020b). Women academics have experienced difficulties in progressing into higher positions in academia because of the questioning of their qualifications, as well as the limiting of their opportunities to progress (Brown et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2014; Khwaja et al., 2017). The '*sticky floor effect*' resembles women's academic experiences, as the lack of opportunities for women in senior leadership

positions lessens their likelihood for other women academics to progress into these roles (Brown et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2014; Khwaja et al., 2017). Great difficulties are had when women attempt to progress in academia compared to men, and these difficulties are exacerbated within disciplines that are considered as male-dominated (Brown et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2014; Khwaja et al., 2017). While to some extent, the representation of women academics has improved, where women represent the majority in STEMM statistically, the tipping point still exists, where there are many gendered inequities that still exist between men and women in many key STEMM industries, institutions, and occupations (e.g., working in higher education; SAGE, 2020b). This can not only impact the representation and progression of women in academia, but also, impact how women identify within the academic, and personal, context.

The academic identity is the view of oneself, embedded within the norms, values, and beliefs that encapsulate discipline-based work structures and govern how individuals engage in academic work (Gaus & Hall, 2015). The identity formation process is complex; identities evolve over time and can be tested, adopted, and refined throughout one's academic career (Gaus & Hall, 2015). The academic identity has been described as important to working within an academic setting (Eagly & Miller, 2016). The conceptualisation of academic identities can also be influenced by tensions in balancing personal and institutional interests, such as women balancing multiple roles (e.g., being a teacher, researcher, advocate, mentor), working harder to be recognised for academic achievements, the self-perceived ability to engage in making systemic changes in academia, and the pressure to be the 'ideal worker' (Esnard et al., 2017).

Extending on the above factors, other characteristics that influence women academics are not only the neoliberal qualities of globalisation that all academics experience (e.g., emphasising marketable knowledge and research skills, the construction of being a product providing a service to students, a lack of agency; Adam, 2012), but that these qualities are exacerbated with the responsibilities that women are forced to complete based on expectations surrounding their gender. This is further compounded by the balancing of home, familial, and caring responsibilities with the academic role (Zhao & Jones, 2017). Women academics are

expected to generate capital and revenue for the higher education institution and meet the research performance targets to appear favourable and maintain the functioning of the setting, while balancing outside personal responsibilities (Connell, 2013). These tensions have called into question how the operation of the academic system impacts on women academic's identity formation. Women academics receive conflicting messages about academic role expectations that compete with their identities, and attempts are made to incorporate these identities with changes in academia (Zhao & Jones, 2017). This is compounded by the pressure to act in accordance with normative standards, and to obscure any aspects perceived to be of little value to the institution (Esnard et al., 2017). As such, an academic's self-perception, and their perspective of how others see them, appear to have significant impacts in terms of their work productivity and performance (Thompson, 2015).

So far, in exploring the practices and ways of being that are privileged in academia, research has discussed these elements in a manner that emphasises a degree of homogeneity within a group, in assuming that all individuals have the same identities and experiences as one another. The danger here is that the experiences and identities of women in academia can be constructed as homogenous, as well as the identity of 'woman' as a homogenous group who share a singular understanding and experience of the academic role. This representation fails to integrate multiple intersectional identities that may not be privileged in academia (Dickens & Chavez, 2018), posing the idea of a single way of being, and thus, a single academic identity and experience for women. A singular identity and experience are obsolete, as women are part of a context in which the academic role is becoming progressively diverse (Williams et al., 2015). Categorising the academic identity and experience in a singular manner is one example of how the literature, and the academic setting, risk constructing women academics as a homogenous group, rather than representing the reality, which is a diversity of individuals and identities that are changing over time (Williams et al., 2015).

### **1.3 My Current Research: The Significance**

Little is known about how self, identity, and governance shape women's experiences, as well as institutional practices and ways of being in academia. For

example, there is a paucity of research on the interplay of broader systemic and contextual issues (e.g., maintaining a work/life balance, neoliberal and/or hegemonic settings), that may inform the academic identities of women within higher education, particularly surrounding power, and institutional governance. My research explores the notions of self, identity, and institutional governance for women in higher education, appreciating that knowledge can be socially constructed, which can influence how different perspectives can shape institutional practices and ways of being.

Additionally, the identities of women academics at different career stages, and how they change over time have not yet been sufficiently explored. While it has been noted that identities change and shift in relation to how they are formed, enacted, and challenged, the execution of how this plays out over time, especially, in relation to career stage for women in academia, has been seldom explored. I wanted to explore how the women were positioned to engage in their roles and responsibilities at each career stage, and how this can shift their perspective of how they identify within academia over time. As such, the utility of critically exploring these experiences and identities for women at different career stages was observed. The findings of this research will provide insight regarding the conceptualisation of identity across the academic career of women within the Australian public higher education setting.

Some studies also tend to employ analyses with a limited scope to capture the complexities of this setting, and women's experiences and identities within it (e.g., thematic analyses, quantitative studies). The proposed research seeks to extend on the extant literature by employing a Foucauldian perspective, which allows for the interpretation of experiences to reveal the multiplicity of identities and subjectivities for women in academia, how discourse can shape the ways of being of women in academia, as well as the complex, competing values that influence individuals (Chan, 2005). Given this, how women engage in the roles and expectations of the Australian public higher education setting is beneficial to explore, in terms of the powerful structures that position the women academics in certain ways, over others, as well as making them engage in certain tasks. By asking questions about academic experiences and the identity conceptualisation of

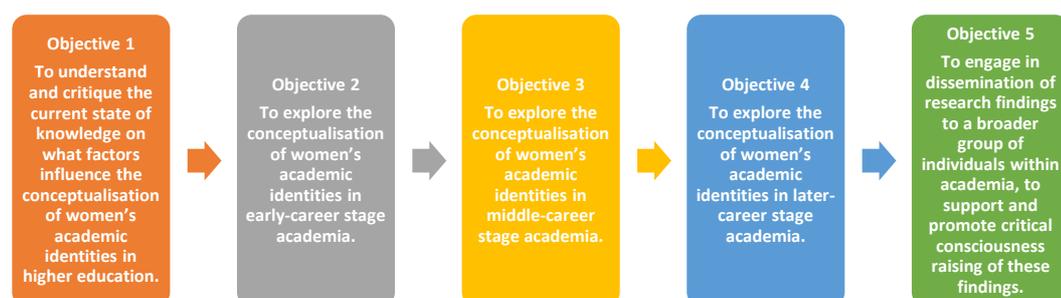
women, I can start to explore their discourses and subject positions, in relation to what they do, how they may think or feel about academia, and the conditions under which these experiences take place. Knowledge systems constructed in academia influence the questions that are asked and the ways in which research is conducted (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016), where certain knowledge and ways of being are viewed as common sense. Findings from the research ultimately aim to illuminate what is common sense within a context through what is said by participants (Foucault, 1998). Critiquing the dominant social order may assist with identifying ways to evaluate and change existing gender equity policies, research funding, conditions of employment, salaries/pay, sick leave, educational choices, and career pathways within the Australian public higher education context, as well as further support gender equity and fairness within the workplace.

#### 1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

The overarching aim guiding my research project was *“to explore how women academics within the Australian public higher education setting conceptualise their academic identities”*. I focused on developing an understanding of how women academics discussed their experiences within academia, the many identities that they conceptualised, and how the discourses, used by the women, as well as other academics, provided specific subject positions and/or opportunities to conceptualise identity within the academic context. The research objectives are provided in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Flow Diagram of Project Objectives*

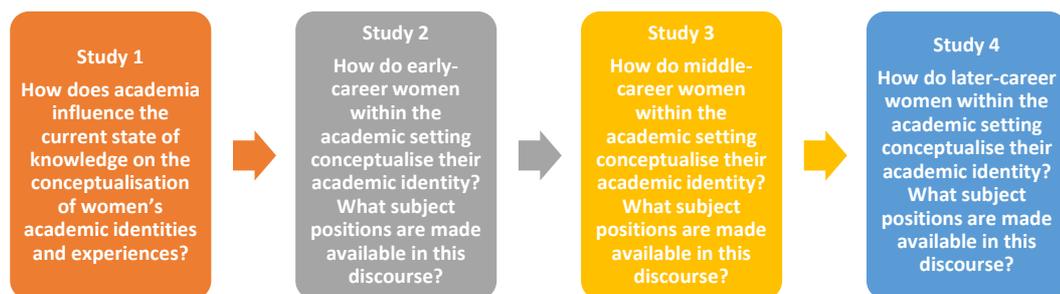


## 1.5 Research Studies and Questions

The research was conducted through four studies, with each study addressing a unique research question that contributed to the overarching research question, *“How do women academics within the Australian public higher education setting conceptualise their academic identities?”*. Further details on each study are provided in Chapters Four and Six, with the findings provided in Chapters Five, Seven, Eight, and Nine. The research questions are provided in Figure 2.

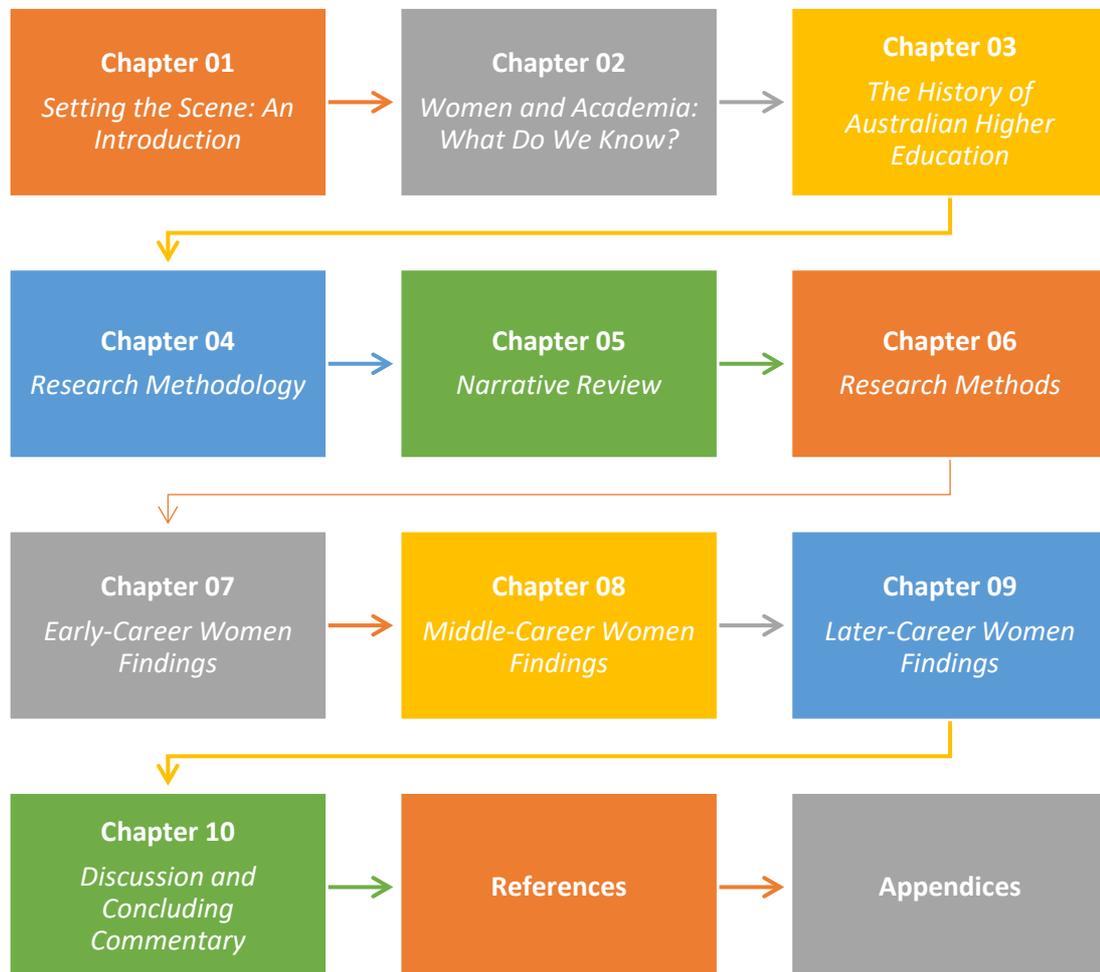
**Figure 2**

*Flow Diagram of Research Questions*



## 1.6 Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is presented in a compilation format and includes nine traditional thesis chapters, and one chapter written as a manuscript and submitted for publication. Each chapter begins with a broad overview and ends with concluding commentary to summarise the take home messages for the reader. A compiled reference list for all the chapters and appendices is located at the end of the thesis. Figure 3 illustrates the structure of my thesis.

**Figure 3***Flow Diagram of Thesis Structure*

Within this chapter, the background and rationale of my research has been presented. A summary of the significance of my project, as well as the research aim, objectives, questions, and studies are provided. Finally, the chapter is concluded by stating the overall structure and organisation of the thesis.

Chapter Two presents an overview of what is known about women's experiences and identities within Australian public higher education, as well as some of the key tensions that are experienced by women in academia. I also explore the impact of coloniality, neoliberalism, what is known about the academic identity thus far within the extant literature base, and the complexities surrounding the identity formation process.

Chapter Three of the thesis explores the history of higher education in Australia, where I present significant events that have occurred within this setting. Embedded within the exploration of these events is the acknowledgement of women's experiences, and how they have been positioned to navigate academia over time. The chapter concludes with a consideration of how political, economic, and symbolic ideologies have disadvantaged women in the academic setting, further establishing the rationale to explore how the operation of Australian higher education can impact women, their experience, and construction of academic identities.

Chapter Four of the thesis presents the overarching research design and the methodology adopted for the current research, informed by a critical psychology theoretical perspective, and underpinned by a Foucauldian philosophy and methodology. The chapter concludes with a discussion surrounding how the Foucauldian informed knowledge provided, the critical psychology theoretical perspective, as well as the social constructionist epistemology complement one another to inform the framework for this project.

Chapter Five of the thesis is a manuscript that has been submitted for publication that presents a thematic synthesis and review of the extant literature base thus far, to explore how neoliberal academia influences the current state of knowledge on the conceptualisation of women's academic identities and experiences. The chapter concludes with a critique of the design and theoretical underpinnings of the reviewed studies to explore how ways of being and doing exist and how research is conducted on women's academic identities within neoliberal academia.

Chapter Six of the thesis presents the methods adopted for Studies Two, Three, and Four. Here, I describe my sample, how the semi-structured interview guides, and demographic questionnaire were constructed, provide the procedure for how the research was conducted, and consider the main analytical technique used – Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). To conclude the chapter, I provide a detailed account of my positioning as the primary researcher, explore some quality and rigour strategies used, as well as the ethical considerations accounted for

within Studies Two, Three, and Four of the research process (in which data was collected from the participants).

Chapter Seven, Eight, and Nine of the thesis presents the findings of each FDA conducted on semi-structured interviews with early-, middle-, and later-career women academics in Australian public higher education respectively. The early-career findings highlight three subject positions, or '*ways of being*': The Compliant Woman, The Strategic Woman, and The Rebellious Woman. The middle-career findings highlight five subject positions, or '*ways of being*': The Pragmatic Woman, The Prototypical Woman, The Credible Woman, The Super Woman, and The Sacrificial Woman. Finally, the later-career findings highlight four subject positions, or '*ways of being*': The Insecure Woman, The Expert Academic, The Reflective Academic, and The Disengaging Academic.

Chapter Ten concludes the thesis by synthesising the key findings from Chapters Five, Seven, Eight, and Nine (Studies One, Two, Three, and Four), as well as contextualising them within the prior research and methodology that was presented in Chapters One, Two, Three, and Four. Through the integration of the key findings with the extant literature base, the chapter concludes with the implications, recommendations, strengths, limitations, and future directions of my research, as well as presenting the final messages and conclusions for the reader to take away.

## **1.7 Concluding Commentary**

Within this chapter, I provided the aims of the research, as well as the specific studies and research questions. I also explored the background, significance, and the rationale for the project and concluded with outlining the organisation of the thesis. In the next chapter, I review the literature base in relation to what is known about women's experiences and identities within Australian public higher education.

## **CHAPTER 02: WOMEN IN ACADEMIA: WHAT DO WE KNOW?**

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*I take care not to dictate how things should be (Foucault, 1994a,  
p. 288)*

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### **2.1 Chapter Overview**

In this chapter, I review the literature base in relation to what is known about women's experiences and identities within Australian public higher education to assist the reader in contextualising the issue. In doing this, I summarise what is known thus far about the key tensions that are experienced by women in academia, underpinned by the influence of the gender binary, heteronormativity, and intersectionality. I then present what is known about the academic identity thus far within the extant literature base, and how the identity formation process can be complex and difficult to engage in for women academics. To conclude the chapter, I extend on these tensions and explore how academic ways of being were introduced and influenced by coloniality, as well as acknowledging how the neoliberal episteme has become embedded within the academic system to influence women and their academic experience over time.

### **2.2 Academia as a Culture: The 'Academy' for Women Academics**

Academia is a highly institutionalised environment, characterised by a hierarchical, traditional, and selective culture (Bomert & Leinfellner, 2017). Within this environment, individuals are differentiated at multiple levels, for example, students, academics, support, and administrative staff, that all have differing responsibilities, access to opportunities, and positionings which can both exacerbate and reproduce social and institutional inequities (Read & Leathwood, 2018). The traditional culture of academia (which is based on hierarchical, bureaucratic systems) was founded on patriarchal, imperial, and colonial values that worked to define and maintain a specific maintenance of gendered roles and regulations, which have been proposed to disadvantage women (Blackburn, 2017; West & Zimmerman, 1987). The operation of academia is similar to other organisational contexts world-wide, whereby the available discourses on

organisational logic, as well as how organisational ways of being are defined, is embedded within the relations and worldviews of men (Acker, 1990; Williams, 2000). Based on the organisational logic being geared towards men, it can be difficult to both initiate and sustain social change relating to gendered equity within academia. This is based on the persistence and maintenance of gendered processes and structures which can be influenced by heteronormative, gendered practices, that are partly ascribed to the construction and operation of the academic institution that works to attribute and legitimise neutrality to these particular processes (Blackburn, 2017; Göktürka & Tülübaş, 2021). These institutional, gendered processes (which can be based on masculinities) can be invisible to most members of academia as they are based on systems of knowledge and belief systems that work to explain and justify current patriarchal and heteronormative practices (Cumings Mansfield et al., 2014; West & Zimmerman, 1987). The justification of current practices can maintain how the academic system operates, to inform the academics' view of "*the way that things exist*" (Bomert & Leinfellner, 2017, p. 108).

### **2.3 The Gender Binary: Maintaining How Things Exist**

Underpinning the justification of current gendered practices and the way that things exist for women in academia is the view of gender, sex, and how it is theorised to exist in a binary manner. The gender/sex binary refers to the perspective that sex is binary in nature and can directly determine gender (Morgenroth et al., 2021; Tilsen et al., 2007). Within this context, 'sex' is considered as the biological composition of an individual (e.g., anatomy, chromosomes), while '*gender*' refers to the roles associated or how one identifies (e.g., what it means to be a woman or man in a specific context, self-categorisation as a '*woman*' and '*man*'; Morgenroth et al., 2021). The gender binary is socially consequential, considered as not only descriptive (e.g., outlining what sexes and genders exist, and how the concepts are related), but also, pro- and pre-scriptive (e.g., dictating how gender and sex should or should not exist, and how they can be related; Morgenroth et al., 2021; Tilsen et al., 2007). In this manner of thinking surrounding gender and sex, a social system is enforced where individuals with two X chromosomes are expected to develop as biologically female, identify as women,

and act in accordance with feminine stereotypes, whereas those with a X and Y chromosome develop male bodies, identify as men, and act in accordance with masculine stereotypes (Aboim, 2020). Additionally, the gender binary constructs expectations surrounding gender that work to construct men and women as possessing both complementary and oppositional identities, each with its own specific attributes (e.g., *'men are assertive'*, *'women are caring'*; Butler, 2002, 2004; Morgenroth et al., 2021; Tilsen et al., 2007). This way of thinking, doing, and being demands a compulsory conformity to individual gendered performances as either female or male (terms which are considered within the binary as mutually exclusive; Aboim, 2020; Butler, 2002, 2004; Morgenroth et al., 2021). Additionally, the binary dictates how the gendered performance must be congruent with the sex of the individual (Aboim, 2020).

Identification of gender can also be associated with ideologies that work to support the gender/sex binary, such as gender essentialism, and the endorsement of stereotypes surrounding gender and sex (Saguy et al., 2021). Gender essentialism is the perspective that women and men are two informative, natural, and distinct categories (Yang et al., 2021). Increased prejudice against those who violate assumptions of gender (e.g., women in leadership positions in academia) has been suggested as related to gender essentialism (Saguy et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021). Stereotypes that are endorsed surrounding gender often pose men as the socially advantaged group, aligned with patriarchal discourse, particularly when distinctiveness of sex is threatened (Morgenroth et al., 2021; Tilsen et al., 2007). These stereotypes are implicated in the devaluation of women and men who behave in ways that are counter stereotypical (Butler, 2002, 2004; Morgenroth et al., 2021; Tilsen et al., 2007). In combination, these ideologies can affect attitudes towards challenging the gender/sex binary and constructs the assumptions surrounding gender in a hierarchical manner (Aboim, 2020; Butler, 2002, 2004). For example, while patriarchal theory is evident, the suppression of women and their identities has also illuminated the suppression of different identities and sexualities, where the social organisation of sex relies upon gender, compulsory heterosexuality, and the restriction of female sexuality (Aboim, 2020; Butler, 2002, 2004). The restrictions and organisation here further perpetuate the embeddedness

of the gender binary, as well as normative values surrounding heterosexuality as the valued identity.

### **2.3.1 *Heteronormativity: The Gender Binary in Practice***

The collection of norms, as well as how individuals reproduce complementary and distinct genders (male and female) is considered as the practice of heteronormativity (Robinson, 2016; Smith, 2010). Heteronormativity allows for an illumination of the mundane and everyday ways in which heterosexuality and gender more broadly are normalised, naturalised, and taken for granted (Herz & Johansson, 2015). Compulsory heterosexuality is not only tied into the acts, ideas, and conceptions of gender and sexuality, but additionally, it can be viewed as a foundational structure of society and culture (Butler, 2002, 2004; Robinson, 2016; Smith, 2010). Here, gender and sexuality are embedded in societal structures which are connected to socialised institutions, such as family, marriage, life, waged and domestic labour, economic support, and dependency (Butler, 2002, 2004; Smith, 2010). As such, the awareness of heteronormativity can work as a tool which allows for the analysis of systems of oppression and contributes to the understanding of how gendered structures and hierarchies can be constructed in society (Butler, 2002, 2004; Smith, 2010). When using this tool, I can explore how sexualities can be performed and expressed, and how the societal system is structured, organised, and maintained (Herz & Johansson, 2015).

Academia, at times, has been posed as gender neutral, when in reality, organisational logic originates in the abstract, intellectual domain of being 'male' (Acker, 1990). Available discourses, reality, worldviews, and perspectives are seen from this particular standpoint, and as such, gender is difficult to observe when the masculine discourses are present (Acker, 1990; Williams, 2000). Men have, over time, adopted their behaviours and perspectives, to reflect all individuals, and as such, this has led to organisational processes and structures being conceptualised as gender neutral (Acker, 1990; Williams, 2000). While women and men academics can be treated differently by their academic institutions, it can be argued that specific gendered behaviours and attitudes are disseminated into gender-neutral structures, which works to separate the organisational structures and hierarchies, from the people within them (Herz & Johansson, 2015; Robinson, 2016; Smith,

2010). Stating that an organisation is gendered means that exploitation and control, action and emotion, advantage, and disadvantage, and meaning and identity, can be constructed through, and in relation to, a distinction between what it means to be male, and female, or masculine, and feminine (Acker, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender is not additive, rather, it forms an integral component of these processes, and as such, exploring women in academia can not be properly understood without analysing gender (Acker, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

What is important to consider is the way that the messaging from both the literature base, and my research findings, are posed. Heteronormativity, and the gender binary, are posed as embedded within the literature base, and my participants' experiences, as something natural, unquestioned, and embedded within different societal levels. This is not to state that the literature base, or my participants, agreed with the way that gender was constructed through these ways of thinking and being, rather, it illustrates how gender and sexuality are affected by societal norms, which affect the participants within the literature, and my research, as well as how this has impacted on institutions, and society, organising ways of being based on heterosexuality and biological sex as a binary (Robinson, 2016; Smith, 2010).

### **2.3.2 *The 'Doing' of Gender***

Gender has been conceptualised as operating within organisational institutions in at least five interacting processes, which, while posed as distinct, are components of the same experience (Acker, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Williams, 2000). They are as follows:

1. Constructing gendered divisions of labour, accepted behaviours, positionings and locations in space, of power, including how the institution governs these aspects. While there may be variations in the extent of the division of gender, men almost always occupy the highest positions of power. Further, organisational decisions initiate divisions of gender, and the practices of the organisation maintain them.
2. Symbols and images can express, reinforce, oppose, and/or explain the gendered divisions mentioned above. Sources of these can be in ideology, language, popular culture, the media, dress/appearance, and television (e.g.,

the image of a professor is often conceptualised as a white, cis-gender, older male).

3. Processes can produce gendered social structures that result in interactions between women and men, women and women, and men and men, that enact either submission or dominance.
4. The above components assist in producing gendered aspects of individual identities, which may include being conscious of these components in choosing where and what to do for work, the use of language, clothing options, and the presentation of the self as a gendered member of the institution.
5. Finally, gender is implicated in the creation and conceptualisation of social structures, framing the relations between other structures. Gender works to influence organisational logic, with assumptions and practices that allow organisations to function manifest daily, and with the repeated enacting of ways of being, these problematic forms of logic are repeated and maintained.

Gendered differences within organisations have been suggested as due to the overarching structure, rather than characteristics related to *'being a woman'* or *'being a man'* (Acker, 1990). The societal hierarchical system that has privileged some, and sanctioned others, is based on these presumed binaries of gender and sexuality, where beliefs and practices about what is *'normal'* in everyday life is defined and enforced by the patriarchy (Butler, 2002, 2004; Herz & Johansson, 2015; Robinson, 2016; Smith, 2010). The issues that women face within large organisations, such as academia, are posed as a result of their placement within the overarching organisational structure, where they can be overpopulated in *'dead-end'* jobs at the bottom, and viewed as tokens at the top (Acker, 1990). Gender becomes an issue where organisational roles reflect characteristics and images of the sorts of individuals that should populate them (Acker, 1990). As such, women in academia are viewed as a part of a system where they are sanctioned and condemned for not fitting in and behaving according to the system that is constructed as a given, and acceptable (Herz & Johansson, 2015; Robinson, 2016; Smith, 2010). Where the impact of the gender binary, heteronormativity, gendered

processes, broader institutional logic, and ways of being is identifiable, is when these systems become visible, for example, when disadvantages are experienced and people speak out, as well as problematising the system and identifying how prejudices, discrimination, inequities, and contradictory workplace practices and policies are executed and operated (Philipsen et al., 2017). These discriminatory, prejudicial practices and policies have been shown to negatively impact the experiences of women within Australian public higher education, and even more so for women who adopt multiple identities and ways of being.

#### **2.4 Intersectionality: A Multiplicity of Identities**

What can assist in maintaining the status quo for women in academia is the homogenisation of their identities. In the current research context, homogenisation illustrates how women academics have been constructed as one-dimensional, with the gender binary further perpetuating the presence of *'one type of woman'* within academia (Quiddington, 2010). Constructing women in a manner that infers they share a singular, similar understanding and experience of academia fails to integrate the multiplicity of identities and intersectional perspectives that are not privileged in academia (Williams et al., 2015). As such, it is important to consider my research going forward as adopting an intersectional lens, as well as critically examining the research conducted thus far to identify the ways that studies have homogenised women's academic identity.

Intersectionality refers to the numerous ways that social identifiers are mutually shaped, and can be interrelated through epistemes such as neoliberalism, colonialism, geopolitics, and cultural configurations, which can shift relations of oppression and power (Rice et al., 2019). The interactivity of these social structures can foster life experiences in relation to forms of privilege and oppression (Rice et al., 2019). Crenshaw (1989) was credited with forming the term originally within African American feminist and critical race studies, where it has now been extended to explore the many relationships in research amongst multiple modalities and dimensions of social relations and subject formations (Gopaldas, 2013). Intersectionality is useful in exploring the interaction amongst categories of difference within the individual lives, practices of society, institutional structures,

and cultural ideologies, as well as the outcomes when these interact, in relation to power processes (Cole, 2009; Gopaldas, 2013).

Social identifiers that can be acknowledged when exploring intersectionality include, but are not limited to, gender, race, class, age, body type, attractiveness, caste, citizenship, ethnicity, height and weight, education, income, immigration status, mental health status, physical ability, marital status, nationality, occupation, sex, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status (Rice et al., 2019). These are considered as naturalised, but not necessarily natural, ways of categorising individuals (Rice et al., 2019). By considering the plethora of social identity structures here, it allows for an expansion of the definitional scope of intersectionality to allow everyone's unique social advantages and disadvantages, to be subject to critique (Cole, 2009; Gopaldas, 2013; Rice et al., 2019). Everyone can entail the multiplicatively oppressed, but additionally, the multiplicatively privileged, where it is acknowledged that individuals can be subject to both social advantages and disadvantages (Cole, 2009; Gopaldas, 2013; Rice et al., 2019).

To acknowledge what identity structures should be attended to is a difficult task, with scholars acknowledging the fine line between simplistic generalisations, and making research too arduous to conduct when considering multiple identity structures (Rice et al., 2019). As such, in defining the scope of my study, I ensured to reflect on the following:

1. *What identity structures had been overlooked or under-theorised in the relevant literature base?*
2. *What were the identity structures that were most consequential in the chosen context (i.e., academia)?*
3. *Which identity structures did participants most want to conceal or reveal?*

Additionally, I needed to reflect on the goals of my study, and whether to focus on a single multiplicatively oppressed group, compare groups that were theoretically purposive, or both (Butler, 2002, 2004; Cole, 2009; Gopaldas, 2013; Rice et al., 2019). As such, while I acknowledge and use literature throughout the thesis that encapsulates, and at times, generalises the identity of 'women', where possible, I have attempted to flesh out the identifiers within the studies, and how

the experiences stated are further compounded based on the interaction of multiple social categories. Additionally, my research findings in Chapter Seven, Eight, and Nine acknowledge different stages of career, gender, family and caring roles, education, and occupation to name a few, and how aspects of neoliberalism, coloniality, and the patriarchy, produce qualitatively different forms of experience and identity. While many of the participants identified as white (which may infer a lack of intersectionality dependent on how I explore their identities), their other social identifiers were diverse in experience and had markedly different outcomes, which was acknowledged and explored from an intersectional perspective.

Additionally, my research aimed to uncover structural and historical mechanisms of power and oppression in academia, where I explored the economic, legal, political, and cultural forces that have created the current manifestations of oppression for women, a key aspect of intersectional research (Butler, 2002, 2004; Harris & Patton, 2018). Exploring the structural mechanisms that reproduced and sustained the status quo was important, as well as conducting my research from a critical, transformative perspective that would eventually allow for me to make value-laden proposals for social change (Butler, 2002, 2004; Harris & Patton, 2018; Rice et al., 2019). These are included later in the thesis in Chapter Ten. Finally, for my research to be considered as truly transformative, I endeavour to focus on the analysis of inequality from a social-structural perspective, considering the institutional and organisational manifestations of hierarchies of power, and how they impact women and their ability to conceptualise identities. It is important to acknowledge intersectionality within higher education, as the analyses that stem from this acknowledgement call for social justice and equity in education, as well as having the power to transform knowledge, higher education, and society (Cole, 2009; Gopaldas, 2013; Rice et al., 2019).

## **2.5 The Operation of STEM**

Acker (1990, p. 145) has argued that *“the structure of the labour market, relations in the workplace, the control of the work process, and the underlying wage relation are always affected by symbols of gender, processes of gender identity, and material inequalities between women and men”*. This appears inherently true within STEM fields. Historically, white men have had more opportunities, and have been

afforded more privilege within STEMM fields than individuals with different identities (Eagly & Miller, 2016; Stark et al., 2001). The STEMM fields have been acknowledged as generally overrepresented in relation to the male gender, white students, and those of Asian ethnicities (Fairweather, 2009). These male-dominated fields have been described as cold and unwelcoming to women (Stark et al., 2001). Reasons for this have been proposed, for example, within academia, bureaucratic and patriarchal discourse is said to be embedded within the actions of all academics, with a clear focus on innovation, success, and productivity that work to value white men, rather than women and other minority groups (Parsons & Priola, 2013). Further, attitudes, beliefs, and solutions that are valued in academia thus far are limited in attending to the underlying economic, social, and political complexities that shape and construct the experiences of minoritised groups (Butler, 2002, 2004; Webster, 2010). Finally, solutions have been proposed and implemented so far that rely on a problem definition (i.e., problematising the individual, rather than the system), which is widely contested, and embedded within a discourse of male-normative competition that resolves the academic “*crisis*” as something to “*win*”, while marginalised others are “*left behind*” (Bomert & Leinfellner, 2017, p. 115).

### **2.5.1 The Disembodied Worker**

Engaging in work within STEMM in academia has been constructed as an abstract job most suited for a disembodied worker, who exists only for their work, and nothing else (Acker, 1990; Williams, 2000). The hypothetical ‘*ideal*’ disembodied worker is assumed to have no other responsibilities outside of their job that may impinge on said job (Acker, 1990; Williams, 2000). For workers who have obligations outside the boundaries of the job, this can make them unsuited for the position (Acker, 1990). For example, in academia, the disembodied worker is privileged as a male worker whose life centres on his full-time, life-long, academic job, while he has a partner (presumably female) who can assist with other responsibilities and the familial obligations (Acker, 1990). Further, working in ‘*a job*’ is implicitly considered to be gendered, even if the institution presents it as gender neutral (Williams, 2000). The ‘*job*’ contains the division of labour and the separation of the personal and professional domains based on gender (Williams, 2000). This

assumes that the *'job'* is particularly gendered, based around domestic life and the social production of norms relevant to familial and caring responsibilities (Williams, 2000). Hierarchies in the institution are then further gendered based on the assumption that an individual who focuses all their time on their work is responsible, compared to an individual who divides their commitments is seen as uncommitted (Acker, 1990; Williams, 2000). As such, the concept of the disembodied worker excludes and marginalises women who, by definition, cannot achieve these expectations and standards, as doing so would require them to become *'like a man'* (Acker, 1990).

### **2.5.2 Critiquing the Operation of STEMM**

Despite broader, well-intentioned efforts to provide opportunities and support for women and other minority groups within STEMM fields, progress is still limited (Blackburn, 2017). What appears to further influence this conclusion is that the current experiences and values of women academics are not fully accounted for (Fairweather, 2009). This can be evident within how the research and/or interventions to examine and facilitate gender equity in STEMM are planned and produced, whereby the research design, conceptual frameworks, research methodologies, and the interpretation of findings occur within a homogenised construction of women within academia, which further perpetuates this discourse (Fairweather, 2009). A homogenised argument has meant that women academics have been constructed as a homogenous group that share a singular understanding and experience of the academic role (Fairweather, 2009; Williams et al., 2015). This does not reflect the reality; with the identity of *'women'* needing to encapsulate a diversity of individuals and identities that can be forever changing (Fairweather, 2009; Williams et al., 2015). Adopting a homogenised perspective can fail to integrate multiple intersectional perspectives and knowledge systems that may not be privileged in academia, as well as reproduce, rather than dismantle privileged ways of being within academia (Quiddington, 2010; Williams et al., 2015). Missing the intersectional nature of experiences and identities fails to recognise the multiple dimensions of identity and treats categories as homogenous and fixed in nature (Quiddington, 2010; Williams et al., 2015).

While there are an increasing number of women in STEMM undergraduate pathways, this does not appear to relay to higher degrees and senior workplace positions (Eagly & Miller, 2016; O'Brien & Hapgood, 2012). This phenomenon is referred to as the '*leaky pipeline*', and interventions/research focus on the ways to repair the '*leaks*' in the pipeline to allow women to not only stay in STEMM-related positions, but additionally, to progress within higher education (Gasser & Shaffer, 2014). To explore the leak and address these inequities, I propose that it is important to consider the experiences of women in higher education, while critiquing the already established ways of being and doing, to illuminate how women are positioned to act and identify in academia. Exploring and addressing how STEMM fields, and academia more broadly, operates for women academics can be useful to critique and question the impact that these socially constituted realities have for women in academia. Although women have been making significant progress in STEMM fields in higher education (and in some fields, are outperforming their male counterparts; SAGE, 2020a), it is crucial for academics, administrators, and policymakers to better understand why there are inequities between men and women in higher education, particularly within the STEMM fields, and how this can influence their academic identities and experiences.

## **2.6 Tensions in Women's Academic Experiences**

The experience of working in academia, and conceptualising identity, is more complicated for women who work within the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM; Westring et al., 2016). Barriers to women's participation in academia can impact how they identify within the setting, with many barriers suggested in the literature base that are either structurally, or individually oriented (Fagan & Teasdale, 2021; Khan & Siriwardhane, 2021). There are varying explanations that have been proposed for the gendered inequities discussed above. For example, in comparison to men, women are subjected to higher expectations from other individuals in their lives, academic or otherwise (Green & Myatt, 2011). Others have suggested that women may experience identity conflicts between the STEMM workplace and other settings, leading to invalidation and conflict in their academic identities (Reybold & Alamia, 2008; Westring et al., 2016). There also appear to be conflicts for women in

academia between conducting *'good research'*, and what it means to be a *'good researcher'* in STEMM fields (Kachchaf et al., 2015). *'Good research'* relates to the process of the work, fostering motivation, achievement, self-expression, creativity, and self-interest. Being a *'good researcher'* relates to the outputs and conforming to ideals that meet the goals and needs of the university, such as applying for, and receiving grants, publications in high impact journals, and citations (Kachchaf et al., 2015). Finally, a broader neoliberal higher education research context has been proposed to contribute to the challenges experienced by women in STEMM in higher education, with a focus on the increasing pressure to be productive compounding with the tensions surrounding the amount of time available to balance with one's other commitments (e.g., teaching, service tasks, mentoring, familial and/or caring responsibilities; Saunders, 2007).

Women academics have also been suggested to experience the *"proverbial trinity of faculty roles"* to varying degrees, for example, their teaching, service, and research responsibilities (Reybold & Alamia, 2008, p. 108). The varying degrees of responsibility within these roles depends on the positioning of the woman within the institution. Where the discrepancy lies is how women academics are expected to engage in teaching and service roles to a greater extent than male academics, who are presumed to be afforded more time to focus on their research responsibilities (Westring et al., 2016). Faculty positions are bound to specific university contexts, as well as specific duties, but the individuals who hold these positions are not (Reybold & Alamia, 2008).

Women in senior academic roles have reported on the impact of gendered stereotypes, such as the expectation of women performing caring roles. This stereotype assumes that women are natural teachers (Bryson et al., 2014), however this may not be the role that women want to adopt or are necessarily best at. Comparatively, leadership roles are stereotyped as being masculine; this aligns with the statistic that most senior leadership positions in academia are held by males (Westring et al., 2016). Additionally, men are often evaluated according to competency, whereas women are evaluated according to their likeability (Moss-Racusin et al., 2015; Thompson, 2015). Women are encouraged to take on administrative roles, which may offer limited opportunities for career progression

(Denmark & Williams, 2012; Thompson, 2015). These stereotypes restrict the types of roles that academics are expected to perform (Fox, 2013). When women are viewed as acting inconsistently with feminine stereotypes (e.g., not wanting to adopt nurturing, pastoral care roles), and consistent with masculine stereotypes (e.g., being assertive, or self-promoting), they may experience negative consequences such as limits to their career progression for not adhering to the traditional, expected academic way of being (Williams et al., 2015).

When women engage with roles and identities outside of academia, there is a perception that their competency and commitment to the academic setting will be reduced or threatened (Macoun & Miller, 2014; Williams et al., 2015). Further, women who balance work with other commitments, roles, and competing identities (for example, but not exclusive to, motherhood and/or caring roles) are perceived by their colleagues as stretching themselves too thin (Knights & Clarke, 2014; Macoun & Miller, 2014). Comparatively, men are celebrated for their attempts at balancing the work and home life and are viewed by other academics as more responsible and accountable than their women counterparts (Dubois-Shaik & Fusulier, 2017). It appears that men do not face the same bind or negative consequences from occupying multiple roles in the academic setting (Foschi, 2000). Comparatively, it has been suggested that women must work harder to have their contributions and achievements recognised both inside, and outside of, academia (Knights & Clarke, 2014).

Difficulties with accessing mentoring networks and role models (Fagan & Teasdale, 2021; Nash & Moore, 2019), experiencing the impact of implicit biases, harassment, and discrimination (O'Connell & McKinnon, 2021), experiencing gender stereotyping (Nash et al., 2021), underrepresentation (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016), navigating masculinist organisational cultures (Khan & Siriwardhane, 2021), gendered divisions of faculty labour (Vohlidalova, 2021), and difficulties with balancing caring and academic responsibilities (Bozzon et al., 2017) have all been suggested as barriers to women's academic experience and conceptualisation of identity. Further, these barriers can accumulate in their effects over time, reflecting an experience known as the glass ceiling, whereby women academics are hindered by the deeply routine, embedded organisational practices and policies of academia

(Arredondo et al., 2022). These practices are influenced by patriarchal, gendered discourses that view male academics as the majority in STEMM, and how to work and identify within these fields is bound within men and masculinity (Gaudet et al., 2022). The barriers for women in STEMM perpetuate a chilly, unwelcoming climate, which can be characterised by a lack of encouragement and recognition for women, a subtle process of devaluation, and resultant lower levels of confidence (Eslen-Ziya & Yildirim, 2022). This climate presents difficulties in identifying as an academic within STEMM for women, who struggle to feel as if they belong, which can be emphasised by the routine, everyday practices that act as significant normalising and invisible barriers for them (Arredondo et al., 2022).

These tensions appear to be further enhanced by the complexities of navigating the ongoing structural changes within the Australian public higher education setting (which are discussed in more depth in Chapter Three; Peck et al., 2018). As such, it is clear there is a need to understand how *'traditional'* Australian tertiary education systems have changed in recent times, as this is crucial to contextualising women's academic experiences and identity formation.

### **2.6.1 Women's Academic Experiences Over Time**

While the literature details some of the tensions in women's academic experiences, where it is limited is in exploring how the academic and professional identities can change over time, as well as the impact of these transitions on the conceptualisation and transformation of such identities. It is important to recognise that the becoming of, and being, a faculty member is a dynamic journey which is marked by movement of some form, whether that be through promotion and/or receiving tenure, moving to other roles and/or institutions, moving beyond academia after retirement, and/or leaving due to disillusionment with the academy (Clegg, 2008). There is an interplay of individual and institutional dynamics that can change over time, which can influence women's home and work identities, with a multitude of differing experiences, successes, setbacks, and choices (Blackburn, 2017; Weedon, 1997). The patriarchal setting, or the powerful social structures of society where women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men, appears pervasive not only in academia, but within all facets of society:

*Yet women's inclusion in education, the franchise, public life, and the labour market have been on terms designed to meet the needs of individual men, unfettered by ties of motherhood, childcare, and [unpaid] domestic labour. Women seeking inclusion have had to negotiate the conflicting demands made upon them by their dual role as best they could on an individual basis (Weedon, 1997, p. 2).*

Scholars criticise the operation of contemporary society based on its failure to acknowledge that gender can be a barrier to social well-being, as well as its role in maintaining patriarchal assumptions about the roles of women and men over different time periods (Clegg, 2008). This is one reason proposed within the literature to support the marginalisation of women within their work and family roles:

*The prevailing conception of gender is understood as an ideological structure that divides people into two classes, men, and women, based on a hierarchical relation of domination and subordination, respectively (Lazar, 2005, p. 6).*

As such, the positioning of women academics within the academic context is embedded within tensions and paradoxes between the commitment to the institution, the organisational structure, as well as broader systemic gendered roles and norms that manifest over time (Philipsen et al., 2017). These tensions can form the basis for the conflicts within conceptualising identities, whereby women may desire to change the current state of being within the institution, while experiencing conflicts in their commitment to the same institution (Göktürka & Tülübaş, 2021).

## **2.7 The Academic Identity within the Higher Education Context**

The academic identity refers to an individual's understanding of who they are, within their academic institution (Pick et al., 2017). One's academic identity can influence their self-perception, as well as their perspective of how others see them (Drame et al., 2012). How an academic identifies in relation to both the personal and professional domains has been suggested to have a significant impact (for better or worse) on an academic's work productivity and performance (Drame et al., 2012; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Walsh, 2015). The conceptualisation of academic identities can be influenced by many elements, including working roles and

responsibilities, the success, and achievements of the academic, the perceived power and voice that an academic possesses, and the pressure to be the ideal worker within the academic setting (Akin-Little et al., 2004; Baker, 1999). Previous literature has reported on the struggles of conceptualising an academic identity (particularly by those within minority groups, such as women; Kachchaf et al., 2015; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Rainnie et al., 2013), as well as the complexities surrounding the conceptualisation of identity (Pick et al., 2017), but does not consider how the notions of self, identity, and institutional governance for women in higher education interact. Additionally, there is a lack of appreciation that knowledge can be socially constructed, which can influence how different perspectives can shape institutional practices and ways of being for women academics at different career stages.

The identities of academics, and the forming of them, can be complex, and consist of various components and elements that stem from various sources (Marginson, 2007). One understanding of identity as a construct is that it can continually shift and change over time and is fluid (Bennett et al., 2016). For example, Clegg (2008) shared their perspective on the academic identity, and stated that,

*Identity is understood not as a fixed property, but as a part of the lived complexity of a person's project and their ways of being in those sites which are constituted as being a part of the academic... having an identity as an academic, this multiple and shifting term exists alongside other aspects of how people understand their personhood and ways of being in the world. As such, it is important that personal detailed attention is paid, especially to how changes are being experienced in higher education, and how this can influence an academic's identity (p. 329).*

The shift acknowledged by Clegg (2008) here is important to consider in combination with an understanding of identity being viewed as most influenced by the identification and interaction that an individual has with significant others (e.g., peers, family, friends; Adam, 2012). As such, the forming of the academic identity can be viewed as complex and may comprise of multiple competing influences that change and shift over time (Bennett et al., 2016). Some authors appear to view the

academic identity in line with the overall conceptualisation of identity as a fluid, shifting concept, which can differ for each individual academic (Clegg, 2008). Through this definition, the academic identity is considered as the understandings and expressions of one's beliefs, values, dispositions, and actions, within the higher education context (Pick et al., 2017). The explanation here also includes the academics' perspectives on the ways of being and doing within their many roles and responsibilities (Drame et al., 2012; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Walsh, 2015).

In contrast, other authors have conceptualised an academic identity as a concrete, fixed entity (Alwazzan & Rees, 2016; Marginson, 2007; Yaacoub, 2011). Supporting this view is the notion that within institutions, individuals tend to be viewed as more homogenous, rather than heterogenous, and are viewed in terms of their particular social group (Alwazzan & Rees, 2016). As such, the identity in this depiction is generally defined as a concrete, distinctive characteristic that belongs to either an individual, or one that is shared by all members of a social category (Knights & Clarke, 2014). This view essentially constructs identity as comparative in nature, emphasising a degree of homogeneity within a group (i.e., a degree of sameness, or oneness with other individuals) in a particular context at a particular point in time (Yaacoub, 2011).

Whether identity is viewed as fluid, or concrete, there is still an acknowledgement of a shift, with identities adapting to societal and consequential institutional changes over time that have resulted in different responses from academics (Clegg, 2008). As such, I align with the perspective that identities have the capacity to both generate change through a continual process of deconstruction, construction, and reconstruction (Berry, 2008). Identities change during periods of shifting and institutional change, which can reflect changes in the overall climate of society (Adam, 2012). It is important to acknowledge and pay close attention to how these changes can influence an academic's way of being and knowing, both important aspects of the academic identity.

### ***2.7.1 Pressures Surrounding the Conceptualisation of the Academic Identity***

Despite the contrasting definitions on what an academic identity is, there are some similarities between these understandings. The academic identity appears to be constructed under several dimensions that are multi-faceted, as well as being

influenced by social movements (e.g., neoliberalism) that can occur in different ways, degrees, and contexts (Peck et al., 2018). Supporting this claim is Galton and MacBeath (2008), who express that, “...academic work is not what it used to be. Not because the impulse to engage in this work has diminished, but because academics now have to deal with further pressures qualitatively different to ever before” (p. 5). These pressures can present several challenges in how academic identities are constructed and conceptualised. Shifts between a liberal to neoliberal episteme in higher education appear to have created a more governed environment, which prompts me to question (as well as being questioned by other academics):

*Have the changes in higher education, augmented by the neoliberal episteme, made the institution more important than the disciplines, and as such, are the disciplines now being perceived as more important than the academics themselves?*

A paradox in academia is evident, where the desire to implement change and be forward-thinking in perspective, conflicts with the institution governing individuals to follow set standards in a manner that makes these embedded practices difficult to question (Thompson, 2015). Alcorn (2003) supports this notion and explores the consequences to questioning these ways of being, stating that “it is extraordinary how easily one can become a pariah in an academic community for questioning the state of being, when in reality, everyone is supposed to be so broad-minded” (p. 22).

### **2.7.2 Academic Identity and Career Stage: What is Known?**

Conceptualising academic identities within the gendered neoliberal higher education context may also be further complicated by one’s career stage. Within the research that has been conducted thus far, it has been suggested that women who are early-career academics (women currently completing their PhD, to being five years post completion; Australian Council of Learned Academies, 2012) experience tensions in their job commitment, motivation, and achievement, and frequently question their future path within the academic setting (McAlpine et al., 2014). Women who are mid-career academics (women between 5-15 years post-PhD; Australian Council of Learned Academies, 2012) are said to describe wanting to contribute to academia, however, can feel powerless when their interests do not

align with the academic institution (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). Women who are late-career academics (women more than 15 years post PhD; Australian Council of Learned Academies, 2012) are said to describe an increased sense of commitment and competency with their academic roles (Brown et al., 2014), but a conflict with questioning what else they can achieve within academia (Australian Council of Learned Academies, 2012). It is apparent then, that each career stage presents unique challenges, particularly where there are tensions between individual and institutional needs.

### **2.7.3 How Do Dominant Academic Identities Manifest in Higher Education?**

Higher education institutions govern individuals to engage in particular practices and identify in certain ways. The prominence of the neoliberal episteme has a significant influence on the normative practices within academia (Archer, 2008). Further to this, some identities are more frequently represented (statistically) and viewed as normative within higher education (e.g., the white, cis-gender, able-bodied, heterosexual male academic; SAGE, 2020a). Theories and ideologies elucidate how certain identities and knowledge systems can function and be valued in higher education; these include hegemonic masculinity, and the influence of colonisation, and eurocentrism (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Fox et al., 2013; Staeuble, 2006).

Hegemonic masculinity is a theory that explains the legitimisation of the male dominant position and the subordination of women and other minority groups and identities (i.e., where hegemonic refers to dominance; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The neoliberal academic context supports dominant, traditional values relating to hegemonic masculinity, and academic identities that challenge the status quo (i.e., white, cis-gendered, able-bodied, male dominance) are at a disadvantage (Pomeroy, 2016). Hegemonic masculinity operates under the assumption that the gender binary is the dominant and accepted way to categorise gendered identities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Within the academic context, women are not necessarily free to forge academic identities that are authentic to their experiences, rather, they experience pressure to pursue a prescribed gendered academic identity (Thompson, 2015). As such, within academia, the distinct categorisation of masculine and feminine identities prescribes gendered

expectations regarding academic role performance (Williams et al., 2015). While an academic may be able to form an identity, the conditions under which they do so are inherently limited and restricted for all, and particularly so for women. These conditions have been proposed to manifest through the privileging of particular identities and ways of being, underpinned by coloniality, Eurocentrism, and the neoliberal episteme.

## **2.8 Academic Ways of Being, Coloniality, and Eurocentrism**

Particular ideologies can elucidate how specific identities, knowledge systems, and ways of being have manifested and are privileged in today's academic context. Underpinning the privileging of these elements is the process of coloniality, which is understood in critical terms to articulate human agency and choice, traditional, dominant values, and how power can be used in an exploitative sense (Fox et al., 2013). Coloniality refers to structures and practices which are derived from settler colonialism and governance that continue to influence social relations and institutions in the present day, while deriving originally from historical practices and long-standing patterns of power (Fox et al., 2013; Staeuble, 2006). I agree with Fox et al. (2013) and their statement of the critical impact that coloniality has had on what is deemed the dominant or privileged way of being in academia. Coloniality is propagated through imperialism, which works to facilitate economic and cultural expansion, power, and control over societies (Staeuble, 2006). This form of large-scale domination is successful based on the large disparity in power, as well as the securing and subjugating of the minority populations (Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2018). The historical role of coloniality in Australia has served three prominent functions: a reduction of the power of Indigenous nations, forcing the adoption and assimilation of a westernised way of thinking, and the perpetuation of narratives which serve to erase the identities of those not privileged within the way of knowing (Battiste, 2013; Moreton-Robinson, 2011).

Practices and policies from the motherland (i.e., the United Kingdom [UK]) prevented the traditional landowners and other minority groups from accessing power and resources (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994; Jones, 1997). This power was held with the individuals from the UK who had taken the land from the traditional custodians (i.e., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those from

the First Nation), illustrating Aboriginal dispossession and colonial takeover, with the assumption that European culture and knowledge was superior to all others, and that the Europeans could define the world in their own terms (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994; Jones, 1997). While some forms of colonialism aim to take resources to place the colonising country at an advantage, the objective of the coloniser upon possession of Australian land extended on this to include the acquisition of land to permanently settle (Marginson & Considine, 2000). Through this process of settling, the most destructive impacts to Indigenous communities were noted, where the exploitation of human and natural resources, as well as the acquisition, control, and definition of these resources and the land, was identified (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016). The process outlined here was accomplished through the genocide, forced removal, and assimilation of Indigenous peoples within colonised land. The colonial defining of land and knowledge devalued the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; as such, the majority were killed through genocide (random killings, punitive expeditions, and organised massacres; Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994; Jones, 1997). The colonisers forcibly removed any traces of Australian Indigenous peoples from their homes, placing them in schools with westernised education to remove all traces of their Indigenous identity (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994; Jones, 1997). Punishment was implemented when Indigenous peoples spoke their language, and the working conditions were inhumane with no payment, or ability to communicate with others (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016).

The superiority of the majority was validated through beliefs, ideas, and values embedded in social representations (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994; Jones, 1997). This led to the European colonists ensuring that they, and their higher education institutions, benefitted from forms of colonial capitalism, as well as having their ideas and beliefs validated as the norm (Marginson & Considine, 2000). This was considered as a means of cultural violence, an aspect of the culture that legitimises violence through direct and structural forms, to privilege the Eurocentric value of a single knowledge and form of education (Galtung, 1990). Coloniality is also underpinned by institutionalised, and cultural racism. Institutionalised racism is where organisational practices and policies prevent members of oppressed groups

from accessing power and resources, whereas cultural racism is where particular beliefs, ideas, and values embedded in social representations validate the superiority of one group over the other (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994; Jones, 1997). The colonisers developed theories of popularised discourses through structural and cultural racism that reinforced support for their colonial endeavours (Battiste, 2013; Moreton-Robinson, 2011). Through the colonisers' perspective, this legitimised the oppression, dispossession, and domination of the colonised subjects on the basis of intellectual and ethical grounds (Battiste, 2013; Moreton-Robinson, 2011). European colonists, through their actions, combined these forms of racism to ensure their ethnic group was the primary beneficiary of colonial capitalism, which led to a dominant culture in Australia titled 'western' (Mentan, 2015; Staeuble, 2006).

### **2.8.1 *Constructing the Western, Eurocentric University***

Coloniality is based on European origins and worldviews which are upheld and work to intentionally replace other knowledge systems, which then dominate society (Staeuble, 2006). In academia, knowledge and science have been influenced by cultural racism to assume universality over particular worldviews, with the European scientific paradigm introduced during colonisation as the only valid system of academic knowledge (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994). The university context was the site in which the colonial matrix of knowledge was developed, which was categories of thought, and epistemic ways of knowing and being, that were developed by the coloniser, within their subsequent privileged languages (Battiste, 2013; Moreton-Robinson, 2011). The colonial matrix of knowledge attacked and marginalised any form of knowledge that did not fit into the colonised ontological and epistemic framework (Battiste, 2013; Moreton-Robinson, 2011). This is similar to Grosfoguel's (2013) statement of foundational knowledge within the westernised higher education context being based on epistemic racism, with the genocide of people and knowledge underpinned by not only material aspects of colonialism, but how the Eurocentric ways of knowing, and being in the world replaced other forms of knowledge. Through the validation of the European scientific paradigm, Mentan (2015) argues that a mono-cultural, universal western tradition of Eurocentrism is promoted, whereby the Eurocentric universal truth is

accepted, and other forms of knowledge and dissemination are invalidated. Eurocentrism reflects the societal values and beliefs which were validated and constructed a dominant culture of 'western' to disseminate the only valid system of knowledge at the time (Grimshaw, 2002; Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994). The universality of the western worldview was based on European origins, which were upheld and worked to intentionally replace other knowledge systems, which then dominated society (Staeuble, 2006). The Eurocentric, western worldview privileged white males as the majority, which impacted how white women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women with caring responsibilities, and other minorities were constructed and positioned in society (Cammack & Phillips, 2002). The western tradition of Eurocentrism was promoted, whereby the Eurocentric universal truth was accepted, and other forms of knowledge and dissemination were invalidated (Mentan, 2015). Knowledge that is gained from the First World (the United States, and later, the UK) was disseminated in a one-way stream that privileges and promotes European and American academic cultural, and patriarchal imperialism (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994).

### **2.8.2 *The Influence of Coloniality on Higher Education***

Higher education institutions have been influenced by particular ways of being and doing which reflect and preserve the dominant European colonial systems and practices (Adam, 2012). The institutions were established upon the epistemic and material histories of coloniality, with universities across Australia, influenced by the British, providing education to the colonisers with the knowledge of those they would rule over (Macoun, 2016). This was achieved in such a manner that the expanding of colonial knowledge was viewed as dominating in nature, where the university was viewed as a context which was built and financed by dispossession, enslavement, coloniality, genocide, and constructed as a setting where colonial knowledge could be developed and extended outward (Battiste, 2013; Moreton-Robinson, 2011). The knowledge privileged by coloniality built upon the subjectivities of a specific social agent (i.e., white, Christian, British men), which served to privilege other identities who did not meet these dimensions of identity (Cammack & Phillips, 2002). Battiste (2013) summarised this by stating:

*Education, like the institutions and societies it derives from, is neither culturally neutral nor fair. Education has its roots in a patriarchal, Eurocentric society, complicit with multiple forms of oppression of women, sometimes men, children, minorities, and Indigenous peoples (p. 159).*

As such, the Australian public higher education institutions within the colonised society represented a crucial site for negotiating between the domination of coloniality, and Indigenous sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson, 2007). Concerns surrounding the relationship between colonial control and power have been suggested, with Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) arguing that:

*Colonial includes all forms of dominating and oppressive relationships that emerge from structures of power and privilege inherent and embedded in our contemporary social relations...colonial is not defined simply as foreign or alien, but more importantly, as dominating and opposing (p. 308).*

Through colonisation, the control of political, economic, and symbolic systems become institutionalised and obscured by ideologies that work to justify exploitative uses of power (Adam, 2012; Fox et al., 2013). This allows for the superiority of the coloniser, and the inferiority of the colonised, to manifest (Fox et al., 2013). The continuing form of coloniality and imperialism works to perpetuate privileged ways of being in academia, for example, academia operates as a patriarchal, exclusionary, elitist, imperial setting that privileges white, heterosexual men and their ways of being and doing as superior (Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2018). Members of the dominant group (i.e., white men) are privileged over others, such as women in academia, who then find themselves in a devalued position and treated in a less favourable way (Staeuble, 2006). As such, other identities who differ from the dominant patriarchal practices and ways of being, such as women and minoritised groups, are constructed in this colonised, imperialist setting as inferior (Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2018). Further, the ways in which academic knowledge is structured, as well as the governing organisational structures of higher education are fundamentally imperialist and colonial (Staeuble, 2006). The culture of academia and the systems of management and governance all work in ways which protect the privileges that are already set-in place, which then disadvantage women academics (Smith, 1999).

Education has been viewed as the perfect vehicle in the domination of coloniality (Battiste, 2013). Colonialism within Australia was only considered the beginning, and given the enormity of the process, it was expected to live on as an unconscious aspect of daily life, specifically, through education (Battiste, 2013). Given this, it is important to make conscious how entrenched and ongoing the colonial process is within the education context. As such, a key component of this consciousness raising is for all individuals to recognise how we are implicated in colonial practices (Moreton-Robinson, 2011). Most are unaware of this because of how normalised colonial ideologies are in both educational, and everyday contexts (Moreton-Robinson, 2011). The normalisation exists based on the education of individuals through pedagogical and research practices (Moreton-Robinson, 2011).

The culture of academia can be suggested as never having engendered a sense of security for women. Historically, the setting has illustrated its inegalitarian and hierarchical structure, to facilitate a setting that fosters exclusion, elitism, and inequalities (Smith, 1999; Staeuble, 2006). As a setting, it acts to marginalise many from the security of the centre, or ivory tower, where many wider social inequities (based on gender, social class, race, and ethnicity) are reflected and reinforced through traditional practices (Smith, 1999; Staeuble, 2006). Considering these inequalities, as well as the social and psychological mechanisms of colonisation and imperialism, the relationship of domination and control becomes more pervasive over generations (Moane, 1999). As such, higher education to this day continues in playing its part in perpetuating colonising, imperialist, and globalising practices, alongside the mass media and other westernised institutions (Smith, 1999). Definitions of reality can be made to prevail over others, for example, through the use of power underpinning a psychological imperialism through laws, rituals, instructions, and other forces (Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2018). The neoliberal episteme is one such example of particular guidelines that govern the academics in terms of their ways of being and doing in academia (Peck et al., 2018). As such, academic institutions appear to focus less on how individuals can challenge Eurocentric norms and practices, and more on how they can assimilate and adjust to these forms of capitalist modernisation and culture (Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2018; Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994). Discussion of the capitalist modernisation in the

academic culture relies on exploring how the neoliberal episteme privileges particular academic identities and ways of being.

## 2.9 Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is an ideology that reflects an increased level of productivity through the marketisation of institutions, as well as exhibiting a set of economic policies that have, over time, become embedded within western culture (Adams et al., 2019). Neoliberalism, as an episteme, reflects a way of knowing that can be present within the academic way of being (Archer, 2008). Berry (2008) describes neoliberalism as knowledge structures of rationalist scientism, empiricism, and productivity, quantified in a hard-and-fast manner that values efficiency and standardisation, as well as arguing that the dominant knowledge system can be indistinguishable from the neoliberal agenda that facilitates it. Further, neoliberalism has been associated with a positivist epistemology, and that the way of knowing, reflective in the episteme, values *“externally defined rules and evaluative criteria, utility, and value for money, as well as scientific excellence”* (Hunter, 2002, p. 167). Institutions, under the neoliberal episteme, are governed to produce employable and local workers, or subjects, to supply services that are managed through neoliberal economic strategies (Clegg, 2008).

The nature of work, and the workplace, within higher education has changed dramatically over the past two decades as a result of those in a position of power, as well as through the processes of globalisation and neoliberalism (Burke, 2020; Cotoi, 2011). Changes in the dominant socio-economic ideology within Australian tertiary education systems have transformed *‘traditional’* academic settings (Dzidic et al., 2016). These changes have included a shift from a liberal setting that was characterised by a negotiated, flat, collegial governance structure, with professional autonomy valued, and the freedom for academics to define their role, to a more competitive, dominated, and hierarchical neoliberal structure, where the rights of academics are dependent on the market (Dzidic et al., 2016). The shift has been strongly influenced by the manifestation of the neoliberal episteme. Many definitions of neoliberalism have been offered in the extant literature base, particularly in the social sciences literature (Adam, 2012), but most have commonalities that can be drawn upon.

The first evidence of neoliberalism was identified in the 1960s, although some argue that the episteme manifested and was evident in society earlier than this (Burke, 2020). As an ideology, neoliberalism acknowledges the value of economic markets, both in their existence, and their operation (Burke, 2020). The operation of the market-like structure within the institution acts as a guide for human action, capable of replacing any existing ideological beliefs that guide the individual's way of being and knowing, focusing on what is valued by the institution instead (Connell, 2013). Institutions guided by the neoliberal episteme advocate for economic growth and view it as fundamental for the successful operation of society (Connell, 2013). In combination, neoliberalism can encompass a range of economic, political, and social practices and ideas which functions at both an individual and institutional level (Burke, 2020).

### ***2.9.1 The Impact of Neoliberalism on Australian Public Higher Education***

Within the higher education context, neoliberalism has changed ideas around teaching, research, and service. Neoliberalism is a change into the free market; a shift from educating students within professions to a focus on building marketable skills and knowledge within research (Radice, 2013). The restructuring of universities has changed the expectations held for academics, for example, in how they provide services to the institution. Some suggest there is increasing pressure to be productive within the working environment (Fanghanel, 2012) and these expectations are perceived by academics as near impossible to achieve (Brienza, 2016). Further, there appears an implicit expectation that the research interests of academics will benefit the interests of the schools, faculties, and institutions, with the importance of meeting targets that benefit the institution, rather than conducting research that the academic themselves enjoys, or finds pleasure in conducting (Dzidic et al., 2016). In context of these pressures, higher education is a setting where decision making capacity and personal autonomy may be limited (Thompson, 2015). In this new context, the focus is on generating capital and revenue (Saunders, 2007), and measuring performance based on targets of research outputs and marketable skills (Radice, 2013).

Neoliberal ideas have changed the role of the academic in terms of the standards of how knowledge is gained, valued, and measured, for example,

academics are viewed as now providing a service to their students, or '*clients*' (Zarkov, 2015). Henkel (2010, p. 5) summarises the impact of neoliberalism on higher education institutions: "*...neoliberalism brought various forms of external regulation, a new phenomenon for many institutions, and a greatly enhanced burden for others. Such large changes have had a strong influence on academics' beliefs and practices*". The polarities, tensions, contrasts, and complementarities that are seen and felt by academics (and distinguished by neoliberalism) have impacted academia from both a local and global perspective (Cortes Santiago et al., 2017). Neoliberalism has reconceptualised the era that individuals live in, in that the knowledge that is produced is linked with economic outputs (Cotoi, 2011). What this means is that advancements in knowledge are made within numerous institutional sites and research communities, simply, that knowledge does not come from one place, or from one person (Adams et al., 2019). The individual or system who creates knowledge, or at least, has the ability to create knowledge, is situated within a position of power. Those with more power are constructed as experts within neoliberal systems, crafted with the responsibility to construct knowledge, subjectify certain individuals and ways of being and knowing, and allocate them hierarchical social positions (Cotoi, 2011). As such, the individuals, the knowledge, and the systems are governed, both by the self and by external systems of control (Burke, 2020).

As institutions strive for competitive advantage in the marketplace, new features have been designed to be able to minimise costs and maximise profits. Radice (2013, p. 9-13) and Brienza (2016) have identified the following in relation to academic settings:

- While women academics' participation has increased within the institution, this is often through low-paid, casual, fixed-term, or part-time contracts.
- Managerialist strategies and bureaucratic organisation are used to gain a firmer control over academics and their practices.
- The increase in working hours has led to the blurring of boundaries between leisure, family, and work.

- An increase in emphasising some forms of flexibility and lifelong learning, ironically, has reduced the emphasis on career continuity and progression, as well as the availability of secure employment contracts.

Further, with the influence of the neoliberal ideology, related ideals such as individual enterprise, maximised efficiency, responsiveness to user needs, and cost effectiveness have filtered into institutions globally (Henkel, 2010). Higher education institutions are not exempt from this, with evidence illustrating an increased emphasis on measured outputs, performance indicators, higher index scores (relating to academic productivity) and grant income (Zarkov, 2015). Consequently, these new behaviours and ideals that are characteristic of the free market have exchanged the traditional culture of open intellectual enquiry with the new culture of performativity (Thompson, 2015). To have agency surrounding the choice of research and inquiry, has now been replaced with academics having to conduct research that meets performance targets for the institution, which may involve conducting research that does not fit with the research area of the academic (Thompson, 2015; Zarkov, 2015).

These issues are of particular significance regarding the potential impact of the gendered academic environment on the experiences of women, and how they can create tensions for women academics. These tensions and inequalities are experienced more strongly by women, as the structure of academia embraces a patriarchal culture in combination to the neoliberal ideology. As such, academia now promotes the fully committed, visible, and self-promoting worker who is unaffected by familial responsibilities as the ideal worker (Macoun & Miller, 2014; Williams et al., 2015). Additionally, the structure of higher education institutions simultaneously reinforces ideal worker standards that are masculinised in nature, as well as framing progression and advancement as merit-based and gender-neutral, which act to both perpetuate and intensify existing gendered inequalities (Clegg, 2008). Consequently, the patriarchal and neoliberal system impacts women whereby their career progression is intermittent and slower, compared to their male counterparts, but accompanied with more physical and psychological exhaustion, based on their multiple roles and responsibilities (Burke, 2020).

### **2.9.2 How Did Neoliberal Ways of Being Become Embedded in Academia?**

The neoliberal practices that stem from the episteme work to allow particular ways of being to function. Additionally, they can illuminate how certain discourses and ideologies are enacted and perpetuated. In the context of neoliberal academia, the ways of being that are constructed can be viewed as practices that allow the normative conditions of academia to exist. For example, neoliberalism can produce in individuals: higher levels of flexibility, cooperation, and productivity with the constructing of economic objectives that allow for the economic benefit of the institution (Davies & Petersen, 2005). Further, neoliberalism allows for the review of academics and their performance, whether the individuals are meeting the requirements of the system, as well as conceptualising the value of the academic to the system (Morley, 2016). These can be considered as simultaneously good for some, and bad for other academics. Neoliberal ways of being in academia include an oppressing of creativity in teaching practices and criticality in research, the generation and demand for competition, as well as a marginalisation and suppression of critical thinking (Archer, 2008). Further to this, the masculination of the academy perpetuates the technologies of competition, individualism, and appropriation being performed in the self, which at times may conflict with other ways of being constructed by the academic (Adam, 2012).

The neoliberal episteme is viewed as powerful and insidious in that it can shape the subjectivities for all academics, irrespective of gender, age, or career stage (Navarro, 2017). While the neoliberal discourse can be viewed as “*monstrous and absurd*”, for example, through the valuing of intellectual work in dollar terms (Davies & Petersen, 2005, p. 34), the superficial set of governing practices outlined thus far are not directly intended to enter and change the identities of academic workers, or to undermine their passion for, and commitment to their work (Dickens & Chavez, 2018). Rather, neoliberal ways of being are rationalised by working to improve and enhance the practices of individuals to make them more useful and relevant to the system (Connell, 2013). Individuals are viewed as subjects and products of the neoliberal system, reconstructed to be part of a whole ensemble directed and focused to the pursuit and interests of the system (Hartung et al., 2017). As such, a subject’s academic identities and sense of self is reconstructed

over time to reflect the ethos and structure of the neoliberal episteme, and all aspects of social behaviour can now be reconceptualised from an economic lens (Dugas et al., 2018). Foucault (2008) adds to this notion, suggesting that,

*...rather than govern by dictating rights and responsibilities, neoliberalism proceeds by harnessing desires for independence and creativity to the interests of business, reconfiguring workers as entrepreneurs of their own skills and abilities and reconfiguring the social relations of capitalism to emphasise competition, not between workers and capitalists, but between workers themselves.*

Within western society, academics now work within a dramatically different educational system and context from what has existed years ago (Burke, 2020). Neoliberalism has brought differing forms of external regulation, which has constructed a new phenomenon for institutions, but poses more of a burden for other academics (Adams et al., 2019). These burdens and challenges have been suggested to influence the academics' identities, beliefs, and actions (Morley, 2016). Academics, when reflecting on their identities, can be forced to review and work on themselves, in terms of self-surveillance, conduct, discipline, and self-restraint. The techniques of government and governmentality work to impose the social personality of the individual, whereby the academic's freedom is engaged to display desirable ways of behaving (Hartung et al., 2017). In the context of neoliberalism, the behaviour is to become tolerable and productive in relation to the labour market and capitalist ideals (Hunter, 2002). The real political task within society is when critiquing these practices, one must critique the workings of the institution and how they influence the conceptualisation of one's identities. The neoliberal workings of the institution can appear to be both independent and neutral; forms of discipline and conduct which have always obscurely exercised itself (Hartung et al., 2017). Individuals can work to fight fear and fight the insidiousness of the neoliberal episteme which have been legitimised by the ways of being of the institution. As such, research that explores the experiences of academics (or as Gill [2010] states, neoliberal subjects) and aims to deconstruct these working practices, can assist in developing an understanding of the academic identity and overall understanding of the academic way of being. It is important to

elucidate discourse surrounding the academic way of being, to be able to make sense of how neoliberalism, as a difficult and intangible ideology, works and manifests through the experiences of academics (Adams et al., 2019).

## **2.10 Concluding Commentary**

In this chapter, I provided the background to the research, exploring the current state of women's positioning within higher education. I set the scene by providing an exploration of what is known thus far surrounding academic identities, the gender binary, heteronormativity, intersectionality, how coloniality has influenced academia, as well as how neoliberalism is conceptualised in the Australian public higher education setting. In the next chapter, I continue my exploration into how women have been positioned in the academic context by providing the history of Australian higher education, as well as outlining the significant events that provide insight into critiquing how the academic context was formed. Embedded within this commentary will be an acknowledgement of the complexities surrounding women's experiences in academia over time.

## **CHAPTER 03: IMPERIALISM, EXCLUSION, ELITISM, AND THE**

### **PATRIARCHY - A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN HIGHER**

### **EDUCATION**

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*If the academy, classroom, and other educational contexts are not mere institutional sites, but are fundamentally political and cultural sites that represent accommodations and contestations over knowledge by differently empowered social constituencies, then the processes and practices of education lead to profoundly significant notions of self, identity, and community (Mohanty, 1997, p. 16).*

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#### **3.1 Chapter Overview**

In this chapter, I explore the history of higher education in Australia. Significant events in the forming of Australian higher education are discussed, embedded within the context of Australia as a colonised nation undergoing Federation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is important to understand the history behind the forming of the Federation, how it impacted the Australian education system, and propagated the influence of colonialism and imperialism on scientific knowledge and practices over time. First, I discuss pre-federation Australia and the identified need for higher education. Then, I explore the growth of higher education and its trends within the First and Second World Wars. Following this, I review the revolution of higher education and its introduction into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To conclude this chapter, I summarise how the academic culture functions to protect the Eurocentric colonial systems and practices set in place and operating to this very day, through the institutionalisation of political, economic, and symbolic systems and ideologies.

Embedded within this commentary is an acknowledgement of the complexities surrounding women's experiences over time in academia. Academia has historically been an elitist and exclusionary setting, influenced by imperial and

patriarchal practices that privilege white, heterosexual men, and has constructed their ways of being as superior, which have influenced how women have been able to navigate academia, both as students, and as academics (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994). The representation of women as students, and academics, in Australian higher education has been mainly influenced by two factors, the history of the Australian higher education setting, as well as the expectations placed on women in society (Krejsler, 2005; Marginson, 2007; Oldenziel, 1999). The operation of the higher education culture has been shown to impact diverse identities who differ from the privileged way of being, which can influence their experience and construction of identity in higher education (Cammack & Phillips, 2002; Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994).

### **3.2 The Late 1800s: Pre-Federation and The Need for Higher Education**

In the time considered pre-federation, Australia was originally structured into separate colonies that were ruled by an appointed governor from the British Government (Rienstra & Williams, 2015). These colonies identified a need for the development of land and infrastructure, and as such, engineers and other professionals were called upon to assist with the development of a new colony (Grimshaw, 2002). This need was reported based on the privileged knowledge of the colonisers, as well as their Eurocentrism, cultural elitism, and perception of acquiring '*available*' lands and resources for global domination (Atkinson 2013; Grimshaw, 2002). The development was reported within the New South Wales Act (1823), whereby the establishing and administering of government institutions required highly educated individuals (Grimshaw, 2002). It is important to note at this time that the need for highly educated individuals focused solely on white men, and the white male contribution, almost ignoring completely the contribution of women beyond familial and caring responsibilities (Atkinson, 2013).

Within the mid to late 1800s, colonists who wished to obtain either secondary or tertiary education, only had the choice of travelling to Europe, North America, or Britain to receive it (Marginson, 2007). The journey was often arduous and lengthy, with men most likely being separated from family members (e.g., their wives and children) for long periods of time, as well as using expenses that were beyond the means of what most colonists had to offer (Marginson, 2007). As such,

the demand for a more locally convenient form of higher education in Australia grew, as well as the demand for a more educated workforce (Atkinson, 2013; Rienstra & Williams, 2015). While some influential colonists (i.e., white men originally from Britain) began establishing private colleges to meet the demand for an educated workforce, it was clear that more was needed to address the need for higher education (Atkinson, 2013; Rienstra & Williams, 2015). Thus far, the attempts to meet the demands for an educated workforce were gendered and focused more on the representation of men in these academic roles (Cammack & Phillips, 2002).

To meet the demands of higher education, plans were made to establish more higher education institutions (Atkinson, 2013). To be able to do this, the separate colonies began to push for more control over their respective land, how it was governed, and to question who had authority over the individuals who inhabited the land (Beasley, 1934). Progressively, the colonies became more self-governing, and in 1851, Britain only retained control of matters relating to the colonies' military and foreign affairs (Rienstra & Williams, 2015). With the increase in power and agency surrounding government matters, came the establishment of higher education institutions around Australia, with the first university established in Australia being the University of Sydney in 1850 (Marginson & Considine, 2000). This was then followed by the University of Melbourne in 1853, the University of Adelaide in 1874, and in 1890, the University of Tasmania (Marginson, 2007). These universities were established to further assist in addressing the need for a more educated workforce, as well as the further development and refining of the colonised land and its related infrastructure (Grimshaw, 2002). The higher education institutions served to colonise, being part of the civilised mission, to re-educate the population based on Eurocentric principles and knowledge (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994; Jones, 1997). Within these institutions, men were the majority in both the representation of students, as well as academics and professionals, and for those women who were admitted entry, they were scarcely represented as both students, and academics (Cammack & Phillips, 2002).

### **3.3 1900 – 1945: Federation and the Influence of Eurocentrism on Australian Higher Education**

It was clear that the imperialists (i.e., white, Christian, heterosexual men from Britain as colonisers), wanted further control and power than what had already been provided. With a rousing argument by then New South Wales Premier Sir Henry Parkes, the six self-governing colonies of Australia became the Federation of Australia on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1901 (Atkinson, 2013). The federation was originally viewed as a dominion of Britain, Canada, and New Zealand over Australia where the country was subject to a doctrine of a single empire (Atkinson, 2013; Rienstra & Williams, 2015). Australia's responsibilities within this doctrine were established by the writing of the constitution under the Commonwealth (Grimshaw, 2002). The constitution defined the responsibilities and powers of the Commonwealth, with all other matters that were not defined under the power and responsibility of each State (Grimshaw, 2002). For example, the Commonwealth were now in charge of matters relating to foreign affairs, customs, posts and telegraphs, defence, currency, banking, citizenship, and immigration, whereas the States were responsible for other matters (e.g., education, health, taxation, mining, agriculture, public order, land, and transport; Atkinson, 2013; Grimshaw, 2002).

In 1901, Australia's population was 3,788,100 and within this, there were fewer than 1652 university students and staff (Marginson, 2007). Men represented 78.1% of the university population, with women academics representing 21.9% (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 1911). The gender gap was still apparent, and men still held the majority in academic positions (ABS, 1911). While popular demand for universities was low, a need for further higher education institutions was still recognised (Forsyth, 2015). Universities were viewed as meeting the needs of profession education to the population (mainly in medical and legal fields), civilising influence, and future leadership (Moodie, 2008). As such, to meet these needs and allow for an establishment of a higher education institution in each State, the University of Queensland and the University of Western Australia were established in 1909 and 1911 respectively (Karmel, 1991). The universities established thus far were controlled by State governments and interests but were reflective of and modelled by the traditional British university system (Abbott &

Doucouliagos, 2003). As such, the features of the (then) influential ‘*Mother Country*’ were adopted, such as being self-governing, State-founded, and self-accrediting (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003). Providing doctoral qualifications and broadly distributed research activities were viewed as the role of higher education (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Marginson, 2007). Additionally, higher education in Australia was also influenced by the Scottish model of daytime lectures and vocationally grounded courses, rather than the Cambridge and Oxford approach of personal development from aristocratic scholars in residential colleges (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Karmel, 1991; Marginson, 2007).

In 1914, with further statistical data gathered, it was reported that approximately 3300 students were enrolled in universities, and 290 people were Professors and Lecturers (ABS, 1914; Marginson, 2007). The statistics here were calculated as representing less than 0.1% of the Australian population (as students and staff) at the time (Marginson, 2007). Students were required (mostly) to pay their own fees, but there was the allocation of some endowments and State funding to assist (Marginson, 2001). With the increasing contributions made by these Australian universities, the decision was made to establish the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee (AVCC) in 1920 (Winchester & Browning, 2015). The AVCC worked to represent the interests of the six universities established thus far to construct how the education system existed in Australia (Pearson 2005; Winchester & Browning, 2015).

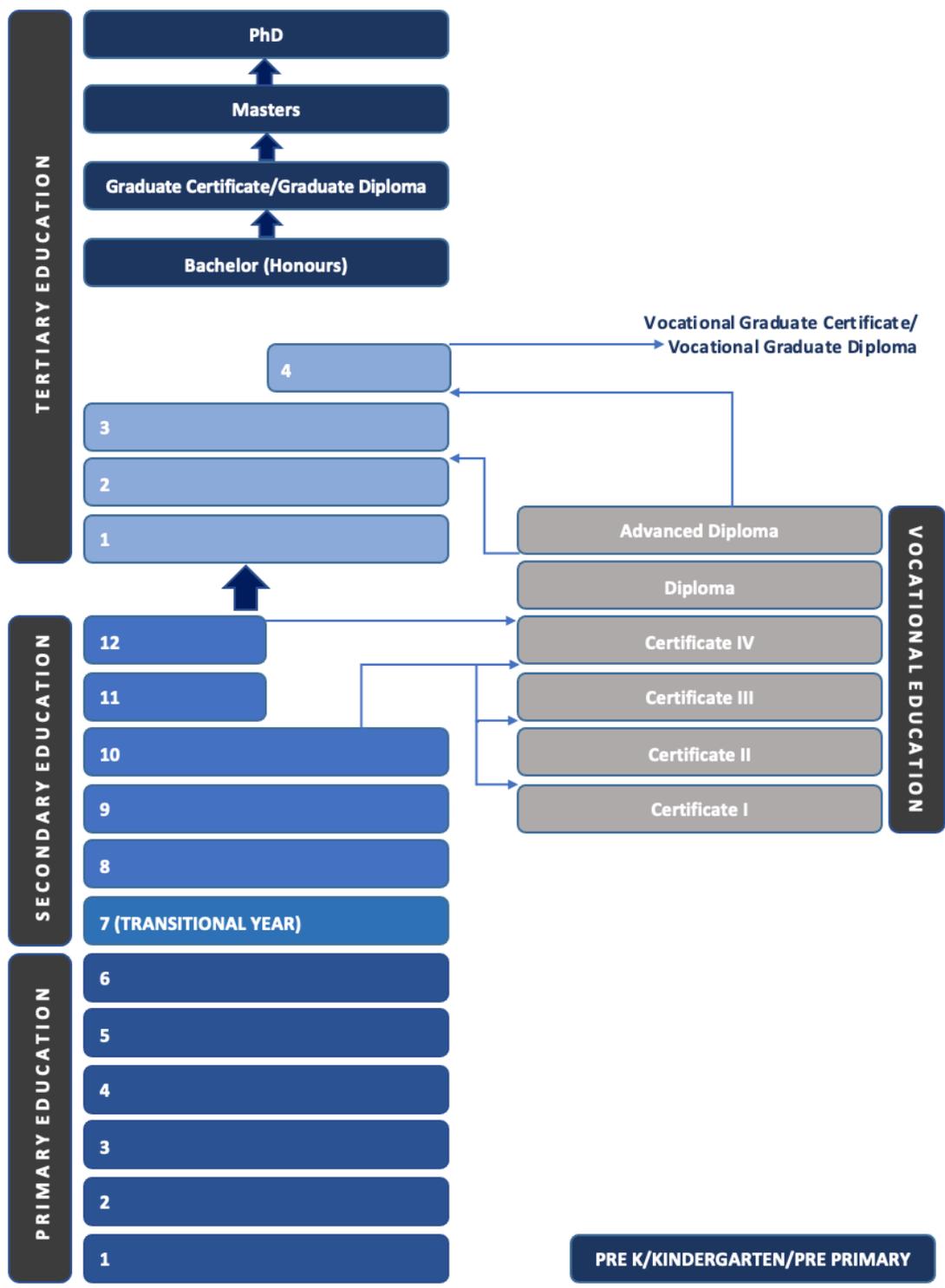
### **3.3.1 Constructing ‘*The Education System*’ in Australia**

With the establishment of a higher education institution in each State of the Commonwealth of Australia, it was important to conceptualise how the higher education system was constructed. Education beyond the secondary level was divided into two streams, higher education and vocational education and training (Australian Government, 2021a). Higher education consisted of universities, theological colleges, and graduate business schools to name a few, whereas vocational education and training consisted of technical training as well as further education skills (Australian Government, 2021b). The entrance into higher education settings was based for the most part on an end-of-school assessment system, which differed contextually by State, allowing for the completion of

assessments and examinations which allowed for the forming of a (at the time titled) Tertiary Education Ranking (TER; Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Marginson, 2007). Entrance was based on the rank of each specific degree, and how this compared to the individual's TER; if the student met the ranking as a minimum or scored higher, they were admitted into the institution (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Marginson, 2007). The following diagram (Figure 4) illustrates the construction of the education system at all levels within Australia, which developed over the course of 1900-1945. This content has been adopted from Marginson (2007), but the figure is my own.

**Figure 4**

*Summary of the Australian Education System (Marginson, 2007)*



Vocational education and training institutions were viewed as *'non-university'* institutions, and originally, only issued technical/trade certificates, diplomas, and professional bachelor's degrees (Australian Government, 2021b). The universities differed from institutes of technology and technical colleges in relation to their participation in research activities (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Marginson, 2007). To allow for further engagement and providing of Australian scientific research, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) was established in 1916. As a legacy, the CSIRO still exists today, but it is now viewed as an organisation that duplicates the role undertaken today by universities and higher education (Garrett-Jones & Turpin, 2012; Pearson, 2005). Further to the facilitation of research and the forming of the CSIRO, two new university colleges were established (Pearson, 2005). Pre-World War I (WWI), Australia's population had increased to approximately seven million, but the university population figures were still comparatively low at 14,236 (Marginson, 2007). This encapsulated the six universities and two colleges established thus far. Within this figure, 10,354 of these students were degree earning (with 81 considered higher degree by research) and almost 4000 were categorised as *'sub-degree or non-award'* students (Marginson, 2007).

### **3.3.2 Gender, 'Elite Occupations', and 'Semi-Professions'**

In 1921, while the representation of women in higher education grew, the gender gap was still apparent (ABS, 1921). Women academics made up 29.3% of the university population, compared to men who represented 70.7% (ABS, 1921). The lack of representation of women in higher education has been proposed to contribute to the highly gendered nature of the context (Cammack & Phillips, 2002), which has been acknowledged internationally (Bryson et al., 2014). With the establishment of higher education institutions, as well as the discussion of gender and its role in education, came further discussion surrounding how the different professions were constructed as more suitable and appropriate for specific individuals based on gendered stereotypes (Acker & Dillabough, 2007). Higher education had been influenced by expectations surrounding the allocated *'professions'* of specific genders (Acker & Dillabough, 2007; Oldenziel, 1999). For example, Krejsler (2005) and Oldenziel (1999) both refer to elite occupations, which

at the time, included jobs in medicine, architecture, ministry, dentistry, law, science, judicial positions, and university teaching, and acknowledged these were most likely allocated to white men, comprising the majority in these professions (Krejsler, 2005; Oldenziel, 1999). These professions require specialised training, where individuals who partake in them are classified as experts with the highest level of autonomy, control, and pay (Krejsler, 2005; Oldenziel, 1999). Elite occupations are viewed as having a higher status and honour, and as such, individuals who are employed in them are held in higher esteem, compared to those within semi-professions (Krejsler, 2005; Oldenziel, 1999). Semi-professions were constructed as careers which were not held to the same level of esteem, but still needed a wealth of knowledge, education, and experience (Krejsler, 2005; Oldenziel, 1999). Professions such as nursing, librarianship, primary and secondary teaching, and social work were considered semi-professions, categorised as feminine positions under the already existing gendered norms of society (Krejsler, 2005; Oldenziel, 1999). While white males were the majority in elite professions, compared to white women in semi-professions during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has been acknowledged that these gendered roles still exist in higher education, and society overall, today (Cammack & Phillips, 2002).

### **3.3.3 *The Quota System and Critiquing Women's Role in Academia***

With gendered roles impacting women's academic representation, access to professions was further complicated by the quota system of admission (Marginson, 2007), whereby tertiary education institutions would set limits as to the number of women they would admit, both in student, and academic roles (Acker & Dillabough, 2007; Marginson, 2007). This was based on performance targets, as well as the assumptions surrounding gender and intelligence, where the higher education setting was viewed at the time as a '*man's world*' (Marginson, 2007). Reflecting this sex-based discrimination, some universities accepted three men for every one woman (Marginson, 2007). At this time, policies and legislation to '*tackle*' gendered inequities did not exist (Winchester & Browning, 2015).

A decline was observed when comparing the representation of women in higher education from the 1920s (29.3%) to the 1950s (10.8%), due to the Great Depression and the World War (ABS, 1951). Until the 1960s, predominately white

males occupied the elite professions, with women and minority men excluded (Krejsler, 2005; Oldenziel, 1999). The underrepresentation of women academics was reflective when considering women comprised one-third of the workforce but made up only 6.8% of doctors, 5.8% of clergy, 4.2% of physicists, and 3.5% of lawyers (ABS, 1951). Within Australian higher education at this time, women taught within areas of curriculum which were constructed as *'soft'*, such as home economics, literature, and foreign languages, compared to disciplines constructed as *'hard'*, such as the sciences (Krejsler, 2005; Oldenziel, 1999). In the 1960s, the representation of women academics increased slowly, until the 1970s where women were as represented as they were before the Great Depression, claiming 14% of the positions in elite professions (ABS, 1971).

The desire for women to attend higher education institutions was constructed as a debatable issue and has lasted over a century (Booth & Kee, 2010). Some claimed that it would destroy the household role of women, who were constructed as wives, mothers, and homemakers, while others felt that attendance would only benefit the experience of women (Fara, 2015). The main argument against the admission of women in higher education, both in terms of studying, and working, was that at this point, higher education institutions enforced the segregation of genders, and if women were to be admitted, they were allocated to the fields that promoted the semi-professions discussed previously (Fara, 2015; Krejsler, 2005; Oldenziel, 1999).

The gendered segregation did change during World War I and World War II (WWII), where enrolment figures, as well as faculty representation, of males in higher education institutions and business organisations declined, due to men being called to war because of the policies surrounding conscription (Booth & Kee, 2010). An opportunity was provided for women who were students, and professors; with most of the male population at war, this left many vacancies in positions to be filled (Booth & Kee, 2010; Fara, 2015). As such, the representation of women in higher education increased, as many women took advantage of these vacancies, and proved their capabilities in the process (Booth & Kee, 2010; Fara, 2015). As Australia fought to manage the impact of WWI from 1914 to 1918, and WWII from 1939 to

1945, post-war, the need for higher education institutions became more evident when the men at war returned home.

### **3.4 1945 – 1970: Post-War Colonial Control of the Australian Education System**

Based on the colonial subjugation that occurred worldwide by the end of WWI and WWII, economic and cultural expansion, power, and control over societies and institutions were evident (Staeuble, 2006). Large-scale domination over education institutions was successful based on the large disparity in power, as well as the securing and subjugating of white women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and other minority populations (Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2018). Additionally, some knowledge systems and ways of being in academia were now becoming further privileged and distributed, which propagated the process of colonisation (Fox et al., 2013). Colonisation in academia referred to the restriction of human agency and choice, the privileging of traditional, dominant values (within the Eurocentric frame), and how power can be used in an exploitative sense against minority groups (Fox et al., 2013). In other words, the privileging of white men was still maintained in Australian society, and this manifested within academia, in terms of the perspectives valued, as well as who was viewed as the expert, and provided the most opportunities to succeed (Cammack & Phillips, 2002).

With the continued privileging of white men in society, the Australian Government paying the fees for ex-servicemen to attend university, the increased demand for teachers, and the valued importance of higher education in national economic growth, there was a large surge of enrolments and admission of men in academia (White, 2007). Further, the Commonwealth Government felt the need to take an increased role and control of the financing of higher education away from the States (White, 2007). As such, the forming of the Universities Commission in 1942 allowed for the regulation of university enrolments and the implementation of the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme (CRTS; Marginson, 2001). With the clear need to conduct research to mitigate the effects of the War, the Australian National University (ANU) was created in 1946 via an Act of Federal Parliament (Karmel, 1991). The ANU was considered, at the time, the nation's sole research

only institution (with no teaching conducted), and research and postgraduate training was considered for the nation's purposes (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003). Following the establishment of the ANU, there were approximately 32,000 students enrolled in higher education institutions, under the incentive provided from the CRTS (Marginson, 2007). There was also 1837 faculty who worked in higher education (ABS, 1946). To assist with the increase, the University of New South Wales was established in 1949 (Karmel, 1991). With the availability of institutions increasing, in turn, so did the enrolment figures, with an increase of 30,000 students during the 1950s where participation doubled since the collected 1946 figures (Marginson, 2007).

While there was an increased demand for university educated individuals, this did not appear to relay to women. The concluding of both wars meant that the remaining men were sent back home, and as such, this meant that many were re-allocated to their original positions in higher education (White, 2007). This also meant that many of the women academics who took these roles were moved out of them, with the women terminated making up approximately 60% of all academic workers (Booth & Kee, 2010). Women academics were terminated at a rate 75% higher than men (Booth & Kee, 2010), which reduced the representation of women in higher education to 21% by the mid-1950s (ABS, 1956). With this decrease, came a loss of the prominence, and respect, of women in higher education, with colleagues becoming apathetic and hostile towards them (Jones & Castle, 1983; Reekie, 1991). The access to higher education institutions as students was no longer an issue for women, but the attitudes towards women manifesting in the workplace of higher education prompted the representation of women academics to decrease dramatically (Jones & Castle, 1983; Reekie, 1991). These attitudes of apathy and hostility were based on the white male's perspective of the white women identifying with positions that were not aligned with their gender (i.e., heteronormative, patriarchal values that fostered discrimination). Subsequently, women academics were provided with limited choice, and felt the pressure to opt for home-based domestic roles (Fara, 2015), aligning with the emergence of the baby boom generation during the 1940s and the 1950s (ABS, 1956).

### **3.4.1 Reflecting on the Commonwealth's Influence on Higher Education**

With the tensions surrounding the increase in university enrolment rates compared to the resources allocated to institutions, the large growth in other State-funded post-secondary institutions (e.g., teacher training colleges, institutes of technology, agricultural and technical colleges), and the previously mentioned manifestation of negative attitudes towards working women, the Commonwealth felt it necessary to assess and resolve these issues (Marginson, 2002). This was complemented by the providing of further incentives for individuals to attend university, whereby fees and living expenses (once means-tested) could be covered (Marginson, 2002). To investigate how this could be achieved, the Mills Committee Inquiry (MCI) was conducted in 1950, which explored the short-term complexities and nuances of the universities' finances under the ruling of the States (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Marginson, 2007). The MCI resulted in the introduction of the State Grants (Universities) Act of 1951, which aimed to be a short-term scheme that would allow for the contribution of one quarter of the costs of 'State' universities being covered by the Commonwealth (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Marginson, 2007). This was assumed to take the pressure of funding off the States in its entirety and allow for assistance (and control) in some respect by the Commonwealth (Marginson, 2002). Many of the resolutions focused on financial matters, and left the gendered matters largely ignored.

The University of New England was established in 1954 at a time where the follow through of the Act was questioned (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Karmel, 1991). Initially, there was no control or influence applied by the government (which contradicted the intent of the Act's purpose; Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003; Karmel, 1991). To assess this, the Committee on Australian Universities was established by Robert Menzies in 1954 (Marginson, 2002). The Committee was also tasked with the additional responsibility to assess the financial impact of the higher education institutions present at this time on the Australian economy. It is of importance to note that out of the five individuals who comprised the committee, no women, or individuals who were constructed of minority status, were present (Committee on Australian Universities, 1957). As such, the composition of committees at this time

were reflective of the privileging of white men and male knowledge within academia (Carmack & Phillips, 2002).

Sir Keith Murray from the UK University Grants Committee headed the Murray Committee Inquiry of 1957 and found that the States were not able to be as responsible for the universities as what was previously thought (Marginson, 2007). The Inquiry found several shortcomings across the universities, such as overcrowding, poor infrastructure and facilities, a high drop out and failure rate, weak honours and postgraduate schools, short staffing, and poor research levels (Marginson, 2007). No shortcoming though reflected the minimal representation, or problematic attitudes, surrounding women in academia. Overall, it was recommended that the Commonwealth take further control and responsibility over the States' universities, providing further finances and expenditure, as well as the formation of a University Grants Committee (Marginson, 2002). Increased funds were provided by the Commonwealth, as well as the forming of the Australian Universities Commission (AUC) to assist with the solutions process (Marginson, 2007).

#### **3.4.2 Recommendations of a Reconstructed Education System**

Concluding the 1950s was the founding of Monash University, as well as the revising of the States Grants (Universities) Act, both in 1958 (Karmel, 1991). This was in response to the need for increased allocation of funding from the Government to the States for both capital and recurrent expenditure in higher education between the years of 1958 to 1960 (Karmel, 1991). Further, the purpose of the AUC was reconceptualised in 1959 in response to the AUC Act (1959) to assist in advising the Commonwealth Government on university matters (Karmel, 1991). Thus far, in the ten universities, there were approximately 53,000 students, calculated as a 13% increase in university enrolments from the 1958 figures (Marginson, 2007). Women represented 22.6% of these enrolments (Booth & Kee, 2010). Further, there was 3702 faculty in Australian higher education, with figures of female representation not recorded (ABS, 1958).

Further to the increase in enrolments, a review of the Higher Education sector was suggested in 1961 and concluded in 1964 (Marginson, 2007). The tier system was further revised, and the recommendation was that Australian higher

education work on a binary system to reduce the impact of the financial burden (Meek, 1991; Marginson, 2002). The binary system categorises higher education as universities (where one can receive Bachelor's and Higher Degrees, as well as undertake research) and Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE; comprising of institutes of technology, diplomas, Bachelor's degrees, and vocational training; Meek, 1991). How the system was implemented was dependent on the State, and varied across the country (e.g., Victoria had 19 CAEs, but Western Australia only had one; Meek, 1991). Within the period of this revision, the representation of women academics increased from 23.2% to 25.9%, based on the increase in enrolments, nature of the times, and changing structure of the university (Booth & Kee, 2010).

### ***3.4.3 Responding to Needs and Shifting Towards Workplace Equality***

Within the 1960s and 1970s, an acknowledgement of the previously mentioned problematic attitudes towards women academics was noted. As such, there was a move towards equality within the workplace, as well as within education, which encouraged a shift in the way that roles were constructed and allocated for women in higher education administration and faculty (Moodie, 2008). Efforts were led by men and women for the equal treatment of minority groups, the elimination of sexual discrimination, and the protection for employees and students in educational institutions (Winchester & Browning, 2015). Movements were led by male and female academics who wanted to see change in the higher education system, and prompted by these goals, where gender equality, protecting the rights of academic staff, and eliminating prejudices and discriminatory practices were viewed as important (Moodie, 2008). Further, these movements initiated the need for higher education institutions to become organisations that were less focused on gender, and more on function (Marginson, 2007). Movements were intended to pressure institutions to focus on treating men and women as academic equals (Marginson, 2007; Winchester & Browning, 2015), with a limited consideration of how men and women are positioned in academia. It was assumed that men and women could, in similar roles, achieve and progress in the same manner, without identifying the different factors that influence individual progression in academia (Marginson, 2007; Winchester & Browning, 2015). While the movements remained,

the impacts were slow in effect, but still identified as important to change the culture of higher education (Moodie, 2008).

### **3.5 1970 – 1980: A Funding Crisis in Australian Higher Education**

To meet the needs of a growing population, the increased desire for higher education, the requirement for further education and building of professional skills in universities and CAEs, as well as increasing women's representation in academia as both students and faculty, there was a series of new universities established in the 1960s and 1970s with the aim of diversifying, admitting, and employing more women into academia (Moodie, 2008). This included the founding of Macquarie University and La Trobe University in 1964, the University of Newcastle in 1965, Flinders University in 1966, James Cook University in 1970, Griffith University in 1971, Deakin University in 1974, and the University of Wollongong and Murdoch University in 1975 (Marginson, 2007; Moodie, 2008). Higher education institutions were growing in need and in their population, with 148,000 students in 19 universities by the early 1970s (Marginson, 2007). The representation of women faculty improved during the 1970s as a result of changing attitudes surrounding the role of women in society, as well as the need for more academics in the new universities established during the 1960s and 1970s (Marginson, 2007; Moodie, 2008). The figure of 29.9% representing women academics in higher education at the beginning of the decade increased to 40.3% by the end (ABS, 1970; 1979).

During this time period, the rise of feminist work and research within academia, and the feminist influence on the change in public policy, were both noted as possible reasons for the increase in women's representation within academia (Gaskell & Taylor, 2003; Yates, 2008). While the need for research within this area was still being debated, issues surrounding women's representation, roles, and responsibilities in academia were being continually discussed and acknowledged (Gaskell & Taylor, 2003; Yates, 2008). The second-wave feminist movement during the 1970s and 1980s allowed for questions not only regarding the representation and rights for women, but for a questioning of the education system, and ways of providing and viewing knowledge (Gaskell & Taylor, 2003; Yates, 2008). Knowledge surrounding the processes of education that constructed males and females in specific ways, which produced particular subject positions, as

well as the vocational choices that were made, were debated (Gaskell & Taylor, 2003; Yates, 2008). The taken-for-granted assumptions of what education was providing, and how it was treating different kinds of students, was also acknowledged (Gaskell & Taylor, 2003; Yates, 2008).

### **3.5.1 *Time for a Re-Structure?***

University systems and tuition fees underwent a restructuring in the early 1970s. Tertiary education in Australia was structured into three broad categories, including traditional universities, technical colleges of further education, and institutes of technology (which were a hybrid between universities and technical colleges; Forsyth, 2015). Within these institutions, university tuition fees were funded either through merit scholarships provided by the Commonwealth, or through the individual payment of fees (Karmel, 1991). This occurred until 1973. It was evident that there was a clear need for tertiary education in Australia, and as such, this led a significant push to make this form of education more accessible to those from the middle and working class, as well as those of minority status (Marginson & Considine, 2000). To address this need, the Whitlam Labor Government abolished university fees, which assisted in increasing the participation and enrolment rate at universities (Marginson, 2002).

### **3.5.2 *Take Two: Revising the Re-Structure?***

With the Commonwealth assuming full responsibility for the funding of higher education in 1974, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) was established (Forsyth, 2015; Karmel, 1991). The CTEC had an advisory role and was allocated the responsibility for distributing government funding amongst the universities and CAEs (Forsyth, 2015; Karmel, 1991). The demand remained for enrolments into higher education institutions, and as such, the CAEs and State-controlled Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges worked to manage some of this demand (Marginson & Considine, 2000). In 1975, while fees were still paid by the Government in full, it was clear an economic recession and federal political crisis were emerging, and as such, cuts to funding were suspended (Marginson, 2002). Enrolment numbers sat at 175,000 and were growing (Marginson, 2007). To assist with the crises, some of the smaller CAEs were

combined as well as the Government having some control over entry into medical degrees (Forsyth, 2015).

### **3.6 1980 – 1990: An Australian Higher Education Revolution**

In the early 1980s, women academics comprised 43.5% of the Australian higher education system (ABS, 1981). The women were embedded within a system that was undergoing a significant amount of stress (Moodie, 2008). The higher education funding provided was considered static in nature, where the CAEs had expanded in terms of what they provided, now specifically offering master's degrees and doctorates, with the larger CAEs producing better research records than some of the major universities, as well as some State CAEs breaking tradition and converting major CAEs into universities (Marginson, 2002). This set a precedent, with other CAEs following this direction. All academics felt the stress of the increased need to conduct more research to maintain their institutions academic record; women specifically felt the pressure due to the balancing of multiple roles and responsibilities, both professionally and personally (Bryson et al., 2014). Additionally, both major political parties had concluded that the idea of 'free' tertiary education in Australia was unsustainable based on the increasing enrolment and participation rate (Karmel, 1991). The stresses outlined here resulted in the Australian Government identifying a need for change in the higher education sector.

#### **3.6.1 *The Need for Change in Australian Higher Education***

It was the subsequent Labor Government consisting of Bob Hawke as Prime Minister, and Paul Keating as Treasurer, that gradually reintroduced university study fees (Karmel, 1991). In a relatively innovative move at the time, the method of reintroducing university fees was a system that was accepted by all political parties and is still used in Australia today (Marginson, 2007). The system, titled the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), allows for students to defer their fee payments until after they engage in professional employment, and/or their income exceeds a particular threshold level (Moodie, 2008). When the individual reaches this threshold, the fees are automatically deducted through their income tax (Moodie, 2008). This was posed as a method that was relatively effective to assist

with the financial burden placed on the Australian Government through *'free'* fees (Karmel, 1991).

To address the other complexities and issues outlined, the Commonwealth government engaged in discussions surrounding the future of Higher Education in Australia. As Australia entered the late 1980s, the tertiary education system was still constructed in terms of a binary system (universities and colleges of advanced education; Meek, 1991). This system allowed for universities, institutes of technology, and colleges of TAFE to exist (Moodie, 2008). The system was not without its flaws, and by this point in time, the roles of these institutes as well as the CSIRO had become blurred (Abbott & Doucouliagos, 2003). For example, institutes of technology had shifted their traditional role of undergraduate teaching and consulting of industry towards conducting pure and applied research (Moodie, 2008). These institutes also now had the ability to award degrees through to the PhD level. As such, the need for revolution was apparent, and in 1987, discussions were had to restructure the higher education system in Australia.

### ***3.6.2 Green Paper, White Paper, Discuss!***

The Federal Minister for Education at the time, John Dawkins, suggested that the Government were not convinced of maintaining the existing funding arrangements for higher education, and felt that keeping these arrangements as is would not be in the best interests, either of the higher education system itself, or of the nation long term (Dawkins, 1987). As such, a discussion paper, known as the Green Paper, was published, and in 1988, a following White Paper was also published, which both led to the complete restructuring of the sector (Dawkins, 1987; Moodie, 2008). The major changes included clarifying the roles of institutes of technology, as well as the moving from a binary to a unified national education system (Meek, 1991; Moodie, 2008).

Dawkins proposed this unified system, which compressed the previous binary system into a revised two-tier system which required for several tertiary institutions to merge (Meek, 1991). Institutes of technology, in some instances, were required to become universities, and as a result, over time, these institutes disappeared and were replaced by the establishing of new universities (Moodie, 2008). The revised two-tier system conceptualised tertiary education as 1)

university education, and 2) technical and further education, with both offering differing degrees up to a Bachelor's level (Meek, 1991). Overall, the system was proposed to meet the economic, social, and cultural needs of the Australian higher education system through the proposing of a new, updated, and advanced system (Dawkins, 1987).

During this time of the Higher Education revolution, Australia's first private university was established. Bond University, which was founded by businessman Alan Bond on the Gold Coast in 1987, was granted the status of university by the Queensland Government (Marginson, 2007). The university awards most degrees, such as diplomas, certificates, Bachelor's degrees, Masters, and doctorates across multiple disciplines (Marginson, 2007). Towards the end of this decade, influenced by the restructure of the higher education sector, and the implementation of the unified national two-tier system, the representation of women academics had increased compared to the 1981 figure, comprising 47.4% of the higher education system (ABS, 1989). This was due to not only a natural increase in the representation of women academics, but additionally, with the increase of student enrolments and merging of faculties and institutions as effects of the restructure, more academics were needed to manage the demand (Meek, 1991).

### **3.7 1990 – 2000: Changing Definitions of Australian Higher Education 'Work'**

While the representation of women academics marginally increased at the start of the decade (comprising 48.1% of academia; ABS, 1991), the decade of the 1990s was the first to see major changes and revisions surrounding the definition of academic work, research, and what it meant to conduct '*real*' work and research (Karmel, 1991). First, regarding academic employment within the 1990s, there was a radical shift to a more market-focused and competitive higher education system in Australia (Radice, 2013). Academic work, originally described as "*cushy, comfortable, and leisurely*", was replaced with "*demanding*" work where contractual employment was becoming more common (Henkel, 2010, p. 10). Reasoning behind this shift dates to changes made in the 1970s which have had a progressive effect, where academic staff were pressured to "*make do*" with what

they had, limiting access to new resources and staff, as well as forcing academics to adapt or engage in new ways of being (Gill, 2010, p. 231). Many of the changes made to the neoliberal university were discussed in detail in Chapter Two of the thesis. The second major change evident was that Australian universities were now focused on research that was based in industry or that would have real-world applications, compared to the traditional university which conducted fundamental, basic, and pure research (White, 2007). Most of the real-world research was supported by the CSIRO (the function of which was to conduct this form of research; White, 2007). Australia thus far had performed well in its execution of pure research, with approximately 12 Nobel Prizes won as a result (Marginson, 2007).

### ***3.7.1 Reconceptualising the Australian Research Identity***

The Hawke and Keating Federal Government addressed this shortfall in applied research by attempting to establish a shift in the Australian national research profile (Marginson & Considine, 2000). The government achieved this by the introduction of university scholarships and research grants as a part of postgraduate research and collaborations with industry, as well as introducing a new national system of Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs; Marginson, 2001, 2002). The focus of the CRCs were to foster cooperation between the university sector and industry, with a narrow focus of particular research themes intended to produce applied research (Marginson, 2001, 2002). The typical CRC would be composed of a collaboration between university partners, industry partners, and the CSIRO, funded by the Federal Government for several years (Marginson, 2001, 2002). The CRC would have access to funds which were comprised of money from the Federal Government as well as the funds from the university and from the industry partners, which were then used to fund projects that were industry-driven and with a higher likelihood for commercialisation (Karmel, 1991). The aim was that over time, the CRCs would become self-sustaining and self-funding collaborations, but this has not yet eventuated (Birrell & Edwards, 2009). Rather, the involvement of Australian universities as partners in the CRCs, as well as the representation of the CSIRO in these centres, has had an opposite effect; rather than identifying specific roles for each partner, the roles have become further blurred. This blurring

manifests in terms of how the CSIRO fits in with research in Australian universities (Moodie, 2008).

### **3.8 2000s: Reconceptualising Australian Higher Education**

The end of the millennium saw women academics' representation sitting at 48.6% (ABS, 1999), and upon entry into the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this figure increased to 51.3% (ABS, 2001). With the focus on constructing Australian higher education as research driven, a system that was once representative of collegiality, the pursuit of truth, and the freedom of thought, was now more reflective of values surrounding efficiency, accountability, and quality (Dollery et al., 2006; Koshy, 2018; Pick, 2008). Australian universities that were once considered insular institutions that focused on learning, were now being considered as research driven, quasi-commercial enterprises that had undergone a significant transformation (Dollery et al., 2006). While universities operated still based on a (mostly) public system, institutions began to operate as if they were a part of a competitive learning, teaching, and research market (Dollery et al., 2006; Koshy, 2018). Archer (2008) summarised this shift by acknowledging that the marketisation of higher education was poisoning the idealised, collaborative, and collegiate academic space through the emphasis and enacting of individualistic and competitive practices. As such, universities transformed from a system focused on working together for the greater good, to a market-driven context focused on providing services and products to its consumers (Dollery et al., 2006; Koshy, 2018).

#### **3.8.1 A Domino Effect**

Decisions that were made in the earlier decades were also beginning to impact the way that higher education existed. The impacts of the unified system from the late 1980s were beginning to manifest, and the transition from the binary system to the revised system was not a complete success (Meek, 1991). Further, higher education increased its focus from teaching to more research-oriented interests, without sufficient build-up and capital to support the demand of conducting research (Marginson, 2007). The Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research assessed these issues in 2006, stating that it was clear that newer established universities were unable to build up mass in their

nominated research areas, as well as the evidence of a decreased rate of research-oriented academics at traditional universities, compared to some newer institutions (Birrell & Edwards, 2009). The newer institutions were scoring zeros (on a 0-100 scale) in their chosen research fields, which indicated that they were unable to achieve the threshold for the required level of activity (Marginson, 2007). To resolve some of these issues, funding that was available was spread across all Australian universities, even the institutions that had the diminished capacity to maintain their research mass (Birrell & Edwards, 2009).

### ***3.8.2 Expectations, Traditions, and Accessibility in Academia***

Additionally, the value of certain roles became more apparent within the 2000s. The traditional academic pathway was constructed, based on dominant understandings and representations of the university experience (Peck et al., 2018). The assumption in higher education was that when individuals complete their first degree, that some will continue into postgraduate studies, academic careers, and advancing into the senior management and professoriate role (Evers & Sieverding, 2015). Women academics entered the academic pipeline at the lowest level, and while their representation increased, they were most likely allocated teaching-only casual, contractual roles with a limited ability to progress in academia (Gasser & Shaffer, 2014). Contractual employment currently still exists in academia today and facilitates feelings of uncertainty and job insecurity in academics (Adams et al., 2019). Teaching and research roles were viewed as required for higher status and success in academia; additionally, most universities would not appoint academics to senior roles if they were teaching-only, and/or casual (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017). As such, the preference of allocating women to the teaching-only, casual roles limited their progression, representation, and success (Gasser & Shaffer, 2014; Peck et al., 2018). The allocation of women in this manner still occurs in academia today. Comparatively, males easily made their way through the pipeline, as they were the most preferred in research roles, which, to this day, is the typical pathway into senior leadership and management roles (Gasser & Shaffer, 2014).

### ***3.8.3 Increasing Accessibility and its Impacts***

To mitigate the gendered inequities discussed above, restrictions were eased and lifted in 2008 on specific university quota enrolments, to make tertiary

education more accessible once again to those individuals from minority groups (e.g., based on gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity; Moodie, 2008). Based on the ease in accessing higher education, at the end of the first decade of the millennium, women academics' representation in academia sat at 52.1% (ABS, 2009), increasing to 52.9% by 2011 (ABS, 2011), and overall representation in universities had increased. Additionally, federal funding was mostly determined at this stage by the number of students per institution (Marginson, 2001). This established an incentive for universities to increase enrolment numbers by also accepting students with weaker academic skills, potentially leading to falling graduation rates, academic standards, and increasing roles and workloads for academic staff (White, 2007). As such, the Australian government froze the amount of money offered in specific research grants for two years, until the universities could produce evidence of an increase in population growth and academic performance (Birrell & Edwards, 2009).

### **3.9 So, What Does It All Mean?**

As discussed, the relationship of domination and control in higher education by the government becomes more subtle and pervasive over generations (Moane, 1999). This can be propagated through the social and psychological mechanisms of colonisation and imperialism. To this day, higher education institutions continue to play their part in perpetuating colonising, imperialist, and globalising practices (Smith, 1999). Power underpinning a psychological imperialism through laws, rituals, instructions, and other forces in academia allows for some definitions of reality to prevail over others (Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2018). The neoliberal episteme is one such example that in current day academia, governs the academics in terms of their ways of being and doing (Peck et al., 2018). It has been suggested that the way women are governed can have more of a negative impact compared to other academics, which is based on higher expectations being placed on them in relation to productivity, and interwoven with their navigating of other responsibilities, both personal and professional (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This can be further compounded by differences in social identifiers and intersectional experiences (Quiddington, 2010). As such, academic institutions appear to focus less on how individuals can challenge Eurocentric norms and practices, and more on how they

can assimilate and adjust to these forms of capitalist modernisation and culture (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1994).

In context of the capitalist culture and its related pressures, academia has become a government-regulated education market, with students as the consumers, academic faculty as the producers, and the administrators marketing and managing the output (Connell, 2013). As such, these characteristics illustrate the following: 1) a transition from educating students within professions to a focus on forming marketable knowledge and research skills, 2) students have become the consumers of the academic setting, with academic staff considered products that provide a service, and 3) neoliberalism reflects values of dominance, authority, and control, and a lack of personal agency (Adam, 2012; Keast, 2020). Additionally, academics are expected to generate capital and revenue for the institution, as well as meeting academic performance targets based on research outputs to appear favourable in the context and maintain the functioning of the neoliberal episteme (Keast, 2020; Marine & Aleman, 2018).

While institutions may differ in terms of site, context, and nuance (e.g., public, private, government-regulated, community, research-intensive), it has been acknowledged that academic institutions share these global neoliberal characteristics mentioned above, which favour dominant ways of being and doing based on Eurocentric characteristics (Abendroth & Porfilio, 2015; Peck et al., 2018). These pressures appear to confound the construction of the different academic identities available to an individual, and how they experience navigating neoliberal academia and its constructed, dominant way of being (Adam, 2012; Peck et al., 2018). Further, it can make it difficult to construct new ways of knowledge and being that may not necessarily be favoured by the academic institution (Abendroth & Porfilio, 2015; Keast, 2020; Peck et al., 2018).

### ***3.9.1 Historically, Gender at the Forefront of Academia***

The gendered nature of universities manifested over time in terms of how work roles, labour, and responsibilities were divided and organised (Barone & Assirelli, 2020). Many forms of horizontal and vertical segregation based on gender can be found in international higher education institutions (one such example being in Australia; Kreitz-Sandberg, 2013). Horizontal segregation has occurred over time

where women are allocated, or have access to different occupations and professions, compared to men (Kreitz-Sandberg, 2013). Additionally, vertical segregation has occurred when men and women co-existed in the same occupation, but mostly men have occupied the higher positions of power and authority (Kreitz-Sandberg, 2013). The segregation of gender occurring both horizontally, and vertically, has translated over time into the lower status and lack of advancement and progression of women in academia, both in Australia, and internationally (Barone & Assirelli, 2020; Kreitz-Sandberg, 2013).

The division of gender in Australian universities is most evident in the role of teaching (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017). It has been acknowledged that over time, women academics have engaged in more teaching, disproportionate to other academics (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017), as well as becoming more positively oriented to teaching (Harris et al., 2017). Additionally, women academics have more likely identified as teachers and invested further in developing their teaching identity (Alwazzan & Rees, 2016) based on the increase in teaching responsibilities. Women academics are now more likely to volunteer to practice their scholarship of teaching and learning (Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017), prepare more thoroughly for teaching responsibilities compared to men (Alwazzan & Rees, 2016), find it difficult to balance their academic responsibilities (Harris et al., 2017), and prioritise teaching over other roles (Wright et al., 2017). These complexities have been further fuelled by women academics feeling hindered by the heavier teaching loads allocated to them through inequitable workload allocations over time (Gasser & Shaffer, 2014; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017).

Throughout the history of higher education in Australia, women have been discriminated against in subtle and complex ways (Peck et al., 2018). The micropolitics, power, and its effects have been evident in women's daily academic experiences (Fox, 2013). Women have been treated differently, based on the devaluing and misrecognition of their professional and intellectual capital, as well as being treated differently in academic social settings (Williams et al., 2015). Women academics have also reported feeling exhausted emotionally, disengaged, and powerless based on their experiences of sexism (which have also increased over time; Knights & Clarke, 2015). While there have been improvements over time,

women academics are still under-represented at senior levels, earning less than males, are less likely to apply for a promotion, are offered less training and leadership development opportunities, and experience discrimination from other staff, most prominently, males (Dubois-Shaik & Fusulier, 2017; Foschi, 2000; Macoun & Miller, 2014; Williams et al., 2015). Such evidence provides support to the claim that women appear to be navigating a societal context that advantages men, and disadvantages them, and their progression daily.

### **3.9.2 *Historically, Has It Been a Man's World?***

Consistent with international academic institutions, Australian university settings are still male dominated (Fox, 2013). Further, the sociocultural context of academia produces these gendered differences and constructs them as '*different*', rather than being perceived as the privileged characteristics of the higher education setting (Staeuble, 2016). As such, the dominant group of white males have maintained control and power over the setting and its resources (Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2018). These processes have seen women academics being confined to roles which have limited their career progression, and has kept the control over resources, and the elite professions, maintained by the dominant group (i.e., white men; Krejsler, 2005; Oldenziel, 1999).

There have been several explanations as to why men have maintained power and control within Australian higher education. First, gendering is said to have occurred in divisions of labour where male academics exist in higher numbers within the most senior positions of organisational power (e.g., ranking higher than other faculty members at mid or executive level leaderships; Danell & Hjerm, 2013; Dubois-Shaik & Fusulier, 2017). Second, within universities, discourse, symbols, and images have existed that reinforce the gendered labour divisions (e.g., when considering a professor or department chair, the image is mostly likely portrayed as a successful white man; Barreto et al., 2009; Beddoes & Schimpf, 2018). Third, within gendered universities, some interactions between academics have enforced forms of dominance and submission, where white men act in dominant positions, dominate women, and women are positioned as submissive (Barreto et al., 2009; Fox, 2013). Fourth, the existence of gendered ways of being in academia have existed from inception to the extent that they have become embedded in academic

society, where academics consciously or unconsciously take on gendered ways of thinking about, and doing of, their work (e.g., to be a successful academic, academics may work constantly in and out of work hours; Barreto et al., 2009; Eagly & Miller, 2016). Finally, the act of gendering is embedded within organisational logic, where the systemic elements (such as managerial documentation, promotional material, job evaluations) have favoured males for work roles (e.g., applying for promotions is favoured towards males and does not recognise barriers influenced by familial and caring responsibilities; Barreto et al., 2009; Dubois-Shaik & Fusulier, 2017).

### ***3.9.3 Historically, Has the 'Way of Being' Been Privileged?***

The culture of academia and the systems of management and governance all work to protect the privileges that are already set-in place, for example, the dominant European colonial systems and practices (Adam, 2012; Smith, 1999). The construction of the coloniser as superior, and the colonised as inferior, manifests through the institutionalisation of economic, political, and symbolic systems, as well as ideologies that justify exploitative uses of power (Adam, 2012; Fox et al., 2013). Historically, white, heterosexual men have been constructed as the majority in academia, with their ways of being and doing constructed as superior and privileged (Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2018). This has led to academia operating as an exclusionary and elitist setting, influenced by patriarchal and imperial practices (Staeuble, 2006). As such, other diverse identities are constructed in this colonised, imperialist academic setting as inferior (Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2018). Through the exclusion of diverse identities, and privileging of the majority, academia and its knowledge systems have been constructed via patriarchal, colonial, and imperial influence, which has led to the higher education system existing as it does today (Staeuble, 2006). The operation of such a culture can influence the experience of diverse intersectional identities who differ from the privileged way of being, as well as the construction of their identities in higher education (Peck et al., 2018).

### ***3.9.4 Attempts to Resolve the Issue***

Efforts thus far, both in Australia, and worldwide, have been considered as ineffective to promoting gender equity in higher education (Dollery et al., 2006; Koshy, 2018; Pick, 2008). For example, Australia, compared to other countries

worldwide, was later in implementing policies in certain States, such as the Equal Opportunity Act being introduced earliest in New South Wales in 1977, compared to Victoria in 2010 (although Victoria does have specific legislation protecting individuals that was introduced prior to this date; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020). That being said, some initiatives and policies have been introduced that have prompted some forms of social change (Dollery et al., 2006; Koshy, 2018; Pick, 2008). For example, Australian higher education institutions are at the forefront in providing paid parental leave, compared to other organisations (Hollenshead et al., 2005). Further, initiatives that have been introduced that have attempted to assist women in their profession include the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act (1999), the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (2012), the addition of flexibility provisions in the Fair Work Act (2009), the Gender Equality Blueprint (2010), and the Athena SWAN initiative. These initiatives hoped to promote gender equity, fairness for all, and the recognition and reporting of equal opportunities for women in the workplace (Dollery et al., 2006; Koshy, 2018; Pick, 2008). Despite this, in Australia, women academics are still disadvantaged compared to their male colleagues, appear less likely to work full-time if they have familial or caring responsibilities, and still need further recognition of their academic experiences and identities (Barreto et al., 2009; Dubois-Shaik & Fusulier, 2017).

With higher education institutions increasingly promoting their commitment to gender equity, further plans and initiatives have been proposed by Universities Australia (UA, formerly the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee; UA, 2020). These action plans were proposed to introduce a more inclusive culture and greater level of gender equity in Australian universities (UA, 2020). These plans were informed and guided by the UA Executive Women's Committee, who proposed new promotion procedures (i.e., relative to opportunity) that would assist in increasing the number of women who would occupy senior management roles, increasing the number of women who occupy C, D, and E academic levels, as well as attempting to pipeline more women from their PhDs into academic roles (UA, 2019). C level academics were recognised as increasing, but there was still progress that was needed in higher positions (UA, 2019). The plan was conceptualised to increase the

percentage of women at level D from 24% in 2004, to 35% in 2010, and at level E from 16% in 2004, to 25% by 2010 (UA, 2019). Additionally, the plan proposed wanting more women academics to obtain their PhDs, to increase the representation of women in senior level positions, as well as examine the gendered ratios of each discipline, and those with PhDs in each discipline (UA, 2019). Women academics currently comprise 54.2% of higher education (ABS, 2020), and while this may reflect a majority statistically, their representation is still not conveying to higher executive levels (UA, 2019). As such, efforts are currently still being proposed to assist in promoting women's representation in academia, and gender equity overall, which still problematises the women, rather than the academic system (UA, 2020). Efforts need to address the systemic disadvantages that exist within higher education.

### **3.10 Concluding Commentary**

In this chapter, I have explored the history of higher education in Australia, with significant events in Australian higher education identified, as well as acknowledging women's experiences, and how they have been positioned to navigate academia over time. Women now represent half of the population (both in relation to academics, as well as students) within higher education, and as such, the danger is that gender equity is seen as an issue which no longer requires attention. While there have been recent gains for women, significant gender differences remain, perpetuated by how the academic culture functions to protect the Eurocentric, colonial, and patriarchal systems and practices set in place. The institutionalisation of political, economic, and symbolic ideologies has disadvantaged how women have been able to navigate academia. As such, there appears a need to explore how the operation of the higher education culture can impact women, and their experience and construction of identities in higher education. In the next chapter, I describe the methodology of my research project.

## **CHAPTER 04: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

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*Maybe each human being lives in a unique world, a private world different from those inhabited and experienced by all other humans. If reality differs from person to person, can we speak of reality singular, or shouldn't we really be talking about plural realities? (Philip K. Dick, 1978, p. 260-261).*

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### **4.1 Chapter Overview**

In this chapter, I outline the methodology adopted for my research, informed by a critical psychology perspective, and underpinned by a Foucauldian philosophy and methodology. First, I present an overview of social constructionism as the epistemological position underpinning the research. I then present an overview of the critical psychology theoretical perspective, exploring the assumptions, drivers, processes, and outcomes of research conducted that adopts this lens. Next, I provide a detailed account of the Foucauldian philosophy and methodology adopted for the current research, discussing the concepts that I have drawn on to guide my analytic technique. To conclude this chapter, I discuss how the Foucauldian informed knowledge, as well as the critical psychology theoretical perspective, and social constructionism complement one another to inform the framework for this project.

### **4.2 Social Constructionism as the Epistemological Position**

The epistemological position used in this research was social constructionism. There have been many variations of social constructionism proposed, but I find myself aligning with Gergen (1985), whereby realities can be socially constructed through the use of language (Galbin, 2014; Gergen, 1985). Additionally, many facets of human life exist as they do ground by specific social and interpersonal influences (Gergen, 1985). Social constructionism takes a critical position towards some of the traditional paradigms of knowledge, such as positivism and empiricism (Burr, 2015). As such, instead of positing knowledge as being discoverable in the natural world, social constructionists consider the notion

that knowledge can be shaped and reshaped by social processes (Burr, 2015). Fundamental to this belief is the individual's perspective and understanding of the world, and how this is shaped by their history and culture (Gergen, 1985). More explicitly, social constructionists believe that how people and groups interact with others shapes their understandings, and over time, this allows for the construction of mental representations of the self, others, and the world (Andrews, 2012). Social constructionism aims to be critical of these representations and works to critique the taken-for-granted assumptions about the world (Burr, 2015). For example, as a social constructionist, my aim is to question particular knowledge systems and whether this could potentially serve the interests of particular groups over others. Finally, in engaging in this critique, the social constructionist investigates how this could open unique opportunities for future action and social change (Burr, 2015).

#### **4.2.1 Aims of the Social Constructionist Epistemological Position**

The problematisation of claims surrounding the nature of the world, its phenomena, and knowledge, being derived from objective observations of events, is what social constructionism aims to achieve (Burr, 2015). Concepts of accuracy and truth are contested and challenged within this epistemological position based on social constructionism's relativist positioning (Burr, 2015). We can argue by adopting this epistemological position that there would never be one final, 'true', and objective account of events and phenomena, rather, multiple perspectives are held as various accounts of events and knowledge relate to the many people that exist in the world (Gergen, 1985). Different ways of being, knowing, and thinking coexist in parallel; none are viewed as the 'one' truth, rather, we take a sceptical and critical attitude toward ways of understanding the world that are often taken for granted and assumed (Burr, 2015).

The case made by the social constructionist epistemological position is that the interactions between individuals allow for social and psychological phenomena to manifest in the social aspects of their lives (Andrews, 2012). These interactions and the phenomena that manifest is structured and conceptualised by the society and culture in which we live, the power relations which we are embedded within, as well as the economic structure of our society (Galbin, 2014). Societal conditions consistently and constantly change over time and location, where the conditions in

which individuals conceptualise and construct themselves, and others, can vary and change depending on context (Foucault, 1982). As such, definitive answers about social and human phenomena can never be given, rather, social constructionism asks why and how these specific constructions emerge (Burr, 2015). This can include constructions of concepts and theories relevant to psychology (specifically, social, and critical psychology) where we then pose questions about culture and history (Burr, 2015). Questions we ask hope to allow for us to understand the evolution of psychological and social life, extending our questioning beyond the individual level, to explore the impact and influence of economic, political, and social domains (Gergen, 1985).

The social constructionist epistemological position critiques the conceptualisations of people and '*things*' that work to categorise our current ways of thinking and using language (Burr, 2015). Categories and dichotomies such as male and female, individual and society, mental and physical, and urban and rural are used in our society, where social constructionism proposes these move away from objective categories and descriptions of society and the world and move towards these ideas as human constructions that grow and develop depending on the context and culture of the times (Willig, 2013). This supports the notion that contemporary conceptualisations of theories and '*things*' are quite different to what they were many years ago, and as such, vary drastically from ways of being and thinking from non-western, industrialised contexts (Foucault, 1982). With the assumption that current ways of thinking and being are better than the past based on truth and accuracy, social constructionism argues that we avoid falling into this '*trap*' as this has resulted in the imposing of ways of being onto other contexts and cultures (e.g., the imperialist, colonising view of psychology and replacement of Indigenous perspectives of life and being; Willig, 2013).

Individuals cannot exist without an existing social network, being introduced into a context where language, norms, customs, and social relations exist, which then constructs them as individuals who are capable of producing meaning and conduct (Foucault, 1977). As such, no element of an individual's way of being and doing does not have origins in society, culture, and context in some way (Foucault, 1977). Our sense of self, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts all emerge out of

interacting with other individuals, with Gergen (1985) proposing that we are a network of various voices from the past, and the present. The way that we evaluate ourselves and other individuals depends on these voices, where we deconstruct and challenge the self/other dichotomy, becoming more open to perspectives, views, beliefs, and attitudes from social interactions of all kinds (Willig, 2013). As such, language and discourse has been identified as being at the heart of the social constructionist epistemological position, from both a macro and micro approach (Burr, 2015), which have been used as inspiration for my research project.

#### **4.2.2 Social Constructionism from a Macro and Micro Level**

Considering social constructionism from a macro level draws on the theory and methodology of Michel Foucault, discussed later in this chapter, who argued the use of discourses in understanding how society privileges ways of talking about or representing people and '*things*' (Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1982). The discourses work to both construct and perpetuate the way that we, as a society, understand individuals, phenomena, and ways of being in society (Foucault, 1972, 1977, 1982). The way that we, as individuals, conceptualise '*things*' can be framed as expressions of discourses, whereby they are spoken through '*us*', by society (Galbin, 2014). The macro view of social constructionism determines how individuals are the carriers of discourses constructed by them in a manner which is deterministic in nature, where identities can become malleable, changeable, and multiple across the discourses that work to construct us (Willig, 2013). Power is then acknowledged within the discussion here (which psychology has neglected to observe over time), where prevailing discourses have been conceptualised and constructed within the interests of those who are viewed as powerful (i.e., the white, cis-gender, able-bodied, heterosexual male academic; Willig, 2013). Observing the social constructionist epistemology from a macro level allows for us to distinguish how the relatively powerful in society have had greater opportunities to conceptualise, construct, and disseminate discourses, and based on their status, further authorises, and legitimises them, while marginalising and oppressing other individuals who do not fall under this construction (Burr, 2015).

Considering social constructionism from a micro level draws on theories surrounding discursive psychology, and the construction of discourse as our

everyday linguistic ways of being, specifically, the spoken interactions of individuals (Andrews, 2012; Galbin, 2014). While the micro level does not focus on the conceptualising power of predominant discourses, rather, the focus is on the interacting nature of individuals in relation to how they construct versions of themselves and events that work for them (Willig, 2013). For example, individuals vary in relation to their version of events, where their 'talk' or discourse changes dependent on the moment-to-moment needs of each interaction (Andrews, 2012; Galbin, 2014). This can include the justification of one's actions, needing to create a good impression, or working to attribute blame to another individual for the outcome of particular events that have occurred (Andrews, 2012; Galbin, 2014). While constructing social constructionism from both a micro and macro level can potentially recreate the division between the individual and the society, these approaches are not incompatible with one another (Burr, 2015), and as such, my research aims to focus on how they can both be used. For example, the concept of subject positions discussed further below in Foucauldian methodology illustrates the micro and macro understanding of the social constructionist epistemology, whereby individuals are positioned by discourses (macro), and then draw on these to either position themselves and/or others within the specific interactions they have (micro; Burr, 2015).

#### **4.2.3 Applying Social Constructionism to my Research**

I align with the sentiments proposed by Gergen (1985) and Burr (2015) in that meaning is formed through both the micro and macro understandings of social constructionism, which relate to discourses (i.e., the shared understandings of events and objects, rather than being a property of said event/object), as well as how individuals can typically communicate shared understandings through the use of language, which does imply that we, as humans, 'exist' in language (Galbin, 2014). As such, within my research project I am interested in how women in early-, middle-, and later-career academia construct their experience and understandings through language and discourse, as well as understanding how social processes are embedded within the discourse. As time progresses, these understandings and processes can become strongly agreed upon, constructed as social norms or ways of being that provide the roles for individuals to occupy and enact (Burr, 2015; Galbin,

2014). My interest lies in critically questioning these ways of being, in how they either advantage or disadvantage specific experiences and identities for women in Australian higher education. Over time, the ways of being that become embedded within the blueprint of society are “*culturally and historically located*”, rather than random (Burr, 2015, p. 15). Therefore, it is important to consider and document how Australian higher education has shifted and changed over time within my research project.

To summarise, my social constructionist epistemological position works to reject the view of there being a universal truth, and as such, recognises the possibilities of many realities. These multiple realities can be instituted through the use of discourse and language and located within their historical and cultural context. It is important to critique and question the impact that these socially constituted realities have for particular individuals and groups, in relation to how women in academia are positioned to experience academia, as well as how women have been represented in academia over time.

### **4.3 Critical Psychology as the Theoretical Perspective**

The critical psychology theoretical perspective provides a lens through which I can explore the influence of power, institutional governance, the relationship between society and individual subjectivity, and the issues surrounding subjectification in the academic context (Montero, 2011; Teo, 2015). Critical psychology emerged within the 1970s in Germany, influenced by Feminist and Marxist values (Papadopoulos, 2009). Critical psychological approaches have global varieties, but all the perspectives relate in deeming that individual actions are in part based on social action (Papadopoulos, 2009). As a practice, critical psychology considers dominant social values and how these values influence certain groups of individuals (Papadopoulos, 2009). Critical psychology also emphasises the importance of reflexivity within the research process, the use of appropriate methodologies for change within different contexts, and the importance of acknowledging the position of the researcher within the research process (Jovanovic, 2010; Teo, 2015). Further, adopting a critical psychology approach offers a critique of the dominant psychological science, as well as the dominant social order (Jovanovic, 2010). As such, critical psychology has the ability to challenge

dominant societal values in academia, as well as the higher education institutions that enforce them.

There have been many influences suggested as being pivotal in the forming of the critical psychological theoretical perspective. Klaus Holzkamp and Friedrich Nietzsche were the major theorists that influenced the introduction of critical psychology, both proposing ideas (informed by Foucauldian philosophy) which aimed to inspire the review and analysis of discourse and power (Teo, 2015). Further, the movements of feminism, postcolonial theory, and elements of social constructionism and postmodernism have been suggested as influencing critical psychology (Wigginton, 2017). Global varieties include an incorporation of liberation psychology, Indigenous psychology, hermeneutic inspired approaches, as well as cultural psychology; all important in considering the history of how critical psychology came to be (Montero, 2011; Teo, 2015).

#### **4.3.1 *The Role of Critical Psychology***

Jovanovic (2010) proposed that the main role of critical psychology is to explore how subjectivity, or the first-person perspective in the conduct of everyday life, could be researched. Further to this, it was suggested that the role of power in traditional psychology was important to explore, interrogating how psychology has acted as a powerful form of knowledge in the context of imperialism (Jovanovic, 2010; Teo, 2015). Additionally, critical psychology involves critiquing dominant social values and the status quo, with the intent to pursue social action and justice (Montero, 2011). The challenging of ideology and power combined with social action reflects the main goals of the critical psychological theoretical perspective (Jovanovic, 2010; Montero, 2011).

Critical psychology plays a fundamental role in questioning the status quo of society. The status quo is produced based on the network of assumptions about the world that work to condition the propositions and beliefs that are considered as true (Jovanovic, 2010; Teo, 2015). Society values some ideas over others as truth based on where they fall within these particular ways of thinking (Jovanovic, 2010). The ways of thinking can be a part of the public consciousness, and overtly known and identifiable, whereas some are less obvious, and part of the subconscious of society (Adam, 2012). In any case, these ways of thinking determine what is

considered as acceptable or normal (Jovanovic, 2010; Teo, 2015). These ideas determine the nature of public thought, termed the episteme. Over time, the interweaving network of political, economic, and historical factors, the nature of the specific context, as well as the limitations of the ways of thinking evolve, and the episteme can gradually be changed or transformed into another (Adam, 2012; Montero, 2011). As such, the status quo, or privileged form of truth, can be shifted and re-constructed.

#### **4.3.2 Assumptions and Drivers of Critical Psychology**

Critical psychologists assume that we, as human beings, are embedded within cultural, historical, and social contexts (similar to the assumptions guiding the social constructionist epistemology; Wigginton, 2017). We are embedded because these contexts make us who we are, and construct and reflect what our life consists of (Teo, 2015). Society, history, and culture are interwoven with our subjectivities. What sets critical psychology apart from other theoretical perspectives is a united understanding that as a society, there are particular societal power differentials that have very clear consequences in how one conducts themselves within their life (i.e., their subjectivities; Jovanovic, 2010). It is important, from a critical psychological perspective, that I reflect on these elements reflexively, exploring individual agency, ways of engaging in praxis, the possibilities for resistance, and how I feel, think and act (Teo, 2015). It is through exploring these elements that the reasoning for adopting a critical psychology perspective in this research project becomes evident.

Researchers working within a critical psychology framework intend to challenge the societal structures of injustice, psychological control, ideologies, and the adjustment of the individual (Teo, 2015). Instead of framing the individual or group as the issue, critical psychology assumes that the problems stem from their experience within institutions and societies (Teo, 2015). Discourses and practices infuse and become a part of the status quo, dominating society and knowledge about individuals and their practices (Jovanovic, 2010). Individuals become pawns by navigating and experiencing the societal context; a context that has become an instrument of power through the nature of its embeddedness and dominance (Montero, 2011). Critical psychology reflects a commitment to critique these social

practices, but additionally, to reconstruct these practices, as well as reconstructing theory, history, and social arrangements and norms within a given context (Montero, 2011).

### **4.3.3 The Critical Psychology Research Process**

Critical psychology research methods are chosen for resolving the problems that need to be addressed, rather than choosing issues based on easy to conduct, accepted, and/or privileged methodologies (Teo, 2015). No one method is excluded, and as such, diverse approaches are valued. A commitment to historical perspectives, to social action, and debunking common sense and the status quo are shared by critical psychologists (Jovanovic, 2010). Within critical research, the interactions between the researcher and participant are challenged; rather than being perceived as *“drive-by sources of information for the researcher”*, participants are viewed as active agents that equally contribute to the production, dissemination, and changing of knowledge (Teo, 2015, p. 5). As such, my research project is conceptualised as an exchange between myself and the participants, where the contributions of all involved in the research process are emphasised.

Within this exchange, it is also important that I interrogate myself in terms of my contributions to the project, how I conceptualise the purpose of the research, the interests involved (from a personal, social, economic, and political perspective), as well as the benefits of the research. As such, because I identify as an early-career academic, I am a part of the socio-historical context that I am conducting the research in (i.e., the academic system). I view the concepts, theories, and methods I engage in as a part of that same context and need to engage in reflexivity to examine my reasons for adopting these practices. Further, my own biases and limitations from the perspective of my own social characteristics (e.g., my gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation) need to be examined, not only to consider how I, as a human being, may have contributed to injustices over time, but also, to how the role of power, and the exerting of power in theory and practice, influences the research that I conduct. As such, my engaging in reflexive journaling, supervisory discussions, and the conducting of the narrative review (Study One) all contribute to the ongoing process of critical examination.

#### **4.3.4 *The Outcomes of Research Based on Critical Psychology***

Critical psychology research methodologies need to capture the changing conditions and problems of the real world, with a theoretical or practical relevance that can contribute to either challenging or abolishing oppressive social situations (Wigginton, 2017). Applied research methodologies that adopt a critical perspective are engaged so that both the research process and findings influence forms of positive social change. Simply put, the research needs to have transformative potential that addresses the status quo and provides information and knowledge on how to change it (Montero, 2011; Teo, 2015). Such methodologies have been labelled by Sandoval (2000) as methodologies of the oppressed, where the knowledge generated reviews the psychosocial processes from the perspective of those dominated. The researcher does not just record the reality that the individuals experience but embeds themselves to allow for an approach that explores biased social ways of being that are embedded within oppressive, exploitative, or ideological practices (Sandoval, 2000; Teo, 2015).

Critical methodologies align with the feminist perspective, where the outcomes of this research aim to attend to the marginalisation and silencing of women's voices (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2000; Butler, 2002; 2004). This is in relation to both the social world, and to the production of knowledge (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2000; Butler, 2002; 2004). The emphasis on women's positioning and knowledge relates to the concerns surrounding the dominance of positivist methods, as well as the construction of knowledge and the world surrounding a dominant group of individuals – men (Cumings Mansfield et al., 2014; Butler, 2002; 2004). In conceptualising my research, my aim was to challenge the aforementioned concerns by including the voices of women and their narratives in the construction of identities and experiences in academia. Additionally, I aimed to work together with the women, to challenge the dominant forms of knowledge and experiences in academia. Based on this, I make the claim here that a feminist perspective is being adopted through the use of critical psychology, as these theoretical perspectives go hand-in-hand (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2000; Cumings Mansfield et al., 2014; Butler, 2002; 2004). Additionally, the use of multiple theories and perspectives, methodology, and providing the political and cultural context, all align with a

feminist conducting of research (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2000; Cumings Mansfield et al., 2014).

#### **4.4 The Foucauldian Philosophy as the Methodology**

The Foucauldian philosophy is considered useful to complement the exploration of power, resistance, and subjectivity within critical psychology. Michel Foucault was a French philosopher and historian who aimed to discover and explore the relations between knowledge, power, institutions, disciplines, and social practice (Rabinow, 1984). In this section, I focus on the concepts that he developed that have shaped my methodological approach, specifically, the FDA. The FDA allows for the examination of different forms of power and knowledge, specifically exploring how these constructs influence the use of discourse, subject positions, subjectivities, and ways of being (Riley & Wiggins, 2019). By exploring these concepts here, I aim to theoretically set the scene to my research, which enables the reader to identify how my ideas have formed, as well as how they will be discussed within the discussion/concluding chapter (see Chapter Ten).

Foucault proposed that there are benefits in reviewing how discourse can enable and constrain what can be said by individuals in particular settings and periods of time, and how this can shape one's experiences (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Adopting Foucault's perspective is useful as it allows for the exploration of participants' truths through the discourse and narratives they share, to identify the particular roles and positions they occupy, and how they construct specific phenomena within their experiences using discursive resources within a discursive economy (Alcoff, 2005). It can be argued that multiple positions can be occupied at any one time, these positionings can reflect possibilities which make available ways of seeing and being in the world. Being able to explore the discursive worlds, and subject positions offered, that individuals can inhabit can have implications for the ways that individuals experience their setting (Alcoff, 2005; Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008).

##### **4.4.1 Knowledge and Ways of Thinking According to Foucault**

Foucault argued that his approach of thinking about the world allowed for a challenging of practices within social realities that have come to be viewed as

normal and taken for granted (Alcoff, 2005). By engaging in this practice, Foucault proposes that individuals can explore how conditions have come to be, how it is they remain, and how they potentially have been or could be (Foucault, 1972). The construction and exercising of power allow for the construction and ordering of reality to render some visible and understandable, but simultaneously, constraining and excluding the forming of alternative views of reality (Foucault, 1982). Foucault also acknowledged that knowledge can be viewed as a product of, and in turn, produce discursive based perspectives of reality (Foucault, 1972). It is crucial to consider how this construction only expresses and creates a partial perspective of the presented reality, which is formed and based on the focus or frame that shapes what is to be seen (Burr, 2015).

Foucault refers to reality as being partial or situated, whereby we can view knowledge and discourse as constructed by and in turn constructing particular understandings of reality, rather than just describing the reality (Foucault, 1972). We are not looking to seek closure on how a reality operates, rather, we look for reasons as to the operation of particular ways of being, and this evaluation must stand up to scrutiny (Alcoff, 2005). The process here is not necessarily linear and homogenous and has been acknowledged as complex (Alcoff, 2005; Foucault, 1972). Overall, the Foucauldian analyst works to explore relationships between discourse and people's thoughts, feelings, actions, and the conditions in which these experiences take place. Additionally, Foucault (1988) argues that the knowledge gained from the past can assist us to understand the present context and reality. When we take the knowledge of the past and the present together, this can also help us to understand the kind of knowledge that is needed to create the desired future (Foucault, 1988).

#### **4.4.2 Discourse**

Discourse is the way of thinking and speaking about aspects of reality (Foucault, 1972). Discourses operate in certain ways that allow the ordering of reality, and as such, within society, there can be a number of discursive frames (i.e., cultural/contextual perspectives) that are used for thinking, writing, and speaking about reality (Foucault, 1982). Foucault argued that language should be emphasised as a way of constructing how a speaker can speak, think, and act, rather than

viewing it as a cultural resource that the speaker draws from (Burr, 2015). As such, discourse is framed as governing social practices that constructs specific '*ways of being and doing*' within certain contexts (Foucault, 1972). It is important to note that based on what is viewed as valued and normative in a context, not all discourses are afforded equal opportunity, presence, and authority (Foucault, 1982).

Foucault proposed that discourses are both historically and socio-culturally bound (Foucault, 1972), which aligns with the perspective of the social constructionist epistemology. As such, these discourses are perceived to reflect regulated ways of speaking, thinking, and acting for particular groups of people at particular points in time (Willig, 2013). Most common is the status quo, or the taken for granted rules of inclusion and exclusion in society (Foucault, 1977). This can work to produce and establish different roles for individuals and allow forms of subjectification where human beings become subjects (Foucault, 1977). For example, Western society has seen a shift in terms of how sexuality (more specifically, homosexuality) is labelled, conceptualised, and defined. In the past, identifying as '*gay*' was conceptualised as a mental illness, linked to criminality, and individuals were identified by the label '*homosexual*' (Hooker, 1993). A now widely favoured discourse in Western society has re-conceptualised the identification of '*gay*', with acceptance surrounding many variations of sexuality rising, and the term '*homosexual*' now viewed as outdated, due to its historical link with pathology and the problematising of this identity within psychology and medicine (Herek et al., 2010; Hooker, 1993). This is largely in part to research that illustrates that sexuality (specifically, identifying as '*gay*') is not associated with any form of mental illness or criminality, or that it is largely determined by heredity, and that perspectives that are harmful to the conceptualisation of sexuality are related to other prejudices, discrimination, and authoritarianism (Herek et al., 2010; Hooker, 1993).

Additionally, while Foucault refrained from explicitly adopting any specific epistemological or theoretical positioning in his work, individuals drawing on both perspectives debate the idea of there being '*absolute*' truths, and argue that at any one time, there can be multiple discourses available for a discursive object (Burr, 2015; Foucault, 1972). For example, Pierre (2019) provided the following illustration

using the discursive object of *'gun ownership'*; gun ownership can be placed in one of the two following discursive locations – ownership as a self-preservation practice, or ownership as a threat to public safety. With discourse enabling regulated practices, each location or version enables specific words, thoughts, and actions. For example, the gun owner (i.e., the subject) within the self-preservation discourse may discuss owning and using their gun as having the right, the agency, and the autonomy to protect the self and their loved ones and may be met with gratitude and appreciation for engaging in this practice, but also disapproval and fear of being a threat to public safety. The owner bound within the discourse of public safety may speak to their fear of guns increasing the risk of crime and victimisation in society but may be judged on their ability to protect their loved ones. In this manner, the discourse has explored the regulated social practices, rather than merely describing the object (Rabinow, 1984). As such, discourse can work to construct knowledge. Discourse governs by allowing the production of knowledge categories and collections of text, constructing what is possible to discuss and what is not (Burr, 2015; Foucault, 1972). As such, discourse is linked with the exercising of power. Discourses can work to produce and reproduce both knowledge and power simultaneously, which can construct what is valued and regulated within a particular context (Foucault, 1978).

#### **4.4.2.1 The Fundamentals of Foucault's Thinking Surrounding Discourse.**

While many academics agree that Foucauldian perspectives are diverse, Foucault himself argued that thoughts cannot be constructed without discourse, as they are constructed through discourse as the proper object (Foucault, 1972). Foucault argued that discourse cannot be considered as transparent or value free, rather, that discourse is assigned specific meanings by both the speakers and the listeners, dependent on the context (Foucault, 1978). Foucault posed three questions of importance when considering the value of discourse:

1. *Why was this said and not that?*
2. *Why were these words used to construct reality?*
3. *How do the connotations of the words fit in relation to other ways of talking about the world?*

When evaluating the value of discourse and the questions of importance suggested above, Foucault (1972) proposes that the uncovering of unspoken and unstated assumptions allows for the examination of how knowledge and discourse have been originally formed. Using the Foucauldian philosophy provides us with a means to describe both the broken and unbroken chains of knowledge that are contained in the layers of discourse present in the system. This can provide us with the means to excavate knowledge and practice through a deep critical exploration and reflection of the normalising power of discourse (Rabinow, 1984). This can be examined through how it constructs subjectivities, and the ways in which it can order and organise work and knowledge (Rabinow, 1984). By examining the assumptions grounded within the text, one can speculate on how to best situate knowledge within the wider context, establishing what those contexts actually are, and the limits to stopping the contextualisation of knowledge (Foucault, 1972).

#### **4.4.2.2 Exercising Power and its Influence on Discourse.**

Foucault argued that the operation and effects of discourse within particular contexts can be made explicit through exploring the ways in which power is exercised (Foucault, 1988). He posed four questions of importance in understanding power relations and their effects on discourse:

1. *What guidelines allow for certain statements to be made?*
2. *What rules direct these statements?*
3. *What rules aid our evaluation of statements as true or false?*
4. *What guidelines permit the construction of ways to explain, model, or classify certain elements of the text?*

Foucault proposed that reflecting on these questions allows for the reader to acknowledge the ways in which discourse can be constructed, shaped, and ordered, in terms of their social and historical context (Foucault, 1972).

#### **4.4.3 The Conceptualisation of Power/Knowledge**

Foucault (1980) argued that power and knowledge are inextricably linked, and that the joining of the words as above is symbolically reflective of how one cannot occur without the other. The extant literature proposes similar arguments, expressing the impossible nature of power being exercised without knowledge, and for knowledge not to create power (Brown, 2009). As such, Foucault summarised

his notion of power through four theoretical foci – power is productive, power cannot be possessed, power disciplines the body, and power propagates resistance (Rabinow, 1984).

Foucault conceptualised power as a network or constructed web that enables certain knowledge(s) to be produced and known (Burchell et al., 1991; Foucault, 1980). Power can have an immense impact through its manifestation and application, by *“reaching into the very grain of individuals, touching their bodies and inserting itself into actions and attitudes, discourses, learning processes and everyday lives”* (Foucault, 1980, p. 30). Through this network, capillary-like structure, power is conceptualised to be neither here nor there, but that it circulates in a net-like manner via social relations (Burchell et al., 1991). As such, we are eternally embroiled within power relations that work to operate on us (Rabinow, 1984). Further to this, power can be conceptualised as a productive concept, influenced by the archaeology and genealogy of sociohistorical processes (Foucault, 1972). For these reasons provided above, Foucault (1988) argued that rather than focussing on power as a possessor, we should concentrate on the application of power. Within my research, my aim is to focus on exploring the discourses of early-, middle-, and later-career women in academia – these discourses will be regarded as produced through the effects of power and how this can shape academic identity formation. Women can not only be controlled by power, but also, producers of knowledge and power, and my research aims to explore, through the discourses and subject positions, how power and knowledge influence academic identity conceptualisation.

Power can be both productive and restrictive (Foucault, 1977). First, power can be productive; being used by individuals in terms of how knowledge is constructed and perpetuated, as well as how the self and others are defined (Foucault, 1977). For example, a woman in academia who is constructing her academic identity is viewed as producing, but also seeking knowledge (e.g., attempting to define her identity, but also seek out new ways of being), which in turn, allows her to construct her identity as an agentic woman. Over time, specific truths and those who have been constructed as truth tellers (e.g., government, academics in higher positions of power, neoliberal knowledge) become privileged

compared to others. As such, these truths and truth tellers become social norms and experts. Here, individuals within a context use specific forms of knowledge from dominant discourses in ways to claim authority and presence, and additionally, to exclude other individuals with other discursive framings or ways of being (Foucault, 1972). In this way, specific discourses and institutions become, over time through production, more powerful than others. Additionally, power can also have a paradoxical effect; constraining what is possible to know in specific situations (Foucault, 1977). As such, power can be conceptualised as a facet of our actions that may work to influence others, what they know, and to also impact their future actions (Rabinow, 1984). Further, conceptualising power as a mode of action suggests that power may not always act in a direct and immediate manner on others, rather, it can act upon their actions (Burchell et al., 1991). This is viewed as an action upon an action, on existing actions, or on those which could arise at a later time (Burchell et al., 1991).

#### **4.4.3.1 Summarising the Conditions of Power.**

Here, in terms of how Foucault conceptualised power, I summarise these conditions, which encapsulate the theoretical journey that he made in terms of his conceptualisation of power.

1. *Power is viewed as an interaction.* Foucault differed from other philosophers in terms of his construction of power as being relational, goal-driven, and self-organised, which can create tensions between, within, and among individuals or groups (Foucault, 1988). The construct is not understood as a singular, unidirectional, reified phenomenon with specific, identifiable instances of application, and it is not viewed as a strategy consciously used by some individuals over others (Foucault, 1988).
2. *Power is viewed as a relational process embodied in context-specific situations.* Foucault acknowledged that power was best viewed in terms of power relations, and that as a process, it operates in continuous struggles and confrontations that change, strengthen, or reverse the polarity of force relations between power and resistance (Rabinow, 1984).

3. *Power is best viewed as a web or system of interacting influences, supported by particular relations and tensions* (Foucault, 1977). Each is necessary to the other, and the concepts constitute, and are constituted by each other.
4. *Power can be understood as the tensions of contradictory relations between power and resistance* and can only be described in specific terms relative to individuals within their context (in other words, it cannot be generalised; Foucault, 1977).
5. *Power can be known by the particular strategies and practices in and through which the relations take effect* (Foucault, 1972).

These conditions allow us to form some conclusions surrounding Foucault's perspective of power. Power is performed through the interplay of unequal and changing force relations in a particular context (Foucault, 1988). The unequal relations illustrate how power has an immediate embodied effect within specific contexts (Rabinow, 1984). Further, power does not only occur in a top-down manner, rather, it can function in larger scale forces that are created based on elements that link and bring about redistributions of power (Burchell et al., 1991; Foucault, 1980). Foucault (1988) argued that power relations are not necessarily planned to intentionally oppress specific groups and individuals, rather, power can be critiqued in terms of specific micro-practices that work with unintended consequences. While the specific practices may appear explicit and intentional, the logic behind the relations is not intended to be oppressive (Foucault, 1977). This can entail the individual as an effect of power, while simultaneously being an agent of its articulation (Burchell et al., 1991). Simply, the subjectified individual can also be the vehicle that drives the relations of power (Foucault, 1977).

#### **4.4.3.2 Conceptualising Power and Discipline Using the Panopticon.**

The analysis of power also draws attention to the manner in which power relations can discipline populations (Foucault, 1977). Rather than being constructed as a means to punish, when used in this context, discipline can reflect the practice of normalisation (Foucault, 1977). As such, the vital component of the workings of disciplinary power and normalisation is surveillance. Foucault (1988) argued that surveillance began to replace forms of corporal punishment, and that placing individuals under surveillance appeared more profitable and beneficial, compared

to punishing them. Within contemporary society, Foucault also argued that the practice of surveillance has become so internalised that it now manifests as a self-regulatory mechanism (Rabinow, 1984). Foucault conceptualised the internalisation and regulation of social practices, structures, and discipline through surveillance in an already proposed model constructed by Jeremy Bentham in 1785 titled '*The Panopticon*'.

The Panopticon was first used in the context of the penal system whereby all prison cells were open to an all-seeing tower, with individuals lacking interactions with other inmates, but always in sight of the panoptic tower (Bentham, 1995). Individuals were unsure when and if there was someone in the all-seeing tower; Foucault added to this and said that "*...the inmate must never know whether he [sic] is being looked at, at any one moment; but he [sic] must be sure that he [sic] may always be so*" (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). As such, the individual believed they could be surveyed at any given moment. Bentham acknowledged his model as a form of prison reform and suggested adopting it as a prototype for how society could function (Bentham, 1995). Individuals needed to believe that anyone could be watched at any time for the system to work, to ensure that forms of surveillance, power, and control were internalised and self-regulated (Bentham, 1995). Foucault (1977; p. 202-203) added to this and argued,

*He [sic] who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he [sic] makes them play spontaneously upon himself [sic]; he [sic] inscribes in himself [sic] the power relation in which he [sic] simultaneously plays both roles; he [sic] becomes the principle of his [sic] own subjection.*

The conceptualisation of the Panopticon by both Bentham and Foucault can be used to illustrate advancements in our modern society, for example, the implementation of technology that allows the government to track individual movement and behaviours through phones, social media, the census, credit cards, surveillance cameras, and the internet (Mills, 2003). Within the carceral contemporary culture, Foucault argues that the panoptic model has been utilised in society, which has influenced the way that different contexts operate (e.g., the operation of workplaces and institutions such as higher education, medical and

psychiatric hospitals, schools, and prisons; Armstrong & Murphy, 2011). The utilisation of the panoptic model is rationalised based on different needs dependent on the context, as such, Foucault proposed that dependent on the setting, it may serve to reform a prisoner, to treat a patient, to instruct children and adults in school settings, to confine the insane, or to supervise workers in the workplace (Foucault, 1977). For example, women academics feel as if they are being watched and surveyed in their academic roles, which can be further compounded by the forever changing rules and guidelines that impede their responsibilities (Knights & Clarke, 2014). As such, the women academics may feel further pressures to act in accordance with what the higher education institution expects of them, feeling fearful of the potential repercussions that could occur if they did not meet these expectations (Peck et al., 2018).

It is evident that the Panopticon can work in complex, nuanced ways. It can manifest as a location of individuals in a particular context, a distribution of individuals in terms of how they relate to one another (Bentham, 1995). The model can work to organise individuals in a hierarchical manner, constructing settings that are influenced by instruments and modes of power that work to control and survey the individual (Foucault, 1977). As such, when reviewing settings that consist of several individuals whereby tasks or forms of behaviour are imposed, Foucault argued that the panoptic model can be used to critique the setting (Foucault, 1977). The utility of the model was proposed by Foucault who acknowledged that *“the panoptic schema, without disappearing as such or losing any of its properties, was destined to spread throughout the social body...its vocation was to become a generalised function...”* (Foucault, 1977, p. 207). Further to this, he adds *“...we are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of its mechanism.”* (Foucault, 1977, p. 217). The result here, is that within our carceral culture, we now live within the panoptic machine that influences the actions and ways of being of our daily lives.

#### **4.4.3.3 The Effects of the Panoptic Model.**

Living within the influence of the panoptic machine can have specific effects on individuals and the society overall. This can include the following:

1. **Internalisation of regulations** – Foucault argues that particular rules and guidelines are normalised within the institution, and that individuals may become less willing to contest these ideas if they are constructed as *'normal'* and dominant (Rabinow, 1984).
2. **Emphasis on rehabilitation** – There has been a shift from a culture of spectacle to a carceral culture, with a focus now on the rehabilitation of *'deviant'* individuals, rather than torture and punishment. Foucault suggests that this focus relies on a social construction of *'normal'* which can emphasise what is viewed as the status quo within the system. As individuals in society are *"judges of normality present everywhere"*, Foucault argued that the reign of normality subjectifies individuals and constructs them as homogenous entities (Foucault, 1977, p. 304).
3. **Constant surveillance** – The increase of surveillance (based on the influence of the panopticon as a prototype) into many aspects of the lives of individuals is evident. This has been perpetuated and aided by the increase in surveillance technology in our culture and society (Mills, 2003).
4. **A growing reliance on information** – The use of surveillance to obtain information forms new challenges for how to organise this information. This can lead to the creation of new ways of gathering and organising information (Mills, 2003).
5. **Increase in workload** – Individuals are needed to be able to engage in the surveillance of others, in terms of collecting and organising the information retrieved from this practice. In doing so, allocating more of these responsibilities to others can work to segregate individuals from those who are being surveilled, as they are viewed to be perpetuating practices that keep the system running (practices that may be seen as problematic; Rabinow, 1984).
6. **Emphasis on efficiency** – More value is placed on the most efficient way to organise both the information obtained, and the individuals who are a part of the system. The aim is to produce and disseminate more products and information, even to the expense of exploitation and injustice (Mills, 2003).

7. **Reliance on others** – The organisation of individuals into categories means that as a society, we become reliant on other ‘*experts*’ to complete tasks or provide information that was at one time, common knowledge (Foucault, 1977).

#### **4.4.3.4 The Panopticon and Higher Education.**

Scholars have linked Bentham and Foucault’s metaphor of the panopticon to the workings of the higher education system (Mutereko, 2018; Ropers-Huilman et al., 2016; Shore & Roberts, 1993; Webb et al., 2007; Wintrup, 2017). The use of this metaphor to illustrate the contextual nuances of the higher education system allows for an illumination of the power differentials that occur within the key players of academia. Research has explored how the influence of government and the neoliberal ideology within higher education has impinged on academic freedom, added multiple layers of complexity within academic bureaucratic processes, and reduced the ability to reflect upon and change to more contemporary pedagogical processes (Mutereko, 2018; Webb et al. 2007; Wintrup, 2017). For example, women may feel they are being watched and feel pressure to be the ‘*ideal academic*’ (Radice, 2013), in turn, sacrificing certain needs and expectations of self, compared to other individuals within the institution (Radice, 2013). In the context of the status quo within academia, women may be pressured to self-regulate, and comply with a system that disadvantages them in comparison to the dominant group (Radice, 2013). The panoptic model works because of the individuals involved feeling compelled to control and regulate their own behaviour. The nature of this compulsion works based on the use of constant observation as a control mechanism, whereby one is conscious of constant surveillance and internalises this mechanism (Rabinow, 1984). The internalisation of constant surveillance results in an acceptance of bureaucratic regulations and normative practices, stemming from the threat of discipline, specifically, disciplinary forms of power (Foucault, 1977).

Additionally, linking the Panoptic model to the operation of higher education illuminates the role of Isomorphism within institutions. Isomorphism in academia refers to the homogenisation of institutions, whereby the institutions are forced to resemble other institutions that may be facing the same, or similar,

environmental conditions (Cardona et al., 2020). This means that higher education institutions are pressured to modify themselves to fit with other institutions and systems that are seen as the *'ideal'* (Croucher & Woelert, 2016). Isomorphism in academia may be coercive (formal and informal pressures are exercised according to standardised procedures set by State, culture, and society; Ozturk, 2020), mimetic (when procedures are unclear, and institutions imitate the operations of institutions that they feel are legitimate and successful; Anafinova, 2020), and/or normative (working conditions and methods are defined by particular members who are viewed as specialists within the institution; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2019). For example, these forms of Isomorphism come through in institutions striving in moving up the rankings of higher education institutions (based on output and capital targets set by the State; coercive), observing and surveying other institutions to see what they are doing (mimetic), and replicating best practices (normative [combining both coercive and mimetic practices]), which all serve to reinforce the idea of the link between Isomorphism and the Panoptic model in higher education (Anafinova, 2020; Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra, 2019; Ozturk, 2020). As with the Panoptic model, institutions, and its members, face consequences if they are viewed to deviate from the Isomorphic conceptualisation of the *'university'* (Cardona et al., 2020).

#### **4.4.4 Resistance and Freedom is Fundamental**

The concept of resistance is acknowledged to be of importance within Foucault's consideration of power/knowledge. Using a Foucauldian approach, reflecting on resistance is imperative to the process; *"where there is power, there is resistance"* (Foucault, 1982, p. 95). For power relations to come into existence, there must be the freedom to engage; without the possibility of resistance, there can be no power (Armstrong & Murphy, 2011). Engaging in resistance can be viewed as a form of freedom, which aligns with Foucault's notion of freedom and power. For power to exist, freedom must also exist. As with Foucault's understanding of power, resistance also has no single locus of control and is dispersed throughout society (Foucault, 1988). Resistance can take many forms, at any time, and in many places (Armstrong & Murphy, 2011).

It is important to critically consider the nuances of resistance, in that an engagement in social practices does not necessarily reflect acceptance of dominant discourses (Armstrong & Murphy, 2011; Foucault, 1982). Additionally, not engaging in these practices does not assume resistance. Power is related to the freedom to engage in resistance, either by constructing individual ways of being while acting in accordance with the subjectivity the individual is afforded, overtly opposing prescribed subject positions, and/or withdrawing from systems where dominating power is exercised (Armstrong & Murphy, 2011). Specific individuals can be positioned within social settings in ways that foster disadvantage and inequality, and this can be examined through deconstructing how the social world is formed (Jovanovic, 2010; Teo, 2015). Individuals can respond in a number of ways to resist the inequality they experience and draw on a range of potential meanings to counter what is viewed as unacceptable (Armstrong & Murphy, 2011; Foucault, 1982). Additionally, from a critical psychology standpoint, resistance can be perceived as crucial to elucidating social power structures and their associated impacts (Jovanovic, 2010; Teo, 2015).

For some individuals, other forms of resistance are engaged in, where new forms of subjectivities are created, suggested by Gergen and Gergen (2003) as countercultures. This is where the original definitions of individual deviance are transformed by the collective '*other*' into legitimate ways of navigating the system (almost as a form of taking the power '*back*' from the dominant group; Foucault, 1982; Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Other ways of engaging in resistance can include mobilising with other, more powerfully positioned individuals, or undertaking forms of social action to force social change (Foucault, 1982; Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Foucault has argued that without resistance, there would be no power, and that for power relations to change, there needs to be an examination of how resistance manifests within the social setting (Foucault, 1982). Foucault summarises this need to explore the relationship between resistance, freedom, and power, stating "*the analysis, elaboration, bringing into question of power relations and the agonism between power relations, and the intransitivity of freedom, is a permanent political task inherent in all social existence*" (Foucault, 1982, p. 791-792). Within my research project, identifying the particular nuances of resistance is crucial as it can

assist me in critically exploring how women create the space to either engage or not engage with academic practices that are meaningful to them. Being critical of how women academics are positioned to experience academia, by both themselves and others, is an important element of my research to create the space to construct diverse academic identities within the higher education context and explore whether these identities are being honoured.

#### **4.4.5 A Shifting Conceptualisation of Power, Freedom, and Resistance**

What I have discussed so far may give the illusion that power, freedom, and resistance somehow manifest within the institutions themselves, rather than within the individuals that allow for the institutions to function. While this conceptualisation is important to consider, I need to acknowledge how Foucault came to this conclusion, and how this has shifted over time. Foucault recognised that the construction of modern society and culture with guiding principles of control, order, and discipline had the propensity to deindividualise power (Foucault, 1977). This can make it seem as though power permanently exists within the institution, which was further supported by the link that Foucault drew between power, institutions, and the panoptic model (Foucault, 1977; Rabinow, 1984).

The panoptic model conceptualises how institutions function in terms of the automatised and deindividualisation of power. Power in this setting may not be within a person, but rather as a production and distribution of bodies and internal mechanisms where individuals are caught up in these relations (Bentham, 1995; Foucault, 1977; Rabinow, 1984). Bentham's idea (used by Foucault) illustrated how power could function on its own; it did not matter who operated the power within the institution (Rabinow, 1984). As Foucault (1977, p. 202) stated, "*any individual, taken almost at random, can operate the machine: in the absence of the director, his [sic] family, his [sic] friends, his [sic] visitors, even his [sic] servants.*"

Further to this, Foucault made connections between the conceptualisation of power and discipline. Discipline was not identified as functioning or emerging within an institution, rather, it was viewed as a type of power to be exercised, comprising of a set of practices and instruments used that can influence the ways of being and doing of individuals (Rabinow, 1984). Disciplinary practices are used as a form of power, specifically, a technology of power under Foucault's description

(Foucault, 1977). Institutions can contribute to this deindividuation through disciplinary practices, for example, by enforcing workplace practices where individuals feel responsible for the functioning of the *'faceless bureaucratic'* institution (Rabinow, 1984). The deindividuation of power through the aforementioned practices infers that power is embedded in this technology of power (the panoptic machine enforcing disciplinary practices), rather than the individual.

The early conceptualisation of power proposed by Foucault can lead individuals to feel powerless before the diffuse form of power and disciplinary practices identified here. Foucault does shift his view of power in his later work, adding to the aforementioned theory, and distinctly expresses that power does exist within individuals, even those who may be surveilled or *'punished'* (Foucault, 1977). Power, while assumed to exist in a diffuse form, is incomplete, rather, Foucault argues that power exists only when it is put into action (Foucault, 1982). He makes it clear that power *"is not a renunciation of freedom, a transference of rights, the power of each and all delegated to a few"* (Foucault, 1982, p. 788). Further, he added,

*...a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that 'the other' (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognised and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up (Foucault, 1982, p. 789).*

As such, the construction of power shifted from a diffuse form evident within institutions, to a further adding of, re-conceptualisation, and identification of power within individuals that is put into action (Foucault, 1982; Rabinow, 1984). Foucault argued here that power always involves a set of actions that are performed based on another individual's actions and reactions (Foucault, 1982; Rabinow, 1984). It can be viewed as a way of acting upon a willing subject(s) by their actions, or at least, the individual's capability of taking action (Rabinow, 1984).

#### 4.4.6 Governmentality

In Foucault's sense, governmentality refers to the techniques and technologies in which institutions of power attempt to construct and produce citizens who fulfil the institution's aims (Foucault, 2008). When referring to technologies, Foucault argued that institutions implement variable rationalities and techniques to obtain a collective purpose – leading individuals to do what is best for the State and the population, but nonetheless allowing the individuals to feel autonomous in their decision-making (Bignall, 2008; Cotoi, 2011). As such, governmentality reflects the manner in which the individual's well-being and agency is disciplined and regulated indirectly (Foucault, 1972). As such, in this thesis, a part of my analysis is identifying some of the specific techniques that individuals and groups employ in positioning women in academia. The specific techniques are discussed in light of their prominence in how subject positions are constructed, as well as how autonomy and agency are influenced by the historical, political, and socio-cultural factors in academia, both crucial elements of interest in my research.

Within the context of governmentality, I can explore how subject positions are made available via the interactions between technologies – specifically, the technologies of the self, and the technologies of power (Foucault, 2008). The technologies of power reflect the methods in which disciplines (i.e., institutions of power such as academia/higher education) work to construct the population in a manner that is more productive, less dangerous, and compliant to particular ways of being (Foucault, 1978). For example, in higher education, academics are constituted as objects, producing knowledge for the purpose of the institution, as well as constructing dominant and 'othered' forms of knowledge through surveillance (i.e., the technology of power; Christopher et al., 2020). Thus, through the disciplinary gaze, individuals are encouraged to engage in a manner that reflects the 'ideal, normative academic' (Christopher et al., 2020; Cotoi, 2011). Women academics, for example, have suggested that their identities as both academics, and carers/mothers, are at times incompatible, and at odds, with one another, and the ideal, normative academic (Lazar, 2005; Weedon, 1997). This pressures the women academics to occupy some roles, over others (Lazar, 2005; Weedon, 1997).

Therefore, through this technology, subject positions (i.e., certain ways of being) for individuals are made available to occupy.

As time progressed, Foucault proposed the technologies of the self, which encapsulates how individuals have the ability to resist the practices that can discipline or dominate them (Foucault, 1986, 2008). Technologies of the self outlines how individuals construct themselves as subjects, as well as the process in which this takes place (Foucault, 1986). Individuals are not passively influenced by dominant discourses, rather, they actively reproduce, or work to resist these dominant discourses (Armstrong & Murphy, 2011). Through this practice, the individual has the choice (i.e., the autonomy) to construct their own subjectivity (Armstrong & Murphy, 2011; Foucault, 2008). However, Foucault (1986; 2008) argued that these forms of subjectivity and practices are embedded within the dominant culture; proposed, suggested, and imposed by the culture, social group, and society, rather than being invented by the individual. Here, what Foucault proposed is that the socio-cultural, political, and historical context that individuals are embedded in, constructs the ways of being that are available to us (Foucault, 1986). While we are not forced to adapt to the dominant ways of being in society and the institution, the choice can be limited as to what we do, based on what is available to us (Foucault, 1986). As such, when exploring how women navigate academia, as well as how they identify themselves, it is important to identify whether academia provides the opportunity for women to construct their own way of being.

#### **4.4.7 A Shifting Foucault**

When working to understand the musings proposed by Foucault, it is important to consider the theoretical and philosophical perspectives that I have discussed, that underlie this methodology. Understanding Foucault's philosophy allows for a richer, more nuanced understanding of the theory underlying his approach. Academics have acknowledged difficulties in conceptualising and understanding Foucault's approach, as it can be fuelled with complexities that can be challenging to comprehend (Alcoff, 2005; Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2011; Graham, 2005; Willig, 2008). Further to this, Foucault's perspectives have been known to change over time. Foucault acknowledged a shift in the way that he

constructed and viewed society, contestation, power, control, freedom, struggle, and resistance throughout his academic career (Rabinow, 1984). As such, it is important to acknowledge this shift, not so much in terms of changing definitions of these concepts, but as understandings that grew and evolved as he became more exposed, experienced, and aware of the operation of the institutions and practices that surrounded him. Figure 5 visually outlines the periods of Foucault and his theoretical foci during these times.

### Figure 5

*Summary of Foucault's Theoretical Foci Over Time*



Foucault's rationale throughout his work was to provide the reader with a sense of how society has shifted and changed over time (Foucault, 1986). Consistent with the examination of this shift is how Foucault's perspective and theoretical foci has changed over time. Where Foucault has been particularly successful is through his critical perspective and examination of discourse, power, governmentality, resistance, and society, with a focus on ensuring that we, as individuals, do not fall victim to accepting conditions as they are, rather, we work to resist and form new ways of being and doing (Rabinow, 1984). Foucault also acknowledged how the process of modernisation can be dangerous in regard to how power is manifested and exercised by individuals and the government

(Foucault, 1988). His work suggests that the government are increasingly obtaining more control over, as well as obtaining the ability to enforce particular conditions within, our private lives (Foucault, 1977). Historically, forms of discipline have been proposed by Foucault as more active and torturous, a '*culture of spectacle*' through displays of dismemberment, torture, and obliteration (Foucault, 1977). Foucault suggested a shift from this form of discipline in our modern, contemporary society whereby these elements of control are more insidious through a '*carceral culture*', with the internalisation of discipline and rehabilitation of subjects within institutional systems (Foucault, 1977).

Foucault himself stated how there were many complexities and ambiguities in his way of thinking, reflective in the constant re-evaluation of how he viewed certain constructs (Foucault, 1988). As such, he proposed that his thinking (and related analyses and deconstruction utilising this knowledge) can be thought of as an extensive toolbox where tools are identified, selected, and used according to the research being undertaken. It was Foucault's hope that the tools within his toolbox could be flexible enough to shape and frame the research being undertaken that explores sociohistorical processes, technologies, theoretical frameworks that explore power relations, and its impact on particular systems and contexts (Foucault, 2003).

#### **4.5 The Use of Foucault, Critical Psychology, and Social Constructionism**

The Foucauldian methodology, critical psychology, and the social constructionist epistemological position all share many similarities to draw on for this research project. As such, my research project adopts these perspectives and regards them as complementary. Foucault's methodology allows for the exploration of discursive constructions, discourses, and subject positions that are made available, or denied, to women within the academic context. Additionally, Foucault recognised that the subjectivities and positions that individuals can adopt are established by the power relations that surround them (Rabinow, 1984). Ultimately, the conceptualisation of academic identities is bound by power relations and the identities made available within academia. For example, roles and responsibilities that have been made available to women academics over time relate to maternal, caring positions (Mutereko, 2018; Webb et al. 2007; Wintrup, 2017). Of interest

here are the social norms that work to construct certain ways of being as the accepted standard over others, with women academics stereotyped and positioned into normative roles based on their gender (Mutereko, 2018; Webb et al. 2007; Wintrup, 2017).

While there are clear merits for adopting the Foucauldian philosophy and methodology, his perspectives have been criticised for reducing the scope in which regulatory processes can be gendered (Amigot & Pujal, 2009; Maxwell, 2019). Within academia, while all individuals are influenced by surveillance and self-regulatory practices, women have been disadvantaged by disciplinary techniques and practices that work to target them specifically (Elias et al., 2017; Kemp et al., 2015; Thompson, 2015). As such, the lack of attention to gender within the Foucauldian philosophy reflects why I have adopted other perspectives within my project. Additionally, while Foucault's philosophy provides an informative way of analysing power and subjectivities, his work lacks an evaluation and critique of practices which may be deemed as '*better or worse*' within the social context (Graham, 2005; Portschy, 2020). As such, the use of critical psychology, which has a focus on power, liberation, oppression, conscientisation, and legitimisation of social practices, can be useful when critiquing these practices (Teo, 2015).

The Foucauldian perspective aligns with critical psychology, as both can be used to explore the influence of discourse on social processes of legitimisation and power (Foucault, 1988). Critical psychology identifies dominant societal values and considers their influence on certain groups of individuals (Teo, 2015). This critical deconstruction allows for dominant values, and the institutions that may enforce them (e.g., academic settings) to be critiqued and challenged. Additionally, research methodologies informed by critical psychology can capture the issues occurring in the real world, with the aim of changing the pre-existing conditions to disrupt oppressive practices (Dustman et al., 2014), and potentiate social change (Teo, 2015). Foucault's philosophy and the critical theoretical perspective offers a lens through which to respond to practical and pressing issues for women within academia relating to power and institutional governance, and how these issues influence the conceptualising of their academic identities. Additionally, adopting a

critical, Foucauldian approach is appropriate as it involves the study of forms of surveillance and self-regulation in everyday life (Jovanovic, 2010).

The social constructionist epistemological position further supplements the perspectives discussed thus far. Social constructionism works to reject and critique the view of there being a universal truth, and as such, recognises the possibilities of many realities for individuals (Burr, 2015). Further, social constructionism complements Foucault's perspective in terms of the need to evaluate discourse and language and how they are located within their historical and cultural context (Galbin, 2014). Using these perspectives allowed me to critique and question the impact that these socially constituted realities have for women in academia. In summary, these perspectives can be used to critique the ways of being and doing in academia, and how women are positioned to act and identify in academia.

#### **4.6 Concluding Commentary**

In this chapter, I have described how I have approached my research project in terms of philosophy, epistemology, theoretical perspective, and methodology. Foucauldian philosophy, the critical theoretical perspective, and social constructionism were discussed in depth. In the next chapter, I provide the first study of my research, reviewing the literature base to explore how academia has influenced the current state of knowledge on the conceptualisation of women's academic identities and experiences. Additionally, I critique the design and theoretical underpinnings of the chosen reviewed studies to explore how ways of being and doing exist, and how research is conducted on women's academic identities within academia.

**CHAPTER 05: EXPLORING AND CRITIQUING WOMEN'S  
ACADEMIC IDENTITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION - A NARRATIVE  
REVIEW**

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*The aim of critique is to separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think (Rabinow, 1984, p. 46).*

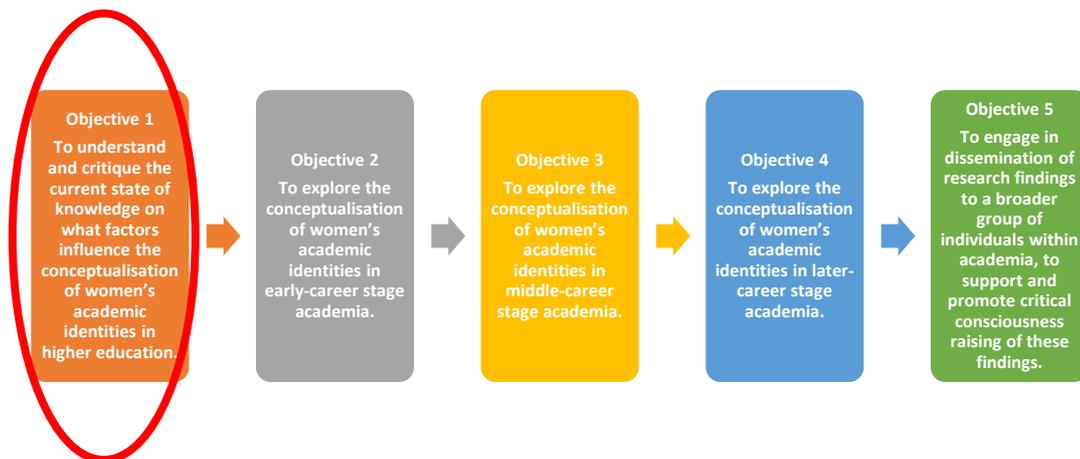
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### **5.1 Chapter Overview**

In this chapter, I present the first study that was conducted in the project, a thematic synthesis and review of the extant literature base, to explore how neoliberal academia influences the current state of knowledge on the conceptualisation of women's academic identities and experiences (see Figure 6). The review, titled "Exploring and Critiquing Women's Academic Identity in Neoliberal Academia – A Narrative Review" has been accepted for publication, awaiting proofs, with an academic journal. The document provided here is the version submitted that was accepted for publication. The review synthesises 56 studies published from 2010 to 2019 to explore what is known about women's academic identities and experiences. The review concludes with a critique of the design and theoretical underpinnings of the reviewed studies to explore how things exist and how research is conducted on women's academic identities within neoliberal academia.

**Figure 6**

*Flow Diagram of Project Objectives: Addressing Objective 1*



## 5.2 Abstract

Academia has been characterised as traditional, hierarchical, and selective, founded on patriarchal, imperial, and colonial values that construct and maintain gendered roles and regulations. This has been proposed to disadvantage how women experience, and identify within, academia. A narrative review was conducted to review the literature on women's academic identities and experiences, and critique the dominant ways of knowing, being, and doing in academia. Thematic synthesis was conducted on 56 qualitative studies (published 2010 - 2019), illustrating the impact of these values on women's academic identities and experiences, and normative gendered stereotypes and practices that impact women academics. Furthermore, existing literature is critiqued, exploring the influence of dominant ways of being and knowing (on how questions are asked, the constructs explored, the design decisions made). By providing this commentary, future research can focus on problematising the system and dismantling the problematic conditions (e.g., underrepresentation, discrimination, gendered stereotyping) for women in academia.

Keywords: academic identity; academia; women; academic experience; gender

### 5.3 Introduction

Academia has been constructed as a highly institutionalised environment, characterised by a culture that is traditional, hierarchical, and selective (Bomert & Leinfellner, 2017). Within academia, individuals are categorised at different levels, for example, as students, academics, support, and/or administrative staff, which can all have different positionings, responsibilities, and access to opportunities that both exacerbate and reproduce social and institutional inequities (Read & Leathwood, 2018). Academia was founded on patriarchal, imperial, and colonial values that worked to construct and maintain gendered roles and regulations, which have been proposed to disadvantage women (Blackburn, 2017). This is based on the persistence and maintenance of gendered processes and structures which can be influenced by heteronormative practices, that are partly ascribed to the construction and operation of the academic institution that works to attribute and legitimise neutrality to these particular processes (Blackburn, 2017; Göktürka & Tülübaş, 2021). These institutional, gendered processes have been suggested as invisible to most academics as they are based on knowledge and belief systems that work to explain and justify current patriarchal and heteronormative practices (Cumings Mansfield et al., 2014). Justifying the current practices maintains how academia operates, to inform the academics' view of "the way that things exist" (Bomert & Leinfellner, 2017, p. 108).

Women academics are considered a minoritised group that experience disadvantage in the academic setting based on their gender. Historically, women have been underrepresented in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM) within higher education. Globally, women comprise 53% of PhD university graduates and early-career academics, however, only occupy 15% of senior academic positions (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2021). This can be compounded by the influence of gendered identities, governance, power differentials, and the broader academic context, on the experiences, expectations, and roles of women academics. While women's representation in higher education, and the work force, has significantly improved over time, the representation of women in STEMM fields is still a prevalent issue that has received increasing attention among researchers

and policymakers (Nash & Moore, 2019; SAGE, 2020). Additionally, many gendered inequities still exist between men and women in many key STEM occupations, institutions, and industries (e.g., working in higher education; SAGE, 2020). This can impact how women identify within the academic, and personal, context.

### **5.3.1 *The Academic Identity***

The academic identity is the view of oneself, embedded within the norms, values, and beliefs that encapsulate discipline-based work structures and govern how individuals engage in academic work (Gaus & Hall, 2015). The identity formation process is complex; identities evolve over time and can be tested, adopted, and refined throughout one's academic career (Gaus & Hall, 2015). Women academics receive conflicting messages about academic role expectations that compete with their identities, and attempts are made to incorporate these identities with changes in academia (Zhao & Jones, 2017). This is compounded by the pressure to act in accordance with normative standards, and to obscure any aspects perceived to be of little value to the institution (Esnard et al., 2017). The conceptualisation of an academic identity can also be influenced by tensions in balancing personal and institutional interests, such as women balancing multiple roles (e.g., being a teacher, researcher, advocate, mentor), working harder to be recognised for academic achievements, the self-perceived ability to engage in making systemic changes in academia, and the pressure to be the 'ideal worker' (Esnard et al., 2017).

### **5.3.2 *Tensions in Women's Academic Identities and Experiences***

Women academics are influenced in higher education, not only by the neoliberal qualities of globalisation that all academics experience (e.g., the construction of being a product providing a service to students, emphasising marketable knowledge and research skills, having a lack of agency; Adam, 2012), but additionally, by the exacerbation of these qualities with the responsibilities that women are forced to complete based on gendered expectations. Women academics have also been suggested to experience the "proverbial trinity of faculty roles" to varying degrees, for example, having to engage in teaching, service, and research responsibilities (Reybold & Alamia, 2008, p. 108). How the women academics engage, and to what extent they engage, in these roles depends on the

positioning of the woman within the higher education institution. This is further compounded for women academics by the balancing of home, familial, and caring responsibilities with the academic role (Zhao & Jones, 2017), where, in comparison to men, women can be subjected to higher expectations from other individuals in their lives, academic or otherwise (Green & Myatt, 2011). It has been suggested that, while balancing outside personal responsibilities, women academics are expected to generate revenue and capital for the higher education institution and meet the research performance targets to appear favourable within, and maintain the functioning of, the setting (Connell, 2013). There also appear to be conflicts for women in academia between conducting 'good research' (enjoying the process of the work, fostering motivation, achievement, self-expression, creativity, and self-interest), and what it means to be a 'good researcher' (increasing research outputs and conforming to ideals that meet the goals and needs of the university, such as applying for, and receiving grants, publications in high impact journals, and citations) in STEMM fields (Kachchaf et al., 2015). Where the discrepancy lies is how women academics are expected to engage in teaching and service roles to a greater extent than male academics, who are presumed to be afforded more time to focus on their research responsibilities (Westring et al., 2016). Faculty positions are bound to specific university contexts, as well as specific duties, but the individuals who hold these positions are not (Reybold & Alamia, 2008).

### ***5.3.3 Gender in Academia: The Impact on Women Academics***

Gendered preconceptions, such as the expectation of women performing caring, and service roles, have been noted by women academics. These preconceptions imply that women are natural teachers and administrators (Bryson et al., 2014), yet this may not necessarily be the role that women desire to take on or are best at. Leadership responsibilities, on the other hand, are perceived as masculine; this aligns with the fact that men hold the majority of senior leadership posts in academia (Westring et al., 2016). Furthermore, men are frequently judged on their competence, but women are judged on their likeability (Moss-Racusin et al., 2015; Thompson, 2015). Encouraging women to take up caring and service roles may provide limited opportunities for career development (Denmark and Williams,

2012; Thompson, 2015). These stereotypes limit the types of roles that women academics are expected to take on (Fox, 2013).

When women academics act inconsistently with feminine stereotypes (e.g., not adopting nurturing, pastoral care roles), and consistently with masculine ones (e.g., being self-promoting, or assertive), they acknowledge experiencing negative consequences such as limited opportunities for career development for not aligning with the traditional, expected academic way of being (Williams et al., 2015). Consequently, identity conflicts may be experienced by women between their STEMM workplace and other settings, which can lead to invalidation and conflict in their academic identities (Reybold & Alamia, 2008; Westring et al., 2016). Women's academic identities conflict with messages about academic role expectations, and attempts are made to incorporate these identities with changes in academia (Zhao & Jones, 2017). This is compounded by the pressure to act in accordance with normative standards, and to obscure any aspects perceived to be of little value to the institution (Esnard et al., 2017). As such, there appear to be significant impacts on women academics' self-perception, and perspective of how others see them, in relation to their work performance and productivity (Thompson, 2015).

Additionally, if women engage with roles and identities outside of academia, there is a perception that their competency and commitment to the academic setting will be reduced or threatened (Macoun & Miller, 2014; Williams et al., 2015). Further, women who balance work with other commitments, roles, and competing identities (for example, but not exclusive to, motherhood and/or caring roles) are perceived by their colleagues as stretching themselves too thin (Knights & Clarke, 2014; Macoun & Miller, 2014). Comparatively, men are celebrated for their attempts at balancing the work and home life and are viewed by other academics as more responsible and accountable than their women counterparts (Dubois-Shaik & Fusulier, 2017). It appears that men do not face the same bind or negative consequences from occupying multiple roles in the academic setting (Foschi, 2000). Comparatively, it has been suggested that women must work harder to have their contributions and achievements recognised both inside, and outside of, academia (Knights & Clarke, 2014). These tensions appear to be further enhanced by the complexities of navigating the broader higher education research context, which

has been proposed to contribute to the challenges experienced by women in STEMM, with a focus on the increasing pressure to be productive compounding with the tensions surrounding the amount of time available to balance with one's other commitments (e.g., teaching, service tasks, mentoring, familial and/or caring responsibilities; Saunders, 2007). Overall, these changes have called into question how the operation of the academic system impacts on women academic's identity formation.

#### **5.3.4 *The 'So What': Why Is This Important?***

Despite the global importance of increasing the representation of women academics in STEMM, there is still no review to date of studies in the global literature focused on identifying as a woman academic within the higher education institution. Without a clear understanding of how academic identities can be conceptualised for women academics, and additionally, what influences this conceptualisation, improving the representation of women in STEMM, as well as how they identify, will be difficult. Therefore, adopting a social constructionist, critical perspective, the first aim of this study is to review the research that has been conducted on women's academic identities and experiences worldwide. Additionally, while we do not contest the literature is abundant with research on the academic setting, and women's experiences and identities within it, what is presented is research influenced by the privileged way of being and doing in academia (Smith, 1999). Knowledge systems constructed in academia influence the questions that are asked and the ways in which research is conducted (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). Certain knowledge and ways of being are viewed as common sense. This leads us to question what is influencing the conceptualisation of women's academic identity, how women experience and navigate academia, as well as how privileged knowledge systems and ways of being can be challenged. Therefore, the second aim of this narrative review is to critique the chosen studies to explore how ways of being and doing currently exist in academia.

## 5.4 Method

### 5.4.1 Research Design

The narrative review used a synthesis process, embedded within a qualitative research design. As the research team, we take a critical theoretical perspective, embedded within the epistemology of social constructionism. Social constructionism asserts the existence of multiple realities, and through exploring these realities, social rules and norms that govern the world can be identified (Gergen, 1985). The critical theoretical perspective guiding our epistemology identifies dominant societal values and considers their influence on certain groups of individuals (Teo, 2015). This critical deconstruction allows for dominant values, and the institutions that may enforce them (e.g., academic settings) to be critiqued and challenged.

### 5.4.2 Researcher Positionality

The research team consisted of three academics (MP as the doctoral student, and two supervisors [PD and EC]). Two members of the team currently work in academia, and one has experience working in academia, but now works within a professional, clinical psychology context. We acknowledge that academia is a setting that consists of contextual systemic inequities. We come from the discipline of psychology, and all share an interest in exploring gendered experiences through research. MP identifies as an Anglo-Australian, Cis-gender male, within the LGBTIQ+ identity, a PhD candidate, and an early-career academic in a sessional teaching role. PD identifies as a White-Australian coloniser, Cis-gender female, mother and carer with invisible chronic illness, middle-career academic in a tenured teaching-research role. EC identifies as an Anglo-Australian, Cis-gender female, early-career academic in an adjunct role, and a practicing psychologist.

### 5.4.3 Procedure

The narrative review was conducted in six steps (Lachal et al., 2017): **1) Defining the criteria** entailed systematically reviewing the extant literature to define the research questions and relevant inclusion and exclusion criteria; **2) Study selection** involved exploring the extant literature, defining the search terms and databases, and deciding on the studies to be used; **3) Quality assessment** used the

Critical Appraisal Skill Program (CASP; Noyes et al., 2015) to determine whether the chosen studies were of sufficient quality; **4) Data extraction and presentation** provided details on the aim, context, demographic information, methods of data collection, analyses, and findings of the selected studies; **5) Data synthesis** entailed the synthesis of findings of the selected studies; and **6) Writing up** reviewed the synthesis findings, and reflected on the review process to provide critiques and future suggestions.

#### **5.4.3.1 Defining the Criteria and Study Selection.**

The data selection phase was conducted from July 2018 to February 2019. The initial literature search enabled the identification of search terms. Databases were electronically searched. Table 1 and 2 provides the detailed search strategy. Table 3 provides the reader with information on the sampling strategy, the type of study conducted, the approaches to sampling, the year range of the search, any limits, inclusions and exclusions, the terms used, and the databases searched (embedded in the STARLITE principles).

**Table 1***Web Search Process for Study Selection*

| <b>Databases</b>     | <b>Free-text term<br/>keywords</b> | <b>Thesaurus terms<br/>keywords</b> | <b>References</b> |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Elsevier             | 37                                 | 25                                  | 178               |
| Other                | 37                                 | 18                                  | 46                |
| OVID PsycARTICLES    | 37                                 | 25                                  | 44                |
| ProQuest             | 37                                 | 25                                  | 490               |
| PubMed               | 37                                 | 19                                  | 11                |
| SAGE                 | 37                                 | 25                                  | 627               |
| Scopus               | 37                                 | 19                                  | 13                |
| Springer             | 37                                 | 25                                  | 226               |
| Taylor & Francis     | 37                                 | 25                                  | 209               |
| Wiley Online Library | 37                                 | 25                                  | 208               |
| <b>TOTAL</b>         | -                                  | -                                   | <b>2052</b>       |

**Table 2***Search Terms Used for Study Selection*

|   |
|---|
| ((‘academic identity’) OR (‘academic identities’) OR (‘identity’) OR (‘identities’) OR (‘professional identity’) OR (‘teacher identity’) OR (‘academic experience’) OR (‘academic experiences’) OR (‘experience’) OR (‘experiences’) OR (‘academia’) OR (‘academe’) OR (‘academic’) OR (‘faculty’) OR (‘staff’) OR (‘neoliberal’) OR (‘neoliberalism’) OR (‘neoliberalist’) OR (‘power’) OR (‘governance’)) |
| AND   |
| ((‘women’) OR (‘female’) OR (‘women’s’) OR (‘female’s’) OR (‘young’) OR (‘young women’) OR (‘young female’) OR (‘young academic’) OR (‘older’) OR (‘older women’) OR (‘older female’) OR (‘older academic’) OR (‘adult’))   |
| AND   |
| ((‘career’) OR (‘early career’) OR (‘mid career’) OR (‘late career’) OR (‘clinical’) OR (‘profession’) OR (‘professional’) OR (‘teaching’) OR (‘research’) OR (‘sessional’) OR (‘teaching and research’) OR (‘psychology’) OR (‘higher education’) OR (‘STEMM’))  |
| AND   |
| ((‘qualitative’) OR (‘qualitative research’) OR (‘qualitative methodology’) OR (‘qualitative methodology research’) OR (‘qualitative method’) OR (‘qualitative study’) OR (‘narrative review’) OR (‘narrative synthesis’) OR (‘thematic synthesis’) OR (‘thematic analysis’) OR (‘thematic’) OR (‘themes’) OR (‘interviews’) OR (‘semi-structured’) OR (‘semi-structured interviews’) OR (‘focus groups’))  |

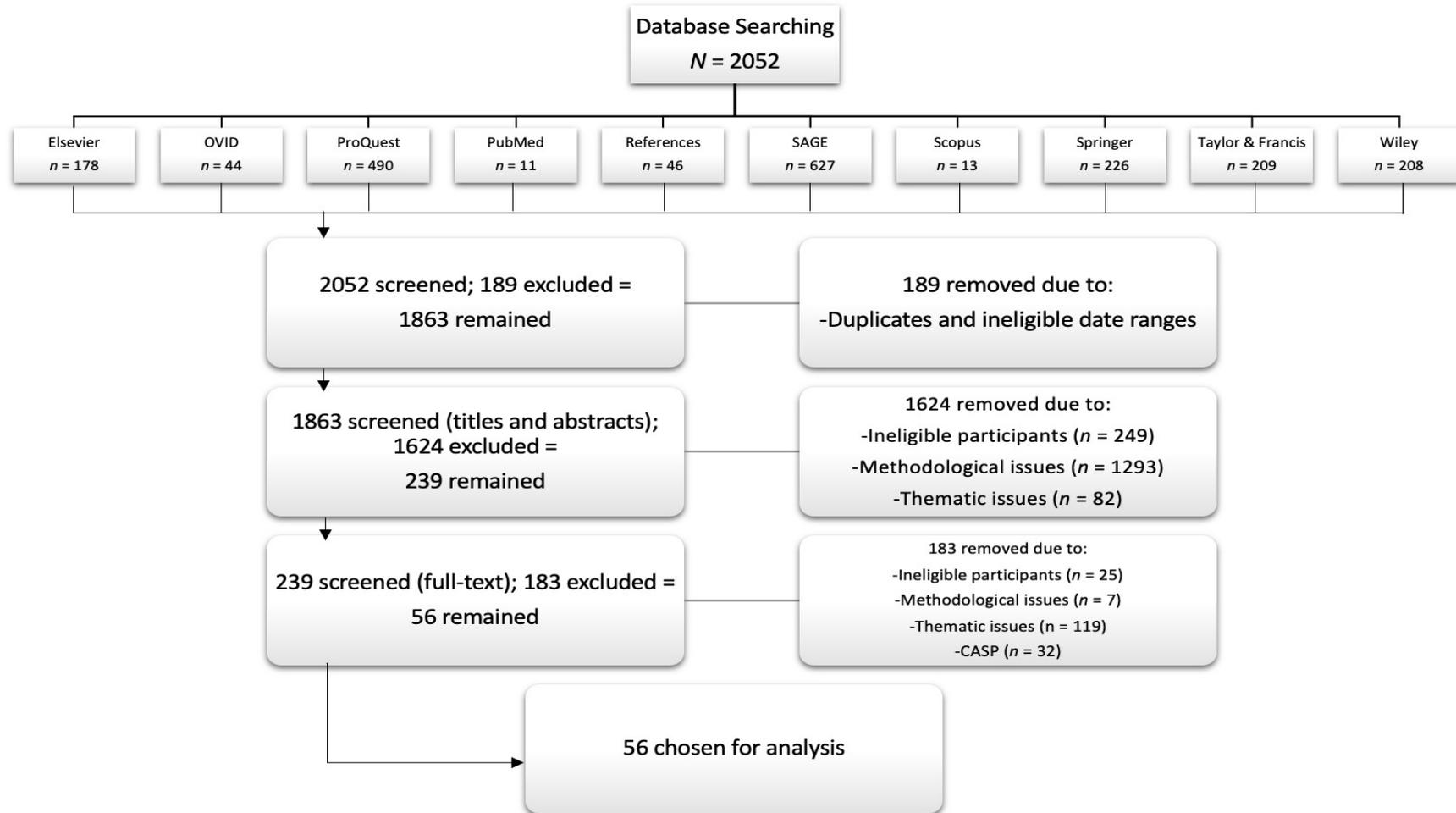
**Table 3***STARLITE Principles of Study Selection*

| # | Criteria                  | Result  |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| S | Sampling strategy         | Comprehensive.  |
| T | Type of study             | Fully reported (any kind of qualitative study).   |
| A | Approaches                | Electronic and citation snowballing.  |
| R | Range of years            | Fully reported 01-2010 until 02-2019. This timeframe marks a period where perspectives are embedded in the globalisation of academia, which has influenced the experiences and identities of academics (Peck et al., 2018).   |
| L | Limits                    | Language (English).   |
| I | Inclusions and exclusions | Inclusions (explore the conceptualisation of women's academic identities, and their experiences within academia. Studies were original qualitative research papers, published within peer-reviewed journals, interviewed women working within academia, occupying a range of roles [e.g., sessional, teaching, research, and teaching and research academics], and career stages [e.g., early, mid, and late career]. Some studies with men and women were also included). Exclusions (quantitative or mixed method studies were excluded, as conducting a thematic synthesis calls for purely qualitative studies. Furthermore, studies that focused on the experiences and identities of male academics, and, dissertations, theses, review articles, or book chapters that were not published original research subjected to peer review were excluded). |
| T | Terms used                | See Table 2 for the terms used.   |
| E | Electronic sources        | Elsevier, Other, OVID PsychARTICLES, ProQuest, PubMed, SAGE, Scopus, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Wiley & Sons.  |

2052 studies were retrieved, 1863 of which remained after the removal of duplicates and those outside the date range. MP screened the titles and abstracts. If the abstract was not sufficient to understand the rationale of the study, then the full text was read. Discussions within the research team (MP, PD, and EC) assisted with clarity surrounding the types of studies included, the search terms and databases used, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the analytical framework adopted. MP performed a second selection, excluding studies with ineligible participants, methodological issues (i.e., were purely quantitative studies, or mixed methods in nature), and thematic issues (i.e., the findings or context of the research were not specific to the topic under investigation), and 239 studies remained. MP then reviewed the full text of 239 studies and further decisions were made to exclude 183 of the 239 studies (151 based on further methodological and thematic review, and 32 based on the CASP). 56 studies remained which were included as the final selection (2.73% of the original studies screened). For clarity, the selection process is presented in a flow chart (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

## Study Selection Process



#### 5.4.3.2 Quality Assessment.

The CASP assessed the quality of the studies chosen for potential review (Noyes et al., 2015; Tong et al., 2012). A preliminary evaluation of five studies was performed to ensure the appraisal tool was appropriate, and all authors appraised a further subset (24 studies) independently. The inter-rater agreement for the quality of the subset of articles was fair at 83.3% (Tong et al., 2012). All authors discussed their findings and arrived at a consensus through discussion of the CASP criteria, agreeing on the studies to be excluded based on poor quality. The CASP was completed for 88 studies, excluding a further 32 studies based on poor quality. Table 4 provides a brief summary of the CASP.

The following is a detailed summary of the qualities of the 88 studies reviewed with the CASP. The authors provided explicit statements of their research aims/questions, accompanied by relevant contextual information (e.g., exploring the context experienced, or the specific issues for women in academia) that constructed the research rationale ( $N = 79$ ). The qualitative methodology was appropriate for addressing the research aims provided ( $N = 83$ ). Information was provided to assess the appropriateness of the research design (e.g., exploring the theoretical frameworks, data collection, and analysis methods;  $N = 63$ ). Content provided suggested that participants were an appropriate sample for their study, which was linked to the study rationale ( $N = 70$ ). The appropriateness of the data collection method was evident ( $N = 73$ ); most studies used semi-structured interviewing ( $N = 63$ ), although other methods were identified (e.g., diary entries [ $N = 5$ ], narratives [ $N = 13$ ], and observational data [ $N = 8$ ]). Content stating how many interviews were conducted ( $N = 74$ ), the duration of the interviews ( $N = 57$ ), and a detailed exploration of the analytical method was evident ( $N = 52$ ). Findings were relevant, detailed, and sufficiently supported by multiple participants ( $N = 72$ ). Higher quality studies outlined the use of rigour and credibility strategies (e.g., triangulation of sources, researchers, respondent validation, peer coding;  $N = 49$ ). Relevant literature was integrated to support the findings, and the studies referred to logical future research directions (i.e., rather than providing a generalist claim [e.g., more interviews need to be conducted;  $N = 66$ ]). Overall, the studies were novel and valuable to the field of knowledge.

**Table 4***Summary of the CASP (Noyes et al., 2015; Tong et al., 2012)*

| <b>Criteria</b>   | <b>Yes<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>Can't</b> | <b>Tell<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>No<sup>1</sup></b> | <b>Incomplete<sup>1</sup></b> |
|---|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Clear Statement of Aims?                                  | 79                     | 7            |                         | 0                     | 2                             |
| Qualitative Methodology Appropriate?                      | 83                     | 3            |                         | 0                     | 2                             |
| Research Design Appropriate?                              | 63                     | 16           |                         | 1                     | 8                             |
| Recruitment Strategy Appropriate?                         | 70                     | 6            |                         | 4                     | 8                             |
| Data Collection Appropriate?                              | 75                     | 4            |                         | 1                     | 8                             |
| Consideration of Researcher and Participant Relationship? | 30                     | 11           |                         | 39                    | 8                             |
| Consideration of Ethical Issues?                          | 33                     | 12           |                         | 35                    | 8                             |
| Rigorous Data Analysis?                                   | 49                     | 27           |                         | 4                     | 8                             |
| Clear Statement of Findings?                              | 72                     | 8            |                         | 0                     | 8                             |
| Is the research valuable?                                 | 66                     | 13           |                         | 1                     | 8                             |

<sup>1</sup> Number of studies = 88.

#### **5.4.3.3 Data Extraction and Presentation.**

The main characteristics of the reviewed studies, including the aim, location, sample size, age range of participants, data collection and analytical methods used, and findings of the selected studies, were extracted, and are summarised in a supplementary material table (see Appendix D).

#### **5.4.3.4 Thematic Synthesis Data Analysis.**

Thematic synthesis was conducted on the final 56 studies using Thomas and Harden's (2008) five steps. **1) Data familiarisation** entailed a careful active reading and re-reading of each study, extracting the characteristics and findings of each study. The intention is to appraise, familiarise, identify, extract, record, organise, compare, relate, map, stimulate, and verify, to collate a synthesisable account of the studies. **2) Descriptive theme development** involved the line-by-line extraction of codes from the entirety of the manuscripts, relevant to the review objectives. **3) Data grouping** entailed comparing the descriptive codes, ensuring they translated across the studies to match codes from one article to another, ensuring the codes were representative of the overall data, **4) Analytical theme development** involved interpreting the descriptive codes into higher-order themes, which required going beyond the original content of the studies. Finally, **5) Writing up** entailed articulating the findings, with accompanying commentary, critique, and recommendations.

### **5.5 Thematic Synthesis Findings**

Thematic synthesis generated four themes relating to women's experiences and identity conceptualisation in academia – 1) You Better Work! The Organisational Culture of Academia, 2) Women's Work Versus Academic Work: Gendered Experiences in Academia, 3) The Struggle: Shifting Between the 'Personal' and the 'Professional' Identity, and 4) Strategies and Support to Navigate the Academic System.

#### **5.5.1 *You Better Work! The Organisational Culture of Academia***

Some participants described the organisational culture of academia as research-driven and competitive, influencing how they engaged in academic and professional work (Van Lankveld et al., 2017). Academic norms, values, and

behaviours were perceived as guided by the majority demographic (i.e., white, cis-gender, heterosexual, male academics; Wright et al., 2017) with the expectation that academics adhere to the guidelines set out by the neoliberal episteme (Harris et al., 2017; Yaacoub, 2011). As such, some participants suggested the academic context systematically disadvantages women based on these expectations (Leyerzapf et al., 2018; Settles et al., 2018; Zhao & Jones, 2017).

A number of participants suggested neoliberalism has influenced academia by the proliferation of market-based principles (Gaus & Hall, 2015; Wright et al., 2017). For example, participants perceived themselves cast as “...intellectual actors...” within an economised education system, compelling them to behave in a market-driven manner that met the expectations of their institution, and the government (Gaus & Hall, 2015, p. 666). These market-driven expectations were bounded in the lexicon of “accountability, efficiency, performativity, and quality assurance”, reflective of a corporate style of academic governance (Gaus & Hall, 2015, p. 666; Yaacoub, 2011).

Participants in the reviewed studies outlined how they acted according to prescribed role responsibilities, expressing neoliberal academia emphasises the importance of conducting research over other activities (e.g., teaching; Esnard et al., 2017; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017). Some participants reported they did not have enough time to devote to research-related tasks given the myriad of other academic (e.g., teaching, service) and personal (e.g., parenthood) demands (Harris et al., 2017; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2017). This ‘juggling’ of multiple demands, for various participants, compounded the difficulties surrounding their capacity to engage in, and prioritise research (Alwazzan & Rees, 2016; Wright et al., 2017).

Tensions arise between what the institution perceives as “good research” compared to an academic’s individual interests (Park & Schallert, 2018, p. 6). Some participants described feeling disempowered when asked to conduct research outside their field of interest (Amon, 2017; Carra et al., 2017). With the rise in value attributed to research and little value attached to teaching, some studies explained the complexities in executing these roles (Arar, 2018; Van Lankveld et al., 2017). For example, some participants outlined that the institution expected they engage in all

responsibilities of their roles to the higher neoliberal standard (regardless of the value attached to the role; Arasa & Calvert, 2013; Beard & Julion, 2016).

Various participants expressed service roles (e.g., committee membership, mentoring students) were the least valued within academia and were perceived by academics as burdensome in terms of expended time and effort (Hart, 2016; Settles et al., 2018; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2015). Some participants also felt obligated to complete these tasks (Hart, 2016; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2015), and suggested service roles were frequently allocated to women (Hart, 2016; O'Shaughnessy & Burnes, 2016). Participants questioned the value of service tasks that did not contribute to academic promotion but acknowledged service tasks were necessary to the functioning of neoliberal academia (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012; Mabokela & Mlambo, 2015).

### **5.5.2 Women's Work Versus Academic Work: Gendered Experiences in Academia**

It was suggested that the influence of neoliberalism on academia was the "*new sexism*", implying women were allocated specific roles that limited their career progression (Marine & Aleman, 2018, p. 234). Additionally, studies suggested women were underrepresented within academia, and that they might be appointed in a tokenistic manner to meet the quota of women's representation (Dickens & Chavez, 2018; Smith & Gayles, 2018). The inequities within women's academic experience were more likely to be identified by women, rather than men (who may not be as conscious of the inequality), which some participants suggested can maintain the subordination of women within academia (Gonsalves, 2018; Rhoads & Gu, 2012; Settles et al., 2018).

Relatedly, participants in the reviewed studies engaged in gendered roles in a prescribed manner, evident in the notion of 'women's work', consisting of mentoring, teaching, and interacting with students (Case & Richley, 2013; Charleston et al., 2014; Lester, 2011), which some felt upheld the stereotypes of traditional feminine roles (e.g., being maternal and emotionally responsive; Alwazzan & Rees, 2016). Participants also suggested reinforcement of the maternal stereotype through being the 'go to' when listening to students' personal issues, and issues relating to 'minorities' (with the normative assumption that one 'minority' understands the experiences of all; Settles et al., 2018; Wright et al.,

2017). The pressure to perform in these additional roles was evident where various participants felt overburdened and had to give up other roles of personal importance (Drame et al., 2012; Marine & Aleman, 2018).

In some studies, participants expressed that they were not taken seriously by their academic colleagues (Nixon, 2017) with their perspectives viewed of lesser status compared to men (Trahar, 2011). The acceptance and integration of ideas offered by men, compared to the disregarding of women's ideas left some participants feeling excluded, incompetent, and questioning their self-perception as an academic (Dickens & Chavez, 2018; Zhao & Jones, 2017). Various studies suggested that women academics had to continually prove their academic competency, fight to retain their employment, and work harder to build legitimacy and gain respect from those in leadership (Arar, 2018; Rogers, 2017). Further, some participants note their response to these experiences (e.g., engaging in self-blame and criticism, viewing themselves as the 'problem') can leave the source of the discrimination unaddressed (Charleston et al., 2014; Nixon, 2017; Trepal & Stinchfield, 2011).

Participants acknowledged parenting responsibilities were confounded by societal gendered roles (e.g., colleagues assuming participants would stay home to care for their children), viewed to slow the progression of women's academic careers (Martsin, 2018; Trepal et al., 2014). Some participants also experienced anxiety about challenging gendered parenting roles (e.g., having children and returning to work), expecting it to affect their colleagues' perceptions of them (Beddoes & Pawley, 2014). Participants in the reviewed studies assumed academics thought women worked outside of working hours with other commitments, such as family responsibilities and parenting (Levin et al., 2014; O'Shaughnessy & Burnes, 2016). Finally, some participants articulated that their colleagues viewed parenthood as a choice, and that they should accept any subsequent consequences from this identity on their career (Arasa & Calvert, 2013; O'Shaughnessy & Burnes, 2016).

### ***5.5.3 The Struggle: Shifting Between the 'Personal' and the 'Professional' Identity***

Various studies suggested tensions in the conceptualisation of personal versus professional identities (Alwazzan & Rees, 2016; Hurst, 2010; Levin et al., 2013). Some participants acknowledged their personal identities related to age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, parenthood, and/or being a spouse (Alwazzan & Rees, 2016; Hurst, 2010). In comparison, other participants identified their professional identities being informed by engaging in leadership, managerialism, research, teaching, clinical work, and/or institutional roles (Alwazzan & Rees, 2016; Hurst, 2010). Participants suggested having to make sense of their experiences, positions, and perspectives to understand what was seen as 'valued' identities within their occupied contexts (Elkington & Lawrence, 2012; Hurst, 2010; Levin et al., 2013).

Participants in the reviewed studies proposed the institution viewed the personal and professional identities as incompatible, placing a higher value on the professional role (Harding et al., 2010; Zhao & Jones, 2017). Participants then outlined how the professional identity was reinforced by neoliberal norms of professionalism, and as such, the individual could retain esteem as a member of the institution to the detriment of personal aspects of identity (Harding et al., 2010; Kolade, 2016). The emphasis of the neoliberal professional identity in academia was suggested by some participants to reproduce problematic dominant practices (e.g., putting the institutional needs first, and not questioning these ideals) which can reinforce the acceptability of enacted behaviours (Harding et al., 2010; Kolade, 2016).

Various participants explained the neoliberal 'ideal' academic completes all organisational tasks, places work before personal responsibilities, has minimal health-related issues, meets academic performance requirements, and does not question the neoliberal standards (Bennett et al., 2016; Kachchaf et al., 2015). As such, these participants expressed the pressure to meet these expectations (Bennett et al., 2016), and acknowledged few academics achieve this 'ideal' as the standards are perceived as subjective, fluid, constantly changing, and impossible to achieve (Esnard et al., 2017; Harding et al., 2010). Participants suggested achieving this standard appeared more of a tension for those groups less favoured (Case &

Richley, 2013) as they are viewed by the institution as wanting to challenge the norms that have disadvantaged them (Leyerzapf et al., 2018).

Some participants attempted to combine their personal and professional identities, which involved success and satisfaction in personal and professional relationships, a healthy work-life integration, and a sense of control over their identities (McCutcheon & Morrison, 2018; Pololi & Jones, 2010). Exercising agency both personally and professionally allowed for these participants to find meaning in their work (Amon, 2017), but a tension in this agency was identified. While participants suggested a 'choice' in what they valued within the personal and professional domains, they also suggested consequences of putting personal responsibilities before their professional roles, which paradoxically denoted 'a lack of choice' (Amon, 2017; Esnard et al., 2017). Participants in the reviewed studies expressed changing identities can be influenced by pressures experienced within neoliberal academia (e.g., putting work-related roles before personal roles; Kachchaf et al., 2015; Levin et al., 2013); as such, the discourse surrounding this shift reflected a challenging experience for them (Dickens & Chavez, 2018; Harding et al., 2010).

#### ***5.5.4 Strategies and Support to Navigate the Academic System***

In the reviewed studies, participants outlined how their family, friends, mentors, and colleagues were important support networks (Gale, 2011; Hacifazlioglu, 2010) indicative to their well-being, success, and value in academia (O'Shaughnessy & Burnes, 2016). However, participants suggested women, especially mothers, were the most supportive, aligning with the stereotyped maternal role (Johnson et al., 2011; Trepal et al., 2014). Relationships with other academics ranged from being natural and genuine, to feeling fragmented and tokenistic in nature (Johnson et al., 2011; Szelenyi et al., 2016). Additionally, the ease of access and quality of these networks differed (Rogers, 2017). Participants outlined the difficulties with the gendered nature of these peer networks (i.e., men drinking together and sharing advice), suggesting that they felt excluded from this support (Nixon, 2017; Rogers, 2017). Exclusion added another burden onto the participants; however, the building of a support network was still suggested as worthwhile to navigate (Johnson et al., 2011; Szelenyi et al., 2016).

The use of particular strategies allowed for some of the participants to cope with the demands of academia, which was framed by the authors of the respective studies as 1) assimilative, and 2) transformative strategies (Ford, 2011; Wheat & Hill, 2016). Assimilative strategies concealed differences between individuals, allowing participants to adapt to normative practices and integrate into academia (Ford, 2011). For example, some participants made changes to their presentation to 'fit in' with the dominant group (e.g., wearing a business jacket and pants [perceived as masculine] compared to a blouse and skirt [perceived as feminine]; Ford, 2011). Additionally, other participants outlined how they remained silent, rather than providing suggestions to change academia (considered effective), rather than speaking up and crossing the well-defined systemic boundaries which resulted in punishment (Hinojosa & Carney, 2016; Mabokela & Mlambo, 2015). In this way, silencing allowed for protection against potential ramifications and was used as a strategy by some participants to gain acceptance in the academic setting (Hinojosa & Carney, 2016).

Transformative strategies allowed a few participants to address the perpetuation of gendered standards and renegotiate the cultural and social norms that were embedded within academia (Ford, 2011; Wheat & Hill, 2016). For example, instead of engaging in unpaid domestic duties themselves, some participants renegotiated their duties to the extended family or domestic help which allowed for them to pursue other professional interests (Mabokela & Mlambo, 2015). Further, various participants suggested needing to pragmatically prioritise what was important to engage in at any given time (e.g., engaging in academic tasks at work, and looking after the family and the household at home; O'Shaughnessy & Burnes, 2016; Wheat & Hill, 2016). Participants suggested this provided them with more time to engage in other tasks and responsibilities (Mabokela & Mlambo, 2015; O'Shaughnessy & Burnes, 2016).

## **5.6 Discussion**

Our qualitative synthesis of 56 studies aimed to review the research that had been conducted on women's academic identities and experiences worldwide and critique the chosen studies to explore how ways of being and doing currently exist in academia. The findings suggest that being accountable, efficient, and

engaging in quality work is the ideal that women are encouraged to strive for within academia. Further, it appears that women experience unique complexities and tensions in striving for this ideal. To navigate academia, it appears that some women feel pressured to prioritise the professional identity over the personal. Finally, support networks (e.g., family, peers, and colleagues) and useful strategies were identified as crucial to the progression of women in academia. Reviewing the research that has been conducted has illuminated how dominant ways of being and doing exist in academia and how this has shaped the research conducted in this area. It is important to consider and critique these practices, to allow for suggestions of future research practices to come to light.

### **5.6.1 *The Homogenisation of Women Academics***

Higher education operates through neoliberal practices that promote a singular understanding of what it means to be an '*academic*' (Smith, 1999). In the context of academic identity, the literature perpetuated the gender binary and inferred there was '*one type of woman*' and '*one type of man*' within academia. Additionally, the neoliberal episteme governed the academics in terms of their ways of being and doing and underpinned the singular '*ideal*' standard that was perpetuated (Peck et al., 2018). The one '*ideal*' standard assumes everyone has the same experience within their identities (Beddoes & Pawley, 2014). This assumption lacks an acknowledgement of intersectionality, which can result in the framing of women and their identities as one-dimensional (Quiddington, 2010). The construction of women as a homogenous group who share a singular understanding and experience of the academic role, rather than as a diversity of individuals and identities that can be forever changing, can fail to integrate multiple intersectional perspectives and knowledge systems that may not be privileged in academia (Williams et al., 2015).

Within the literature base exploring women's identities, an example focused on the motherhood identity, constructed by the reviewed studies as a dominant socio-cultural expectation, and '*natural*' role for women. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2016) focused on the motherhood identity being common for most women to experience in academia, to the neglect of discussing other identities. Although acknowledging motherhood is important, the focus on one element of identity (to

the exclusion of others) can serve to erase women's multiple identities (academic, professional, or otherwise). Dimensions of identity obscured by a lack of intersectional perspectives can include age, ethnicity, abilities, sexualities, and cultural and social class locations (Quiddington, 2010). Martsin (2018) suggested research that fails to acknowledge the experiences associated with these dimensions can reproduce, rather than dismantle the neoliberal episteme within academia. Furthermore, when agitating for change, it is evident that particular positionalities can infer certain privileges compared to others, and as such, some individuals may be required to part with some of their power, privilege, and decision-making capacity. In this case, some of these individuals may be women, giving up their power for the good of the collective, and to assist in setting conditions in academia that reflect a fair and equitable experience for all. Finally, the demographics of the participants in the reviewed studies were not reported in a format that identified the standpoint of whom was speaking. Missing the intersectional nature of experiences and identities does not recognise the multiple dimensions of identity and treats categories as homogenous and fixed in nature (Quiddington, 2010).

### **5.6.2 Grounded in Gender-Normative Assumptions**

The ways in which research questions were asked within the reviewed literature appeared influenced by gendered assumptions. For example, it was inferred in Kachchaf et al., (2015) and Martsin (2018) that the experience of women includes caring responsibilities and motherhood as an innate disposition for all women (by generalising the role of motherhood using discourse encompassing "*all women*"). Doing so leaves little room for women who are childfree. Gonsalves (2018) and Hart (2016) explored the influence of gendered assumptions in academia and stated that these assumptions were constructed as normative due to individuals repeated following and unquestioning of such standards. For example, some participants in Harris et al.'s (2017) study suggested the teaching role is primarily occupied by women as it is perceived as easier to balance with other responsibilities, as well as being a stereotypically maternal, caring role. This example appears to perpetuate normative assumptions surrounding women's roles in academia. Such recommendations do not question the status quo and, while they

may not be intended to harm, they can limit the career progression of women academics through reducing their autonomy and maintaining their positioning within the context.

Additionally, within the literature base, some of the women academics revealed tensions between the professional and personal lives of women, as well as the nature of the hierarchical, gendered higher education setting, that were interwoven and complex. Currently, these issues appear to exist and build according to the changing social, political, and workplace culture (Blackburn, 2017). For example, thus far, the literature base proposes that academia maintains traditional workplace norms that appear to conflict with the assumed caring responsibilities of women academics. Tensions arise where women academics then centre their lives on a full-time, life-long occupation, while also balancing their caring responsibilities, to the detriment of other responsibilities and identities. The literature supports this and presents commentary surrounding how these norms coexist with the culture of neoliberalism that emphasises competition and productivity, versus the responsibility of the individual for success and failure in each domain (e.g., Berry, 2008; Webster, 2010).

### **5.6.3 *The Individualistic Focus of Solutions***

Strategies to navigate academia tended to place the individual academic as responsible for resolving institutional issues. For example, in their discussion of effective change strategies in academia, Leyerzapf et al. (2018) suggest needing to “challenge the normalisation practices evident in higher education” but then later suggest “diverse ‘othered’ identities need to adapt to current ‘normal’ practices within academia” (p. 147). Additionally, Hart (2016), Johnson et al. (2011), and Wright et al. (2017) have proposed current solutions to gender inequity in academia assist women in being authoritative, gaining respect, establishing credibility, and maintaining interpersonal academic relationships, however, these solutions emphasise an individualistic focus. We ask the reader to question who is setting the standards by which these solutions are constructed and that suggesting the individual is solely responsible for change is counterintuitive. We argue that placing individual blame de-emphasises reflecting on the neoliberal episteme of academia, and potentially poses resolutions of gender inequity as being ‘*a woman’s issue*’

(evident in Leyerzapf et al., 2018). Focusing the onus of responsibility on one individual, or group of individuals, deflects responsibility from the institution and the system, to the individuals experiencing the issues as being responsible to potentiate change. Recommendations should be recast to critique the institutional cultures women are embedded within, and work to pose new ways of being and subjectivities for all in academia.

When posing new ways of being and subjectivities for all in academia, it is critical that the system, and its ways of being and doing, are examined and critiqued. As such, change that could occur over time within university policies, guidelines, and protocols is important, where the underlying issues surrounding organisational culture, context, office politics, and impact of emotional labour should be considered. Understandably, these changes that are systemic in nature and that problematise the system, are considered easier to acknowledge, but harder to implement (Watzlawick et al., 1974). Practical implications, which, while ideal, would take time to employ within the academic setting, should reflect the creating of cultural change within academic institutions to make the setting workable. Self-care initiatives, guidelines surrounding working hours to limit overworking, expectations surrounding productivity, providing professional and personal development opportunities, building social networks and collaborations, and the reducing of workload to allow for employees to engage in self-care would all be important in re-establishing an academic system that separates the worker from the work, and maintains the importance of care above all else.

#### ***5.6.4 Acknowledging the Past, Changing the Future***

The reviewed literature base focused on legitimising the issue that academia is gendered and disadvantages women, seemingly to convince the academic audience of these inequities. While establishing this understanding is important, this has limited the ability for research to engage in a critical deconstruction of how to address these issues, ensuring the existing conditions for power and inequity exist (Morley, 2014). We suggest a multi-level analysis needs to be conducted, to explore not only the individuals within this setting, but also, examination of the functioning of the academic system itself. To assist with this, there needs to be a shift surrounding how academics view the academic context and environment, as

well as the individuals within it. Academia has historically been exclusionary, patriarchal, imperial, and elitist in nature, and acknowledging how this operates, and proposing how it needs to change, is of importance here. While the 'issue' has been legitimised, the focus should now be on problematising the neoliberal academic system, rather than the women academics.

Further to this, we propose that the focus should shift to a strengths-based perspective, to consider how the STEMM institutional environment can remove the systemic barriers that present academics such as women, and those with diverse identities and perspectives, to engage effectively. Changing the prototype of what it means to be an academic should be achieved when considering the restructuring of the system, to allow for a system that is more inclusive to the multiplicity of ways to be an academic. Additionally, when problematising the system, we need to develop more of an awareness of the practices that currently exist to negatively impact women and minority groups within STEMM. The STEMM environment was perceived in the literature as hostile for women, which led to negative mental and physical health outcomes (Johnson et al., 2011; Szelenyi et al., 2016). As such, developing this awareness means all academics should be educated on why language and discourse is problematic, and to disrupt the taken-for-granted assumptions within academia. This should then allow for all academics to exist in a safe and collaborative environment.

To disrupt these taken-for-granted assumptions relies on an awareness of one's individual practices and ways of doing and being as a STEMM academic. Through the literature base working to legitimise the issue, equality and equity has been suggested as needed within academia. Extending on this, we question how academics acknowledge and suggest how this would be achieved. We call on all faculty members within STEMM to use the findings and critiques within this review as a catalyst, an opportunity, to reflect on their own assumptions, understandings, and commitments to promoting gender equity. As such, to be able to engage in this practice, academics need further opportunities to identify and reflect on their own implicit assumptions, privileges, and biases. These opportunities must be engaged in, maintained, and sustained; transformative change cannot be implemented without this consistency. We need to transform the biases, attitudes, and privileges

of academics more effectively, by engaging in these practices on a consistent and regular basis.

### **5.6.5 *The Romanticism of Resistance***

Finally, within the literature base, women were prompted to resist the status quo, constructed as an aspiration which may appear useful to begin a conversation about how to potentiate change. The literature suggests a limited critical exploration of the consequences for women when engaging in this resistance (Dickens & Chavez, 2018, Kelly & McCann, 2014; Levin et al., 2014). There needs to be an exploration of the potential consequences for women if they choose to engage in resistance (e.g., challenges to career progression, being isolated, excluded, discriminated against). Williams et al. (2015) suggest resistance could perpetuate the positioning of women as a group viewed as differing from the norm who want to change these normative conditions. This could exclude women from the dominant group and limit their ability to progress further (Dickens & Chavez, 2018; Williams et al., 2015).

### **5.6.6 *Strengths and Limitations of the Review***

The design and process of this review provides a unique contribution to the literature base. It is based on a rigorous method that meets the criteria used when synthesising qualitative research (Noyes et al., 2015; Tong et al., 2012) with the systematic review of databases allowing for the large selection of studies to be assessed, based on studies of fair quality. The findings described the experiences of 1230 women, larger than any previous review or meta-analysis in this field known to the authors. The themes presented in the synthesis are evident across the studies, which ensured the content was representative and cohesive of the overall data set. The findings reflect the interpretations of multiple researchers in many contexts (e.g., from different countries, career stages, gendered identities). Triangulation of the data (e.g., taken from women at different career stages and from different specialties) and theoretical concepts (e.g., comparing the findings from multiple studies) adds to the credibility of this review by acknowledging our relationship to the research process, assessing the applicability to the context in which it was conducted.

### **5.6.7 Conclusion**

Our review suggests the neoliberal episteme has had a widespread impact on women's academic experiences and identities embedding a culture which has impacted the career advancement, role opportunities, identities, and overall status of women in academia. Specific attitudes and practices limit the ability for women to achieve a satisfying experience within academia and beyond. If teaching and service roles, and familial care continue to be viewed as women's roles, rather than the work of any person, there will be an ongoing cost to women, science, and society. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that academics suffer to different extents in the current neoliberal context; some more than others. The neoliberal episteme allows for power, order, and discipline to be expressed as definitive aspects in academia. These boundaries leave little room for women academics to negotiate, learn, participate on one's own terms, and to define their personal and professional identities within academia. Future research should adopt a critical, intersectional perspective to focus on problematising the system and assist in dismantling the practices that have perpetuated these problematic conditions (e.g., underrepresentation, discrimination, gendered stereotyping) for women in academia.

### **5.7 Concluding Commentary**

Within this chapter, I provided the manuscript of the first study in my research, which thematically synthesised, reviewed, and critiqued the extant literature base. Within the next chapter, I will describe the process of the remainder of my research studies by discussing the specific methods that were used for Studies Two, Three, and Four of my research.

## **CHAPTER 06: RESEARCH METHODS**

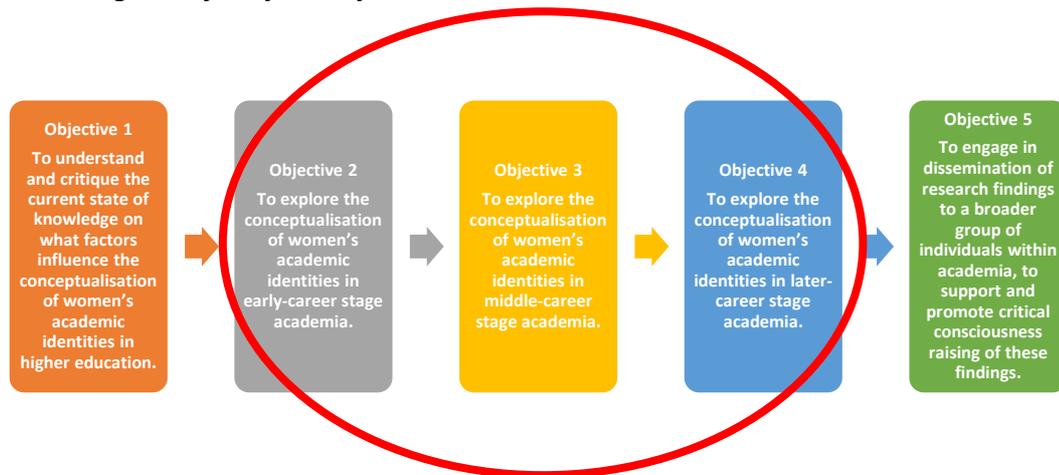
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*When we choose our methods and approaches for a qualitative research project, we are choosing a perspective on the world, and on our data. We are choosing to 'slice' it in a particular way, giving special privilege to the perspective we have chosen to take. We are not ruling out the perspective afforded by an alternative slice, but we are certainly bringing one particular view into the foreground (Michael Larkin, 2015, p. 249).*

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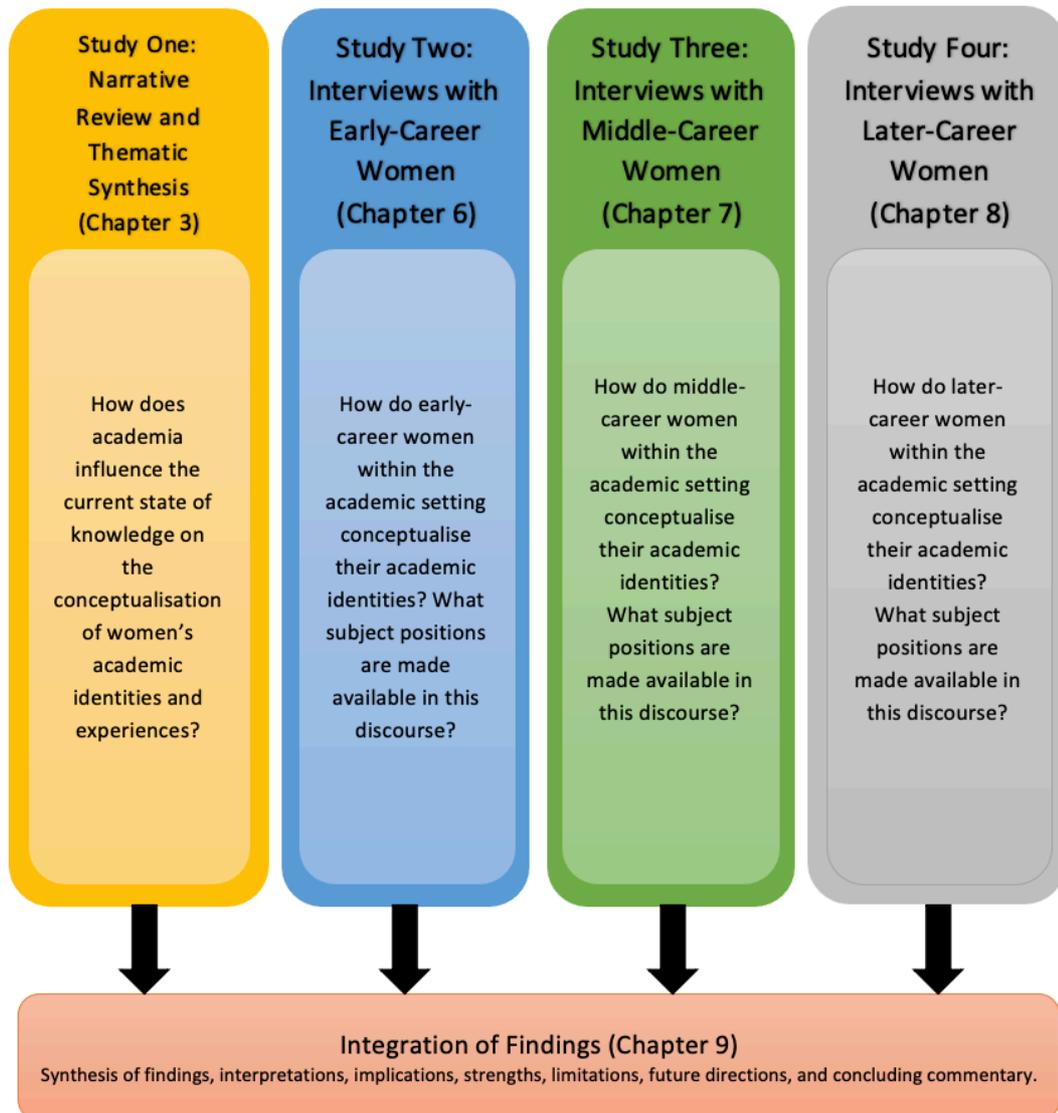
### **6.1 Chapter Overview**

In this chapter, I discuss the particular methods used within Phase Two of my project. The aim of this phase was ***to explore the conceptualisation of academic identities in early, middle, and late-stage academia***, which addresses Objectives Two, Three, and Four of my research project, highlighted in grey, yellow, and blue below in Figure 8. The methods used were to address the research questions, ***'How do women in the Australian academic setting conceptualise their academic identities? What subject positions are made available in the discourse?'***. To assist with the exploratory, cross-sectional, qualitative nature of the research design, the findings from the Narrative Review in Phase One assisted with the direction and interview questioning of Phase Two, but there was also scope for additional meanings to emerge. The questioning used for each career stage in the interviews were constructed to seek further exploration and clarity of the findings from the Narrative Review and assist in the illumination of potentially new findings.

**Figure 8***Flow Diagram of Project Objectives*

## 6.2 The Research Design

My research employed an exploratory, cross-sectional qualitative design to explore how women conceptualise their academic identities and experiences in early-, middle-, and later-career academia (see Figure 9). I adopted a social constructionist epistemological position to explore the academic identities and experiences of women at early, middle, and late career stages of academia. Additionally, I was informed by critical psychology as the theoretical perspective, as well as the philosophy and work of Foucault to assist in guiding my understanding of the research design, analysis, and discussion of the findings. My theoretical positioning can be conceptualised as a Foucauldian informed criticalist as I identify and attend to the ways in which power, discourse, and ways of being operate, and how this can influence how women in academia conceptualise their many identities.

**Figure 9***Summary of the Research Process and Research Questions*

### **6.2.1 Summary of the Study Objectives**

The research began with the conducting of a narrative review (see Chapter Five) to explore how the academic context influences the current state of knowledge on the conceptualisation of women's academic identities and experiences. This employed the qualitative techniques of a narrative synthesis for the overall approach, and a thematic synthesis for the data analysis. By searching for, appraising, and synthesising research evidence, the review allowed for '*what is known*' to be identified, as well as identifying '*what remained unknown*' to illuminate gaps of knowledge surrounding the findings. Additionally, the narrative review informed recommendations for future practice in academia.

The narrative review contributed to the current state of knowledge on this topic, as well as critiqued the design and theoretical underpinnings of the chosen studies. I was able to explore how things existed (i.e., the status quo) and how research has been conducted (e.g., the questions asked, design decisions made, constructs explored) on women's academic identities within academia. This allowed for the identification of common ways of thinking (i.e., the status quo) in academia, as well as acknowledging how the research conducted perpetuated the issues it aimed to deconstruct. The narrative review was informed by the knowledge and philosophy surrounding the critical psychology theoretical perspective.

The use of FDA as the analytic technique informed studies two, three, and four (Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine) and aided the conceptualisation of academic identities for women in academia in three career stages – early, middle, and late. The research design was exploratory and cross-sectional in nature, where recruitment and interviewing took place at the same time but differed in terms of the stage of career that the women academics were positioned at. The reviewing of the extant literature in Study One assisted with informing the foci for the interviews in Studies Two, Three, and Four. The experiences and positioning of women in each career stage differed, based on the changing forms of structure and governance within the Australian higher education context over time (see Chapter Three for an exploration of the history and change in Australian higher education over time; Saunders, 2007). As the interviewing progressed, the interview guides were added to and revised to ensure that a wide variety of experiences were attended to and

explored within the research. The findings from Studies Two, Three, and Four (Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine) provide commentary and discussion surrounding the conceptualisation of women's academic identities and experiences in academia and provides the implications of academic ways of being and doing over time (see Chapter Ten). Recommendations for future practice and ways of being and doing in academia are also informed by these findings.

### **6.3 Setting the Scene: Context Surrounding My Findings**

Within each findings chapter provided, I first provide a glossary exploring the discursive constructions, discourses, and action orientations found within the data set of the specific career stage. More detail is provided when considering the subject positions, practices, and subjectivities following the glossary. The decision to focus on these components of my analysis in detail aligned with the primary objectives of my research, as well as Foucault's description of subject positions aligning with the broad conceptualisation of identity that I provided in Chapter Two. In reference to my research objectives, and Foucault's methodology, I emphasised the importance of considering how women are positioned to navigate academia, and what subject positions are made available to them. Considering this, I found the thematic link between '*positioning*', '*identity*', and '*subjectivity*' important, and as such, the content within each findings chapter focuses on these components.

It is important to note that the discursive constructions, discourses, and action orientations provided in the glossary are explored further within each subject position/identity posed, in relation to how the identities are constructed (implicitly and explicitly), how the identities are spoken about in different ways, as well as how the identities function in higher education. As such, a broad definition of each is provided first, to which I then explore how these components function specifically in each subject position/identity, and what this means in light of what women academics can do, and how they can act, in relation to their subject positions. This also provides commentary in considering how legitimised practices in academia can act to reproduce the discourses which created them.

Additionally, each specific subject position is supported by verbatim quotes from participants' interview transcripts. After each quote, a number has been provided in parentheses. The number represents the participant within the entire

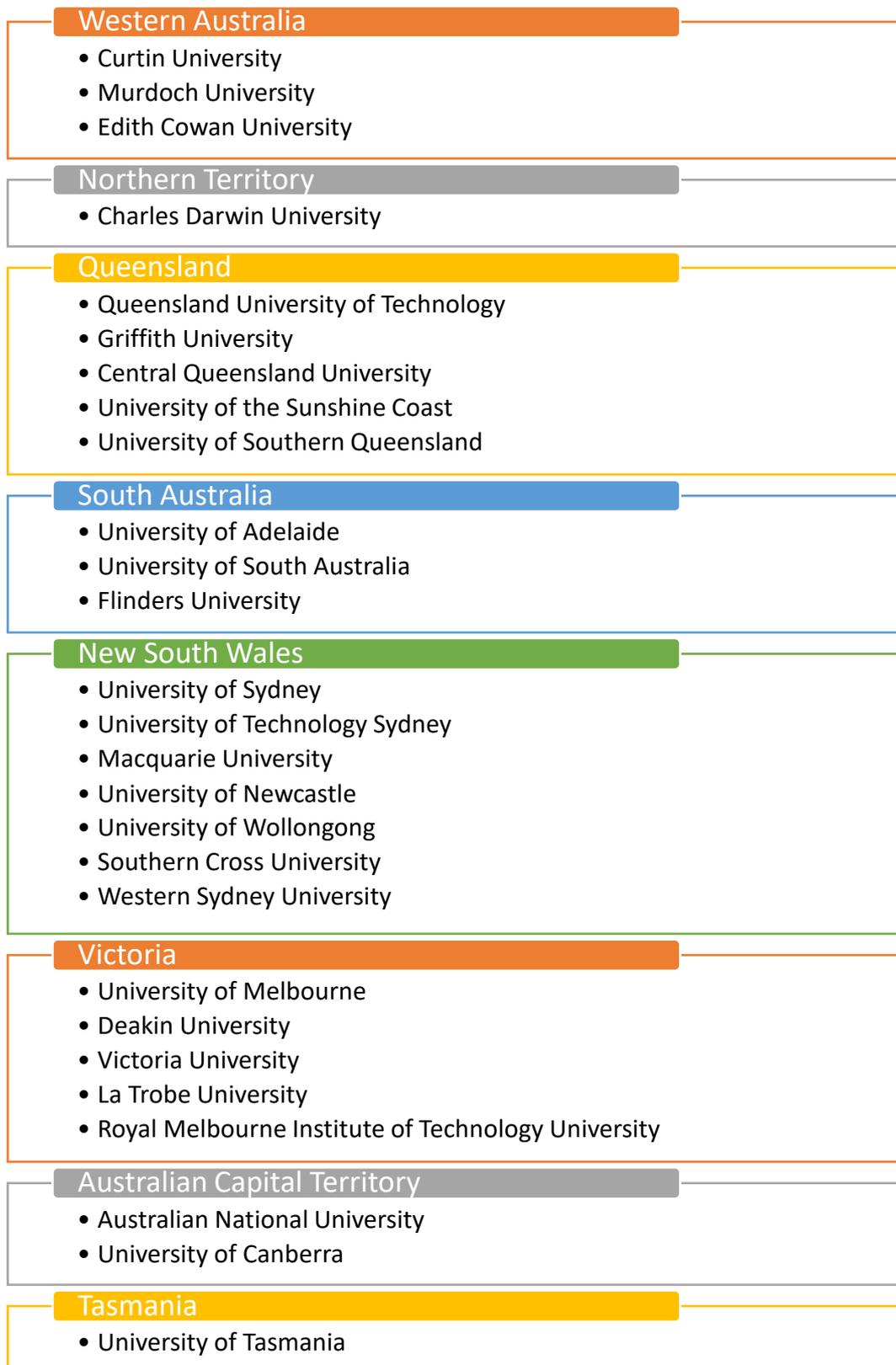
sample of women academics from all career stages. Within each career stage, it is important to recognise that the women do not occupy just one position, and that the subjectivities provided reflect what is made available, or denied, to them throughout their academic experience. As such, participant numbers can repeat across the subject positions offered in each findings chapter. I have engaged in this process to ensure that quotes were drawn from the full sample of women academics. This enhances the representativeness of the discourses for the participants as a group.

#### **6.4 Participants**

Women who worked within STEMM faculties in Australian State and Territory public higher education institutions were recruited for individual interviews. An effort was made to recruit at least one woman from a public higher education institution in each State and Territory within Australia. These women had to self-identify as being sufficiently immersed in the Australian public higher education context to allow them to provide commentary on the topic. Higher education institutions were selected if they were listed on the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, which judges universities on components such as their research record, teaching standards, application, and integration of knowledge to the literature base, and international perspectives (THE World University Rankings, 2018). The Australian institutions contained within this ranking system are provided below in Figure 10. This ranking system is globally recognised, and subjected to independent scrutiny, which is trusted by students, academics, industries, university leaders, and the Australian government (THE World University Rankings, 2018). Private universities or those governed in a manner that differs from public institutions have been removed from this list. For a full list of the 35 universities on this list, see Appendix E.

**Figure 10**

*Australian Universities Within The Times Higher Education World University Rankings*



Using a purposive and targeted sampling approach, I navigated the staff directories of the listed universities and contacted 168 women working in STEM fields via email to invite them to participate in my research. This was based on a stratified random selection of academics from the staff directories of the listed universities on the THE World University Rankings (2018). Gender was determined based on how each of the academics self-identified on their public staff profile. See Appendix F for the script of the email sent to each potential participant. Of the 168 women contacted, 90 women acknowledged their interest (via email response) to be interviewed.

There were three distinct participant groups within this phase: early, middle, and later-career women academics. Women who were in the position of currently completing their PhD, to being five years post completion of this degree were considered **Early-Career Women Academics**. Women who had completed their PhD between five to 15 years ago were considered **Middle-Career Women Academics**. Finally, women who had completed their PhD 15 years ago or more were considered **Later-Career Women Academics**. The career stage groups are posed in this manner within the literature (Australian Council of Learned Academies, 2012), and as such, the data from each career-stage group were treated as a distinct data set. The findings in Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine will be considered distinct according to these career stages. Within these participant groups, I ensured that women who occupied a diverse range of academic roles (such as Sessional Academics, Teaching Academics, Research Academics, and Teaching and Research Academics) were recruited. This was to allow for an exploration of the diversity of particular roles, responsibilities, and identities within academia.

#### **6.4.1 Early-Career Women Academics**

The aim of recruiting early-career women academics from public higher education settings in Australia was to explore how these women navigate their introduction into academia. Additionally, it was of interest to explore how these women conceptualised their future career in higher education. The early-career women academics consisted of 17 participants, with ages ranging from 27 to 62 years. Table 5 outlines the demographic information collected from these participants to assist in describing the sample.

**Table 5***Early-Career Women Academics Demographic Information*

| <b>Early-Career Women Academics (N = 17)</b> |      |
|--|------|
| <b>Age (in Years)*</b>                       |      |
| Mean   | 37.3 |
| SD   | 10.2 |
| Minimum                                      | 27   |
| Maximum                                      | 62   |
| Range  | 35   |
| <b>Sex</b>                                   |      |
| Female                                       | 17   |
| <b>Current Institution</b>                   |      |
| Australian National University               | 2    |
| Charles Darwin University                    | 2    |
| Curtin University                            | 5    |
| Deakin University                            | 1    |
| Edith Cowan University                       | 1    |
| Macquarie University                         | 1    |
| Murdoch University                           | 2    |
| University of Newcastle                      | 1    |
| Victoria University                          | 2    |
| <b>Current Faculty</b>                       |      |
| Science                                      | 8    |
| Technology                                   | 2    |
| Engineering                                  | 3    |
| Mathematics                                  | 2    |
| Medicine                                     | 2    |
| <b>Current Position</b>                      |      |
| PhD/Sessional                                | 4    |
| Teaching                                     | 4    |
| Research                                     | 7    |
| Teaching and Research                        | 2    |
| <b>Identifies As</b>                         |      |
| Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander     | 0    |
| Living with a Disability                     | 1    |
| Culturally and Lingually Diverse             | 1    |
| Diverse in Sexual Identity                   | 4    |
| <b>Current Household Composition</b>         |      |
| Lone Person                                  | 1    |
| With Family (i.e., Partner and Child/ren)    | 5    |
| With Housemates                              | 3    |
| Couple/With Significant Other                | 8    |
| Multiple Families                            | 0    |

\*Age values are of 16 participants; 1 participant did not provide their age.

#### **6.4.2 Middle-Career Women Academics**

The aim of recruiting middle-career women academics from public higher education settings in Australia was to explore how these women have navigated their academic roles in higher education. Additionally, it was of interest to explore how these women conceptualised their future career in academia. The middle-career women academics consisted of 18 participants, with ages ranging from 30 to 56 years. Table 6 outlines the demographic information collected from these participants to assist in describing the sample.

**Table 6***Middle-Career Women Academics Demographic Information*

| <b>Middle-Career Women Academics (N = 18)</b> |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Age (in Years)</b>                         |            |
|   | Mean 41    |
|   | SD 6.7     |
|   | Minimum 30 |
|   | Maximum 56 |
|   | Range 26   |
| <b>Sex</b>                                    |            |
|   | Female 18  |
| <b>Current Institution</b>                    |            |
| Australian National University                | 1          |
| Curtin University                             | 5          |
| Deakin University                             | 1          |
| Edith Cowan University                        | 1          |
| Griffith University                           | 1          |
| La Trobe University                           | 1          |
| Macquarie University                          | 1          |
| Murdoch University                            | 2          |
| Swinburne University of Technology            | 1          |
| University of Adelaide                        | 1          |
| University of New South Wales                 | 1          |
| University of Newcastle                       | 1          |
| University of Technology Sydney               | 1          |
| <b>Current Faculty</b>                        |            |
| Science                                       | 6          |
| Technology                                    | 2          |
| Engineering                                   | 2          |
| Mathematics                                   | 2          |
| Medicine                                      | 6          |
| <b>Current Position</b>                       |            |
| PhD/Sessional                                 | 0          |
| Teaching                                      | 5          |
| Research                                      | 2          |
| Teaching and Research                         | 11         |
| <b>Identifies As</b>                          |            |
| Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander      | 0          |
| Living with a Disability                      | 1          |
| Culturally and Lingually Diverse              | 0          |
| Diverse in Sexual Identity                    | 1          |
| <b>Current Household Composition</b>          |            |
| Lone Person                                   | 1          |
| With Family (i.e., Partner and Child/ren)     | 11         |
| With Housemates                               | 2          |
| Couple/With Significant Other                 | 4          |
| Multiple Families                             | 0          |

### **6.4.3 *Later-Career Women Academics***

The aim of recruiting later-career women academics from public higher education settings in Australia was to explore how these women have navigated through a multitude of different contexts (i.e., career stage, roles, responsibilities), either within the same, or multiple academic settings. Additionally, it was of interest to explore how these women conceptualised their future and end of career in academia. The late-career women academics consisted of 17 participants, with ages ranging from 43 to 72 years. Table 7 outlines the demographic information collected from these participants to assist in describing the sample.

**Table 7***Later-Career Women Academics Demographic Information*

| <b>Later-Career Women Academics (N = 17)</b> |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Age (in Years)</b>                        |  |
|  | Mean 56.6                                    |
|  | SD 9.9                                       |
|  | Minimum 43                                   |
|  | Maximum 72                                   |
|  | Range 29                                     |
| <b>Sex</b>                                   |  |
|  | Female 17                                    |
| <b>Current Institution</b>                   |  |
|  | Curtin University 4                          |
|  | Edith Cowan University 1                     |
|  | Flinders University 2                        |
|  | Murdoch University 1                         |
|  | University of Adelaide 1                     |
|  | University of Melbourne 1                    |
|  | University of Southern Queensland 1          |
|  | University of Sydney 1                       |
|  | University of Tasmania 1                     |
|  | University of Technology Sydney 1            |
|  | University of Wollongong 1                   |
|  | Victoria University 2                        |
| <b>Current Faculty</b>                       |  |
|  | Science 5                                    |
|  | Technology 2                                 |
|  | Engineering 3                                |
|  | Mathematics 2                                |
|  | Medicine 6                                   |
| <b>Current Position</b>                      |  |
|  | PhD/Sessional 0                              |
|  | Teaching 3                                   |
|  | Research 3                                   |
|  | Teaching and Research 11                     |
| <b>Identifies As</b>                         |  |
|  | Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander 0   |
|  | Living with a Disability 0                   |
|  | Culturally and Lingually Diverse 6           |
|  | Diverse in Sexual Identity 1                 |
| <b>Current Household Composition</b>         |  |
|  | Lone Person 2                                |
|  | With Family (i.e., Partner and Child/ren) 10 |
|  | With Housemates 0                            |
|  | Couple/With Significant Other 5              |
|  | Multiple Families 0                          |

## 6.5 Materials

The research project required the use of the following. Firstly, an audio recorder allowed for the recording of interviews conducted face-to-face. For interviews conducted online, either a phone, or computer (with access to the programs Skype, FaceTime, Zoom, or WebEx) were used and the interview was recorded through the chosen program. Second, a semi-structured interview guide was developed for each career stage of the research and used dependent on the career stage of the participant. Finally, a de-identified demographic questionnaire was used to collect demographic data.

### 6.5.1 *Semi-Structured Interview Guide*

A semi-structured interview guide was developed for each participant group with the aim of asking questions that would be based on the research objectives of this phase, the extant literature base, as well as being tailored to each career stage. The semi-structured interview guides were also informed by findings from the first phase of the research (i.e., conducting the Narrative Review). The use of a semi-structured interview in this research allowed for the discovery of rich, in-depth concepts and discourses, therefore permitting the participants' positionings to be co-constructed by me as the researcher (Foucault, 1972; Ryan et al., 2007). The format of the guide allowed for me to ask my expected questions, but also provided the opportunity for me to probe/prompt on points of interest (Morrow, 2005). Additionally, I was able to establish an understanding of the participants' social context by asking novel questions, as well as building rapport with the participants, noted as particularly important within the interviewing process (Ravenek & Rudman, 2013).

The semi-structured interview guides contained a specific set of questions relevant to the career stage of the academic, for example: **1) The Early-Career Women Academics Guide** (see Appendix G) contained questions relating to entry into academia, allowing for participants to reflect on certain experiences, and goals they wanted to achieve. An example question was, "*What do you think are some of the experiences of women in the early-career stage of academia?*"; **2) The Middle-Career Women Academics Guide** (see Appendix H) contained questions surrounding academic achievements to date, how the participants navigated any

potential conflicts, and how they balanced the number of roles within their life. An example question was, *“What do you think are the challenges or difficulties for middle-career women within academia?”*, and **3) The Later-Career Women Academics Guide** (See Appendix I) contained questions exploring contextual differences between the age groups, and particular strategies and experiences that assisted the participants in navigating academia. An example question was, *“What do you wish you had known about the academic setting before you entered it?”*. The design of each guide allowed for the interviews conducted to be approximately 45-60 minutes in duration.

### **6.5.2 Demographic Questionnaire**

The purpose of this questionnaire was to collect demographic information about the whole case, and report this within the associated publications and final thesis. The information that was collected included the participants' age, sex, current institution, current faculty, current position, diverse identification, and current household composition. Participants were asked to complete the demographic questionnaire either before (emailed to online participants) or after the interview (for face-to-face participants; see Appendix J). Participants were also provided the option to return the form blank if they did not wish to provide this information. The demographic questionnaire responses were not linked to participants interview transcripts. All participants completed the demographic questionnaire.

## **6.6 Procedure**

After receiving ethical approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee, individuals were invited to participate via flyers (see Appendix K) circulated via email to interested individuals/groups relevant to the research topic, recruitment emails sent after navigating staff directories, word-of-mouth through academic staff, and snowball sampling. Individuals who expressed their interest in the research were provided with a participant information sheet (see Appendix L) and consent form (see Appendix M) via email. These documents outlined the focus of the study, the participants' rights, and how the data collected would be used. Participants were given the option of either face-to-face, online, or telephone

interviews to be conducted, and a mutually convenient time, location, and platform agreed upon.

I conducted all 52 semi-structured interviews. Consent was obtained from the participants verbally and formally, either with their consent form signed face-to-face or returned via email. I also informed the participant that any information collected as a part of my research would remain confidential (and only accessible by myself and my supervisors), and that their identity would be protected within the final write-up. Following informed consent, the interview commenced according to the relevant interview guide. On average, most interviews were approximately one hour in duration, but ranged from 30 to 90 minutes in length. At the end of the interview, I provided participants with a verbal summary of their interview, asked if they wished to add any additional information to what had been shared, and invited them to complete/share with me the de-identified demographic questionnaire.

Upon completion of each interview, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, with any identifying information being removed and replaced with either a pseudonym, or a placeholder (e.g., [participant's name]). The transcripts were printed and analysed via the paper/pen method, using FDA. Interviewing, transcription, and analysis for each group was completed as an iterative process, meaning I moved through the phases repeatedly as I needed to, coming closer to the end process through continual engagement. After all interviews had been collected and analysed for a particular career stage, participants were invited to '*opt-in*' to engage in member checking. This is where a summary was sent to the participants of the key collated messages (according to career stage) of the research, to allow the participants to provide feedback on the fairness and accuracy of the interpretations and allow for the addition of additional reflections to the research (see Appendices N, O, and P for each career stage summary).

## **6.7 Data Analysis**

Semi-structured interview data from all career stages were analysed using FDA. The analysis was considered appropriate as it examines different forms of power and knowledge, specifically exploring how these constructs influence the use of discursive constructions, discourse, subject positions, subjectivities, and ways of

being (Foucault, 1972). FDA was useful as it allowed for me to explore and discover the participants' truths through the narratives they shared, to identify the particular roles and positions they occupied, and how they constructed specific phenomena within their experiences using discursive resources (Foucault, 1972). From a Foucauldian perspective, narratives, ways of being, and positionings are communicated through discourses, which are sets of statements that may constrain or facilitate certain ways of speaking, thinking, writing, and being (Burr, 2015). Certain discourses can be privileged over others and can be legitimised through power relations and social structures (Foucault, 1972). Within my research, FDA specifically allowed for me to explore how the participants relayed their academic experiences, the narratives engaged in to articulate how they navigated the academic setting, and how their positioning within the academic context influenced the forming of their academic identities. It was speculated that by using this analysis, I could uncover how the power and knowledge present within the academic setting position the participants in ways of being.

Within the literature, there are several ways to conduct FDA and I chose to adopt the six-step process outlined by Willig (2008). Before following Willig's (2008) steps, it was important to familiarise myself with the data set. As such, transcripts were first read and re-read whereby I noted down any initial ideas to assist with my understanding of the data in relation to the research question. I then began to employ Willig's (2008) steps. In step one (**Discursive Constructions**), I searched the data for the different ways in which the participants constructed the discursive object of the academic identity, as well as the academic experience. The discursive constructions illustrated how the participants discuss the topic of the research question. This process included both explicit and implicit references to the topic as well as describing any particular issues identified within the talk. In step two (**Discourses**), I located each discursive construction within wider societal discourses which served to help me understand why women discussed their academic identities and experiences in this way. This step allowed for me to identify the particular discursive lens that the participants were using to capture their sentiments. In step three (**Action Orientation**), I explored what could be gained from constructing the academic identity and experience in these ways, within the

wider discourses, and further questioned the function and benefit of the constructions. In step four (**Positionings**), I explored the subject positions, or ways of being, that were made available by the discursive constructions and wider discourses. In step five (**Practice**), I considered the possibilities for action that were available to women who identified with the particular subject positions explored. In step six (**Subjectivity**), I extended on this commentary in an attempt to understand how the subject positions identified impacted participants' academic experiences and constructions of their academic identities. I chose to present the findings according to the identified subject positions for many reasons – to address the research aims and focus (i.e., exploring identities, which were pragmatically able to be conceptualised as subject positions), as well as all participants identifying and contributing to the subject positions presented, indicating a shared meaning in the data. As such, I felt this was worthy of such a focus.

## **6.8 Ethical Considerations**

My research was conducted in accordance with the Australian Psychological Society (APS) Code of Ethics (2007), and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007; updated May 2018). Ethical approval was sought from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee following candidacy approval (Ethics Number HRE2018-0606). Additionally, permission was sought from Curtin Survey Approvals as Curtin University staff members were a part of the participant pool. An information sheet was given to the participants, which informed them of the purpose of the study. A consent form was also given to the participants, which was signed to illustrate the providing of informed consent. Participants were informed that audio-recorded data from the interviews would be destroyed 48 hours post-interview after transcription (which did take place). Identifying details were also omitted during transcription of the semi-structured interviews, for privacy and confidentiality reasons. Where participants made reference to other individuals or settings during the interviews, identifying information was generalised (e.g., “[colleague] said...”). Demographic questionnaires and interview data were stored separately to any identifying information (e.g., consent forms). Data was handled honestly, and all forms reported without misinterpretation, to ensure the findings

were accurately represented. Contributions to the research are acknowledged within the relevant section of this thesis. Data is stored in keeping with the guidelines of Section 2 of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research on the Management of Research Data and Primary Materials. Prior to, and during transcription, audio recordings of the interviews were stored on my personal password protected computer, and the University server, before being deleted post transcription. Interview transcripts were stored in the same manner, without deletion. The data will be kept for a minimum of seven years, after which time it will be destroyed.

Additionally, I ensured to attend to concerns surrounding ethics of care within my research, which derives from having an awareness that my research could potentially result in distress and/or harm to academics and their communities (Reich, 2021). This also includes the distress and harm relevant to me as the researcher (Reich, 2021). As such, within my research process, I ensured that I engaged in dialogue with my participants, as well as my supervisors, which demanded introspective discussion, intuition, and respect for all participants, the individuals involved in the research, and myself (Reich, 2021). Within my reflexive journaling, reflexive discussions with my research team, as well as the write-up of my findings and overall conclusions, I aimed to address and continually reflect on ethics of care surrounding my project, with my desire and genuine intent for conducting this study based in gathering empirical data about how women academics experience and identify within academia, in a setting where they may be socially marginalised, ensuring I did not engage in ways which reproduce the marginalisation they have experienced.

## **6.9 Researcher Positionality**

I acknowledge that my positioning and experiences within Australian public higher education have informed how I have approached and designed this research project. As such, it was crucial that I endeavoured to maintain a reflexive position, and to locate myself within the research process. It was important to be aware of my location within the research, as well as the influence of my subjective positioning. This was considered as an ongoing process. For my PhD project, the research team consisted of four academics (myself as the doctoral student, and

three supervisors [PD, LR, and EC]). Three members of the team currently work in academia, and one has experience working in academia, but now works within a professional, clinical psychology context. We acknowledge that academia is a setting that consists of contextual systemic inequities. We come from the discipline of psychology, and all share an interest in exploring gendered experiences through research. I identify as an Anglo-Australian, Cis-gender male, within the LGBTIQ+ identity, a PhD candidate, and an early-career academic in a sessional teaching role. PD identifies as a White-Australian coloniser, Cis-gender female, mother and carer with invisible chronic illness, middle-career academic in a tenured teaching-research role. LR identifies as a Cis-gender female citizen of Australia and New Zealand, of Celtic heritage, and a later-career academic in a teaching-research role nearing retirement. EC identifies as an Anglo-Australian, Cis-gender female, early-career academic in an adjunct role, and a practicing psychologist.

Specifically, I wish to draw attention to my positionality. My identity within the research prompted a number of discussions within the supervisory team, as well as the participants during the interviewing process. First, my identity as a white male within academia has had an influence on the research process, design decisions, and my interpretation of findings. As a White cis-gendered male academic, I have been often asked about my ability and capacity to conduct credible, safe, and meaningful research with women. The questions asked of me centre on my experiences in academia as a man, compared to women's experiences, my ability to be able to understand, or at least represent, women's academic experiences, as well as ways that I, as a man, can assist in mitigating the prejudices, discriminatory behaviours, and marginalisation of women that occurs in academia daily. I am continually curious as to how my gender continually acts as a point of contention in my role as an academic, and as a qualitative researcher. Identifying as a cis-gender male appears to challenge the credibility of my work surrounding women's academic identities and experiences automatically and inherently. I do agree that all researchers (myself included) must engage in reflexivity surrounding their positionality within qualitative projects, as well as in broader power structures. With a feminist perspective guiding the research through the use of critical psychology, and social constructionism, I made sure to engage in

journaling, and reflexive discussion with my supervisors to ensure my gender identity did not influence the research. For example, some of the participants indicated that they were uncomfortable with a male researcher conducting the research. I ensured that I managed this tension at the beginning of the interview by discussing my role in the research, my reasoning for conducting the research, as well as allowing participants to ask me about my intentions surrounding the research.

Second, my identity sits within the LGBTIQ+ identity; as such, I undertook the research with a sensitivity to the nuances of falling under a diverse set of identities less represented in the dominant, hegemonic setting. Third, my identity falls under the most common ethnic identity in academia, with my ethnicity identified as white. This also relates to the ethnic identities of my supervisory team. Predominantly, the women in my study also identified ethnically as white. I can recognise that my recruitment process has been a by-product of the influence of the institutionalisation of colonisation, specifically, focusing on the white experience, and influenced by the roots of academia emerging from *“a patriarchal, Eurocentric society, complicit with multiple forms of oppression of women, sometimes men, children, minorities, and Indigenous peoples”* (p. 159). There is a risk within my research that the experiences of individuals who do not identify as white could be distorted or excluded from what has been considered as privileged experience and knowledge. Based on this, it is important for me to recognise that my research may perpetuate these embedded practices, as well as being conscious of just how entrenched and ongoing the colonial process is within the education context. While I cannot change who has participated in my research, going forward, I aim to raise awareness of just how implicated the higher education setting can be (based on the normalisation of colonial ideologies) in colonial practices, based on the education of individuals through pedagogical and research practices (Moreton-Robinson, 2011).

I recognise that my positionality represents some forms of diversity, however, replicates some of the most common identities in academia, those being, white, cis-gender, and male. Within my research, I can recognise that by adopting the role of the researcher (and with my various facets of identity accompanying this

role), I am in some cases speaking for the women that I have recruited in this study, and that they have placed comfort and trust in me to share their stories. As such, it was important to consider the particular privileges attached to my identities, to ensure that I attended to this influence and acknowledged my privilege in conducting this research. Additionally, as an advocate for gender equity, and as a feminist, managing my influence on this research in an area that is considered to be masculinised in nature was of importance. Throughout my research, I ensured to use a pragmatic approach to assist in dealing with these tensions and found engaging in reflexivity to be a core strategy to maintain rigour and authenticity within the findings. I acknowledge the importance of reflexive practice to explore, and be aware of, how my positioning may influence the research process, design decisions, and interpretation of findings. Specifically, the ways of managing my positionality and influence are described below within the quality procedures section, as well as throughout the thesis, where I engaged in critical reflection on the complexities and dynamics which arose throughout the research to contribute to the transparency and trustworthiness of the research process.

### **6.10 Maintaining Quality and Rigour**

It is important to consider the quality and rigour of the research process, to ensure that the findings, interpretation, and overall practices are considered transferable, credible, confirmable, and dependable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My research project supports the notion of subjectivity through assuming that individuals construct different, but equally valid representations of reality (Yardley, 2017). I attempted to manage this subjectivity and protect the authentic voice of the participants throughout my research process, to ensure that the represented views reflected those of the participants who shared their stories with me (Morrow, 2005). Working with the participants to acknowledge their lived experiences and contexts, and how they use their voice to disrupt oppressive practices, assisted in moving beyond providing a theoretical understanding, to how the voices of participants worked through new authentic practices (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2000; Jackson & Mazzei, 2009; Mackay & Heck, 2013, Mazzei & Jackson, 2012). I ensured throughout the research process, that I worked with the participants, to ensure their experiences were being represented authentically.

At the beginning of the research project, as per the recommendations proposed by Burgess-Limerick and Burgess-Limerick (1998), I compiled a personal statement reflecting on my own experiences within academia, what I have observed in terms of women's experiences and identities in academia, as well as why the research topic was of particular interest to me. While the acknowledgement of these assumptions (via the process of bracketing; Dorfler & Stierand, 2020), as well as the scrutinising of my involvement in the research (via the process of bridling; Vagle, 2009) does not remove the influence of these components from the research process, what it does allow for is the transparent representation of the participants, and my own, views and perspectives (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998; Morrow, 2005). Additionally, I have been mindful to avoid being selective on the details included – rather, I have endeavoured to be as transparent as possible by reporting my research findings in their entirety. Throughout the thesis, I have included my reflections to contribute to the transparency of the project.

Additionally, processes of reflexivity were employed extensively throughout the research project. I have kept an audit trail, which included my personal reflexive journal, supervision notes, analysis notes, illustrations of the process, previous drafts and write-ups, interview transcripts, and memoing. Prior to, and throughout the course of the project, I extensively detailed how my understandings have developed over time, explored reflections on my assumptions, as well as describing my thoughts surrounding the socio-cultural context. I have also engaged in a continual process of reflexive and critical discussions with my supervisory team, where we explored the ideas that were emerging from the findings, as well as our reactions to them. The process of exchanging ideas, reflections, and engaging in a critical discussion with my supervisory team assisted in being able to develop an understanding of the topic under exploration. Engaging in these formal (e.g., reflexive journaling) and informal (e.g., conversations with participants, as well as my supervisory team) reflexive processes contribute to the trustworthiness, social relevance, and quality of the research findings, as well as being identified as key components of qualitative research (Morrow, 2005; Yardley, 2017). By providing reflexive experiences, the reader can be provided with understandings surrounding

the participant's voice and meaning within the research, as well as insight surrounding how this meaning was constructed (Cosgrove & McHugh, 2000; Jackson & Mazzei, 2009; Mackay & Heck, 2013, Mazzei & Jackson, 2012). Specifically, by engaging in processes of reflexivity, this provided me with insight surrounding my assumptions regarding academia, gender, and identity.

Willig (2013) argues that when engaging in reflexive processes, the processes can be considered in the context of bracketing. While bracketing was originally a process critical to phenomenological inquiry, it is viewed as a process within other types of qualitative research that is of importance. As a researcher, I aimed to identify my own views and assumptions, and to acknowledge how they provide context for the development of my research project, and the research findings. While Willig (2013) states the original intent of bracketing was to identify these assumptions and set them aside to maintain impartiality in the research process, in my research, I feel it is not possible to remove myself entirely. Rather, by adopting these reflexive practices, I can contribute to the transparency of the process, by acknowledging where I fit and am positioned within the masculinised academic context, my attempts to navigate this positionality, as well as how my position informs the rigour, quality, and trustworthiness of the research findings (Galbin, 2014; McCabe & Holmes, 2009; Morrow, 2005).

With the typically emergent nature of qualitative research, it is important for researchers to keep a detailed record of the development of the research process (Yardley, 2017). As such, I kept an audit paper trail which documented the research process as well as the rationale of the research through supervisory notes, recordings, field notes, reflections, research flyers/posters, and emails. Additionally, member checking was utilised, where data and interpretations were returned to the participants to seek feedback on fairness of representation, addressing the confirmability and dependability of the findings (Locke & Velamuri, 2009). The feedback provided from the participants who responded was integrated into the findings. Finally, investigator triangulation was adopted within the research process by illuminating multiple perspectives of the research team, which ensured flexibility, thoroughness, and identification of differences in experience, which, in combination, addressed the dependability of the findings (Yardley, 2017).

Investigator triangulation was addressed through peer coding, to ensure that a wide range of perspectives and findings were encapsulated in the data.

### **6.11 Concluding Commentary**

In this chapter, I discussed the particular methods used for my research project. Specifically, I explored the research design, how the participants were recruited, the specific participant groups within the project, how the materials associated with the project were developed, the specific procedure adopted, and the data analysis used. Additionally, I discussed the strategies employed to maintain the rigour and quality throughout the research process, as well as my consideration of ethics within my research. In the following chapters, I will explore the findings from each career stage (Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine), identified through my analysis.

**CHAPTER 07: “COMPLY, STRATEGISE, OR RESIST?”:**  
**EXPLORING EARLY-CAREER WOMEN’S ACADEMIC IDENTITIES**  
**IN AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION USING FOUCAULDIAN**  
**DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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*Early-career academics are generally regarded as newcomers to the sector who are still finding their way and building the capabilities and identities necessary for their careers. This career stage is a period of acclimatisation, requiring the individual to develop a range of skills and capabilities that are necessary for successful academic performance (Shelda Debowski, 2017, p. 144).*

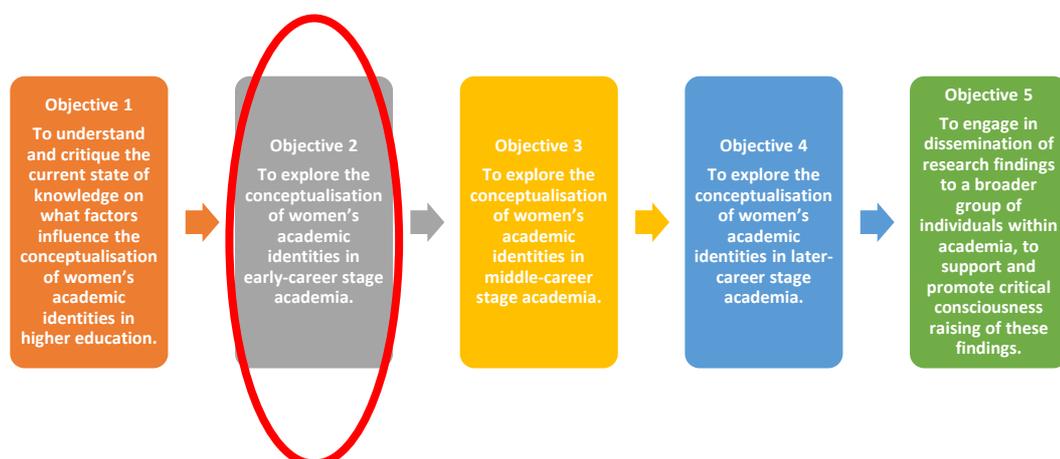
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### 7.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I discuss my analytical findings in relation to objective two of phase two, which is highlighted in grey below in Figure 11. This phase aimed ***to explore the conceptualisation of academic identities for women in early-career stage academia***, and to address the overarching research questions, ***‘How do early-career women within the academic setting conceptualise their academic identities? What subject positions are made available in the discourse?’***.

**Figure 11**

*Flow Diagram of Project Objectives: Addressing Objective 2*



## 7.2 Setting the Scene: Early-Career Women Academics

Three subject positions were identified in the FDA for early-career women academics – 1) The Compliant Woman, 2) The Strategic Woman, and 3) the Rebellious Woman. I consider and provide commentary on how these subject positions were made available to the participants through discursive constructions and the role of discourse, as well as explore how they function within Australian public higher education.

## 7.3 Early-Career Women Academics Findings

### 7.3.1 Discursive Constructions at a Glance

The discursive constructions identified in the early-career women academics analysis are provided below:

- **‘Good’ Academic:** the early-career woman works to either a) follows the pre-existing standards of academia, viewed as *‘good’* based on consolidating her academic positioning, or b) questions and challenges the pre-existing standards of academia, viewed as *‘good’* based on critiquing the practices that have harmed women, and their progression, in academia.
- **‘Bad’ Academic:** the early-career woman either a) does not question the standards of academia, viewed as *‘bad’* dependent on the risk of perpetuating practices that are viewed as harmful, or b) does question the standards of academia, viewed as *‘bad’* dependent upon the risk value and the consequences for challenging the system.
- **‘Good/Bad’ Academic:** the woman works to question the standards of academia, viewed by others as both *‘good’* and *‘bad’*, good in terms of having agency, choice, and initiating change, but bad in terms of engaging in risky behaviours that may threaten the position of the woman.
- **Masculine Academic:** viewed as an assertive, active, combative, and aggressive way of navigating academia. Not just attributed to male academics, but also women who have navigated their way to leadership positions by adopting masculine behaviours (e.g., being combative to progress in academia). Men are celebrated in being the assertive academic, women are viewed as too assertive, *‘the bitchy’* academic.

- **Feminine Academic:** viewed as a passive, mild, content, and accepting way of navigating academia. Not just attributed to stereotypical representations of women and caring roles, but also to men as well (e.g., those who do not want to adopt the masculinised way of being). Women are celebrated in being the passive academic, but find academic progression limited when their identity is constructed in this way.
- **Working Academic:** resisting the position of overworking through the conscious valuing and practising of the work/life balance.
- **Overworking Academic:** feeling compelled to work extra hours to keep up with the workload (noted as against the desire and preference of the academic).

### 7.3.2 *Discourses at a Glance*

The discourses identified in the early-career women academics analysis are provided below:

- **Political:** discourse that is produced by a subject to carry out some form of action (e.g., to govern, survey) within an institutional context.
- **Gendered/Heteronormative:** discourse surrounding symbolic activities, style of dress, patterns of consumption, ways of moving, talking, and being, in relation to gender.
- **Survival:** discourse produced by a subject to explore behaviours, ways of being, ways of doing, and talk, to carry out actions which embed them within a setting, allowing them to feel safe and secure in their positioning.
- **Risk:** discourse which considers how subjects navigate the possibility of exposure to danger, unpleasantness, or something unexpected within their environment.
- **Neoliberal/Economic:** discourse produced to constitute success, value, and productivity through the marketisation of institutions, as well as exhibiting a set of economic policies that have, over time, become embedded within Western culture.
- **Responsibilisation:** discourse which considers subjects as being individually responsible for tasks which previously would have been the duty of another

individual or group, or, would not have been recognised as a responsibility at all.

- **Patriarchal:** discourse produced to act, explain, and justify the dominance of men within society. Additionally, the discourse produces meanings to attribute natural differences between men and women.
- **Expert:** discourse surrounding the possession of knowledge and having more knowledge than most academics surrounding a particular content area or set of experiences.
- **Agentic:** discourse produced by an individual that reflects one's capacity to act independently and to make their own free choices.

### 7.3.3 *Action Orientations at a Glance*

The action orientations identified in the early-career women academics analysis are provided below:

- **Complying:** the early-career women expressed how certain ways of being are valued and legitimised in academia, which must be followed.
- **Being Safe:** by not questioning the dominant way of being and doing, the early-career women acknowledged feeling safe in the setting, to an extent.
- **Being Surveyed:** the early-career women felt that they were always watched and governed, which influenced the roles that they engaged in.
- **Performing Gender:** the dichotomisation of gender, and how it was performed (i.e., masculine, or feminine) prescribed conditions on the early-career women in relation to how they were positioned in academia. Conditions prescribed what was considered '*women's work*' and '*men's work*' in academia.
- **Accepting:** in having to navigate academia through the operation of prescribed roles, the early-career women attempted to find enjoyment in what they could, which assisted in their compliance, and accepting the way that things were.
- **Resisting:** the early-career women expressed wanting to challenge these ways of being, as they felt by challenging them, this would allow them to feel more autonomous and empowered.

- **Playing the Game:** considered both an extension of *compliance*, by following the rules to be able to both embed the early-career self, and progress, within academia, and *resistance*, by learning the rules of the game (that are not set by the women) and outrightly challenging them.
- **Being Agentic:** by resisting, and playing the game, the early-career women acknowledged feeling as if they had choices surrounding the decisions they made, and how they would navigate the academic setting.
- **Feeling Responsible:** as a function of their gender, and as an academic, the early-career women academics felt a responsibility to challenge the traditional way of being in the setting.
- **Evaluating:** by resisting the traditional way of being, the early-career women were evaluated as autonomous, and able to decide how they would navigate and progress in academia.
- **Being Damned:** whether the early-career women academics followed the rules, or challenged the rules, there were consequences to either action, which made them feel damned either way.

#### **7.3.4 Subject Positions, Practices, and Subjectivities**

##### **7.3.4.1 The Compliant Woman.**

The Compliant Woman subject position is an early-career woman academic who consolidates their positioning within academia by following the rules of the institution and meeting the expectations of higher education. Within the data set, this was illustrated through the women navigating the academic system in a prescribed manner and following the set norms and ways of being that have been traditionally embedded within the setting. For example, when the participants discussed why they followed the rules of the institution, and complied with the conditions set in academia, they drew their explanation from a patriarchal discourse. Drawing from the patriarchal discourse, participants expressed how there have been a set of normative standards embedded within the academic culture that favour most men within academia, which act to systematically disadvantage other groups of individuals: *“The rules and requirements of academia are set to advantage the lifestyles of men. They have less commitments and*

*expectations than women do.” [17] and “...all the top researchers, the head of the school, who academia advantages and that kind of stuff, it’s men, you know (laughs). We always think about academia as men as well.” [29].* Additionally, when discussing the male-dominated nature of the academic context, participants drew from a political discourse, expressing how higher education has drawn on political technologies in terms of how knowledge and ways of being are obtained and constructed:

*I just feel like academia is way more political than almost any other thing. Like, because knowledge in itself is so political and then the institutions are so political as well and, and how they governed, and uh, so there's all, it just always feels like there's some sort of standard that you are being evaluated against. [29].*

Drawing on the political discourse allowed the women to identify tensions in how they were governed and evaluated against certain standards, expectations, and knowledge within academia. Being governed and evaluated in this manner illustrated to the early-career women academics that certain ways of being are valued and legitimised, which must be complied to. Compliance to the patriarchal standards both advantaged, and disadvantaged the early-career women academics, which constructed them as academics who followed the rules, meaning they could progress, but it was also difficult for them to construct new standards and practices that would further benefit them.

For some participants, accepting the standards that disadvantaged them and their academic progression was acknowledged as difficult. Experiencing this difficulty was expressed as an accepted experience, as complying to the normative way of being was viewed as a way of surviving academia: *“I think there's just like systemic inequality that trickles down in everything and impacts on women's opportunities. It disadvantages women, but women feel they have to accept it to survive in academia.” [29].* As such, some participants identified that to consolidate their positioning in academia, you need to play it safe by accepting the way that things are, which can impact the forming of their identity and experience in academia.

There were complexities evident when exploring how The Compliant Woman navigated academia, specifically in terms of how her identity and practice can be constructed by other academics. By being positioned as a Compliant Woman, the participants were discursively constructed as either a *'good'*, or a *'bad'* academic. When complying to the standards and pre-existing conditions of academia, the practices of the early-career women academics were discursively constructed as *'good'* in terms of consolidating their positioning, as well as ensuring they would not be questioned or viewed as a threat by other academics: *"You're a good academic because you comply [to the rules of the institution]. If you comply, you're not going to be questioned."* [13]. Conversely, with the obeying of academic standards and ways of being, early-career women academics were also discursively constructed as *'bad'* academics. This construction was based not only on the direct and indirect perpetuation of academic practices that served to disadvantage women, but also, how following the rules can be viewed as a fraudulent practice: *"Women who comply to survive, like, I get it, I've done it, but it makes me feel fraudulent. A bad academic because I'm not doing anything to change how things are."* [38]. Here, the quotes illustrate that no matter the construction of *'good'* or *'bad'*, the complying to academic standards reflects an anguished position, and an obedient subjectivity, where feeling fraudulent in academia is a direct consequence of complying and being obedient to survive the academic setting. I propose here that the early-career women academics are acknowledging a practice within academia whereby entry into the setting is conditional based on compliance; while it feels unpleasant, it is an accepted and agreed upon norm that everyone must experience. A *'good'* academic appears to challenge the notion that each academic should experience complying to the rules that disadvantage them, but according to the subjectivity here, being an early-career woman academic compounds the experience with tensions to challenging the academic way of being. While the early-career woman academic may be able to assimilate into academia by complying with the standards set, the way that she experiences the setting appears conditional and prescriptive, which can impact how she views herself as an academic.

Additionally, when early-career women were positioned as The Compliant Woman, nuance surrounding gender, masculinity, and femininity were expressed.

Participants acknowledged how the academic identity was linked to specific traits attributed to stereotypical gendered qualities and behaviours. Drawing on a heteronormative discourse, the participants offered specific ideas surrounding the construction of gender in academia:

*Not all women want this, but women are expected to prescribe to a feminine academic identity. We are expected to be caring, nurturing, accepting, compliant, and maternal. We have to look after students, care for our colleagues, whereas men, it's like they have to be masculine, which they may not want either. Men are viewed as assertive, dominant academics who like to do whatever they want. [04].*

Within these ideas, the masculine academic was viewed by participants as an individual who was “...not compliant” [29], rather, they were “assertive, active, combative” [20], and at times, “aggressive” [05] in their way of navigating academia. In contrast, the feminine academic was viewed as “...compliant in their behaviour” [29], as well as being “passive, mild, content, and accepting” [20] throughout their navigation of academia. The operation of the heteronormative, gendered discourse was complex, whereby early-career women academics could be positioned within a masculine or feminine role, but there were clear consequences dependent on how they were positioned:

*I think, um, in a sense historically and systemically in academia, um, the gaze gets cast on women and their identities. Women have to be compliant and candid, otherwise, they are viewed negatively. Um, you know, it's like that classic thing, like, oh, a woman who isn't compliant, but is candid is a bitch, but a guy who is candid is like, assertive or something like that. [29]*

The discursive construction of gender as a dichotomy when considering compliance, as well as the masculine and feminine identity, was evident through the participants' sentiments. With the pressure to comply and adopt the normative standards of academia set by the hegemony, early-career women academics expressed feeling like a woman within a man's world, whereby gender is positioned and constructed as one-dimensional: “The number of men in my building, it's very clear that academia is a man's world. I feel it in every meeting I attend, I'm one of about five women in a room of 30 academics.” [29] and “It's like that song, it's just a

*man's, man's, man's world, but relate that to academia. To avoid rocking the boat, you do as you're told, as a woman in academia."* [20]. As such, to make it in the academic world, participants felt pressured to adopt a feminine identity to feel safe and secure in their position.

In being a compliant early-career woman academic, the primary course of action is to play the game by complying to the above gendered stereotypes and roles, which acts to consolidate their positioning within academia. By complying, the early-career women academics are working to become a part of, and to identify with, the academic setting, in an assimilative manner that is prescribed by the hegemony in accordance with their gender: *"I feel like I'm playing the game in a sense. In reality, I hate the way I'm treated, but I want to be a part of academia, so you do what you have to do."* [26]. Paradoxically, by safely embedding the self into the academic system, the early-career woman academic assimilates into a setting that is dominated and controlled by the dominant group. By drawing on a survival discourse, the participants expressed how assimilating into this context, and following the rules and gendered ways of being, was a way that they remained within the setting, without being viewed as a threat to challenging the academic way of being and doing. Additionally, drawing on a risk discourse was evident in that questioning the dominant practices was considered a risk, and by limiting the questioning of how things exist in academia, the participants felt safe, and that their positioning was solidified: *"I feel safe. I don't question a thing. I do what I'm told. If I don't, I risk everything"* [21]. Overall, the early-career women academics acknowledged that questioning normative practices was a risky behaviour for them in relation to their academic progression, so to reduce this risk, they complied to reduce the likelihood of dissent or conflict in academia.

The early-career women academics alluded to how they perceived neoliberal academia was meant to be run. Participants acknowledged their explanation of this perceived way of being using both neoliberal/economic discourse, expressing that compliance to this practice would be more beneficial: *"You can see how the neoliberal system was supposed to benefit all academics. It was meant to allow for a system that was supportive, efficient, engaging, collaborative..."* [17]. Specifically, the neoliberal/economic discourse here outlined

how participants felt academia was originally governed to allow for levels of flexibility, productivity, and cooperation that benefitted all academics. Participants acknowledged a shift in how academia has been governed, focusing on the needs of the institution, rather than the individual: *"I've heard from my supervisors how they used to have more freedom. Now, I feel like we're watched constantly, like all we can do is stuff that benefits the university."* [38]. As such, the early-career women felt positioned to comply with the expectations set by neoliberal academia, and discussed the impact of complying with said practices, where neoliberal practices are normalised, and that academics feel the pressure to control, regulate, and report on their own work:

*Um, I think there's a lot of, um, sometimes pressure. I always like, often feel anxious and tired and exhausted trying to do everything the university expects of me. Also, the accountability and kind of, um, surveillance, I would like to say, of the overarching kind of university and how they kind of expect things, so report on this, answer these questions or that, I want this done yesterday. [29]*

Experiencing this pressure, the early-career women expressed their compliance was influenced by neoliberal technologies such as surveillance, where they felt their work and way of being was constantly being watched. The difficulty in meeting the standards of academia, versus meeting the individual standards that the women set for themselves when surveilled, was apparent. As such, when complying to the neoliberal norm, the early-career women academics appeared to accept that when being watched in academia, working fast to complete their set tasks, as well as recognising their work may not be their personal best, was enough to comply to the academic standards: *"I complete the tasks I'm asked to do. It's not my best work, but I do the very best that I could in the time that I had, with the pressure I was put under. That's academia."* [26].

When drawing on the neoliberal/economic discourse to explore the foundations of compliance in academia, the early-career women academics expressed tensions between 1) complying to the prevailing neoliberal standards that work to constitute success and value, compared to 2) engaging in the intellectual work that they believe to be of personal value that signifies success:

*“It’s a struggle juggle, really, between being viewed as a success by the institution for doing the work that I hate, versus doing the work I love and value that isn’t seen as ‘worthy’ by the university.” [13] and “I love teaching, but that isn’t valued. I hate research with a passion, but that’s what the university wants me to do.” [13].*

Further, in the below quote, being positioned to comply in their role as an academic, the woman rationalised the pressure of neoliberal standards by acknowledging that they find enjoyment and love in what they do (regardless of whether they have the freedom to choose what work they want to engage in), which acts to frame these standards and ways of being as acceptable:

*...there's always days and times where everything's crap and things aren't working out and your analysis doesn't work, and your paper gets rejected and then your grant gets rejected, you're told you can't do something because you're not allowed or there's not enough money, and then something else happens. And you're just like, "This all sucks." But at the end of the day, I've, I get to work on a topic that I'm interested in with people that I really like. So, while there are the bad things, I think, um, yeah, overall, it's more, um, a positive thing. It makes it all worth it. [33]*

As such, framing these ways of being as interesting and acceptable further maintains the feeling of choice in these practices. I propose that the participant, based on framing the practices as interesting and acceptable, may then perceive compliance as voluntary, and a choice, to engage in the normative academic ways of being, but there are further tensions here relating to this ‘choice’. Framing compliance here as a choice can make the explored forms of disciplinary power and subjectification all the more insidious, as the early-career women feel that they possess the power and freedom to independently make decisions and engage in academic work. In reality, the normative academic context can make it difficult for women to have choice and autonomy, as well as being able to make decisions without experiencing negative consequences. The autonomy, freedom, and choice to either comply or challenge the standards appears to be held instead by the dominant group (i.e., white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, able bodied men) within the academic system, which further perpetuates their ability to control how academia is governed. The dominant group construct and enforce the normative

conditions, whereas the early-career women express having to comply to said conditions to be able to feel safe and secure in academia. Where tensions emerge is when considering how the academic setting is not safe for early-career women academics. Here, early-career women academics are positioned so that their compliance reinforces an acceptance of the status quo, and an assumption that organisational and structural barriers are tolerable if one simply works hard enough:

*If I work hard, put in the hard yards, put my heart and soul into everything, and comply to the standards, I'll get there one day. No matter what obstacles block my way, I'll progress. That's just the academic experience for you. [03].*

#### **7.3.4.2 The Strategic Woman.**

The Strategic Woman subject position depicts an early-career woman academic who advantageously questions the rules and challenges the expectations of higher education. In the data, this can be illustrated through the women finding ways to navigate the academic system, and to challenge the prescribed norms and ways of being. For example, when participants discussed why they wanted to challenge certain norms and ways of being in academia, they drew from a risk discourse in terms of evaluating the potential risk of challenging the way of being. Speaking up and questioning the pre-existing norms can inherently challenge the women's positioning within academia, which was discursively constructed as a risky practice: *"I hate the way that things are, and that makes me want to change the way we do things in academia."* [03], and *"It's a fine line. Do what you need to do to survive, take the risk, take a chance, but make too much of a fuss and then a target is placed on your back."* [04]. These quotes illustrate that the positioning of the early-career women academic can be challenged when the choice is made to question the current academic standards. While the questioning process was acknowledged as difficult, engaging in the risk was viewed by participants as needed, both as a way of surviving academia, and attempting to find their way of experiencing academia without being viewed as a threat to challenging the system. All participants identified that to survive in academia, they had to engage in risk taking behaviour to be able to play the game, which formed their academic identity

as a strategic risk taker. Adopting this position requires a consciousness of the rules of the academic game, as well as an acknowledgement of their positioning.

Thus far, when strategically navigating the academic system, it is evident that both The Compliant Woman and The Strategic Woman experience similarities surrounding the discursive constructions of the 'good' and 'bad' academic. Where the nuance emerges within this subject position is surrounding the operation of 'good' and 'bad', and the intersection of the 'good/bad' academic. First, the early-career women were constructed as 'good' academics, by complying to the standards of academia, and the pre-existing conditions, which assist to protect the women's positioning: "...as an academic, I am held accountable. People watch what I do, as well as the university, they all expect things, so I comply. I report on this, I answer these questions, I follow these rules..." [29] and "I've generally fallen under the radar because I do what I'm told, I do my work, and I go home." [26].

Additionally, early-career women academics were constructed as 'bad' academics if they engaged in compliance, viewed as directly and indirectly perpetuating practices that were perceived as harmful: "I know it's a tough position to be in, but if you follow the rules, and aren't challenging the harmful way that academia manifests for women, then what the hell are you doing here? [05]. Participants identified an intersection between these constructions and referred to a 'good/bad' academic, a woman who works to question the guidelines and standards of academia, has agency and choice when initiating change, but simultaneously engages in risky behaviours that may threaten their position/role:

*I see others make suggestions about how things in academia can change. Have I done this? Yes, but no. I mean things need to change, but I'm too scared of the consequences if I challenge the rules too much. Finding the balance is tough. [08]*

These sentiments illustrate how the participants evaluated the characteristics, risk value, and consequences for challenging the system and questioning the standards of academia. Early-career women academics felt they were damned no matter which construction they occupied, with each identity having its own potential benefits and risks:

*We are damned if we do, and damned if we don't. If I follow the rules to protect myself, I'm good for putting myself first, but I'm seen as a bad academic, and as a bad woman, for not fighting for the cause for all women academics. If I challenge the rules, I might be seen in a good way by some because I'm standing up for my fellow women, but really, I'm an irresponsible idiot because it's a risky behaviour. I might not be here tomorrow if I'm viewed as too much of a threat. Like what do you do? [30]*

As such, these conflicting constructions serve to highlight the distinctions within these discursive constructions, the tensions within women's academic experiences, as well as illustrate the nuances within how an early-career woman identifies as a 'good' and 'bad' academic concurrently. This perpetuates the individualistic focus within academia, where academics are pitted against one another in relation to success, progression, and productivity, embedded within neoliberal/economic discourse.

When elaborating on the conditions to be followed, or challenged within academia, the early-career women academics drew on patriarchal and heteronormative discourses. The patriarchal and heteronormative discourses characterise the academic working conditions as a clear setting of normative standards that have been embedded within dominant western culture that works to favour the hegemonic group (i.e., white, cis-gender, heterosexual, able-bodied men), as well as systematically disadvantage other groups based on the shifting of standards over time. Academic patriarchal knowledge systems and ways of being are viewed as gendered, and are constructed and enforced by the hegemonic group:

*...in the faculty, you're getting acculturated by the system into 'what women do' of that women's work. The higher-ups allocate it [the roles], so, you don't really stop and question it, you just think oh, okay, that's the role of women in academia. [04]*

By drawing on and acknowledging the patriarchal and heteronormative discourses evident within academia, the participants express attempting to find new ways to strategically challenge these practices: "...it seems like you need to be ruthless, you need to be competitive. Um, I wouldn't say you need to squash people

*under you, but you need to put yourself first. And promote yourself.” [32] and “I have definitely had to be assertive...a lot of it is just about assertiveness and being very direct with people, but also not being rude or dismissive at the same time.” [33].* By strategically challenging these patriarchal, academic practices, participants work to control how they are perceived and constructed in academia. Historically, other individuals and groups have constructed the way of being for women in academia. Participants identify wanting to challenge this to an extent, or at least, within the positions ascribed to them, control how they navigate the prescription to construct a new way of being. This is expressed further by another participant: *“I love being able to challenge the rules. Fuck the rules of academia, honestly, there’s no reason it has to be the way that it is.” [08].*

In being a strategic early-career woman academic, the primary course of action is to challenge the normative conditions of academia in a manner that is safe and responsible, but simultaneously, viewed as irresponsible and risky. Either way, the strategic early-career woman academic is constructed as an individual who has evaluated the consequences of either construction (i.e., safe/risky and responsible/irresponsible): *“You need to be smart and know what will happen if you make certain decisions. You need to be quite strategic. In hindsight, I should have been more strategic. I wasn’t strategic enough.” [27] and “An academic is careful, smart, intuitive. They should know how to navigate the system.” [44].* The participants suggest that when they decide to challenge these normative behaviours and conditions, they are constructed by other academics as being brave, worthy, and placed on a pedestal, but concurrently, they perceive that they are viewed as stupid, irresponsible, and risky. Participants acknowledge these discursive constructions and note that when early-career women challenge and critique pre-existing practices, the brave construction is amplified based on their marginalised position. The consequences of the amplification of braveness when being strategic, is that there is more to lose if the challenging does not work, or the behaviour is questioned by the hegemony:

*...if I stand up for myself, and for women, I feel almost placed on a pedestal, I’m seen as a hero, and that makes me feel good. It makes me want to keep fighting the good fight, but if there is no positive outcome to the challenging,*

*I'm just seen as a wuss, someone who spends all their time complaining, and that makes me feel like it [the challenging] just isn't worth it. So, there's all that tension to experience along with the everyday things. [29].*

As such, engaging in such actions can allow for the early-career women academics to be subjectified, which, according to the participants sentiments, could be subjugating and repressive, or potentially enabling and life giving to their academic identity.

Nevertheless, a sense of individual freedom may be had as the strategic early-career women academics are working to engage and navigate academia in their own way. When engaging in this practice, the participants acknowledged feeling a sense of responsibility in having to change the embedded conditions (which they view as outdated and problematic): *"I feel like I have a responsibility to make a difference, to answer some important questions, and to change the way that things have been done before. If I can do that, then I'm happy to continue."* [03]. The sentiments here support the notion that the early-career woman academic can work the system to their advantage, to meet the requirements of academia, but simultaneously, to start challenging these rules of higher education. There appears a perceived responsibility of being a woman in academia, to be strategic and provide a voice for other women. Participants drew on both a gendered/heteronormative, and responsabilisation discourse when suggesting tensions between the desire to engage in this practice, compared to the responsibility felt to engage:

*Some days, I love being a woman in academia. I feel like I can engage in my work and keep myself out of harm's way. There is the odd day or two where I can clearly see how my male colleagues have an easier experience compared to me and my female colleagues, and that irritates me. Why does it have to be this way? Seeing that makes me feel like I need to say something about it. [29].*

Either way, the early-career women academics suggest that providing women with a voice, and being an inspirational role model, can be viewed as complying to the standards by educating women on how to navigate academia,

while concurrently being strategic by working with other women to challenge the system.

The early-career women academics felt encouraged to challenge the positions afforded to them in academia, to construct a flexible and strategic subject position within neoliberal academia. For women who work to challenge practices, they can potentially close down dominant practices, or at least, make others question the standards that are embedded within academia: *“I love making people question the boundaries in academia. Seeing the light bulb moment of, ‘Yes, I work here but I don’t work here 24 hours a day, seven days a week.’ [08].* The early-career women academics also worked to invent new ways of existing through constructing optional rules or ways of being when navigating academia. By playing the game or gaming the system, women can intentionally and consciously breach the setting dominated by the hegemony: *“When I leave work, I set an automatic reply, I don’t check my emails, and my colleagues know this. Don’t contact me outside of work.” [08]* and *“I’m still overworking, and overdoing, I can never say no to anything, but I feel like I am setting my standards.” [29].* While the woman still experiences a sense of over-working and never resting here, she works to govern her power by turning it back actively on the self, engaging in self-governance to set the conditions of when she can work and meet neoliberal requirements. While the power here is turned back on the self, viewed as free and separate from neoliberal academic practices, the working practices here are still problematic, as the early-career woman may feel attached to challenging the conditions and working on her own terms. With the desire to critique and undo some aspects of neoliberalism in academia, this is ultimately enmeshed with the doing of neoliberalism, potentially viewed as pleasurable and necessary, but dangerous. The early-career woman may view the risk and danger as manageable based on her power and agency, which affords her the opportunity to be a strategic woman, but paradoxically, she now becomes the neoliberal subject herself.

#### **7.3.4.3 The Rebellious Woman.**

The Rebellious Woman subject position is an early-career woman academic who feels in control of herself, her behaviour, and her destiny, and as such, is positioned to outrightly question and challenge the rules and conditions of higher

education. Within the data set, this was illustrated through the early-career women sharing stories of rebelling by not complying to the academic system, displaying agency, and attempting to rewrite the 'game' by reconstructing the system, as well as acknowledging how women are evaluated when displaying rebellious behaviours, compared to their male counterparts.

The early-career women drew on two discourses in explaining how women conceptualise their rebellious identity when navigating the conditions of academia. First, drawing from a patriarchal discourse, early-career women who were positioned as rebellious contextualised the conditions of academia and suggested that masculine, patriarchal norms foster forms of gendered inequalities in academia: *"Academia. It's just a man's world. The way things are run, the system, it's so unfair to us women."* [38]. The early-career women extended their sentiments by suggesting that a clear, outright challenging of these norms and logic in academia was seen as being rebellious, rather than compliant, where women resisted the problematic academic conditions. Participants drew on a survival discourse when describing these behaviours: *"I'm the first one to complain when I'm hard done by. I've always got my eye on the prize... I'll do what I like to get there. That's how you survive academia."* [17]. Drawing from both a patriarchal, and survival discourse, these quotes illustrate how some early-career women are positioned to challenge the conditions they find problematic to their experience, and their identity. Doing so allows the women to feel a sense of individual freedom and choice, where they attempt to engage in academia, and its responsibilities, in their own way. Some early-career women attempted to find their own ways of working, within the already prescribed requirements and guidelines of academia. While the women noted that this experience was not always successful, they suggested that *"having the ability to rebel, and attempting to question things"* [29] is important to the rebellious identity, as well as navigating academia, as here, they feel they have agency and autonomy over their decision-making.

For some of the early-career women academics, knowing that the conditions of academia worked to disadvantage them based on their gendered identity influenced their desire to rebel and change the academic way of being. In being a rebellious early-career woman academic, one course of action is to work the

academic system to their advantage by being agentic, engaging in resistance, and challenging the rules of higher education: *"I'm a new academic. As such, I feel it's my responsibility to question everything. I feel like I have the ability to do that, so I can thrive in academia."* [21]. Further, another participant mentions how women academics who existed in the setting before her have paved the way to allow for women to challenge the academic ways of being, *"I have to be thankful of the women academics before me. They allow for us to be able to question things."* [38]. Here, the participants express how choosing to rebel and challenge the normative way of being positions them to work in ways that create new opportunities and ways of being, rather than simply responding to, or reinforcing the current problematic standard.

Behaving in this manner was suggested by the early-career women to serve their career and educational development, even if the behaviour served as a potential risk. Drawing on a risk discourse, the participants expressed that engaging in resistance was worth the risk: *"Isn't it worth the risk when you know the grass could be greener?"* [08] and *"I know making a fuss is risky, but if it's going to benefit me, and my fellow peers, then why not?"* [17]. In these quotes, the women appear to have identified and subsequently evaluated the risk whereby the decision to engage in resistance is positioned as more beneficial, compared to the impacts of complying to the already existing standards. While there were perceived risks to challenging the status quo, the early-career women acknowledged how, as academic women, they had a responsibility to improve the way of being for all women. By nodding to the perceived responsibility of having to change the system, the early-career women drew on the discourse of responsabilisation: *"It's my responsibility. It's the responsibility of women, to be a good inspiration for young girls in particular by showing them how we can enforce change and foster equality."* [44]. The responsabilisation discourse suggests how early-career women perceive their position in academia as engaging in resistance and fostering change. This can reinforce how the early-career women feel in relation to it being their responsibility to potentiate change. Additionally, they may feel responsible for fostering equality for other women academics, potentially neglecting the role of the academic system in engaging in this practice.

When the early-career women engaged in making their own decisions, they were positioned by other academics as the expert of their own experiences and were viewed as knowing what was best within their given context. As such, the participants acknowledged feeling the pressure from others of needing to know how to resist, and how the conditions of academia could be changed. Drawing on an expert discourse, some women felt the pressure to be perceived as the expert of the experiences of all women academics, as well as how they would be framed if their resistance and rebellion was not favoured by others:

*It's all well and good to say that things need changing, and that we should make a fuss, but if it's not the right way of going about it, there can be consequences. I've had female colleagues who are excluded from collaborations and such because they're viewed as 'that kind of academic' [who engages in social change]. As a woman though, I feel like people look at me to know how to change the way things are in academia. I struggle, because how do I know what's right? [32].*

Here, the women suggest the risk in being framed as the expert is not only in challenging the problematic standards of academia, but additionally, in having their suggestions to change the system questioned and evaluated negatively. Some early-career women did suggest though that the risk of questioning the way of being, and being viewed negatively according to this behaviour, outweighed the consequences of having to comply to the problematic standards of academia.

The early-career women academics suggested that engaging in rebellious behaviours and setting their own academic standards were framed as predominantly male or masculine in nature. Rebellious behaviour in academia, such as displaying confidence, dominance, self-promotion, assertiveness, and agency, were identified by the early-career women academics as best illustrated by their male counterparts: *"You see the men in the hallways, doing their thing, being accepted, acting so confident, cocky, arrogant, it drives me up the wall, but they can do it. They can actually rebel if they want to."* [27]. Drawing on both a heteronormative, and patriarchal, discourse, the women expressed how male academics are viewed as the dominant hegemonic group, and as such, attempted to act in ways that were viewed as accepted in academia. These ways of being were

positioned as conditional based on gender, with the early-career women, for the most part, suggesting that being rebellious and assertive in academia was in violation of female stereotypes: *“Do you see the majority of women questioning how things are? No, because it’s not in our nature.”* [26]. In attempting to rebel by acting in ways that were prescribed as masculine in nature, the women may encounter a different academic experience compared to their male counterparts. Specifically, the rebellious ways of being were constructed by the academic organisational context where one’s social identity interacts with that context. As such, with women being discouraged to act with agency and dominance, adopting this positioning may result in unintended consequences for the early-career women academics, such as being excluded, ignored, passed over for academic opportunities, and progressing slower than male academics.

In practice, engaging in resistance and rebellion for early-career women academics played a critical role in allowing them to feel as if they could question the way of being, as well as feeling like part of an academic system that historically was never made for them. In response, The Rebellious Woman works to govern her own power and agency by engaging in resistance to be able to fit in and identify as a part of the academic system, as well as be viewed as an academic who makes her own decisions. While some of the early-career woman academics viewed their actions as allowing them to fit in, paradoxically, by engaging in resistance, their behaviours allowed for other academics to position them as outsiders, where they may feel segregated and isolated from others within academia. As such, the following sentiment, drawn from patriarchal and agentic discourses, summarises how the rebellious positioning influenced the participant’s desire to change the system, as well as changing how other academics perceive them:

*As women, we’ve never gotten a choice in how we are constructed and represented. It’s kind of just been done for us. That’s why we work to change things. We want to be just as valued as the men. Can’t that be our future? We make suggestions, and then get viewed as troublemakers for not complying. I want to see an academic world where in 20 years, I can be working here, progressing, being successful, and to be viewed on the same level playing field as my male colleagues. [29].*

When engaging in resistance and rebelling against the system, participants work to resist power and elude knowledge, even if the knowledge tries to penetrate them and the power tries to appropriate them (Foucault, 1988). Through this process, the early-career women academics are appropriated, and caught up in a process of both doing and undoing neoliberal/economic discourse, which can lead to them becoming more attached to challenging these practices (which could be risky and painful for them). Participants acknowledged viewing the risk as manageable because they can construct themselves as a rational, choosing individual in control of how they navigate academia: *“I don’t care what everyone else is doing. I care about what I’m doing. I need to take the risk and do my own thing. I can make choices, you know, and I can make the choice of how I navigate my role.”* [26]. The tension evident in this identity is that by autonomously making decisions regarding the academic experience, engaging in the undoing of neoliberal academic standards is a neoliberal practice in itself. The early-career women focus more on work that challenges the pre-existing conditions, where this work on improving the system is ultimately a condition of the neoliberal episteme (i.e., changing the role of the academic in terms of the standards of how knowledge is gained, valued, and measured; Zarkov, 2015). The early-career women may find it difficult to sustain their strategic challenging of embedded conditions, which may lead to an eventual questioning of their purpose, and feelings of disheartenment and demoralisation.

#### **7.4 Concluding Commentary**

In this chapter, I identified three ‘*ways of being*’, or subject positions that were present within the experiences of early-career women academics – The Compliant Woman (who follows the rules and meets the expectations of neoliberal higher education), The Strategic Woman (one who attempts to navigate compliance, as well as resistance), and The Rebellious Woman (who outrightly questions and challenges the rules and conditions of higher education). While these positions were clearly defined, it appeared (at times) that the early-career women found themselves shifting between them, which led to a blurring between positioning, identity, and their experience. Efforts to comply, strategise, or rebel and resist resulted in subjectivities that were placed onto the women; for example,

that to progress in academia, one must accept the way that things are to avoid negative consequences surrounding safety, as well as structural and cultural violence.

Ultimately, it appears that women who have challenged the way of being now must work harder to prove themselves as a part of a setting which historically has never operated to accept them, based on the embeddedness of patriarchal and gendered ideologies, as well as structural and contextual forms of violence. While all academics work in a system which dehumanises them and views them as neoliberal subjects, early-career women academics experience further complexities based on their gendered identity (for example, being subject to higher expectations than men, and having to balance the work and home life based on normative gendered roles). In the next chapter, I discuss how the middle-career women academics conceptualised their academic identity through exploring the subjectivities and positionings made available through discourse.

**CHAPTER 08: “ALL WE HAVE TO DO, IS DO IT ALL”:**  
**EXPLORING MIDDLE-CAREER WOMEN’S ACADEMIC**  
**IDENTITIES IN AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION USING**  
**FOUCAULDIAN DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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*Middle-career academics are those who have progressed to the next level of employment. While they may have successfully evidenced a capacity to perform the basic academic functions of teaching and research, they now face a key identity transition: moving from being a junior academic to an independent, well profiled academic who demonstrates leadership capacity (Shelda Debowski, 2017, p. 146).*

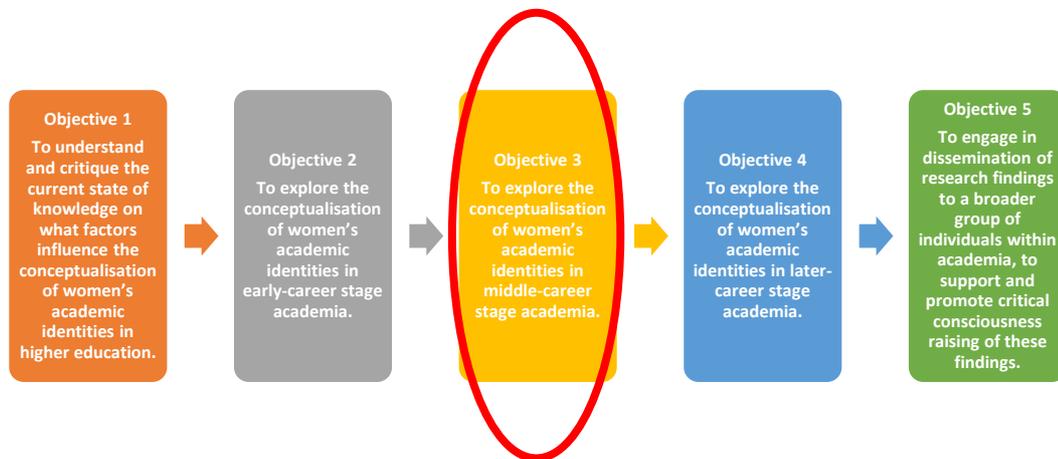
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### **8.1 Chapter Overview**

In this chapter, I discuss my analytical findings in relation to objective three of phase two, which is highlighted in yellow below in Figure 12. This phase aimed ***to explore the conceptualisation of academic identities for women in middle-career stage academia***, and to address the overarching research questions, ***‘How do middle-career women within the academic setting conceptualise their academic identities? What subject positions are made available in the discourse?’***. The findings from the early-career women academics provided in Chapter Seven were considered to determine whether the available subject positions differed within the middle-career women’s academic experience. While drawing on many of the same discursive constructions, discourses, and action orientations, the subject positions appeared as novel and unique to the middle-career experience, and as such, the findings from the analysis of the interviews conducted with middle-career women academics are provided below.

**Figure 12**

*Flow Diagram of Project Objectives: Addressing Objective 3*



## 8.2 Setting the Scene: Middle-Career Women Academics

Five subject positions for the middle-career women academics were identified in this FDA – 1) The Pragmatic Woman, 2) The Prototypical Woman, 3) The Credible Woman, 4) The Super Woman, and embedded within The Super Woman is, 5) The Sacrificial Woman. I consider and provide detailed commentary on how these subject positions were made available to the participants through discursive constructions and, the role of discourse, as well as explore how they function within Australian public higher education.

## 8.3 Middle-Career Women Academics Findings

### 8.3.1 *Discursive Constructions at a Glance*

The discursive constructions identified in the middle-career women academics analysis are provided below:

- **Forever Engaged Academic:** the women constructed their academic experience as ongoing and continual. Subsequently, the women acknowledged feeling as if they had to say yes to everything but grappled with tensions surrounding the setting of boundaries and limits in academia. The women rationalised how much work they engaged in by acknowledging their continual building and developing of skills to be seen as credible within the setting.

- **Prepared Academic:** the women suggested needing to be pragmatic in how they navigated academia. Additionally, there were several skills and behaviours acknowledged that were reflective of someone who is prepared and pragmatic within academia. The women noted that the culture of academia was competitive and survivalist in scope, and that they had to be prepared to act in a protective manner. Subsequently, an awareness of the academic system, and how it operated, was acknowledged as required.
- **Forever Learning Academic:** the middle-career women academics suggested that being an academic was being someone who wanted to learn, and who was open to learning.
- **For the Individual, or the Collective:** tensions emerged in the construction of an academic, in terms of whether the women were only looking out for the interests of themselves, or for the interests of others/being a team player. The women also constructed the position of the academic as being a small part of a much larger academic machine, viewed as players in a political game, where the needs of the system were viewed as more important than the individual.
- **The 'Real Deal':** tensions emerged in how women academics were constructed, in terms of whether they were acknowledged as being a '*real*' academic. For example, to be '*real*', an academic was constructed as being professional, an expert, credible, a '*good*' academic, a leader, a man, and trusted. As such, the women felt that they did not meet these standards as they were unachievable.
- **The Struggle:** the women suggested that there were '*good*' and '*bad*' conditions of academia and felt that they were attempting to fit into a gendered system that did not include them. Subsequently, they expressed wanting to have more of an inclusive system for all identities. Struggles were acknowledged in being a woman academic, as well as ways to overcome the struggles.
- **Role Categorisation:** the women acknowledged that there were categorisations in the way that academics were constructed in higher education. For example, the following constructions were identified:

- **Dominant Academic:** the women acknowledged that academia was gendered, evident through the masculinisation of the academy. As such, there was a common, dominant view of 'who' an academic was, constructed by those in higher education (a white, cis-gender, heterosexual, able-bodied male).
- **Women:** constructed as the minority, who juggles academic responsibilities with caring/family responsibilities, engages in the 'busy' work, and perceived as academic fighters engaging in social justice.
  - Tensions emerged whereby the women acknowledged that their academic identities were complex and interwoven with their personal identities.

### 8.3.2 Discourses at a Glance

The discourses identified in the middle-career women academics analysis are provided below:

- **Strategic:** discourse produced by an individual to carry out a long-term aim, goal, or plan of action with maximum benefits, and minimum risk.
- **Neoliberal/Economic:** discourse produced to constitute success, value, and productivity through the marketisation of institutions, as well as exhibiting a set of economic policies that have, over time, become embedded within Western culture.
- **Survival:** discourse produced by a subject to explore behaviours, ways of being, ways of doing, and talk, to carry out actions which embed them within a setting, allowing them to feel safe and secure in their positioning.
- **Preparedness:** discourse produced by an individual to explore behaviours, ways of being, ways of doing, and talk, to carry out actions which allow an individual to anticipate and respond to the impact of likely, imminent, and/or current events and conditions.
- **Patriarchal:** discourse produced to act, explain, and justify the dominance of men within society. Additionally, the discourse produces meanings to attribute natural differences between men and women.

- **Gendered/Heteronormative:** discourse surrounding symbolic activities, style of dress, patterns of consumption, ways of moving, talking, and being, in relation to gender. Here, the discourse specifically emerged through talk surrounding femininity, what it means to be feminine, and the prototype of a woman.
- **Expert:** discourse surrounding the possession of knowledge and having more knowledge than the lay person surrounding a particular content area or set of experiences.
- **Political:** discourse that is produced by a subject to carry out some form of action (e.g., to govern, survey) within an institutional context.
- **Responsibilisation:** discourse which considers subjects as being individually responsible for tasks which previously would have been the duty of another individual or group, or, would not have been recognised as a responsibility at all.

### **8.3.3 Action Orientations at a Glance**

The action orientations identified in the middle-career women academics analysis are provided below:

- **Being Strategic/Pragmatic:** the middle-career women academics engaged in roles that would allow for them to progress in academia.
- **Being Agentic/Autonomous:** being able to set the academic and workplace boundaries, as well as the overall working conditions. Choices were still governed by the institution, rather than the individual.
- **Being Flexible:** by setting their own boundaries, the women acknowledged prioritising their own well-being and decision-making.
- **Accepting:** the women engaged in striving to work within a pre-existing system in such a way that reduced their risk and maximised their benefits.
- **Surviving:** to remain a part of the academic system, the women attempted to meet the expectations of the institution as best they could. They also worked harder to be viewed as credible within the setting.
- **Separating:** to remain a part of the setting, and enjoy the work that is being engaged in, the middle-career women acknowledged how they attempted

to balance their work and home life, by detaching the *'woman'* self, from the *'academic'* self.

- **Performing Gender:** the dichotomisation of gender, and how it was performed (i.e., masculine, or feminine) prescribed conditions on the middle-career women in relation to how they were positioned in academia. Conditions prescribed what was considered *'women's work'* and *'men's work'* in academia.
- **Questioning:** the middle-career women expressed how their constant questioning of their experience and abilities, subsequently informed their feeling of being an imposter.
- **'Ideal' Working:** having to place the academic role first, working unpaid hours, and having more academic commitments and tasks to complete, allowed for the women to be viewed as *'ideal'*, and the super worker.
- **Sacrificing:** by meeting the many demands of academia, sacrifices were made in relation to the home life, and to the self.

### **8.3.4 Subject Positions, Practices, and Subjectivities**

#### **8.3.4.1 The Pragmatic Woman.**

The Pragmatic Woman subject position depicts a middle-career woman academic who views academia from a practical lens and makes decisions based on their experiences in higher education. The Pragmatic Woman is positioned to feel in control over themselves and their personal and professional lives, based on having the perceived autonomy to choose their own path. Within my data set, this was illustrated through the experiences that the middle-career women shared, where they learned how to be pragmatic in the face of adversity and engage in ways of being and doing that allowed for them to maintain their positioning in academia. Embedded within these experiences was discourse surrounding survival, strategy, and preparedness, where the middle-career women engaged in practices that allowed for them to make their own decisions, as well as meeting the requirements of academia while efficiently balancing their multiple roles and responsibilities. Tensions became evident when exploring the meeting of academic requirements, where this felt like an autonomous decision for the middle-career women

academics, but realistically, it was contingent on standards that were ultimately decided by those in positions of power in higher education. Adopting a pragmatic positioning entailed a degree of sacrifice surrounding the women's personal standards within academia. This ultimately led to the women re-constructing their version of what it means to be autonomous, constructing a pragmatic positioning in learning how to survive in academia.

The women acknowledged the conditions at the middle-career stage as being given less support, with the assumption that they should know what they are doing based on their experience and career stage. They contextualised their experience within academia by drawing on a strategic discourse, sharing how they would engage in working roles that benefitted their career progression. Being in a position where they were able to choose their working role allowed for the middle-career women to construct an awareness of, and build experience in, working roles they had not yet occupied:

*No day is the same. I get to do what I want to do, things I have done, and things I haven't done before. Sure, there's tasks that I don't want to do that I have to, but most of it is something that I'm interested in. It's driven by you as an academic and furthering your interests and passions. I can choose what I want to do. [37].*

Another participant drew on the strategic discourse to explore similar sentiments: *"I think definitely having worked in universities for a long time, just listening, and having an understanding of how they work, is one thing that's been really helpful to me." [34].* The above sentiments support the manifestation of strategic discourse in the way that identity is constructed for middle-career women academics. Choosing what work to engage in positioned the women to act pragmatically, adopting a strategy to navigate academia on their own terms. Having the choice to occupy these new working roles positioned the women to gain experience and build an awareness of how academia operates in their own way. Adopting this as a strategy to progress in academia appeared to act as a gateway for learning how to navigate and work the academic system to your own advantage.

For some of the middle-career women academics, learning how to strategically navigate the conditions of academia in a way that advantaged them

informed their desire to set their own boundaries surrounding their roles and responsibilities. In being a pragmatic middle-career woman academic, one course of action was to work the academic system to their advantage by choosing how often, where, and when, to engage in academic work:

*I'm sitting in a coffee shop right now. I've got huge amounts of flexibility. Both physical flexibility, like I started work at 12pm today, just because I could, sitting in this coffee shop, but also, intellectual flexibility. I mean we choose what we want to pursue, who we want to deal with...you get to kind of pursue and grow your own ideas. [39]*

The discussion surrounding work habits and work hours with the participants illuminated how they saw themselves positioned as an academic, in terms of whether they worked, or overworked. The middle-career women academics illustrated their ability to be pragmatic women by choosing the hours they worked, while also being able to meet the requirements of their roles, and to limit the capacity to overwork in this setting. One participant drew on neoliberal/economic discourse to explore how they meet the targets set by the system in their own way:

*I set my working conditions, to an extent, and as long as I get things done, my line manager doesn't care. Basically, if I'm meeting the requirements and bringing in the money, I could spend my entire life working from home. Some days I start work at 6am, some days I start at 6pm, but I always limit myself to working a set number of hours, and only during the week. I make the decisions. It's about working, not overworking. [31].*

Here, the participant suggests how acting pragmatically and strategically allows for middle-career women to be able to make decisions surrounding their working conditions. The middle-career women acknowledged feeling as if they had developed the autonomy to engage in academia their own way, as they had, over time, earned it by contributing to academia and meeting the requirements of their job positions. This appears to position the women to be flexible in how they navigate academia. What is of interest here is that these hours appear to align with the caring responsibilities that the women may have to engage in. Being pragmatic in meeting the requirements of the academic role in one's own way meant that the

women chose to only work during working hours which allows for time to engage in caring roles (“8.30am to 4.30pm, that’s my workday.” [11]), only taking on roles that interested them (“Based on my interests, I can say well, no, this is my priority, and this is what I want to do.” [37]), or roles that would allow them to progress in academia (“I am getting better at saying no to things that won’t benefit me in the long run.” [01]). The tension evident in this identity is that being pragmatic with their decision making may appear on the surface as autonomous and beneficial to the middle-career women, but in practice, the decision is still conditional:

*It's up to you to decide what to take on or not, but what is frustrating is you are expected to do those things in order to contribute and be viewed as contributing. We still have to abide by and meet certain requirements and expectations set by those situated above us, and sometimes, having that choice doesn't really feel like my own choice. [31].*

Here, the participant acknowledges complexities surrounding the pragmatic positioning for middle-career women in academia. The experience here is conditional as the higher education institution still has power and control over the construction and execution of its practices and expectations (which is influenced by neoliberal/economic discourse and its associated technologies), to act in ways to control the middle-career women academics. Here, I question whether the pragmatic positioning is disingenuous to the experiences of middle-career women, and whether being positioned as a Pragmatic Woman is more reflective of a tokenistic endeavour that allows middle-career women to feel in control of their way of being, but in practice, the women are positioned to act as objects who are controlled by the higher education institution. These positions can also co-exist, where the women may possess some agency within the control of higher education.

Thus far, it is evident that both the early- and middle-career women have experienced complexities in being able to act autonomously in academia, whereby the higher education institution providing the women with the capacity to make decisions appears more of a tokenistic endeavour, rather than a genuine practice. Where the middle-career women differ from early-career women, is how they navigate the above experience. While both career stages were consistent in acknowledging feelings of disheartenment and demoralisation based on a lack of

control and autonomy in academia, where the early-career women felt motivated to change the system and its way of being, the middle-career women appeared to accept the way that things were, but took control by being pragmatic in how they navigated an already pre-existing system:

*I've built up that thick skin over time, and to accept how things are. When I first started [in academia], I was like, "Oh god, more changes, more shit to get used to", whereas now I'm just like, "Well, here we go again, all right, let's just get on with it, how can I limit the impact on me and benefit from this change? [14].*

Here, a prolonged positioning in Australian public higher education appeared to influence the experience of middle-career women academics. The women suggest taking back control by adopting a pragmatic lens and considering how the current higher education setting can benefit them as it currently exists. Reasonings for reframing their academic experience more pragmatically differed between participants (*"You just get your work done, that's enough to survive."* [34] and *"I work for my family, to be able to live and survive."* [25]) but drew from a survival discourse when explaining their decision-making. The middle-career women acknowledged their reasoning for acting pragmatically in academia as their way of surviving the setting, with the discourse reflecting ways of being where one works smarter, more strategically, to stay strong, and tough it out. While the middle-career women academics referenced surviving as a normative experience, this was not viewed as being optimum to their experience and positioning: *"It really does feel like surviving. I mean, it's horrendous. Most academics sympathise with my experience. It does make me think "Why can't we just enjoy the academic experience? Why is it all about surviving?" [25].* Here, the participant acknowledges a majority of middle-career women feeling as if they have to survive academia by being pragmatic and also laments the construction of surviving academia as a normative experience. The participants sentiments reflect lamenting of why survival should be the normative discourse for academics in higher education, where engaging in academic practices appears more for meeting the expectations, targets, and guidelines of institutions, rather than for the passion, interest, and pure enjoyment of individuals.

For some of the middle-career women academics, learning how to survive the conditions of academia meant reflecting on how much one attributed being an academic to their personal identity. A pragmatic practice and solution for surviving in academia for the middle-career women appeared to be separating their personal ‘woman’ identity, from their professional ‘academic’ identity. Specifically, in being a pragmatic middle-career woman academic, some participants chose to detach the self from the academic identity, by choosing to identify with the academic identity less over time. This was seen as a pragmatic decision, whereby the women came to work, completed their set responsibilities, and left work-related responsibilities at work when they went home: *“I do what I need to do, I come to work to work, and then I focus on my family when I am at home”* [34]. Detaching from the role meant that the women felt they were less likely to be influenced by being subjected to the neoliberal academic conditions: *“The less I let the way of doing things here [in academia] impact me, the less I’ll give a shit, honestly. I’m not going to be controlled by them. It’s just a job, it’s not my life.”* [23].

By detaching the self from the academic role, the middle-career women felt able to control how they navigated their academic responsibilities, as well as the value placed on completing these tasks, and how they identified as being an academic. The participants suggested feeling as if they were able to complete these tasks more efficiently based on this, or at least, to the expectations of the neoliberal system, where good enough is viewed as simply *“good enough”*:

*Experience allows me to just do things quicker or care less about the quality of what I do. When I detach myself, I feel less stressed. It’s like I realised my work is not the be all and end all. It’s not my everything. It’s not all I do. I mean, that’s my experience anyway, [28].*

The women mentioned the quality of the work declining based on efficiency compared to effort but did acknowledge feeling as if the work completed was tied less to their self-worth, way of being, and overall identity. This was acknowledged as a preparedness strategy, a way of surviving and remaining a part of academia over time, with the women still feeling pragmatic in their decision-making. By choosing to complete their work their way, the middle-career women drew on a preparedness discourse when sharing how they pragmatically remained in control

of their work, navigation of academia, and construction of their identity, within the constraints of what needs to be achieved:

*I decided, as time progressed, to prepare myself to remain in academia, that I had to detach myself, from the work, from the people, from everything, for my own self-worth, I made that decision. I continue to make my own decisions [about balancing work and personal responsibilities, ensuring a lack of burnout], and that is something that makes me feel good. It's the only way for me to survive academia. [02].*

Within this positioning, the middle-career women acknowledged that being prepared to detach themselves and their identity was an important and pragmatic way of navigating academia. As such, framing this way of being as a preparedness and survival strategy further maintains the feeling of autonomy in these practices, but in practice, this is problematic. I propose that the nature of autonomy within The Pragmatic Woman positioning is influenced by forms of disciplinary power enacted by the higher education institutions, where the middle-career women feel they have the ability to make their own decisions. In reality, the participants can only make choices bound by conditions set by the institution, as they are subjected to forms of power and control. Middle-career women academics appear to be subjected further to power and control by the higher education institution, where they are told about how and when they can engage in their work, while balancing other commitments. While the women act in ways to regain their autonomy and independence, this is achieved within the bounds of acceptance of the status quo, which can reinforce the normative way of being, for example, reducing their capacity to work and progress in academia when they have caring/parenting commitments. While the women have attempted to re-construct their version of what it means to be autonomous, through constructing a pragmatic positioning to survive in academia, the assumption here is that the academic boundaries, conditions, and expectations will be a constant, normative part of the academic experience, an experience that women will have to navigate to survive in academia:

*I think it's part of the culture of the university, and for women especially, there are always going to be barriers to being a part of academia. The things that you think are going to be straightforward and easy, never are. So, I*

*think you just have to be very, very determined, to do your own thing, and make your own decisions. I think that people who aren't like that, don't survive (laughs). [14].*

#### **8.3.4.2 The Prototypical Woman.**

The Prototypical Woman subject position is a middle-career woman academic who is expected to engage in their professional and personal responsibilities by adopting ways of being and doing associated with femininity and motherhood. This can be engaged in either implicitly, or explicitly. Within the data set, this was illustrated through the participants expressing how women are allocated specific roles based on the prescribed prototypical woman identity. As such, neoliberal academia appears to enforce women engaging in tasks that are viewed as 'women's work' (e.g., teaching and service responsibilities). Middle-career women academics identified tensions with adopting this subject position, acknowledging that their identities were more complex and often interwoven with their personal identities. With the academic and personal identities merging and spilling over at times, the participants explored how, in practice, the higher education setting constructed expectations through discourse of using their nurturing, mothering identity (identified as prototypical of being a woman) to assist in the operating and running of the system. This primary form of action leads to particular consequences for the middle-career women, which impacted their progression in academia.

The middle-career women academics expressed that there were ways in which academics were discursively categorised and constructed in Australian public higher education. Middle-career women academics acknowledged that academia operated in a gendered manner, evident through the masculinisation of the academy, and influenced by patriarchal discourse. As such, there was a dominant view of 'who' an academic was, constructed by those in positions of power in higher education. The participants expressed how the dominant academic was constructed as a white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, able bodied male, with no children, who adopted ways of being that were narcissistic and egotistical. The participants acknowledged that this was an identity that was offered more decision-making

power, capacity, and opportunity within the academic setting, where under this construction, men succeeded, and women either struggled, or did not succeed:

*Young, male, no children, not planning on having children anytime soon. Um, narcissistic, psychopathic tendencies maybe (laughs). Um, narcissistic because I think ego plays a huge role. But essentially, I think the person who's going to succeed in academia are male. No children. That's it. [06].*

Further, the participants acknowledged that this identity was positioned in a manner which allowed for the men in academia to take on more academic work, and less personal responsibilities, leading them to be able to succeed and progress further in academia. As such, middle-career women academics appeared to take on more responsibilities around the home, in combination to their working responsibilities, which influenced how the women perceived their ability to progress, compared to their male counterparts:

*I remember sitting at a conference and there was a stage of panellists...all of them were 50, male, balding, middle aged, overweight, sitting there saying how easy it is for them to get grants and they provided these tips and perks to navigate academia, and I'm thinking, "Do you cook your own dinner? Who is taking your kids to school? It's not you that's doing this mate. Who ironed your shirt this morning? 'Cause I'm pretty sure you didn't. Who's got your kids while you're standing at this conference talking about this?" You know, I don't even know that they fully fathom it. Right? 'Cause it's just how it is. I'm not in any way trying to diminish their success, but, you know, all they have to do is just be successful, compared to us women where all we have to do, is do it all. [25].*

Here, the discussion informed how women are discursively constructed in middle-career academia, whereby women are constructed to identify with, and occupy, dual roles. The acknowledgement of how women occupy dual roles (i.e., parenting, and academic roles) draws on both a gendered/heteronormative, and patriarchal, discourse, where the representation of a traditional woman led to the emergence of The Prototypical Woman subject position. The participant expresses how men do not appear to face this bind, based on patriarchal privilege where the dual role conundrum is more experienced by women. The middle-career women

academics acknowledged that upon their entrance into academia, they were constructed by the institution in ways which reflected the traditional representation of women in broader Australian society, expected by other academics (primarily male) to occupy a parenting/caring role in addition to their other responsibilities. When exploring how women are constructed and positioned in academia, the middle-career women academics drew on a heteronormative discourse to explore opposite constructions to the dominant identity, expressing that most women were constructed as minorities who were expected to juggle their academic responsibilities with other caring and familial responsibilities. These identities were also acknowledged as being offered less decision-making power, capacity, and opportunity within the academic setting, compared to their male counterparts:

*A lot of women in academia have a family homemaker role that we pair with the academic role. I mean it's the traditional societal expectation that women will have that homemaker, child rearing role, so, we juggle a busy academic life with a busy home life. [01].*

Another participant further explored this nuance surrounding gendered complexities in academia, stating:

*Compared to men, women have to deal with juggling multiple responsibilities, in a setting where they have limited capacity to be involved in decisions that are made. It's tough, and it's not just in academia either. Women are disadvantaged in society more broadly. [09].*

In the above quotes, the middle-career women academics drew on tensions evident not only in Australian public higher education, but Australian society more broadly, where societal norms and roles inform their prototypical, gendered identity, which can position them as individuals who must engage in caring and familial responsibilities that influence how their other identities manifest (i.e., professional, and other personal identities). The participants alluded to some of the particular roles and assumptions which guided the academic practice of middle-career women academics. Participants acknowledged their explanation of these gendered ways of being using a gendered femininity discourse, expressing how The Prototypical Woman was expected to comply to these standards:

*Most women academics actually care about how their students do, and how their colleagues are going. They are investing in the individuals. They'll supervise students and supervise them in a caring manner. It takes an enormous amount of energy, and yet, it's expected of women because we're women. We have to be approachable and available and maternal and all of those neoliberal, gendered things. [06]*

Specifically, the discourse here outlined how the participants were identified as academics whose students and other colleagues can turn to when they have an issue. Primary courses of action such as availability and approachability were constructed by the enacting of the discourse, where middle-career women academics were called on when other colleagues were absent or unavailable.

Relationships that were developed in academia appeared to be subject to a gendered hegemony, where middle-career women academics were expected to extend their assumed maternal capacity (whether mothers or not) to students, colleagues, and the institution. Further, it appears the expectation in academia that women would always be available, which participants suggested was further enhanced by the availability aspect of their mothering role: *"I mean, as mothers, we have to be switched on 24/7. I feel like that extends to academia as well."* [11]. Experiencing these expectations, the middle-career women expressed how their experience was influenced by gendered technologies and practices such as nurturance, care, support, and tolerance, technologies which also operated based on some women occupying a mothering role and identity, in combination to their professional identity. A woman who engages in, or is forced to engage in, the Prototypical identity by the higher education institution, reinforces the stereotypical foundations of femininity to the benefit of the institution, who capitalises on these gendered skills:

*Does that homemaker nurturer role, make us different as academics? Probably. Do we view our role as academics differently because we are nurturers in the other part of our life? I would say so, yes, and the institution sees that. They see how we use our maternal instinct and role in the professional setting. Who do you think they are going to ask to mentor a*

*colleague, or to see a student who is struggling? Us, women, because we have to be maternal. [01].*

Here, an insidious form of power exists, whereby gendered skills are being capitalised on by the institution. Disciplinary power and subjectification position the women to act in ways that promote the interests of the Australian public higher education setting, while further reproducing the problematic gendered ways of being that have been identified by the middle-career women academics. What makes this form of power all the more insidious is, as described by the participants, the difficulty in refusing to adopt this positioning:

*I know that the moment I say yes to supervising a student or having a meeting with a student who is failing the course, I am inadvertently perpetuating gender roles here in the institution. Whenever we have the tough conversations with students, they always bring me in to provide support. At first, I thought it was because of my role as course coordinator, but I've been told it's also because I've been described as the mother figure by the students. My students see me like their mother, and while I hate that's how the institution sees me now, it's a part of my identity, and it's so difficult to say no to a struggling student. [34].*

Here, the middle-career women academics acknowledge the difficulty of turning away those individuals who need assistance or support. Stereotypical forms of femininity, as well as manipulation are at play here, whereby the expected behaviours of supporting and nurturing colleagues and students, while engaging in maternal behaviours is present and expected by the higher education institution. The maternal, gendered, heteronormative discourse evident here is discursively constructed by societal norms and expectations which socially condition all academics, which then penetrate the academic setting and manifest through occupational expectations, roles, and responsibilities. I propose that the maternal, gendered, heteronormative discourse manifests through actions undertaken in academia, and sets expectations for women to be able to resolve any pastoral or procedural issues. As such, they appear to be asked, or more so, required to, participate in activities and duties that are well beyond, but not considered a valued component of, the highly regarded and valued activities of academia (for example,

research). The consequence of this expectation is that middle-career women academics may be viewed as *'good girls'* that the organisation can turn to, to be able to fix unresolvable problems, as well as sort out longstanding issues: *"They call on me when they need help. I've even had my colleagues state that I'm a 'good girl' for always fixing issues when they arise."* [02]. In practice, The Prototypical Woman is positioned to provide the social and organisational *'glue'* in higher education that supports students and staff, within a social and organisational expectation that the practice will be engaged in willingly and graciously.

Middle-career women academics experienced tensions surrounding the pressure to subscribe to the *'good girl'* gendered roles, as well as barriers to moving beyond this identity. Participants acknowledged how the prototypical identity was linked to particular roles and responsibilities, and that any identity beyond the privileged was constructed as the minority. Academics, dependent on their identity, were more preferred in some roles, compared to others. Drawing on gendered, heteronormative, and patriarchal discourses, the participants offered specific ideas surrounding how they felt pressured to adopt the prototypical, feminine *'good girl'* position, as well as critiquing how certain roles are valued in academia:

*Certain roles are feminised in the institution, for example, teaching, mentoring, support roles, and I think that's why it's predominantly women that are doing it, yet, the men get to primarily engage in research, and the institution bangs on and on and just talks endlessly about research and the value of men, instead of valuing some of those other roles where most of the women are. [02].*

Another participant further explored the nuance surrounding this pressure, and the value of gendered roles, stating:

*Obviously, some things are seen as being more important than others in how they're talked about. It's just this constant tension between being told that all of the roles in academia are all important, and then being told that some things are far more important than others, or that this is the real stuff 'cause that's what the men do, and this is, you know, just the day-to-day crap the women do. [09].*

Here, it is evident that the middle-career women academics are pressured by a system influenced by neoliberal ideologies to subscribe to feminised roles, such as teaching and service roles, which, while consistent with societal expectations of their gender, can limit their career progression in academia. I propose that subscribing to these roles and subjectivities can be limiting to the autonomy and agency of the middle-career women academics. With most of the participants acknowledging that this was not the work they wanted to do, pressuring the middle-career women to engage in these roles further strengthens the majority-minority divide in academia, making the women feel as if their experience and contributions may not be as valued, compared to their male counterparts, in higher education.

Further, the women felt that within the neoliberal setting, *'women's work'* was constructed as *'busy'* work which was not valued within the institution, and that overall, the feminised roles were viewed by academics and the institution as supplementary to men's identities and roles. Drawing on both a neoliberal/economic, and a gendered/heteronormative discourse, the women explore these ideas:

*I've seen that women have to fight harder to prove ourselves. I feel like we are viewed as the visitors of academia, whereas men are the citizens.*

*Academia feels very male-dominated and not just in terms of the sex of the individuals at any given level of the organisation, but male in terms of the characteristics, the valuing of contributions, everything. Feminine qualities and characteristics are less valued in the academic setting. [28].*

Within this sentiment, the middle-career women express how women are positioned to feel like visitors to academia, and this can reinforce the positioning of female academics as being lesser, compared to male academics. I propose that this experience can make the navigation of academia difficult for The Prototypical Woman, as the tensions between adopting a feminine identity appear to conflict with how femininity and gender is expressed and valued in academia. With an unconscious bias surrounding gender evident in academia, the participants express a continual reinforcing of gendered expectations surrounding women's work in academia. Such tensions in navigating this experience may influence the

participants, whereby the middle-career women academics may feel as if they cannot be feminine in academia or be able to engage in roles that they most enjoy. This potentially limits the progression of women in academia, as well as impinging on a navigation of academia and adopting of identity that is genuine to their experiences.

As stated previously, some of the middle-career women academics adopted a maternal, mothering identity (not necessarily by choice) in combination with their professional identity (implicitly subscribing to The Prototypical Woman subject position). As such, these participants expressed how this responsibility appeared to influence how other academics perceived their capabilities. For example, when the participants shared the experience of outside responsibilities with their colleagues, they felt that this framed their academic identity as uncommitted:

*I'm a woman, part of that is that I'm a mother, and whenever I mention having to leave early to pick up my child, or mention taking my child to a doctor's appointment, for example, I feel like I'm viewed as a nuisance. Last year, I was actually kicked off a research project because the lead researcher felt I didn't have enough time to commit, just because I mentioned having to leave by 2.30pm every day to pick up my child. [43].*

Additionally, the middle-career women academics acknowledged how subscribing to The Prototypical Woman identity by having a family, in practice, illustrated discrimination surrounding progressing in the higher education institution. Neoliberal/economic and gendered/heteronormative discourses were evident within the women's sentiments whereby the participants acknowledged an assumption in academia that having a child meant limiting their ability to meet the expectations of higher education. The women also expressed how those in positions of power had informed them of the detriment to an academic career from deciding to have a family:

*I've heard of staff that had gone for promotion and sat down with people to have their CV looked at. So, she's got three kids, she's younger than me. The senior staff member asked why she hadn't been attending conferences in the last couple of years? And she goes, "Well I've got three children under five,"*

*and he basically said, "Well, you need to rethink that." What! The children under five? Like, she can't really rethink that. [25].*

Here, an example of middle-career woman academics being positioned in an impossible predicament is illustrated. By engaging in practices illustrated by The Prototypical Woman (i.e., choosing to have a family), middle-career women academics can be placed in a precarious position, where the choice of having a family paradoxically denotes a lack of choice, and the above choices appear conditional. In practice, it appears that the middle-career women experience tensions when exploring how having children may impact their academic progression, and that it is an unspoken given that their positioning in academia would never improve or progress beyond what they have currently achieved when having a family. The following sentiment further explores this nuance:

*I thought, "Well, have I progressed enough in my career to where I'm happy now?" Because it's just going to flat line. Well, if I have a baby, this is what I'm gonna do. My husband becomes the breadwinner, and my career becomes something of the past really. It becomes a job that I'm doing, but not something that's gonna be on the same trajectory. You accept it, as a woman if you have a baby, your career is gonna dip. It might recover, to the same level, but it's probably not gonna go much higher than where you were before. You kind of accept it. [06].*

Within these sentiments, the middle-career women acknowledge how engaging in practices reflective of The Prototypical Woman subject position can impede their academic career progression. With a primary course of action being to navigate the motherhood role, I propose a lack of agency in navigating this decision, as well as control by higher education over a decision which falls outside of the dominant group's authority to make. While the freedom and choice to have, or not have, a family are expressed as a right for The Prototypical Woman, the participants appear to experience consequences for choosing to do so. While The Prototypical Woman can indeed decide to have a family, as well as still identify as an academic, the institutions appear to control how the middle-career women academics are perceived once they have engaged in this practice, and what the consequences are for one's career if they decide to have a family. In practice, this appears as another

insidious form of power, where the dominant group perpetuate their majority control, as well as their progression and positioning within academia, while limiting the progression of middle-career women academics who decide to have a family. As such, the participants felt this is how male academics consolidated their positioning in academia, as it is not a decision that is part of their academic experience:

*It's a terrible thing to say, but it's an unspoken given. Young women are thinking, "I'm not going to get ahead if I have a family. I've got to just keep on with this and get as far ahead as I can before I have a family.". They're holding off having families because they want to establish themselves and get ahead in academia whilst they can. It's really sad. Men don't have to deal with this conundrum. They've got a partner who takes most of the load, and let's face it, you know, women do carry more of the home life. I can't do what my male counterparts are doing. I can't. I don't have the time that they have. [40].*

The Prototypical Woman subject position has illuminated the difficulties surrounding how the middle-career women academic's identities and practices are constructed. By being positioned as a Prototypical Woman, the participants expressed how their academic experience was constantly based on navigating difficult moments and having to overcome adversity based on their prototypical feminine identity. This was suggested as a prominent and frequent experience for middle-career women in academia. Additionally, the participants alluded to how their Prototypical Woman identity has informed how they experience academia, specifically through the acceptance of the existing academic conditions. Here, the participants draw on gendered/heteronormative discourse to suggest a frequent experience of inequities and barriers that is framed as a condition that all middle-career women have to experience:

*I think the impacts are on women more, but people see it less because it's so normalised. The treatment of women, the prejudice, discrimination, the barriers and struggles that all women experience, is so normalised. Women are particularly vulnerable in academia. [34].*

Here, the quote illustrates that in practice, The Prototypical Woman is positioned to experience hardship and struggles as a normative part of their

experience. While the middle-career woman academic may be able to remain a part of, and survive in, the Australian public higher education setting, the way that she identifies and experiences the setting appears to be conditional on the acceptance of the status quo, and with an implicit acceptance that the mistreatment of women in academia may appear as an unspoken given to their academic experience. As such, The Prototypical Woman is positioned to accept the dominant way of being, which can construct a state of no alternatives for the middle-career women academic. As such, I question how middle-career women are to feel able to contribute, and feel credible in a setting which systematically disadvantages them based on their gendered identity:

*There are just some people within the university who probably won't ever change, and I think the university itself is too fearful to change the way of being. It seems like our way of being as women in academia is to be carers, supporters, mothers, who are limited in our progression and can only progress so far. It's like we have no other option at times. It's almost like "how do we navigate academia as women who are successful?" [43].*

#### **8.3.4.3 The Credible Woman.**

The Credible Woman subject position depicts an ideal representation that the middle-career woman academics constructed based on their perceptions of what the Australian public higher education setting expects of them. This subject position was conceptualised as a woman who was credible, trusted, and valued in academia, based on her working habits. The middle-career women academic attempts to meet the requirements of academia by working to the extent of overworking, and consequently, is now positioned and viewed as an academic who will put the needs of the institution before herself. Putting the institution before the self, validated the women as credible academics. The tension evident in this subject position is that many of the participants rarely met these expectations, and felt it was impossible based on neoliberal/economic, gendered/heteronormative, and expert discourses that were embedded in their daily experiences. Subsequently, not meeting the expectations positioned the women to feel like imposters within the academic setting, who, then attempt to work harder to meet the expectations of this identity.

Within the data set, The Credible Woman subject position was first illustrated through the women drawing on discourse and ways of being to explore symbolic representations of what it means to be an ideal and credible academic in higher education. For example, when the participants discussed what it meant to be credible as a way of being in academia, they drew from a gendered discourse in terms of identifying gendered symbolism reflective of being an academic. Reflecting on past constructions illuminated how the middle-career women conceptualised being an academic, which was discursively constructed as gendered:

*I always saw a professor or a researcher as a genius, credible, a male, who had elbow pads on his jacket and created mathematical formulas (laughs)...we see how movies and TV and things like that portray a professor, like the nutty professor kind of concept, that they're a bit mad and are usually a male in an old-fashioned suit (laughs). [15].*

The above quote illustrates how previous traditional representations of a credible academic were gendered, based on skill, credibility, intelligence, and embedded within the science and mathematics disciplines, which have influenced how women in academia previously viewed the prototype of an academic. Further, the participant suggests that discourse presented in the media can have an influence on how women are positioned to construct what it means to be an academic. Another participant draws on neoliberal/economic, gendered/heteronormative, and patriarchal discourses when discussing the gendered symbolism reflected in academia, with a focus on credibility and leadership, which was suggested to limit the inclusion and progression of women in the setting:

*I think the university generally, it is an academy. It's very masculine based on the language, master, bachelor, fellow, the way graduation regalia is, that they have a spot for the tie and there's no pockets, because of course you'd always have trousers on underneath, right? Think about when we see an academic in a senior leadership position, we assume credibility based on seniority, and it's most likely a male representing this position. Um, so everything is just like that in academia. [09].*

Here, I propose that the discursive constructions presented in academia position the women academics to feel as outsiders in a setting that has historically worked to exclude them. Symbolism surrounding what it means to be an academic is explicitly gendered, heteronormative, and patriarchal, where being a part of the academic setting is contingent on illustrating masculinity through how the system functions, the degrees that are awarded, the positions that are available to academics, as well as engaging in leadership, which all appear to be geared towards men. Limiting the focus on women can advertently position them as outsiders which can, in practice, impact how they identify as a part of the academic setting, potentially making them feel as visitors, or imposters, within academia. While women have been positioned in this way historically, the participants did express how they have identified change in terms of what it means to be an academic, although this change appeared conditional:

*...that perspective has changed because I now see them [academics] as somebody, regardless of gender, who has chosen a particular topic and pursued it, got all the right networks, worked exceptionally hard, you know, in terms of hours and writing and things like that. In saying that, as a woman, I still have to work harder to be seen as a credible academic. [15].*

While change has been noted here in this sentiment, the participant expresses how their identity as a woman academic positions them as devalued in the setting, where women must work harder to be viewed as a credible academic in the same manner as their male counterparts. With credibility a trait that is underpinned by skill, intelligence, and hard work, I propose that the conditions of credibility in academia are constructed as impossible for the women to achieve without sacrifice. With shifting conditions and a lack of understanding and acceptance surrounding women's acceptance in academia, this leads me to question whether the women are able to adopt and identify with The Credible Woman positioning, when the discursive construction of the identity limits what women can achieve, and how they are perceived in higher education.

Within the data set, when considering what it means to be a credible academic within the Australian public higher education setting, the middle-career women academics explored nuance surrounding discursive constructions of what it

means to be *'real'*. Specifically, the women suggested that to be seen as credible within academia, that part of this identity was to be perceived as a *'real'* or *'proper'* academic, as someone who is viewed as contributing to the system, engaging in practices for the benefit of academia, as well as demonstrating excellence and competency in their role:

*To be viewed as a proper academic nowadays, and to be promoted and recognised within any institution, you have to be excellent in most of your roles, and you have to be able to demonstrate excellence, because mediocrity doesn't get you recognised. [01].*

Further, the middle-career women academics explored the discursive construction of being *'real and credible'* by suggesting that the higher education setting supports academics who illustrate professionalism, a strong entrenchment in the setting, as well as being viewed as an expert across many different competencies. Drawing on neoliberal/economic, political, and expert discourses, the participants referred to specific competencies that are expected, valued, and required, to be positioned as a credible academic:

*Academia is one of perhaps a few professions where you need to be an expert, or you're expected to be an expert, across a range of different competencies. You're meant to be a content expert. You're meant to be a pedagogical expert. You need to be an administrative expert. You need to be an expert researcher, as well as an expert teacher. You need to have your subspecialty that you're a content expert in, and then you need to be able to do a bit of statistics on the side, being professional in the setting, credible, all of that. Then, and only then, can you be viewed as a real academic. [37].*

Within the above discursive constructions and related sentiments, the middle-career women academics drew on neoliberal/economic, political, and expert discourses. First, the women referred to working patterns and representations within their exploration of the real, credible academic that are situated within a neoliberal/economic discourse of professionalism, expertise, increasing levels of outputs, and contributions. Women are expected to work to these standards within the system, irrespective of gender. If these standards cannot be met, this limits the progression of, as well as how women can be positioned in,

academia. Additionally, the women drew on a political discourse when exploring how certain working behaviours and competencies are valued more than others, and to be considered as real and credible within academia, they are expected to be engaging in these valued practices. When engaging in these practices, the middle-career women academics also drew on expert discourse in acknowledging how they were expected to be experts and illustrate excellence in their roles.

In being a credible middle-career woman academic, the primary course of action is to invest more time and effort into your academic responsibilities to be viewed as being a genuine contributor to the academic setting. Working, to the level of overworking, appears to have been constructed as a normative practice in academia, where the middle-career women academics have evaluated the consequences of engaging in such a practice:

*I think academia would be among the few jobs where you are expected to have a finger in so many pies and be successful in all of that cooking. I think that's potentially why everyone's working so hard, and working all the time, because not only is it a passion, but working hard and working overtime means "you're an academic" right? [18].*

The participants suggested that when they decide to engage in these normative behaviours and conditions, they are constructed by other academics as successful, passionate, and a real academic. Concurrently, engaging in working practices that could be considered dangerous is also considered as risky to the well-being of the women, especially if they have to encounter the aforementioned barriers to being viewed as credible within the setting. Participants noted that when middle-career women work hard to the extent of overworking, their credible construction is amplified and consolidated, but to the detriment of other practices and identities. Consequences to the amplification of working hard to be seen as credible is that the women may be attempting to meet the requirements of a system that is constantly changing in terms of what is expected of an academic. As such, the women may feel that meeting the requirements to be viewed as credible is an on-going process, and an expectation that is rarely ever met:

*It constantly feels like shifting goal posts to be viewed as credible and doing well. You're shooting for one thing and then when you get there, you're told,*

*"Oh, but it's a different thing now, we've moved it and you need to do more, or you need to do better". The expectation of you changes, the expectation is that you know your craft now, and you should be able to perform. I think the landscape's always changing and the goal posts are being moved, so you might feel that you knew what your craft was even a year ago, but that it's now changed. You're given less support at this stage in your career because of that assumption that you should know what you're doing by now. [28].*

The middle-career women academics engage in such actions which allow for them to be subjected by the higher education setting. This is dependent on the academic in terms of the potential consequences they experience, for example, some academics may thrive when attempting to meet the shifting conditions of credibility in academia, finding the experience worthwhile and beneficial to meeting the real, Credible Woman positioning. Other academics may find the potential consequences subjugating, repressive, and difficult to manage, which can have impacts on their academic identity. For example, with the expectation that meeting the academic conditions and requirements are rarely met, the middle-career women academics may come to accept that their experience will be forever difficult, and that they will never meet the conditions of The Credible Woman identity. As such, these participants felt that academia was constructed as an exclusive club, with credibility as a condition to be a part of a system, that in reality, they were never considered to be members of: *"Academia is full of men, viewed as academics who are the shit, credible, real, and women are never considered as a part of that club."* [31].

A personal struggle was identified as the middle-career women academics expressed overworking in their professional roles and responsibilities to be seen as credible and a part of the academic setting. When engaging in this practice, the participants acknowledged feeling as if all would be lost if they chose to remove themselves from the problematic practices of overworking in academia:

*I've worked so hard for the last two years, to be seen as credible and contributing to academia, that the thought of walking away from what I've established now, it's just heartbreaking, because it's been such a big part of the last two years. It's not like stacking shelves at [supermarket chain] where*

*you turn up at your job, you do your work, you leave, you're paid, and there's no investment. You actually become invested in academia. I'm invested, but I still feel as if I'm not a part of the setting. [42].*

The sentiments here support how middle-career women academics can overwork to the point of becoming invested in academia, but simultaneously, to still be questioning their positioning and contribution to academia. There appears to be a perceived normative experience of middle-career women academics questioning their academic identity here, where many of the participants also expressed feeling as if they were not good enough to be a part of academia. Participants drew on both a gendered, and an expert discourse, when considering how women academics' question their academic identity:

*I wish that I had more confidence in myself as a woman, and as an expert in my field so that when I worked with academics, I would see myself as an expert in my field, and they're an expert in their field, rather than this dichotomy of, they're better than me, and I suck. [43].*

Another participant draws on the above discourses when acknowledging how they have questioned their identity as an academic:

*I wish I'd known how much of my self-worth was tied up in it. So much of our identity as a woman and as an academic is all about, "Wow, you've achieved this and you're achieving this" and then when you stop achieving that, it impacts you personally. Are you contributing, are you still an academic? [06].*

Here, the middle-career women academics felt discouraged within their academic experience and acknowledged that constructing a credible subject position within academia was more detrimental to their own self-worth. For the women who engage in these practices, they may feel like an imposter within the academic setting, questioning how much they have achieved, what their worth and value is within the context, as well as constantly comparing themselves with other academics in the setting (particularly male academics). The participants suggested that this was further compounded by experiences unique to women, such as having to take maternity and/or carers leave, where the women had to re-establish their credibility as an academic:

*I took a break when I had my first child, and the support and the mentoring for that, the guidance, dropped off, and the opportunities dropped off. You are actually considering disengaging from your work for a little while and you probably need more support and more guidance and more opportunities, but no, I came back, and had to re-establish myself with no help, no assistance from anyone, and I felt like I wasn't viewed as a proper academic for taking the time off to engage with my family. [28].*

Here, the middle-career women academics suggest that the imposter feeling appears to be heightened when taking leave from academia to engage in other responsibilities. The level of credibility and reputation as an academic appears threatened when attempting to focus on one identity over the other. As such, it appears that the women may consider reflecting on how they are perceived in academia, and work to balance their multiple roles and responsibilities to maintain their level of academic credibility. Experiencing a sense of never resting and overworking to be seen as credible can have problematic implications for the sense of worth and well-being of the women. The middle-career women academics acknowledged how their experiences of validating their credibility in academia positioned them as academics who were constantly engaged in their work, while simultaneously questioning their positioning in higher education. I propose that the middle-career women academics may find it difficult to overcome feeling like an imposter in a setting which functions to exclude them, even while they overwork to meet the requirements of higher education, which may lead to an eventual questioning of their purpose, and feelings of discouragement and depreciation. Middle-career women academics are positioned so that their hard work reinforces being identified as credible, with an assumption that eventually, they will be viewed as The Credible Woman if they simply work hard enough.

#### **8.3.4.4 The Super Woman.**

The Super Woman subject position is a middle-career woman academic who attempts to balance responsibilities from both their personal and professional life. The middle-career woman academic attempts to meet the requirements of both her role in academia, and her role at home (e.g., as a wife, girlfriend, mother, carer) by working constantly, and consequently, is now positioned, and viewed as an

academic who will put the needs of the institution, and other people, before herself. While some participants noted struggles with being able to balance their multiple roles and responsibilities, they were conceptualised as a force of strength, and almost superhuman, when meeting the requirements of multiple roles successfully. As such, The Super Woman was embedded within a professional and personal context which valued being forever engaged working in both academia, and at home, which left little time to focus on, and prioritise the self. Subsequently, during the analysis, The Sacrificial Woman emerged as a position within The Super Woman positioning, where in practice, the middle-career women academics have been constantly engaged in meeting the requirements of their work and home lives, to the extent that they have sacrificed their own sense of self and well-being for others.

Within the data set, The Super Woman subject position was first illustrated through the women discursively constructing what it means to engage in their work, both in professional and personal contexts. For example, when the participants discussed how working in academia meant they were expected to work longer hours, in combination with parenting and caring responsibilities at home, they drew from both a neoliberal/economic, and a gendered, discourse. First, the middle-career women academics drew on a neoliberal/economic discourse to construct their academic work responsibilities as ongoing, continual, with a larger workload compared to other workplaces, as well as reflecting on what the higher education system expected of them:

*I think the workload side of it can be way more different than other areas, even if there are sort of clear guidelines, they're very rarely, I think, adhered to, and you're just expected to work a lot of unpaid hours...that would be one area where I think it is quite different from other work, you don't work nine to five, it's just expected that you work a lot more and to always be switched on and flexible when they're available, for example, to be available in the middle of the night. Like, the boundaries are less clear with that kind of thing, I think, in academia. [31].*

Here, the middle-career women academics drew on neoliberal technologies to express being positioned in their academic role, such as always being available to

other individuals, as well as the system, where engaging in the academic role comes with the expectation of always being available, and to never stop engaging in academic work and responsibilities. The participants extended on their sentiments by describing their working responsibilities in combination with their personal responsibilities. Drawing on a gendered/heteronormative discourse, the participants expressed how their mothering role at home had to be engaged in while balancing academic commitments, with the expectation that their identity as a woman meant they were required to engage in this role:

*As a woman, I find it challenging. It might just be the area that I work in, but there's almost an expectation that you'll be in early, and you'll work till late, and that there's an expectation that you will be working weekends, and we get emails at midnight, and we are expected to reply to them. Combine that with having to make dinner for my family, and take my kids to school, do the washing, clean the house, take the kids to their friends' house, parties, all of these other things, I have to do them while being expected to meet the requirements of my academic role. [23].*

Here, I propose that the discursive constructions presented in academia position the women academics to engage in overworking practices, which constructs a normative experience that one will always be busy when balancing multiple roles. Constructing overworking in the work and life responsibilities as normative, in practice, constructs the higher education setting as a context which values commitment above all else, with increasing workloads that are expected to be met, regardless of other responsibilities. Constructing this as a discursive practice of being a member of academia subsequently reinforces the problematic standards of academia in regard to workload and work/life balance, which can maintain The Super Woman positioning as a normative lifestyle and standard for the middle-career women academics. Extending on this more broadly, I propose that this can perpetuate the expectation from academia that all academics live for their work, and to be able to meet the requirements of other roles, that individuals must engage in overworking as the standard to succeed within the setting. In practice, this can set the benchmark for all individuals in academia, old and new,

regardless of gender, in terms of how the academic system requires its subjects to engage in work:

*It's harder because people are running with less resources, and doing more work, being told to be faster, faster, faster. There's creep on time, so most academics will tell you, "Look, we don't work the normal working time and we work like 5060 hours", and that's not great for young people coming in either. So, it's sort of setting a benchmark saying we've got to work like this to be effective. I mean, that's not quite right. [42].*

Within the data set, being positioned as The Super Woman meant that the middle-career women academics had to reflect on their workloads, and how they balanced their multiple responsibilities. When reflecting on how they would engage in overworking, the middle-career women academics explored how they felt pressured to engage in more work to be viewed as successful within the setting. Additionally, the women felt pressured to agree to completing multiple tasks, both in the academic setting, and at home. This made it difficult to set the boundaries on how much one should engage in work:

*As a woman, we feel more of a need to take all of those opportunities to succeed in academia, and I go, "Oh, well they're giving it to me because I need an extra boost, so, I'll say yes, yes, yes, yes and I say yes to all the things.", but I still need to keep up with my responsibilities at home, so I try and do them all as well. In doing that, there's a lot less clear boundaries, between work and home life, a lot less clear. The boundaries blur a lot. [15].*

Here, the participant drew on neoliberal/economic discourse to express needing to take on more work to be valued and viewed as credible and contributing within multiple domains. Additionally, there was a lack of definition surrounding the workload in academia, and with the hours that were given to complete the work that the middle-career women took on, I propose this is a deliberate gesture from the academic setting, whereby limited time is given to engage in certain roles, with the expectation that it will be done faster than the time allocated to complete it. The participants concurred with this, and expressed how working responsibilities and tasks encroached into the home life, with the expectation that as an academic, you work unpaid hours:

*You know, often I'll work all day here, and then there's an expectation I'll do my PhD, I mean it'd be lovely to have my PhD, but there's no time allocation. It's a part of my job requirement to do it, so I have to do that in my own time, but then I have to do marking in my own time, I have to do the extra bit of work I can't cram into the day in my own time. I then get something like we're expected to undertake scholarship of learning and teaching, of which my PhD isn't considered scholarship of learning and teaching, but that's a long story, even though it's an assessment. I get 12 hours a semester. Well, you can't write a project proposal in 12 hours, really, if you're going to research it, so 12 hours is a bit of a token gesture. But you're still expected to have the outputs. So, I think it's quite a harsh environment to work in. I think the expectations are quite high, and the work-life balance is minimal and extremely unbalanced. [23].*

Here, being positioned as The Super Woman means that consequently, the boundaries between the work and the home life become less clear, almost blurred, to the extent that the participants may feel they cannot be away from academia. Being an academic appears an all-encompassing role that merges into other roles and responsibilities held by the middle-career women academics. As such, the women expressed feeling engaged in academia constantly, no matter where they are: *“Well, I just think it's relentless. You're always doing something, either at work, or at home. It's the to do list that never goes away.” [25].* Another participant also explored how adopting The Super Woman identity meant that she was forever working without having a clear sense of the boundaries between roles:

*The workload is not really defined in academia. It's not realistic. It becomes more about what you can do at home to make yourself more competitive, which I don't see happening in other industries. I wish I knew that academia operated this way beforehand, that it would interfere with my family and home, and that it would consume my life (laughs). [06].*

Within the above sentiments, the middle-career women academics acknowledge that adopting a work/life balance can be difficult, which perpetuates the operation of The Super Woman subject position. Being positioned to find a balance between the work and home responsibilities was suggested as difficult, as

the women suggest feeling as if they must do it all and complete all of the tasks required of them. While some periods of time appear to be more work focused (*"Some periods I have more work to do, which makes it difficult."* [28]), some appear to be more home focused (*"I haven't worked out the work/life balance, but there'll be periods where I have more family."* [18]), which suggests that the negotiation process between roles is continual. I question whether the negotiation process of engaging in these roles is conditional, based on the balancing act between them. For example, it appears that the balance might be an impossible task, and that enjoyment and satisfaction may only come from these roles, when one has less responsibilities, compared to the other role. With the participants acknowledging the difficulty of finding the balance, this may impact how the middle-career women identify, both in their work and home contexts.

Upon reflecting on the impact of the gendered/heteronormative and neoliberal/economic discourses embedded within the middle-career women academics experiences thus far, I also propose that the women are taking on extra responsibilities in their work and home life in an attempt to be viewed as successful in a setting where the conditions of being a female academic appear to differ compared to other academics. For example, middle-career women academics are being subjected to higher expectations than their male counterparts. Expectations surrounding working and overworking subsequently maintain problematic practices surrounding working practices in both the institution and at home, but additionally, it appears that these practices are also self-imposed based on the academic themselves. A participant draws on a preparedness discourse to explain how taking on more responsibilities sets them up to be viewed as a hard worker, a discursive construction which is important for them to be able to thrive in academia:

*I think the pressure to continually do more builds up, and often it is self-imposed, and this is perhaps again a personality trait of a lot of the people who enter into academia. You know, you're very self-motivated, and you want to do more, and want to do better, it's funny, I actually really thrive in that kind of environment, so my brain doesn't really stop. I need to be stimulated. I don't really function without doing a lot of things. So, for me, it's kind of an ideal environment. I'm known for doing a lot and being that*

*super woman who gets shit done. I want to be known for that, because it means I can progress further in academia, and be viewed as a Super Mum at home. [39].*

Within the above discursive constructions and related sentiments, the middle-career women academics drew on neoliberal/economic, gendered/heteronormative, and preparedness discourses. First, the participants referred to working patterns and practices within their exploration of The Super Woman academic that are situated within neoliberal/economic discourse of overworking, self-motivation, meeting expectations and imposed targets, and making contributions to academia. While it has been proposed that engaging in extra work is an expectation for all academics in today's academic context, the middle-career women academics drew on gendered/heteronormative discourses to explore how they, as women, have other responsibilities outside of academia, perceived as normative for women, that they balance with their working roles. The women acknowledged that male academics do not appear to have to experience this to the same extent. In response to the flexibility and perceived autonomy granted by the academic system, the women choose to take on more responsibilities around the work and home environments, with the expectation that they can do it all and succeed. To be viewed as a Super Woman, the participants also draw on preparedness discourse to illustrate how overworking is considered a strategy to progressing further in their academic role.

I propose that positioning the middle-career woman academic as a Super Woman is problematic, as it reinforces the standard that the women can do it all by overworking, which can increase the expectations placed on women to achieve and succeed. The middle-career women academics attempt to meet this positioning and standard by increasing their workload further, and as such, a perpetual cycle is constructed. I question whether the women can actually meet the standards set by The Super Woman identity, or whether this is another form of subjectification constructed by higher education to control how women navigate academia and its unachievable standards. The middle-career women academics acknowledged that The Super Woman identity cannot be maintained, and that at some point, the women were not able to meet these expectations, allowing for higher education to

position the academic as someone who is not capable of meeting their responsibilities when in reality, the standards are just impossible to meet:

*Sometimes, I hit the wall, and I've had enough, when I reach a point where I'll sort of, you know, work a lot more than I'm supposed to, or that I'm required to, but I think that's often a normal part of an academic role, and also, my role as a working Mum. For good and for bad, I know that it can be quite difficult for a lot of people, and they feel that's really problematic. I think the risk of burnout is really problematic for a lot of people. I've been told I'm not up to the standard of what my institution expects, and I feel like it's because all they see is me when I'm burnt out from trying to balance everything. [39].*

Here, the participant acknowledges difficulty meeting the academic standards, as well as a lack of understanding from other academics surrounding the responsibilities from both the home and academic context. The lack of understanding stems from being positioned to overwork, based on neoliberal/economic discourse that assumes that as an academic, you will place your academic responsibilities first, before other roles. Within this, there is an expectation that when you are not engaging in other roles and responsibilities, that you will be engaging in academic work. The middle-career women academics acknowledged this was a difficult expectation to manage, as they found it hard to balance their responsibilities within a system whose members illustrate a lack of understanding surrounding other priorities:

*I've had some people say, "Oh, when you put her to bed, you can do some work." Are you joking? Like, I'll put my kid to bed at 8 o'clock at night and then I do all the laundry, I get a lunch packed for the next day, I get everything ready to go. By the time I sit down on the couch at 9:30 at night, I'm not really in the mood to log on, and then I also know that I'm probably going to wake up at some point during the night and deal with whatever's going on with her. I need to start the day again at 6:00 AM, but it's like the concept of "Just do some work when your child goes to bed." I'm like, "Such a male thing to say, yeah, while you sleep through," I also don't get weekends off, like it's happening on the weekends as well, it's just never ending. Yeah,*

*that sounds great (laughs). Like it really doesn't, you know, like I'm absolutely bone crushingly tired. [25].*

The middle-career women academics acknowledge the positioning of women in academia whereby they contend with a system that constructs barriers to interfere with familial and caring responsibilities. These barriers promote the construction of The Super Woman subject position, as the women work harder, engage in more tasks, with less time, to be viewed as contributing, valued, and respected in their contexts. The working practices here are still problematic, as is the positioning of The Super Woman, as the desire to engage in doing it all for everyone is ultimately a neoliberal practice. Specifically, I propose how being positioned to engage in overworking, reflective of The Super Woman positioning, indirectly constructs and conceptualises women as both entrepreneurs of the market, as well as entrepreneurs of the self, which manifest through discourse related to governmentality and neoliberalism (Foucault, 2008). In practice, managing the responsibilities of the market relate to academic responsibilities, while the responsibilities of the self, relate to the managing of both the personal life and familial obligations. As such, this practice is ultimately enmeshed with the doing of neoliberalism, where the middle-career woman academics are constantly thinking about the work that needs to be done. This is achieved by the women academics being controlled by the institution and governed in a manner that reinforces these problematic standards. I propose that the women are positioned in a manner where eventually, they place the needs of the institution, and their family, as priority, to the detriment of the self, and their individual identity. Here, there is an assumption that the roles of work and life can be met, if the self is sacrificed:

*I understood that it was quite a commitment to be an academic. It required working weekends, and long hours, and all that sort of thing. I was aware of the fact that it would be a lifestyle, with that value attached to it. It's the same as being a mother, the same sort of thing. Without a balance between the two, there's a tipping point that has an impact on you personally. For me, I've sacrificed my own identity. I've felt that I just didn't have a life at all, you know what I mean? I was either at work, working, or out of work, caring*

*for my family. It can come at a cost. I'm now questioning who I am as a person, like what did I sacrifice to get here? [31].*

Upon reflecting on how The Super Woman subject position operates within academia, discourses reflective of survival and sacrifice became a common nuance that weaved its way through the experiences of middle-career women academics. I was particularly interested in observing how the participants discussed their experiences of surviving academia by adopting The Super Woman positioning, engaging in overworking as a discursive practice within their work and home domains, to the detriment of other facets of identity. The above participant began to question who she was as a person beyond her academic and caring/mothering roles, and what she had sacrificed to progress in her work and home domains. Other participants shared similar sentiments, and as such, I found that The Sacrificial Woman subject position emerged as a sub-position, or as a positioning within a position, for the middle-career women academics.

#### **8.3.4.4.1      *The Sacrificial Woman.***

The Sacrificial Woman subject position is a middle-career woman academic who attempts to meet the needs of the academic institution, as well as their home context, where subsequently, the woman then loses her own sense of self identity. The work self, and the home self, become dominant identities for the middle-career women academics, with the identity of the self, becoming sacrificed over time to meet the demands of other responsibilities. The sacrifice to the self, appeared to be a surprise and shock to the participants, where they expressed how they felt their individual identity shifted and changed over time, until they were unsure of who they were as a person:

*There is this immense pressure to keep your career ticking over but also looking after these little people and feeling like you're not doing a good job with either. It is a really hard time. Adding to that, you spend so much time at work, or caring for your family, that you don't take the time out for yourself. So, I think that's a particular point where a lot of women question whether it's worth it, and it surprises you, because it's coming at a cost of your interaction with your family, you're feeling stressed and worn down, questioning yourself, and feeling like shit about everything. [34].*

Here, neoliberal/economic, survival, and responsabilisation discourses are embedded within these sentiments. The middle-career women academics have felt pressured to prioritised responsibilities for other individuals both in academia and at home, with the pressure of feeling responsible for multiple domains, as well as being able to integrate both the work life, and the family life. This appears as an expectation of the academic system for middle-career women academics to be able to navigate and survive. Focusing on surviving as an academic, as well as a parent/carer/manager of the household, appeared at the expense of the women's sense of self, self-care, and individuality. As such, the participants expressed feeling unsure of themselves and who they were as a person. The middle-career women academics described how as they progressed over time in academia, attempting to keep their work life progressing, and their families happy and fulfilled, which meant that there had been a lack of time to focus on themselves:

*You can't really take any time for yourself when you have so many things to do for work, and then what you have to get done at home, these multiple responsibilities are always in the back of your mind. I was kind of prepared for it, but the extent of that and how it affects your, you know, sense of self. Like some days, I cry because I don't know who I am beyond being a good academic and a good mother. I wish I had known about all of this when I started in academia. [39].*

Here, the middle-career women academics drew on discursive constructions of working and overworking, where engaging in these practices has become the norm, and as such, the self has become less of a priority. I propose that the self here has ultimately been forgotten and devalued, as the responsibilities of other identities become so encompassing and dominating, that the middle-career women academics have minimal, to no time, to focus on other identities. Additionally, I propose that the nature and choice of sacrificing the self to meet the normative ways of being in academia can make the form of subjectification a sinister form of disciplinary power and control, as the middle-career women academics are made to feel that they should be able to succeed and meet the responsibilities of their work and home roles. A lack of control over the multiple demands and struggles to

survive is evident here, where the women lack the choice and autonomy to fully engage in roles without it sacrificing their own way of being and sense of self.

While middle-career women academics may perceive that they have autonomy, in practice, the power is actually held by the dominant group, favoured by patriarchal discourse, in terms of particular ways of being and doing that are more valued than others to engage in. Sacrificing the self to benefit the academic system first, and then to benefit the family second, appears to be constructed at times as the logical and favoured way of being in higher education. Consequently, the women reconceptualised what was important to them during this career stage, and as such, found it difficult to meet these standards while being able to express who they were outside of both academia and their home context. This practice is enmeshed within the doing of neoliberalism, as promoting these other identities while sacrificing the self allows for the woman to become a neoliberal subject. The middle-career women questioned whether it was worth engaging in these multiple roles, as their identities came at a cost of how they interacted with the work and home life, as well as being unsure of who they were as individuals. As such, the sacrificing of the self was stated to impact on 'everything':

*I stayed connected to my family, and connected to my job, throughout the whole time, but I really lost myself in there. I woke up every morning questioning who I was. I was an absolute train wreck for a few years. Surviving was literally it. I would do things like not being able to find a matching pair of socks and I would cry for 15 minutes, 'cause I just couldn't do it. It really was honestly just day by day surviving. I know it sounds ridiculous, crying over matching socks, but you know, the impact of not knowing who you are beyond your work and your family life, I just didn't have the energy to think about it. [25].*

#### **8.4 Concluding Commentary**

In this chapter, I identified five 'ways of being', or subject positions that were present within the experiences of middle-career women academics – The Pragmatic Woman (who views academia from a practical lens to learn how to survive the setting), The Prototypical Woman (who experiences their professional and personal responsibilities by adopting ways of being and doing associated with

being a woman, and motherhood), The Credible Woman (who was constructed as the ideal in academia; someone who was trusted and valued, based on their working habits), The Super Woman (who meets the requirements of multiple roles by working constantly, and puts the needs of the institution, and other people, before herself), and The Sacrificial Woman (who finds the sense of self sacrificed based on the valuing of the work and home life).

The overarching message from the findings is that while all women academics appear to work within a system where they must work harder than other academics to prove themselves, the middle-career women academics have to work even harder, as they are afforded less allowances, and held to higher standards, than their male academic counterparts. While the middle-career women academics are also constructed and positioned as neoliberal subjects, they additionally experience further complexities based on their gender, prototypical expectations of women, conflicting roles and responsibilities, nuance surrounding credibility and expertise, and demanding expectations from individuals both within, and outside of the academic setting. In the next chapter, I discuss how the later-career women academics conceptualised their academic identity through exploring the subjectivities and positionings made available through discourse.

**CHAPTER 09: “I’M AN ACADEMIC, NOW WHAT?”: EXPLORING  
LATER-CAREER WOMEN’S ACADEMIC IDENTITIES IN  
AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION USING FOUCAULDIAN  
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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*The later-career stage is a period that may not always be as straightforward as one might expect, as women may experience more challenges in achieving recognition, or even, an invitation for being considered for senior roles. For some, it is a period of finality, acknowledging the end of one’s career, for others, it can be the beginning of another career, acting as a launching pad into other academic roles (Shelda Debowski, 2017, p. 147).*

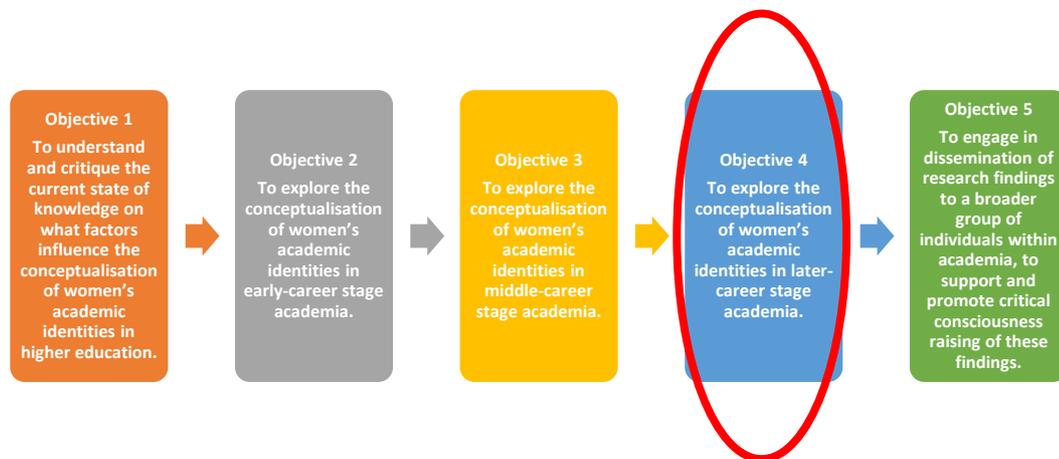
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### 9.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I discuss my analytical findings in relation to objective four of phase two, which is highlighted in blue below in Figure 13. This phase aimed **to explore the conceptualisation of academic identities for women in later-career stage academia**, and to address the overarching research questions, **‘How do later-career women within the academic setting conceptualise their academic identities? What subject positions are made available in the discourse?’**. The findings from the early-, and middle-career women academics provided in Chapters Seven and Eight were considered to determine whether the available subject positions differed within the later-career academic experience. While drawing on many of the same discursive constructions, discourses, and action orientations, the subject positions appeared as novel and unique to the later-career experience, and as such, the findings from the analysis of the interviews conducted with later-career women academics are presented separately from the early-, and middle-career women academics, and provided below.

**Figure 13**

*Flow Diagram of Project Objectives: Addressing Objective 4*



## 9.2 Setting the Scene: Late-Career Women Academics

Four subject positions for the later-career women academics were identified in this FDA – 1) The Insecure Woman, 2) The Expert Academic, 3) The Reflective Academic, and 4) The Disengaging Academic. Within these subject positions, I consider and provide commentary on how they were made available to the participants through discursive constructions and the role of discourse, as well as explore how they function within Australian public higher education.

## 9.3 Later-Career Women Academics Findings

### 9.3.1 *Discursive Constructions at a Glance*

The discursive constructions identified in the later-career women academics analysis are provided below:

- **Feeling Unsupported:** the women constructed their academic experience and identity as plagued with insecurity. Subsequently, the women acknowledged still not feeling supported in the later-career stage, noting a struggle for women to progress in academia. The women experienced tensions in the academic they wanted to be, versus what the institution expected of them.
- **“I Can Do What I Want”:** the women suggested a greater level of flexibility and autonomy in the later-career stage. Additionally, there were

assumptions made based on skill, expertise, career stage, and value, whereby the women were perceived as the experts in academia. The women noted that this protected them from some of the negative behaviours and patterns within academia. Subsequently, the later-career women experienced being able to reflect on their identities, and how they wanted to progress.

- **Always Busy:** the women constructed their academic experience and identity with several different responsibilities and roles similar to the other career stages. Subsequently, the women acknowledged finding it difficult as they felt they had to be *'everything for everyone'*.
- **Collaborative Academic:** the later-career women suggested wanting to pass on their wisdom and expertise to younger academics, to assist them in navigating the academic system. Further to this, the women acknowledged adopting a mentoring role, which was consistent with stereotypical assumptions made of them based on their gender and age (i.e., considered as maternal, motherly, supportive).
- **"I Feel Good":** the women reflected on their time in academia and considered the impact that they had made. Additionally, there was consideration of what it meant to identify as a later-career woman academic. The women noted that they felt satisfied but questioned what else they could achieve within the setting. Subsequently, this led the later-career women to disengage with their roles and prepare for the eventual leaving of academia.
- **Is this the End?:** the women questioned their suitability to academia at this later-stage of their career. Subsequently, the women acknowledged how far they had come, and expressed feeling bored within the setting. The women experienced tensions between wanting to stay in academia based on their passion, versus wanting to leave based on having already made their mark.

### 9.3.2 *Discourses at a Glance*

The discourses identified in the later-career women academics analysis are provided below:

- **Patriarchal:** discourse produced to act, explain, and justify the dominance of men within society. Additionally, the discourse produces meanings to attribute natural differences between men and women.
- **Neoliberal/Economic:** discourse produced to constitute success, value, and productivity through the marketisation of institutions, as well as exhibiting a set of economic policies that have, over time, become embedded within Western culture.
- **Risk:** discourse which considers how subjects navigate the possibility of exposure to danger, unpleasantness, or something unexpected within their environment.
- **Gendered/Heteronormative:** discourse surrounding symbolic activities, style of dress, patterns of consumption, ways of moving, talking, and being, in relation to gender.
- **Survival:** discourse produced by a subject to explore behaviours, ways of being, ways of doing, and talk, to carry out actions which embed them within a setting, allowing them to feel safe and secure in their positioning.
- **Expert:** discourse surrounding the possession of knowledge and having more knowledge than the lay person surrounding a particular content area or set of experiences.
- **Preparedness:** discourse produced by a subject to explore behaviours, ways of being, ways of doing, and talk, to carry out actions which allow an individual to anticipate and respond to the impact of likely, imminent, and/or current events and conditions.
- **Responsibilisation:** discourse which considers subjects as being individually responsible for tasks which previously would have been the duty of another individual or group, or, would not have been recognised as a responsibility at all.
- **Agentic:** discourse produced by a subject that reflects one's capacity to act independently and to make their own free choices.
- **Ageist:** discourse produced by a subject that promotes perspectives of older individuals as holding homogenous traits that are viewed as undesirable.

Particular social identities for older age groups are constructed via the de-individualising and devaluing of older people through certain attitudes, cultures, and practices.

### 9.3.3 *Action Orientations at a Glance*

The action orientations identified in the later-career women academics analysis are provided below:

- **Being Agentic/Autonomous:** being able to set the academic and workplace boundaries, as well as the overall working conditions. Choices were now more governed by the individual, rather than the institution.
- **Being Flexible:** by setting your own boundaries, the later-career women acknowledged prioritising their own well-being and decision-making.
- **Accepting:** the women engaged in working to work within a pre-existing system in a way that reduced their risk and maximised their benefits.
- **Performing Gender:** the dichotomisation of gender, and how it was performed (i.e., masculine, or feminine) prescribed conditions on some of the later-career women in relation to how they were positioned in academia. Conditions prescribed what was considered '*women's work*' and '*men's work*' in academia.
- **Questioning:** some of the later-career women expressed how their constant questioning of their experience and abilities, subsequently informed their feeling of being an imposter.
- **Sacrificing:** by meeting the many demands of academia, sacrifices were made in relation to the home life, and to the self.
- **Being Responsible:** to the self for adapting and learning new ways of being in academia.
- **Having Status:** the status and identity of the later-career woman academic made it feasible for one to progress and have specific freedoms within the setting.
- **Being Empowered:** based on one's status, the women acknowledged feeling more empowered to challenge the traditional way of being.

- **Blaming:** based on the later career stage, the women were evaluated negatively on their decision to remain in academia, viewed as taking a place for someone who could more effectively and efficiently '*do the job*'.

### **9.3.4 Subject Positions, Practices, and Subjectivities**

#### **9.3.4.1 The Insecure Woman.**

The Insecure Woman subject position reflects a later-career woman academic who, based on her previous experiences of prejudice, discrimination, a lack of opportunity, and uncertainty of the self, is positioned to doubt her contributions, value, and overall academic identity. Within this positioning, there was a clear focus on how gender can manifest and influence how the later-career woman academic experiences higher education. Previous experiences of having to comply to the academic standards, learning how to be pragmatic, and engaging in prototypical female roles and responsibilities positioned the women to experience tensions between the academic that the system required them to be, compared to the academic that they wanted to be.

Within the data set, this was illustrated through the extensive experiences that the later-career women shared with me, where they still felt unsure of what the academic system, as well as other academics, expected of them, to ensure that their positioning in academia was maintained. Further, the later-career women acknowledged that they felt dispensable and unsupported, and that it was a struggle to navigate academia, even after being a part of the setting for so long. Embedded within these experiences was discourse surrounding gender, the patriarchy, survival, and risk, where the later-career women expressed feeling vulnerable based on their career stage. Tensions became evident when exploring how the later-career women attempted to mitigate the insecurity, by attempting to adapt to the setting and comply with the expectations set for them, finding this experience difficult based on the manifestation of patriarchal, gendered/heteronormative, and ageist discourses. This ultimately led to the women feeling as if they were imposters within the academic setting based on their gender, experience, and age, which positioned them as outsiders within academia.

First, the later-career women academics acknowledged that they experienced a sense of insecurity when constructing their academic identity. Specifically, when navigating the conditions and expectations of academia, the women felt unsure of what the academic system, as well as other academics, expected of them. While the women drew on patriarchal discourse to contextualise how the conditions of academia were constructed to position women academics as outsiders, disadvantaging them within the setting, discourses evident of survival and risk also manifested within the later-career women's experiences. Being in a position where they were feeling insecure and unsure of the expectations of academia meant that the later-career women doubted their capability to contribute to the setting:

*Even though I've been in academia for many years, I still don't feel like a part of the setting. I think there's a mismatch between what I think the expectations are, and what I think the expectations should be, and that makes me doubt myself and what I've contributed to the institution. Am I seen as a genuine, proper academic? [16].*

Another participant drew on both survival and risk discourses to explore similar sentiments: *"I still question what it takes to be an academic. I don't feel like one, and I feel like every day I'm just doing enough to survive. Not doing enough makes me feel like I'm not good enough."* [50]. The above sentiments support the manifestation of survival and risk discourses in the way that the Insecure Woman identity is constructed for later-career women academics. The later-career women discursively constructed insecurity as a part of their academic identity, drawing on the above discourses to reflect their understanding. The primary function and consequence of this construction is that the women may question their own abilities and contributions, as well as their perception of what it means to be an academic. Additionally, the women appear to question whether they have contributed enough to be evaluated and considered as a *"proper"* academic. Of particular interest here is the construction of *"proper"* in relation to what it means to be an academic at the later-career stage, whereby the women may find that there are inconsistencies between their own insecurities, and the expectations of the institution when engaging in the academic role.

For some of the later-career women academics, feeling insecure in relation to their academic positioning, as well as navigating the system, perpetuated feelings surrounding their struggle in what it means to be a woman in academia. Nuance surrounding gendered roles, identities, and positionings manifested when the later-career women drew on their experiences within academia, with the participants drawing on patriarchal discourse to explore how women were still viewed as the minority in academia, even within the later-career stage: *"I'm a woman in academia, and because of that, I'm part of the minority. Women are always the minority in academia, and in everyday society. Blame the patriarchy."* [10]. Discussion surrounding gendered roles and responsibilities with the participants illuminated how for some, patriarchal discourse appeared to embed itself within normative practices and assumed responsibilities over the course of the academic career. For these women, they experienced assumptions made of them, their abilities, and difficulties based on gender, which further perpetuated their insecurities:

*I think it is difficult for women to progress their career, because of, you know, the structures within the university, to be able to do that, and be viewed as an academic, rather than as a woman, or a woman academic. I have found it extremely difficult to progress based on my gender. It's as if I may as well have a sign on my head that says 'impediment' just because I'm a woman. [12].*

Based on these assumptions and experienced difficulties, the later-career women academics felt as if they were evaluated based on their gender, and judged based on their physicality and biology, rather than their intellectuality. Gendered/heteronormative and patriarchal discourses continued to manifest throughout the experiences of later-career women academics, where the women also felt unsupported based on both systemic disadvantages, and their gendered and caring responsibilities: *"It's like women are set up to fail, expecting us to take on these caring and familial responsibilities, and engaging in tasks that are drawing on our 'maternal' side. It's the way it's always been."* [52]. Additionally, the women felt that having more responsibilities to juggle, compared to their male academic colleagues, positioned them to struggle in relation to their progression in academia.

Gendered/heteronormative discourse was again drawn on to explore these sentiments:

*I look at most of the people who do my job, most of them are male. As you're getting to the level D's and the E's, the women start dropping off, and the men start taking up the percentage of it. I'm convinced that it's because most of these men are all married with children, and they have wives to help out. I'm trying to do the job that they're doing, but I'm also doing the job that their wife is doing as well, so I'm having to leave work at 4:30 to get to childcare. When there's conferences or seminars, they're run from 4:00 until 5:00 and then we're having nibbles afterwards and these men are all there, and I'm having to leave at 4:30, or even if I can push it to 5:00 if I drive really fast, to get my daughter to get her home, to put her bed. I'm not back online until like 8:00, 9:00 o'clock at night whereas these men in general can do it anytime because they just know that their kids are going to be picked up by their wives. [22].*

Here, the participants draw on gendered/heteronormative discourse to explore how later-career women academics navigate and juggle the increasing expectations set for them in both the professional and personal context. The participants described how her responsibilities were different, effectively doubled, based on the gendered expectations that manifest throughout their experience. Male counterparts are described as being able to be an academic, whereas the participant describes having to be an academic, and having to complete the duties performed by her counterparts' wives. When reflecting on this nuance, consistent with the early- and middle-career stages, gender appears to manifest throughout the experience of women, particularly in how they are able to occupy and navigate academia, as well as juggling their caring responsibilities, which men appear to be excused from. For some women in the later-career stage, this experience appears continual over time, which appears to position them in such a manner where tensions surrounding gender will consistently be at the forefront of their experience.

Further perpetuating the Insecure Woman identity for the later-career women academics is the acknowledgement of tensions in adapting to the forever-

changing academic environment. The later-career women academics suggested that academia was continually changing in terms of how one is expected to learn, engage, and adopt new ways of being. Additionally, the later-career women felt that it was assumed that based on their career stage, and age, that they may find it harder to adapt to change, as well as being the responsibility of their younger colleagues to assist. Societal and ageist discourses were evident when the participants shared their sentiments supporting these claims:

*It's like they look at me as this old, stale woman, never wanting to change, still with a Nokia phone, that they have to manage. It's like 'I have an iPhone, and I can learn new things, just be patient with me!'. But that's society, isn't it? Old people are viewed as resistant to change, or that they can't learn new things, and I'm lumped in that category now. [51].*

Consequently, the above sentiment may reinforce stereotypes surrounding age and change, as well as maintaining the perspective that younger academics are able to adapt more easily, and learn new ways of being, compared to later-career women academics. Here, I propose that this would reinforce the Insecure Woman identity, where the women may struggle with conceptualising the self and their academic identity in the later-career stage. The constructions and discourses here function to position later-career women to not feel good enough, or to feel as if they are not the best fit for academia. In practice, it appears that for later-career women academics to mitigate the feeling of insecurity, that they must be responsible for their own learning, as well as adapting to the system, or risk feeling like an imposter within their institution.

For some of the later-career women academics, feeling insecure, dispensable, unsupported, as well as struggling and finding it difficult to adapt to the setting meant that they began to question their role in academia, and identity as an academic. Based on this questioning, the participants expressed feeling as if they were an imposter within the academic setting: *"I feel like an imposter within academia 100% every single day. That has never changed."* [48]. Subsequently, the later-career women expressed fears surrounding the insecurity of their existence, and their positioning, in academia, and that they would be forced to adopt

behaviours that were considered as normative to the traditional academic. These behaviours were constructed to disadvantage the later-career women in academia:

*I will be the first to tell you that sometimes, I have no idea what the institution expects of me. That makes me feel like crap. I don't feel like I necessarily fit in here. I've been told that I don't meet the imposed targets that they [the academic institution] want me to meet, to be considered as ideal, and a good worker. Knowing that I don't meet these academic expectations makes me question my whole being as an academic, yet I'm expected to fix the problem and to stick it out to remain a part of the institution. [41].*

Here, the participant suggested feeling as if their own academic identity and way of being was considered as not good enough, or “*ideal*”, for the academic system. Survival discourse was drawn upon when considering how the Insecure Woman is expected to “*stick it out*”, stay strong, and be resilient in a setting where their identities are questioned and compromised. This excludes the ways of knowing, being, and doing that are women centred. Consequently, responsibility is deferred to the self in terms of how to manage insecurity and the questioning of identity within the academic setting, where the later-career women expressed feeling as if they need to be able to survive academia by resolving their own insecurities. In practice, this perpetuates their insecurity as an individual problem, rather than being influenced by, and the product of, the existing institutional system, in relation to how it manages its members.

Within the Insecure Woman positioning, the later-career women acknowledged that their feelings of insecurity were about more than just constructing a way of being that met the expectations of the institution. The constant feeling of insecurity permeated through how the later-career women academics managed their multiple identities: “*By feeling insecure at work, I begin to feel insecure at home. I bring it home with me, and I begin to question everything I'm doing. [35].* As such, framing this way of being as consistent within the later-career woman experience illuminates the concerning nature of said experiences. I propose that the Insecure Woman positioning is more than just feeling constantly insecure, where additionally, it becomes a dangerous embracing across the many

identities and ways of being for the later-career women. By being unsure and insecure of their academic identity, I propose that there is scope for the women in this position to be vulnerable to the threat and danger surrounding women's experiences in academia. Specifically, the way of being here could make the women more predisposed to conceptualising an identity that benefits the academic institution, rather than the woman herself, to avoid risking their own position in academia. As such, the assumption here is that to survive and maintain their positioning in academia, later-career women academics who identify as insecure must sacrifice part of their own individual, self-identity and way of being, to be viewed as "ideal" and good enough for the system. The tension evident for the Insecure Woman is that she wants to remain unique and construct her own way of being, rather than being a product of academia, but she remains uncertain of exactly what her way of being is:

*In order to survive in a university, I think that the sense of academic freedom surrounding who we are, and what we do, that used to be taken for granted, is not necessarily always available anymore? I question who I am every single day. As academics, we do things to be viewed favourably within academia, but are they things that we feel comfortable doing? I'd love to speak to women who have made it in academia, to consider how they progressed up the ladder. What did they sacrifice? What did they do right? Who knows? [24].*

#### **9.3.4.2 The Expert Academic.**

The Expert Academic subject position depicts a later-career woman academic who is constructed as a part of the most qualified group of individuals within the academic institution. Within this positioning, it was evident that the career stage of the academic, as well as their extensive academic experience, positioned them to be viewed by other individuals (academic, or otherwise) as the expert, and the voice of reason within academia. This was both in terms of a particular subject area, as well as in navigating the academic setting. What was of interest when exploring this subject position, was the change in discourse and rhetoric surrounding the labelling used. Thus far, in each career stage, the subject positions have all encapsulated gender being at the forefront of the academic

identity and experience for women academics. Previously, gender was viewed as a construct that was interwoven with both the professional and personal identities for the participants. Within this subject position, and for the remainder of the positions in this chapter, it was evident that the women, based on their career stage, were now being evaluated and positioned based more on their expertise and experience, rather than their gender. While gender was not completely removed within the subject positions, the participants felt a shift in how they were evaluated, and that being positioned in this way signified to them that their journey was ending, and that they were perceived as having '*made it*' within academia. This implies that within the academic experience, one must persist and survive until the end to be viewed as the Expert Academic.

Within the data set, the Expert Academic subject position was illustrated through the later-career women discursively constructing what it means to be viewed as the most qualified academic, as well as the voice of reason within academia. Additionally, the later-career women drew on expert discourse to reflect on the shift in how they were evaluated and positioned in academia, based on their expertise, rather than their gender. The participants also shared with me how they felt confident in their identity and positioning, and as such, they acknowledged feeling more respected as an academic. Subsequently, this led the later-career women academics to feel as if they were protected from some of the issues that were embedded within the experience of the early- and middle-career women academics. The women also felt they were offered more flexibility and autonomy when constructed as the Expert Academic, and ultimately, the ability to make their own decisions resulted in a shifting of focus in relation to what was important within their academic career.

First, the Expert Academic subject position was illustrated through the later-career women academics discursively constructing what it means to be viewed as '*the expert*' within academia. For example, the women reflected on how they were now evaluated in relation to their expertise, rather than their gender, which had been at the forefront of their previous experiences. As such, the focus on experience and expertise positioned the later-career women as "*fully-fledged proper academics*", drawing on expert, and gendered/heteronormative, discourses

to illustrate the shift, as well as how they were perceived as the most qualified in academia:

*Previously, it was all about being a woman, and how I had to juggle multiple responsibilities with my work and home life. Now, it's almost like, because I've been here for so long, and I've shown that I can do that successfully, that the ship has sailed, and I'm now viewed solely on what I offer. I've given a lot to the institution. It's like I've made it here, finally, I'm a fully-fledged proper academic, and it feels great. [47].*

Here, the participant explores how in evading being a woman within the academic space, they were then able to be constructed as an academic. Another participant also drew on both the expert, and gendered/heteronormative discourses, to explore similar sentiments:

*With being an older academic, I'm no longer asked about my kids. When they were growing up, it was the first question that my colleagues asked me. Now, the focus is less on them, and more on my expertise and experience. I seem to be viewed as if I can offer more now, based on my career stage. [36].*

The above sentiments support how the later-career women academics are discursively constructed based on their level of experience. Expert and gendered/heteronormative discourses were embedded within these constructions to explore how the women were positioned to operate in academia. The primary function and consequence of this construction is that the participants have been evaluated differently in academia compared to the early- and middle-career stages, which may imply that experience, career stage, and status impact the perception of women within academia. Through this discourse, the assumption here implies that to be an expert, one must be older, wiser, and embedded within the setting for a prolonged period of time.

Additionally, the later-career women academics acknowledged that being constructed as *'the expert'* appeared synonymous with being the voice of reason, and that the vast array of experience positioned the academic as effective problem solvers who knew how to overcome *"any struggle in academia"*. Expert and age-related discourses were drawn on to explore these sentiments: *"It's almost like*

*you're the sage, based on being in academia for so long, so you're the expert, and you can navigate and reason through any struggle in academia."* [45]. The discussion surrounding expertise, experience, and wisdom with the participants illustrated that for some, expert and age-related discourses appeared to be embedded within the day-to-day experience of the later-career women academics. For these women, it appears assumptions were made of them based on their career stage, which perpetuates stereotypical assumptions that can be made of older adults in society, where to be considered an older adult, one must be wise, they must have all the answers, and they must be experienced. Another participant explored this claim: *"As an older academic at the later-career, people naturally assume you're a brilliant researcher, or a brilliant lecturer, or a brilliant manager of people. It's like you're old, and you're wise, so you know everything."* [10]. Consequently, this may place unintended pressure on the later-career women if they are not able to resolve issues or meet the expectations of the Expert Academic subject position: *"Not meeting the expectations of being older and wiser, well, that's a bit daunting for me."* [45] and *"I do sometimes feel the pressure to be all knowing at my age."* [48].

For some of the later-career women academics, being positioned as an Expert Academic within the institution allowed for them to feel more certain and confident in their academic positioning. The women acknowledged that in navigating academia over time, that the factors that inhibited them from doing what they wanted in their careers, were no longer an issue. As such, they felt assured in terms of how to juggle their multiple personal and professional responsibilities. This was also easier based on their children being older and able to look after themselves, having less responsibilities from the personal domain. The women drew on survival discourse to explore these claims: *"I feel like I've found the happy medium in terms of how to navigate academia and juggle my never-ending to-do list."* [46]. Extending on these claims, the participants acknowledged how feeling more confident has led to feeling more secure in their academic position, as well as becoming more certain of their own academic identity. Survival and expert discourses were drawn upon to explore these sentiments:

*For me, I don't feel the pressure so much to have to survive in academia anymore. I've made it, and I feel so good in myself as to what I've done and how I view myself as an academic. I'm viewed as an academic by others based on what I've done and how I've contributed to my area. I feel like I can do whatever I want. What can they [the academic institution] do to me? Fire me? They'd never do that; how could they survive without me? [49].*

The above sentiments explore how the later-career experience for women is less embedded within a survival discourse, and more focused on discourses of security, expertise, and experience. Based on the discursive construction of confidence, certainty, and security evident here in identifying as an Expert Academic, it appears that the primary function and consequence is that the later-career women academics are positioned to feel more empowered within their identity conceptualisation, as well as in their navigation of academia. The later-career women acknowledge feeling less concerned about contributing to, and making it in, academia, as they have been able to determine exactly what and how they have contributed to the setting. Being able to conceptualise the academic identity within this career stage appears to determine just how secure and confident that the later-career women academics feel in terms of their academic positioning.

Further consolidating the Expert Academic identity for the later-career women academics was being acknowledged and respected as an academic in relation to their career status, expertise, and experience. The later-career women academics suggested that as they have established their credibility based on their many years of experience in academia, that they were more respected in relation to their academic expertise. Specifically, the participants suggested how the discursive construction of a “good academic” manifests when considering expertise, experience, and respect:

*At the later-career stage, you're no longer on that pathway of trying to obtain promotion, you're more able to withstand some pushback, and you have established your credibility in the academic world, and so, you know, people will actually pay you respect and acknowledge that you have the authority and the credibility to say and do things. I'm viewed as a good*

*academic, and I'm respected based on my contributions and what I offer, which feels great. [24].*

Here, the participant acknowledges that being positioned as an Expert Academic offers the benefits of credibility, respect, and authority. Not only are the later-career women academics being viewed as *'an academic'*, with the status and privilege that accompanies it, an additional layer is present whereby they are also being constructed and evaluated as a *'good academic'*. Subsequently, with being viewed as a *'good academic'* illuminating for the women what is important within their academic experience, the participant acknowledged feeling more valued and positive surrounding their position and contribution in academia. Based on the above discursive constructions of expertise, confidence, experience, and respect, the later-career women academics also acknowledged feeling as if their academic position was less threatened, and that they were protected from some of the negative consequences and outcomes that existed within academia based on their status. For example, a participant drew on a survival discourse to explore the trajectory of the women's academic experience, and how the Expert Academic positioning affords protection against some of the disadvantages of working in academia:

*I hear the stories of my colleagues, the women who are just starting out, and the women who are right in the thick of it, you know, 'the struggle', and I feel awful for them. I've experienced it. I've been there, but I've come out of it, I've survived. It's almost as if because I've survived it, I'm protected. Nothing can penetrate me, nothing can break me down, I'm safe here [in academia] now. [52].*

Here, the survival discourse manifests within the participant's sentiments, where it appears that the navigation of the academic journey as a trajectory is demonstrated within the Expert Academic subject position. As previously stated, the participants discursively constructed their academic experience as having an end point, accompanied by being perceived as an expert, feeling confident, and certain in their identity, as well as being respected by others. The academic setting is considered as no longer dangerous for The Expert Academic. Consequently, the participants suggested that withstanding the struggles for women in academia, and

reaching the end of the constructed academic trajectory, affords protection based on career status. Of particular interest here is the construction of *'survival'* where the participants suggest *'nothing can break'* them, acknowledging the violent nature of academia for women, and implying that in experiencing the worst throughout their academic career, they have navigated an array of differing experiences intended to disadvantage and *'break'* them, as well as being considered an expert in navigating these experiences. I propose that this perpetuates the problematic messaging that later-career women academics are forced to navigate the complexities of the academic setting which are based on discriminatory practices, threat, violence, and sacrifice, and that this navigation is justifiable based on the experience of surviving said setting.

For some of the later-career women academics, being perceived as the Expert Academic within higher education allowed for a higher degree of flexibility and autonomy in relation to the choices that could be made, and the way that they navigated their academic role. The participants explored the ways in which they were able to be more autonomous and flexible, drawing on an agentic discourse to explore how they now have more power to control their academic experience:

*I get to be fairly autonomous in what I choose to work on, you know, like I can choose to work on this research project, rather than that one. I can choose to supervise this student because, you know, I think that student shows potential and, you know, like I've got the capacity to choose the different ways in which I could spend my time. I've got that capacity because I've shown my value. Being a later-career academic, I've been here for so long, that the institution knows what I can offer, so I am afforded more autonomy and the ability to be flexible. [24].*

Here, the participant explores how one's career stage and experience can influence the degree of autonomy and flexibility that they are offered. When drawing on agentic discourse to explore how the women have the power to control their experience, the primary course of action and consequence here is that the later-career women academics have proven themselves within the academic setting, which allows for them to feel more empowered and in control when constructing their academic experience and identity. In practice, the later-career

women academics illustrate being empowered and in control in their ways of re-working the neoliberal expectations of academia, whereby they are able to construct their own academic experience, by setting their own standards.

What the later-career women academics valued in academia shifted over time, which influenced the work that they chose to complete, and how they engaged overall within the academic setting. The later-career women academics expressed that what they valued and needed as an academic in their earlier career stages shifts. This was suggested to differ when compared to what they acknowledged was valued as a later-career woman academic. Both expert and responsabilisation discourses were drawn upon to explore these sentiments:

*The paths of the past are not the desired paths for the future. I don't need to establish myself in academia, I've already done that. I'm not as focused on things like promotions and building my profile. I'm already here, and well-known. I've done all of that, people know me as one of the experts in my field. What I value now is passing on my knowledge and wisdom to other academics and helping others through academia. That's what I value. [49].*

Here, the participant suggests that a change in career stage and status is accompanied by a shift in what is valued by the women within the academic setting. Of interest here is the discourse surrounding “*the paths of the past*” not being “*the desired paths of the future*”, where the later-career women acknowledge that what they desire in relation to their academic career, shifts based on already being established and embedded within academia. Additionally, while the women acknowledge feeling less responsible for doing what the academic institution expects of them, being positioned as the Expert Academic appears to place more responsibility onto the women to pass on their wisdom to other academics. This is recognised by the participant as self-imposed, and desired.

Within the Expert Academic positioning, the later-career women academics also acknowledged that the increasing amount of flexibility and autonomy afforded to them meant that they were able to spend more time reflecting on their progression, as well as considering what their next steps would be both in academia, and beyond their career. Discourses surrounding preparedness and agency were evident where the participants contended with tensions relating to

their desire to remain in academia, versus planning ahead for the future and beginning to consider whether they still want to be a part of their institution. As such, removing themselves from the setting, and considering retirement, was discussed by the later-career women academics:

*I'm really starting to question what my future looks like in academia, and even after academia. I mean, I've achieved everything that I possibly wanted to achieve, and even more than I could have ever imagined, but it's like now what? If I stay in academia, I worry I'm going to be stuck, stagnant, not knowing what I'm doing next, and doing the same thing day in and day out. I have thought of leaving, I feel ready to leave, and I know I have the ability to make this decision. It's just hard when it's all I've ever known. How do I even begin to prepare myself for this? [16].*

Here, the later-career women academic acknowledged how they were able to achieve in academia over time. Subsequently, reflecting on their journey illustrated tensions surrounding what it means to be an academic when moving beyond the academic system. When reflecting on their academic positioning and identity, the women explored a direct consequence to being considered as the Expert Academic. Being positioned as the Expert Academic here assumes finality in relation to the academic journey, and that at a later point in time the later-career women will feel ready to exit the system. As the participant explores above, this process is not necessarily as straight-forward as expected, when considering what it means to be an academic beyond one's career. As such, the tension evident for the Expert Academic is that she wants to remain a part of academia in her own way, but she remains unsure of what else she can contribute to the setting:

*I've done everything that I can possibly do here in academia. I'm considered the expert in my field, but what else can I do? I'm getting bored, and while it's still a career I find enjoyment in, I've had to reflect on what else I can actually get out of it. I'm tired, but I'm so happy. Maybe that's how an academic knows when their time is up. They've made it, they're exhausted, but they're happy with what they've done, and they are fulfilled. So, what do we do now? [46].*

#### 9.3.4.3 The Reflective Academic.

The Reflective Academic subject position depicts a later-career woman academic who begins to reflect on, and summarise, their academic career, and considers whether they are satisfied with what they have achieved over time. Within this positioning, it was evident that the women were experiencing tensions surrounding their decision to continue working in academia. This was based on their own reflections surrounding their impact, versus considering how other academics perceive them in relation to their contribution to academia. As such, the later-career women academics reflected on their own positioning within academia.

Within the data set, the Reflective Academic subject position was illustrated through the women discursively constructing what it means to have made an impact within academia. Additionally, the later-career women reflected on what their academic role meant to them at this stage of their career, considering whether their position was suitable for them, as well as contemplating whether they still had the same passion for their role. As such, some of the later-career women expressed feeling as if they have achieved all that they can within academia and commented on their consideration of leaving the setting. The participants also shared tensions surrounding how other academics evaluated their suitability for the role, acknowledging that based on their later-career stage, others viewed them as being selfish and greedy for remaining in a role that was perceived as better suited for a younger academic. Subsequently, the later-career women academics experienced further complexities when contemplating their decision to either remain in, or leave, academia, feeling as if they were *'taking up space'* for academics who were viewed as better suited to their role based on age.

First, the Reflective Academic subject position was illustrated through the later-career women academics discursively constructing how they have made an impact within academia. To engage in this, the women drew on stories that summarised their academic experience, as well as acknowledging whether they felt satisfied with the impact they have made, based on their academic contributions. As such, reflecting on their impact in academia positioned the women to quantify, or measure, exactly how they have contributed, drawing on neoliberal/economic discourse to illustrate this process:

*I would think that I'd be known as a person who had an impact on others, in terms of personal impact, but also, an impact in how we think, how we learn. I've conducted some pretty novel, and cutting-edge research, and I've got an endless list of research outputs, which in the setting, shows that you've done your thing, and made a solid impact in your area. I'm still dabbling in that and hoping that that will continue to make such an impact in the future. [10].*

Another participant acknowledged similar sentiments, but focused more on the personal impact they have had, drawing on responsabilisation discourse when reflecting on their academic role, and feeling appreciated and valued based on the collaborations they have had within the institution:

*Knowing that my efforts are valued and appreciated is the best. Knowing that I have made an impact on even one student, or one colleague, and how they see the world, and how they think, is enormously rewarding. That's what we want to see as academics, that's partly why we are here, doing what we do. [48].*

The above sentiments support how the later-career women academics are discursively constructed based on their perceived personal, and professional, impact. Neoliberal/economic and responsabilisation discourses were embedded within these constructions to explore how the women are positioned to operate within the academic setting. While the participants reflected on their desire to make an impact within the setting, the primary function and consequence of this construction is that the women are primed and guided to quantify their impact within academia, measured through their success and research outputs, as well as changing the perceptions and worldviews of their students and colleagues. Through the discourses, the assumption here implies that academics are expected to have an impact within the setting, and that it is part of their academic responsibility to illustrate how this has been achieved. As such, I propose that this could embed a perceived pressure within academia which enforces a need to make an academic impact. This pressure could be further heightened when considering how the expectations of neoliberal academia can impact on women's experiences and

identities, where women may be under a considerable amount of pressure, compared to their male colleagues, to demonstrate their impact.

Additionally, the later-career women academics acknowledged that a part of the later-career stage was engaging in constant reflection on a day-to-day basis on how they have made an impact in academia. The women extended on this and reflected on how they were positioned to give their perspective on professional matters (explored in the previous Expert Academic subject position write-up), but additionally, how they wanted to assist others, and provide their knowledge and expertise to be able to make a difference within the setting. Expert, as well as age-related, discourses were drawn upon to explore these sentiments, as well as how the women enjoyed the process:

*As I get older, I get approached by more and more people to give my perspective on academic matters, as well as assisting some of our younger academics in their teaching and research endeavours. I quite like doing that because it is fulfilling for me. Part of it I feel is based on my expertise, and part of it I think is based on the stereotypical 'I'm old so I'm wise' perspective, but hey, if it's helpful to them, then you know. Sometimes I talk to them, and I'm not sure that I've got anything that's useful to say, but if they find it useful, then I'm more than happy to give that back, and to help them to try to navigate what is a difficult academic world for them. [50].*

Here, the discussion with the participants surrounding assistance, making a difference, and making an impact in academia illustrated that for some, age-related and expert discourses appeared to be embedded within the day-to-day experience of the later-career women academics. For these women, while assumptions were made of them based on their career stage and age, they considered being able to pass on their knowledge, as well as assisting other academics and being viewed as making a difference in academia as an important part of their academic experience. Consequently, the primary course of action of this construction is that the participants are afforded the agency to assist and mentor others, as well as reflect on their academic experience in a positive manner. Additionally, by being positioned to reflect positively on the impact of their academic experience, the later-career women academics acknowledged how they felt as if they had come

'full-circle', and that they began to consider what the future held for them within academia:

*I've had an amazing career. I've been able to meet all of the expectations. I've been able to assist others and collaborate with some wonderful people. I feel like I've done all I can do here in academia, I've come full-circle, and now I'm starting to think about what else I can do here in the setting. [41].*

For some of the later-career women academics, being positioned as The Reflective Academic, and acknowledging that they had come "full-circle" in their career prompted thoughts surrounding their future in academia. Specifically, the women acknowledged that they had begun to reflect on the suitability of their academic role for them in the future, navigating tensions between feeling passionate about their work, versus experiencing boredom based on the repetitive nature of their roles and responsibilities. The women drew on a preparedness discourse to explore these claims: *"I love my job, but it's getting a bit same old, same old. I need a challenge, and I'm not sure whether I'm getting that now. I need to do what's right for me."* [35]. Extending on these claims, the participants expressed feeling bored in their later-career stage and questioned whether they should stay within academia based on passion, versus their desire to leave the setting based on being evaluated as having 'made their mark' in the institution. Survival and preparedness discourses were drawn upon to explore this tension:

*People know I've made an impact here [in academia]. I've made my mark, and I've done all that I can do. I'm not sure what else I can do right now, and it's getting a bit boring and repetitive for me. I feel like someone else can take the reins and keep on going, but that person is not me. I've done my bit, and I've been thinking that it's time for me to go and leave academia. [45].*

The above sentiments explore how the later-career women academics reflect on their academic experience and feel positioned to take a step back based on their perceived impact in the setting over time. For the women, their reflective process has resulted in acknowledgement of the finality of their academic career, and that embedded in a discourse of preparedness is the primary function and consequence of feeling ready, and preparing oneself, to leave academia. The later-career women academics acknowledged feeling less concerned about contributing

to academia in the future, as they express knowing exactly what they have done, and how they have made their impact in the setting. Being able to conceptualise their positioning appears to determine just how secure and confident that the later-career women academics feel in terms of their future beyond academia.

Upon reflecting on their academic impact, the later-career women academics suggested that they were perceived by others as being selfish if they chose to remain in their role within the academic setting. Specifically, the later-career women acknowledged forms of ageism in their experience, in relation to how other academics viewed them as needing to exit academia, based on their older status and access to opportunity over time. It was perceived that the academic role would be better suited and positioned for a younger academic. The participants suggested how the discursive construction of a *'selfish and greedy'* academic manifested when reflecting on whether the later-career woman academic decides to remain in academia:

*I have a pretty good deal here in academia. If there was one thing I would complain about in my old age, it's the subtle and also overt reference of my age and its relation to my position here. I've had colleagues ask me, "So why haven't you left yet? You've done all you can here for a very long time. Give someone else a go.". Someone else said to me more explicitly that I'm "selfish and greedy for remaining here when it's time for me to go". I can understand where these perspectives are coming from, as academia is extremely competitive, but like, I gave it my all to get here. Don't start telling me when I should be leaving. [51].*

Here, the participant explores how one's career stage, age, and experience can impact other academics' perceptions of how long one is meant to remain in academia. I question the imposed deadline being placed onto the participants here and propose that the pressure placed onto later-career women academics to leave academia when they have reached a certain time in their career places negative connotations of blame and shame on the participants for occupying a position that they have worked hard to achieve. Further, ageist, risk, and neoliberal/economic discourses are evident when the participants acknowledge how some other academics perceived their positioning in the later-career stage, with some

participants expressing that while they felt it was their time to leave academia, they could not help but feel this was influenced by broader perspectives relevant to age held by academics within the institution, which in turn, influenced their own perspectives:

*I want to be able to leave academia when I feel the time is right. I can tell you that I feel like my time to leave is now, or at least, sometime in the next few months, but I question whether I came to this decision on my own. We are told day in and day out that the institution wants hard workers, who meet the forever changing expectations of academia, who are able to work day in and day out, yet, as an older academic, I feel that other academics, and the system also, assume that we will be slowing down, because we are old, and that our output will shift and change, which then, for us, is risky, because the institution then perceives us as not being able to bring in what is expected in our role. With this perceived shift, comes the subtle reminder that we are old, and it's time to go. [19].*

It is evident that broader societal views of what it means to be an academic, as well as what it means to be an older individual, construct tensions within the later-career academic experience. Shifts in what the academic system expects of an academic were expressed in the above sentiments, embedded within a neoliberal/economic discourse relating to academic outputs and expectations of working in academia, which conflicts with the expectations and perceptions of being a later-career woman academic. In practice, this impacts on the ability for the women to have agency and autonomy in deciding when to leave academia. Later-career women academics can be placed in a precarious position here, where the choice of leaving academia paradoxically denotes a lack of choice, with the above choices appearing conditional. It appears that the later-career women academics experience these tensions when reflecting on their academic experience, compounded by the unspoken given that they would relinquish their academic position when reaching a certain age or status within the setting, based on broader societal views of competency and age.

Based on the above tensions, within the Reflective Academic positioning, the later-career women academics also acknowledged that this led them to feel as

if they were *'taking up space'* within academia, which further contributed to their consideration of what their next steps would be. As such, when reflecting on their academic experience, considering their personal and professional impact, their suitability and passion for their work, as well as other academics' perceptions of their academic positioning, the later-career women academics acknowledged a shift in the way they approached their roles and responsibilities. Discourses surrounding preparedness, agency, autonomy, and survival were evident, where the participants expressed their desire to leave academia, and that no matter what, or who, was influencing them, that they felt it was their time to go:

*I've begun thinking about how I'll be feeling on the day I leave. I've spoken to my line manager and the head of school and expressed that I feel like it's time for me to go. I want to leave on my own terms, and I honestly feel that I've made my own decision. Next January, I'll sign off on an amazing 29 years in academia. I've survived, and now it's time for me to do a little less surviving, and a lot more thriving. [36].*

Here, the later-career woman academic reflected on their perceived agency and autonomy in deciding to leave academia. Subsequently, the reflection here illustrated similar nuances to the Expert Academic subject position. For example, when reflecting on their academic positioning, and identity, the women explored a similar direct consequence and assumption of finality to one's academic journey. As the later-career woman academic feels ready to leave academia, the experience is left open-ended, where the participant begins to acknowledge what it means to be her own individual beyond the academic setting. In preparation for leaving the academic setting, the Reflective Academic expresses how she navigates, or plans to navigate, her academic responsibilities until leaving:

*I've done what I can do, and it's time to go. When you make plans to leave academia, you find that you slowly start to disengage from the role. It's almost like an automatic response, and it makes the process of leaving that little bit easier. [47].*

#### **9.3.4.4 The Disengaging Academic.**

The Disengaging Academic subject position is a later-career woman academic who, while feeling rewarded in what they have achieved in academia, as

well as the impact that they have made, begins to transition out of their academic roles and responsibilities. Within this positioning, it was evident that the later-career women were experiencing tensions surrounding what it means to leave academia. This was based on feeling ready to leave the setting but acknowledging that it would be difficult to remove themselves from a role that they have been embedded within for so long. As such, the later-career women academics reflected on how it would be a complex process when identifying and positioning themselves outside of the academic setting, as well as having to consider what it means to be an academic who will have left the institution.

Within the data set, the Disengaging Academic subject position was illustrated through the later-career women discursively constructing what it means to feel satisfied and rewarded in their academic positioning. Additionally, the women expressed how they moved away from the demands of academia as a direct consequence to feeling bored with their everyday role, and as such, prepared themselves to separate the '*self*' from academia. As such, some of the later-career women academics acknowledged finding it difficult to disengage from the academic role. While they acknowledged it was something that they wanted, they found the separation of an academic identity from their personal one difficult to manage, as their academic identity had been a dominant part of their being for so long. Subsequently, the later-career women academics questioned what was to become of them, and how they would conceptualise their identity outside of the setting, which led to a questioning of the broader self beyond academia.

First, the Disengaging Academic subject position was illustrated through the later-career women academics discursively constructing their feelings surrounding who they are as an academic, and what they have achieved over time. To engage in this, the women shared with me stories that summarised their academic experience, expressing that they felt satisfied with their academic role, as well as who they were as an academic within this career stage. As such, feeling a sense of satisfaction positioned the women in such a way that they were able to move away from, rather than closer to, the demands of the academic institution. Survival discourse was drawn upon to illustrate this process:

*I feel so good about what I've achieved here at [name of institution]. I've done it all and because of that, I'm slowing down, and bowing out. I don't care as much about the demands of academia anymore because I've done everything I wanted to do, and more. I'm not here to survive, to be a part of the setting, and to try and fit in anymore. It's not about that for me. My time is up, that's it, it's time for me to go. [12].*

Another participant expressed similar sentiments when exploring how they have begun to disengage from academia, based on their feelings of accomplishment, achievement, and success, but extended on this further. Specifically, the participant considered how the disengagement process acts as a manner of preparing oneself for the difficult separation of self from academia, drawing on preparedness discourse to illustrate this experience:

*I'm doing less work every single day, and that's deliberate. If I take on less and less, then I feel as if I'm preparing myself for the eventual time that I'll have nothing to do. Each day of most of my adult life has encompassed some kind of academic task or responsibility. Not having that kind of responsibility every single day is scary to me, but I feel like if I try and remove myself from it a little bit more each day, then I think I'll be more prepared for when I eventually leave here [academia]. [22].*

The above sentiments support how the later-career women academics discursively construct their success and achievements in relation to their academic identity, as well as how they construct the later-career stage as a time where an academic begins to disengage from their roles and responsibilities. Both survival and preparedness discourses were embedded within these constructions to explore how the women were positioned to operate as they came to the end of their academic experience. While the participants acknowledged acceptance of their time in academia, feeling satisfied, achieved, and rewarded based on their academic contributions over time, it was evident that they had begun to disengage from their responsibilities as a way of preparing to leave academia. The primary function and consequence of this disengagement is that the women are not only lessening how responsible they feel in relation to their roles, but additionally, these actions allow for the later-career women academics to prepare and feel ready for

when they eventually leave the academic setting. As such, I propose that disengaging from academia in this manner could be a useful and helpful mechanism for the later-career women academics to slowly shift and change how they are positioned in the setting, limiting the potential negative impact that could result from such a shift. This could also be helpful for all individuals who are considering retirement.

With the later-career women academics acknowledging their readiness to transition out of the academic setting, they expressed how experiencing boredom and monotony surrounding their academic roles only further emphasised the desire to leave academia: *“Oh Matty, I love it here, but I’m getting so bored! Thank goodness I’m leaving soon! Retirement here we come!”* [48]. With experiencing this boredom, and moving away from the demands of higher education, the later-career women academics expressed how they felt the most able to shape their academic identity at this time of their career, compared to the other career stages. One participant spoke explicitly in terms of how their lack of desire to progress further (based on the perception of already *“making it to the top”*), as well as no longer valuing the mundane and routine nature of academia, allowed for an increased amount of autonomy and agency surrounding how they engage in their role. For the participant, this validated their capacity to disengage, drawing on expert, as well as agentic, discourses to explore this nuance:

*Let me tell you, I’m finished with the tasks that bore me. The repetitive shit that we have to do, day in and day out. What I’ve noticed is that compared to 25 years ago when I first started in academia, or even 10 years ago when I was fairly seasoned but still had a long way to go, is that nowadays, I can have a lot more say in what I do. I don’t have to do that shit anymore, Matty. I’ve made it to the top here at [institution’s name], so I can decide who I am and what I do here. Also, I’m leaving next year, and they know that, so I lowkey don’t really care so much anymore about it all. I don’t really care, so I find I’m not doing as much now. What can they do to me? Fire me? I’m already leaving!* [47].

The above sentiment explores how this later-career woman academic has been able to determine if, when, and how she engages in her academic

responsibilities, based on her planning of, and decision to, leave academia. Expert, and agentic, discourses were evident in terms of how the participant expressed having “*made it to the top*” in academia, and consequently, being viewed as someone who has choice and control in the setting also informed how she navigated her capacity to disengage. As such, the primary course of action within these discursive constructions and discourses is that the later-career women academics may be afforded more capacity to disengage based on 1) their career status and perception of expertise, and 2) their decision making surrounding their choice to leave academia. While capacity, agency, and autonomy has been shown to develop across the career stages in my findings, additionally, being positioned in this manner appears to allow the later-career women academics to shape their own academic identity, specifically as someone who is choosing to disengage from this setting.

For some of the later-career women academics, disengaging from the academic setting, and separating the personal self from the academic self, illustrated a difficult process. Specifically, the women shared with me stories of their academic experiences and acknowledged the diversity and depth of their experience over their many years being a part of the academic setting. Tensions emerged within the consideration of these experiences when the later-career women shared with me their concerns surrounding how difficult it may be to separate themselves from a role, and an identity, that has encompassed who they have been for so long: “*I’ve been an academic for so long. Who am I beyond that?*” [52] and “*I’ve sacrificed so much and been an academic for as long as I remember. I’m worried that I won’t know who I am, or what to do, afterwards.*” [19]. Extending on these claims, the participants felt that part of the difficulty in separating from academia is that they were preparing themselves for a new experience, and a new identity, that was not yet clear to them, feeling forced to reflect on what was to come beyond academia:

*What scares me is what’s to come beyond academia? I’ve been an academic for so long, that I can’t remember a time where I wasn’t one. I’m ready to leave, and I’m proud of what I’ve achieved, but what do I do beyond here? I feel like most people have hobbies or other interests that they can focus on,*

*but not me. Not as an academic. Our lives are so 24/7 academia that knowing what to do outside of the setting is tough. We never really get the time to have outside interests, but now I feel like I need to have a sense of what's to come, when really, I haven't the faintest idea what to expect. [50].*

The above sentiments explore how the later-career women academics consider their progression beyond academia, where they acknowledged feeling the pressure to prepare and construct a new experience and identity. For the women, this process is acknowledged as complex, and while the women drew on preparedness discourse to explore how they would navigate the process, this was still considered difficult as the women expressed feeling unsure of how to identify beyond academia. This was based on how both overworking within the system and experiencing the lack of time to engage in other roles and responsibilities, can complicate the process. The primary function and consequence here from experiencing this uncertainty is that it may force the later-career women academics to reflect on what comes next within their lives beyond academia at a time where they may not feel ready to consider it. Additionally, the later-career women acknowledged that while they had disengaged from the academic role, the expectation of re-engaging with another role to compensate was a struggle, and as such, the participants reflected on whether they had other skills to engage in a separate role:

*What other skills do I have beyond teaching, research, and academia? I've been here for so long, that I don't know what else I could be doing. Am I meant to be doing something else, or do I just relax and do nothing? Take up a hobby? I have no idea. [41].*

Here, the participant questions their skill base beyond the academic setting and acknowledges tensions with how to navigate life beyond academia. I propose that the women may be feeling vulnerable based on navigating these complexities, by experiencing a sense of uncertainty of what it means to be not only an academic, but also, an individual who has left academia, and is considering other ways of being and doing beyond the setting. Broadly, the later-career women academics reflected on what it would mean to identify themselves beyond academia, as well as being an academic, and felt the process was largely unclear and unanswerable

based on their positioning at the time of the interviews. Whether they had expressed planning for, and being ready to leave academia, or not, the later-career women academics were positioned in their academic role when I conducted the interviews, and as such, it is unclear whether the women were able to resolve the tensions expressed in the above sentiments. While it is unclear whether the women resolved these tensions, it was evident that the participants were currently engaging in the difficult process of conceptualising their identity beyond academia. One participant summarised the experience of conceptualising their identity, by acknowledging that no matter their career stage, status, or positioning, that it reflects a ‘*metamorphosis of sorts*’, where identity is forever changing based on their specific context. This was acknowledged to assist in preparing the women for life beyond academia:

*I think that identity is not a fixed entity. We identify differently based on the different times of our careers, with who we interact with, how we view ourselves, and how others view us, within academia. How our outside context intersects can influence how we identify and considering what is important to us at any given time, I truly feel, can change our identity. How I saw myself, and how others saw me, when I first started in academia, is so different compared to how I, and others, see me now. Academia is such a different place now, and so, we have to change. Our identities shift and change, it’s a metamorphosis of sorts. That’s how we navigate academia. That’s how we survive academia. So now, when I disengage from academia, and say my bittersweet goodbyes, I’ll remember that my entire experience has been riddled with complexities and hard times, and this is just another hurdle for me to overcome. [22].*

#### **9.4 Concluding Commentary**

In this chapter, I identified four ‘*ways of being*’, or subject positions that were present within the experiences of later-career women academics – The Insecure Woman (who is positioned to doubt her contributions, value, and overall academic identity), The Expert Academic (who is viewed by other individuals as the expert, and the voice of reason within academia based on their career stage, and extensive academic experience), The Reflective Academic (who reflects on

satisfaction and impact in relation to their academic career, as well as experiencing tensions surrounding their decision to continue working in academia), and The Disengaging Academic (who makes preparations for leaving the academic setting, and as such, begins to disassociate with the academic role, as well as experiencing tensions surrounding how to identify beyond academia).

The overarching message from the later-career findings is that while the later-career women academics experienced a shift in how they were evaluated in academia (based on expertise, rather than gender), tensions arose when the women began to reflect on what it means to have survived the academic setting. While some experienced insecurity, others were positioned as experts; either way, the women began to reflect on what, and how, they have contributed to the academic setting. Subsequently, the findings reflect a questioning of what it means to have been a part of academia, what it means to identify as a later-career woman academic, as well as evaluating what it means to identify beyond the academic setting. Next, in the final chapter, I restate the primary objectives of this doctoral thesis, synthesise the key findings across my studies in light of theory and the extant literature base, discuss the implications, strengths, and limitations of my findings, explore directions for future research, and finally, conclude the thesis by presenting my recommendations and closing remarks.

## **CHAPTER 10: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING COMMENTARY**

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*No research is ever quite complete. It is the glory of a good bit of work that it opens the way for something still better, and this repeatedly leads to its own eclipse (Mervin Gordon, unknown).*

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### **10.1 Chapter Overview**

Within this chapter, the findings generated from my research project are discussed and explored in light of theory and literature. As such, the chapter considers the key messages from my research findings from a critical perspective. First, I provide a review of my research objectives, and summarise the key findings from my research. Next, I integrate my research findings with previously reviewed work of Foucault, the critical psychology theoretical perspective, as well as the extant literature base, to illustrate its utility and transferability. I then contextualise my research in relation to the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and its impact on Australian public higher education. Following this, the contributions of my research are demonstrated through the consideration of theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. I then discuss the strengths and limitations of my research, as well as potential future research directions. To conclude the chapter, I present my recommendations, reflections, and closing remarks.

### **10.2 Review of the Thesis Objectives**

Using an exploratory, cross-sectional qualitative design, this project comprised four studies – a narrative review of the current state of knowledge surrounding women’s academic identities and experiences (Study One, Chapter Five); an FDA exploring the conceptualisation of early-career women’s academic identities through the subject positions made available within participants’ discourse (Study Two, Chapter Seven); an FDA that similarly explored the conceptualisation of middle-career women’s academic identities through the subject positions made available within their discourse (Study Three, Chapter Eight); and finally, an FDA that aimed to explore the conceptualisation of later-career

women's academic identities, acknowledging the importance and role of the subject positions, as well as the discourse, aligned with the previous studies (Study Four, Chapter Nine). Each study was able to inform the next in both expected (i.e., addressing the overarching research aims and objectives, contributing to data/participant selection, revision/additions to the interview guides) and unexpected ways (i.e., contributing to shifts in my conceptualisation of ways of being in academia, shifts in the recommendations made).

### **10.3 Summary of Major Findings**

Through exploring the conceptualisation of women's academic identities at the early-, middle-, and later-career stage in Australian public higher education, my present research suggests that identities can change and shift over time, with the academic identity continually being formed, enacted, challenged, and re-formed as women progress through their academic career. The women academics who participated in my studies acknowledged the ways in which discourse, as used by not only academic women, but also, their academic counterparts, and individuals outside of the academic setting, allowed for novel and unique subjectivities to emerge at each career stage. Of importance was the consideration of how these subjectivities '*play out*' in each career stage, which can have implications for the ways in which academic women navigate the higher education setting. Further to this, the present research study provides novel findings that address how the current ways of doing and being within academia limit the ability for women to have agency and autonomy in how they choose to identify within higher education, as well as acknowledging the role of historical, political, and socio-cultural processes in how women have been able to conceptualise their academic identities. Finally, through the exploration of discourse, I have been able to explore how language can be a powerful tool in considering how ways of being for women within Australian public higher education have been made available and legitimised (in relation to what is expected of women academics) and resisted (in relation to how the women pose new subjectivities in response to how they have been positioned; Burr, 2015; Foucault, 1972).

### **10.3.1 Study One**

Findings from the thematic synthesis explored how academic norms, values, and behaviours were perceived as guided by the majority demographic (i.e., white, cis-gender, heterosexual, able bodied, male academics) with the expectation that academics adhere to the rules informed by neoliberal/economic and patriarchal discourses. These expectations, norms, and values were viewed to disadvantage women in higher education (e.g., by limiting their career progression). Additionally, it was suggested that women were allocated specific roles (e.g., more teaching, or service roles) that limited their career progression, evident in the notion of women's work, as well as their representation in certain roles and responsibilities, which upheld the stereotypes of traditional feminine roles (e.g., being maternal and emotionally responsive). The reviewed studies also acknowledged that the institution viewed the personal and professional identities as incompatible, placing a higher value on the professional role, and to survive academia, the professional identity should be prioritised over the personal. To mitigate this, support networks (e.g., family, peers, and colleagues) and strategies (assimilative and transformative) were identified as crucial to the progression of women in academia.

My critique acknowledged how the literature base perpetuated practices promoting a homogenous construction of the academic identity based on dominant socio-cultural expectations. Further, maternal, caring responsibilities were assumed as innate and generalised to all women, which perpetuated the status quo and limited women's positioning within the academic context. When considering how the literature base posed recommendations for change, the individual academic was positioned as responsible for resolving institutional issues, which deflected responsibility from the institution and the system to potentiate change. Additionally, the literature base focused on legitimising the issue that academia is gendered and disadvantages women to convince the academic audience of these inequities, limiting the ability for research to engage in a critical deconstruction of how to address these issues, ensuring the existing conditions for power and inequity exist. Finally, the literature base acknowledged resistance to the status quo as an aspiration for women academics, but it was limited in exploring the consequences of this behaviour.

### **10.3.2 Study Two**

Findings from this study explored three positionings in relation to how early-career women academics conceptualise their academic identities. First, the women consolidated their academic positioning by following the rules and meeting the expectations of the institution. Compliance reflected obedience, with the women pressured to obey the traditional academic way of being to avoid experiencing negative consequences to their career. Second, the women strategically navigated academia by deciding to either challenge, or comply, to the normative standards, dependent on their evaluation of the context, and the potential consequences of their decision. Third, the women shared stories of resisting the status quo by rebelling, displaying agency, and rewriting the '*game*' by reconstructing how academia operates. Tensions emerged whereby resistance allowed for other academics to position the women as outsiders, which led them to feel isolated within academia.

### **10.3.3 Study Three**

Findings from this study explored five positionings in relation to how middle-career women academics conceptualised their academic identities. First, in the face of adversity, the women learned how to be pragmatic and engage in ways of being and doing that maintained their positioning in academia. Second, the women expressed how they were expected to engage in their professional and personal responsibilities by adopting ways of being and doing associated with femininity and motherhood (i.e., being maternal, caring, and/or emotional). Third, the women constructed the ideal, credible representation, based on their perception of what the Australian public higher education setting expects of them, with many acknowledging they rarely met these expectations. In response, the women found they had to work harder; simultaneously balancing their responsibilities from both their roles in academia, and at home (e.g., as a wife, girlfriend, mother, carer). As such, the women were consequently positioned to put the needs of the institution, and other people, before herself. With the work, and the home self, becoming dominant identities, the identity of the self was sacrificed to meet the demands of other responsibilities.

### **10.3.4 Study Four**

Findings from this study explored four positionings in relation to how later-career women academics conceptualised their academic identities. First, later-career women academics acknowledged tensions between the academic they wanted to be, versus the academic that the system required them to be, with insecurities and a questioning of their identities prevalent for some at this career stage. Second, a shift was recognised in terms of how women were evaluated and positioned in relation to their identities, now based on experience and expertise, rather than gender. As such, the later-career women acknowledged being viewed by other academics as the expert, and voice of reason, within academia. Third, the later-career women reflected on their academic experience and noted tensions surrounding their decision to continue working in academia, versus considering what else they have to offer, and whether it was time to leave the setting. Finally, the women expressed feeling rewarded in their academic achievements and impact, resulting in their disengagement from academia as a preparedness strategy. With the later-career stage acknowledged as the time to reflect on what it means to have survived academia, the findings reflect a questioning of what it means to have been a part of the setting, what it means to identify as a later-career woman academic, as well as evaluating what it means to identify beyond being an academic.

## **10.4 Integration of the Research Findings**

Institutions (such as higher education) enforce homogeneity in its system through the use of agents (Foucault, 1972). Faculty members and academics function as agents, who regulate '*what is normal*' through reinscribing hegemonic discourses to enforce social control (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The participants described how academia has a history of being discriminatory towards women (e.g., favouring white, heterosexual, cis-gendered, able-bodied men), where having an identity prescribed as the '*other*' features as non-normative, defined as deviant, and extends from the social norm. Additionally, the women expressed having to engage in ways of being which were constructed by the dominant group. The construction of hegemonic discourse, Foucault (1972) argued, is what allows privileged and patriarchal ideals, identities, and systems to function. When specific

people or groups of individuals control the knowledge that can be obtained and disseminated, oppression can become a possibility for those who extend from the social norm (Staeuble, 2006). The dichotomising of individuals who are deemed worthy to provide and add to the knowledge obtained can construct an '*us versus them*' dynamic (Pomeroy, 2016). It is important to be aware of who has power currently in academia, who does not, and who is recording and surveilling the actions of women academics.

In the literature, it has been argued that these normalising practices, and construction of privileged knowledge and identities, impose homogeneity, essentially allowing it to function (Alwazzan & Rees, 2016). This way of being monitors what the norm views as the excessive and the exceptional (Pomeroy, 2016). Those categorised as '*abnormal*' will be reformed through the strength and embeddedness of institutional practices, where male dominance and female subordination remain systemic, political, and self-reproducing (Clegg, 2008; Weedon, 1997). For example, in my findings, the early-career women academics acknowledged how they saw senior academics represented as males most frequently, and saw women allocated roles which impeded their progression. The persisting problem is that the accepted and articulated conceptions of knowledge in the academy have, to this day, been shaped by hegemonic male-dominated cultures (Fox et al., 2013). The result is that language, social representations, and discursive constructions are embedded within power relations and require a more revolutionary, transformative change to be realised, reformed, and enacted (Galbin, 2014).

The women academics acknowledged difficulties engaging in systematic and widespread resistance and critique of these hegemonic practices, but simultaneously, acknowledged an overt commitment to critique and resistance as a way of life when navigating academia. For example, this was clear within The Strategic Woman positioning in the early-career stage, where the participants acknowledged how they wanted to challenge the dominant way of being but found it difficult when the traditional ways of being were embedded within the setting for so long. The desire to critique the academic system can be difficult, particularly when undoing some of these practices and technologies can be intricately caught

up in the doing of neoliberalism, and so with becoming the neoliberal subject (Gill, 2010). Foucault left the process of resistance, or at least, how to engage in resistance surrounding such practices and technologies, up to the individual (Foucault, 1980). When knowledge is collected through mechanisms of power, the response from those deemed less powerful may be to resist, but how does one resist? How does one resolve conflict? Foucault provided instruments to use in the analysis but offered no weapons to resist (Foucault, 1982). Further, he acknowledged the issue surrounding resistance:

*The problem is to free oneself from it...one has to dig out a whole mass of discourse that has accumulated under one's feet. One may uncover with gentle movements the latent configurations of earlier periods; but when it is a matter of determining the system of discourse on which we are still living, when we have to question the words that are still echoing in our ears, which become confused with those we are trying to formulate, we are forced to take a hammer to it (Foucault, 1980, p. 195).*

The difficulty surrounding resistance appeared to relate to how the women academics were still constructing their understanding of the system, and its practices, in relation to how higher education operated. The women questioned how neoliberal practices had become viable and normalised, whereby academics overall felt compelled to control, regulate, and report on their own work, and the work of others. What can be taken to be truth and inevitable in the global episteme of power shaped how the women conducted themselves, and how they shaped their own conduct in academia (Moss-Racusin et al., 2015). This was evident when some of the middle-career women academics lessened their workload when balancing their mothering role, as they found it difficult to meet the expectations of both. The differences between the expectations and values of the academic institutions, and the women academics, contributed to constraining the choices that the women were able to make. Tensions manifested in the women academics' attempts to meet the expectations of their employers when the values of the women conflicted with the discourses of the academy (e.g., values in relation to when and how the women academics engaged in their work). There appears a relation between the forms of truth that have been acknowledged, and the forms of

practice by which academics seek to shape the conduct of themselves and others (Parsons & Priola, 2013).

It is important to also recognise and question how particular epistemes have been imposed. While neoliberalism has worked to produce subjects within academia that can control and manipulate others, it would be unwise to speculate that it only manifests through powerful beings that work to manipulate others or control them (Rabinow, 1984). Rather, I question how power works to act on the actions and desires of women academics. For example, the early-career women academics acknowledged awareness of how neoliberalism controlled the actions of their academic counterparts and mentioned how they felt positioned to resist the setting and the control enacted by higher education. Further, Foucault (1980) argues, and I concur with the statement, that power should not only be viewed as a force weighing on us that says no, but rather, that it can also traverse and produce things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, and produces discourse. As such, it can make individuals act and speak in particular ways. Foucault (1994b, p. 163) states that,

*How light power would be, and easy to dismantle no doubt, if all it did was to observe, spy, detect, prohibit, and punish; but it incites, provokes, produces. It is not simply eye and ear: it makes people act and speak.*

Neoliberalism works to incite, provoke, and produce (Foucault, 1994b). The way that particular epistemes (e.g., neoliberalism) influence academics works as a form of global domination, beginning with infinitesimal mechanisms (e.g., the history, trajectories, techniques, and tactics used) and how they manifest within the academic experience (Foucault, 1990). This allows for us to begin to make sense of its working. As such, in my research, women academics have taken up the neoliberal practices somehow, not only forcefully by the threat of the government, managers, and those in power with the intent to control them, but also in ways that are consciously and willingly taken up by the self (Reybold & Alamia, 2008). The power underlying neoliberalism and its insidiousness work not only as a line of force that can act upon individuals externally, but also, by turning the self upon the self, and acting internally (Foucault, 1977). This can ensure that the power of the episteme produces the academic through subjectification and can mean that

women academics identify with these practices in different ways. For example, the middle-career women academics were positioned to act pragmatically to balance their multiple responsibilities and choose when they would engage in their work, but ultimately, the setting and allocation of work outside of a traditional workday is still neoliberal in practice.

Power does not necessarily belong to higher education, or its members, rather, it is dependent on the discourses that manifest in the setting that culturally, historically, and socially are taken as common sense, accepted as truth, and privileged as knowledge (Bomert & Leinfellner, 2017). Discourses surrounding how women can identify within academia are intrinsically bound up in power, as they bring certain rights and responsibilities, and open possibilities to act in certain ways of being (Fox, 2013). Identities that encapsulated compliance, rebellion, strategy, pragmatism, credibility, survival, experience, reflection, and disengagement in my research allowed for discursive constructions of identity to be conceptualised and were pivotal to understanding how women experience higher education. As such, I concur with the claim proposed by Foucault (1980) which states that mechanisms of power have always been, and continue to be, invested, utilised, colonised, involuted, transformed, displaced, and extended through the subjection of individuals in institutions. Specifically, I extend the claim to include women academics working in higher education. I propose moving beyond the question of *“how does power manifest itself”* and ask ourselves by what means is power exercised? What can happen when individuals exert power over others? Further to this, power can be conceptualised not in terms of who possesses it, but as something that circulates and is employed and exercised through networks (Foucault, 1982). The individual is an effect of power and is the element of its articulation at the same time, also being its driver, its vehicle (Foucault, 1977, 1982).

Academic practices that are engaged in may be subjugating and repressive, but potentially, also life-giving and enabling (Burke, 2020). This is dependent on the discourses and technologies that women academics may not have chosen, but paradoxically, can work to initiate and maintain their agency (Thompson, 2015). Neoliberalism, in some respect, has been acknowledged to improve some aspects

of higher education (Burke, 2020, Connell, 2013). It influences all academics and works to facilitate the work completed (Brienza, 2016). Engaging in the practices defined by neoliberalism in one's own way can feel like an autonomous decision. In my research, women academics defined their experience of engaging in the practices their own way as a form of freedom, of challenging the normative way of doing and being. This allows for academics to take up new discourses, promising to make things better (i.e., as neoliberalism has promised over time), but at a cost to individuals and with many of the so-called improvements too costly in its constitutive effects (Adams et al., 2019). Additionally, what can be problematic here is that the voluntariness of this autonomous practice contradicts its intention and works to perpetuates said problematic conditions. This can make the power behind this neoliberal form of subjectification and practice all the more insidious (Mutereko, 2018).

Concurrently, the influence of these technologies is constructed as something that is held at bay, resisted for fear that it could displace and overtake an academic's identity (Ropers-Huilman et al., 2016). The women academics in my research were fearful that the practices may undo what really matters to them in relation to their work (e.g., the participants having to engage in research which did not interest them to meet the requirements for outputs in academia). Furthermore, in the engaging of academic work, the women engaged in a quest of what is constructed as '*meaningful*', taking part in work that is viewed as '*what academia is all about*'. This ultimately came at a cost, where some women academics gave into the higher education system, they were fearful of, and constructed their giving in as making a '*deal with the devil*' to play the superficial game. It is evident that there were tensions between 1) the ways that the prevailing neoliberal discourse discussed constitutes value and success, and 2) the intellectual work that women academics believe to be of value and to signify success, tensions which are further supported by Adams et al. (2019) and Gill (2010). Additionally, the longer the women academics are engaged in these practices, the more normalised that it becomes, so much so that the need for critique and resistance can become invisible (Cumings Mansfield et al., 2014). This was evident in the later-career women academics sentiments, where they described ways of being which were a part of

the academic experience, and expressed that other academics needed to experience the tough parts of their career to survive.

The modern Australian public higher education institution operates as a large business corporation with values relevant to managerialism and neoliberalism, particularly at the top of the hierarchy which *'trickle down'* to the experiences of all academics (Berry, 2008). Through my findings, it was clear that the values were not shared by women academics, who also made claims surrounding the disconnect of the values with all academics. For example, middle-career women academics questioned why they should have to sacrifice aspects of their personal lives for the benefit of the academic institution. Choices are constrained for women academics, which created tensions in the identities of the women, which were considered harmful to the well-being of these academics. It was clear that the values did not coincide with the expectations of the corporate and gendered university system. It is essential then that the tertiary education sector listen to the voices from all levels of the academic hierarchy, as there are clear issues in the ways that academics are able to navigate the setting, which could have profound consequences for the sustainability of the higher education sector overall (Blackburn, 2017). Both the institutions, and its academics, need to collectively examine, research, and debate the ways in which the procedures, policies, and structures that disadvantage women can be changed to provide a better environment for all (Fox et al., 2013).

The findings also illuminate the vital role of discourse in the process of identity formation. Historically, the silencing of women's voices and experiences by patriarchal, gendered, and neoliberal discourses, as well as the representation of women by men as the embodied *'other'*, hinders the recognition of diverse perspectives in academia (Eagly & Miller, 2016). The reproduction and maintenance of these discourses, which permeate the everyday practices of academics by means of social representations and discursive constructions help to explain how the traditional gendered norms have become embedded in academia over time (Read & Leathwood, 2018). Perhaps we can take the interpretations offered within this project to illuminate, in some respect, how social structures are internalised and become part of the self over time (Montero, 2011). This claim, and the claim that the subordination of women is a product of power relations, rather than biology,

has practical implications (Clegg, 2008; Weedon, 1997). For example, the issue of gender within academia was considered as an ongoing struggle by the participants (for example, in relation to how women can balance the work and home lives); such a struggle where the women questioned whether a resolution would ever be found.

Across the three career stages, it was evident that the women were united in their commitment to their professional careers, yet they acknowledged that being a woman in the academy automatically meant conflicting with the existing, gendered societal, political, and academic norms. The women expressed feeling a need to have to choose and justify their positions – whether this be as researchers, teachers, mentors, mothers, carers, and more broadly, as women – both to themselves, and to other individuals. It was clear through the justification of themselves as not only professionals, but as gendered human beings, that the language and discourses of academia were embedded within their consciousness, as well as for those that they interact with, which adds to the tensions surrounding the exchanges between the women and the academy. My claims align with Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2016) and Maxwell (2019), who argue that the expectations and experiences of women are gendered, in an environment that is inherently gendered and hierarchical in nature, where the attitudes, policies, practices, and expectations result in tensions in the professional and personal lives of women academics.

The examination of particular roles and identities within my research help us to consider and deconstruct how certain identities are altered by culturally specific and normative expectations. For example, the way that identities are performed makes evident the relationship between gendered roles, identity, and regulatory, disciplinary power (Wintrup, 2017), as well as considering the ways in which certain roles are legitimised within the Australian public higher education setting (Blackburn, 2017). Being able to expose the ways in which particular roles and identities are reproduced in their performance and positioning has implications for higher education institutions. For example, acknowledging the way that women academics perform many traditional gendered roles has implications for the ways in which academic '*work*' is distributed (Bryson et al., 2014). An example here from my findings is considering how women academics were expected to continue to perform the role of the caring, maternal, and emotional worker, which then

relegates them into service-oriented work that can distract from other roles and responsibilities. While we cannot make causal links here, I propose that one of the reasons we observe an underrepresentation of women at higher leadership positions may be based on the presence of these gendered roles and identities (O'Brien & Hapgood, 2012). Higher education institutions need to explore and deconstruct '*faculty work*' and consider the consequences of work being aligned with one's gender, and gendered roles.

This research uncovered nuance surrounding how gender and the workplace system can impact both an individual's professional and personal identity. Individuals do not just perform particular roles (e.g., the middle-career women academics performing '*gender*' by engaging in maternal and caring responsibilities or performing '*heroic*' acts by balancing the work and home life). Rather, the women academics use the existence of their particular roles, responsibilities, and experiences, to adopt, negotiate, and at times construct new identities to navigate the academic setting. My findings have clear implications for research surrounding the identities of women in academia, the balancing of work and family roles, and how women and minority group members progress into higher education work. By providing these alternative explanations of identities, and how the pervading of gender within them creates conflicts, this can hope to better understand how and why women academics continue to experience conflict within their academic setting, as well as considering why the balancing of work and family life remains a prevailing issue in higher education. In addition to this, the adoption of particular identities was found to '*hide*' potential inequities, for example, the middle-career women academics conformed to, and at times, accepted discriminatory versions of their roles and responded by constructing new hybrid identities such as The Super Woman identity. Understanding how versions of identity can become normalised has the potential to begin discussions surrounding how academia operates, where individuals can examine and reconstruct organisational practices that are inequitable (Cumings Mansfield et al., 2014). Systems should be able to show interest in these areas, especially if their workers are providing more of themselves to the detriment of other aspects of their lives.

Additionally, the women's perceptions of themselves as inadequate permeates their perspectives surrounding their career prospects in academia, their status as potential (or actual) mothers, and their mis-fitting in to the academic setting. These perceptions are embedded within real incidents of overt objectification and sexism which was viewed within participants' experiences, demonstrating that particular identities and discursive representations frame the ways that the women experience and speak about themselves (Reybold & Alamia, 2008). Practically, the negative connotations of '*being a woman*' within academia are further enhanced when considering the self as an academic, via adopting an assumed '*masculine*' position inevitably, which diverges from the subject position of the woman who struggles to be heard (Adam, 2012). Brown et al. (2014), McAlpine et al. (2014), and O'Brien and Haggood (2012) support this, stating that women in the earlier stages of academia struggle to separate the self from available discourses of marginalisation, devaluation, and exclusion, finding themselves in the position of the academic outsider. As such, women face a double bind, which was evident within my findings, early-career women academics either chose to follow the rules and position themselves as compliant, or face exclusion by challenging the rules and adopting the outsider position as one who resists, which was acknowledged as difficult to resolve based on tensions surrounding being excluded in the setting. It appears there is collusion with the oppressive structures of academia whereby it coexists with the actions aiming to overcome the system (Bomert & Leinfellner, 2017).

Discussions with the women academics revealed tensions surrounding how the professional and personal lives of women, as well as the hierarchical, gendered higher education setting, were interwoven and complex. Currently, these issues appear to manifest and build according to the changing social, political, and workplace culture (Blackburn, 2017). For example, the traditional workplace norms that presented within the findings assumed that a woman academic is someone who centres their life on a full-time, life-long occupation, while also balancing their caring responsibilities, rather than having their responsibilities taken care of by other individuals. The literature supports this and presents commentary surrounding how these norms coexist with the culture of neoliberalism that

emphasises competition and productivity, versus the responsibility of the individual for success and failure in each domain (e.g., Berry, 2008; Webster, 2010).

Foucault (1980) stated that each embodied subject has their own history, trajectory, techniques, and tactics on subjecting individuals. Further to this, it is important to recognise that in the conducting of our own lives, we are continually involved in the process of being governed and in governing, not just through superficial performances of ourselves, but through governing our own souls, bodies, and desires (Rabinow, 1984). These personal histories and trajectories can influence how we navigate the process of subjectification in other contexts and environments we are a part of (Mutereko, 2018). Foucault's theories of disciplinary power, and docile bodies, are a clear illustration of how academics can become disciplined and governed within the academic institution, so that they serve the expectations of the institution, as well as adhering to normative societal expectations (Foucault, 1977, 1979). For example, at all of the career stages, to different extents, the women academics felt tensions in placing their work responsibilities above their home responsibilities, with the risk of being punished if they did not do so. Considering this, Foucault (1979) argued that institutions work to increase the productivity of the worker in relation to economic utility, while simultaneously diminishing the political astuteness and individuality of said worker. For example, the women academics were expected to focus on conducting research, even with the increase in their teaching load (allocated by the institution) to increase individual outputs and to bring in economic utility to the institution. Disciplinary power can be exercised through the institution, which attempts to control the human experience by extending the reach of its effects (Foucault, 1977). For those who do not engage in resistance, the process of compliance and subjugation may not be necessarily reflective of obedience, rather, it is a process where individuals self-regulate their bodies to fit with the demands of the institution (Foucault, 1980). The main catalyst for the participants complying and following of the expectations of academia, was in the perpetuation of neoliberal and patriarchal discourses in considering how the higher education system operated.

Neoliberalism in higher education operates by technologies of surveillance that can be characterised by engaging in spying, detecting, prohibiting, and

punishing academics (Elias et al., 2017). Neoliberal discourse can be effective in closing down accounts constructed as *'different'* or deviating from the norm (Saunders, 2007). This can make it difficult for academics to critique the setting and propose for new ways of being and doing to be implemented. In my findings, this was evident, where women academics who were viewed to engage in oppositional practices experienced consequences that were problematic for their positioning in higher education (e.g., being excluded from workplace gatherings, and not being told about ways to advance their progress in higher education). In response, this coerced the women, impacting on their ability to do their work. Foucauldian understandings of disciplinary power are exemplified here whereby the exercising of normative academic standards on the women acts in subtle ways over time, obtaining hold on the women through movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity, or as Foucault stated, *"an infinitesimal power over the active body"* (Foucault, 1990, p. 112). The exercising of power over the women academics illustrated how particular subjectivities were placed onto the women through their experience, coercing them to meet the expectations of the system, while slowly sacrificing their sense of self, and what was important for them to achieve within the setting. The danger here, which was further explored by Foucault, was not so much that individuals become repressed by the social order, but that they are, in an insidious manner, carefully fabricated into the system with the power existing penetrating their behaviour (Foucault, 1977). Power works to become more efficient through the technologies underlying surveillance and observation, and as such, knowledge follows suit, with Foucault arguing that one is always looking for new forms of knowledge in the different ways that power is implemented (Foucault, 1977).

What is considered just as dangerous as coercion into the academic setting, underpinned by patriarchal, gendered, and neoliberal discourses through disciplinary power and surveillance, is exploring how the participants were constructed and guided to tolerate or survive the system. Embedded within the narratives of my participants were sentiments acknowledging aspects of the academic system which were unsafe, such as the forceful placing of subjectivities onto the women academics, having to meet the expectations of the system with limited resources, sacrificing the sense of self in response to these expectations,

and the expectation that women *'have to'* survive and break through the patriarchal, neoliberal, and gendered/heteronormative practices that have disadvantaged them. The acknowledgement of these aspects illuminated the presence of violence within the academic system. Specifically, the construction of a traditional way of being in academia has been perpetuated through epistemic violence, where colonisers have created and occupied hegemonic positionings that have enabled them to afford themselves power, which has privileged the knowledge and meanings that are most beneficial for them (Brunner, 2021). This was evident through the privileging of white, cis-gender, able-bodied, heterosexual men, and their Eurocentric knowledge, as the normative academic and way of being and thinking within academia. This has worked to evoke structural and cultural violence within the experiences of the women academics, where these mechanisms have been used to justify and legitimise the dominant and privileged academic way of being.

The forms of violence evident in the findings have operated in three forms. Dichotomous thinking was depicted through the subjectivities of academics constructed as a *'for and against'* dichotomy, which enables the dominant group to claim authority (Galtung, 1969, 1990; Langhout & Vaccarino-Ruiz, 2020). This reduced the importance of context and nuance in women's identities, which worked to degrade their status within academia. Those academics who were viewed as being *'against'* the dominant group were then viewed as *'them'*, which further constructed them as the *'outgroup'* or the *'social other'* (Galtung, 1969, 1990; Langhout & Vaccarino-Ruiz, 2020). Narratives surrounding social groups operated via the dominant narratives perpetuated about individuals within society (Galtung, 1969, 1990; Langhout & Vaccarino-Ruiz, 2020). Stereotypes surrounding women academics, and their capacities within the higher education system were acknowledged in my research that worked to control their status and positioning. For example, the participants felt that they were constructed as maternal, caring, and motherly, and as such, were allocated specific roles and subjectivities that limited their progression, as well as identification in roles they felt were better suited for them. Finally, the control of public spaces reflected how individuals can be either restricted, or removed, from settings in either a physical, or psychological

and cultural manner (Galtung, 1969, 1990; Langhout & Vaccarino-Ruiz, 2020). For example, the participants in my research suggested how the limiting of women in higher positions of power, research, and leadership roles, as well as allocation into gendered positions such as teaching and service, limited the ways in which they could identify and be positioned within academia.

As a social structure, the culture of academia perpetuates marginalisation and social exclusion of women through producing, maintaining, and then reproducing social inequities (Galtung, 1969, 1990; Langhout & Vaccarino-Ruiz, 2020). As such, the forms of structural and cultural violence evident in my participants' experiences originated from the social and political origins of these societal issues. The women found it difficult to resist and address these problematic issues that they experienced in navigating, and identifying with, the academic setting. It is clear through my research findings that the academic system is violent for women academics. This can limit their potentialities in a system where violence appears strategic and embedded within broader social and cultural systems (Galtung, 1969, 1990; Langhout & Vaccarino-Ruiz, 2020). Addressing the issues surrounding safety for women in academia, as well as the capacity to navigate and conceptualise identities safely, appears difficult when the structures and systems that are currently in place exist to complicate this process.

### **10.5 A Nod to Context: COVID-19**

It would be remiss for me not to address the current worldwide context within my thesis, specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic, and its influence on the Australian public higher education setting. The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed our expectations, personal lives, and professional careers in unprecedented ways (Shalaby et al., 2021). As the virus spread, it further exposed the existing structural and gendered inequalities, as well as further deepening others, in societal contexts (McGaughey et al., 2021; Shalaby et al., 2021). Specifically, to my research context, the pandemic has affected both the Australian, and world-wide, university sector (McGaughey et al., 2021). Academics have been significantly impacted, in relation to their capacity to undertake their academic responsibilities, based on the rapid campus closures and shifts to online modalities in response to the pandemic (Marinoni et al., 2021; Watermeyer et al., 2021). For

example, engaging in laboratory and field-based research has been noted as a struggle, as well as the disruption of teaching by adapting to online pedagogy in response to social isolation measures and quarantining (McGaughey et al., 2021). Additionally, the management of finances and systems have been particularly vulnerable, whereby the COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed the weaknesses of the dominant neoliberal business model evident in higher education, as well as the placing of social and travel restrictions which have impacted the feasibility of service offerings (particularly to international students; Ross, 2020). In response to these changes and impacts, the higher education institutions have initiated voluntary, and involuntary redundancies, with an approximated 21,000 job losses so far to offset the financial impacts of the pandemic on tertiary education in Australia (McGaughey et al., 2021; Ross, 2020).

While these impacts are clearly outlined in the literature base, they are further exacerbated by the operation of gender within higher education, specifically, how women academics are positioned to navigate their personal and professional roles amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (McGaughey et al., 2021). For example, while all academics have suggested tensions surrounding work-related stresses, digital fatigue, concerns over long-term changes to their teaching and research responsibilities, and difficulties managing a work-life balance, women academics have suggested experiencing more of the workload based on the balancing of their work and home lives, as well as the perceived valuing of their roles and contributions being viewed as *'lesser than'* within the pandemic (Gorska et al., 2021; Venkatesh, 2020). Additionally, women academics perceived an undermining of academic and personal autonomy during the pandemic, with rigid requirements surrounding their teaching practices, concerns surrounding their competence, and feeling that their professional responsibilities are less valued, compared to men, have been expressed (Crick, 2021). Overall, women academics at the early-, middle-, and later-career stages acknowledge feelings of abandonment, relatedness, and community amongst academics, at a time where support and collaborations are suggested as needed to assist with navigating the context surrounding the pandemic (McGaughey et al., 2021). These tensions are further exacerbated when considering the home context of the women, with some women

academics suggesting that their male spouses view their work role as greater than, or more valued, than the women's working role, even when the women have the same, if not more, responsibilities to balance (Gorska et al., 2021).

While these perspectives are not necessarily 'new' within the literature base, what is novel, and of importance here, is considering how the existing issues for women within the neoliberal, marketised sector have been exacerbated and compounded (Gorska et al., 2021; McGaughey et al., 2021; Venkatesh, 2020). These issues are not gender neutral, with women academics being disproportionately affected by them (Gorska et al., 2021). While there have been clear impacts on the identities and experiences of women academics due to COVID-19, it is important to note that my semi-structured interviews were conducted within the final quarter of 2019, at a time well before the pandemic existed, and impacted on the current context. As such, it is important to consider that my findings are contextually embedded within a pre-COVID-19 setting and should be evaluated as such. This is not to suggest that the experiences and identities of women academics mid- and post-pandemic are not of interest to explore, rather, research conducted thus far has begun to explore how the pandemic has amplified pre-existing issues within the Australian public higher education setting. The exploration of these issues for women academics demonstrates the relevance and applicability of my research conducted pre-pandemic, serving as a qualitative baseline, as well as considering how it is needed within our current context to illustrate the importance of assisting not only women, but all academics, to navigate academia. To address the changing context and acknowledge how this change could extend on my findings, I explore the implications of my findings, as well as providing some future research suggestions, and recommendations for future practice, that critically considers not only my research findings, but the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women within the Australian public higher education setting.

## **10.6 The 'So What?': Contextualising My Research Findings**

There are a multitude of implications to be realised from this research which hold relevance for theoretical, methodological, and practical domains. These domains cover the specific ways in which my research has contributed to the knowledge base.

### **10.6.1 Theoretical Implications**

Theoretical implications refer to both the development and improvement of specific concepts and definitions relevant to my research. Within my research, the narrative review of the existing literature base provided a worldwide exploration into the conceptualisation of women's academic identities to be able to assist and provide context surrounding how identities are constructed theoretically, as well as providing a substantive basis for the research project. As such, being able to construct an understanding of how academic identities have been conceptualised for women, over time, and within the current academic context, assisted in identifying potential gaps of knowledge, as well as critiquing the dominant research practices that have taken place so far. Having this awareness allowed for me to form an understanding of what was currently known, what areas needed further exploration, and an awareness of how to conduct my research in such a manner that avoids constructing identities, the tensions surrounding them, and women's experiences, as homogenous, gender normative, and the sole responsibility for the women to resolve. As such, I have attempted to conduct my research to explore the conceptualisation of women's academic identities, and carefully avoid any practices that may perpetuate the status quo, and the traditional way that research has been conducted thus far. That being said, there is scope to be reflexive and self-critical here and identify how my research may engage in practices that are '*Western*' centric, which could reproduce some of the inequities discussed. While particular experiences, identities, and academics were not purposely ignored, I can acknowledge how future research could improve on my practices to include academics from other minority groups.

Upon reflecting on my findings, and how the women academics conceptualised their many academic identities, implications surrounding a shift in the prototype of what it means to be an academic were noted. I engaged in many discussions with my participants surrounding how their versions of being an academic often conflicted with the expectations of what it meant to be an academic from an institutional perspective. As such, my research illuminated the diverse perspectives of women academics from early-, middle-, and later-career stages in Australian public higher education settings, and how their conceptualisation of

academic identities differed based on both personal and professional factors, time, career stage, and the broader academic and personal context. Theoretically, my research builds on the understanding of what it means to be an academic, whereby I propose the literature base, as well as higher education institutions, can frame their understanding of identity to be more inclusive of multiple identities or ways of being an academic, rather than the perpetuation of the homogenous, ideal academic, which has permeated the women's ways of being and doing thus far. Considering this reconstruction and conceptualisation of identities over time for women can assist in a theoretical understanding of the construct, but additionally, build on more practical and applied ways of understanding how women experience academia (which are discussed further below). Being able to build on how women conceptualise their academic identities have allowed for a recognition of identity as ongoing and fluid, affected by one's lived experiences, both professional and personal, illustrating an interplay of dynamics specific to the women's context. As such, the academic identity conceptualisation should be thought of as an ongoing process of development.

Extending on the acknowledgement of a shift in how academic identities are conceptualised for women in academia, my research is the first to propose specific subject positions in relation to how women are positioned in particular ways, to perform particular roles, which has implications for the ways of being and doing that they are able to occupy. Thus far, these subject positions have not yet been explored in terms of women's academic identities and experiences in Australian public higher education, and as such, provides a basis for understanding some of the identities that emerge at particular career stages for the women. In drawing on the Foucauldian approach, my research has been able to acknowledge the social, historical, and political influences that have emerged over time to impact women academics, as well as illuminating the subjectivities and positionings that are made available to women at different stages of their careers. Additionally, these subjectivities appear to be influenced and coincide with one's progression through their life journey. With different professional and personal roles and skills emerging, it was apparent that the academic identities became salient at different periods of life when women move from one stage to the next.

With an acknowledgement of how the shift in identities coincides with the shift in women's life stages, my research provides further findings to assist in understanding how and why women in academia experience conflict in their academic identity conceptualisation, as well as considering why the balancing of both work and home identities remains a prevailing issue in the higher education context. Building on this understanding, I have acknowledged not only the different subjectivities that are available to the women at the different stages of their academic career, but also, extending on this, an exploration of how women can navigate and overcome the subjectivities that are placed on them, to assist in being able to conceptualise and explore new ways of being and doing in academia. I propose that fully considering how new ways of being and doing can be conceptualised in academia must go beyond the formal identification of an academic under the roles of research, service, and teaching, to extend on this understanding, to explore, and recognise the equally important influence of discipline, career stage, interpersonal connections and relationships, familial and caring responsibilities, and individual characteristics on women's academic identities.

#### ***10.6.2 Methodological Implications***

Methodological implications entail the application of new methods and ways of doing in relation to the research. The implementation of the study design was noted as unique, with a combination of theory, methodology, and method that were both consistent, and novel to the research area and topic. Specifically, the use of the Foucauldian methodology, embedded within a critical psychology theoretical perspective, was a first, which allowed for a deeper, more critical understanding of how women's academic identities were conceptualised over time, in the different stages of their career. Existing studies have adopted either quantitative, or qualitative methods previously, that while useful to build a preliminary understanding of women's experiences and identities in academia, have not yet acknowledged the crucial importance of how power and knowledge can inform the ways in which women academics can construct their identities. Additionally, the use of the Foucauldian perspective has illuminated the vital role of discourse in the process of academic identity formation, demonstrating how particular identities

and discursive representations frame the ways that women experience and speak about themselves. In considering and deconstructing these identities, I have acknowledged how they can be altered by the academic culture, as well as the normative standards and expectations of higher education that the women have shared with me through their experiences. A dedication to the critical, Foucauldian perspective has made evident the relationship between subjectivities, identities, power, knowledge, discourse, as well as how certain roles are legitimised in academia.

### **10.6.3 Practical and Applied Implications**

Practical and applied implications explore and propose ways in which my findings can be practically applied to the broader context. The experiences and identities conceptualised and shared by my participants offer practical value for the wider community, the research community, as well as policymakers and those who exercise political influence. It is important though to acknowledge that particular changes and differences in the needs, skills, priorities, challenges, concerns, roles, and relationships of the women academics need to be considered within these implications. As these aspects have been shown both in my findings, and the literature base (Kachchaf et al., 2015; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Pick et al., 2017; Pifer & Baker, 2016; Rainnie et al., 2013) to evolve over time, differential support for women academics across identities and career stages is necessary and important. Subsequently, my findings reinforce the importance of supporting '*the whole person*', both professionally and personally, when considering the application of the implications listed next.

First, participants acknowledged the importance of support networks in the navigation of their careers and found it easier to be embedded within academia with these networks being a part of their experience. As such, the importance of networking and mentoring programs was evident. I propose programs that are women-only (to ensure that women can feel safe, interact, and have discussions about their experiences of academia, where they feel women may be the only ones who can understand their experience), and additionally, programs that are inclusive of all genders (to further illustrate and discuss how resolving the inequities is the responsibility of all academics, as well as the system, to consider, rather than just

focusing on women's responsibility). I also propose programs that are multi- and inter-disciplinary as well, as the integration of gender, as well as discipline, can be useful as a way of illustrating awareness of the complexities of the academic system. Members could provide examples of how they have progressed, or are progressing through academia, what sort of barriers they might be experiencing, provide support to other academics, disclose the '*tricks or rules*' of the academic game, as well as being able to establish new connections. As such, these new connections, and subsequent knowledge shared, can be a useful tool in assisting all academics in how to navigate an academic career.

With the participants acknowledging issues with the academic system, it is imperative that an examination of the system, and its ways of being and doing, are implemented. As such, I propose that change occurs over time within university policies, guidelines, and protocols. Here, the underlying issues surrounding the organisational culture, context, office politics, and impact of emotional labour would need to be considered. Understandably, changes that are systemic in nature, that problematise the system, are considered easier to acknowledge, but harder to implement (Watzlawick et al., 1974). As such, I acknowledge the following practical implications, which, while ideal, would take time to employ. These suggestions are in terms of creating cultural change within academic institutions and making the setting workable. First, self-care initiatives, such as taking mental health days, or breaks for morning tea/lunch away from the desk during the day, should be introduced into existing policies and guidelines surrounding work practices. Additionally, guidelines surrounding working practices should be implemented, whereby academics can avoid the excessive workload and burden of overworking, and expectations surrounding productivity under less working hours should be more manageable and aligned with the care initiatives that the institution would implement. With participants suggesting a lack of access to opportunities, I propose offering more professional and personal development opportunities, with more support being provided to assist women in developing throughout their careers at different career stages, with a focus on building confidence and efficacy. While some of these opportunities could be individually focused, I propose opportunities for collaboration and networking to be provided also, whereby institutions can

actively assist academics to build strong peer support networks via team building activities, and frequent social events to maintain the networks that are created. These opportunities need to be accompanied with the institutional providing of time through reducing workloads for employees to engage in hobbies, exercising, socialising, and other activities that separates the worker from the work, while facilitating connections between employees.

For many of these practical implications to be useful, there needs to be a shift surrounding how we, as academics, view the academic environment and context, as well as the people within it. As such, I propose that the focus is shifted from a deficit to strengths-based perspective. Specifically, rather than considering what might be '*wrong*' with women to not engage in STEMM adequately, we consider how the STEMM institutional environment can remove the systemic barriers that prevent not only women, but for all academics with diverse identities and perspectives to engage effectively. This would also involve changing the prototype surrounding what it means to be an academic, discussed above within the theoretical implications, by reconstructing the system, and its members, as being more inclusive to the multiplicity of ways to be an academic. Additionally, it would also mean that we would need to develop more of an awareness of the currently existing practices that can negatively impact women and minority groups within STEMM. These practices were suggested to lead to negative mental and physical health outcomes within my findings, with the climate of STEMM experienced as hostile for the women. Developing this awareness could involve educating all academics on why particular discourse and language is problematic, as well as disrupting the taken for granted assumptions (i.e., the status quo) within academia, to be able to create a safe and collaborative environment for all academics to exist in.

Disrupting these assumptions relies on an awareness of one's individual practices and ways of doing and being as an academic within STEMM. Through legitimising the issue, equality and equity has been suggested as needed within academia, but I question the ways that we acknowledge and suggest how this would be achieved. As such, the implications, and recommendations I suggested are my attempt at proposing what an equitable academic system could look like. I call

on all faculty members within STEMM to view the findings of my thesis as an opportunity to reflect on their own understandings, assumptions, and commitments to promoting gender equity. To engage in this practice, academics may need further opportunities to be able to identify and reflect on their own implicit privileges, assumptions, and biases. Sustained professional and personal development must be engaged in and maintained, as we may be unable to implement transformative change without this consistency. We need to transform the attitudes, privileges, and biases of academics more effectively, by engaging in these practices on a consistent and regular basis.

#### ***10.6.4 Reformative Versus Transformative: Ways to Conceptualise Social Change***

Recommendations for changing the aforementioned issues surrounding women's identities and experiences in higher education in the extant literature base have thus far focused on the individual (i.e., women), constructing it as their responsibility to change the system. Where I attempt to mitigate this cycle of individualised blame, is by posing my implications and recommendations in relation to how the different orders of change can be utilised, in an attempt to debunk the current way of being which limits change to the social systems that support the relationship between the powerful, and the powerless (Rappaport, 1977). In practice, women academics in higher education are often blamed for their victimisation, while the power dynamics that have been identified in my analysis continue to operate unchanged (Ryan, 1971). Discourses and practices that underpin individualised blame can be legitimised and viewed as reformative to the system; in response, the interventions can reflect the practice that it attempts to resolve. While reformative strategies may be appealing to individuals at first, as they can reflect immediate gratification surrounding social change, they can retain the traditional hierarchies and practices that currently exist (Mills, 2014; Ropers-Huilman et al., 2016). As such, the commentary within my thesis has acknowledged going beyond observing difference, to be able to intervene and promote equity and transformative, second-order change. It is acknowledged that this is a process which can take time.

In tying the threads together that can underpin recommendations for social change, I acknowledge the role of different orders of change in understanding the

issues that surround women's academic identity conceptualisation. The solutions that can be generated from the analysis of individuals, such as women within academia, represent first order change, which can be often based on common sense, which can create and/or exacerbate the issue (Rappaport, 1977; Watzlawick et al., 1974). What is important though to recognise, is that thus far, the interventions and strategies that have been designed to support and improve the experiences of women in academia are well intentioned, and important to consider. While important, these efforts need to be extended to create genuine, transformative, second-order change, whereby the system that maintains the traditional way of being is both questioned and challenged, and the individual is looked beyond to consider the collective also (Rappaport, 1977; Watzlawick et al., 1974). If the importance of the collective, and the system, are minimised, this can produce decontextualised strategies and interventions that produce a distorted understanding of the social structures that shape unjust relationships, further reinforcing the beliefs embedded in individualised blame, which neglects the role of the environment (Fine, 1986). Within the environment, the standards of the system (i.e., '*rules of the game*') govern the way that social relationships between women academics and those in positions of power operate. As such, the recommendations that are posed need to be aimed at changing the context, and its rules, rather than simply addressing the individual (Rappaport, 1977; Sarason, 1974; Watzlawick et al., 1974).

In addressing the role of different forms of social change, I mentioned how interventions suggested thus far were well intentioned. While well intentioned, further to this, I propose that in considering how the state of higher education can be improved, it needs to reflect a gradual process, where transformative change may be the desired change, but we need to first engage in ameliorative or reformative change as a starting point. As such, my recommendations are not intended to solely propose drastic forms of social change, as this may not be feasible within the current context. Rather, I propose recommendations with a comprehensive understanding of the social context, as well as the related structures and relationships that maintain injustice, as without this consideration, it would be a thoughtless endeavour (Fine, 1986). Further, in examining the way that

academia has operated for women, it is just as important to not only consider how to intervene, but also, where to intervene, and how gradually, or abruptly, that the specific change should be introduced (Rappaport, 1977). The potential consequences of specific recommendations should also be considered before any action is taken, as failing to consider these consequences may have the unintended impact of further exacerbating the tensions and challenges experienced by women academics.

It is clear then, that the way in which women academics identify within and beyond academia, can have major implications for the recommendations that follow. With such a focus on the individual and blaming the victim, past practices have produced first-order change. For true, reflective, transformative, genuine change to occur, the problems must be reformulated and reconceptualised, where the standards of academia that support interactions between the powerful, and the powerless, are challenged and critiqued. Bishop et al. (2002) acknowledged that while developing self-awareness and an understanding of the social processes and structures in academia (such as victim blaming) is difficult, nevertheless, it is of importance when considering how the proposed recommendations would be implemented. De Botton (2004) further supports this claim, and states that as individuals, we can be so well socialised to particular social forces, that they can often go unnoticed, making them difficult to observe, critique, and challenge as they become so embedded within our society:

*The essence of ideological statements is that, unless our political senses are developed, we will fail to spot them. Ideology is released into society like a colourless, odourless gas. It is embedded in newspapers, advertisements, television programmes and text-books – where it makes light of its partial, perhaps illogical, or unjust, take on the world; where it meekly implies that it is simply stating age-old truths with which only a fool or a maniac would disagree (pp. 214-215).*

Subsequently, it is of importance to have the ability to observe the trends of the obvious (i.e., the status quo) which can be obscured by dominant worldviews, as well as having a critical understanding of the social context (Bishop et al., 2002).

### **10.6.5 Tying It All Together: Recommendations for Social Change**

This research has a crucial role in being able to raise awareness amongst researchers, scholars, disciplines, professions, system facilitators and users, and broader society in determining the complex social processes that impinge on the experiences and identities of women in academia, as identified in my analysis. Looking beyond the individual and ensuring we attend to all aspects of the social context can raise new questions. Being able to accept the powerful role of the context (in relation to values, worldviews, and norms) in how academic identities are conceptualised for women in academia, can encourage us to consider what an equitable allocation of power would be, allowing the opening of new possibilities (Fine, 1986). I would recommend for individuals to be critical of the current systems of possibility, rather than just passively accepting the status quo as a given (Fine & Asch, 1988). Such forms of critical questioning and reflection should be encouraged within the context of reflexive practice, mentoring, and educational programs, as mentioned above in the applied implications. Further incorporating the voices of all academics in the future would be beneficial for the professional discourses and understandings surrounding identity and equity in academia to be challenged.

When considering the use of discourse surrounding a work-life balance, re-conceptualising this *'balance'* into an integration of work-in-life, or work being one component of one's life out of many, is important. Experiences in life are not separate, and as such, cannot be implied by balance, as neither family, caring responsibilities, hobbies, or careers are static (Clegg, 2008). Further, reconsidering the *'pipeline'* and constructing it as a life-course instead would be useful. The *'pipeline'* metaphor reflects masculinised orientations of a linear career advancement and progression over time, where there is one entry point and no ability to be able to exit and re-enter (Shaw & Stanton, 2012). This does not encapsulate the many diverse experiences and progression of women academics, and as such, life-course would be more encompassing of the diverse experiences of all academics. Life-course refocuses the work-life commentary to consider that branches are available for entry, and re-entry. My findings illustrate the benefit of considering these experiences and identities under a life-course perspective, as the way that the women academics were influenced by their changing social and

historical contexts impacted the decisions they made, based on the opportunities they were provided, and the constraints of the social structure and culture of higher education. Finally, moving beyond constructions of women academics' experiences and identities being focused on family, to being more focused on life, would be more inclusive of the many diverse constructions of life that recognise women's multiple ways of being.

Comparing the narratives across each of the career stages reflects the necessity of a broader life-friendly perspective (rather than just family-friendly) when considering the conceptualisation of policy. As individuals are living and working longer, as well as the shift demographically in our aging country (Allen et al., 2021; Ropers-Huilman et al., 2016), higher education institutions need to consider embedding their policies in the view of human lives as progressive and ongoing, to include the complexities and nuances surrounding intergenerational families, caring responsibilities, and other outside of academia interests and responsibilities. As such, an inclusive approach is important, not just considering the academic women in my research, but for all academics Australia, and world-wide, to benefit all and allow for a more holistic perspective towards careers, life, and beyond. The importance of addressing this changing perspective surrounding work and life is evident, especially considering how academics nowadays are seeking a meaningful life both inside, and outside, of work (Philipsen et al., 2017).

All academics (not just women) need to collectively consider and debate the direction that their higher education institution is taking, whether the direction is in the best interests of both women, and society, and whether there are any solutions that are being posed that would be effective in considering genuine, transformational change. While conceptualising the debate, and how this could take place, is beyond the scope of this thesis, the discussion would likely be complex as it would attempt to challenge the individualistic and neoliberal norms for which academic is known, as well as the specific discourses that shape the status quo. I would expect that the implications of women feeling fearful, uncertain, and unsure of making themselves and their stories heard, for themselves and society, would be considered, and debated, not just by the women themselves, but by the broader higher education sector. Responsibility lies with the academy as the

employer to both participate in, and contribute to, the resolution of the aforementioned issues as the narratives of the women suggest that the current workplace practices and policies are contributing to problems relating to the long-term health and well-being of women, as well as the overall sustainability of the higher education setting.

Additionally, with the intent of collaborations and ongoing debate, discussions should be engaged in to allow for the collective resisting and challenging of the systems and practices that contribute to women's disempowerment in academia. This could include, for example, the establishing of collaborative research networks, collective research submissions, and spaces provided by employers (to include temporal, physical, and financial resources) to meet, discuss, and debate about the issues within academia. Ways for collective debate between the hierarchies in academia, and academics, should be found that allows for the stories of all academics to be heard. The women in my research acknowledged feeling fearful of negative repercussions if they decided to speak out against other academics, and the system, and/or feeling anxious if they considered ways of navigating academia that may compromise meeting the expectations of their employment. Therefore, such avenues need to be safe and secure in terms of employment security, as it has been considered by my participants as risky and dangerous for women academics to speak out.

### **10.7 Strengths of the Research Process**

In this section, I address the strengths of the research with a particular emphasis on the methodology and methods utilised in the study. The strengths of this project include synthesising, critiquing, and expanding the knowledge base surrounding women's academic identities, the rigour surrounding each specific study, diversity of the sample, the methodology, and the theoretical approach, the transferability of findings, recognition of the history of higher education and how the setting has perpetuated privileged knowledge and ways of being, as well as the use of quality assurance procedures.

My research project provides a wealth of knowledge and information which adds to the body of research. First, the Narrative Review assisted in building both a theoretical basis for my research, as well as providing context for the literature base

in relation to what has been explored, what the gaps were within the literature, how the research has been conducted, and what research practices I needed to avoid engaging in, so not to perpetuate the problematic ways that have been embedded in the literature surrounding the topic. Further, a rigorous method was used to synthesise the extant literature base within the Narrative Review. No Narrative Review (or synthesis) was conducted in this topic area before, which added to the novel nature of the review. A rigorous method was also adopted in the analysis of the data set in Studies Two, Three, and Four. The iterative process of conducting an FDA ensured a clear, detailed procedure that adds to the credibility of my research process. Additionally, with conducting three separate FDAs, it stands to reason that my ability to conduct each analysis would become consistent over time.

The diversity of my sample was a strength. Intersectionally, women academics who provided a wealth of lived experiences, from a range of different fields in STEMM, and from many Australian public universities, were recruited. Additionally, women of differing career stages, and differing ages within those career stages, were recruited. As such, my research findings provide a diverse and comprehensive insight into the perspectives of women, and their experiences surrounding academia, and identity conceptualisation. The findings can be useful for other researchers, academics, academia, the industry, organisations, and those involved in policy, where findings are transferable across different groups of women at different career stages, to assist in informing and directing change for higher education overall. The integration of qualitative methods, the Foucauldian methodology, and the critical psychology theoretical perspective was a further strength. Not only is this a novel approach which has never been conducted before in this area, it allows for new ways of being, and possible new future research directions in this area.

Providing the history of Australian higher education (Chapter Three) is a noticeable addition and strength to my research, as it documents the academic context within a dominant Western understanding and experience, as well as illuminating the identities, understandings and experiences that have, and have not, been privileged. Foucault (1972) argued that discourse is located within particular

socio-cultural elements, thus, the recognition of context is important. Aligning with the use of the Foucauldian methodology, and the critical psychological theoretical perspective, in the deconstruction of the academic context, the chapter adds novelty and utility to my research. While it may not be relevant to other countries or time periods (as I discuss in the limitations section), it still provides context to my research project.

Another key strength of my research involved the quality assurance processes adopted for each study. Included in this was a comprehensive audit trail, which included my reflexive journal, supervision notes, analysis notes, illustrations of the process, previous drafts and write-ups, interview transcripts, and memoing. Further, engaging in triangulation with the research team (consisting of a doctoral student/sessional academic, and three women academics at different career stages within STEM fields in Australian public higher education) enhanced the quality of the research. In addition, for Studies Two, Three, and Four, which involved research participants, I invited all the participants to provide feedback on my preliminary data interpretations. Three participants responded, acknowledging agreement with the final write up of the findings.

## **10.8 Limitations and Future Research Directions**

There are limits to the transferability of my research findings beyond the Australian public higher education context. My findings are only representative for women academics within STEM fields in such an academic context. With limits to the transferability of the findings, caution is needed when applying these findings to different contexts (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In aligning with the recognition that my study findings are bound within an understanding of STEM for women within the Australian public higher education context, future research should explore how academic identities are conceptualised and constructed in education systems within other socio-cultural contexts. Comparative studies with other faculties, as well as other geographical and cultural contexts, are needed. Additionally, women's identity conceptualisations in private higher education settings, both in Australia, and worldwide, would be useful, to explore whether the dynamics differ in relation to context. Overall, the exploration of identity, and its associated subject positions, outside of the current socio-cultural context is

important, as it can help to identify the differing ways of being, experiences, needs, and views of individuals from different education systems and socio-cultural contexts.

My research did not consider how women academics who have left academia conceptualised their academic identities. This was considered beyond the scope of the research project. Such an area would be considered of importance, as some of my participants spoke about the process of how they would identify as an academic when they would eventually leave and/or retire, as well as mentioning some of their colleagues in their experience who had left, or were pushed out of, academia. As such, future research using a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to explore the conceptualisation of academic identities for women who have left academia would be useful to provide insight into these experiences, and how these women have been/were positioned. Additionally, further research in how women navigate the process of leaving academia would be useful, as this was a major concern that was discussed within my findings. Exploring this area further would assist in providing depth and insight into these experiences.

My research project focused on how women conceptualise their academic identities within STEMM in Australian public higher education, excluding other academics (i.e., males and gender-diverse academics) within these fields. Many of my participants suggested how exploring a male perspective on the topic of not only academic identities, but how they feel women are positioned to navigate academia, would be useful. As such, I propose that future research could endeavour to explore 1) how men conceptualise their academic identities, 2) how they perceive gender to be embedded within the academic setting, and 3) how they perceive their positioning and the ability to navigate academia, compared to other academics. Additionally, with my recommendations suggesting the renegotiation of identities and subjectivities for all academics to thrive within the system, obtaining the perspectives of all academics in both research, and the institutions themselves, is important.

In relation to the current COVID-19 pandemic context, I noted above that suggestions for future research, and recommendations to be made, should also acknowledge the intensified and exacerbated problematic conditions for women in

academia. While my data was collected pre-COVID in 2019, comparisons to the mid- and post-pandemic context would provide a critical, contextual understanding. Implicit within these recommendations is an encouragement to collect data from the same population, to see how my findings can be extended on during mid- and post-pandemic. Additionally, future research should branch out to other populations that are similar, to explore contextual understandings and experiences, as well as address limits to the transferability of my findings. Impacts that have been either created or exacerbated by COVID-19 can be explored to establish new, and novel, critical knowledge (Venkatesh, 2020).

The academic community, industries, funders, health professionals, and the government should support women academics during this pandemic, and beyond. With the recognition of women taking on more familial and work responsibilities compared to men (Gorska et al., 2021; Venkatesh, 2020), future research needs to explore the impact of this work on women's navigation, progression, and productivity in academia. Broadly, the degree in which COVID-19 has impacted on how women experience, and identify with, academia, would be useful to explore. Additionally, exploring why the work that women engage in is viewed as *'lesser than'* in value, compared to male academics, during COVID-19 (Gorska et al., 2021; Venkatesh, 2020) is important to consider. With all work considered valuable within our context, I question the influence of patriarchal and gendered discourses on how women and their work are valued, particularly in a context that has intensified and exacerbated the concerns I have mentioned previously.

In relation to navigating academia, I recommend that assistance is provided by institutions for families to access childcare, as well as care options for academics that may be caring for family members. This could be achieved by considering lockdown periods as care leave, and providing this option, so that any decrease in productivity does not hinder later career development. Further, while COVID-19 communities of practice have been implemented in response to the pandemic (McGaughey et al., 2021), it would be useful to continue implementing and sustaining these communities, to address the various and rapid changes occurring to the academic context. Ensuring that members reflect identities across multiple areas of the university, with varying forms of power, agency, and decision-making

capacity, are important to ensure not only a diverse group of members, but that the interests of all academics are acknowledged, and implemented. Higher education needs to acknowledge gendered inequities as they are being intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, with institutional actions going beyond a tokenistic, box-checking exercise, to genuinely address the inherent gendered biases that appear to permeate all levels of the academic hierarchy. Recommendations and solutions should be applied to benefit everyone; as such, it is necessary for the academy to change how it acknowledges and considers equity for all academics.

### **10.9 Concluding Commentary**

Reflecting on the final messages of my PhD project leaves me pondering more questions in regard to how higher education operates. What is clear is that the conceptualisation of academic identities, for women, has evolved over time, in relation to how they balance their teaching, research, and service responsibilities, which is further fuelled by pressures from outside responsibilities that women are expected to perform based on dominant socio-cultural gendered expectations. Of interest was considering how the women academics, in each of their career stages, negotiated the structures they were a part of, as well as stretched the parameters in which they worked, both inside, and outside, of higher education. The academic careers of the women were influenced by both distinct, and related aspects of the women academics' sense of self, which held a unique meaning for the women's lives, relationships, work, and overall sense of self which evolved across career stages.

My findings supported the conceptualisation of women's academic identities as ongoing, fluid, dynamic, and changing, affected by professional and personal experiences, and processes of development, that characterise ways of being within the academic setting. For the most part, a clear sense of identities within the later years of academia was suggested, which implies a level of confidence and comfort with the roles in academia and beyond as the women progressed through each career stage. Additionally, when women moved through each career stage, it appeared to coincide with the stages of life (i.e., starting a family, caring for a loved one, entering new relationships), and as such, different skills and roles saliently emerged at different times, dependent on the stage of

career, and of life. Therefore, subjectivities that emerged at each career stage were inextricably linked to the relationships, communities, and personal challenges of the women, which influenced their sense of self, and the meaning they attributed to their career, and to their life.

This project explored how women conceptualise their academic identities in Australian public higher education, and with that, a number of questions have remained in reflecting on my findings. The core tension evident in my reflection is in relation to how we, as academics, prepare for our academic career, when the navigation of that career is not yet clear. How do we prepare for our careers? How do we know what identities will be important to us? What signs and signals in our careers do we pay attention to? How do we prepare for the potential opportunities that arise, and how do we define the sorts of opportunities that will benefit us in the long run? How, as academics, do we remain highly effective at what we do, while being open to new things that become important to the *'being'* of the academic role? Finally, how do we continue to identify as academics, when the everyday ways of being and doing in academia, and our daily personal lives, constantly change?

Do academics have the ability to fight their own battles and develop strategies to help not only maintain a sense of normalcy, but also to thrive in academia? Can a normal, thriving, academic experience and identity even exist? What is *'normal'*? Who determines what is considered as *'normal'* in the setting, and is there a construction of *'normal'* that exists? Are academics able to develop a system where power and knowledge operate as a form of resistance, or shall they simply surrender to the way that things are? Surrender to the powers that focus their energies on controlling academics from afar. These are just some of the considerations that the participants within my project articulated through their research interviews and expressed with me as being their *'questions without answers'*. The changing landscape of Australian public higher education has further compounded these struggles, identified through the experiences of women in conceptualising their identities. Overall, the women academics questioned whether they should continue to adapt and submissively accept the increasingly monitored

academic context, or within the academic culture, they should try to overcome these struggles.

It is clear that power systems are already embedded within our society, which can make any opportunities for change appear a hopeless endeavour. The women within the research questioned whether we, as a society, should even bother to hope that the higher education system can be changed, when dominant attitudes and perspectives are so prevalent and embedded unconsciously within our culture. With real change wanted and desired, I ask to who, or to what, should we develop resistance against? Foucault (1982) argues that we focus less on the State in the struggle against power, and instead, focus on the local struggles, but I question the effectiveness of focusing on one parochial aspect of the system. Focusing locally rather than globally almost assumes that the right thing will be done just because, which almost feels like a naïve perspective (a thought commonly expressed by the participants in my research). Will people do the right thing just because they can? Can we assume that by coming together with other academics locally, that this will make a difference in higher education globally?

This may sound as if I am refuting the need for collaboration and communities of practice to assist with navigating higher education, which is not my intention at all. Perhaps with further experience, and with making localised changes focused on impacting change at a higher level, this can help us to form counter cultures, counter discourses, counter subjectivities, and forms of resistance that are more sophisticated and effective in constructing a thriving experience for not only women, but all academics in higher education. It is clear that some forms of resistance do work, not so much in an antagonistic and violent manner, but rather, resisting by working together. New forms of coordination and cooperation can be brought about to help acquire new forms of social power that can assist to restructure the Australian public higher education system at a time where change is needed for all. By developing an understanding of how identities can interact with professional experiences, as well as recognising the process of learning and development as continual, it is clear that academic institutions can better serve the diverse needs of all academics. Consideration of the professional experiences and identities of academics must go beyond the formalised roles of academia, to

incorporate the influence of career stage, discipline, interpersonal relationships, caring and familial responsibilities, as well as individual characteristics and identities. Perhaps the answer for acceptance of all academic identities, as well as thriving academic experiences, lies in the ability for all academics to act as agents of change. ***With one group at a time, one place at a time, real change can occur.***

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## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A Low Risk Ethics Approval Letter



Office of Research and Development

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Perth Western Australia 6845

**Telephone** +61 8 9266 7863  
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13-Sep-2018

Name: Peta Dzidic  
Department/School: School of Psychology  
Email: Peta.Dzidic@curtin.edu.au

Dear Peta Dzidic

**RE: Ethics Office approval**  
**Approval number: HRE2018-0606**

Thank you for submitting your application to the Human Research Ethics Office for the project **A qualitative exploration of women's academic identity**.

Your application was reviewed through the Curtin University Negligible risk review process.

The review outcome is: **Approved**.

Your proposal meets the requirements described in the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*.

Approval is granted for a period of one year from **13-Sep-2018 to 12-Sep-2019**. Continuation of approval will be granted on an annual basis following submission of an annual report.

Personnel authorised to work on this project:

| Name              | Role       |
|-------------------|------------|
| Dzidic, Peta      | CI         |
| Castell, Emily    | Supervisor |
| Phillips, Matthew | Student    |

Approved documents:

|          |
|----------|
| Document |
|----------|

### Standard conditions of approval

1. Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal
2. Report in a timely manner anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project including:

- proposed changes to the approved proposal or conduct of the study
  - unanticipated problems that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project
  - major deviations from the approved proposal and/or regulatory guidelines
  - serious adverse events
3. Amendments to the proposal must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Office before they are implemented (except where an amendment is undertaken to eliminate an immediate risk to participants)
  4. An annual progress report must be submitted to the Human Research Ethics Office on or before the anniversary of approval and a completion report submitted on completion of the project
  5. Personnel working on this project must be adequately qualified by education, training and experience for their role, or supervised
  6. Personnel must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation, that bears on this project
  7. Changes to personnel working on this project must be reported to the Human Research Ethics Office
  8. Data and primary materials must be retained and stored in accordance with the [Western Australian University Sector Disposal Authority \(WAUSDA\)](#) and the [Curtin University Research Data and Primary Materials policy](#)
  9. Where practicable, results of the research should be made available to the research participants in a timely and clear manner
  10. Unless prohibited by contractual obligations, results of the research should be disseminated in a manner that will allow public scrutiny; the Human Research Ethics Office must be informed of any constraints on publication
  11. Approval is dependent upon ongoing compliance of the research with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#), the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#), applicable legal requirements, and with Curtin University policies, procedures and governance requirements
  12. The Human Research Ethics Office may conduct audits on a portion of approved projects.

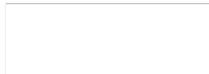
**Special Conditions of Approval**

None

**This letter constitutes low risk/negligible risk approval only.** This project may not proceed until you have met all of the Curtin University research governance requirements.

Should you have any queries regarding consideration of your project, please contact the Ethics Support Officer for your faculty or the Ethics Office at [hrec@curtin.edu.au](mailto:hrec@curtin.edu.au) or on 9266 2784.

Yours sincerely



Catherine Gangell  
Manager, Research Integrity

## Appendix B Ethics Amendment Approval Letter



Research Office at Curtin

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12-Jun-2019

Name: Peta Dzidic  
Department/School: School of Psychology  
Email: Peta.Dzidic@curtin.edu.au

Dear Peta Dzidic

**RE: Amendment approval**  
**Approval number: HRE2018-0606**

Thank you for submitting an amendment request to the Human Research Ethics Office for the project **A qualitative exploration of women's academic identity**.

Your amendment request has been reviewed and the review outcome is: **Approved**

The amendment approval number is HRE2018-0606-01 approved on 12-Jun-2019.

The following amendments were approved:

Changes have been made (additional text added) to the research flyer associated with the approved research. The additions have been to make the investigators more explicit to the potential participants, as well as the situated context of the investigators. A statement on why the research is of interest for us to explore has been added also.

The following text has been added to the research flyer: "The research is being conducted by Matthew Phillips, supervised by Dr Peta Dzidic and Dr Emily Castell. We are three academics in the discipline of psychology and share an interest in exploring gendered experiences through research. Our aim in the research is to explore systemic inequities."

Any special conditions noted in the original approval letter still apply.

### Standard conditions of approval

1. Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal
2. Report in a timely manner anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project including:
  - proposed changes to the approved proposal or conduct of the study
  - unanticipated problems that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project
  - major deviations from the approved proposal and/or regulatory guidelines
  - serious adverse events
3. Amendments to the proposal must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Office before they are implemented (except where an amendment is undertaken to eliminate an immediate risk to participants)
4. An annual progress report must be submitted to the Human Research Ethics Office on or before the anniversary of approval and a completion report submitted on completion of the project
5. Personnel working on this project must be adequately qualified by education, training and experience for their role, or supervised
6. Personnel must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation, that bears on this project
7. Changes to personnel working on this project must be reported to the Human Research Ethics Office
8. Data and primary materials must be retained and stored in accordance with the [Western Australian University Sector Disposal Authority](#)

- [\(WAUSDA\)](#) and the [Curtin University Research Data and Primary Materials policy](#)
9. Where practicable, results of the research should be made available to the research participants in a timely and clear manner
  10. Unless prohibited by contractual obligations, results of the research should be disseminated in a manner that will allow public scrutiny; the Human Research Ethics Office must be informed of any constraints on publication
  11. Ethics approval is dependent upon ongoing compliance of the research with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#), the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#), applicable legal requirements, and with Curtin University policies, procedures and governance requirements
  12. The Human Research Ethics Office may conduct audits on a portion of approved projects.

Should you have any queries regarding consideration of your project, please contact the Ethics Support Officer for your faculty or the Ethics Office at [hrec@curtin.edu.au](mailto:hrec@curtin.edu.au) or on 9266 2784.

Yours sincerely



Amy Bowater  
Ethics, Team Lead

## Appendix C Study 1 Copyright Agreement

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#### Contributor's Publishing Agreement

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Article</b>   | Exploring and Critiquing Women's Academic Identity in Higher Education: A Narrative Review |
| <b>DOI</b>       | 10.1177/21582440221096145  |
| <b>Journal</b>   | SAGE Open  |
| <b>Author(s)</b> | Matthew Phillips, Peta Dzidic, Emily Castell   |

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I warrant that I am one of the named authors of the Contribution and that I am authorized to sign this Agreement; in the case of a multi-authored Contribution, I am authorized to sign on behalf of all other authors of the Contribution

Signing Author: Matthew Phillips (electronic signature)  
Date: 18 April 2022

#### Terms of the Agreement

##### Copyright

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- Any studies on which the Contribution is directly based were satisfactorily conducted in compliance with the governing Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards or were exempt from IRB requirements.

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5. You have checked the instructions to authors, and where declaration of grant funding is required, you have provided the appropriate information, in the format requested, within the submitted manuscript.

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### Appendix D Main Characteristics Table of Summarised Studies

| Study                   | Aims   | Location                        | N and Age Range | Discipline and Career Stage  | Data Collection and Analysis Method(s)   | Key Findings  |
|-------------------------|--|---------------------------------|-----------------|--|--|---|
| Alwazzan & Rees (2016). | Exploring female medical educators' experiences of gender, career progression, and leadership in medicine.                       | Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.        | 25.<br>25-59.   | Medicine.<br>9 = Early Career;<br>10 = Mid-Career;<br>6 = Late Career.   | Semi-Structured Interviews, and Demographic Questionnaire.<br><br>Thematic Analysis.       | Varied experiences of career progression, leadership, and gendered workplace cultures based on career stage, work environment and speciality.   |
| Amon (2017).            | Exploring the perspectives and experiences of women in male dominated STEMM fields.  | United States of America (USA). | 46.<br>21-51.   | Natural Sciences, Medicine and Health, and Engineering.<br><br>Career stage not provided.  | Interactive Activities, Photovoice, and Demographic Questionnaire.<br><br>Grounded Theory. | Women were not identified as authority figures and worked to legitimize their status through building relationships. This time and energy were taken from their professional endeavours. Women transitioned through multiple roles but were limited in their sense of agency and freedom. |
| Arar (2018).            | Exploring how Arab women in Israel define their aspirations, motivations, challenges, and strategies to succeed within academia. | Israel.                         | 14.<br>38-52.   | Sociology, Psychology, Mathematics, Curriculum Design, Information Technology, Education Sociology, Education, Statistics, Arabic Literature, Hebrew Language, Sociology of Education, and Methodology.<br><br>1 = Early Career; | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Comparative Analysis.                                   | Women were 'breaking the glass ceiling' to reinforce elements of their identity (professionally, personally, and gender specific) through empowerment and leadership. Notions of a successful hybrid identity were mentioned to navigate through the higher education setting.            |

|                          |   |            |                                |  |   |  |
|--------------------------|---|------------|--------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Arasa & Calvert (2013).  | To explore women's academic narratives and agency in their daily experiences, and to deconstruct the structure of the Kenyan academic system. | Kenya.     | 20.<br>Age range not provided. | 9 = Mid-Career;<br>4 = Late Career.<br>Discipline and career stage not provided.     | Data collected via Time Logs and Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Data analysis not provided. | Findings suggested the intensification of labour, conflicting priorities, outside pressures, and a lack of control over one's professional life.   |
| Beard & Julion (2016).   | To gain an understanding and share the academic experiences of African American nursing faculty.  | USA.       | 23.<br>Age range not provided. | Nursing.<br>1 = Early Career;<br>3 = Mid-Career;<br>19 = Late Career.                | Semi-Structured Interviews and a Demographic Questionnaire.<br><br>Thematic Analysis.           | Academics have a passion for teaching, wanting to make a difference to students, to be welcoming and inclusive, and develop in the academic setting, juxtaposed with questioning of credibility, marginalization, experiencing an unsupportive work environment, and struggling to maintain a work-life balance. |
| Beddoes & Pawley (2014). | Exploring how faculty members, make sense of maintaining a work-life balance within academia.   | USA.       | 19.<br>Age range not provided. | Science, Technology, Engineering, and Agriculture.<br><br>Career stage not provided. | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Grounded Theory.   | Family-related challenges were identified. Gendered inequalities were identified but reduced through the myth of an equal playing field within academia. The nature of the system of academia was identified as needing to be questioned.  |
| Bennett et al. (2016).   | Exploring the experience of 'being an academic' within the  | Australia. | 7.                             | Philosophy, Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Environmental                            | Story Pot (Narratives).   | A tripartite academic identity formed by three roles: the teacher, the educational researcher,   |

|                           |  |            |                         |   |  |  |
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|                           | Australian university setting.   |            | Age range not provided. | Science, Education, and Tourism.<br><br>Career stage not provided.  | Group Auto-Ethnography and Narrative Analysis.                                 | and the disciplinarian. Participants acknowledged wanting agency and visibility for underrepresented and unacknowledged academic identities.   |
| Carra et al. (2017).      | To reflect and understand academics current occupational identity and address the challenges of practitioner-scholar transition. | Australia. | 13.<br><br>22-55.       | Occupational Therapy.<br><br>2 = Early Career;<br>11 = Mid-Career;<br>0 = Late Career.  | Closed Blog for Conversational Scholarship.<br><br>Data analysis not provided. | The crafting of a new academic identity was a dynamic and ongoing process, consisting of multiple intersectional roles. Peers were influential for collaboration and support in constructing a renewed academic identity.  |
| Case & Richley (2013).    | Exploring post-doctoral women academics experiences in American higher education.  | USA.       | 24.<br><br>28-35.       | Genetics, Neuroscience, Pharmacology, Immunology, Biochemistry, Infectious Diseases, Oncology, and Biology.<br><br>Career stage not provided. | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Thematic Analysis.                          | Participants wanted to contribute to their field, and to collaborate with others. The work-life balance was a key aspiration, but the systemic nature of the post-doctoral environment consisting of gender and family biases, and challenges specific to women working in male-centric environments made this difficult to achieve. |
| Charleston et al. (2014). | Exploring Black female computing aspirants' experiences at various levels of academic  | USA.       | 15.<br><br>18-35.       | Computing Sciences.<br><br>Career stage not provided.   | Focus Groups.<br><br>Phenomenology.  | Race and gender were inseparable and confluent in their experiences. Barriers to academic,   |

|                              |   |                      |                                    |   |   |  |
|------------------------------|---|----------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|--|
|                              | status in a historically represented as a White, male-dominated field.  |                      |                                    |   |   | social, and institutional success were identified. Feelings of isolation and subordination within the computing sciences context were identified. Participants assimilated to norms representative of the dominant culture to appear authentic but struggled with the cognitive dissonance surrounding feeling inauthentic. Black women shift their identities in relation to assessing the benefits and costs of what they do, say, and act, in relation to social norms. |
| Dickens & Chavez (2018).     | Examining how gender, racial, and class identities among early career US Black women may shift whilst working in a predominantly White environment. | USA.                 | 10.<br>22-28.                      | Student Affairs in Higher Education, Case Management, Family Services, Physical Therapy, and Healthcare.<br><br>10 = Early Career;<br>0 = Mid-Career;<br>0 = Late Career. | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis.              |  |
| Drame et al. (2012).         | Exploring early career tenure track women scholars' experiences within their professional environments.   | USA.                 | 6.<br><br>Age range not provided.  | Education.<br><br>6 = Early Career;<br>0 = Mid-Career;<br>0 = Late Career.  | Collaborative Inquiry of Storytelling, Dialogue, and Reflections.<br><br>Phenomenology. | Participants 'fought against' the cultural and societal constraints placed on them due to race, gender, and/or social class. This appeared to present another set of expectations within higher education, with class, cultural, and egotistical constraints.  |
| Elkington & Lawrence (2012). | Exploring experiences of academics who are employed in non-specialist teaching roles in the higher education  | United Kingdom (UK). | 10.<br><br>Age range not provided. | Dance, Music, Art and Design, Nursing, Education, Computing, Social Work, Sports Therapy, Sport and Leisure, Business and   | Semi-Structured Interviews and Open-Ended Group Discussions.<br><br>Thematic Analysis.  | Tensions existed between being a higher education professional, and their academic identity; also, feeling fragmented in terms of the academic   |

|                       |  |            |                                |   |   |  |
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|                       | setting in the United Kingdom.   |            |                                | Marketing, Further Education, Psychology, Accounting and Finance, and Creative Arts.  |   | identity, and a dissonance between what was 'expected' to engage in by the institution.  |
| Esnard et al. (2017). | Exploring Caribbean academics' experiences, and the conceptualization of their professional identity within higher education institutions. | Caribbean. | 4.<br>Age range not provided.  | Career stage not provided.<br>Sociology, Education, Psychology, Gender Studies, History, and Linguistics.<br>0 = Early Career;<br>2 = Mid-Career;<br>2 = Late Career. | Narratives.<br>Group Auto-Ethnography and Narrative Analysis. | Academia was identified as an isolated and fragmented context, influenced by a hierarchical nature, and self-serving the interests of more senior academics.   |
| Ford (2011).          | Exploring how faculty members social identities, impact the university experience.   | USA.       | 66.<br>Age range not provided. | Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Humanities.<br>Career stage not provided.  | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br>Grounded Theory.               | Women of colour are categorized as the 'other' within the higher education setting, lending itself to misrecognitions in relation to knowledge, intellectuality, race, and gender. Women of colour felt pressure to act in relation to the norm and illustrate changing of identities and practices to fit with hegemonic practices. |
| Gale (2011).          | Exploring the academic identities amongst early-career academics within a UK post 1992 teaching oriented university.                       | UK.        | 17.<br>Age range not provided. | Discipline not provided.<br>17 = Early Career;<br>0 = Mid-Career;<br>0 = Late Career.   | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br>Grounded Theory.               | Many elements of an academic identity bear different weighting in accordance with hegemonic norms in UK higher education.  |

|                        |   |                 |                                |   |   |   |
|------------------------|---|-----------------|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Gaus & Hall (2015).    | Exploring the identities of Indonesian academics during the implementation of government-driven policy in higher education. | Indonesia.      | 30.<br>39-63.                  | Language, Literature, Cultural Studies, and Engineering.<br><br>Career stage not provided.                  | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Data analysis not provided.  | Participants noted the struggle to balance their existing academic identities, with the new roles prescribed from their external environment appearing to influence said identities.  |
| Gonsalves (2018).      | Exploring the experiences of doctoral students in the field of Observational Astrophysics.                                  | USA.            | 2.<br>Mid-20s.                 | Observational Astrophysics.<br><br>2 = Early Career;<br>0 = Mid-Career;<br>0 = Late Career.                 | Field Observations, Ethnographic Field Notes, Journaling, Photo-Elicitation Interviews, and Semi-Structured Interviews. | Cultural models of astrophysicists (often stereotypically enforced) did not fit within the students' experiences and perceptions of being an astrophysicist.  |
| Hacifazlioglu (2010).  | Exploring the challenges experienced by women within the first years of their academic appointment.                         | USA and Turkey. | 24.<br>Age range not provided. | Organizational Behaviour, Organizational Development, and Gender Studies.<br><br>Career stage not provided. | Narrative Analysis.<br>Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Data analysis not provided.                                   | The women suggested needing to mentally adapt to their new settings, to 'fit' with the institution. Many roles were experienced within the workplace, in combination to resistance from other colleagues, particularly men. |
| Harding et al. (2010). | Exploring the academic self and how academics can account for academic selves.  | UK.             | 6.<br>Age range not provided.  | Accounting, Psychology, Health Studies, and Public Sector Management.<br><br>Career stage not provided.     | Unstructured Personal Accounts and Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Thematic Analysis and Personal Pronoun Analysis.  | Tensions surrounding frustration and disillusionment within the controlled work environments were evident. The self was managed and monitored by the institution.   |
| Harris et al. (2017).  | Exploring the experiences of parent academics and their   | New Zealand.    | 32.<br>25-70.                  | Discipline and career stage not provided.   | Semi-Structured Interviews.   | Experiences and perceptions of academic   |

|                             |  |      |                                |  |   |   |
|-----------------------------|--|------|--------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Hart (2016).                | colleagues within contemporary neoliberal academia. Exploring the workplace practices carried out by mid-career women faculty in STEMM fields. | USA. | 25.<br>Age range not provided. | Engineering, Arts and Sciences, Agriculture, and Natural Resources.<br>0 = Early Career; 25 = Mid-Career; 0 = Late Career. | Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis.<br>Semi-Structured Interview and a Demographic Questionnaire.<br>Case Study and a Grounded Theory Approach. | parents were damaging to one's academic careers.<br>Institutional practices either facilitated or limited career opportunities. More barriers than supports shaped the careers of STEMM women.  |
| Hinojosa & Carney (2016).   | Exploring the experiences of Mexican American women in doctoral programs.  | USA. | 5.<br>27-37.                   | Counselling.<br>5 = Early Career; 0 = Mid-Career; 0 = Late Career.   | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br>Narrative Analysis guided by Fraser's (2004) Four Stage Process of Analysis.   | Women face challenges navigating academia, integrating their family and culture into their academic practices, and experiencing dissonance over becoming someone 'new' in academia and 'losing' their cultural identity.  |
| Hirshfield & Joseph (2012). | Exploring how faculty and women of colour perceive their gender and racial group relationships to influence their experiences in academia.     | USA. | 33.<br>Age range not provided. | Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Humanities.<br>Career stage not provided.   | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br>Data analysis not provided.  | Women represented their gender, and race in academia, and were expected to take on a greater proportion of mentoring others, and advising female students, compared to males. Experiencing prejudice and discrimination was identified, as well as being stereotyped as nurturing and motherly. |
| Hurst (2010).               | Exploring how physiotherapists experience the  | UK.  | 8.                             | Physiotherapy.   | Semi-Structured Interviews.   | Participants struggled with making the transition into academia with feelings of  |

|                         |  |      |                         |  |   |  |
|-------------------------|--|------|-------------------------|--|---|--|
|                         | transition between clinical practice to academia.  |      | Age range not provided. | Career stage not provided.                               | Thematic Analysis.                          | uncertainty and inadequacy suggested.  |
| Johnson et al. (2011).  | Exploring the experiences of three women of colour who have completed advanced degrees in science-based professions. | USA. | 3.                      | Physics.   | Unstructured Interview.                     | The conceptualization of identity is an ongoing process, constrained by the oppressive nature of the higher education institution.   |
|                         |  |      | Age range not provided. | Career stage not provided.                               | provided.                                   |  |
| Kachchaf et al. (2015). | Exploring the experiences of academic women of colour compared to their white, male counterparts.                    | USA. | 3.                      | Mathematical Science, Physics, and Engineering.          | Semi-Structured, and Open-Ended Interviews. | An interplay between realities of domestic life and the ideal worker norm, with a need identified to address issues relating to the retention, participation, and advancement of women of colour in STEMM. |
|                         |  |      | Age range not provided. | 1 = Early Career;<br>1 = Mid-Career;<br>1 = Late Career. | Narrative Analysis.                         |  |
| Kelly & McCann (2014).  | Exploring gendered and racialized disparities within experiences in the professoriate within academia.               | USA. | 3.                      | Discipline and career stage not provided.                | Semi-Structured Interview.                  | Gendered and racial challenges and benchmarks over the women faculty of colour's academic journey, impacted by challenges to clarity surrounding roles, self-efficacy, and social acceptance.              |
|                         |  |      | Age range not provided. |  | Data analysis not provided.                 |  |
| Kolade (2016).          | Exploring the experiences of nursing faculty within the context of higher education faculty culture.                 | USA. | 5.                      | Nursing.   | Semi-Structured Interviews                  | Tokenistic attempts to 'gain more numbers' of minorities in academia.  |
|                         |  |      | Age range not provided. | Career stage not provided.                               | Hycner's Explicitation Process.             | Participants also noted difficulty adjusting to the majority culture.  |

|                      |   |      |                                |  |   |  |
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| Lester (2011).       | Exploring how women faculty members manage gender roles within the academy.                               | USA. | 6.<br>Age range not provided.  | Construction Technologies, Culinary Arts, and Language Arts.<br>2 = Early Career;<br>3 = Mid-Career;<br>1 = Late Career.   | Semi-Structured Interviews and Observations.<br>Narrative Analysis.                                     | Women faculty perform certain roles which closely relate to the dominant discourse of the specific context in which they are situated, and that having to continually manage these roles leads to a reconstruction of identity, merging forms of identity, and intentionally managing forms of impression. |
| Levin et al. (2014). | Understanding the academic, and its faculty members.  | USA. | 31.<br>Age range not provided. | Auto Mechanics, Business, Counselling, Criminal Justice, Dance, English, Health Sciences, History, ESL, Mathematics, Nursing, Engineering, Psychology, Sociology, and Visual Arts.<br>Career stage not provided. | Semi-Structured Interviews and Institutional Data from College Websites.<br>Data analysis not provided. | Faculty of colour use self-authoring by possessing different understandings of institutional life than their White colleagues.   |
| Levin et al. (2013). | Exploring social and ethnic identity conflicts noted in the daily lives of faculty of colour in academia. | USA. | 36.<br>Age range not provided. | Counselling, History, Psychology. Chemistry, and English.<br>Career stage not provided.  | Semi-Structured Interviews and Observations.<br>Data analysis not provided.                             | Faculty of colour held hopes for institutional change. The personal and professional elements are interrelated, and issues may arise when in conflict with institutionalized norms that do not match with the social identity of faculty of colour.  |

|                           |  |                  |                                |   |   |   |
|---------------------------|--|------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Leyerzapf et al. (2018).  | Exploring how workplace inequalities are formed and constructed, and how professionals in an academic hospital workplace perceive and deal with diversity.   | The Netherlands. | 62.<br>Age range not provided. | Medicine and Nursing.<br>Career stage not provided.   | Semi-Structured Interviews and Observations.<br><br>Data analysis not provided. | Diversity was constructed as a non-issue and defined as being irrelevant. Cultural diversity issues of the minority were consequently obscured due to this construction. The setting was constructed as neutral, objective, context-less, and individual, and differences between professionals was labelled as the minority. |
| Mabokela & Mlambo (2015). | Exploring the reasoning behind the absence of women in academic positions across African universities.   | Ghana.           | 9.<br><br>30-60.               | Natural Sciences and the Social Sciences.<br><br>2 = Early Career;<br>5 = Mid-Career;<br>2 = Late Career.   | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Grounded Theory.                             | Disciplinary expectations overtook other life responsibilities but were suggested as part of the academic experience and identity for all. Childcare and traditional gender expectations impacted the career negatively, and social and cultural norms were re-created to suit the experiences of women.                      |
| Marine & Aleman (2018).   | Exploring how women born between 1946-1964 interpret their academic careers, understanding themselves as academic professionals, and how feminism has informed their professional dispositions and identities. | USA.             | 11.<br><br>54-72.              | Women's and Gender Studies, Religion, Sociology, English, Psychology, History, and Philosophy.<br><br>0 = Early Career;<br>0 = Mid-Career;<br>11 = Late Career. | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>In-Vivo Coding.                              | The development of a professional identity was challenging, with the incorporation of managerialism reasserting a masculine discourse within academia, where a change in culture is evident, and roles and identities are re-evaluated in relation to this change.  |

|                                |  |            |                                   |   |  |   |
|--------------------------------|--|------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Martsin (2018).                | Exploring how academic women navigated returning to work in some capacity after maternity leave.   | Australia. | 24.<br>29-43.                     | Higher Education, Construction, Health, Consultancy, Science, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine.<br><br>Career stage not provided. | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Thematic Analysis.  | A repositioning of identities surrounding not only motherhood, but as a new kind of employee with an important identity shift for the women. Being an employed mother was suggested to be complex.  |
| McCutcheon & Morrison (2018).  | Exploring the masculine norms and perceived barriers encountered from Psychology women faculty and graduate students regarding work-family balance in the academy in Canada. | USA.       | 65.<br>23-74.                     | Psychology.<br><br>33 = Early Career;<br>18 = Mid-Career;<br>14 = Late Career.  | Open-ended question at the end of a survey.<br><br>Thematic Analysis.                            | Academia enforces masculine-normative institutional policies and practices that guide the behaviour of academics around work and family roles. The women noted a struggle in choosing between their career and family roles, either/or to the detriment of the other.                                       |
| Nixon (2017).                  | Investigating the experiences of women of colour faculty who serve as college and university chief diversity officers.   | USA.       | 5.<br><br>Age range not provided. | Education, Counselling, Psychology, and Law.<br><br>0 = Early Career;<br>2 = Mid-Career;<br>3 = Late Career.                            | Semi-Structured Interviews, Document Data, and Archival Data.<br><br>Data analysis not provided. | Participants navigated the institution as marginalized 'others', feeling isolated from others, which influenced the roles undertaken, and the conceptualization of the academic identity. Women had to contend with tensions surrounding identity, and the expectations from others within the institution. |
| O'Shaughnessy & Burnes (2016). | Examining the experiences of career development for early  | USA.       | 22.<br>29-41.                     | Psychology and Counselling.   | Semi-Structured Interviews and a   | Gendered flexibility, gender as a continuum, restriction of gender roles,   |

|                          |   |                             |                                    |   |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
|                          | career women academics.   |                             |                                    | 22 = Early Career;<br>0 = Mid-Career;<br>0 = Late Career.   | Demographic Questionnaire.  | and assumptions based on gender were explored.  |
| Park & Schallert (2018). | Exploring how discourse influences the development of a professional identity for graduate students.                                  | USA.                        | 20.<br><br>24-42.                  | Psychology.<br><br>20 = Early Career;<br>0 = Mid-Career;<br>0 = Late Career.  | Grounded Theory.<br>Semi-Structured Interviews and Observation Notes.<br><br>Grounded Theory. | The need to change ways of talking, reading, and writing, to various degrees, influenced by disciplinary practices relevant to the academic profession.   |
| Pololi & Jones (2010).   | Exploring women's concerns within the academic medical culture, and how the women cope with and resist situations of marginalisation. | USA.                        | 17.<br><br>Age range not provided. | Medicine.<br><br>Career stage not provided.   | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Data analysis not provided.                                | Women had a sense of 'not belonging' to the organization, perceived as cultural outsiders and feeling isolated and invisible. Barriers to advancement (i.e., bias and gender role expectations) were noted.   |
| Rhoads & Gu (2012)       | Exploring the academic lives of women.  | People's Republic of China. | 27.<br><br>Age range not provided. | Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, Business, Economics, Environment and Natural Resources, Finance, Foreign Languages, History, International Studies, Journalism and Communication, Law, Marxism Studies, Public Administration, Philosophy, Physics, Psychology, Sociology and Population Studies, and Statistics. | Semi-Structured interviews.<br><br>Data analysis not provided.                                | Differences in how women and men perceive the challenges confronting women in academia. Women saw the challenges as serious, compared to men who saw them as either minor, or there being no challenges whatsoever. Women work 'double time', having roles within the workplace, and roles within the home context (e.g., parenting, homemaker). The women felt that limitations were |

|                                  |  |      |                                 |  |   |   |
|----------------------------------|--|------|---------------------------------|--|---|---|
|                                  |  |      |                                 | Career stage not provided.   |   | placed on them in relation to their advancement within the university (e.g., culture of the university, inequities of workload, gendered work roles). Women felt excluded from academia.  |
| Rockinson-Szapkiw et al. (2017). | Exploring how women who engage in distance education programs at the graduate level, and who identify as mothers, balance and integrate their multiple identities (e.g., mother, student, professional). | USA. | 17.<br>20-69.                   | Education.<br>17 = Early Career;<br>0 = Mid-Career;<br>0 = Late Career.  | Semi-Structured Interviews and Life Maps.<br>Grounded Theory. | Development of the academic identity in relation to transitioning from student to scholar is complex and challenging, but the social conditions appeared to provide women faculty with the confidence and space to differentiate, develop, and intersect multiple identities. |
| Rogers (2017).                   | Exploring the experiences of working-class women academics at different phases of their careers.   | UK.  | 3.<br>40s.                      | Not provided.<br>1 = Early Career;<br>1 = Mid-Career;<br>1 = Late Career.  | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br>Thematic Analysis.             | Academic identities of the women suggest a 'bogus' sense of self, where one complies with institutional machinations, 'fakes' intellectual prowess, and simply does not feel worthy of existing in academia.  |
| Settles et al. (2018).           | Exploring the (in)visibility experiences among faculty of colour within a research intensive, predominantly White university.  | USA. | 118.<br>Age range not provided. | Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and Agriculture and Natural Resources.<br>42 = Early Career;<br>35 = Mid-Career.<br>41 = Late Career. | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br>Thematic Analysis.             | Faculty of colour felt used by other individuals as visible minorities to promote diversity, suggesting inauthentic forms of inclusion which enhanced the tokenistic  |

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|                         |   |      |               |  |   |   |
|-------------------------|---|------|---------------|--|---|---|
| Smith & Gayles (2018).  | Exploring the experiences of graduating senior women in engineering.                                      | USA. | 10.<br>21-24. | Engineering.<br>10 = Early Career;<br>0 = Mid-Career;<br>0 = Late Career.  | Semi-Structured Interviews and a Demographic Questionnaire.<br><br>Grounded Theory. | nature of this action and setting.<br>Overall equitable experiences with some stating women may have an 'advantage' based on the availability of resources aimed at supporting women in STEMM. However, the women shared examples of experiencing bias, where their knowledge was underestimated or demeaned, frequently by male peers.   |
| Szelenyi et al. (2016). | Exploring the science identities of women doctoral students in STEMM fields within research universities. | USA. | 21.<br>21-63. | Astronomy, Biology, Bioengineering, Biomedical Engineering, Chemical Engineering, Chemistry, Computer Science, Environmental Science, Entomology, and Geosciences.<br><br>1 = Early Career;<br>0 = Mid-Career;<br>0 = Late Career. | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Grounded Theory.                                 | Different forms of academic identities: the entrepreneurial scientist identity related to using knowledge to engage in other forms of engagement. The industrial scientist identity related to showing results from research in a limited amount of time, providing solutions to a problem and developing products for use. The policy scientist identity related to values and goals relating to policy goals and ecological systemic change. Finally, the scientist as a community educator identity was suggested to |

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|------------------------------|--|------|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Trahar (2011).               | Exploring which diverse student populations influence current teaching and assessment practices in higher education. | UK.  | 10.<br>Age range not provided. | Geography, Computer Science, Health Care, Biochemistry, Linguistics, and Education.<br>Career stage not provided. | Unstructured Interviews.<br>Autoethnography and Narrative Analysis. | be providing education to other programs and avenues outside of academia.<br>Participants had to assimilate to different cultural and systemic experiences in higher education.   |
| Trepal & Stinchfield (2011). | Exploring the experiences of women who identify as tenured counselling educators, and mothers.                       | USA. | 20.<br>31-65.                  | Counselling.<br>Career stage not provided.  | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br>Phenomenology.                       | The academic context is a key component of the participant's experiences, associated with being a mother in counselling education. Flexibility in positioning was positive for some, and overwhelming for others. Participants felt both discrimination and support for being mothers, also having agency over their choices and circumstances. |
| Trepal et al. (2014).        | Exploring the perspectives of doctoral student mothers in counsellor education.                                      | USA. | 10.<br>30-43.                  | Counselling.<br>10 = Early Career;<br>0 = Mid-Career;<br>0 = Late Career.   | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br>Phenomenology.                       | Women's' ideas about their life trajectory, career goals, and parenthood, and the meaning constructed of these elements were influenced by academia. The women found that other mothers within academia were more supportive than   |

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|-----------------------------|--|------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Van Lankveld et al. (2017). | Exploring how beginning teachers in the field of undergraduate medical education integrate a teaching role into their identity.  | The Netherlands. | 18.<br>25-46.                   | Social, Health, and Life Sciences.<br><br>18 = Early Career;<br>0 = Mid-Career;<br>0 = Late Career.  | Semi-Structured Interviews and a Logbook.<br><br>provided. | other men. There was also a perceived sense of societal expectations for the women, such as gender roles and parenting, and children being a barrier to degree completion.<br>Integrating the teaching role into the identity was difficult, due to the perception of teaching as a low status occupation. |
| Wheat & Hill (2016).        | To investigate understanding of the complex factors that influence women's experiences of leadership within academia.  | USA.             | 14.<br>46-70.                   | Education, Health, Liberal Arts/Social Sciences, Physical/Natural Sciences, Health-Related Sciences, Business, and the Humanities.<br><br>Career stage not provided. | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Grounded Theory.        | Gender matters in regard to women's leadership styles, views concerning the influence of gender on leadership, and gender role spill over of family roles into professional roles.   |
| Wolf-Wendel & Ward (2015).  | Exploring the integration of gender, discipline, academic rank, family formation, and the ways in which female faculty members manage their careers in light of competing demands and disciplinary contexts. | USA.             | 118.<br>Age range not provided. | Humanities, Social Sciences, Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Education, and Business.<br><br>Career stage not provided.                               | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Grounded Theory.        | The academic career, and parenthood is consuming, but the autonomy and flexibility of the position made it possible to manage multiple roles. Women appeared to bear the brunt of home-life responsibilities but found joy in having multiple roles.   |

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|                       |   |                             |                                   |  |   |   |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Wright et al. (2017). | Exploring how women, manage their working lives, seek professional careers and navigate the 'ways of working' which are traditionally considered masculine in nature. | UK.                         | 3.<br><br>Age range not provided. | Health, Social Care, and Education.<br><br>Career stage not provided.          | Narrative Accounts.<br><br>Thematic and Linguistics Analysis through Autoethnography. | University processes are ameliorated and working conditions are enhanced to allow academics to support one another. Within the masculine traditions and competitive nature, collaboration, caring, and creating support to assist in being able to navigate academia. Past experiences and societal norms and influences impact the formation of a professional identity. |
| Yaacoub (2011).       | Exploring the professional identities of part-time academics in academia.   | Lebanon.                    | 26.<br><br>20-70.                 | Not provided.<br><br>17 = Early Career;<br>7 = Mid-Career;<br>2 = Late Career. | Semi-Structured Interviews and Diary Entries.<br><br>Thematic and Discourse Analysis. | Women's identities were suggested as shaped and constrained by dominant discourses in Chinese society, which can result in identity regulation.   |
| Zhao & Jones (2017).  | Exploring how women construct multiple identities, their interplay, and influences of societal discourses of gender and leadership.                                   | People's Republic of China. | 9.<br><br>28-53.                  | Discipline and career stage not provided.                                      | Semi-Structured Interviews.<br><br>Thematic and Discourse Analysis.                   | Women's identities were suggested as shaped and constrained by dominant discourses in Chinese society, which can result in identity regulation.   |

**Appendix E Australian Universities in The Times Higher Education World  
University Rankings (2018)**

1. University of Melbourne,
2. Australian National University,
3. University of Sydney,
4. University of Queensland\*,
5. Monash University\*,
6. University of New South Wales\*,
7. University of Western Australia\*,
8. University of Adelaide,
9. James Cook University\*,
10. Queensland University of Technology,
11. University of South Australia,
12. University of Technology Sydney,
13. Griffith University,
14. Macquarie University,
15. University of Newcastle,
16. University of Wollongong,
17. Charles Darwin University,
18. Deakin University,
19. Flinders University,
20. University of Tasmania,
21. Victoria University,
22. University of Canberra,
23. Curtin University,
24. La Trobe University,
25. Murdoch University,
26. Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University,
27. Southern Cross University,
28. Swinburne University of Technology\*,

29. Western Sydney University,
30. Australian Catholic University\*,
31. Bond University\*,
32. Central Queensland University,
33. Edith Cowan University,
34. University of the Sunshine Coast, and
35. University of Southern Queensland

*\*Those marked with an asterisk are considered private higher education institutions or are governed in a manner separate from public institutions. As such, they were not included within the search strategy for Phase Two of my project.*

## Appendix F Recruitment Email

Hi [potential participant's name inserted here],

My name is Matthew Phillips, and I am a PhD student located at Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia. I am emailing you to inquire whether you would be interested in participating in my research project 'A qualitative exploration of women's academic identity'.

I have engaged in forms of purposive sampling (reviewing online staff directories for your institution) and have identified you as a potential participant for my research. To provide you with some context surrounding my project, I am interested specifically in exploring the academic identities of women in the public higher education setting in Australia.

So, if you:

- Identify as a woman,
- Work within a Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, or Medicine (STEMM) field in academia,
- Hold an academic and/or professional role in the public higher education setting in Australia.

I would love to be able to interview you at a time and place of mutual convenience. As we are located in different states/locations, I would assume this would be either a Skype or Telephone one-on-one, audio recorded interview.

The interview will run for approximately 45-60 minutes, and you will be asked some questions relating to your experiences within academia and to share how you feel these experiences have shaped your academic identity. You will also be asked to answer some demographic questions (either within the interview, or I will send the demographic survey to you to complete and send back to me following the

interview). The findings of my project may be used in the future and may be published or presented at conferences, lectures, and forums.

I have attached a research flyer and participant information sheet. These documents go into further detail on the purpose and relevance of my project, and what you can expect from participating.

If you are interested in participating in my research, please contact me by replying to this email and I will 1) discuss scheduling an interview with you, and 2) send you the consent form for you to sign before the scheduled interview.

Also, if you know anyone who you think may be interested in taking part in this research, I would really appreciate you passing this information on.

There is no pressure if you are unable to participate in my research, do not wish to participate, or to send the details on. It is completely voluntary.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email, I am looking forward to hearing from you 😊

Warm regards,  
Matthew.

## Appendix G Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Early-Career Women Academics

### OPENING/RAPPORT BUILDING

1. To begin, what prompted you to participate in this research today?

### LIFE IN ACADEMIA IN GENERAL

2. Could you describe to me your current academic role?

*Prompts: teaching, research, teaching and research, sessional.*

3. What prompted you to pursue a career in academia?

*Prompts: interest/passion, family, friends, university experience?*

4. Prior to entering the profession, what did you think that being an 'academic' involved?

5. How would you describe working in academia compared to other occupations?

6. What type of individual do you feel is best suited to working within academia?

*Prompt: traits useful for an individual to navigate academia.*

### EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMIA FOR WOMEN

7. Can you describe to me your experience of working within academia?

*Prompts: the best parts, the worst parts, unique experiences of early-career academics?*

8. What do you think are some of the experiences of women within academia?

*Prompts: experiences that may influence lifestyle and/or work/life balance?*

9. What do you think are some of the experiences of women in the early-career stage of academia?

10. What do you think are some of the challenges or difficulties for women within academia?

*Prompts: have you encountered any? If so, the impact of them?*

*Resolution?*

11. Can you reflect on some of your experiences from previous workplaces that assist you with working in academia?

## **REFLECTING ON ACADEMIA**

12. What are the main goals you aim to achieve in academia in the next few years?

13. Can you tell me a little bit about whether you have thought about leaving academia?

*Prompts: do you know anyone who has left? Their experiences, etc.*

14. What do you see as your future in academia?

15. At the end of your career in academia, what do you think you would like to be known for?

16. What advice would you have liked to have been given before entering academia?

## **CLOSING**

17. Before we conclude, is there anything you would like to add that we have not discussed today?

## Appendix H Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Middle-Career Women Academics

### OPENING/RAPPORT BUILDING

1. To begin, what prompted you to participate in this research today?

### LIFE IN ACADEMIA IN GENERAL

2. Could you describe to me your current academic role?

*Prompts: teaching, research, teaching and research, sessional.*

3. What prompted you to pursue a career in academia?

*Prompts: interest/passion, family, friends, university experience?*

4. Prior to entering the profession, what did you think that being an 'academic' involved?

*Prompts: has this conceptualisation changed over the years? If so, how?*

5. How would you describe working in academia compared to other occupations?

6. What type of individual do you feel is best suited to working within academia?

*Prompt: traits useful for an individual to navigate academia.*

### EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMIA FOR WOMEN

7. Can you describe to me your experience of working within academia?

*Prompts: the best parts, the worst parts, unique experiences of mid-career academics?*

8. How have your experiences within academia compared to your previous expectations?

9. What do you think are some of the experiences of women within academia?

*Prompts: experiences that may influence lifestyle and/or work/life balance?*

10. What do you think are some of the experiences of women in the mid-career stage of academia?

11. What do you think are some of the challenges or difficulties for women within academia?

*Prompts: have you encountered any? If so, the impact of them? Resolution?*

12. Can you reflect on some of your experiences from previous workplaces that assist you with working in academia?

## **REFLECTING ON ACADEMIA**

13. What are the main goals you aim to achieve in academia in the next few years?

14. Can you tell me a little bit about whether you have thought about leaving academia?

*Prompts: do you know anyone who has left? Their experiences, etc.*

15. What do you wish you had known about the academic setting before you entered it?

16. What advice would you give an individual entering the academic field now?

*Prompts: has this advice changed over time? If so, how?*

17. At the end of your career in academia, what do you think you would like to be known for?

## **CLOSING**

18. Before we conclude, is there anything you would like to add that we have not discussed today?

## Appendix I Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Later-Career Women Academics

### OPENING/RAPPORT BUILDING

1. To begin, what prompted you to participate in this research today?

### LIFE IN ACADEMIA IN GENERAL

2. Could you describe to me your current academic role?

*Prompts: teaching, research, teaching and research, sessional.*

3. What prompted you to pursue a career in academia?

*Prompts: interest/passion, family, friends, university experience?*

4. Prior to entering the profession, what did you think that being an 'academic' involved?

*Prompts: has this conceptualisation changed over the years? If so, how?*

5. How would you describe working in academia compared to other occupations?

6. What type of individual do you feel is best suited to working within academia?

*Prompt: traits useful for an individual to navigate academia.*

### EXPERIENCES OF ACADEMIA FOR WOMEN

7. Can you describe to me your experience of working within academia?

*Prompts: the best parts, the worst parts, unique experiences of late-career academics?*

8. How have your experiences within academia compared to your previous expectations?

9. What do you think are some of the experiences of women within academia?

*Prompts: experiences that may influence lifestyle and/or work/life balance?*

10. What do you think are some of the experiences of women in the late-career stage of academia?

11. What do you think are some of the challenges or difficulties for women within academia?

*Prompts: have you encountered any? If so, the impact of them?*

*Resolution?*

12. Can you reflect on some of your experiences from previous workplaces that assist you with working in academia?

## **REFLECTING ON ACADEMIA**

13. What are the main goals you aimed to achieve in academia?

14. Can you tell me a little bit about whether you have thought about leaving academia?

*Prompts: do you know anyone who has left? Their experiences, etc.*

15. What do you wish you had known about the academic setting before you entered it?

16. What advice would you give an individual entering the academic field now?

*Prompts: has this advice changed over time? If so, how?*

17. What would you like to achieve in the latter stages of your career?

## **CLOSING**

18. Before we conclude, is there anything you would like to add that we have not discussed today?

## Appendix J De-Identified Demographic Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help describe who has participated in the research. The details you provide will not be reported individually, rather as an aggregate. In the analysis and reporting of research findings, your responses to this Questionnaire will not be linked to your interview transcript. Please give your answers to the following questions in the space provided and leave any questions blank if you would prefer not to answer them.

1. What year were you born?

---

2. What is your sex?

---

3. What stage of career are you currently positioned at?

Pre-PhD – 5 years post PhD

5-15 years post PhD

15 or more years post PhD

Clinical/Professional Fellow

4. What institution are you currently employed within?

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5. What school/faculty are you currently employed within?

---

6. What is your current job position?

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7. How long have you been in your current job position?

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8. Can you list any previous academic institutions you have worked at?

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9. Can you list any previous academic roles you have had?

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10. Can you please list any previous positions (e.g., discipline specific roles) you have occupied outside of academia? Please include the length of time you served in each role.

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11. Do you identify with any of the following?

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- With a disability
- Culturally and linguistically diverse
- Diversity in sexual identity

12. Please describe your current living/family composition, or tick from the options provided.

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- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lone person        | <input type="checkbox"/> Couple / With significant other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> With family        | <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple families               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Group / Housemates |  |

**When you have finished, please return the form to the researchers in the envelope provided.**

*Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number HRE2018-0606). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, in particular, any matters concerning the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, or you wish to make a confidential complaint, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (08) 9266 9223 or the Manager, Research.*

## Appendix K Recruitment Flyer



Curtin University

## A qualitative exploration of women's academic identity

So, we want to know, what are your experiences in academia?

If you:

- Identify as a woman,
- Work within a Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, or Medicine (STEMM) field in academia,
- Hold an academic and/or professional role in the public higher education setting in Australia,

We want to hear from you! 😊

Your participation will involve taking part in an audio-recorded interview for approximately 45-60 minutes on your experiences within academia. You can withdraw at any time without consequence as participation is completely voluntary.

The research is being conducted by Matthew Phillips, supervised by Dr Peta Dzidic and Dr Emily Castell. We are three academics in the discipline of psychology and share an interest in exploring gendered experiences through research. Our aim in the research is to explore systemic inequities.

Our findings may be used in the future and published or presented at conferences, lectures, and/or forums. If you are interested in participating in our research, please email [matthew.j.phillips1@postgrad.curtin.edu.au](mailto:matthew.j.phillips1@postgrad.curtin.edu.au) and we will provide you with further information. If you know someone who you think may be interested in taking part in this research, we would really appreciate you passing this information on.

Thank you for your time 😊

*The research will form part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) degree at Curtin University. Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number HRE2018-0606). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, in particular, any matters concerning the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, or you wish to make a confidential complaint, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (08) 9266 9223 or the*

## Appendix L Participant Information Statement



|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>HREC Project Number:</b>  | HRE2018-0606   |
| <b>Project Title:</b>        | A qualitative exploration of women's academic identity |
| <b>Principal Supervisor:</b> | Dr Peta Dzidic   |
| <b>Co-Supervisor:</b>        | Dr Emily Castell                                       |
| <b>Student Researcher:</b>   | Matthew Phillips                                       |
| <b>Version Number:</b>       | 1  |
| <b>Version Date:</b>         | 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2018                            |

### **What is the project about?**

Previous research has found that issues around gender (i.e., expectations, values, stereotypes, and systemic influences) can shape the development of women's academic identity. The academic identity refers to an individual's understanding of who they are, within their academic institution. We are interested in exploring the academic identities of women in the public higher education setting in Australia. If you:

- Identify as a woman,
- Work within a Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM) field in academia,
- Hold an academic and/or professional role in the public higher education setting in Australia,

We invite you to participate in an audio-recorded, one-on-one research interview on your experiences within academia, and your experience of developing an academic identity.

### **Who is doing the research?**

The project is being conducted by student researcher Matthew Phillips (in fulfilment of his Doctor of Philosophy) under the supervision of Dr Peta Dzidic and Dr Emily

Castell. This research will be used by Matthew to obtain this qualification; this research is funded by the University. There will be no costs to you, and you will not be paid for participating in this project.

**Why am I being asked to take part and what will I have to do?**

You have been invited to take part because you are a woman who works within the public higher education setting in Australia, specifically, in STEM related fields. If you choose to take part, you will be asked in an audio-recorded interview to answer some questions about your experiences within academia and to share how you feel these experiences have shaped your academic identity. You will also be invited to answer some demographic questions. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will be conducted at a time and location that is convenient for you.

The interview will be audio recorded, and then transcribed verbatim within 48 hours of the interview. The audio recording will be stored separate to the transcript after transcription, and the transcript will be analysed. At a later stage, you will be invited via email to give your feedback on a short summary of the research findings; this feedback will help shape the final research findings.

**Are there any benefits' to being in the research project?**

Participation may not directly benefit you; sometimes, however, people appreciate the opportunity to discuss their opinions/feelings. We hope that the research findings will contribute to knowledge about the public higher education setting, and the experiences of women within this context.

**Are there any risks or inconveniences from being in the research project?**

There are no foreseeable risks from this research project. We have been careful to make sure that any questions asked of you will not cause any distress but if you do feel anxious at any point, you do not have to answer them, and we can take a break and/or terminate the interview. Apart from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or inconveniences associated with taking part in this study.

**Who will have access to my information?**

The information gathered for this research is strictly confidential. Nobody but the research team and Curtin's Human Research Ethics Committee (for potential audits) have access to your responses. The information collected in this research will be de-identified. This means that we will remove any identifiable information. Any information we collect will be treated as confidential and used only in this project.

Your personal details (e.g. name) will only be recorded on the consent form. Your signed consent form will be kept separate from the research data. You will not be identifiable in the interview transcripts, demographic questionnaire, or the write-up/thesis. Data will be filed and securely locked away. You have the right to access and request correction of your information. The results of this research may be presented at conferences, lectures, forums, and/or published in professional journals. You will not be identified in any results that are published or presented.

**Will you tell me the results of the research?**

Once the data has been collected and analysed, I will prepare a one-page summary for your records where you can assess if I have interpreted your interview the way you intended. This summary will be based on all the information I collect and analyse for this research. After your interview, I will invite you to 'opt-in' to receive this summary document via email and take part in this feedback process. At that time, I will also ask you if you consent to be re-contacted at a later date and invited to participate in any subsequent phases of the research.

**Do I have to take part in the research project?**

You do not have to agree to take part if you do not want to. It is your choice to take part or not. Please let us know if you want to withdraw so we can make sure that you are aware of anything that needs to be done. Your participation is voluntary, and you will be able to withdraw your participation before, during and up to 48 hours after you have taken part without any negative consequences. If you do withdraw your participation, within 48 hours of your interview, data and information will be destroyed and will not be used in the research findings. After 48

hours, your interview will be transcribed, and added to the existing data set, at which time it will be impossible to identify as yours for removal. It is important that while your data will not be used, your interview and the experiences/thoughts you shared, may influence me as a researcher, and will potentially influence the research process and my data interpretation. I will engage in reflexive practices to ensure I attend to this influence.

**What happens next and who can I contact about the research?**

If you decide to take part in this research, please read and sign the consent form, which states that you understand what you have read and what we have discussed. Signing the consent indicates that you agree to be in the research project and have your information used as described. Please do take your time and ask any questions you may have before you decide whether you would like to participate. You will be given a copy of this information sheet and the consent form to keep for your records.

If you would like further information about this research, please do not hesitate to contact Matthew Phillips ([matthew.j.phillips1@postgrad.curtin.edu.au](mailto:matthew.j.phillips1@postgrad.curtin.edu.au)) or project supervisors' Dr Peta Dzidic ([peta.dzidic@curtin.edu.au](mailto:peta.dzidic@curtin.edu.au)) or Dr Emily Castell ([emily.castell@curtin.edu.au](mailto:emily.castell@curtin.edu.au)).

If you know anyone who you feel may like to take part in this research, please do pass on this information. Thank you very much for taking the time to read this participant information sheet. Your time and consideration are greatly appreciated.

*This research will form part of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology) degree at Curtin University. Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number HRE2018-0606). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, in particular, any matters concerning the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, or you wish to make a confidential complaint, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (08) 9266 9223 or the Manager, Research Integrity on (08) 9266 7093 or email [hrec@curtin.edu.au](mailto:hrec@curtin.edu.au).*

## Appendix M Participant Consent Form



|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>HREC Project Number:</b>  | HRE2018-0606   |
| <b>Project Title:</b>        | A qualitative exploration of women's academic identity |
| <b>Principal Supervisor:</b> | Dr Peta Dzidic   |
| <b>Co-Supervisor</b>         | Dr Emily Castell                                       |
| <b>Student Researcher:</b>   | Mr Matthew Phillips                                    |
| <b>Version Number:</b>       | 1  |
| <b>Version Date:</b>         | 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2018                            |

- I have read the information sheet version listed above and I understand its contents.
- I believe I understand the purpose, extent, and possible risks of my involvement in this project.
- I voluntarily consent to take part in this research project.
- I understand that if I withdraw from participating in this research, my data will be withdrawn, but the process and thoughts that emerge may influence future design processes of this research by the researcher.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.
- I understand that this project has been approved by Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee and will be carried out in line with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated August 2018.
- I understand that this research may be published in peer reviewed journals and presented at conferences, lectures, forums, etc.

- I give consent for the interview to be recorded. I understand that the recording will be transcribed.
- I understand I will receive a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form.

|  |  |                  |
|--|--|------------------|
| <b>Participant Name:</b>   |  |                  |
| <b>Participant Signature:</b>  |  |                  |
| <b>Date:</b>   |  |                  |
| <b>Would you like to be re-contacted at a later stage to participate in any future phases of the research?</b> |  | <i>YES or NO</i> |

- Declaration by researcher: I have supplied an Information Sheet and Consent Form to the participant who has signed above, and believe that they understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of their involvement in this project.

|                              |                  |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Researcher Name:</b>      | Matthew Phillips |
| <b>Researcher Signature:</b> |                  |
| <b>Date:</b>                 |                  |

*Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number HRE2018-0606). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, in particular, any matters concerning the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, or you wish to make a confidential complaint, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (08) 9266 9223 or the Manager, Research.*

## Appendix N Member Checking – Early-Career Women Academics



### **“A Metamorphosis of Sorts”: Exploring the Conceptualisation of Women’s Academic Identity in Australian Higher Education**

#### Early-Career Women Academics Summary of Findings

Thank you for participating in my research project seeking to explore how women academics conceptualise their academic identities. Your time in contributing to this study and sharing your experiences in academia are valuable and greatly appreciated.

The aim of this stage of the research was to explore the conceptualisation of academic identities for early-career women academics in Australian public higher education. I conducted 17 interviews with early-career women academics, out of 52 women academics overall across the 3 career stages.

The interview findings identified 3 core identities, or subject positions for early-career women academics in Australian public higher education.

- The first was the Compliant Woman identity, an early-career female academic who consolidates their academic positioning by following the rules and meeting the expectations of the institution. Tensions surrounding how compliance may, in reality, reflect obedience was identified, whereby the women felt pressured to obey the traditional way of being in academia to avoid experiencing negative consequences (such as limits to their career progression).
- The second was the Strategic Woman identity, an early-career female academic who safely challenges the traditional ways of being in academia. The working practices were still problematic here in relation to early-career women progressing in academia. As such, the women experienced tensions between protecting themselves by complying, but being viewed as selfish for doing so, while also at times challenging the rules and feeling empowered, which then

risked their position within academia for threatening the traditional way of being.

- The third was the Rebellious Woman identity, an early-career female academic who feels in control of herself, her behaviour, and her destiny, and outrightly challenges the conditions of academia. The participants shared stories of rebelling, displaying agency, rewriting the 'game' by reconstructing how academia operates, as well as acknowledging how they were evaluated when displaying rebellious behaviours, compared to their male counterparts. The tension here is that by resisting, these behaviours allowed for others to position women as outsiders, where they may feel isolated within academia.

The overall messaging of the findings from the early-career stage are as follows:

- The identities found within this career stage were clearly defined, but the participants suggested shifting between them, which led to a blurring between positioning, identity, and experience.
- The women felt to progress in academia, one must tolerate the way that things are, and accept the status quo.
- While some safely embedded themselves into academia to reduce the risk of being isolated, tensions emerged as it became difficult for the women to feel safe.
- Additionally, women who challenged the status quo had to work harder to prove themselves as part of a setting which historically has never operated to accept them.
- Simply put, the early-career academics felt however they identified, that they were damned in their approach.

If you would like to provide feedback on the findings, please reply by email by the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2021.

Warm regards,  
Matty Phillips.

## Appendix O Member Checking – Middle-Career Women Academics



### **“A Metamorphosis of Sorts”: Exploring the Conceptualisation of Women’s Academic Identity in Australian Higher Education**

#### Middle-Career Women Academics Summary of Findings

Thank you for participating in my research project seeking to explore how women academics conceptualise their academic identities. Your time in contributing to this study and sharing your experiences in academia are valuable and greatly appreciated.

The aim of this stage of the research was to explore the conceptualisation of academic identities for middle-career women academics in Australian public higher education. I conducted 18 interviews with middle-career women academics, out of 52 women academics overall across the 3 career stages.

The interview findings identified 5 core identities, or subject positions for middle-career women academics in Australian public higher education.

- The first was the Pragmatic Woman identity, a middle-career female academic who learned how to be pragmatic in the face of adversity, and as such, engages in ways of being and doing that allow for them to maintain their positioning, as well as tolerate, accept, and survive academia.
- The second was the Prototypical Woman identity, a middle-career female academic who is expected to engage in their professional and personal responsibilities by adopting ways of being and doing associated with femininity and motherhood. Here, the higher education setting constructed expectations of the women through discourse of using their nurturing, mothering identity (identified as prototypical of being a woman) to assist in the operating and running of academia.

- The third was the Credible Woman identity, an ideal representation that the middle-career woman academics constructed based on their perceptions of what the Australian higher education setting expects of them. The tension here is that many of the participants rarely met these expectations, which positioned the women to feel like imposters within the academic setting, who, then attempt to work harder to overcome this identity.
- The fourth was the Super Woman identity, a middle-career women academic who attempted to balance responsibilities from both her role in academia, and her role at home (e.g., as a wife, girlfriend, mother, carer) by working constantly. As such, the participants were consequently positioned as an academic who will put the needs of the institution, and other people, before herself.
- Finally, the Sacrificial Woman emerged as a position within the Super Woman identity, where in practice, the middle-career women academics have been constantly engaged in meeting the requirements of their work and home lives, that they have sacrificed their own sense of self and well-being for others. The work self, and the home self, become dominant identities for the middle-career women academics, with the identity of the self becoming sacrificed over time to meet the demands of other responsibilities.

The overall message of the findings from the middle-career stage is as follows:

- Middle-career women academics have to work harder than their academic counterparts, as they are afforded less allowances, and held to higher standards, based on prototypical expectations of women, conflicting roles and responsibilities, nuance surrounding credibility and expertise, and demanding expectations from individuals both within, and outside of the academic setting.

If you would like to provide feedback on the findings, please reply by email by the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2021.

Warm regards,  
Matty Phillips.

## Appendix P Member Checking – Later-Career Women Academics



### **“A Metamorphosis of Sorts”: Exploring the Conceptualisation of Women’s Academic Identity in Australian Higher Education**

#### Later-Career Women Academics Summary of Findings

Thank you for participating in my research project seeking to explore how women academics conceptualise their academic identities. Your time in contributing to this study and sharing your experiences in academia are valuable and greatly appreciated.

The aim of this stage of the research was to explore the conceptualisation of academic identities for later-career women academics in Australian public higher education. I conducted 17 interviews with later-career women academics, out of 52 women academics overall across the 3 career stages.

The interview findings identified 4 core identities, or subject positions for later-career women academics in Australian public higher education.

- The first was the Insecure Woman identity, a later-career female academic who experienced tensions between the academic that the system required them to be, compared to the academic that they wanted to be.
- For the remainder of the identities in this career stage, what was of interest was that the women were now being evaluated and positioned based more on their expertise and experience, rather than their gender. While gender was not completely removed within the identities, there was a shift in how the participants were evaluated, and that being positioned in this way

signified to them that their journey was ending, and that they were perceived as having 'made it' within academia.

- The second was the Expert Academic identity, a later-career female academic who is positioned by other individuals (academic, or otherwise) as the expert, and the voice of reason within academia, based on their career stage, as well as their extensive academic experience.
- The third was the Reflective Academic identity, a later-career female academic who experiences tensions surrounding their decision to continue working in academia, based on their reflections surrounding their academic impact, versus considering what else they have to offer to the setting.
- Finally, the Disengaging Academic identity was a later-career female academic who, while feeling rewarded in what they have achieved in academia, as well as the impact that they have made, experiences tensions surrounding what it means to leave academia, based on the complex process of removing themselves from a role that they have been embedded within for so long.

The overall messaging of the findings from the later-career stage are as follows:

- While the later-career women academics experienced a shift in how they were evaluated in academia (based on expertise, rather than gender), tensions arose when the women began to reflect on what it means to have survived the academic setting.
- The findings reflect a questioning of what it means to have been a part of academia, what it means to identify as a later-career academic, as well as evaluating what it means to identify beyond the academic setting.

If you would like to provide feedback on the findings, please reply by email by the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2021.

Warm regards,  
Matty Phillips.