JOURNAL OF UNDERREPRESENTED AND MINORITY PROGRESS

Special Issue on *Intersectionality: From Theory to Practice*

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The Journal is international in scope and includes work by scholars in a wide range of academic fields and disciplines. Contributions from researchers and professionals in fields like sociology, psychology, higher education, philosophy, education, and cultural studies are welcome in the Journal.

The Journal's audience includes scholars and researchers in social sciences who work on the issues of ethnicity and race, caste and class, religion and spirituality, gender and sexual orientation, power and privilege, wealth and income, health and well-being, beliefs and value systems, and the intersections of these issues.

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CRAFTING A SPECIAL ISSUE IN AN INTERSECTIONAL, PROCESSUAL, AND REFLEXIVE MANNER

Over the past two decades, intersectionality has emerged as an important framework and praxis in the social sciences (Al-Faham, 2019). It offers a unified approach to understanding the complex relationships between social identities and systems of oppression, deliberately moving away from siloed or single-category thinking and toward multiple identity factors such as race, gender, class, sexuality, disability, and more that are often interconnected at the experiential level (Hankivsky & Jordan-Zachery, 2019). This recognition highlights scholars' ongoing search for a theoretical tool that not only advances academic inquiry but also reflects lived experience authentically. Intersectionality, while instrumental in navigating the complexities of social structures and identities, requires critical examination and understanding of its challenges in practical application.

Intersectionality gained prominence because of its unique strengths in addressing the marginalization and oppression of populations, particularly Black women. However, its increasing popularity has led to debates over its correct interpretation and application, and whether a correct method exists. Salem (2018) highlights several concerns, including the historical erasure of its radical beginnings in Black feminist histories and the shift from radical to liberal interpretations, which can dilute its potential to challenge the status quo. Another tension exists between Marxist approaches from the Global South, which

emphasize the role of imperialism and colonialism in capitalism, and Northern feminist theorizing, which may be Eurocentric and centered on the experiences of white, middle-class women (Salem, 2018). This tension is compounded by differing views on the roots of intersectionality. Some scholars emphasize its deep connections to Black feminist theory (Crenshaw, 1995), while others trace its beginnings outside of academia (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Collins and Bilge (2016) argue that intersectionality is more than simply an academic form of inquiry; it is a process that combines critical examination of inequalities with critical praxis (Feree, 2018).

Building on these perspectives, scholars such as Hancock (2007) advocate for a broader use of intersectionality, claiming that this does not erase its origins or diminish the contributions of Black feminists. Instead, a wider application can better address questions of injustice, power, and governance, going beyond traditional content specializations (Al-Faham, 2019). Nonetheless, intersectionality's promise in policy analysis remains largely untapped. While conceptual clarity is advancing, it is important to explore its application in public policy (Hankivsky & Jordan-Zachery, 2019). At the same time, within academia, the influence of university corporatization and the neoliberal emphasis on diversity shape the discourse around intersectionality. Nash (2017) argues that these neoliberal structures often align intersectionality with market-driven priorities, potentially obscuring its radical roots and implications. The dispute persists over whether intersectionality's significance in academic discourse is critically examined or co-opted by market-driven agendas. This ongoing discussion highlights the need to critically engage with the interpretations and applications of intersectionality — which is the primary focus of our work on this special issue.

With the challenges of effectively and ethically applying intersectionality in research, activism, policy-making, and daily practices in mind, our goal through this special issue was to expand and deepen the understanding and application of intersectionality, both conceptually and practically. Recognizing intersectionality's untapped potential, we invited contributions from academic and practitioner viewpoints worldwide, fostering submissions from diverse perspectives across the Global North and South. Our goal was to explore diverse perspectives on the interpretation and application of intersectionality as a valuable approach in research, practice, and advocacy across various contexts and disciplines. As such, we, the guest editors of the issue, adopted an intersectional approach throughout the process of co-creating this special issue, from the initial call for proposals to the finalization of the manuscripts. We specifically employed Collins and Bilge's (2016) approach which suggests three distinct yet interconnected ways of understanding intersectionality; as a theoretical framework, an analytical strategy, and praxis. Throughout our editorial process, we organically embraced all three understandings rather than through a deliberate attempt to adopt it in a singular manner. Before we share an overview of the articles of this special issue, we

wanted to describe how our role as editors is processual rather than consisting of discrete responsibilities. We believe it is important to share these insights because praxis involves reflecting on our own (un)learning and applying it to our practices.

Our call for papers was crafted to invite contributions from researchers and scholars who were interested in examining the intersectional relationships among various social identities and systems of oppression affecting underrepresented minorities. This initiative garnered unanimous support from the entire editorial board, prompting us to move forward with inviting submissions. After inviting authors to submit full papers, we issued a special call for reviewers interested in participating in the special issue on intersectionality. We also decided to organize a meeting and workshop for the reviewers, so that we could develop a community who endorsed constructive peer review feedback. The response to the workshop was positive, where respondents not only shared their backgrounds and motivations for joining the project but also how their intersectional social identities and lived experience could be an asset to the project. From that meeting, it became evident that for many reviewers, the true value lay not in gaining credentials or enhancing their resumes, but in their intrinsic praxis and commitment to advancing underrepresented minority progress through the notion of intersectionality. The well-attended workshop was both productive and inspiring, setting the stage for the next phase of peer reviews.

The articles we received from contributors employed a variety of methodological approaches to explore the multifaceted dimensions of identity and their intersections within diverse contexts. In the peer review phase we were presented with various opportunities and challenges, which prompted us to reflect deeply on the process. By engaging in an intersectional praxis, we prioritized inclusivity toward intentionally creating spaces where diverse voices and their lived experiences, with intersectional aspects of their social identities, were not further marginalized to meet the rigorous standards of academia. For instance, there were frequent issues with meeting deadlines, and several scholars requested extensions. However, we recognized that underlying neoliberal productivity norms in academia could be the root cause of this issue. As a result, even though our initial goal was to adhere to our original timeline, we decided to prioritize work that emerges from a state of well-being and joy, reducing the pressure of the usual time constraints that are often prevalent in academia. Similarly, some reviewers faced challenges in submitting their reviews on time. However, since we had already engaged with many of them during our workshop, we were able to communicate transparently and show mutual empathy.

We frequently deliberated on the potential impact of assigning a variety of reviewers to an article, considering factors such as their interests, expertise, geographic origin and institutions of training, whether from the Global North or South, gender diversity, and academic experience and seniority, including professors and graduate students. While this may seem contrary to the principle of

a double-blind review, we implemented what we termed a *double-anonymous review with sensitivity*. Anonymization was impractical given the inherent nature of our work, where authors' social identities were integral to their lived experiences, contexts, identities, and writing styles. Nevertheless, our reflexive approach ensured a carefully sensitive double-anonymous process by focusing on academic rigor by the first reviewer, while a second reviewer, who was well-versed in intersectional contexts, provided nuanced feedback. We revisited our decisions regarding the context and quality of manuscripts, reviewer feedback, the overall timeline, and our responses to the editorial board's queries during their monthly Saturday meetings, guided by our commitment to intersectional praxis.

Despite our considerations, the process was not without its missteps. For instance, an article by a racialized emerging female scholar was initially assigned two reviewers. However, when the first reviewer declined, the replacement reviewer for academic rigor happened to be a senior white male professor. While his suggestions were academically rigorous and robust given his training and experiences, we took on the responsibility of editors with an intersectional praxis to pause and reflect on the potential impact of that feedback if shared without sensitivity. We questioned whether our actions might discourage minority scholars by closing these spaces and further marginalizing their lived experiences and contributions to academia. Would this approach uphold equity in our review process? To understand the scholar's perspective, we conducted a simulation exercise. As editors, we assumed roles as both authors and reviewers, reevaluating the comments to gauge how they might be received and responded to, considering both emerging scholars of color and those with robust training and experiences. While acknowledging the limitations of fully comprehending their expertise, experiences, and identities, this simulation exercise afforded us a chance to enhance our reflexivity and apply our intersectional praxis to editorial practices. A third reviewer was assigned again, taking into account all of these nuances.

We are grateful that we received support from our editorial team every step of the way. Throughout this process, we reflected on our own positionality as women of color and early career researchers living in the diaspora. These reflections materialized through our numerous conversations over the past few years. For example, not only did we experience shifts in timelines with the reviewers and authors, but we also experienced shifts in our own timelines. One of us moved countries and defended her PhD while contributing to the special issue, whereas the other balanced motherhood with her postdoctoral role. We held weekend meetings after family responsibilities and managed an intensified workload, partly due to ingrained societal expectations for women to be caregivers. Women of color are underrepresented in Western academia (Agunsoye, 2020; Institute of Education Sciences, 2018), which often drives them to take on extra responsibilities in fear of stalling their careers; we also faced a similar fear, for instance, choosing to take on tasks at times that could have been delegated to

others. However, we did not allow our intersectional identity to be perceived solely as a deficit. Rather, as South Asian women in the diaspora, we leveraged this perspective to challenge the binary between the Global North and South. This approach enabled us to engage in a process of learning, unlearning, and relearning insights typically attributed to each region. This transformative experience has significantly contributed to defining our identities as researchers and cultivating our community.

LAYOUT OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Organizing the articles into clear sections proved to be challenging due to the conceptual and overlapping intricacies of intersectionality. We identified several recurring themes, including the use of intersectionality as a tool to examine academic spaces and reproduction of inequality, critical praxis in exploring gendered experiences, and its role in understanding public policy and social justice initiatives. The articles in this issue cover a range of theoretical and conceptual frameworks, from postcolonial discourse analysis to critical race theory, black feminism, and sociological and political lenses. The methodological approaches are also diverse, with the authors employing qualitative and quantitative empirical approaches such as interviews, secondary datasets, policy analysis, discourse analysis, and autoethnographies.

We classified the papers into three types. First are empirical papers, which present data generated by the authors. Second are conceptual papers, which use intersectionality to develop novel theoretical insights. Finally, we encountered articles that did not fit neatly into empirical or conceptual categories. These papers used intersectionality to provoke academic dialogue. Rather than dismissing them, we chose to classify them as academic commentaries, recognizing their importance alongside the other two types of articles and avoiding gatekeeping practices that perpetuate the status quo in academic publishing (Biesta et al., 2024).

Bishop's study offers insights into the impact of power dynamics and identity-based inequities on marginalized educators, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using intersectionality for quantitative data analysis, the study advocates revisiting sampling and data cleaning practices to challenge norms of Whiteness and heteronormativity, promoting a more inclusive understanding of identity in empirical research.

Expanding on this theme, Parker, Robertson-Hornsby, Smith, and Drake explore the intersectional dynamics of marginalization within academia, focusing on subalternity and subaltern studies. They highlight the diverse range of discursive practices, linguistic choices, and rhetorical devices employed by marginalized communities to navigate and resist dominant discourses and challenge power structures entrenched in educational institutions. By critically reflecting on their own positionalities and conducting a meticulous examination across 11 manuscripts, the authors showcase intersectionality as a robust

methodological tool. By combining this method with postcolonial critical discourse analysis, they provide an interdisciplinary framework that helps explain how intersectionality can effectively guide research practices, helping to break down oppressive systems and promote inclusion in academic settings.

Saito and Flores further contribute to the insights on marginalized educators in higher education. They explore the challenges of Asian-American non-tenured female faculty, and amplify their own voices through an autoethnographic approach. They adapted and created a framework using Asian Critical Race Theory, Critical Asian Feminism, and Collaborative Autoethnography. Through these theories, the authors analyze and detail the challenges they faced including covert and overt racism, academic elitism, and cultural and gender taxation. In particular the authors highlight that these challenges do not emerge through unidimensional aspects of their identity, but because of their intersecting identities in terms of gender, culture, race, and career stage.

The next set of papers also explore intersectionality in higher education, but focuses on students. Stanislaus, Wilkerson, and Hodge's study examines the experiences of second-generation Afro-Caribbean female students within Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), using qualitative case study methodology to explore the complex factors influencing these students' sense of belonging on campus. Their research contributes to ongoing discussions on the effectiveness of HSIs in supporting minoritized student populations and underscores the crucial role of intersectionality in understanding the perpetuation of inequality in educational settings. By expanding intersectional research in higher education, this study provides valuable insights that can inform the development of more inclusive support programs tailored to the diverse needs of student populations, particularly highlighting their significance for second-generation marginalized students navigating higher education institutions.

Complementing this perspective, Pinkney, Charlot, Samuels, and Wilkerson's study on peer mentoring practices in postsecondary settings adds another layer to our understanding of intersectionality in academia. By addressing a need for empirical evidence and examining the experiences of peer mentors and their impact on transfer students at a Hispanic-serving institution, the research provides valuable insights into effective mentoring strategies. Moreover, it highlights intersectionality by exploring how diverse identities shape mentoring experiences and academic support networks. The authors reiterate the importance of developing inclusive support programs, especially mentoring practices that recognize the complexity of intersecting identities in higher education.

After establishing this comprehensive overview of academia and understanding relationships among the social identities of minoritized universities and students, we move on to the nuanced exploration of gendered experiences with policy through the lens of intersectionality. This examination spans academic

spaces and extends to public discourse, encompassing perspectives from both the Global North and Global South.

Jones and Ross-Gordon's examination of midlife, Black, female doctoral students' experiences advances our understanding of higher education aspirations, particularly at the intersection of gender and race. By incorporating Black feminist thought and intersectionality, they enable a deeper exploration of power dynamics, social inequalities, and resistance strategies within the context of doctoral education. Their use of qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, artifacts, and critical incident reflections underscores the need for inclusive research methodologies that center the voices and experiences of marginalized communities. This study serves as a reminder for higher education institutions to reassess their doctoral programs in response to changing demographics and evolving student needs.

Brass and Jenson examine the lived experiences of skilled immigrant women language teachers in Canada through an intersectional feminist lens. Through in-person and virtual interviews with participants, the study captures the nuanced experiences of immigrant women language teachers, highlighting the significance of qualitative approaches in understanding intersectional dynamics within marginalized communities. The study contributes to intersectionality both theoretically and methodologically, offering empirical insights into the systemic barriers faced by internationally highly qualified immigrant women language teachers.

Khanna and Mukherjee's investigation explores the challenges faced by Indian women academics in public higher education institutes in Delhi. Through an intersectional lens, their empirical study scrutinizes the interaction of multiple social identities, revealing challenges encountered by women academicians at different career stages. The research emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to address gender disparities in academia, emphasizing the need for environments that support women's career advancement based on their recognition of their intersectional identities and lived experiences.

The next few papers explore the use of intersectionality to address issues regarding Dalit communities. Nepali and Baral examine land access for the Dalit community in rural Nepal by employing an intersectionality-based policy analysis of survey data. The paper contributes to theoretical debates on caste, class, and gender by highlighting the complex relationships between these social categories in determining access to land resources and social status within Nepali society. By integrating concepts from sociology and political science, the study reveals the complexity of social hierarchy and exclusion faced by marginalized groups, offering avenues for employing intersectional approaches in interdisciplinary research. The study emphasizes the necessity for tailored policy interventions to address intersecting dimensions of inequality while also stressing the crucial need

for systemic intersectional frameworks in policy development, particularly within diverse contexts.

Sahu and Chauhan present a conceptual analysis of how intersectionality has been adapted, developed, and received in India and the relevance of this concept to the Indian context. The authors argue that intersectionality is an imperative theoretical and conceptual lens to understand the challenges of marginalized populations in India. To support this argument, they discuss the plight of the Dalit population and highlight how it is crucial to consider the intersection between gender, caste, and class in order to understand this issue.

Farooq and DeGalan use intersectionality to explore the world of media. They traverse the diaspora by analyzing the Ms. Marvel TV series, to illuminate how the show explores the interconnectivity between the protagonist's Pakistani-American identity, age, and religion. They employ theory of disidentification and a critical feminist lens to engage in this conceptual examination.

Lastly, Aspea's academic commentary explores the Indian Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 and ongoing intergenerational impact stemming from the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. Aspea elaborates on the nexus between nationalism and religion by drawing on two novels that discuss the partition.

As such, this special issue offers a comprehensive exploration of intersectionality's multifaceted applications across various disciplines, distinct groups, and different theoretical frameworks, encompassing perspectives from both the Global North and South. As we move forward, we must emphasize that this is just the beginning. Scholars must engage with intersectionality as praxis before employing it as an analytical framework and theory. Understanding marginalized groups' lived experiences within their contexts is critical to knowledge creation and engagement without compromising the foundational academic rigor necessary for research. It requires collaborative efforts that respect both research robustness and experiential insights. Attention to power structures in knowledge production is imperative. Editorial boards and reviewers play critical roles in determining what is prioritized and advanced, and they must ensure that these decisions align with and serve the needs of the community. Incorporating an intersectional lens into the review process and establishing principles of a community of practice through reviewer training are essential steps in this direction.

Our aim has been to continue these essential discussions and promote scholarly dialogue. We hope that this issue inspires further research and activism, advocating for inclusivity, equity, and meaningful social transformation.

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Intersectional Identity and Well-being During COVID-19: An Investigation into the Disproportionate Effects of Stress and Burnout on Educators Holding One or More Marginalized Identities

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ABSTRACT

This intersectional study critically examines the mechanisms contributing to perceptions of stress, stigma, burnout, and well-being for educators holding one or more marginalized identities. Survey data were collected from American educators (N = 450) in the spring of 2021 to assess inequities experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Analyses reveal the unequal effects of prolonged stress on the health of marginalized educators. Results of this study highlight the utility of intersectional inquiry for understanding the disproportionate effects of public health crises on marginalized members of the public and can inform educational and public health policies that promote equity and inclusion while reducing hierarchical systems of power and oppression. Furthermore, this research underscores the need to reevaluate best practices for sampling and data cleaning to decenter norms of Whiteness and heteronormativity and embrace the multifaceted nature of identity.

Keywords: COVID-19, educator, intersectionality, stress, burnout, stigma, well-being

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected people's well-being in a variety of ways as they have coped with prolonged stress induced by this global health crisis (WHO, 2020). In the midst of health consequences that have accompanied the pandemic, people have also faced significant distress and disruption as they navigate new challenges within their professional and personal lives (Cahapay, 2020; Restubog et al., 2020). The stress of managing increased responsibilities and competing demands is especially pronounced for educators (e.g., McDonough & Lemon, 2022). Those in academic positions serve as a form of caregivers to their students, while also performing care in the home (Fleming et al., 2013). Educators already face high levels of stress and burnout (Haberman, 2005; Russell et al., 1987), with teaching regularly identified among members of the workforce as one of the most stressful occupations (e.g., Johnson et al., 2005). Educators tend to have lower quality of life than people in other occupations, with educators facing declines in physical and psychological well-being, reductions in job satisfaction, and disproportionately high levels of stress and emotional exhaustion (Johnson et al., 2005; Yang et al., 2009). The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened these concerns by compounding the existing levels of stress and burnout with the additional uncertainty of navigating the pandemic (Kim & Asbury, 2020).

Adding another layer to the challenges of working in the education sector pertains to educator identity. While the pandemic has exacerbated stress and accompanying health outcomes for people across the board, the magnitude of these effects is not equal (e.g., Gaynor & Wilson, 2020; Ruprecht et al., 2021; WHO, 2020). Research has revealed a marked difference in the impact of COVID-19 on the well-being of educators holding one or more marginalized identities (Ruprecht et al., 2021; Sirotich & Hausmann, 2021). These consequences are on top of existing disparities in workplace stress and burnout faced by educators (Acker & Armenti, 2004).

Pedagogy is a social and structural system rooted in inequities surrounding race, class, sex, gender, and sexual orientation (Oldfield et al., 2006; Ruprecht et al., 2021; Warren & Hancock, 2016). Much of the scholarship examining the experiences of American educators, however, has adopted a rather unidimensional approach to identity that fails to capture the unique and complex experiences of educators who hold multiple marginalized identities (Pugach et al., 2018). This study utilizes an intersectional approach to explore variations in the experience of stress, burnout, and well-being among marginalized educators across the United States. Specifically, I critically examine the ways in which power relations (Acker, 1990; Moussawi & Vidal-Ortiz, 2020) and social/relational frames (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004) shape the educational structures and experiences of educators during the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing so, I shed light on the ways in which power

and inequity are woven into the fabric of the American education system and discuss how to better support educators while striving toward a more equitable academic landscape.

What follows is an overview of the literature where I begin by outlining the state of affairs within education from a labor market perspective. I then argue that education is a social system marked by privilege and highlights the inequities faced by marginalized educators. Next, I contextualize the logic of my core arguments to the ongoing stress faced by educators during the pandemic. Finally, I argue for the utility of intersectional inquiry to understand the ways in which existing systemic and interactional disparities are exacerbated for educators as they navigate the additional stress that accompanies the ongoing public health crisis.

EDUCATION AS A SEXED, GENDERED, RACED, AND CLASSED LABOR MARKET

The landscape of education is one that is inherently sexed, gendered, raced, and classed. The United States' educational roots are grounded in privilege, with early education systems of the 1600s and 1700s inaccessible to many children on the basis of socioeconomic characteristics (Jeynes, 2007; Kober et al., 2020; Nasaw, 1981). Free public schools were introduced in the 1830s with the goals of reducing systemic inequities and social problems, enhancing diversity, and providing children with opportunities to strengthen their literacy, morals, and productivity as young citizens (Kober et al., 2020; Nasaw, 1981).

Unfortunately, this movement toward a school system that was equal and available to all fell drastically short, as people with marginalized identities on the basis of sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and motherhood status were socially and physically excluded from accessing an education (Jeynes, 2007; Kober et al., 2020). These trends surrounding equity and access continue into today's education system and are replicated in the opportunities available to people who wish to become educators (Bourabain, 2020; Carter Andrews et al., 2021).

The composition of the educational workforce in the United States looks very different across academic ranks and titles, with the postsecondary education system being far more homogenous than the primary and secondary school systems. There are marked differences in the proportion of female, racial minority, and ethnic minority educators represented in postsecondary academic institutions and in positions of power. For example, despite the historical notion that teaching is "White women's work" (Warren & Hancock, 2016, p. vii), there are only half as many female post-secondary educators as there are female primary school educators (47% vs. 89% female; USDOE, 2021, 2022). Examinations of race and ethnicity reveal similar patterns. Hispanic and racially diverse educators are underrepresented, especially in

higher ranking positions (USDOE, 2020). Across all levels of education, only 6%-9% of educators are Hispanic and 12%-20% of educators are Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or multiracial (USDOE, 2020, 2021).

The lack of diversity in the American education system, especially higher education, calls into question the social, relational, and institutional forces that are driving compositional and occupational disparities. Next, I shed light on the ways in which power and inequity are woven into the fabric of the American education system.

EDUCATION AS A SOURCE OF INEQUITY

How do we make sense of educational biases (e.g., hiring, retention, income levels, opportunities for career progression) that disproportionately disadvantage educators? One way to understand the landscape of education is to consider the educational system as consisting of macro-level structures and micro-level interactions furthering hegemonic agendas. Social structures create and perpetuate hierarchies that disadvantage those who hold marginalized statuses in society (Acker, 1990). In other words, educational institutions, like many other organizations, are centered around inequitable distributions of power, control, and prestige, with higher-ranking positions within the organizational hierarchy disproportionately filled by people with societally privileged identities (Acker, 1990).

Inequitable opportunities also lower earning potential for educators on the basis of sex, race, and ethnicity (USDOE, 2022). Specifically, educators identifying as female, Black, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, and/or Hispanic tend to have lower incomes and academic ranks, compared to their more privileged peers (USDOE, 2022). Of note, pay gaps in academia based on sex and parental status are not merely a function of working hours; rather, mothers who work comparable hours to their male and childless female counterparts still earn less money, thus, highlighting the motherhood penalty faced by women within the education system (Correll et al., 2007; Sieverding et al., 2018).

In addition to the structural notions of privilege and power infused into the very core of the education system, day-to-day interactions serve to reinforce these hierarchical structures (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). In social relational contexts, identity characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation serve as primary frames guiding people's interactions and beliefs (Moussawi & Vidal-Ortiz, 2020; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Interactions on a micro-level within the education system also reinforce hierarchies and stratified social structures through status expectations and androcentric practices (Acker, 1990; Fox, 2020).

Not only do these inequities have organizational and relational implications, but they have significant personal consequences. Inequitable

treatment and marginalization of educators with societally underprivileged identities increases levels of stress and burnout (Rabelo & Cortina, 2014; Zurbrügg & Miner, 2016). For instance, women, LGBTQ+, and Black employees often experience greater levels of incivility, discrimination, segregation, bias, and harassment in both hiring proceedings and workplace interactions, which is a pervasive and systematic form of disadvantage (D'amico et al., 2017; Rabelo & Cortina, 2014; Zurbrügg & Miner, 2016).

Within academia, women are consistently overworked, more fatigued, and more stressed than men (Acker & Armenti, 2004). Furthermore, mothers are seen as possessing two irreconcilables, competing devotions: one to their family and one to their job (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Blair-Loy, 2003; Collins, 2019; Quadlin, 2018). Because mothers are often viewed as being responsible for the well-being and functioning of the family, they often make sacrifices in their work life, thus, positioning them outside the scope of an ideal worker, which tends to reflect White, heterosexual men who are high-achieving, competent, and committed (Collins, 2019; Daminger, 2019; Mize, 2016).

Outdated, hegemonic power structures within the education system have systematically disadvantaged educators holding one or more marginalized identities. This disadvantage has been seen in such domains as earning potential, social interactions, and educator well-being. Given the deeply rooted nature of these inequities within the education system, it is likely that existing disparities have been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the prevalence of stress and burnout have increased. Next, I contextualize these challenges within the transformed landscape of academia during the pandemic that educators are calling the "new normal" (Cahapay, 2020).

EDUCATION IN THE TIME OF COVID-19 AND BEYOND

Existing disparities in the experience of stress and support for marginalized educators have been amplified during pandemic, with sexual and gender minority people and people of color facing worse outcomes than their societally privileged peers (Ruprecht et al., 2020). Specifically, marginalized populations are often exposed to COVID-19 at greater rates, are more susceptible to contracting the virus, and have limited treatment access if they do become infected (Ruprecht et al., 2021; Sirotich & Hausmann, 2021). Furthermore, marginalized populations have faced detrimental psychological, economic, and social effects from the pandemic at levels that are disproportionate to the population average (Haynor & Wilson, 2020; Ruprecht et al., 2021), and the overall mental well-being of these populations has declined (Moore et al., 2021).

Why are marginalized populations having such a disproportionate burden placed on them throughout the pandemic and beyond? One

explanation is that pandemic-related stress compounds the preexisting, chronic stress and stigma faced by minoritized people (Meyer, 2003). In other words, people holding one or more marginalized identities face minority stress, which is a chronic, identity-based stress stemming from invalidating social interactions (Meyer, 2003). The additional stress from COVID-19 exacerbates not only this minority stress, but results in even greater health disparities and worsened health outcomes (e.g., profound declines in well-being; Fish et al., 2021).

Another explanation is that COVID-19 has highlighted the existing interactional and structural barriers that uphold hierarchies of power and oppression (e.g., Acker, 1990). For instance, disparities in access to quality care, as well as lack of health insurance and reliable transportation, have served as barriers to receiving both preventive and responsive care during COVID-19 for many individuals holding one or more marginalized identities (Ruprecht et al., 2021).

Alternately, COVID-19 may be changing the labor market in such a way that it creates new problems and disparities. Whatever explanation we ascribe to the effects of the pandemic on marginalized populations, there is mounting evidence that the effects of the pandemic are far-reaching and devastating to people's well-being. For instance, the gender gap in the education labor market has widened during COVID-19 with mothers disproportionately burdened as they simultaneously managed rapidly shifting work and care demands, all while experiencing lower work productivity and lower job satisfaction (Feng & Savani, 2020).Women have also been facing burnout in public and private spheres to a higher degree than men, highlighting that the effects of the pandemic are not gender neutral (Aldossari & Chaudry, 2021).

People's identities are multifaceted, and unfortunately, it is not feasible to include every possible identity (and combination thereof) in a single study. I am focusing on the identity characteristics of sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and parent status in this intersectional inquiry for several reasons. First, there is well-documented evidence of identity-based disparities in relation to stress, burnout, well-being, and stigma among minoritized social groups. Specifically, people who are members of marginalized social groups (i.e., females, women, and people identifying as Queer, non-White, and/or Hispanic) often face increased incivility, bias, and labor expectations in the workplace (e.g., D'amico et al., 2017; Hirshfield & Joseph, 2011; Nadal, 2019; Rabelo & Cortina, 2014; Zurbrügg & Miner, 2016). COVID-19 has only heightened these disparities (e.g., Evans, 2020; Simien & Wallace, 2022). Furthermore, the origin of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) centers on race and sex, and the theoretical frames guiding this study (e.g., "a queer sociology") focus on such identities as gender, race,

nationality, and sexual orientation. Finally, I include parenting status because of the expanding body of research on motherhood penalties (e.g., Sieverding et al., 2018) and fatherhood premiums (e.g., Luhr, 2020), which are of particular interest because childcare and employment decisions have been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Petts et al., 2021).

Examining the associations between distinct identity characteristics and outcomes pertaining to stress, burnout, stigma, and well-being, we can understand how disparities unfold for marginalized educators during the pandemic. However, it is important that we do not stop there. Adopting an intersectional approach is vital for truly capturing the effect of the pandemic on people holding one or more marginalized identities. Because people's identities are not merely additive in nature, it is crucial to consider the intersection of identities (Bowleg, 2008).

One way to better understand how disparities are created and upheld within the education system is to employ intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) as a lens through which to view the exacerbation of inequities during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. I align myself with contemporary, justice-oriented scholars who critically engage with intersectional notions of identity (e.g., Bell, 1995; Bowleg, 2020; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 1995; Giroux, 1992; Matsuda et al., 1993; McLaren, 1998; Pugach et al., 2018). In doing so, I outline why an intersectional approach is necessary for accurately capturing the multifaceted experiences of educators within the U.S. education system during the pandemic.

EDUCATION AS A SITE FOR INTERSECTIONAL INQUIRY

Intersectionality is a way of embracing the multiplicity of identities while spotlighting the complex, intertwined mechanisms that serve to marginalize and disempower Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). As Crenshaw (1989) powerfully stated, "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, [and] any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (p. 140). Extending the original intersectional logic to encompass a range of marginalized identities is beneficial for theory, method, and practice (e.g., Bauer, 2014; Cho et al., 2013).

Within the education system, there is considerable underrepresentation of marginalized educators, especially in positions of power and authority (Brown, 2013; Murphy, 2021). COVID-19 has amplified these disparities, and research on the effects of the pandemic on people holding one or more marginalized identities has found that, despite the abundant messages of solidarity and support splashed across the headlines, in reality, "[w]e're not all in this together" (Bowleg, 2020, p. 917). People with intersecting, or interlocking, identities have their pasts rooted in experiences of oppression and their present realities rife with social, relational, and

systemic inequities (Bowleg, 2020). In identifying power relations as the root of inequality, scholars are able to capture the dynamic interplay of various identities (e.g., Moussawi & Vidal-Ortiz, 2020). For example, in their "a queer sociology," Moussawi and Vidal-Ortiz (2020) decenter Whiteness and adopt an intersectional lens through which to study race, nationality, sexual orientation, gender, and class. In their theory, Moussawi and Vidal-Ortiz (2020) use queer not as a reductionist term, but as a means of representing people with diverse identities who are often marginalized by society through the privileging of dominant (i.e., normative) identities and experiences.

Intersectional inquiry is not only relevant in sociological and academic contexts; scholars have called for the utilization of an intersectional lens to frame issues surrounding public health (Agénor, 2020; Bowleg, 2012). Whether it be intersecting identities or systemic health disparities, bringing the invisible to light is a first step in disrupting normative conceptions of who (populations) and what (phenomena) is worthy of study (Moussawi & Vidal-Ortiz, 2020; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). There has been a push in recent years to extend intersectional theorization and methodologies into the sphere of quantitative, social scientific research (Bowleg& Bauer, 2016; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016; Richman & Zucker, 2019).

Identity-based disparities are prevalent in the U.S. education system. Given that burnout is associated with worsened well-being (Harrison, 1999; Koutsimani et al., 2019) and marginalized people have been experiencing stress and burnout at higher rates during the pandemic than societally privileged people (e.g., Aldossari & Chaudry, 2021; Evans, 2020; Haynor & Wilson, 2020; Moore et el., 2021; Ruprecht et al., 2021; Simien & Wallace, 2022), I advance the following hypotheses to guide this study:

H1: Educators with marginalized identities will face a) greater levels of stress and burnout, and b) lower levels of well-being during the pandemic than those with more societally privileged identities.

H2: Educators with marginalized identities will a) contract COVID-19 and b) face stigmatization at greater rates than those with more societally privileged identities.

Finally, I extend an intersectional approach to this study to fully capture the unique experiences of educators holding several marginalized identities. Akin to arguments made by scholars on the merits of intersectional approaches for advancing scholarship on health inequities (e.g., Richman & Zucker, 2019), I argue that an intersectional lens is not only appropriate, but necessary, to fully capture the complexity with which educators holding marginalized identities are experiencing the pandemic and coping with a host of academic-related stressors.

RQ1: Which intersections among educators' identities most shape their experience of stress, burnout, stigma, and well-being during COVID-19?

METHODS

Data Cleaning

Prior to determining the final sample and calculating demographic characteristics, traditional "best practices" for data cleaning (e.g., Osborne, 2013) were employed to screen the data for possible concerns pertaining to quality, missingness, and representativeness. Data cleaning was conducted in several stages. I worked with the survey software company to iteratively replace 175 cases through traditional data cleaning procedures, which involved a data scrubbing service through Qualtrics and me personally cleaning the data following the aforementioned established, yet outdated, "best practices" that call for data that are low quality, missing, and misrepresentative to be removed from the dataset and replaced with "higher quality" data by refielding the survey to additional participants. Specifically, data were replaced when (a) the duration to complete survey was greater than three standard deviations above/below mean, (b) extensive straightlining occurred (i.e., 14 or more of the same response chosen sequentially), (c) illogical combinations of responses were present (i.e., reverse-coded and regular-coded items have same answer back-to-back within a scale designated as a data quality check measure), (d) irrelevant open-ended responses were provided to describe the main education-related stressor (e.g., "very stressor," "Walmart is a good place to work at," "Dana burger"), and (e) data were missing. While missing data, alone, did not constitute a sufficient reason for removing individual cases, missing data were permissible as a data cleaning and replacement parameter by Qualtrics in the presence of other indications of "low quality" data as described in reasons a-d, above.

The final sample size was equivalent for the original/raw data ($N = 450$) and the iteratively cleaned data ($N = 449$); however, the original sample reflected far more sociodemographic diversity and seemed to capture the experiences of marginalized educators with greater frequency than the cleaned dataset. Of note, the original sample consisted of a greater percentage of educators who identify as Black or African American (13.3% vs. 9.8%), Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish (18.7% vs. 14.0%), and Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual (LGB; 12.0% vs. 9.3%). Additionally, more educators (17.6% vs. 14.3%) reported contracting COVID-19 in the original dataset, so there is greater insight into the experiences with stigmatization that educators have faced pertaining to COVID-19. Taken together, these patterns seem to indicate traditional data cleaning processes introduce systematic bias because the cases that were replaced reflect a disproportionate number of racial, ethnic, and sexual minority individuals that one would not expect from chance

alone. Based on empirical evidence documenting the potential misreporting of sensitive information out of fear of social repercussions (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007) and increased stereotype threat among minority respondents (Steele & Aronson, 1995), it is likely that patterns of missing or seemingly low-quality data are driven by engrained, systematic privilege of societally normative identities. Given that the present investigation is focused on intersectionality and the decentering of White, non-Hispanic, heteronormative experiences, the original dataset was used for all analyses.

Sample

To be eligible for participation in this study, people had to be educators (i.e., K-12 teachers, educators in post-secondary education, and graduate teaching assistants) in the United States who were 18 years of age or older. A national sample of 450 educators with a mean age of 37.4 years (SD = 13.3) was obtained through data collection efforts via Qualtrics spanning March and April of 2021. Complete sociodemographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 450)

Sample Characteristics	n	%	M	SD	Range
Age	448		37.42	13.34	18-77
Sex Assigned at Birth					
Female	238	52.9			
Male	211	46.9			
Intersex	1	0.2			
Gender					
Woman	230	51.1			
Man	210	46.7			
Transgender	4	0.9			
Non-binary	4	0.9			
Another gender	2	0.4			
Sexual Orientation					
Lesbian	6	1.3			
Gay	12	2.7			
Bisexual	36	8.0			
Straight/heterosexual	387	86.0			
Another orient./prefer not to answer	9	2.0			
Race (select all that apply)					
White	350	77.8			
Black or African American	60	13.3			
Asian	29	6.4			
American Indian or Alaska Native	9	2.0			
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	6	1.3			
Another race not listed	17	3.8			
Ethnicity					
Non-Hispanic	365	81.1			
Hispanic	58	12.9			
Latino	15	3.3			
Spanish	11	2.4			
Highest Degree Earned					
Associate degree	50	11.1			
Bachelor's degree	178	39.6			
Master's degree	171	38.0			
Doctoral or Professional degree	50	11.1			
Title/Position					
Graduate Student	19	4.2			
Teacher (K-12)	249	55.3			Cont'd

Sample Characteristics	n	%	M	SD	Range
Special Education or ESL Teacher	57	12.7			
Adjunct Professor/Lecturer	28	6.2			
(Visiting) Assistant Professor	30	6.7			
Associate or Full Professor	67	14.8			
Type of School					
Elementary	107	23.8			
Middle	84	18.7			
High	118	26.2			
Community College	33	7.3			
Private University	54	12.0			
Public University	44	9.8			
Other	10	2.2			
Marital Status					
Never Married	144	32.0			
Married	263	58.4			
Widowed, Divorced, Separated	43	9.6			
Annual Household Income					
Less than $50,000	74	16.4			
$50,000 - $99,999	194	43.1			
$100,000 - $149,999	109	24.2			
$150,000 and above	58	12.9			
Prefer not to say	15	3.3			
Number of Dependents					
0	182	40.4			
1	60	13.3			
2	96	21.3			
3 or more	112	24.9			
Number of Years Teaching					
Less than 1 year – 4 years	159	35.3			
5-9 years	108	24.0			
10 or more years	183	40.7			
Contract COVID?					
No	371	82.4			
Yes	79	17.6			
Inform Employer?					
No	8	10.1			
Yes	71	89.9			
Receive Time Off?					
Paid time off	60	75.9			
Unpaid time off	13	16.5			
No time off	6	7.6			

Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethics approval was obtained (STUDY00017084) from the Office of Research Protections at a large northeastern university. Educators across the United States were recruited using Qualtrics survey software. Upon meeting the eligibility criteria and providing consent to participate in the study, participants were first asked to respond to an open-ended question identifying the main academic stressor

they faced since the start of COVID-19. Then, participants responded to a series of closed-ended questions derived from empirically validated scales of perceived stress, burnout, and mental well-being. After providing comprehensive demographic information, participants were asked to share their experience with COVID-19, specifically whether they had (a) contracted COVID-19, (b) chosen to disclose that information to their employer, and (c) received (un)paid time off. Participants who self-identified as having contracted COVID-19 were provided with a series of questions measuring felt and enacted stigma. Those who did not self-identify as contracting COVID-19 were directed to the "End of Survey" message. The screening questions and consent form were the only questions that required a response from the subjects; all remaining survey questions utilized the "Request Response" feature. Survey completion took approximately 10 minutes, with slight variation based on survey logic and branching.

Measures

Perceived Stress

Stress was measured using Cohen et al.'s (1983) Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), a five-point, Likert-type scale consisting of 14 items (e.g., "*how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do*"). The PSS is a well-validated and widely used scale (e.g., Cohen, 1986; Lee, 2012) measuring stress appraisals. Cohen and colleagues (1983) drew on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) conceptualization of secondary stress appraisals when creating the items in the PSS to capture people's analysis and evaluation of the resources and strategies to them for coping with stress. Psychometric assessment of the PSS has yielded a Cronbach's alpha (α) of .84-.86 (Cohen et al., 1983). Responses range from "1" (*never*) to "5" (*always*), with greater values representing a higher degree of stress in the present study ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 0.52$, $\alpha = .80$).

Burnout

The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Scale (MBI-ES; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 1986) was employed to assess the frequency with which participants have experienced three core components of educator burnout: emotional exhaustion ($n = 9$), depersonalization ($n = 5$), and reduced personal accomplishment ($n = 8$). Sample scale items reflecting each component of burnout include: emotional exhaustion (e.g., "*I have felt emotionally drained from my work*"), depersonalization (e.g., "*I've become more callous toward students since the transition to remote instruction*"), and reduced personal accomplishment (e.g., "*I have accomplished many worthwhile things as an educator since the transition to remote instruction*;" items reverse coded). Responses to this five-point, Likert-type scale range from "1" *(never)* to "5" (*always*). The MBI-ES has demonstrated strong

psychometric properties (e.g., Gold, 1984; Iwanicki & Schwab, 1981), with established reliability values as follows: emotional exhaustion (α = .88 - .90), depersonalization (α = .74 - .76), reduced personal accomplishment (α = .72 - .76), and composite burnout (α = .83 - .84). All subscales in the present study possessed high internal consistency: emotional exhaustion (α = .91), depersonalization (α = .87), and reduced personal accomplishment (α = .86). A composite variable was created by averaging scores across the three burnout subscales (*n* = 22 items) such that larger values indicate greater levels of burnout (*M* = 2.72, *SD* = 0.61, α = .89).

Mental Well-being

Participants' mental well-being was assessed using the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (Lamers et al., 2011). Sample scale items capturing the frequency with which educators have experienced various indicators of positive mental well-being include: emotional well-being (e.g., "*feeling happy*"), social well-being (e.g., "*feeling that you had something important to contribute to society*"), and psychological well-being (e.g., "*feeling that your life has a sense of direction and meaning to it*") well-being. Responses for this five-point, Likert-type scale range from "1" (*never*) to "5" (*always*). Empirical tests of the MHC-SF demonstrate strong internal consistency for all (sub)scales reflecting positive mental well-being: emotional well-being (*n* = 3, α =.83), social well-being (*n* = 5, α = .74), psychological well-being (*n* = 6, α = .83), and composite mental well-being (*n* = 14, α = .89). All subscales in the present study possessed high internal consistency: emotional well-being (α = .83), social well-being (α = .84), psychological well-being (α = .85), A composite variable was created by averaging participants' scores across all three types of well-being, with higher values indicating greater levels of overall mental well-being (*M* = 3.50, *SD* = 0.73, α = .92).

Stigma

Participants' perceptions of stigma were assessed using Boyle's (2018) Felt Stigma scale and Enacted Stigma scale. The Felt Stigma scale is a four-item measure that provides insight into participants' personal assessment of how their potentially stigmatized experience (i.e., COVID-19 diagnosis) would be perceived by others (e.g., "*I have been fearful that others would reject me if they knew about my COVID-19 diagnosis*"). Participants' experiences with being stigmatized by others were measured using the Enacted Stigma scale, which is a 15-item measure assessing the actual instances of stigmatization that educators have experienced (e.g., "*People have discriminated against me because of my COVID-19 diagnosis*"). Responses to both of these five-point, Likert-type scales ranged from "1" (*strongly disagree*) to "5" (*strongly agree*). These two scales have strong psychometric properties (Boyle, 2018), with reliabilities of .86 and .94 for the

felt stigma and enacted stigma scales, respectively. Composite variables were created such that larger values indicate greater levels of felt stigma ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.28$, $\alpha = .88$) and enacted stigma ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.34$, $\alpha = .98$).

Main Academic Stressor

Participants were presented with one open-ended question asking them to "*describe the main stressor you felt related to your teaching or academic life*." Open-ended responses reflected a variety of stressors, including difficulties with work/life balance, student engagement, job (in)security, and converting lesson plans into meaningful online activities and assessments.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Bivariate correlations were assessed in SPSS to examine the associations among the dependent variables of interest prior to analyzing the ways in which aspects of identity were related to experiences of stress, burnout, well-being, and stigma. Perceived stress was positively associated with burnout and negatively associated with mental well-being. Burnout was negatively associated with well-being and positively associated with both felt and enacted stigma. Mental well-being was positively associated with felt stigma, and felt stigma was positively associated with enacted stigma. The correlation matrix is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlation matrix for all variables of interest in the present study

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Perceived Stress	---				
2. Burnout	.57**	---			
3. Well-being	-.54**	-.43**	---		
4. Felt Stigma	.08	.34**	.32**	---	
5. Enacted Stigma	.00	.41**	.20	.83**	---

$N = 450$.

$**p < .01$.

A series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were also run to examine whether the national trends in identity-based differences in income and title across educators is persistent through COVID-19. There was a significant effect of sex on income [$F(1, 448) = 13.71$, p < .001] and title [$F(1, 448 = 10.19$, p = .002], with people identifying as female earing less annually and having a lower title at their place of employment. There was a significant effect of race on income [$F(4, 449) = 5.27$, p < .001], with people identifying as White making significantly more money on an annual basis than people identifying as Black or another race (e.g., Pacific Islander) that is

often underrepresented. There was a significant effect of ethnicity [$F(3, 449)$ = 2.85, p = .037] on title, with people identifying as Latino having a higher title than people identifying as non-Hispanic. There was a significant effect of being a parent on both income [$F(3, 449)$ = 14.20, p < .001] and title [$F(3, 449)$ = 4.98, p = .002]. People having two or three children had a higher annual income and higher title than those with zero or one child(ren). However, mothers did not have a significantly different annual income or title than non-mothers, so the effects of being a parent on income and title are likely driven by fathers.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1 predicted that people with a societally marginalized identity status would have higher levels of stress and burnout, and lower levels of well-being. A series of one-way ANOVAs were performed on each of the categorical-level identity characteristics, with variance assessed for the three dependent variables (i.e., stress, burnout, well-being). Results were mostly consistent with predictions. People identifying as female and/or a women had higher levels of stress and lower levels of well-being than males and/or men. Bisexual people had lower levels of well-being than heterosexual people. Mothers experienced higher levels of burnout than non-mothers. Interestingly, when considering parents as a whole, however, people identifying as a parent had higher levels of well-being than non-parents. There were no statistically significant effects of race or ethnicity. Results for H1 are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Hypothesis 1: Results from a Series of One-Way ANOVAs

Identity *Post hoc comparison*	Stress *F*-statistic *Mean diff. (SD)*	Burnout *F*-statistic *Mean diff. (SD)*	Well-being *F*-statistic *Mean diff. (SD)*
Sex	$F(1, 448) = 10.10$**	*ns*	$F(1, 448) = 10.00$**
Sexual Orientation *Bisexual-Heterosexual*	$F(3, 440) = 3.32$* $M_{dif} = 0.27 (.09)$*	*ns*	*ns*
Gender *Woman - Man*	$F(2, 447) = 5.86$** $M_{dif} = 0.16 (.05)$**	*ns*	$F(2, 447) = 4.53$* $M_{dif} = -0.19 (.07)$*
Race	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*
Ethnicity	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*
Children *3-0 children* *3-1 children* *3-2 children*	*ns*	*ns*	$F(3, 449) = 10.19$*** $M_{dif} = 0.47 (.08)$*** $M_{dif} = 0.34 (.11)$* $M_{dif} = 0.31 (.10)$*
Mother	*ns*	$F(1, 449) = 4.15$*	*ns*

Notes: Significant findings are included in the table. Full results are available upon request.

Sex categories include: Female, Male.

Sexual Orientation categories include: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Straight.

Gender categories include: Woman, Man, Transgender, Non-binary, or Queer.

Race categories include: White, Black, Asian, Another race (single), Multiracial.

Ethnicity categories include: Non-Hispanic, Spanish, Hispanic, Latino.

Children categories include: No children, 1 child, 2 children, 3 or more children.

Mother categories include: Yes, a Mother, Not a Mother.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

      Hypothesis 2 predicted that people with a societally marginalized identity status would have contracted COVID-19 at higher rates and have higher levels of felt stigma and enacted stigma. Chi-square analyses were performed to assess differences in the prevalence of contracting COVID-19, with significant differences identified based on race and ethnicity, but not sex, sexual orientation, gender, or parent/mother status. A series of one-way ANOVAs were performed on each of the identity characteristics, with variance assessed for felt stigma and enacted stigma. Results only showed

statistically significant differences in the experience of stigma for parents, with educators having three or more kids facing higher levels of felt and enacted stigma than people with one or no children. Results for H2 are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Hypothesis 2: Results from a Series of One-Way ANOVAs

Identity	Contract COVID-19	Felt Stigma	Enacted Stigma
Post hoc comparison	χ^2 statistic	*F*-statistic	*F*-statistic
	Likelihood Ratio (LR)	*Mean diff. (SD)*	*Mean diff. (SD)*
Sex	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*
Sexual Orientation	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*
Gender	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*
Race	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*
Ethnicity	$F(3, 450) = 12.81^{**}$ $LR = 11.43^{**}$	*ns*	*ns*
Children	*ns*	$F(3, 78) = 6.78^{***}$	$F(3, 78) = 5.01^{**}$
3-0 children		$M_{\text{dif}} = 1.34\ (.32)^{***}$	$M_{\text{dif}} = 1.20\ (.34)^{**}$
3-1 children		$M_{\text{dif}} = 1.27\ (.45)^{*}$	
Mother	*ns*	*ns*	*ns*

Notes: Significant findings are included in the table. Full results are available upon request. Chi-square analyses necessitated the dichotomization of variables (with binary variable coding outlined in the notes of Table 5). ANOVAs utilized categorical coding, as follows:

Sex categories include: Female, Male.

Sexual Orientation categories include: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Straight.

Gender categories include: Woman, Man, Transgender, Non-binary, or Queer.

Race categories include: White, Black, Asian, Another race (single), Multiracial.

Ethnicity categories include: Non-Hispanic, Spanish, Hispanic, Latino.

Children categories include: No children, 1 child, 2 children, 3 or more children.

Mother categories include: Yes, a Mother, Not a Mother.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Finally, intersections of identity were explored to understand which marginalized groups faced the highest levels of stress and burnout and biggest declines to well-being (RQ1). Identity characteristics were analyzed using Crosstabs in SPSS to determine feasible subgroupings based on sample size

and power. Given the unequal cell sizes across groups and issues of statistical power, identity variables were dichotomized. A multivariate analysis of variance (i.e., MANOVA; general linear model) was performed to test the ways in which people with intersectional identities have experienced stress, burnout, stigma, and well-being during the pandemic. Results indicate that experiences of stress were escalated for Queer Females, Non-White Females, Female Parents, Queer Female Parents, and Queer Hispanic Females. Well-being was jeopardized for Non-White Females, Non-White Women, Non-White Parents, Non-White Hispanic people, Non-White Female Parents, and Non-White Queer Hispanic people. Results for RQ1 are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Research Question 1: General Linear Model (MANOVA) Results for Intersectional Identities

Identity Combination	Stress F-statistic	Burnout F-statistic	Well-being F-statistic
Queer Female	$F(1, 444) = 4.99*$	ns	ns
Non-White Female	$F(1, 444) = 5.35*$	ns	$F(1, 444) = 12.21***$
Female Parent	$F(1, 444) = 3.44^{\dagger}$	ns	ns
Non-White Woman	ns	ns	$F(1, 444) = 4.71*$
Non-White Parent	ns	ns	$F(1, 444) = 7.93**$
Non-White and Hispanic	ns	ns	$F(1, 444) = 7.19**$
Queer Non-White Female	ns	ns	$F(1, 444) = 6.46*$
Queer Female Parent	$F(1, 444) = 4.64*$	ns	ns
Queer Hispanic Female	$F(1, 444) = 3.51^{\dagger}$	ns	ns
Non-White Female Parent	ns	ns	$F(1, 444) = 5.18*$
Queer Non-White Hispanic	ns	ns	$F(1, 444) = 4.04*$

Notes: Significant findings are included in the table. Full results are available upon request. Identity characteristics were dichotomized to allow for multiple comparisons.
Sex categories were coded as: 1 = Female, 0 = Male.
Sexual Orientation categories were coded as: 1 = Queer, 0 = Heterosexual.
Gender categories were coded as: 1 = Gender Minority, 0 = Cisgender.
Race categories were coded as: 1 = Non-White, 0 = White.
Ethnicity categories were coded as: 1 = Hispanic, 0 = Non-Hispanic
Children categories were coded as: 1 = Parent (i.e., have 1 or more children), 0=No children.

Mother categories were coded as: 1 = Mother, 0 = Not a Mother.

†p = .06   * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

DISCUSSION

This study set out to critically examine the ways in which educational experiences and structures are shaped by social/relational frames (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004) and power relations (Acker, 1990; Moussawi & Vidal-Ortiz, 2020). Findings from this intersectional inquiry shed light on the dynamic and consequential outcomes of COVID-19 on educators' levels of stress and burnout, experiences of stigma, and mental well-being. Results of this study yield valuable insights for theory and practice by advancing scholarship on identity and well-being within the context of the U.S. education system during the global pandemic.

Theoretical Implications

There are several ways in which this research supports, and is supported by, existing theoretical frameworks. When adopting a social/relational perspective to the role of identity within the power-laden academic context, it is vital to consider how identity characteristics guide educators' perceptions, interactions, and health outcomes (Acker, 1990; Moussawi & Vidal-Ortiz, 2020; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). The present study demonstrates how the effects of COVID-19 have disproportionately affected educators holding one or more marginalized identities, which extant literature identifies is likely a result of social vulnerability and systemic inequity (e.g., Gaynor & Wilson, 2020). Furthermore, this research reinforces the necessity of adopting intersectional approaches to the study of public health (crises) (Bowleg, 2012), and the power of adopting "a queer sociological" approach (Moussawi & Vidal-Ortiz, 2020) to best understand how power relations underlie inequality in academic spaces.

In examining these data, I found that the effects of the pandemic on educators' health and functioning were not consistent across identity groups. Analyses revealed that the intersections of sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and parent status often produced declines in well-being and increases in perceptions of stress. Furthermore, investigating the intersections of identities produced findings that would not have been yielded with traditional (i.e., singular) approaches to identity. Race, alone, did not exert an effect on well-being, stress, burnout, or stigma. However, race exerted a significant effect on stress and well-being when examining the differential effects of intersectional identities on the outcomes of interest. If this study had stopped after conducting singular identity analyses, the nuanced and profound experiences of people with multifaceted identities would have been completely missed. Despite a wealth of messaging focused on collective efficacy to curtail the spread of COVID-19, the results of this present study,

and the pandemic more broadly, highlight that "we're not all in this together" (Bowleg, 2020, p. 1267).

Although not the main theoretical focus of the study, results of this inquiry echo some of the tenets of critical race pedagogy (CRP), which is "an analysis of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination in education that relies mostly on the perceptions, experiences, and counterhegemonic practices of educators of color" (Lynn, 1999). Although CRP focuses on the education of students, it reasons that CRP might be applicable to academic institutions and educational structures of power. Similar to how CRP combines tenets of critical race theory (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 1995; Matsuda et al., 1993) and critical pedagogy theory (Giroux, 1992; McLaren, 1998), I argue that adapting a critical intersectional approach to the structures and principles that uphold the American educational system would merge influential theories that aim to address identity-based inequities through a comprehensive approach. In other words, research would explore beyond what is taught and by/to whom, to encompass the perpetuation of systems of oppression in academia. To this point, the sociodemographic characteristics of students reflect a growing diversity in the American student body over the past few decades, but diversity among educators has not shown similar growth (Ramlackhan et al., 2022). Working toward uprooting gendered, classed, and raced education systems would contribute to shifting the landscape of education and paving the way for marginalized educators and students, alike, to be integrated into a supportive academic system. By moving away from the historical educational system that is engrained in identity-based deficit models (Solorzano & Yosso, 2000), intersectionality of identity may be embraced, and a diverse, reformed educational system may flourish.

Practical Implications

This study underscores the dynamic relationship between identity pride and prejudice that exists in the American educational system (Anonymous, 2024)[1]. To best support educators during prolonged stressors, we must first recognize that each person is comprised of a unique set of identities and experiences. Furthermore, it is imperative that the education system is reflective of the communities and individuals that are being served. Put differently, schools should be reflections of communities; they should mirror the social values, norms, and identities of the people who inhabit the larger community (Peña et al., 2021). As such, schools can be sites of transformation and support for members of the surrounding communities. Intentionally incorporating social justice principles and upholding individual

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[1] I would like to thank Reviewer 2 for providing me with the language of "identity pride and prejudice" to poignantly highlight the duality of experiences within the U.S. education system and illustrate the value of intersectional research.

and cultural dignity across social systems can help foster dialogue and the creation of safer spaces (Ramlackhan et al., 2022). There are many ways that schools can be culturally responsive and support diverse educators. Among these strategies are (1) investing in educators and providing support to meet their students' needs and their own needs (e.g., family, identity, well-being), (2) recruiting and retaining diverse educators, (3) "flipping the system" by valuing and promoting people from minoritized identities, and (4) intentionally providing leadership opportunities and avenues for meaningful collaboration (Peña et al., 2021). However, it is crucial to be mindful when implementing opportunities for leadership and career advancement not to veer into the realm of identity taxation (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2011). In other words, actions need to be taken to ensure that educators with marginalized identities are not expected to perform additional unpaid labor under the guise of professional growth (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2011).

Supporting diverse educators is an investment that reaps major dividends. It is imperative that academic systems not only invest financial resources, but that they invest in the social and emotional well-being of educators and commit to structural reform (e.g., Peña et al., 2021). Educators regularly devote themselves to providing quality and supportive learning environments to their students, but they often experience minimal structural support to sustain their personal and professional well-being. Understanding the complexity of norms, stigmas, and the social construction of identities involves acknowledging the intersection of personal and professional experiences in shaping people's identities and driving the factors that can best support diverse educators (Ramlackhan et al., 2022). For example, having safe spaces to openly discuss challenges and support one another can provide educators with the opportunity to set aside the performative aspect of marginalized teachers maintaining safety in majority-dominant spaces (Ramlackhan et al., 2022).

As a final practical implication, this research could inform educational and public health policies, with the goal of making visible the inequities that persist across interactions, systems, and contexts. One place to start would be to address gendered organizations (Acker, 1990). There appears to be differential effects of parent sex on the outcomes of interest in the present study. For instance, mothers faced higher levels of burnout whereas parents, as a whole, experienced greater well-being and had higher incomes and job titles than non-parents. These patterns are echoed in the literature, with women often facing a motherhood penalty in the workplace with employers viewing mothers as employees who are committed to their family at the (presumed) detriment of their work life (i.e., committed parent equates to noncommitted employee), while fathers tend to experience a

fatherhood premium (i.e., committed parent equates to committed employee; Blair-Roy, 2003; Luhr, 2020).

Limitations

The results of the current study reflect larger trends in the literature; however, it is not without its limitations. The cross-sectional nature of these data limits the interpretations that can be made about the effects of identity on well-being and burnout. There are long-standing trends showcasing the disproportionate burdens of social and institutional stress placed on marginalized educators, such as women (Elliott & Blithe, 2021) and faculty of color (Simien & Wallace, 2022). Longitudinal research is warranted to assess the lasting impacts of coping with prolonged stressors for educators holding one or more marginalized identities.

Issues of sample size and statistical power emerged when exploring which intersections of identity most shape educators' experiences with stress, burnout, well-being, and stigma (RQ1). Although all identities included in my hypotheses were also included in my intersectional inquiry, I had to collapse response options into dichotomous variables to preserve statistical power. Although this decision allowed me to examine the intersections of two and three different identities at a time while still retaining all identity characteristics across these analyses, I did have to sacrifice the richness and descriptiveness of some of the identity variables. Employing quota sampling could be a useful strategy for ensuring cell sizes are large enough for complex comparisons.

Another limitation lies in the isolated health context of the study. Although this present inquiry focuses on the heightened structural and interpersonal challenges experienced by marginalized educators, it does not explicitly examine other sociopolitical stressors beyond COVID-19. A social justice pandemic has been parallel to the COVID-19 pandemic, with multiple pathways of inequity present during 2020 and 2021 when the COVID-19 pandemic originated, and data were collected. During this time, the Violence Against Women Act had lapsed (ACLU, 2023b) and many anti-LGBTQ rights bills were introduced across the country (ACLU, 2023a). Social justice movements, such as the Black Lives Matters movement (Garza et al., 2013), held prominence in the social sphere to protest police brutality following the murder of George Floyd. The past few years have been hallmarked by the intersection of three pandemics: social justice, incivility, and COVID-19 (Hammond & Parker, 2020). Although the present study focused on one pandemic at the time, we know that discrimination and threats to safety and personhood have been occurring across a variety of settings, all of which contributes to worsened health outcomes (e.g., Williams et al., 2019).

Future Research

People possessing one or more marginalized identities are often regarded as less resilient when combating public health disasters based on a host of interactional and systemic factors, such as racism and social inequities that limit access to quality care (e.g., Evans, 2020). Future research would benefit from studying how community connectedness, stigma resistance, and collective resilience could be protective factors in the face of adversity and prolonged public health crises (e.g., Firmin et al., 2017). Furthermore, scholarship should critically engage with what constitutes "best practice" in research methodology to address systematic biases not only in social/public spheres, but in the principles used to guide sampling and data cleaning. There are methodological challenges to conducting intersectional research (Bowleg, 2008), but the opportunity to decenter norms of Whiteness and heteronormativity and embrace multiplicity of identity can spur profound change.

Another future research direction pertains to who is the subject of intersectional pedagogical research. There is a growing body of literature examining the effects of microaggressions and other discriminatory experiences in academia (e.g., Boyle et al., 2022; Misawa, 2010), but the majority of (intersectional) scholarship still seems to focus on the student experience. While this research path is certainly valid and much needed, scholarship would also benefit from expanding research inquiry into the experiences of educators and the effects of social conditions on their well-being inside and outside of the classroom.

Finally, integrating sociopolitical events into study designs and analyses, either as variables of interest or contextual factors that shape study findings, would be beneficial across disciplines. At the time of this writing, some progress has been made to protect human rights, such as through the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (The White House, 2022). There are still many areas of human rights, such as reproductive rights (e.g., Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v. Wade) and LGBTQ rights (e.g., limiting access to gender affirming care), that have regressed since the data were collected for this study. Over the course of the nation's history, we have witnessed landmark wins and losses in the fight for human rights. The specific triumphs and challenges vary across time, but the fact remains that the social climate will continue to impact well-being.

CONCLUSION

This intersectional study demonstrates the disproportionate effects of coping with prolonged stress on educators holding one or more marginalized identities in the United States. Both identity pride and prejudice tend to exist in the American educational system (Brannon & Lin, 2021), making reflections on the role of identity in personal and professional spheres

simultaneously empowering and fraught with historical oppression. I argue that people are not a single identity, defining experience, or proverbial "box to check;" rather, everyone is a unique combination of multiple identities and experiences. When we are seen as whole people that shape, and are shaped by, social forces, sources of oppression can begin to be dismantled. By challenging the status quo, we can begin to uproot and unearth the very sources of power that serve to oppress the voices, experiences, and lives of those who are marginalized.

Rather than repeating "hollow platitude[s] of solidarity designed to placate the privileged," (Bowleg, 2020, p. 917), let us truly come together and collectively acknowledge the value inherent to each person and the richness of experiences and identities that each person embodies. Collectively celebrating the value inherent to each person is a touchstone for meaningful change, a change which can be fully appreciated by acknowledging the richness of experience and identity that each person embodies.

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When I Cry, You Cry. We Cry, Together: The Intersectional Nature of Subalternity in American Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

In 2022, Parker et al. published a special issue in Research Issues in Contemporary Education with the intention of curating manuscripts addressing marginalization in higher education. Within the framework of Subalternity/Subaltern Studies, the current study employs a Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis methodology to investigate the intersectional nature of the 11 included manuscripts, thereby advancing the special issue. Findings highlight recurring themes including individual experiences, the need for theory to inform practice, and a focus on classroom dynamics. Additionally, within each manuscript numerous key terms are referred to relating to diversity, racism, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Last, from the findings, Black Women are prominently identified as subaltern within higher education and victims of the power dynamics at play.

Keywords: Higher education, subalternity, historically black colleges and universities, black women, diversity, racism, power

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The margin is an interesting place to live and work. Spivak (2011) called it "the silent, silenced center" and further posed the question, "Can the subaltern speak? Or rather, do oppressed individuals have the ability to contribute to and advance spaces where they are being oppressed? Can they forge change for a better future for themselves in a system that does not value them? Understanding marginalization and living on the margin in any context is of importance to studies of intersectionality and subalternity because "race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 357). In other words, identity categories, regardless of which ones, are always the result of and subject to oppression by those in power. Furthermore, being subjected to the margins is a means of maintaining the status quo.

Recently, Parker et al. (2022a) brought together 24 authors to produce a special issue comprised of 11 manuscripts published in *Research Issues in Contemporary Education* (RICE). This collection was aptly titled "Letting the Marginalized Reestablish the Margins: The Multicultural Dimensions of Academia." It aimed to provide a space for minoritized voices from the BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, first-generation, non-native English-speaking, secular, non-heteronormative conforming, and various other communities to advance the growing movement to reform academia to be a catalyst for positive change for all individuals, not only those who have historically benefited from it. This article seeks to further their work on marginalization in American colleges and universities by investigating the intersectional nature of subalternity as presented by the authors in the collection. The following sections provide contextualization related to the need for this study within the existing research. Then, the remaining sections discuss the methods used along with the findings and further discussion related to their relevancy. This paper closes with commentary related to subalternity in higher education.

Rationale

Workers in any organization find struggle in systems where power is used as a weapon against them as a form of oppression (Spivak, 1994). Employees are driven by the desire to either advance professionally within or outside the organization. Because of the hierarchical structure of power in higher education, it is common that such struggle happens in binary pairs: students and faculty, faculty and administration, administration and boards of directors, political officials, and/or other decision-making stakeholders. As we know, "the link to the workers struggle is located in the desire to blow up power at any point of its application" (p. 67). In understanding that oppression has no boundaries and that the oppressed can only speak and know their conditions when given the chance, this manuscript adapts Spivak's question to the work of Parker et al. (2022a) in an effort to advance the conversation

from "Can" to "How". Further, this research seeks to understand if, and in what ways, the subaltern is speaking in higher education as a way of further conceptualizing relationships of power within large bureaucratic organizations such as colleges and universities and the role of intersectionality in maintaining and breaking oppressive systems.

Positionality

The researchers involved in this study are aware of their proximity, biases, values, and perspectives related to this study. As editors of the special edition, the authors understand we have unique proximity and responsibility to the texts. Likewise, as mostly African American and all higher education professionals working in the deep south, our perspectives align closely with the ideas represented within the texts. We have intersectional identities and experiences similar to and/or related to the forms of identity discussed by contributing authors, including but not limited to race, gender, sexuality, language, and ability. We all have deep commitments to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in all its forms.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Subaltern is defined in this study as the notion of having inferior rank within an American college or university or the idea of a faculty member, staff member, or student within an American college or university who is subject to the hegemony of those in a position of power (Ashcroft et al., 2000). While subalterns are usually denied power within a space, these individuals normally also have less access to the means by which they may control their own representation and cultural and social institutions. Thus, regardless of those who are subaltern, the key common denominator is resistance to the dominant group.

Subalternity works in terms of binary relationships between the subaltern and the dominant group (Ashcroft et al., 2000). Spivak (1994) argued that the notion of being subaltern is built on the inherent attributes that define the group. Thus, the group will never be able to speak for themselves as long as they are viewed as subaltern by those who hold the most power. The issue is that because they did not create their subalternity, they will never break free from it. Moreover, there is no way that the oppressed or politically marginalized can resist their subalternity. To be heard, they must speak in the language of the dominant group at a level they can hear and in a way that they understand. The formation of dominant groups is usually classified as official history or something that is documented, implying that the creation of the subaltern is the result making it the subject of an activity that established the ruling group.

Spivak (1994) viewed subalternity from the perspective of natural selection, meaning they were born into these roles rather than forced into them. Moreover, there exists a direct relationship between desire, power, and

subjectivity. The subject will always desire the power of hegemony meaning that individuals never want to go against their interests. Hence, the desire for power is driven by the goal of changing the societal dynamics of who is in power and who is a subject. The margin can also be considered the silent, silenced center of a culture or society marked out by epistemic violence. The subaltern cannot speak. It is the therefore their job to fight for equality for all in the space while occupying it so that they eventually can.

To study the subaltern, one must consider their objective formation, their active and passive affiliation to the dominant political formations, the birth of new parties and dominant groups, the formations that the subaltern produce to press their claims, how the new formations function in the old framework, and their relationships to trade unions and political parties. Moreover, no act of subalternity can be delinked from hegemonic power. Subalternity only exists because there is a group in power to establish its anthesis, the hegemony.

Subalternity research looks at power dynamics among groups of individuals, and the nature of subalternity is pervasive in higher education around the world. This investigation centered on this concept within higher education by specifically looking at the discourse produced by Parker et al. (2022a) related to marginalization in academia. It ranges from issues of curriculum and instruction (Grosfoguel, 2013) to issues of students and belonging (Kim, 2012). This research aimed to uncover marginalization in the context of faculty by studying the work of Parker et al. (2022a) as discourse in order to bring attention to the ways that this same dynamic can be seen among higher education professionals. The following section will provide a brief review of the existing literature on the topic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education replicates a workplace culture that divides physical and mental labor by class and the division of capital on the one hand, but on the other, it also maintains the need to struggle and further conflict over resources to maintain each unit (Sotiris, 2014). Interestingly, a transformation of the current structure of higher education is also plausible when the mission and daily work of an institution align with the entrepreneurial nature of where the institution is shifting, thus creating an interest convergence (McGowan & Shipley, 2020). In other words, it is through being forward-thinking that most units and institutions can advance themselves beyond their current constraints.

Subalternity in Higher Education

The existing research on subalternity in higher education mainly addressed issues of students (Dubin & Beisse, 1967; Kim, 2012; Wagner, 2013), faculty (Brissett, 2020; Gilmore & Smith, 2005; Mishra, 2012; Orelus, 2018), and curriculum and instruction (Sant, 2017; Winkler & Scholz, 2021).

While each area at some point did intersect with the other, these three were evident as overarching themes within the literature.

Teachers and Students

The power dynamic between teacher and student is based on the temporality of the situation. In other words, because both parties understand that the teacher is there permanently while the student is not, the teacher will always maintain situational power. This dynamic is furthered by the consistent and blatant disregard by upper administration and higher-ranking faculty (Dubain & Beisse, 1967). It was not until higher education adopted a more capitalist approach that an emphasis on return on investment shifted this power dynamic. This dynamic shifted away some power from faculty and gave it to the students and stakeholders. Amplified by their status, minority students are significant victims of this power dynamic. As suggested by Kim (2012) in discussing Korean students:

> The organizational excellence of the American university system, its superior academic ethos and norms, and the hope of interaction with celebrated scholars all demonstrate how the global hegemony of the American university system is daily embodied in looking at issues of concern to faculty. (p. 473)

Essentially, the American system reinforces the hegemonic aspects of this power dynamic by sustaining subalternity and attracting individuals willing to become subaltern.

Faculty and Staff

Traditionally, university employees are hierarchically organized by job duties and labeled either faculty or staff (Trowler, 2014). Faculty have perceived higher status and working conditions, based on tenure, promotion, and incentives such as sabbaticals. Yet, the spaces of the Faculty Council and/or Senate, and tenure-track faculty positions are dominated by white males, including their values, which reinforce Christian, abled-bodied, monolingual, and presumably heterosexual norms (Grosfoguel, 2018; Orelus, 2018). Further, a white male majority continues to dominate key decision-making roles, such as department chair, dean, provost, president, and chancellor (Orelus, 2018). This lack of diversity is significant as it contributes to the epistemological and ontological formation of the institution, which are then reproduced within the student body.

Notably, regardless of minority scholars' contributions to the western academy, subaltern professors are most often subjected to inhospitable and inequitable treatment from administrators, colleagues, and students. This is a direct result of their lack and/or blatant disregard for awareness and an unwillingness to embrace diversity and the value that non-traditional faculty and staff bring to postsecondary education (Orelus, 2018). Thus, the term subaltern in the higher education context refers to non-normative (white,

Christian, able-bodied, monolingual, Cis-gendered males, middle-class) people who become college faculty or staff. It is because of people from privileged positions in society who are unwilling to acknowledge discrimination based on race, gender, accent, language, sexuality, or religion that people placed in subaltern positions must face discrimination and resist systemic oppression as a daily reality upon entering the academy for as long as they remain within the system.

Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum and instruction literature suggests that bodies of knowledge coming from non-western perspectives are usually treated as academically inferior (Grosfoguel, 2013; Wright-Maley, 2022). Grosfoguel (2013) argued that epistemologies, cosmologies, and knowledge produced by non-western worldviews or world regions that are not aligned with dominant groups are always considered inferior in western colleges and universities. This is evident in course offerings at colleges and universities across America. This is also exemplified by the fact that not a single Historically Black College or University (HBCU) has been designated a Research One institution, and all HBCUs lack funding when compared to Predominantly White Institutions (PWI). Interestingly, HBCUs are leaders in STEM and produce thousands of doctors, lawyers, and great contributors to global society from all backgrounds.

Power in higher education is a coveted commodity by faculty, staff, and to a lesser degree students. This institutional power is recognized as a tool for change and also a tool for maintaining the status quo. Further, institutional power is a mechanism for maintaining power or obtaining it to make a change. To understand the intricate nature of subalternity in higher education, this study investigated these dynamics by analyzing faculty discourse on institutional power. The following section will explain the methodology of this study, including the research questions and the credibility, including reliability and validity measures, embedded within the of the study.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a case study method based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Mullet, 2018; Sanz Sabido, 2019), and a theoretical lens that combined CDA and Postcolonial Theory to look at 11 manuscripts published in a special issue of RICE and find oppression and power imbalances (Sanz Sabido, 2019). This section discusses the demographics of the data set investigated, as well as the coding scheme and procedures used to conduct the study.

When considering existing literature on the topic, the researchers asked the following research questions:

1. In what ways does the discourse produced by Parker et al. (2022b) illuminate the voices and experiences of subalternity in higher education?
2. What are the key themes and subthemes related to subalternity highlighted by the work of Parker et al. (2022b)?
3. What are the intersections of marginality in higher education as established by the work represented in Parker et al. (2022b)?

The sample for this study consisted of 11 manuscripts published in a special issue of the academic journal *Research Issues in Contemporary Education* (RICE). RICE, the official publication of the Louisiana Educational Research Association, is indexed in the U.S. Department of Education ERIC and EBSCO databases. The special issue, titled "Letting the Marginalized Reestablish the Margins: Multicultural Dimensions of Academia," aimed to publish manuscripts that addressed marginalization, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in higher education. Per the call for papers:

> The purpose of this special edition is to bring scholars together to investigate the relationships of power, equity, equality, and the lived experience of scholars in higher education throughout the world. Through embracing the idea of counter-narrative research, articles in this special collection should be geared toward presenting authors' lived experiences in higher education. This can take the form of purely qualitative, purely quantitative, or mixed method research. (Parker et al., 2021, para. 3)

The current study extends the work of the special issue by analyzing the published manuscripts as a form of published discourse.

Demographics

The manuscripts included in the special issue were produced by 24 authors with higher education affiliations in the United States. Of the 11 articles, four were produced by single authors, and seven were co-authored. Among the 24 authors, it was assumed that six authors identify as male, and 18 authors identify as female. This was concluded via their pronouns used throughout the works and/or their author affiliation statements. Additionally, five authors identified as white and 19 identified as scholars of color. Notably, none of the white authors contributed single-authored articles. All the articles in the dataset were qualitative and reflective, meeting the special issue's intended purpose of capturing the lived experiences of subaltern members of academia.

Coding scheme

An abridged version of the coding scheme designed by Mullet (2018) and Sanz Sabido (2019) for conducting CDA research was utilized in this study. In line with Stage 4 of Mullet's (2018) CDA framework, the primary objective was to identify overarching themes within the texts and their contextual surroundings. Guided by Spivak's (1994) concept of subalternity, a deductive coding procedure was employed to create a codebook, forming the foundational framework for identifying and analyzing pertinent data segments.

Next, the researchers marked the text of the articles for words or phrases that were deemed relevant to the initial codes. Through multiple iterations, labeled text segments were recorded in a codebook, and a final list of key thematic terms was generated that are common to postcolonial discourse. The initial codebook contained approximately 32 key terms. These terms underwent refinement using a constant comparative process, and 10 key themes emerged. Through revisiting the texts, the themes were deconstructed, which produced an additional 33 more terms, for a total of 65 terms. Finally, the terms were operationalized for the specific research project.

Procedures

The initial coding of the manuscripts was conducted by two of the researchers and the data set was reviewed for consistency by a third researcher. The procedures for conducting the Critical Discourse Analysis were as follows:

1. Based on previous research (Mullet, 2019), a coding scheme was designed.
2. The 11 articles were grouped based on overarching themes and given to researchers to perform the CDA based on their areas of expertise. One group consisted of articles related to education (Beckers & Calderon, 2022; Broussard & Mallery, 2022; Gadsden, 2022; Matius; Thompson, & Luney, 2022; Shelby-Caffey, 2022). The other group comprised manuscripts based on cultural issues (Cosey, 2022; Hatcher et al., 2022; Johnson & Culverson, 2022; Reed et al., 2022; Thompson, 2022)
3. One article (Parker et al., 2022b) was analyzed by both authors to ensure the validity and reliability of the coding scheme. After analyzing the manuscript, the researchers compared notes and discussed their approaches to the analysis.
4. The coding scheme was revised to alleviate redundancy and ensure thoroughness in the data collection.
5. A critical discourse analysis was conducted on each manuscript and data was collected.
6. Data from both sets of articles was brought together as one large data set.

Credibility and Validity

As it relates to credibility of the analysis, because of the researchers' close proximity to the data set, we recognize the potential biases (i.e., confirmation, author, disciplinary, research interest, personal relationship) that may have arisen during data analysis. We acknowledged these biases and took proactive steps to minimize their impact on the analysis. Specifically, we maintained self-awareness throughout the analysis process by understanding that our biases, beliefs, and assumptions may influence interpretations and judgments. As the CDA was conducted, we employed a range of analytical approaches and perspectives. We considered multiple frameworks, theories, or methodologies to ensure a comprehensive evaluation. The research team used peer collaboration to receive input and engage in discussions on our different perspectives and areas of expertise.

Moreover, the data was triangulated as part of the collaborative process, and the multiple data sources minimized the impact of personal biases. Reflexivity, which is the act of examining one's own assumption, belief, and judgement systems, and thinking carefully and critically about how this influences the research process (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), was used to gauge the potential influence of personal experiences, values, or cultural backgrounds was explicitly discussed throughout all stages of analysis. In these ways, the researchers systematically and continuously questioned their assumptions and critically reflected on their interpretations to guard against biases.

Lastly, the researchers maintained transparency by documenting and describing the analytical methodology used, including the steps, criteria, and processes followed. This transparency helped to ensure accountability and allowed collaborators to assess the validity of the analysis. The researchers' critical engagement with each other through counterarguments, alternative perspectives, and contradictory evidence helped to challenge biased interpretations by critically evaluating different viewpoints. To maintain transparency and integrity, the researchers made sure to reflect on and acknowledge the limitations and potential biases inherent in the analysis by clearly discussing them in the findings and conclusions upon completion. By implementing these steps, the researchers attempted to minimize the impact of biases and strive to conduct a comprehensive and unbiased critical discourse analysis.

To further ensure reliability of the analysis, the researchers worked to extract both qualitative and quantitative data from the 11 manuscripts. Quantitative data allowed the researchers to further report the frequency of key topics, themes, and ideas (Sanz Sabido, 2019). Further, qualitative data complements quantitative approaches if they are decontextualized and lack essential details (Sanz Sabido, 2019).Qualitative analysis allows researchers to answer questions related to the underpinning ideologies, how meaning is

prioritized within the data set, and to consider the producers of discourse and the discourse itself. The qualitative dimension of this study consisted of analyzing the texts as one single set of data and also as individual units within the dataset. Both approaches were needed because in postcolonial approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA), quantitative approaches further allow researchers to analyze the entire data set to draw overarching conclusions.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings and is divided into five sections. Section one will focus on quantitative data and present the key information found in the data set. The rest of the sections will present qualitative data. Specifically, the second section will present an analysis of the context in which each manuscript was produced and the producers of the text. Section three will discuss the overarching theme found in the special edition, along with the key themes that were found in each manuscript. Section four presents the language that was used throughout each manuscript in relation to the perspectives and ideologies surrounding it. The final section will present key concepts that were found consistently throughout each manuscript when compared to one another.

Quantitative Analysis

To gain a sense of the underlying themes, tones, and values presented across articles, key thematic words and concepts were counted per the coding scheme devised based on the work of Mullet (2018) and Sanz Sabido (2019) during the data analysis process. Table 1 shows the frequency with which each term was thematically applied across all articles.

Table 1
Key Themes Within Sample

Term	Frequency of theme
Diversity	9
Inclusion, Marginalization/Marginalized/Margin	8
Equity	7
Power	6
Oppression; Intersectionality	5

Knowledge; desire	4
Resistance, Social Justice, Critical Race Theory	3
Marxism, Feminism, Interest Convergence, Subjectivity	2
Subaltern, Hegemony, Multiculturalism, Invisible Other, Colonialism	1

The most frequent thematic term was diversity (9), while the least frequent thematic terms were subaltern, hegemony, multiculturalism, invisible other, and colonialism (1). What can be determined from quantifying the themes is that authors tend to frame their discourse more often in more concrete and operationalized terms such as marginalization, diversity, equity, inclusion, power, oppression, and intersectionality than in theoretical terms. For example, the authors wrote about diversity as an adjective to describe subjects or groups of subjects instead of problematizing and discussing the sets of principles that undergirded the terms themselves or generalizing the term. This suggests that there is a preference for addressing diversity in practical, observable contexts rather than in an abstract or theoretical form. By focusing on the tangible aspects of diversity, authors can create a more immediate and relatable impact on their audience. However, this approach may, in some cases, limit the depth of understanding regarding the systemic and philosophical foundations of diversity-related issues, potentially overlooking the broader, more complex frameworks that shape these concepts.

Key Information & Context and Background

Numerous themes emerged after identifying and analyzing key information, context, and background within the data set. Marginality/marginalization, experiences, agency/empowerment, Critical Race Theory, Queer Theory/ Resistance, politics, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) emerged as major themes from the articles. When looking at the authors themselves, there was a balance of university types across Carnegie-ranking institutions. Two authors' institutional affiliations were at HBCUs. The authors who contributed to the data set were affiliated with universities including, but not limited to, Southeastern Louisiana University, Wichita State University, Bowling Green State University, Fordham University, Tulane University, Jackson State University, Tennessee

State University, the University of Kentucky, the University of Toledo, and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Per their author affiliation statements, the authors research interests included aspects of education including curriculum and instruction, multicultural education, education law and policy, underrepresented student motivation and success, first-year experience programming, higher education administration, educational leadership, emotionality of whiteness, black womxn and femmes, Special Education, and World Language Education. Likewise, contributing authors held various professional roles within institutions of higher education, including instructors, professors, academic advisors, directors, deans, and coaches.

The data set maintained a consistent focus on marginalized communities within higher education. Particularly, contributing authors across the data set communicated their interest in working with or researching topics related to marginalized groups, including underrepresented students, women of color in academia, Black women student affairs professionals, and social justice issues impacting marginalized BIPOC communities. Moreover, many of the contributing authors included in the data set are well-published authors in their respective fields. These contributing authors have published numerous articles and books.

Qualitative Themes

As shown in Table 2, three overarching qualitative themes were discovered among the articles in the data set: experiences, theory-informing practice, and learning environments. Experiences refers to manuscripts that focus on the experiences that have taken place as a result of the authors' employment and involvement in higher education. Theory-informing practice included manuscripts that addressed some type of educational theory and provided critical commentary on how it can be implemented in the classroom or university setting. Learning environments included manuscripts that focused specifically on changing aspects of the classroom and/or the teaching and learning process. In some cases, themes overlapped. For example, during data analysis, Matius et al.'s (2022) main theme was assigned as "experiences" due to its prominence in the article. However, the authors also employed Critical Race Theory (CRT) to analyze their experiences, making "theory-informing practice" a secondary theme. It is important to note the fluidity of themes here but remain aware that the main themes were assigned based on how they foregrounded the authors' work.

Table 2
Key Overarching Themes and Subthemes

Overarching theme	Author	Main Themes	Subthemes
Experiences	Parker et al. (b)	Marginality	The margin as a place of reflection; the margin as a place of thought; the margin as a place of possibility; the margin as a place of reflection for radical change
Experiences	Matius et al.	The intersection of domination of women of color in higher education	Whiteness and the power white people carry and abuse in higher education; the subordinate position of people of color in the academy; the need for change in the academy
Experiences	Shelby-Caffey	Racism in America; racism in education	The relationship between national racism and politics at the local levels; the ways in which minority educators must endure racism in their teaching
Experiences	Thompson	Identity/Experience	The experience of isolation and loneliness as the only Black woman in a doctoral program. The experience of microaggressions and discrimination. The politics of identity and faith in coping with academic hazing. The need for doctoral programs to address the issue of academic hazing for Black women doctoral students.
Theory-Informing Practice	Hatcher et al.	The Value of CRT	Racism in the educational experiences of African American males. The potential of CRT to help

			educators understand the educational experiences of African American males.
Theory Informing Practice	Reed et al.	CRT as a call to action	The challenges of using CRT in education. Defining CRT and its origins. The key tenets of CRT Debunking misconceptions about CRT. The importance of CRT A call to action
Theory Informing Practice	Gadsden	Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)	CRP allows students from community-based backgrounds to succeed. Students who attend HBCUs normally do so because the core of an HBCU is built on culture and a sense of community. Students need the continuous loving, nurturing, and supportive presence of significant relationships in their lives, particularly their belonging to groups and communities that are communal and culturally focused. This can be achieved through CRP.
Learning Environment	Cosey	Queer Theory as Resistance	The importance of understanding students' prior knowledge and experiences; The use of familiar texts and concepts; The importance of creating a safe and supportive learning environment
Learning Environment	Broussard & Mallery	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion	To implement DEI programs, there must be an inclusive space.

Learning Environment	Beckers & Calderon	Intellectual inclusion at HBCUs	The need for more inclusive services for individuals with intellectual disabilities at HBCUs
Learning Environment	Johnson & Culverson	Agency/ Empowerment	The role of libraries in providing access to information and resources. The role of libraries in creating a space for Black people to share their stories and their experiences. The role of libraries in building bridges between Black communities and the larger society. The role of libraries in promoting social justice.

Experiences

Throughout the theme of Experiences, contributing authors offered their experiential interactions as examples of profoundly inequitable structures within higher education. Parker et al. (2022b) discussed the importance of the margin as a space for reflection and the radical openness of choosing the margin as a standpoint. Thompson (2022) addressed the challenges faced by a Black woman in a doctoral program, including isolation, discrimination, and academic hazing. This includes an emphasis on the need for doctoral programs to address these issues by offering support, fostering inclusivity, and creating a welcoming environment for Black women doctoral students. Matius et al. (2022) presented the argument that White people are often implicated and complicit in microaggressions and racial stonewalling in higher education based on their emotional (re)actions. Shelby-Caffey (2022) relayed her experience in teaching during the 2016 election as a Black woman and how the election caused a climate where racism became more overt, and racists felt more comfortable expressing themselves. In each of these articles, authors provided descriptions of their experiences and reflected upon them to argue that there is a dire and urgent need for significant reforms in higher education to provide more equitable working environments for People of Color.

Theory-Informing Practice

Articles that represented this theme offered robust explanations of theoretical perspectives and how they can be applied to understanding the utility and importance of particular practices within higher education. Hatcher et al. (2022) and Reed et al. (2022) contributed manuscripts centered on CRT.

Hatcher et al. (2022) studied the impact of racism on the educational experiences of African American males, including microaggressions, stereotypes, and institutional barriers that hinder their academic achievement. In their article, a sense of belonging emerged as a theme in the discourse. In particularly, the authors communicated ways in which individuals can recognize the potential of CRT to help educators better understand how racism and oppression shape experiences and thus be able to develop more effective teaching and support strategies. In addition, they discussed concerns about the potential drawbacks of CRT, such as the potential for division along racial lines and the justification of reverse discrimination.

Reed et al. (2022) provided an overview of CRT and its origins, emphasizing its emergence as a response to the limitations of traditional civil rights approaches. In their article, they outlined the key principles of CRT, highlighting its focus on systemic racism embedded in laws, policies, and institutions. Their article also addressed common misconceptions about CRT and called upon educators, policymakers, and others to utilize its principles to promote racial equity and social justice.

Gadsden (2022) presented an argument for how teachers must use methods that will allow their students to achieve their maximum success in higher education. Specifically, her perspective was that CRP was most effective in the classroom, especially at HBCUs. She suggested that students need the continuous loving, nurturing, and supportive presence of the significant relationships that are built via this approach in their lives, particularly African American students who come from communities that are communal and culturally focused. In each of these articles, the contributing authors provided arguments for why theory is most effective for informing educational practice and the benefits that such theories have for education and society as a whole.

Learning Environments

Within the theme of learning environments, articles focused on discussions within particular spaces of learning in higher education. These were either physical spaces, such as libraries, or theoretical spaces that construct supportive learning conditions within specific groups. Johnson & Culverson (2022) examined how libraries play a crucial role in providing access to information and resources that are valuable to Black communities, enabling them to learn about their history, culture, and rights. They explained how libraries create a safe and inclusive space for Black individuals to share their stories, fostering community and raising awareness about their unique challenges. Additionally, libraries help bridge the gap between Black communities and the larger society by promoting understanding, tolerance, and challenging stereotypes through the sharing of experiences and resources. Ultimately, libraries contribute to promoting social justice.

Cosey (2022) posited that understanding students' prior knowledge and experiences is crucial in teaching queer theory, enabling educators to address misconceptions and prejudices respectfully. The author suggests using familiar texts and concepts to broaden students' understanding of queer theory's applicability to diverse experiences. Creating a safe and supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves and having their questions addressed is also emphasized.

Broussard and Mallery (2022) assessed the value and importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education. Specifically, they detail the work of the diversity council at their university. They addressed the culture and climate required to implement such initiatives on college campuses and the benefits to everyone.

Lastly, Beckers and Calderon (2022) suggested that more opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities at HBCUs make for a better society. Hence, there is a need for more inclusive services for individuals with intellectual disabilities at HBCUs. Throughout all of these articles, the value of space and/or place was highlighted as having the potential to support marginalized students, faculty, and staff within the formal or informal borders of campus life.

Language Use

As shown in Table 3, there were multiple key terms that frequently appeared throughout each manuscript. These terms reflect the usage of language and the ways in which the authors frame their argument. To provide context, the table includes a listing of the most frequently used words within each article, as well as examples of their usage. .

Table 3
Key Terms Used

Author	Terms	Examples
Parker et al. (b)	margin, space and place, center, other, radical, reflection	"Personal narratives allow the **marginalized** to tell their story and relate their experiences on the fringe of mainstream society". (p. 4) "When considering the collegiate encounters of **marginalized** communities, pedagogical strategies, and content for instruction also

		hold importance in conversations held by higher education professionals". (p. 5)
Thompson	Black woman; doctoral student; academic hazing; microaggressions; discrimination; politics; identity; faith; support; inclusion; welcome	"As a Black girl in the Midwest, I was used to being the "one and the only." Still, in some ways, the experience of being a **Black woman** doctoral student in a predominately white program felt lonelier and more isolating"(p. 54).

"**Academic hazing** within doctoral programs is often so deeply embedded within the doctoral experience that it becomes normalized". (p. 54) |
| Johnson & Culverson | library Black community access resources voices heard public sphere agency social justice | "They argue that "libraries can play a vital role in providing **access** to information and resources for Black communities" (p. 150).

"Libraries can play a role in promoting social justice by providing access to information and resources about **social justice** issues". (p. 153). |
| Hatcher et al. | CRT, African American, males, education, racism, academic achievement | "**CRT** provides a historic and legal lens through which to explore systemic structures that have not provided equitable access to opportunities for African Americans in the United |

		States of America". (p. 139)
		"Teaching the true history of **racism** in the United States of America will go a long way to ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past" (p. 140)
		"The pedagogical approach to teaching **queer theory** should not make students feel as if they are compromising their already precarious position within the social order". (p. 99)
Cosey	queer theory, resistance, HBCU, students	"Techniques for deferring (or de-centering) possible **resistance** to queer theory include contriving instructor fallibility by mis-labeling queer theory readings as something other than what they are, e.g., identifying works by Roderick A. Ferguson or Barbara Smith as being within the rubric of Marxist Theory or Gender Studies". (p. 98)
Reed et al.	CRT, Racism, Education, Research, Marginalized, Framework, Equity, Social justice, Systemic	"**CRT** creates a platform to understand and eliminate **systemic racism** and create the **equity** deserved by every human being". (p. 122) "While more research is necessary to demonstrate how the **CRT framework,** when used in **education,** can inform how race and **racism** manifest themselves

		in our institutions and can used as a valuable tool to critique and approach our existing systems, acknowledging these critiques can dispel the misperceptions and help us to understand how this praxis can advance **social justice**". (p. 123)
Shelby-Caffey	Racism, education, America, PWI	"Critical Race Theory (CRT) in **education** is a framework that draws from the lived experiences within BIPOC communities to understand how systems of power mediate **educational** trajectories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001)". (p. 74-75) "As a BIPOC faculty member at a **predominantly white institution (PWI),** my experiences have mirrored those described in the literature (Lazos, 2012; Niemann, 2012; Orelus, 2013; Pittman, 2012; Rollock, 2012)". (p. 75)
Matius et al.	CRT; white; women of color;	"Though initially a loose metaphor to illuminate how whiteness operates on its own degeneration, the comparison between a **white** dwarf in the universe and **whiteness** in the academy are quite analogous. Both burn, fuel themselves on degeneration, and are none other than death itself—the ultimate

Death Star". (p. 27)

		"Fortuitous are these tenets in this analysis because, as we, **women of color,** are both raced and gendered (see Crenshaw, 2017), so too are these caricatures of Beckys, Karens, Tomáses, and Dianes (see Matias, 2019). However, despite being both raced and gendered, we are not raced and gendered in the same way. For the **women of color** in the counter stories above, they are the victims of baseless **white** emotionalities expressed onto them, oftentimes then stereotyped as uncollaborative, suspicious, and incompetent (see Guttierez y Muh et al., 2012)". (p. 22)
Gadsden	CRP, HCBU, students, inclusive/inclusiveness	"Faculty who teach with **CRP,** cultural **inclusiveness**, and funds of knowledge in mind allow these **student**s to bridge their home lives and their academic lives". (p. 41) "Faculty who teach at **HBCUs** may be in a better position to understand such pressures since they may have experienced similar challenges when they attended college". (p. 36)
Broussard & Mallery	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion	"The lessons learned include: (a) the impact of

		intercultural engagement on inspiring culture change within an academic college; (b) the importance of getting broad buy-in and engagement from students, faculty, and staff for making process; and (c) successful strategies for advancing **diversity, equity, and inclusion** at the college level". (p. 103)
		"The purpose of this article is to describe the plan that was implemented by the college to develop the infrastructure for a learning space that meets the needs of all stakeholders in relation to **diversity, equity, and inclusion"**. (p. 104)
Beckers & Calderon	Inclusion; intellectual disability; HBCUs	"By this definition, as a society, we are socially responsible for the cultural competence and experiences of Black students with ID by affording them the opportunities to attend an **inclusive** postsecondary **HBCU** program; therefore, there is an immediate need to establish such programs". (p. 49-50)
		"The future can provide opportunities for Black students with intellectual disabilities share the same cultural

experiences and postsecondary education at a **Historically Black College or University** while preparing to become contributing members of society and reducing the negative outcomes of the intersectionality of being Black and having an **intellectual disability**". (p. 50)

According to the data in Table 3, the special edition concluded with an overall theme of racial harmony, equality, and social justice. In general, the contributing authors communicated a meta-message of equality for all, not just racial equality. As a whole, authors also communicated a strong stance in support of bettering HBCUs and dialogue related to the Black and/or African American community.

The language used by each contributing author expressed their perspective toward the specific topic they addressed. Parker et al. (2022b) used mostly the active voice as a method to emphasize the agents of the actions. There were a few instances of passive voice in the article, but they were used sparingly. Thompson (2022) employed the active voice when describing their own actions, but used the passive voice when describing the actions of others. They also used first person throughout the article. Johnson & Culverson (2022) likewise used the active voice, but passive voice was used in some cases when the authors wanted to emphasize the action rather than the actor. The authors did not use first person in the article, but they do use the pronoun "we" in some cases when they were referring to themselves as a team of researchers. Hatcher et al. (2022), Cosey (2022), and Reed et al. (2022) used a combination of active and passive voice. They also interchange perspectives by employing a mixture of first and third persons throughout the manuscript.

Shelby-Caffey (2022) used a descriptive style with long sentences and more active voice usage. Matius et al. (2022) also used the active voice with a heavy emphasis on description. Similarly, Gadsden (2022) included a thick description, but they presented their work via a narrative approach that included the use of the first person.

Unlike all other manuscripts, Broussard and Mallery (2022) approached their manuscript from a technical and descriptive narration-based standpoint. They included minimal analysis with a heavy focus on providing description and a matter-of-fact writing tone. Beckers and Calderon (2022)

approached their manuscript from an explanatory perspective by providing thick descriptions and explanations to support their claims, along with quantitative data and statistics. Overall, the majority of authors used the active voice to communicate their message. Regardless, the contributing authors used a variety of discourse, including active and passive voice, and first-person and second-person point-of-view, to present their arguments.

Key Concepts in the Manuscripts

There were numerous key concepts that were continually addressed by multiple authors throughout their articles. These concepts provided a framework for the content focus of the discourse. Table 4 highlights discourse, in the form of key concepts, that were included throughout the sample.

Table 4

Key Concepts Addressed

Key concept	Authors
Marginalization/Marginalized/Margin	Parker et al.; Thompson; Johnson & Culverson; Hatcher et al.; Cosey; Reed et al.; Matius et al.; Beckers & Calderon
Diversity	Parker et al.; Thompson; Johnson & Culverson; Hatcher et al.; Cosey; Reed et al.; Matius et al.; Broussard & Mallery
Inclusion	Parker et al.; Thompson; Johnson & Culverson; Hatcher et al.; Reed et al.; Matius et al.; Beckers & Calderon
Understanding	Parker et al.; Thompson; Johnson & Culverson; Hatcher et al.; Cosey; Reed et al.
Equity	Parker et al; Johnson & Culverson; Hatcher et al.; Reed et al.; Matius et al.; Broussard & Mallery

Black	Parker et al.; Thompson; Johnson & Culverson; Hatcher et al.; Cosey; Reed et al.
Experience	Parker et al.; Thompson; Johnson & Culverson; Hatcher et al.; Cosey; Reed et al.
Racism	Parker et al.; Thompson; Johnson & Culverson; Hatcher et al.; Reed et al.
Social Justice	Johnson & Culverson; Hatcher et al.; Reed et al.; Matius et al.; Broussard & Mallery
Identity	Parker et al.; Thompson; Hatcher et al.; Cosey
Reality	Parker et al.; Thompson; Johnson & Culverson; Cosey
Equality	Parker et al.; Johnson & Culverson; Hatcher et al.; Reed et al.
Knowledge	Parker et al.; Thompson; Johnson & Culverson; Cosey; Reed et al.
Intersectionality	Parker et al.; Thompson; Cosey; Reed et al.
Oppression	Parker et al.; Thompson; Cosey; Reed et al.

The key concepts, as an indicator of discourse content focus, included in Table 4 were terms or ideas that were mentioned by four or more of the authors. The most discussed topic was marginalization, followed by diversity and inclusion. Parker et al. (2022b) addressed a majority of key concepts in the data set, followed by Thompson (2022) and Johnson & Culverson (2022).

The frequency of key concepts such as marginalization, diversity, and inclusion is logical when considering the call for articles (Parker et al., 2021) explicitly solicited manuscripts based on marginalization. Thus, it can be

concluded that the articles maintained the intended focus of the guest co-editors. However, what is interesting to note are the key concepts that emerged and were employed to facilitate discourse on marginalization. These terms included phenomenological discourse, such as experience, reality, and understanding. As a form of internal relations among the texts (Mullet, 2018), this prevalent phenomenological discourse established the goals of the articles, provided a structural pathway for the texts, and allowed for the foregrounding and clarification of the authors' positionality.

Limitations

While the findings of this study provide a more detailed understanding of subalternity in American higher education, there are some limitations to the study. First, the researchers for this study also served as editors of the manuscripts included in the special issue. The limitation means that the researchers also played a role in the editing and writing process of the finalized manuscript, which essentially helped to produce the discourse as well. Another limitation of the data is that the authors present their discourse in a professional, filtered manner. Hence, while multiple themes, concepts, and terms have emerged, the true nature of subalternity in higher education is not fully depicted, as the authors had to meet certain standard conventions of scholarly publication to be placed in the special issue.

Additionally, with a case study sample size of 11 articles representing 24 authors, generalizability is limited. The special issue was curated to ensure thematic consistency and coherence across all included manuscripts, but each contribution was selected based on its alignment with the central theme of marginalization in higher education. By limiting the analysis to the manuscripts within the special issue, we aimed to maintain methodological alignment. The use of Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis was consistently applied across the 11 manuscripts, allowing for a robust and comparative exploration of the intersectional nature of subalternity in higher education. Likewise, the decision not to notify the authors included in the special issue about the creation of the current manuscript was based on a combination of oversight and specific considerations related to the nature of this study. By doing a bounded case study, our objective was to provide an analysis based on the content that was publicly accessible to readers without involving the authors in any pre-publication review. Likewise, the manuscripts were officially published at the time of this study, hence, the researchers viewed them as a public document.

Delimitations

The largest delimitation of this study was that the researchers also served as editors of the special issue. This closeness with the texts allowed us to become extremely familiar with the manuscripts and their authors. However, by maintaining an extended exposure to the works, the authors were

able to be more critical in their work, having read each manuscript multiple times before and during data analysis for this study. So, familiarity with the sample may also be a benefit as it leaves less room for missed key information.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study shed light on multiple ideas for decolonizing academia. Generally, higher education researchers know that "issues of diversity and inclusion are central in higher education today, and they will only become more important in the future as U.S. demographics change and globalization accelerates" (Barnett & Felten, 2016, p. xii). As the subject of this inquiry, the special collection presented the textual discourse of minoritized voices. By investigating the investigations, the research team aimed to provide validity and advance a degree of generalizability among these published works. The voices of the contributing authors in the special issue were originally intended to address multicultural issues in higher education. Thus, this study aimed to investigate our understanding of discourse about marginalization within higher education through the lens of Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (PCDA) using Subalternity (Spivak, 1994) as a framework for studying the intersectional experience of the subaltern.

In response to Research Question 1, the discourse produced by Parker et al. (2022a) provided a space for subaltern higher education professionals to tell their story and speak out against their subalternity. In doing so, the most frequent theme that the authors addressed was diversity. The contributing authors come from a range of institutions and levels within the institution. The findings of this study suggest that at the core of the changing nature of higher education, passive subalternity, and power dynamics, is the need for diverse groups of individuals at every level. As the traditional nature of the academy is shifting, subalterns are aiming for greater voice and variance and a shift in the traditional model of academia to allow others to share in the power held historically by a select group of normative individuals.

There were a lot of variances in language devices, which is further reflective of the argument for greater representation of oppressed and subaltern groups in higher education. Likewise, as suggested by Orelus (2018), the subaltern can speak back if they just speak. In this case, the authors were speaking back against subalternity in higher education by using the language and context most impactful to higher education professionals, the professional literature, and by doing so in a diverse way, they showed that arguments for greater equality can come in many forms.

In response to Research Question 2, the three overarching themes of experiences, theory-informing practice, and learning environments were identified as the areas of focus by the authors where more work was needed

to advance power dynamics in higher education. Specifically, the experiences of the subaltern, the approaches used to advance them and the greater society, and the spaces where learning is taking place are all areas of interest when trying to investigate subalternity in higher education.

Specifically, there was a notable assumption of the "Other" and power dynamics within the higher education context. While some mention racism, it is not explicitly grounded in subalternity or postcolonial discourse. This observation aligns with the notion that "'Postcolonialism' is the theoretical wing of post coloniality. It refers to a mode of reading, political analysis, and culture resistance/intervention that deals with the history of colonialism and present neo colonial structures… It is, in short, a critique. It invokes ideas such as social justice, emancipation, and democracy in order to oppose oppressive structures of racism, discrimination, and exploitation" (Nayar, 2008, p.17). However, it is important to note that some articles did not fully delve into the second part of the quote, which involves using these ideas to oppose oppressive structures. Instead of directly challenging oppressive systems, the articles tend to narrativize the margins, navigating or subverting dominance.

Lastly, it is important to note that there are some missing terms, such as subaltern; epistemic violence; multiculturalism; epistemology; cosmologies; world views; epistemic racism/sexism; westernized university; matrix of domination; postcolonialism; hegemony, that the researchers saw in the literature that were never used in any manuscript included in the sample. This is important to note because while the focus of this manuscript is on what content was included, it is also important for future researchers to focus on "what is missing," examining what is being said and, more importantly, what is not being said. This involves identifying the gaps and absences in discourse and investigating the implications of these exclusions. By studying the missing key terms, PCDA aims to uncover unexplored, or less-explored, aspects of power structures, ideologies, and hegemonic forces that shape and constrain the representation and interpretation of certain topics or groups. Moving forward, these are areas for further research and reflection.

In response to Research Question 3, there are multiple intersections of identity established in the manuscripts. Mainly, they pertained to issues of race, gender, sexuality/sexual identity, intellectual capacity, and type of institution. From the data, it emerged that Black women in general are the subalterns of higher education. Specifically, Black women who identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community face multiple levels of subalternity. Regardless of their representation in teaching, research, or service, black women face varying levels of resistance while doing their work in higher education and must continuously battle against the colonial matrix of domination, particularly fueled by patriarchy and racism.

IMPLICATIONS

Subaltern groups, by definition, are often subjugated by individuals, groups, or, more often, by organizational power structures. The intersectional markers of subaltern commonly relate to minority ethnic, female or non-binary, low-income, non-heterosexual, and non-Christian individuals. In higher education, this is commonly reflected in their absence from senior leadership positions. Thus, the question of whether research on subalternity can find ways to delink from the colonial matrix of domination and power is of interest to those looking for something new. If one breaks away from the power structure of higher education, must they either exist in their current state as their once-subaltern self or change to adjust to their newfound position of power? As demonstrated in this study, postcolonial critical discourse analysis allows researchers to shift the focus from "Can the subaltern speak?" to "How can the subaltern speak?" as a way to acknowledge their agency and presence within discursive spaces. By examining how the subaltern speaks, PCDA seeks to understand the diverse range of discursive practices, linguistic choices, and rhetorical devices used by marginalized individuals and communities to navigate and resist dominant discourses. This approach recognizes that the subaltern`s ability to speak is not a binary question of mere existence or absence but rather a complex process influenced by power dynamics, social contexts, and historical conditions.

By utilizing Subalternity as a framework and PCDA as a method, this study aimed to understand the dynamics of power in higher education. Through looking at a special edition of *Research Issues in Contemporary Education* that focused on marginalization in higher education, we showed that the subaltern can speak back, and they are talking about diversity. Just as with all other fields, the future of American colleges and universities is diverse (McGowan & Shipley, 2020). There is an expected growth in the number of faculty and staff from various backgrounds. Hence, for future sustainability, higher education needs to look away from maintaining traditional demographic norms and toward embracing diversity.

As suggested by hooks (1994), "the unwillingness to approach teaching from a standpoint that includes awareness of race, sex, and class is often rooted in the fear that the classroom will be uncontrollable" (p. 39). This study uncovered that among multiple things, diversity work is most critical, along with the idea that there is a need to listen and understand the experiences of higher education professionals, along with understanding the research, particularly theory, that will inform higher education practice. However, as previous research (Tinto, 2015) and the findings of this study suggest, the classroom as an educational space is the core of higher education and deserves attention when considering issues of power dynamics and marginalization.

Moreover, when looking at the intersectional nature of marginalization, these findings communicate that Black women are

disproportionately subaltern in higher education. They are intersectional victims of racism, sexism, marginalization, microaggressions, and white emotionality (Matius et al., 2022). Thus, by reflecting on the question posted by Spivak (1994) within the contemporary context, the findings of this study have exposed the need for future research to explore the question, *Can Black Women in higher education speak?*

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Critical Voices of Asian American Non-Tenured Female Faculty: A Dialogue on Intersectionality

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ABSTRACT

Marginalization of non-tenured faculty of color in academia endure increased responsibilities and workload without compensation, based on cultural affiliation (Cleveland, et al., 2018; Rideau, 2021). The gender equity gap in salary among non-tenured faculty further exacerbates the issue (American Association of University Professors, 2020). In raising this awareness, this collaborative autoethnographic study focuses on foregrounding the positionality in Asian American non-tenured female faculty (AANTFF) who experience triple marginalization of being Asian, female, and non-tenured. The theoretical framing for this work draws upon Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) (Chang, 1993; Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Yoo et al., 2022), Critical Asian American Feminism (Chow, 1987), and Critical Collaborative Autoethnography (Bhattacharya, 2008), to develop an interdisciplinary framework using the lens of intersectionality both as a concept and a method. Guided by this research question, in what ways do AANTFF amplify their critical voices through autoethnographic work to understand positions within Asian Critical Feminism and AsianCrit? The researchers critically reflect and engage in a dialogue on their lived experiences with intentional and collective engagement, which are rooted in a deeply seeded racialized history that has informed and shaped their present context.

Keywords: academic elitism, AsianCrit, autoethnography, cultural taxation, faculty of color, female faculty, intersectionality, non-tenure

INTRODUCTION

The label of non-tenured faculty of color conjures complications with cultural and gender taxation and marginalization in academia, where faculty of color are faced with increased responsibilities and workload without compensation and based on cultural affiliation (Cleveland, et al., 2018; Rideau, 2021). Relatedly, there are the continued inequities in salaries between male and female tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenured faculty. Asian American non-tenured female faculty (AANTFF) in particular experience triple marginalization of being Asian, female, and non-tenured (American Association of University Professors, 2020).

Women are more likely to hold a non-tenured faculty position where they are largely underpaid and hold the least amount of job security (AAUP, 2020). Added to this are the challenges Asian American female faculty face, masked by stereotypes of perceived success influenced by the model minority myth. However, the dearth of research on AANTFF raises the need to highlight the voices and experiences from the field. While the authors in this study identify as female, non-tenured, and Asian American, their approach to using collaborative autoethnography is salient for creating a new space for dialogue of an underrepresented subgroup in academia. It is through this process that we shift from using third person to first person in order to provide a more personal connection to our work, lives, and stories. The lack of research in this area poses a challenge to interrogate consequences that are prevalent in the lived experiences of AANTFF, as we continue to pursue truth in this educational realm. Hence, the overarching research question addresses the ways AANTFF amplify their voices through critical collaborative autoethnographic work to understand positions leading into an *Asian American Non-Tenured Female Faculty Interdisciplinary Framework.* Further we examine the intersections of AANTFF within professional spaces that address academic elitism and cultural & identity taxation.

FRAMING THE LITERATURE

Interdisciplinary AsianCrit Frameworks

In order to address the needs of AANTFF, we adapted and developed an interdisciplinary framework, which was informed by the following theoretical and methodological perspectives: Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit), Critical Asian American Feminism, and Critical Collaborative Autoethnography (see Figure 1). These three areas allow us to critically reflect on our lived experiences with intentional, collective engagement, which are rooted in a deeply seeded racialized history that has informed and shaped our present context.

Figure 1

Asian American Non-Tenured Female Faculty Interdisciplinary Framework
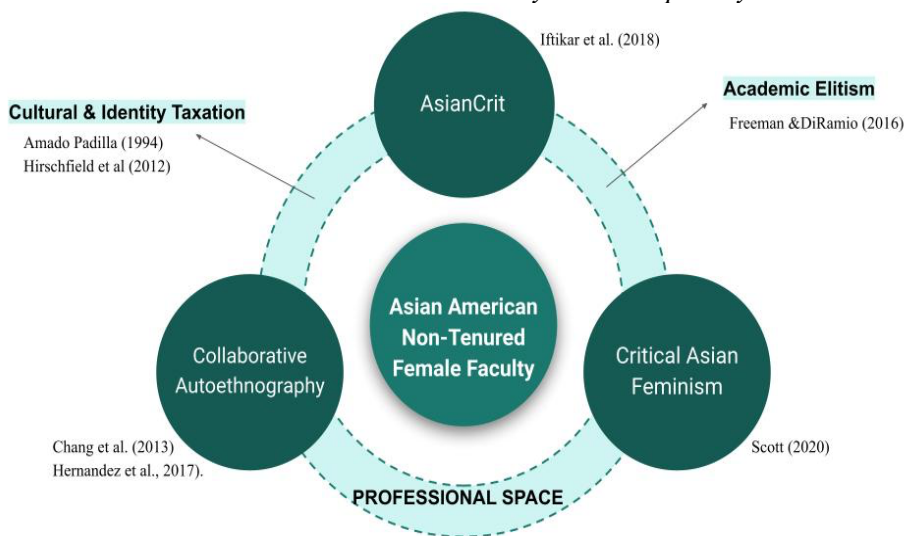
Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) was conceptualized by Chang (1993) to understand Asian American legal scholarship informed by critical race theory during a time of rising anti-Asian hate in the 1990s. Building upon this work, Iftikar and Museus (2018), applied AsianCrit in higher education spaces that center on race as the primary focus of the problems experienced by Asian Americans through racialized stereotypes, such as being cast as the model minority, or perceived as being a forever foreigner. The seven tenets that govern AsianCrit and inform this study through an added lens of critical feminism include: 1) Asianization, 2) transnational contexts; 3) (re)constructive history; 4) strategic (anti)essentialism; 5) intersectionality; 6) story, theory, and praxis; and 7) commitment to social justice (Iftikar & Museus, 2018).

Applying a critical Asian American feminist lens to this work raises both racial and gender consciousness to the ways that Asian American women historically and presently face oppression (Scott, 2020): 1) perceived as exotic and overly sexualized; 2) assumed to be passive; and 3) subject to racialized violence and sexual harassment (Azhar et al., 2021; Chow, 1987; Ontiveros, 1993). Within the workplace, complications of AANTFF and Asian professional women are viewed with similar biased ideations as foreign and passive. This raises a need to center AANTFF positionality to create agency and to understand the complexity of the challenges that AANTFF face.

Lastly, critical collaborative autoethnographies serve as a means to reexamine the collective lived experiences of AANTFF as an asset by building community through intentional and engaged dialogue. As autoethnography serves as exploration and reflection of self, collaborative autoethnography evokes a space to connect through personal experiences and engage in critical dialogue to unearth (Chang et al., 2013; Hernandez et al., 2017). An additional layer to the dialogue is the mode. During COVID-19, the autoethnographic collaborative spaces were enacted virtually in order to reach and connect across cities, since such spaces were not available or did not exist on site.

Professional Spaces

Professional spaces in higher education include the physical workplace environment such as classrooms, faculty offices, open campus spaces, virtual and in-person conference rooms. Traditionally, classroom spaces are regarded with clear lines of authority and power, where faculty uphold command of the classroom space. Asian American female faculty have experienced the opposite, where the classroom is a "contested space" that includes experiences of open student resistance through questioning one's authenticity, experience, and knowledge to hold an academic position. Moreover, AANTFF face these challenges more often than their White male counterparts (Hune, 2011). In addition, newer female faculty experience higher rates of incivility by students compared to male faculty.

The professional space beyond the classroom is also challenging for Asian American female faculty because they feel disconnected, Othered, and experience the triple standard to prove oneself in being perceived as American, holding leadership skills/knowledge in multiple subject areas, while balancing a personal life. As part of the stereotype cast on Asian female faculty perceived as "forever foreigner", those who have an accent experience lower course evaluations in perceptions of content knowledge compared to those who are native English speaking (Deo, 2013; Hune, 2011).

Tensions with Asian American Female Faculty

Our stories do not neatly map onto the central narratives of the academy, and like most women of color in academia, our first instinct is to keep our stories to ourselves, following the unspoken rules and making no waves (Guttierez y Muhs et al., 2012). The hope for this paper is to begin a conversation on how these experiences are being understood by AANTFF, why they feel they do not have a voice in these challenging spaces and begin creating a space to raise this issue in spite of how it will be received by the academy. The inner tension AANTFF face is the want for resistance, while not feeling the support to speak out due to community perceptions, institutional rankings, and relatedly, credibility of scholarship due to institutional affiliation. How do these rankings and profiles create further

tension within Asian American female faculty who already feel under-supported?

Academic Elitism & Perpetuation of Generational Wealth

Within the context of this paper, the term academic elitism refers to the institutionalized structure that perpetuates dominance from perceived scholarly voices of authority stemming from highly ranked institutions and acclaimed or prestigious institutions. Academic elitism influences scholarship and voices of authority in academic and professional spaces.

This translates into hiring practices where 70% of elite higher education programs hire faculty who have graduated from top ranking institutions. The formation of cliques in hiring practices perpetuates a continuance of excluding prospective candidates with diverse backgrounds (Freeman &DiRamio, 2016). Although assumptions of research quality and productivity tied to institutional ranking are unfounded, academic elitism persists. The focus on prestige and institutional rank serves to maintain its reputation. Structural (i.e., institutional culture and climate) and external (i.e., funding, prior partnerships) perceptions are also identified in understanding the intentional relationships between top-tiered institutions.

Relatedly are the ways academia is largely structured and supported through generational wealth. The overwhelming majority of those who are in academia come from family backgrounds that include high achievement and roles in higher education that support their navigation process in being placed in academia. This process creates a barrier for prospective first-generation candidates who want to pursue careers in academia (VanDam, 2022).

Cultural & Gender Taxation in Higher Education

Cultural taxation is a discriminatory practice, defined by Padilla (1994) as an extra burden of service responsibilities placed upon minority faculty members due to their racial or ethnic background. The concept is expanded to identity taxation to encompass how other marginalized social identities (i.e., gender, race, sexual orientation) may result in additional non-academic service commitments for certain faculty (Hirschfield et al., 2012). Female faculty face a double minority status of being female and from a minoritized group, adding the burden of balancing work and personal responsibilities (Cleveland et al., 2013). The added weight of responsibilities further limit opportunities for minority faculty advancement into leadership positions. Further, minority faculty are not remunerated for the additional workload that is not outlined in their responsibilities. Examples of this practice include the expectation to speak on behalf of a community or culture, focus research on a minoritized community, advise and mentor students of color, lead and attend ethnic and cultural groups on campus.

METHODOLOGY

Critical collaborative autoethnography is not only a methodological approach to qualitative inquiry but it is a collective process and "a form of empowerment that facilitates survival, solidarity, and resilience" (Ashlee, 2017, p. 91). It also allows authors as researchers and participants to interrogate themselves in relation to society (Bhattacharya, 2008; Chang et al., 2016). This approach creates the conditions to analyze the hegemonic structures experienced as AANTFF. By employing a critical collaborative autoethnographic approach, we address the intersubjective narratives from our respective lives as female, Asian American K-12 educators pursuing higher education. The initial process began organically through a casual conversation in January 2022 during an organizational Zoom Online Communications (Zoom) meeting. We chatted in the text box about some of the challenges we were facing personally and professionally during the COVID-19 pandemic. From these conversations, we began to formalize the process to capture our lived experiences. Without knowing each other, we offered to meet and introduce ourselves in Zoom and decided to write about our personal educational journey in K-12 to see if we had any similarities. From this experience, we continued to meet, discuss, and critically reflect upon our past and the ways we are confronting repeated experiences today.

As our positionalities are central to this work, we are providing aspects of our ethnic and professional identities. As a first author I identify as a multi-generational, Japanese American who, at the time of this study am also a non-tenured female faculty in higher education teacher preparation and previously worked as an adjunct at three different higher education institutions for a period of seven years. Within these institutions I taught in a variety of teacher preparation courses in literacy, social studies, human development, teaching multilingual learners, and language assessments. I was an elementary classroom teacher in the second largest public school district in the nation. Then moved to a public school with a high migrant population and taught a newcomer class and literacy intervention. A few years later I moved to teach at an affluent private school serving a large international student population and taught English language development while also serving as the English language development and sheltered programs department chair.

As the second author, I identify as a first-generation, Filipino American non-tenured female faculty, who at the time of the study worked at five different institutions on a contractual basis, teaching foundations in education, methodology in curriculum development, STEM, and classroom management. I was a former bilingual elementary classroom teacher in an inner-city public school, then moved on to a middle-class public school.

Finally, I served as a language acquisition instructor in an affluent private school.

METHODS

We collected two types of data sources in this research study. The first was a written personal narrative that encompassed our educational journey (i.e., positionality, educational experiences, teaching, and research interests) that we, as AANTFF, shared with each other. Using Google Sheets, we exchanged our narratives to read and annotate our connections and wonderings. We also reflected on our similarities and differences while categorizing them accordingly.

The second data source was video and audio recordings via Zoom with each of us writing one autobiographical sample, describing our educational journeys as a starting point to our conversations. There was a total of seven recordings ranging between an hour to an hour and a half. Through questioning for further clarification, elaboration, and engagement, we discovered the shared challenges we endured hidden beneath the surface.

Zoom transcriptions and notes were extracted and organized in Google Sheets. Our responses were combined and hand-coded with emerging themes and categories. Themes and categories include experiences with discrimination and hiring/promotion practices due to race and assumptions of foreignness, seeking community through professional organizations, and questioning our own abilities in spite of our educational background and experience. Based on these emerging themes, a new theoretical framework was constructed to address the specific lived experiences of AANTFF.

RESULTS

The outcomes in this study revealed that our experience as AANTFF is multilayered and complex, with feelings of marginalization within the organizations we served based on gender, ethnicity, role, and institutional ranking. The results of our study align to categories that address the intersectionality of race, gender, non-tenure, and institutional ranking. These areas inform our adapted, interdisciplinary framework: Asian Critical Race Theory, Critical Asian Feminism, and Collaborative Autoethnography.

Critical Female Asianization

Critical female Asianization raises awareness to both race and gender consciousness in the ways Asian American women historically and presently face oppression (Scott, 2020). We discuss below the ways historical racism persists in our journey in higher education. Examples range from microaggressions to blatant and explicitly racist comments. The first author experienced biases within the blind peer review process in an academic journal where "I was questioned about my authenticity and ethnic identity on

more than one occasion. While positionality within research is important, the reviewer's assumption was that I was not Japanese American". The second author was also questioned about her capability to spearhead a bilingual authorization program at her former institution. "I took the initiative to research and gather detailed information on how this program can be started; unfortunately, my proposal was shut down and I was not given the opportunity to lead nor assist in getting the program started. I felt the reasons for this decision were based on ethnicity, position, and gender.

> I wanted to push for the bilingual authorization in this University that I worked for…I believe that even my colleagues in that room supported me in a sense that the proposal for the bilingual authorization was strong enough. However, there's one person in that room who is white and has the authority to either say yes or no and shut down that proposal. This person normally doesn't have that capability of running the program. That thought was running in my mind the whole time because the person would say 'No, we're going to table it later on. We're going to bring in more people to hear their input' as though my input is not good enough.

Academic & Gender Elitism

We both experienced some form of academic elitism, which included the biased assumptions of abilities based on non-tenured positions and institutional ranking through Carnegie R1 and R2 research classifications. This was experienced not only within society but also within our ethnic communities. The perceived ability of high performance and productivity in research is tied institutional ranking that follows the Carnegie classifications (Freeman &DiRamio, 2016). We both did not work at R1 institutions,

Conferences and organizations perpetuate the conditions for academic oppression based on affiliations. The first author interacted with a male graduate student attending an R1 institution who boasted of his research abilities due to his affiliation and claiming the author would not know about research because the author is not employed at an R1 institution. The author reflected upon whether the same comment would be made to a male faculty member.

> I was taken aback by the comment made by this male graduate student from an R1 institution who bragged about his competence in research investigations based on his connection with the highly reputable university he's currently enrolled in. More than that, he insinuated that I don't know anything about research because I'm not in an R1 school.

The second author encountered an incident where her former female graduate student refused to apply for the doctorate program of the same

institution because it was unrated and assumed that most, if not all, professors in that institution were substandard in their teaching capabilities.

It was very surprising for me to hear that my former student did not want to get her doctorate degree in the same institution where she received her master's degree. I sensed that there was (still is) a stigma to obtaining a higher degree in a non R1/R2 institution due to its negative reputation in terms of the lack of marketability for employment.

Cultural and Gender Taxation

The concept of cultural and gender taxation, or the "tax" enforced on faculty based on gender or color which adds responsibilities not listed on one's job description go unrewarded and unacknowledged and instead, turns into an expectation (Cleveland et al., 2018). The two authors in this study reflected on the different occasions where they were given duties additional work in their department without any compensation. They were expected to attend additional meetings and were given extra tasks that were outside their job description. They reflected on why these responsibilities were given and wondered if it was due to gender, ethnicity, or lack of experience.

One of the challenges I face is balancing the workload of being a new/ junior faculty and also wanting to be present in my children's life. I thought long hours was temporary as a PhD student, then I thought it would be temporary while working full-time as a teacher and taking on multiple part-time jobs that I thought would help me secure one full time position in academia.

For the first author, she has always wondered why she was not getting compensated for extra duties placed upon her and whether it was an option or an expectation. She has reflected upon whether this was a result of her position within the institution/department, gender, or ethnicity.

Starting a full-time position during COVID and being 100% remote has some perks but also drawbacks. There are missed opportunities to engage with colleagues and grasping the connections already present as well as understanding the organizational structure. I seemed to work longer hours than I ever had before, taking on additional tasks, and not seeing how they fit my role. What are the realistic expectations to maintain my position vs. the realistic goals in order to advance?

Double-Edged Sword in Professional Spaces

During the time that Affirmative Action was heavily put into effect, the second author was hired as a classroom teacher not on the basis of her capabilities but was due to her gender and ethnicity of being a Filipino American female. She overheard the principal make a surprising comment after he hired her: "I am so glad we hired a teacher – a Filipino American

female" without any remarks on her professional qualifications. This experience seems to mirror a double-edged sword phenomenon in professional spaces.

> So, because in the schools that I work for three school districts, I was the only Filipino so first that Compton Unified I was the only Filipino and then I went to ABC unified school district and other I was in Filipino and then Rowland unified another one, so it was, in fact, an advantage because they saw me as a different– another face, another ethnicity, if you will, and somehow I represented a certain portion of the students there so that was the leverage, of course. On the other hand, I was a product of you know affirmative action and in this affirmative action. I overheard my principal saying 'oh okay I'm glad we hired because, at least we have one Filipino' so that somehow offended me because I thought I was hired for my skills and not for my skin tone or my ethnicity, but in a way that was an advantage for me, because that led me to receiving this full-time position in teaching. Who I am is a triple standard because I also need to prove that I am English proficient, which seems ridiculous. Sometimes I need to prove that I do have these skills, but it depends on the context. I'm not going to go into a room full of leadership and take over the conversation, right? I think there's certain types of behaviors based on the people in the room, and so a question came up but more like a statement that I come off as being passive and my response was then you don't know me, you know nothing about me, and I it took that as a huge insult. Because to me passive means, not only are you quiet, but you have no opinion and so, that is a huge stereotype. I feel like that's being placed upon me and so, I have to constantly prove myself —right? It's very frustrating, because that doesn't happen to the other people that are in the room. And it doesn't happen to white women that are in the room, and because they're not looked at that, from the start, you know, whereas it's assumed from me that it's going to be that way so it's this weird triple standard of having to prove that I'm good enough to fit in. I was just thinking about that because it just came up the other day, and I was super frustrated and angry about it. It's hard to constantly try to prove myself. I'm tired, you know, like I shouldn't have to prove myself to anyone.

Amplifying Our Stories & Actions

We used our personal narratives as a starting point to create a positive support for one another during COVID-19, and dove into an unexpected area of discussion within our educational journey. It is through our vulnerability in sharing these stories and lived experiences that we can critically engage and develop mutual compassion. This turns into a source of support and

creates a sense of community. It is through our shared stories that we discover our common themes.

> So that brings to mind this book that my colleagues and I read through…not webinar but maybe like a small group. We get together and every week, we would talk about this book called Presumed Incompetent and these are stories of minority women who have been neglected, who have been ignored and had their goals shattered because of higher authority of White males who are dominant in the higher education. So, I look at your experiences as somehow similar to mine because of the passivity concept among Asians and so I totally relate with that, and I guess the frustration happens when you're pushing yourself too much and it's still not good enough.
>
> The result of being unsilenced considers how we confront our challenges to build strength. Since we both did not have any mentors within our institutions and learned on our own to navigate through the higher education realm, we collaborated with each other as non-tenured faculty, submitting conference proposals, and publishing articles. Our cultural intuition and positionality as AANTFF grounds us and through our engagement, we created a space to support and strengthen one another in the process.

CULTIVATING PROFESSIONAL SPACES FOR AANTFF

As we continue to support, encourage, and build up each other in the process, we also want to extend this engagement by cultivating professional spaces for other AANTFF, who may have similar challenging stories like us. We hope that as we go through the process of vulnerably sharing our stories and foster a sense of community among those who wish to amplify their voices by destabilizing the hegemonic assumptions within racist, male-dominated, patriarchal educational practices, particularly in higher education. Hence, by disrupting the pattern of isolation, we aspire to cultivate professional spaces that will serve as a refuge or a haven for current or future AANTFF who wish to collectively examine and dismantle systems of oppression, with the goal of liberating ourselves and other AANTFF in higher education.

CONCLUSION

This study explores how AANTFF navigate higher education spaces and how their positionality provokes motivation to push themselves further in combating experiences with microaggressions, academic elitism, vulnerability, and cultural taxation. All of the aforementioned aspects stem from institutionalized racism and guided by the research question: In what ways do AANTFF amplify their critical voices through autoethnographic work to understand positions within Asian Critical Feminism and AsianCrit? Through the collaborative autoethnographic process, we were able to

contextualize our respective journeys through the common themes that exemplify our lived experiences within a racialized system of oppression.

Future research can explore how complex oppressive systems and areas are experienced and understood within a larger population of AANTFF. Do biases exist within the larger landscape of Asian American female faculty within particular colleges and programs (e.g., education, social science, hard sciences, etc.) or between research institution tiers? Is there a hierarchy association and affiliation in articulating this further, what informs Asian American female faculty decision-making to be at their current institution? In addition, do AANTFFs feel they had options to choose from? How can we develop critical awareness of biases in academic settings based on tier affiliation and assumed competency despite the presence of the academic elitism?

At the same time, this study is also a starting point to explore how AANTFF's cultural capital can play a significant role in navigating organizations as junior faculty, find and create community, and seek mentorship and other protective barriers against oppressive structures. Sharing these thoughts with a wider audience of junior faculty can be a starting point in addressing these historically tabooed discussions.

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An Examination of Sense of Belonging in Second Generation Afro-Caribbean College Women at a Hispanic-Serving Institution

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ABSTRACT

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are classified by the percentage of the institution's student population who self-identify as Hispanic (US Department of Education, 2021). While HSI designations are supposed to further support minoritized students, researchers studying HSIs have identified the need for more direct support. To further the conversation about the role HSIs play in the larger educational landscape we facilitated a case study that examined the experiences of second-generation Afro-Caribbean female students attending an HSI. This project aimed to analyze thoughtfully and intentionally in the hopes of highlighting the impact students' sense of belonging can have on their connection to campus. This qualitative case study evaluated the experiences of second-generation Afro-Caribbean female students and was guided by the following question: How can HSIs create a sense of belonging for second-generation Afro-Caribbean female students? Results highlight assessing sense of belonging among African Diasporic college at HSIs often may be excluded.

Keywords: Afro-Caribbean, Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), intersectionality, second generation, sense of belonging

INTRODUCTION

As the access to higher education continues to expand, institutions are faced with the challenge of critically assessing the delivery of services. In a 2019 Education data report, it was found that college enrollment rates increased among Black and Hispanic students (Muniz, 2021). Institutional shifts to leverage diversity and inclusion have opened the door to classifications such as Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). Most recently, HSI Black student enrollment is 16% compared to 10% of Black students attending HBCUs (Nunez et al., 2015), yet there is limited scholarship that explores the experiences of Black students attending HSIs.

Thoughtfully discussing Black women college students' unique identity development while addressing issues commonly ignored in research, could bolster the Black female experience in education. Porter (2017) laid the groundwork to explore personal foundations, pre-collegiate socialization, collegiate socialization, and articulation of identity, that inform the development of Black undergraduate women. Scholarship suggests, when Black women in college are given an opportunity to create their own definitions of collegiality their success becomes more relevant to their lives and forms new meaning that may be counter to the dominant narrative (Steele, 2017). Similarly, researching Black women college students within an intersectional framework helps capture the complexities of their lived experiences while making explicit connections between their intersecting female identity and their blackness within the larger structures of inequality (Jones, 2016). The purpose of this study is to highlight second generation Afro-Caribbean college women's experiences who attend an HSI. We articulate a need for researchers to disaggregate participant ethnicity which allows for a more nuanced approach to exploring the experiences of Black college students. This study was guided by the following research question: *How can HSIs create a sense of belonging for second-generation Afro-Caribbean female students?*

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper underscores the importance of exploring African Diasporic college students and their sense of belonging within education settings. Black women particularly have complicated experiences in the college environment, ranging from exclusion to the financial burden of attaining higher education (Walkington, 2017). Utilizing a sense of belonging framework allowed for the experiences of these Black women to be viewed and analyzed in a critical manner. Additionally, it accounts for the various systems that continue to oppress and marginalize Black women in unique ways and contribute to conversations about campus climate for diverse students in urban/metropolitan institutions.

Sense of Belonging

Discussing a sense of belonging is often applied in the context of relatedness, membership, acceptance, and support. Accordingly, the most widely applied definition is "a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to being together" (Osterman, 2000, p. 324). The key distinction is to focus on students' psychological experiences and their understanding of the level of integration they perceive occurs in the collegial setting and is critical to student success. Higher education is keen to foster a sense of belonging for students because the literature suggests it is critical to have a positive, prosocial, and productive outcome in college environments (Osterman, 2010). Conversely, when a sense of belonging is not fostered, students are found to have a decreased or diminished interest and engagement (Strayhorn, 2012); their motivations are diminished, development is impaired, and they perform poorly on tests and assignments (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These findings are particularly true for students of color and for this reason imperative to contemplate when discussing second generation Afro-Caribbean female students. Why? Sense of belonging accounts for the cases of students who perceive themselves as marginal to campus life; it is equated to mattering (Strayhorn, 2012). In Strayhorn's research, he identified seven core elements of a sense of belonging which include sense of belonging is a basic human need, drives human behavior, contextual importance, mattering, social identities intersect and affect college students, engenders other positive outcomes, and finally must occur on a continuous basis (Strayhorn, 2019). These elements are relevant to student success in retention and strategic planning; however, they can be abstract. With this in mind, we also integrated an intersectional framework.

Intersectionality

Crenshaw's (1989) work was a secondary theoretical and processing underpinning. Thus, as part of our advanced analysis, we drew on her seminal work, in which she defines intersectionality as a theological bridge to understanding individuals with multiple identities. Intersectionality acknowledges isolated identified identities and the identities that overlap with one another (Crenshaw, 1989). Though, Crenshaw (1989) warns that defining a person just by race, gender, or economic position is inadequate in recognizing the importance of each category in understanding a person's lived experience. Taking Crenshaw's work into account, as well as the research question that inspired our study, we reframe the narrative by no longer examining student participants via a single label, but rather through an intersectional lens. An intersectional approach to participants' lived experiences tries to contextualize the provided experiences within the context of the research participants' shared experiences as students. We focused on all

three pillars to help structure ways in which an intersectional approach could better support a sense of belonging on college campuses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women learners' experiences in postsecondary educational environments are generally characterized according to their ethnicity and ethnic origin, gender, and academic interests, to mention a few (Kalmakis et al., 2020; Karaman, 2019; Mwangi et al., 2018). It is critical to note, however, that the experiences described above do not necessarily reflect those of all women, particularly second-generation Afro-Caribbean women who attend HSIs (Stanislaus, 2020).

On the other hand, conceptualizations of student categories such as second-generation, an explanation of Afro-Caribbean as an ethnic depiction, and an examination of emerging data about who is served at HSIs lay the technical groundwork for processing the direction that this research will take. To explain, while a considerable amount of interest is invested in students with a first-generation status, researchers have begun to explore conceptions of the experiences of second-generation students as a praxis for developing broader bands of student development support (Deutscher, 2018; Gist-Mackey, 2018; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2018). In college, a student is labeled "Second Generation" if one of their parents or guardians has a bachelor's degree or above (Pike & Kuh, 2005). A critique of recent empirical data on second generation students is the manner in which the data is disaggregated by race, or not (McNair et.al, 2020). For instance, the nuances of Black representation do not entirely account for Afro-Caribbean students (Thelamour et al., 2019). Additionally, these limitations are further exacerbated when gender and race intersect with school types to include HSIs.

Until now, researchers such as Garcia (2019) have pushed for cultural changes in understanding the federal HSI classification in light of how post-secondary institutions operationalize the activities associated with HSIs. Furthermore, given the proximity to metropolitan centers, HSIs serve various minoritized non-Hispanic students (Garcia & Dwyer, 2018). Despite these compartmentalized understandings of second generation students, female college students, and HSIs, we argue that there is a dearth of empirical evidence addressing the interconnections of those populations mentioned above. Additionally, we re-examine these areas to document the experiences of second generation Afro-Caribbean women college students to educate the field on how to best assist their achievement.

METHODOLOGY

In this qualitative case study, we conducted semi-structured interviews to investigate the experiences to get a comprehensive grasp of the perspectives of second generation Afro-Caribbean female undergraduate students enrolled

full-time at an HSI (Merriam, 1998). Case studies are a methodological approach that can be employed to explain a phenomenon within a particular context (Merriam, 1998). The usage of a case study research approach enabled analytic probing to gather a rich and contextualized understanding of the experiences of an underrepresented population of students at a Minority Serving Institution. That is to say, this study was conducted at a large, public, four-year HSI situated in the southern region of the United States. The Latinx student population of Bluff University (pseudonym) is over 60% which well exceeds the 25% needed to become an HSI. At the same time, Bluff University also serves a Black student population, which they do not disaggregate to delineate between race and ethnicity. In total, the aforementioned Black student population is about 12%.

This study more closely examines who these students are, second generation Afro-Caribbean female students, and what are their experiences. The selected research participants challenged the notion that HSIs serve only one type of student and also expand their understanding of Black women. In order to establish a representative population sample, the first author of this paper devised research inclusion criteria based on the following characteristics: second-generation Afro-Caribbean women with both parents being born in the Caribbean who were also undergraduates. The original study included 9 participants while this study focuses on 5 who were chosen given their deeper insight into the intersectionality framework that was used to analyze the data. The following is a description of the approach used to contact eligible individuals and select them for participation.

Data Sources

A purposeful sample was utilized to recruit undergraduate women who identified as Black and as second-generation Afro-Caribbean. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the five participants (See Table 1). Interviews were chosen as the method to collect data as individuals' realities are constructed by their interaction with their social worlds (Merriam, 1998). A two-interview scheme was devised to gather data from the participants. The first interview centered on the life history of each participant while the second interview focused on the participants' experiences navigating an HSI. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. As an example of data visualization, Table 1 lists the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Institution (Pseudonym)	Ethnicity	Gender
Nadine	Bluff University	Guyanese	Female
Yolette	Bluff University	Haitian	Female
Danai	Bluff University	Haitian	Female
Xiomara	Bluff University	Dominican	Female
Serenity Selene	Bluff University	Jamaican	Female

Note. Ethnicity refers to what the participants identify as and may not be exclusive to one ethnicity alone.

Analytical Plan

The transcripts were analyzed using In Vivo coding for the initial scheme to keep the voice of the participants intact. In Vivo coding fit within the constructivist approach of this study as it privileged the words of the participants. Second-cycle coding was conducted using the intersectionality framework to group and sort codes into categories and then develop themes. The three dimensions of intersectionality identified by Haynes et al., (2020) which includes structural intersectionality, political intersectionality, and representational intersectionality were used as the framework for the second cycle coding. Following the initial interviews, the recordings were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were shared with participants for member verification. Once the transcript contents were corrected and verified, the first author began analytic coding of the data then segmenting codes into themes utilizing the coding scheme mentioned above. After data coding, the researchers utilized additional triangulation methods to strengthen this study. Patton (2002) contends that triangulation permits the use of multiple analyses to evaluate the study's findings. Consequently, we use Patton's framework to construct and interpret the interviewees' responses. The first author initially coded the data, while the third author used subsequent interactions for the development of meaning-making to verify or dispute findings within the context of both the reviewed literature and the presented theoretical concepts.

Limitations

Qualitative research is conducted in a manner that provides an exhaustive, detailed description of the unit of analysis being studied. However, there are limitations to the use of this methodological approach. Specifically, qualitative research is not generalizable. The restricted

population size of this study prevents the generalizability of the results to the same group of students who have attended HSI-designated postsecondary institutions. However, access to this demographic is crucial, and the purpose of our study was to broaden the higher education community's understanding of participants, which we problematized mattering at HSIs (2019).

FINDINGS

The five participants shared experiences that speak to their unique experiences attending an HSI. We present the findings using the intersectionality framework and the three dimensions - structural, political, and representative intersectionalities. While the data is displayed in distinct themes, it is important to note that the work of intersectionality and critical analysis is not neat, clear, and cut. The process is in fact messy, and data could be assigned to overlapping and/or multiple themes. In the following sections, we share the data in individual themes according to the three dimensions and then provide data that could not be neatly assigned to one theme.

Structural Intersectionality

Structural intersectionality explains the multiple systems of oppression that erase Black women. The participants were aware of the systemic oppression that defined their lives. This awareness was underscored by Nadine when she shared, "it's hard to not think about it [my race] when that's what's shoved down my throat every day."

Additionally, Yolette explained that many of the Black students attending Bluff University sought to live on campus because it, "gives us a freedom that we necessarily didn't have at home. For me it was like I always felt like there was an eye watching me or like there was just, it was very suffocating at home." Yolette's words speak to the sense of being surveilled by her parents but also by larger forces that were stifling and limited her opportunities. Yolette also believed that the need to escape surveillance was attributed to the large representation of Black students living on campus.

Nadine shared that one of the deciding factors in choosing to attend Bluff University was its status as an HSI. She believed that attending a minority-serving institution would provide her with a more inclusive experience when compared to attending a predominantly white institution. However, Nadine's reflection about an experience serving on a Bluff University student focus group conflicted with her initial thoughts. She discussed,

> I'll hear people talking about how proud they are of the diversity of Bluff University and stuff like that. But then I'm like, it's great that, you know, this is a diverse school and all but then at the same time a lot of I feel like us that are not Hispanic like we don't feel all of this great positive diversity. Like, we don't feel like we're seen or heard sometimes.

Nadine illustrates how diversity can mean different things to different people. As an Afro-Caribbean woman, she does not believe that her particular needs are acknowledged or being addressed at the institution, which was surprising to her given that Bluff University is a minority-serving institution.

Several participants discussed the desire to meet and get to know others who do not share their racial identity but had apprehensions that were tied to structural systems of oppression. Serenity Selene explained,

> And I wanted to change that, like, branch out more...And I don't know how their friends are going to react. Like if I went out today with one of the people that I know that are white and said, Hey, I want to go to this party with y'all and my hair is looking like this. And somebody does something to me. I'm not gonna have a good time. Like that's another thing I guess that's holding me back. I'm not sure how all the interactions will go. So, I'm okay like with that one person I know. But I don't know how the other people around are…

What Serenity Selene expressed her concern about and also discussed is an example of how the rhetoric of being might impact her safety or comfort in new/unknown situations.

Xiomara, who self-identifies as Black Hispanic, explained that she has friends who do not acknowledge and at times attempt to erase her race. She explained,

> I probably would be seen mostly as like Hispanic only because people know me. And they know that I'm Hispanic. And so, it's like, okay, I'm just like Hispanic, obviously, people, but I think that a lot of the people here, they don't consider me as like black, like, or African American or whatever. They just see the Hispanic side of me...I have some friends who are like, oh, no, you're not really black. So, I think people see me like as Hispanic at Bluff University because of the large amount of Hispanic students that are in this major and like school.

Xiomara goes on to explain,

> It makes me feel kind of a little bit uncomfortable or weird. Only because I'm literally physically like, black like, I appear as a black person. So, I don't know why you wouldn't consider me as a black person even though I'm physically black you know.

On the other end of the spectrum, Nadine identifies as Latinx, Guyanese, and Belizean American. However, her identity as Latinx is often challenged because she is Black as well as their ignorance of the languages spoken in Guyana and Belize which are located in South America and Central America, respectively. Both countries have official languages of English. Nadine is often asked if she speaks Spanish to which she responds no. This experience leaves her feeling othered and challenges her Latinx identity.

Political Intersectionality

Political intersectionality relates to the particular needs of Black women. In the present study, the political intersectionality dimension and theme highlight how the intersecting identities of race, gender, and ethnicity converge to illuminate gaps in meeting the needs of the participants.

Xiomara lives at home while commuting to Bluff University. She explains,

> I feel like it's [Bluff University] very diverse already. Outside of Bluff University, like during my internship, I do feel like my race and ethnicity and gender is an important part of how I feel because I don't feel out of place, I don't feel uncomfortable at school here. Because, you know, I'm from [this city] and this is like, where I've been born and raised, and this is like what I'm used to being around outside it's where I feel maybe uncomfortable.

Conversely, Serenity Selene who identifies as Jamaican-American, also grew up near Bluff University but not in the immediate surrounding area of campus. When she discussed being from around the city, she makes it clear that she is from the northern part of the city which is demographically very different from where the main campus is located. Serenity Selene explained,

> And my sister does hair, so I don't have to really struggle for that. And I remember one time, not one time, a few times someone's like I want to go to the hair store to get this and I'm like okay, where's the closest hair store? And she's like I don't know I'm like okay go Google it because they were asking me like I'm from here. I told y'all multiple times. I'm from here but I'm like, not this part.

Serenity Selene expressed what most of the participants shared during their interviews. There were times when they needed products that were specific for their hair type and texture but were not able to locate them either on campus or close to campus. Not being able to locate these items added another layer of invisibility to their experiences. Nadine further explained,

> The majority of the people that live on campus are black like if you look at the statistics... But it's like, there wasn't really anything on campus that caters to us . . . I don't even know if I can find anything for my hair at the closest Walmart you know, or the CVS or the Walgreens when it was on campus. Most of the time I buy stuff for my hair, or things that I need as a black woman when I go home.

Nadine also shared that there were many Hispanic/Latinx food options on campus however, "there's nowhere that I can eat anything that seems like something from back home...I will be okay with a super whitewashed version of Jamaican food somewhere." Both Nadine and Serenity Selene's comments highlight some of the frustrations felt by the participants while attending this HSI.

While Xiomara felt a sense of belonging on campus, she believed that improvements could be made to increase the presence of Afro-Latinx students at Bluff University. While attending conferences, she meets other students with her shared identity which has fostered connections and validation that she does not get at her home campus. She shared, "I don't really see other people who are Afro-Latina...I want to see more representation of me. That's maybe a concern that I have."

Nadine tried to work through her feelings of isolation and invisibleness while attending an institution that is not a PWI. She explained the following,

> I don't feel like I go to a school that's a school full of people of color. But then it's weird, because they're not white. So, it's like, you know, I mean, if I went to a PWI and I felt excluded or I felt like I was being treated differently, I was being othered, or I was being judged, or looked down upon, it would kind of make sense. Because I'll be like, well it's a PWI and this is what happens. This is what we fight against and like this or that. But here, it's like, you can't really say like, oh, like I feel like I'm being treated weird. Because like, we're all supposed to be like, you know, black and brown people and people of color. I don't feel I don't really feel 100% like solidarity. It feels like us and them which is really weird.

> Nadine expresses the expectation of solidarity among Black students and Latinx students but was surprised that it did not exist.

Representative Intersectionality

Representative intersectionality describes the ways in which Black women are depicted in the media and how that informs how Black women are viewed, how they are treated, and what is expected of them. Danai described a time in which she was attracted to a Hispanic/Latinx classmate whom she had the opportunity to get to know through a group project. She considered him to be kind and nice so she asked him if he would be interested in meeting outside of the class environment to which Danai said he responded, "I like white girls." She further explained,

> I was like, oh okay cool. Which was like very shocking to me. I've never heard somebody say it like that, you know?...He has a preference...And then I started dating, hanging out with this Black Haitian man, and this guy comes along, and he's like, oh, I've broadened my horizons. And oh, you're such queen. Oh, my Nubian.

> Danai shared that her experience with this classmate as well as other white men who have approached her made her feel fetishized. Stereotypes were also challenges that our participants faced while navigating Bluff University. Danai shared,

> So then when I first came here, and I lived on campus, I was like, let me tone it down. Let me not, you know, be, you know, that crazy

person, cause sometimes I like being loud. But then if I am loud this gonna be like, Oh, my God, this black girl is so ghetto...I used to try to censor myself so much more. And to try to, you know, fit in that box again. It's like, you know, you have to continuously watch what you're doing and how you're acting or how you're talking. And, you know, my accent sometimes comes out, and then I'm like, I'm sorry, but why am I apologizing? You know, it's like, so I feel like you're just more aware of who you are.

Eventually, Danai questioned why she felt the need to adjust herself to counter stereotypes of Black women held by others. She has become more comfortable with who she is and does not concern herself with what others think. Similarly, Yolette shared frustrations with the limited views of Black women. She shared,

I identify with the weird black girl movement, like allow black girls to be weird. Allow black girls to be authentic, allow them to be themselves and like the things that you're like...I'm very different.

Particularly, Yolette discussed enjoying anime and alternative music among other things. Enjoying these things was seen as weird and didn't align with the expectations of those within and outside her racial group.

Despite feeling isolated, some of the participants hoped to forge relationships with students from different backgrounds. However, Serenity Selene expressed some anxiety about these relationships. She discussed,

I want to step outside of that comfort zone but it's hard because I want to make sure you're not going to like disrespect me or anything like that and a lot of times people do, and it gets into that thing where like you don't want to be seen as that black girl of course she's gonna say that because she's black.

Serenity Selene's sentiments speak to the challenges of the desire to be open while also protecting yourself from potential expressed oppression tied to misogynoir.

The participants also experienced expectations that centered on their appearances. Danai shared,

I'm not nonbinary, but I don't think of my gender as being fixed. Right? So, it's like, if, you know, I want to chop my hair, and I'm going to chop my hair, you know, and then it's like, it becomes this big deal with people. It's like, oh my gosh, she's a bald, you know, like, it was like, I remember when I first chopped my hair. Like, the people I knew they were like...oh my God, you're so brave. And I was like, I just don't understand why that's a conversation. So, I feel like womanhood is kind of like, at Bluff University. It's kind of like, you know, if you do something that's out of the norm, just like in the world, you know, becomes like, Oh my gosh, Wow, you're so you

know, you're someone to look up to or your, I don't know. I just feel like why am I put on a stage because I chopped my hair?

Danai's comments illuminate the ways in which Black women are expected to perform femininity. In her case, she believes that society views long hair as tied to femininity, and any behaviors that go against that are viewed as taboo. Cutting her hair was not just experimenting but an indictment of her gender expression.

A couple of the participants also shared experiences where they faced racial stereotypes while navigating the campus' surrounding community. Nadine explained,

I'm not mad at you for not speaking English. And I know that's like, maybe you had a lot of experiences where people are rude cause you don't speak English. But it's like, I don't know it's awkward, like when it's like you already are tired of me or interacting with me before we even have any type of interaction if that makes sense. It's like, as soon as you come to the register, it's like, here we go. Like, we don't have to speak the same language till I just get through this transaction, you can still say like, hola, and smile at me.

Nadine illustrates receiving negative responses before she interacts with an employee at a local grocery store. Her interaction is one that she can only explain as due to stereotypes about her race.

Significance

With 16% compared to 10% of Black students, HSIs enroll more Black students than HBCUs (Nunez et al., 2015). Our preliminary findings indicate that study participants set out to attend HSIs or MSIs to shield themselves from racist experiences commonly highlighted in research related to predominantly white institutions. Participants explained how their experiences attending an HSI were often influenced by stereotypes of Black women, hyper-invisibility, and visibility. While this was the case, the participants continued to find ways to foster connections that validated their existence on campus. These initial findings are powerful because it presents campuses, particularly HSIs, and MSIs, with an opportunity to thoughtfully apply an intersectional lens to understand this population's experiences and needs. As such, institutions must not rely on the distinction alone but rather forge meaningful support for students. Utilizing an intersectional framework allowed for the experiences of these Afro-Caribbean women to be viewed and analyzed in a critical manner. Additionally, it accounts for the various systems that continue to oppress and marginalize Black women in unique ways and contribute to conversations about campus climate for diverse students in urban/metropolitan institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the course of the interviews, it was documented that the participants firmly felt that establishing themselves in the environment in which they were living and learning presented obstacles. The timing and revelations of the findings coincide with a number of empirical and programmatic initiatives that fit into two categories of higher education changes. First, fundamental changes to the demographic makeup of institutions. Second, modifications to initiatives that are central to establishing a competitive environment as a whole are evaluating how to serve a likely multiethnic student body. While we have identified a specific population, the recommendations that follow are intended to provoke thoughts regarding the questions we pose about the student experience. Then, we highlight observations regarding accelerating training frameworks that demonstrate a commitment to serving diverse student populations, and we conclude this section with parallel provisions that we believe postsecondary institutions should consider at the system level to elevate empirical discourses for continuing research on the topics presented in this work.

Recommendations for Research

Student success, as well as how to support the success of students on the path to earning a post-secondary credential at a university, has been studied in higher education, but primarily in areas of student development and primarily focusing on the voices of students who are commonly heard, such as students who identify as white and cis-gendered. This is because these students are the ones whose voices are most often heard. In spite of this common approach, we believe that the existing body of research needs to have a more in-depth understanding of how to best serve students whose voices are rarely elevated. Administrators can foster student growth to ensure no students have direct contact with them and connect outcomes to higher education, specifically concerning credential completion. When it comes to student populations that are second generation Afro-Caribbean descent who attend institutions that serve people of minoritized backgrounds but are not in the majority, researchers should think about appropriate support methods. To take this line of inquiry one step further, HSIs, are expanding across the country, and this status implies minoritized status dictates that there be increased knowledge about how to serve them best. Thus, HSIs should further explore the needs of non-Hispanic students. The scant literature on the experiences, needs, achievements, and challenges faced by second generation Afro-Caribbean female HSI students may then give insight into areas of the student experience that not only enhance knowledge but also change behaviors concerning support and development. We stop here to recommend six questions to continue moving the context of this work forward:

1. Has the term "mattering" become misunderstood?

2. Are all students, particularly second generation Afro-Caribbean students, included in the concept of mattering at HSIs?

3. How can professionals working in the field of student affairs become aware of the subtleties in the area of student identity within the context of mattering at HSIs?

4. Do student affairs preparation programs focus aspects of preparation on the modernity of minoritized institutions?

5. Do programs that train individuals to work in student affairs employ a variety of theoretical frameworks to attempt to understand what it means to be a student in the twenty-first century?

6. Whose perspectives are prioritized in HSI-related research?

All of the above are merely suggestions, but it is hoped that when we return to these issues in the future, we will also take into account the major debates in the field of higher education concerning the excessive use of the servingness without questioning who we are serving and to what extent the people who are serving students are effectively prepared to do so. Different ideas are used to help the students we singled out succeed. Strangely, these ideas are seldom implemented in academic settings. To better comprehend the student experience, we feel it will be helpful for future academics to explore using a theoretical framework such as intersectionality and a sense of belonging.

Recommendations for Practice

As our results show, there is room for rethinking how professionals are trained to better support students' educational goals when they are ignored, feel isolated, or note how their success in college was or can be achieved with little or no support from the professionals who are there to help them. The context of our suggestions will mostly concentrate on student affairs personnel, and university administrators, however, we recognize assistance may come from a number of sources on campus including professors and staff. We focused on these two subsets because it is the responsibility of student affairs professionals and university administrators to evaluate the state of the student body and adjust as necessary to foster an atmosphere conducive to learning. Furthermore, we know that financial mechanisms that affect the circumstances for programming activities typically have a significant impact on student accomplishment and the degree to which students may be successful. That's why our suggestions include administrative matters too. We did not include professors as a component of the support system to which we want to draw attention when making our suggestions, but that does not mean that future work should not focus on this group.

As a first step, experts in the field of student affairs have worked hard to break down the demographics of those who benefit from various forms of assistance. In the framework of higher education, students from all walks of

life and walks of experience may find a helping hand. So, an obvious and maybe very challenging topic is how this assistance works and what it means for second generation Afro-Caribbean students at an HSI. First, we think that our results suggest that the participants' unfulfilled needs may be satisfied via further targeted and general interaction by administrators. The ideas we discussed in our student interviews may also be used to get insight into students' lived experiences. This called for a new method of helping students succeed. We think this new strategy has to be intersectional in character to account for the fact that students have varying needs and the institution itself may have varying statuses.

A conceptual model for what we call an "intersectional model for student success" is shown below. The social, cultural, and ethnic identities of students are crucial to this approach because of their probable influence on students' academic and personal success. First, we emphasize the importance of relying on the information provided by participants, as demonstrated through our findings. For clarity, we propose that the Student Success Intersectional Model (SSIM) should be a concept explored regarding the experiences of college student learners. While the concept of student-centeredness is not novel, we have incorporated it into our model to emphasize that expanding student support services must be structured through the lens and practice of student experiences and their sense of belonging.

Second, we incorporate intersectionality into the SSIM concept to adequately convey that students' identities are rarely articulated in a manner that is not unidimensional. In other words, the majority of the studies we examined may have classified students as learners, first-generation, by ethnicity or gender. However, researchers are just beginning to incorporate the numerous variables that contribute to comprehending who the student is in totality. Nonetheless, it would be beneficial to analyze the interrelationships between environment, heritage, experiences, personal orientation, and other characteristics so that those who support student achievement have a broader, more in-depth, and more comprehensive understanding of the students.

Figure 1

Student Success Intersectional Model Concept
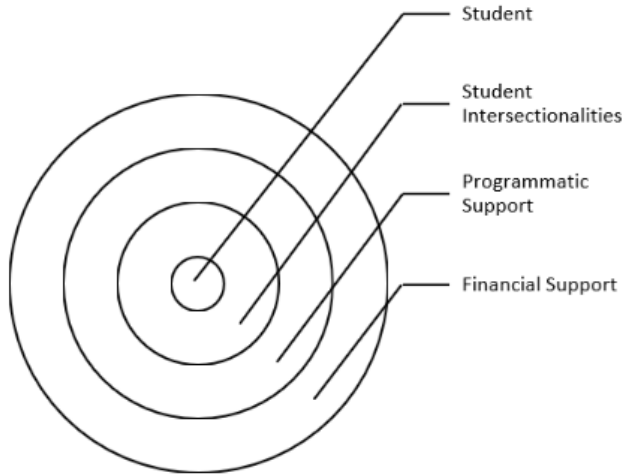
Note. This figure provides an illustration to accompany the explanation offered regarding a conceptual model related to the explanation the Student Success Intersectional Model (SSIM). The figure was created by the authors of this presented research work.

We believe that explicitly addressing the notion of supporting a student's sense of belonging can only be incorporated into programming once students are placed at the center and their intersecting identities are understood. We contend that it is impossible to improve a student's sense of belonging if the steps to comprehend who they are not emphasized. Therefore, the next level of the SSIM concept is to deliver programmatic support that invests in students by utilizing the identities of students. None of the preceding can be accomplished without financial support. While the conventional model for student affairs programmatic initiatives is to use tuition funds designated for student enrichment activities, we propose that university administrators in academic and student affairs make financial commitments to the well-being of students. Moreover, we believe that the university's financial commitment to sponsor programming incorporating the SSIM concept could improve the sense of belonging among HSI students. Heuristically, we hope this conceptual model will assist student affairs professionals consider both the people they serve and the services they provide.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings from this study found that the participants were proud of their identity but found it difficult to connect with the greater HSI community. Participants said they felt othered, had apprehensions regarding structural systems of oppression, and had to perform femininity as second generation Afro-Caribbean women as part of the campus community. Though participants cited several concerning barriers at Bluff University they continued to find ways to foster connections that validated their existence on campus. This finding is powerful because it presents campuses but particularly HSI campuses an opportunity to thoughtfully cultivate a sense of belonging to understand this population's needs. We found the participant's narrative as an opportunity to fill a gap in HSI research by serving the unique needs of students from the African diaspora.

What we learned was institutions were in some ways complicit in making participants feel inferior or perhaps to word it differently never considered as the central focus for diversity and inclusion efforts. As a result, the participants experienced limited support or accessing support services were minimal. As a consequence of this, the participants felt compelled or important to separate themselves from their identities, rather than integrating their identities into campus. This particular finding warrants further exploration of the impact on mental health, student success, and connection to the university. The participants' comments specifically were critical of the practicability or struggled with seeing any benefits of assimilating into campus culture. This study's result suggests that universities can and should continue to broaden the conversation to support students, particularly in a manner that is more intersectional as students represent interlocking identities that may detour their sense of belonging on campus.

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Making Mentoring Work: A Case Study of the Intersections of Peer Mentoring at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)

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ABSTRACT

First year, university transfer students experience challenges typically addressed with mentoring. Peer mentoring provides a culturally relevant approach to reduce disparities in educational achievements. This study seeks to understand the experiences of peer mentors and the impact on their relationships with first-year transfer students attending a Hispanic Serving Institution. Using a case study approach, our research finds that peer mentors were ill-equipped to handle challenges associated with having a transfer student mentee. Our findings suggest training requires improvement of peer mentor-mentee pairings with due consideration to the dynamic issues caused by incongruency in age or gender, lack of relatability to or lack of proper knowledge for mentees with backgrounds differing the mentors, and mentors experiencing imposter syndrome.

Keywords: best practices, cultural relevance, higher education, Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs), imposter syndrome, peer mentoring, transfer students

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is quietly shifting funds away from a critical population: new students (Heirdsfield et al., 2008). This shift comes at a time when many first-year students face increasingly difficult transitions to college life. At predominantly white institutions, a persistent achievement gap continues, wherein racially underrepresented students appear to underperform at rates that distance them from their White peers (Musoba et al., 2013). This lack of achievement is especially amplified during students' first year or transfer year in college. Addressing the achievement gap among racial groups demands a plethora of support from practitioners and learners. This support can come in many forms including tutoring, emotional support, guidance, mentoring, etc. (Heirdsfield et al., 2008). While valuable and important to maintain existing support systems, they often fall short in addressing the academic and nonacademic needs of students. Shortcomings include limitations in fostering genuine interpersonal connections and addressing feelings of intimidation. While mentorship has proven effective, it may not always provide a comprehensive solution for student success (Menges, 2016). Culturally relevant peer mentoring holds the potential to dismantle achievement gaps and foster equitable outcomes for students of all racial backgrounds (Paris, 2012).

In this study, we offer a few solutions to help mitigate the disparities in peer mentoring by analyzing participant experiences regarding university led peer mentoring services. Though peer mentoring is a structure that has existed in higher education since the 1700s, it needs to be revisited, reevaluated, and if necessary, redefined (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). Consequently, we used our analysis of the participants' experiences to recommend practitioner approaches that might address challenges we uncovered related to peer mentoring practices at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and beyond. For the purposes of our work, we acknowledge the definition of mentoring as the guidance and support from an experienced person, who shares their knowledge and insights to help individuals grow and develop (Bryant-Shanklin & Brumage, 2011). Similarly, peer mentoring entails the guidance of an experienced person, within which the authority that often carries an intimidating stigma is removed. However, a peer mentor may share similarities with their mentee including, but not limited to, age, race, gender, major, experience, and background.

This paper explores the characteristics of peer mentoring program at an HSI located in the southeastern part of the US, with a particular interest in understanding the experiences of peer mentors. We are conscious that peer mentoring approaches tend to vary based on the field in which it is being implemented. A robust program educates its participants on its expectations, with a certain level of flexibility, which clearly distinguishes the roles of the

mentors. Doing so also articulates the mentoring goals so that both peer mentors and mentees understand their ultimate takeaways from the program (Scholz et al., 2023). Thus, in the current work, we emphasize the critical roles of diversity, equity, and clear communication in creating effective peer mentoring programs. Further, the aim of this work is to deepen the peer mentor-mentee relationship through an in-depth exploration of shared experiences and their impact on the success of transfer students at an HSI. By examining the intricate dynamics of peer mentoring, this research seeks to foster workable ideas on creating an inclusive educational environment, highlighting the essentiality of a well-structured peer mentorship system in supporting student success. As a result, we asked the following research questions: *What are the mentoring experiences of peer mentors? How can the shared experiences of peer mentors alter the preparation of mentors supporting the success of transfer students?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mentoring vs. Peer Mentoring

In this case study, we considered the meaning of mentoring in order to differentiate between mentoring and peer mentoring. Mentoring entails the sharing or transfer of information and exchanges of experiences (battle scars), at times, through which a lifelong relationship is rooted (Feng et al., 2024; Scholz et al., 2023) between a mentor, a more experienced individual, and a mentee, a less experienced individual in a given domain. Ragins and Kram (2007) stated that mentoring is a life changing process which can facilitate the transformation of an individual, group, and community. In this study, we acknowledge that there are numerous forms of mentoring, including informal and formal (Feng et al., 2024). Regardless of the type of mentorship implemented, the core of mentoring is the relationship between the mentor and mentee. Though it is evident that mentorship works (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Houde, 2008; Marshall et al., 2021), it is important to understand how it is best used to optimize the success rate of transfer students in higher education, given the growing Federal funding opportunities at HSIs.

Provided that a solid and mutual relationship is the core of mentoring, a series of factors must be considered when providing mentorship to learners in higher education, especially for transfer students. It is of great importance that the mentors are well versed in the fields of interest and are acculturated such that they can resolve issues that might arise during the initial phase of the established relationship (Crutcher, 2007). Ideally, mentors are motivated to provide mentoring to those in their ingroups, meaning mentees who share similar backgrounds and identities.

Mentoring addresses two important aspects of higher education: student development in the field and psychosocial growth in the strange environment, provided the student has just transferred or enrolled in the

institution of choice (Chang et al., 2014; Persson & Ivanaj, 2009). Consequently, mentors need to "help others prepare for education (HOPE)", a term coined by Crutcher (2007, p. 21). Thus, the mentees' identities, life experiences (personally and professionally), and funds of knowledge, the collection of knowledge that is shaped by an individual's social, historical, and cultural interactions within their environment, should be considered when matching a mentor with a mentee, formally (Abarca et al., 2024). Mentoring can be cumbersome, formal or informal, and the approaches to formal mentorship alter depending on the field of study, which can hinder the genuineness of the mentor-mentee relationship. Hence, we focused on peer mentoring, which could possibly provide a level of genuineness and substantial support through HOPE. In the next section, we explore a variety of definitions of peer mentoring to form our own. We consider the different aspects of peer mentoring to substantiate its implementations and impacts. As a result, we reframe the definition of peer-mentoring for this study.

Redefining the Frameworks of Peer Mentoring

According to the literature, there is no consistent definition of peer mentoring because the structure of peer mentoring has evolved along with the definition (Chang et al., 2014; Rieske & Benjamin, 2015). After conducting a thorough search of the literature on peer mentoring, we found this same sentiment is echoed by Lane (2020), who also found a lack of consistency in defining peer mentoring. Although There are varying ways to define peer mentoring, there are also many commonalities in the definitions. For instance, some authors describe peer mentoring as a relationship (Marshall et al., 2021; Moschetti et al., 2018), a pedagogy (Aarnikoivu et al., 2020), or a "buddying up" system (Caget et al., 2021), that is reciprocal in nature (Aarnikoivu et al., 2020; Cage et al., 2021; Rieske & Benjamin, 2015). In this mentorship relationship, the peer mentor is more experienced, and the mentee is less experienced (Marshall et al., 2021; Moschetti et al., 2018; Yomtov et al, 2017), because the mentee is a new student to college (Aarnikoivu et al., 2020; Cage et al., 2021; Rieske & Benjamin, 2015) or a transfer student, new to university life. The advantages of peer mentoring include lower intimidation, higher approachability, and more trustworthiness compared to faculty mentors (Marshall et al., 2021).

The peer mentor and mentee are either close in age or they can vary across age groups and even disciplines (Kosoko-Lasaki et al., 2006; Marshal et al., 2021; Yomtov et al., 2017). This differs from classical mentorship because the mentee is a younger adult and the mentor is an older, more experienced adult (Chang et al., 2014). This is imperative to note because literature has highlighted a population of students in higher education who are older, more experienced, and no longer considered the 'traditional' college students; instead, they pursue college education as adult learners after a period

of time (Heirdsfield et al., 2008). Therefore, peer mentors are typically upper-class students, and mentees are underclass students (Lane, 2020). Across most definitions, there is a clear consensus that peer mentoring serves as a form of support for the mentees (Aarnikoivu et al., 2020; Cage et al., 2021; Marshall et al., 2021; Moschetti et al, 2018; Núñez et al., 2015b; Rieske & Benjamin, 2015). Also, in this framework of peer mentoring, mentees are challenged by their peer mentors, learn coping skills, receive advice from their peer mentors (Moschetti et al., 2018; Núñez et al., 2015b), are provided with resources to navigate academic challenges following the transition period (Aarnikoivu et al., 2020; Cage et al., 2021; Rieske & Benjamin, 2015), and improve in academic performance and academic and social integration (Moschetti et al., 2018; Murphy, 2022; Yomtov et al., 2017).

For the purpose of this study, within the framework of higher education, we define peer mentoring as the mutual peer mentor-mentee relationship in which the peer mentor possesses adequate experience to support the mentee in their endeavors, both academically and psychosocially. Peer mentors would have a reasonable gap in experience between themselves and their mentees and have at least three of the following valued characteristics: age, identity, culture, worthiness, competency, and willingness.

Peer Mentoring in College Campuses and Universities

The most common reasons for dropping out of college are loss of friendships, withdrawal from university activities, and the loss of scholarship or money used for tuition (Wangrow et al., 2021). Essentially, there is a lack of social capital and sense of belonging when these students are not properly integrated into university life, which can lead to attrition. There are several adjustments that need to be addressed when considering the success of students in college. First, when a student transitions to a higher education institution, there is a need to establish the role of the college student and to develop a sense of belonging at the university because "belonging and academic performance are strong predictors of retention" (Collier, 2022, p. 38). Strayhorn (2018) defined sense of belonging as perceived social support, sensation of connectedness, experience of mattering, or feeling cared about and important to others on campus. He also connected the idea of a sense of belonging to be incredibly important to the success of students, especially first-year students, on college campuses.

Second, a social support network needs to be developed even though the students have spent little time on the campus (Collier, 2022). Peer mentors can serve as a form of social capital for students who struggle to access it on campus (Moschetti et al., 2018). Social capital consists of information-sharing networks, social norms, values, and expected behaviors that can help students navigate academic settings to achieve success (Strayhorn, 2008).

This may be difficult for various subgroups of students, but especially for first-generation, minority students. In this case, peer mentoring would be considered important because students who lack social capital are the least likely to apply to or attend college, and if they make it to college, they are at risk of low academic engagement and lack of persistence (Moschetti et al., 2018).

The third, fourth, and fifth issues consider the challenges that students face with information processing overload as a result of the volume of information they are expected to take in regarding expectations from universities, how to behave as college students, how to navigate college campuses, and how to find resources to help them with problems (Collier, 2022). To combat these issues, universities should have a formal peer interaction structure in which they encourage students to engage in activities such as peer mentoring, learning communities, and first-year courses to foster a sense of belonging, increase retention rates, and provide support for students to aid in their transition to college life (Lane, 2020; Marshall et al., 2021; Murphy, 2022; Rieske & Benjamin, 2015; Wangrow et al., 2021). By our definition, peer mentors fill the gap of providing mentees with resources, encouraging them to partake in university activities and events, and acclimating to college life (Lane, 2020; Rieske & Benjamin, 2015).

The last issue is if the student is nontraditional, they face additional challenges due to lack of available resources and higher education familiarity (Collier, 2022). Peer mentoring provides benefits to various subgroups of individuals, such as practical information acquired from peer mentors, increased resilience, and increased awareness about organizational structures (Aarnikoivu et al., 2020). Research also indicates that participation in these programs is correlated with higher GPAs, completing a higher number of credits, on average, in the first year, and improved sense of belonging (Collier, 2022; Marshall et al., 2021). Additionally, peer mentoring program support is strongly valued, viewed as allies, and helps students make higher quality decisions. It also promotes increased confidence, knowledge, use of campus resources, and how to make the most out of opportunities in college (Collier, 2022; Núñez et al., 2015a). Peer mentors also promote favorable academic and social outcomes, negate feelings of isolation and disengagement (Moschetti et al., 2018; Yomtov et al., 2017), and drastically improve relationships with their peers and instructors (Kosoko-Lasaki et al., 2006).

Peer Mentoring at Minority Serving Institutions

Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) are characterized as institutions that have large enrollment percentages of African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and Asian/Pacific Islander students (Flores & Park, 2015). MSIs include Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges

and Universities (TCUs), and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs). Examples of these MSIs include Howard University (HBCU), Aurora University (HSI), Ilisagvik College (TCU), The Brooklyn College (AANAPISI). This current case study was conducted at an HSI, which Title V statute of the Higher Education Act (1965) identifies as 2- and 4-year institutions with a student population of at least 25% Hispanic students (Ek et al., 2010; Murakami & Núñez, 2014). The identity of an HSI is developed based on geographic location that consists of a large Hispanic population, institutional leaders' commitment to serve the needs of Hispanic students and maintaining the federal definition of MSI to receive federal funding (Flores & Park, 2015).

In United States (US) higher education, there is a persistent Eurocentric, male-centered worldview that is mirrored in the normative structures and practices of the institutions, including those at HSIs (Ek et al., 2010; Núñez et al., 2015b). This leaves students that fall out of the dominant culture feeling marginalized, alienated, isolated, unsupported, and unwanted by everyone around them, including peers and faculty (Strayhorn, 2008). Therefore, this makes it difficult to form a sense of belonging on campus. Strayhorn (2018) researched the sense of belonging at an HSI and the factors that positively influenced this feeling, including academic and social integration and experiences and perceptions of diversity. More specifically, he found that participating in academic support programs, such as peer mentoring, helped increase a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2018).

Regarding the ever-present Euro-dominant culture in higher education, Ladson-Billings (2021) established the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy as a framework for practicing that supports and empowers minority students rather than make them feel inferior. She encouraged practices for those in positions of authority to shape their instructions that are responsive to the students' cultural orientation to establish stronger relationships, respect cultural differences in the classroom, place a value on a diversity of knowledge, and provide various opportunities to demonstrate learning (Garcia et al., 2021). In a study that explored the impact of peer mentoring experiences on the peer mentors' competency beliefs related to several items, including culturally responsive teaching, Garcia and colleagues (2021) found that peer mentors expressed how it helped them to develop different strategies to serve the mentees. The study demonstrated how peer mentors could benefit from receiving training regarding culturally responsive teaching.

Another factor that was explored in relation to peer mentoring at HSIs is again, social capital. In a study that sought to increase social capital and feelings of university connectedness, peer mentors were viewed positively and seen as a form of emotional and academic social capital (Moschetti et al.,

2018). Mentees also reported increased integration and connectedness to the university, which was significant compared to the sample of students who did not receive mentoring. Peer mentoring is a prime example highlighted that would strengthen the embedded forces for all students but are especially important for underrepresented student groups (Wangrow et al., 2021). However, this study only focused on the results of first-generation Latino students after receiving peer mentoring, thereby future studies should focus on expanding to other races and ethnicities of mentees in HSIs.

Peer Mentoring with Transfer Students at an HSI

In a quantitative study, Núñez and colleagues (2015a) found that students from non-White backgrounds were more likely to enroll in a 2-year HSI and reported that they were more at risk of factors such as dropping out, having children, and prioritizing full-time employment over full-time enrollment. Despite these risk factors, the students enrolled in these HSIs reported an intention to transfer to a 4-year institution. The phenomenon of transitioning students is not new to literature. As Umbach (2018) described, transitional or transfer students were identified as those who choose to enroll in community colleges for at least their first year and then transfer to universities, given the rise in cost of attendance and admission standards. This population of students was perceived as a risk factor because they were considered new to university life novices to senior institutions, and there was a paucity of data recording the effects on academic performance. There were studies suggesting transfer student shock, suggesting the transfer student's grades decline in their first year, however, due to the inconsistency of transfer student experiences, this theory was disregarded (Flaga, 2006).

In addition to academic performance, transfer students experience psychological distress. Transitioning into university life has been reported to be attributed to a strain on wellbeing, specifically psychological wellbeing which determined the success of transition (Cage et al., 2021; Flaga, 2006; Lane, 2020). A longitudinal study conducted in the US, which measured the psychological wellbeing of transitioning students, reported heightened psychological distress and decreased psychological wellbeing midway through the first year and little improvement at the end of the year (Cage et al., 2021). It was believed that some students did not recover from having a depressed psychological well-being. Other studies reported a loss of their former identities, social networks, and sense of place while forming a new identity (Cage et al., 2021), leading to an increase likelihood of attrition.

Student retention and successful transitions to university have demonstrated an importance for sense of belonging and community. Ek et al. (2010) reiterated this notion about sense of belonging being an important factor for Latino undergraduate students because it contributes to the way a student thinks about themselves and their role in the community, thus the

more a student feels they belong, the better they are able to function and participate within university life. Cage et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study that explored the needs of transitioning students and found that students emphasized a need for coping skills to enhance independence and academic demands, student led support networks (mentoring), the need for universities to adopt a culture of inspiration not competition and extended transitional periods beyond conventional timepoints from the start to graduation. Although the challenges associated with being a transfer student are evident, there is a lack of new information regarding peer mentors and their experiences peer mentoring transfer students in HSIs within the last decade.

Experiences of Mentors

While the topic of this case study is peer mentoring, we also want to find out what the experiences of peer mentors are and how they shape their practices to support transfer students. As it stands, there is a paucity in the literature about the experiences, role, and responsibilities of mentors in the dyadic peer mentoring relationship (Marshall et al., 2021; Rieske & Benjamin, 2015). The responsibility of the peer mentor role varies on the written job description. The universal expectation of peer mentors is to engage students in their transition into the university and involvement in the community (Rieske & Benjamin, 2015). Another responsibility is personal and professional development such as training that occurs prior to starting the new academic year via classes, retreats, or workshops. For example, peer mentors in Southern California had to undergo summer training which was comprised of ten hours of topics related to the following:

> Professionalism, confidentiality, student leadership development skills, how to organize group activities, fostering effective communication with mentees, creating good relationships with students with disabilities, goal setting exercises, working with students from diverse populations, utilizing the community of mentors, developing positive coworker relationships, and creating a safe and welcoming environment for undocumented students. (Moschetti et al., 2018, p. 378).

We found literature regarding how to be a good peer mentor, which indicated that the individual must possess qualities such as academic strength, leadership, strong interpersonal and soft skills, and knowledge relevance (Heirdsfield et al., 2008; Rieske & Benjamin, 2015). In addition to these skills, peer mentors are expected to develop self-esteem and healthy behaviors that can be strengthened through participation in workshops and training. Marshall et al. (2021) highlighted the interpersonal skills peer mentors should possess, including working with people from different disciplines and with different personalities, improved rapport building, increased self-efficacy and confidence, more compassion and empathy, and feeling of satisfaction from

watching their mentees grow. Peer mentors also used this opportunity to network with faculty and career professionals to form stronger connections to the professional world, improve public speaking and professional writing, experience a stronger identification in the role of leader, and confidence to take on more responsibility (Chang et al., 2014; Heirdsfield et al., 2008; Marshall et al., 2021). Furthermore, peer mentors gain technical and academic skills including time management, organization, communication, confidence in information sharing, active listening, and teaching skills (Marshall et al., 2021). Another skill peer mentors learned was recognizing warning signs of a mentee that was struggling (Moschetti et al., 2018). If students were identified as struggling, it was the duty of the peer mentor to intervene and help the student improve and address their needs as best as possible.

Although the skills gained from serving as a peer mentor are plentiful, it is not clear whether peer mentors are paid for their roles after training. Some research indicates it can be a paid position, while others report it being a volunteer position. Other challenges reported may be due to the lack of understanding of the role and definition of peer mentor, including expectations. This uncertainty can lead to anxiety, lack of confidence in the role, and even negative impressions, because peer mentors feel they are not needed or that the mentees doubt the credibility of the mentors. Additionally, an expectation of this role is to meet with their mentees weekly, which can be a personal approach of the peer mentor, either face-to-face, email, text, or phone calls (Heirdsfield et al., 2008). This may cause difficulties for the peer mentor when the relationship with their mentee is not reciprocated (Seery et al., 2021). Further, it can be challenging to work with mentees who lack motivation and are not engaged (Marshall et al., 2021). This frustration escalated when the peer mentors felt they could not establish a relationship with the mentee, which could lead to feelings of failure (Heirdsfield et al., 2008). Marshall et al. (2021) also emphasized that peer mentors are undergraduates themselves, and the role of peer mentorship can feel more time-consuming than anticipated when they are still learning to navigate their own challenges as well as their mentees' challenges with university life.

Due to poor social and academic capital, transfer students face many obstacles that hinder their developments. They have a harder time immersing themselves within the academic environment and struggle to develop a sense of belonging. These challenges can be mitigated by having a mentor who connects with the mentee personally, academically, and socially. However, mentoring is not as effective as it was once believed to be, especially serving the modern learners of higher education. We consequently must shift to peer mentoring to better serve the marginalized, underrepresented, and nontraditional students at our institutions.

RESEARCH METHOD

We used a case study methodological design. The decision to adopt a case study methodology for this research project was driven by its exceptional ability to facilitate a comprehensive examination of the subject matter through an in-depth evaluation of lived experiences of the phenomenon in question. In his seminal work, Yin (2010) articulated that the primary objective of utilizing a case study methodology is to acquire profound insights into complex phenomena within their real-world contexts. This approach is instrumental in fostering a nuanced understanding of contemporary issues, emphasizing the significance of detailed analysis in uncovering the intricacies and dynamics inherent in specific cases. This capability was the predominant reason the research team opted for a case study approach, underscoring its relevance and applicability in addressing the research objectives.

Therefore, relying on a case study design allowed the researchers to evaluate an enormous amount of qualitative evidence in order to adequately respond to the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the mentoring experiences of peer mentors?

Research Question 2: How can shared peer mentoring experiences inform the preparation practices of mentors supporting transfer students?

Participants

The study's site is designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution. Interview, observation, and training data were collected from college peer mentors who work at Big State University and presented in Table 1. Eligibility to participate in the study required that respondents satisfy the following criteria: 1) selected by the university and identified as academic mentors, 2) enrolled as full-time undergraduate students, 3) be at least eighteen years old, and 4) willing to be interviewed about mentoring transfer students. Further, the primary geographic location of the post-secondary institution was a metropolitan setting (Winston, 2010).

Data Collection

We conducted qualitative, semi-structured interviews with six participants to understand their perceptions of peer mentoring experiences with respect to transfer student populations. For this project, a single case study methodological approach was utilized to capture two critical points of information. First, interviews were conducted to understand the perspective of participants' work as mentors in a peer mentoring system. Secondly, participants were asked to share their perspectives regarding peer mentoring practices to highlight what they did to support, or not support, students for which they were assigned to mentor. Utilizing a case study design allowed

the researchers to capture important perspectives associated with the modernity of peer mentoring in the field of higher education. Further, we utilized the functions of case study design as it pertained to the various ways in which we could capture and analyze data to complete this work.

Table 1

Study Institution by Size and Type

Category	Description
School Name	Big State University
Enrollment Size	≥ 25,000 students
Institutional Classification	Public
Number of Peer Mentors	6

Note. This table demonstrates the institutional demographics involved in our study. The information is listed using a pseudonym which was used to protect the anonymity of the study's institutional site. Presented in the table above, it shows that we only had six peer mentors that participated in our study.

Participant Demographics Table

The research was initiated after receiving approval from the university's institutional review board (IRB). Purposive sampling was employed as a technique in this study (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposive sampling was used because it enabled us to pick individuals who have specific experiences that are relevant to our study's aims, which is to understand the perceptions and experiences of college peer mentors who mentor transfer students at an HSI. Participants agreed to participate in peer mentoring training sessions, be interviewed about their experiences, and allow the researchers to observe their interactions with their assigned mentees. Seventeen peer mentors were invited to participate in the study, and six self-selected to take part. Data were collected through interviews and observations of the mentors during their training. While all participants self-identified as African American, this was not a deliberate selection criterion for the study. Study participants were recruited using an email recruitment letter. Each potential participant was screened to determine their eligibility to participate in the study. This manuscript shares the voices of six of the study's participants, including in-depth information about their peer mentoring experiences, which is presented in Table 2. All six participants 6 identified as Black/African American, 3 were male, and 3 identified as female.

Table 2

Interview Participants' Demographics

Participant Name	Race	Gender
Participant X	Black/African American	Female
Participant D	Black/African American	Female
Participant C	Black/African American	Female
Participant E	Black/African American	Male
Participant N	Black/African American	Male
Participant J	Black/African American	Male

Note. Table 2 displays demographic information associated with the study participants. The demographic composition of the participants provides scope to explore our research topic through an intersectional lens.

Data analysis: Intersectionality

Crenshaw's (1989) seminal work served as a foundational theoretical framework for our advanced analysis. In our study, we drew upon her concept of intersectionality, which reimagines the individual identities within the context of intersecting multiple identities. To comprehend intersectionality within the participants' lived experiences, we sought to contextualize these experiences within the broader backdrop of the students' shared experiences. Crenshaw (1989) introduced the term 'intersectionality' to convey the idea that individuals may possess multiple marginalized identities that intersect. She argued that defining a person solely by their race, gender, or economic status is insufficient in fully understanding their lived experiences.

In light of Crenshaw's work and our research question, we reframed our narrative. Instead of examining student participants through single labels, we adopted an intersectional lens. That is, we acknowledged the race and gender of participants as indicated in the participant demographic table. This approach helped us structure strategies for fostering a sense of belonging on college campuses.

Coding and Analysis

Research interview data were transcribed from audio to text and stored electronically in Otter AI, a software program designed to capture live audio and generate written transcriptions. Within this study, Patton's approach was utilized for data processing and interpretation (2002). The data was structured so it could be used to provide an analysis of the case and to generate new information about what peer mentors learned from their mentoring experiences with transfer students (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Prior to doing data analysis, it was important to arrange the data based on the information provided by participants. The primary investigator of the research study

reviewed and transcribed the data to identify themes and patterns in the participants' responses. Following that, the data was coded, labeled, and categorized as depicted in Table 3. Following this step, similarities within the categories were identified and analyzed to gain a broader meaning of the participants' responses.

After the primary investigator analyzed the transcribed data to identify key quotations, themes, and patterns, the data was classified, labeled, and then grouped into specific themes. To establish credibility, data interpretations were shared with participants to affirm validity (Nowell et al., 2017). In addition, categories were established, and patterns were interpreted regarding their broader significance (Patton, 2002)

Positionality

As four Black researchers conducting research on peer mentoring at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), we approach this work with a unique perspective that is partially informed by our personal and professional experiences, cultural background, and research interest. Relatedly we are keenly aware of the historical and systemic injustices that have affected minoritized students seeking support in higher education settings. Nevertheless, we utilize this research space to amplify the lived experiences of the participants we recruited and interviewed.

RESULTS

Patton (2002) stipulates that practices and approaches are the primary stages in the data analysis and interpretation procedure. Due to the transcription and categorization of the audio recordings of the interviews, researchers were able to examine the cases and acquire new information regarding peer mentoring experiences of mentees who mentor transfer students (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Even though peer mentoring is a practice for student success that fosters an engaged sense of belonging and contributes to graduation, the findings indicate that peer mentor training was lacking to support a specific niche population of students, namely transfer students. Specifically, in our study, the peer mentors and their mentees were diverse in age, gender, lived experiences, international status, and transfer student status. Completing a peer mentoring training that only covered the basics of peer mentoring created a gap in the connection of success of transfer mentees and their peer mentors. Therefore, if peer mentors cannot relate to or do not know specific information regarding a mentee, this can hinder the integration into the university, create a lack of sense of belonging, and low academic and social capital, possibly result in attrition.

The timing of the shared findings is crucial, as there is an ongoing interest in bolstering the success of transfer students in postsecondary settings. Prior to offering recommendations in the discussion section, we

present three main themes in Table 3 that were interwoven and were demonstrated as the major challenges in the participants' experiences: (a) knowledge of peer mentoring; (b) developing mentoring relationships; and (c) imposter syndrome in peer mentoring.

Table 3
Thematic Codes

Theme	Sub-themes	Example quotes
Knowledge of Peer Mentoring	Skill, knowledge, instructions, rules	"We were trained to be a mentor to another student, like try to help them but not tutor them, but some of the things they asked to get help on surprised me"
Developing Mentoring Relationships	Mentoring friends, working with opposite sex, age	"It's difficult to build relationships."
Imposter Syndrome	Self-doubt, failure	"I feel like I'm not a good enough mentor" "I want to be a good mentor but after doing it I worry that I not really that good at it"

Note. Table 3 depicts the coding and thematic analysis of our data analysis process. The first theme is knowledge of peer mentoring, which is broken into four sub-themes: skill, knowledge, instructions, and rules. The second theme is developing mentoring relationships, which is broken into three sub-themes: mentoring friends, working with the opposite sex, and age. The third theme is imposter syndrome, which is broken into two sub-themes: self-doubt and failure. For each theme, we provided a corresponding quote from a peer mentor.

Theme One: Knowledge of Peer Mentoring

Participants were requested to share their experiences regarding transfer student mentoring. Initially, participant responses evoked reactions centered on job responsibilities. For example, Participant J stated, "I adhere to the provided instructions." In this sense, the participant, like others, placed a great deal of emphasis on process knowledge and used terms such as training to characterize the peer mentoring formula with which they were taught. Other responses to the inquiry included "I assist them" and "I am responsible

for ensuring they are aware of all campus offices." Some even elaborated on their knowledge by asserting, "In my training, I was taught to develop relationships with mentees." However, when asked to clarify how their knowledge helped them support transfer students, the process of assisting the researchers in understanding the peer mentors' knowledge became evident. Many of them felt the peer mentoring training was beneficial, but it was difficult to contextualize the training for the population they were assigned to support. Participant X shared the following:

> I remember my first session with my mentee. I had our agreement out and was ready to go through the list that the office provided mentors. I waited around for several minutes looking for my mentee, when I realized the older guy waiting at the front of the library hovering over coffee was my guy. He looked to be the age of an uncle. His name, Jamie (pseudonym), was on my paper, but I kept wanting to call him by his last name out of respect. He was a veteran and here I was a college student two years out of high school, also an opposer of any wars, taxed with helping someone who kept calling me kiddo.

The perspective of Participant X regards the limited knowledge of peer mentors: "My mentee asked about free bus passes, I just knew about the campus bus because I used it to get from the campus to my off-campus dorm, but I have a car." Another peer mentor noted the major difficulty in connecting with the mentee, given a number of circumstances, one of which was cultural differences, Participant N explains:

> My mentee was an international student. A lot of what he asked had to do with the number of credit hours he had to take to maintain his status as a regional student. At first, I told him that going to the office of international students was where he would find the most help. We looked up the times, and then I shared with him the best route to take to get to the building which was tucked away in the middle of nowhere on campus. Then he asked about working off campus and getting a job. I mean, every question made me feel like he needs more support than what I could offer him. Over time, his absence from our scheduled meetings began to show me that he saw my mentoring as unhelpful. I knew this because when I emailed him about missing appointments, he said that he'd rather spend his time talking to people that knew the answers and not to people that could direct him to the answers.

Theme Two: Developing Mentoring Relationships

Individuals received instructions to develop mentoring relationships with mentees as part of the preparation for peer mentoring. Multiple peer mentors held the aforementioned value, but in discussing their experiences, they appeared to acknowledge the complexities of forming relationships. In

some cases, developing relationships with mentees came naturally to peer mentors who were accepted as mentors for the program, based on their willingness to support students, attend professional development sessions, and be compensated and evaluated on mentoring. Participant D elaborated and said:

> I worked as a campus orientation leader. When freshmen came for the summer, I introduced them to the Big State way. So, it was natural that I would get selected to mentor. I know the school, I know where students should go to get help, and I know how to talk with people and not at them. I'm the kind of person that finds a friend among strangers.

In this way, participants connect past experiences to their preparation for peer mentoring, emphasizing skills such as communication and relationship building to demonstrate that they knew how to establish rapports. However, developing mentoring relationships appeared to depend on the level of comfort of the participants, the degree of connection with the mentee, or both. Participant C explained:

> I walked into the Starbucks on campus, excited to be paired with one of the football players. I am a girl and when he saw me, he only wanted to discuss hanging out. I had to figure out how to get this guy to follow our mentorship agreement without getting myself into a compromising position with him, especially because he regularly invited me to come to his room for sessions or would text me late at night to see what I was up to.

Forming connections was not difficult, yet it was challenging in the context of peer mentorship. Participant E made the following point:

> I had to mentor a person that I went to high school with. I started my first two years of college at the university. But they didn't. In fact, I didn't realize it was a former high school person that I knew until I saw their face. We talked about our town and our high school. It was perfect. But you know when I got into the mentor role, it felt like they didn't want to receive the information from me.

This sentiment was expressed: "It's difficult to build relationships. Sometimes I wonder whether we were taught how to form relationships."

Theme Three: Imposter Syndrome

During the interviews, participants frequently conveyed self-doubt through personal narratives. This self-doubt was not due to inadequate preparation but emerged during practice implementation. Additionally, the requirement to report hours spent delivering services made it difficult for them to manage expectations and avoid feelings of failure. The ways participants expressed impostor emotions are detailed in Table 3.

A common thread of self-doubt emerged from the personal narratives shared by participants. While all participants expressed this feeling, two distinct modes of expression surfaced. Participants X, N, J, and C articulated their self-doubt with a sense of fixity, as seen in statements like, "I feel like I'm not good enough," suggesting they believed they inherently lacked the necessary qualities or skills to be effective mentors. In contrast, Participants D and E, while also expressing self-doubt; "I worry that I am not good enough", revealed an aspiration for growth and improvement, hinting at the possibility of change and a desire to become better mentors. These findings suggest that imposter syndrome manifested in two distinct forms: a static, fixed belief of inadequacy and a more dynamic perspective that acknowledged both self-doubt and the potential for growth. Overall, the findings highlight the challenges faced by participants, who serve as peer mentors to college transfer students at an HSI. These challenges are worth discussing due to their impact on transfer student success in postsecondary settings.

In the discussion section, we explain the importance of the findings and their relationship to the reviewed literature. We further consider the significant implications of our findings by formulating pragmatic recommendations that speak to both research methodology and the conceptualization of the experiences.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to explore the mentoring experiences of peer mentors and how those shared experiences can inform the preparation practices of mentors supporting transfer students. Thus, we want to accentuate our definition of peer mentoring as follows: the mutual peer mentor-mentee relationship in which the peer mentor, possesses adequate experience to support the mentee in their endeavors academically and psychosocially (especially for Black and/or transferred students at an HSI). We considered the need for a reasonable gap in experience and at least three of the following characteristics being valued: age, identity, culture, worthiness, competency, and willingness.

Through our findings, it is evident that peer mentors' experiences vary. The results indicated that while training was helpful, it did not adequately equip peer mentors to address the challenges associated with the relationship between themselves and their assigned mentees. The results of this study align with literature as participants reflected on how helpful training was at setting a foundation for peer mentoring practices and developing necessary soft skills, as demonstrated by researchers who pursued similar subject matters (Heirdsfield et al., 2008; Marshall et al., 2021; Moschetti et al., 2018; Rieske & Benjamin, 2015). In this study, Participant X was ill-

equipped to handle the dynamic between them and their mentee because of the age difference. Participant X struggled to maintain their position of authority of respect with his mentee, who was older and continued to refer to the peer mentor as "kiddo." In addition, the findings suggest complexities in relationship building, boundary setting, and managing emotions of peer mentors. Heirdsfield et al. (2018) described how frustration can lead to feelings of failure when they cannot establish a relationship with their mentee. In combination with feelings of failure, mentors can experience imposter syndrome, and in this study, participants had trouble managing the expectations of being a peer mentor and feelings of failure and self-doubt.

These findings are in line with research conducted by Marshall and colleagues (2021), where they emphasized the challenges of peer mentors including learning their role, relating to mentees, and getting their mentee engaged. According to the findings, a challenge peer mentors have is anxiety, lack of confidence, and negative impressions in their role as mentor and reports of the role being very time consuming. These feelings are attributed to the mentee not feeling like the relationship is beneficial for themselves, as we saw with participant N, the mentee's absences increased because the peer mentor did not have the information the mentee needed. Moreover, the findings reveal a pervasive ambiguity regarding the roles and expectations within the peer mentor-mentee dynamic. This is highlighted by the experience of participant C, where the mentee sought assistance beyond the traditional scope of mentorship, indicating a misalignment in expectations between mentors and mentees.

This study acknowledges limitations in the design and execution of the peer mentoring program under investigation and how it impacted the experiences of peer mentors, particularly in fostering the mutuality inherent to successful mentor-mentee relationships. A primary shortcoming arises from the method of pairing peer mentors and mentees, which was conducted without sufficient consideration of compatibility or background knowledge. Peer mentors were assigned mentees with minimal information beyond basic identification details, as exemplified by the experience of participant X. This lack of initial insight hindered the peer mentors' ability to fully comprehend and engage with the unique challenges faced by their mentees, such as those encountered by an international student, illustrating a disconnect due to unrelatable circumstances and lack of racial diversity.

CONCLUSION

It is important to reiterate the impact of existing Eurocentrism in all institutions, including HSIs (Ek et al., 2010; Núñez et al., 2015b), which can already cause students to feel disconnected and marginalized (Strayhorn, 2008). Most students with non-White backgrounds had a greater likelihood of enrolling in a two-year HSI with the intention to enroll in a 4-year HSI as a

transfer student, and researchers reported risk factors including attrition and prioritizing full-time employment and childbearing over full-time enrollment (Núñez et al., 2015a). Transferring comes with its own set of challenges including but not limited to, successful integration and distress of wellbeing. Peer mentoring was highlighted as one of the many ways to reduce these risk factors by increasing the students' social and academic capital (Strayhorn, 2018), especially for underrepresented groups (Wangrow et al., 2021). While there is a surplus of literature on peer mentoring and the benefits of being a mentee, there is a gap in the literature on the experiences of peer mentors. Our study explored those experiences and practices of peer mentors in an HSI serving non-traditional, transfer students.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of our study aligned with the handful of existing literature focusing on peer mentor experiences. Our findings include a poor sense of belonging, failure to successfully integrate transfer students at the HSI, and transfer students at risk of dropping out of college. These results, while alarming, have practical implications for peer mentoring programs that would benefit mentees, such as how to improve peer mentoring practices and relationships, especially for peer mentors. As the purpose of peer mentoring is to reduce attrition, increase sense of belonging, and integrate transfer students, the experiences from our participants made it clear that they were ill-equipped to handle the challenges of non-traditional transfer students that are not addressed in training. The intersections of gender, race/ethnicity, and age were apparent barriers for successful peer mentor-mentee relationships, thus having lower successful integration at the HSI. Additionally, the impact of these obstacles left peer mentors struggling with imposter syndrome and inadequacy. As the participants noted, training is helpful; however, they are not sufficient, especially when serving transfer students who fall out of the margins of a traditional college student at an HSI.

Recommendations for Mentorship Programming and Further Research

A recommendation for future research is to research and explore how culturally relevant practices shape the practices of peer mentors to develop various strategies to serve the specific needs of mentees (Garcia et al., 2021). It was evident in the study that some peer mentors were out of their comfort zone when they felt they could not provide accurate information or relatability to their mentees. Using the experiences of the peer mentors in our study, we strongly suggest some informality to be implemented in peer mentoring programs. This would help incorporate the mutual aspect of the relationship that is necessary. How can this be done? The group of peer mentors and mentees should be introduced in a roundtable format as well as on paper, which delineates their characteristics and experiences. Henceforth, both peer

mentors and mentees would select three individuals they believe would be a good match for them. This procedure acknowledges what all participants value in each other, an aspect that seems to be missing from the experiences of our participants. Another recommendation would include taking a survey at the end of training and the program that takes into consideration the experiences of the peer mentors for ways to improve the program.

We also recommend a wider range of diverse participants for future research, to examine a more diverse range of experiences with other peer mentors and their mentees and to better design peer mentoring training programs that includes a focus on relational connection between the peer mentoring pairs as it relates to our findings. Take notice that we focused solely on the account of the peer mentors in our study. Another direction for a future study could be to consider the experiences of the mentees at HSIs.

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Race Matters: Midlife, Black Female Doctoral Students Navigating Racial Undercurrents

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the experiences of midlife, Black, female doctoral students. The overarching question guiding this study was: What meanings did midlife, Black, female doctoral students attach to their doctoral experiences? Data were collected from nine participants using in-depth semi-structured interviews and critical incident reflections. As this study was concerned with examining the experiences of midlife. Black, female doctoral students and how the intersection of these three locations impacted the doctoral experience, a conceptual framework incorporating Black feminist thought and intersectionality was also used in order to analyze the phenomenon. Participants were selected from various institutions and from a diverse group of programs. Findings suggest that as older Black women, these doctoral students were subject to different academic and social expectations that influenced their doctoral journey. This study contributes to the limited body of research on older Black women in higher education and gives institutions strategies for supporting this population.

Keywords: Adult education; Black female doctoral students; Black studies; higher education; intersectionality; midlife doctoral students; phenomenology; women's studies

INTRODUCTION

Decades after Brown v. Board of Education (1954), which gave equal access to education to all Americans, Blacks have made significant strides in educational attainment (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010). Approximately 45 percent of Blacks have attended college as compared to approximately 53 percent of Whites (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010). These factors point to the progress made by Blacks in closing the educational gap between Blacks and Whites. Even with these gains, however, Blacks are still less likely than Whites to earn a college degree. The disparity in educational attainment can be seen by the high college attrition rates experienced by Blacks. A widely held belief is that the reason for the difference in academic success and retention between Whites and Blacks is that Blacks are not as well prepared academically (Levin & Levin, 1991). However, there are other studies which contradict the notion that the lack of academic preparation is the primary reason for the low academic success and retention of Black college students. In fact, there is research that supports the belief that Black college students experience difficulties outside of academics that influence their ability to be successful (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010). Adding to a growing body of literature, examining the challenges and obstacles to success faced by Black women in higher education in general and at the graduate level in particular, this study looks specifically at the experiences faced by midlife Black women enrolled in doctoral programs.

The Black Woman's Experience in Higher Education

Alfred (2001) characterized the Black woman's experience at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) as one of marginalization and isolation. Although some students have a positive doctoral experience at PWIs, many do not, often facing misjudgment, unfair treatment (Grant 2012), double marginality (Spurlock, 1984), flagrant and disguised racism (Ross-Gordon, 2005), and what Johnson-Bailey (1998) refers to as experiences with blatant hostility. Black doctoral students are often not afforded the same privileges as their white counterparts (Grant 2012). For example, when Black doctoral students propose researching an area of interest related to their culture, they may be met with skepticism or even dismissal of their ideas (Walkington, 2017). Higher education in the United States has faced many challenges recently to include limited resources, changes in demographics, diminished public confidence and more accountability for the success of students (Whitt et al., 2008).

A Shifting Age Landscape

Lachman (2004) has suggested that while for many years there was little interest in research on midlife adults or they were studied tangentially as part of studies on children or older adults, there is finally growing interest in studying this group. She noted "The population explosion of middle-aged adults and the increased knowledge about this age period have led to the identification of midlife as a segment of the lifespan worthy of study in its own right" (2004, p.307). Lachman also has acknowledged that while midlife has often been associated with the image "midlife crisis," increasing study of this age group has contributed to multiple perspectives on midlife, including a view of this period as one associated with growth and renewal, even if that growth emerges as an outcome of dealing with life transitions and crises. Such transitions have often been associated with adult learning, including beginning or returning to higher education (And & Brickell, 1980; Anderson et al., 2022). Lachman indicated that "those between 40 and 60 are typically considered middle-aged" (Lachman, 2004, p. 311) although she acknowledged that ages associated with middle age have ranged widely from 30-75. For purposes of this study of midlife doctoral students, we included women between the ages of 45-65.

As the demographic landscape continues to change, it can be expected that more Black women will seek advanced degrees during middle age, with both an aging population and given a greater proportion of students of color beginning and completing undergraduate degrees later than the traditional age (Jain & Crisp, 2018; Rose et al., 2024) The pursuit of a doctorate is often an intimidating venture, requiring extensive time and effort, perhaps more so for older students whose work and family responsibilities are likely to be greater than younger students enrolling directly after undergraduate studies. In addition to the typical barriers experienced by adult students as noted by Ross-Gordon (2005), Black women can encounter considerable obstacles during doctoral studies because they also contend with issues related to race and gender. An examination of the literature points to a scarcity of research focused on the experiences of Black, female doctoral students, but there are even fewer researchers examining midlife doctoral students. Instead, literature tends to focus on one or two of the identities, rather than the intersection of all three: Black, female and middle-aged.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to chronicle the experiences of middle-aged Black, female doctoral students in hopes of providing more visibility to and a platform for voicing their struggles and successes, as these voices are frequently unheard or muted. This study contributes to the research knowledge base by addressing this gap in the research literature. It was hoped that an enhanced understanding of this population would enable institutions, programs, and graduate faculty to better serve and support midlife Black females pursuing doctoral studies, facilitating the completion of their studies.

Given this purpose, the central research question guiding the study was: How did midlife, Black females perceive their doctoral experiences?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The African American female has been tasked with becoming a healthy, happy, and productive member of society (Turnage, 2004). This task has been made difficult considering the history of racism and sexism in the United States. The Black female must contend not only with issues surrounding being Black but also those issues that confront her as a woman. The African American woman cannot just be Black or just be a woman; she is a Black woman. The race-gender aspect of her identity is more powerful than either aspect of her identity viewed separately (Turnage, 2004). For instance, in a study by Thomas et al. (2011), participants were able to state how their identity was affected by race and gender. However, when study participants were asked about the aspects of their identity as separate constructs, their responses were based on gendered race. For example, one participant stated:

> It's very hard to distinguish like being a woman, and being Black, you are a Black woman, it's one. Like it's no, I'm a woman then I'm black. It's not I'm black then I'm a woman, it's, um, "I'm a Black woman" (Thomas et al., 2011, p. 535).

Black women have a complex history within the United States. As noted above, it is important to consider their intersected identities when researching Black females. According to Torres et al. (2003), to understand the totality of a person requires examining multiple identities. After all, "few individuals define themselves with just one identity; all of us simultaneously develop multiple identities throughout our life" (Torres, et al., 2003, p. 67). Furthermore, the double marginalization that Black females experience makes their experience different from that of White women whose marginalization is linked to sexism alone (Walkington, 2017). As the Black woman ages, she also faces a triple marginalization, with age becoming the third issue to be addressed.

Black Women in Higher Education

The educational system in the United States is permeated with inconsistencies, false expectations, and masked racism (Margolis & Romero, 1998). Black women are typically affected the most by behaviors and challenges stemming from these experiences (Collins, 1986; Williams et al., 2005; Patton, 2009). Unfortunately, Black women have been experiencing racism and sexism throughout the history of the United States, with these inequities still playing a pivotal role in their modern-day experiences (Collins, 1989). Although Black women are a diverse group, it is difficult to grasp their higher education experiences without recognizing their struggle against the

double oppressions of sexism and racism stemming from their gender and racial social locations (Carter, 2010).

White males have had access to a college education since the 1600s (Carter, 2010). However, it was not until the 1800s that White women were allowed entrance into a college-level institution. Alexander Lucius Twilight, the first Black male to receive an Artium Baccalaureatus (AB) degree, earned it in 1823. However, it would be 1837 before Oberlin College became the first college-level institution to admit women of any race and 1850 before Lucy Stanton Sessions, a Black woman, graduated there (Carter, 2010, para 4). Carter noted that many of the legal barriers preventing the inclusion of Blacks and women in higher education were eliminated by the start of the 1970s, however, Black women have continued to be affected by institutionalized racist practices that have impacted access to higher education programs and supports (Carter 2010).

Using a Black feminist thought framework in their qualitative study, Borum and Walker (2012) examined the undergraduate and graduate experiences of 12 Black women in mathematics who attended historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) versus those who attended institutions that were not an HBCU. Women attending an HBCU noted supportive faculty and a nurturing environment as positive factors of their experience. The women reported similar aspects of what made their experience pleasant or distressing no matter which institution was attended for doctoral study. Two of the women who did not attend an HBCU indicated that they did not feel racial or gender discrimination; however, they revealed that they were usually the only Black student in their classes. Three of the remaining women attending a non-HBCU described experiences that were colored with feelings of alienation and discrimination at their undergraduate institutions.

A study conducted by Morales (2014) of 62 Black students, which included 32 men and 30 women ages 18-30, discovered that these students experienced racial microaggressions related to gender and class during their daily interactions with peers who were not Black. Additionally, many of the Blacks were seen as totally different and foreign from non-Black students, with non-Black students tending to exhibit a fascination with the alleged uniqueness of Blacks, resulting in the objectification of Black students. Findings of this study suggested that race does not exist in isolation but is gendered and classed as well, such as assuming Black students were low income or working class or that female students were the authority on cooking soul food or braiding hair. Moreover, findings from this study illuminated how these racialized meanings are interlocked with different social locations in shaping the experiences of Black people, even in spaces that are considered liberal such as higher education institutions.

Black Women Pursuing Doctoral Study

An advanced degree can provide the needed education for professional careers and create opportunities for African Americans to better serve their communities, as suggested by the words of one participant in a study of Black women in doctoral programs:

> I want to be successful. I want to be able to provide for those in my life and to be an asset to my own community as well as to – not only to my own community professionally which is social work, but also to my family and to the African American community as well (Shavers & Moore, 2014. p. 25)

Because African Americans are underrepresented in advanced degree attainment, earning an advanced degree is especially important. This underrepresentation is still a concern even with the 88.4 percent increase in graduate school enrollment by Blacks from 1996 to 2004. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), 13 percent of the master's degrees conferred between 2009 and 2012-2013 were earned by African Americans, the highest share of degrees conferred among nonwhites. Among nonwhites, Blacks earned eight percent of the doctor's degrees (which includes professional degrees) between 2012 and 2013, exceeded only by Asians. Black females earned 71 percent of the master's degrees and 65 percent of the doctor's degrees awarded to Blacks between 2009 and 2010. With Blacks seeming to lead proportionally in master's degree attainment among nonwhites, especially for Black females, but not maintaining this same lead among nonwhites in the earning of doctor's degrees, it is important to understand their experiences in the pursuit of the doctoral degree.

Although enrollment for Black students has increased and Black women are earning doctoral degrees at a higher rate than some other nonwhite groups, concern for a lack of diversity among students remains an issue for administrators, faculty, and policy makers (Ellis 2001). To provide a larger pool of Black faculty candidates, more nonwhite students, specifically Black students, will need to earn doctoral degrees. In a study of sixty doctoral students (equal numbers of Black and White women and men) Ellis (2001) found that Black women, more than any other group reported poor advisor relationships, including limited communication about program hurdles and expectations and incomplete feedback on dissertation proposals. Because findings in this study suggested that race was an important aspect of doctoral students' positive experiences with faculty and timely dissertation progress, she suggested that deficits in faculty relationships could be mitigated with a more diverse faculty who have experience engaging with diverse student populations.

Grant and Simmons (2008) shared their own experiences in the academy as an African American doctoral student and a tenured professor in their narrative study of the experiences of two Black women at different academic stages. Their study suggested that there is an absence of Black female mentors for African American females who are current and emerging scholars. Conclusions from their study point to the importance of having Black faculty support and mentoring. They go on to counsel against Black females enrolling in doctoral programs lacking in "Black female faculty representation and/or mentoring support" (p. 512). Moreover, they suggested that those moving into tenure-track roles might want to investigate whether an institution has culturally supportive programs prior to accepting job assignments.

Black women pursuing learning activities are subject to similar barriers as other adult learners, such as poor academic self-concept, diverse role responsibilities and difficulty with support services (Ross-Gordon, 2005). However, such barriers, although common among adult learners, are more pronounced with Black adult learners. Additionally, marginalized groups, according to Ross-Gordon, can face additional challenges, to include a lack of institutional role models, scarcity in content related to their culture, overt and covert racism and trouble establishing connections. Similarly, a Johnson-Bailey (1998) study of Black reentry women that included some doctoral students indicated that the usual psychological and situational barriers that reentry women faced were minor when compared to the blatant hostility they experienced. In a more recent review of scholarship on the experiences of Black women faculty and graduate students titled "How far have we really come?" Walkington (2017) concluded that microaggressions and limitations to academic opportunities and resources were still faced by Black female graduate students, based in persistent stereotypes.

Turner (2002) suggests that Black women believe if they are to be successful in academe, they must leave themselves outside of the school doors, relegating who they are to the background to conform to hegemonic standards. Women in a study by Coker (2003) were keenly aware of living in the White male-dominated academic world where they were expected to be silent participants and act in a demure manner while also living in their Black, mostly male-dominated world with strong, independent, and outspoken Black women. These women found it difficult to be themselves while navigating the academic world. This sentiment was mirrored in a Shavers and Moore (2014) study in which participants indicated the need to adjust their language, grammar, interactions, and outward appearance, attempting to project a professional posture to manage their departments' perception of them as students. The cost of this posturing often resulted in students not being authentically themselves. As Johnson-Bailey suggested in her 2001 book

Sistahs in College: Making a Way out of No Way, this posturing becomes a means of survival.

For example, Black women who challenge the status quo can be seen as aggressive and difficult, and a study by Shavers and Moore (2014) indicated it was important for Black women to present a professional posture. The presence of women of color in the academy can serve to interrupt the stereotypical narrative that situates women of color as unintelligent (Harris et al., 2015). As one participant interviewed by Shavers and Moore explained: "Well, I've got to come off as somebody who is professional, … and also someone who works very hard, always comes to class with my reading done, ready to participate in discussions. (Shavers & Moore, 2014, p. 28). Shavers and Moore went on to point out that employing such a "prove them wrong" coping strategy to rebuke negative stereotypes, while also living up to internalized stereotypes of the "strong Black woman," often took its toll on participants. In the words of another of their study participants: "Being emotionally resilient has its place but many Black women ignore signs that they need mental or psychological help because they do not want to be seen as weak" (Shavers & Moore, 2014, p. 30). They concluded that for the women in their study, persistence and overall welfare were often conflicting facets of their experience, which could not be experienced at the same time. Similarly, Johnson-Bailey (2001) suggested that the women in her study sacrificed their well-being in pursuit of higher education.

Another challenge to the pursuit of doctoral study for Black women is the availability of funding. Maher et al. (2004) in a study of factors that affect the progress of female doctoral students, suggested that some of those who finished their degrees late experienced an inability to secure consistent funding. In her book *Leaving the Ivory Tower*, which describes her study of 816 of doctoral program completers and noncompleters of different racial/ethnic and gender identities, Lovitts (2001) indicated that while finances were not the top-ranked reason for noncompletion of doctoral programs, the inability to meet expenses was the number one financial concern among students who did list finances as a reason for not completing their degree. Furthermore, she reported that women were significantly less likely than men to have received financial support of any type, and that when provided financial support, Black students were more likely than White students to have received fellowships rather than research or teaching assistantships which typically promote higher levels of social and professional integration within their respective departments.

Although Black women face numerous obstacles when pursuing a doctoral degree, some nonetheless cope with these challenges and persist to graduation. The women in a Simon (2011) study examining doctoral degree attainment of African American women from 1995 to 2005 who were able to

earn their degrees despite the lack of social integration within their departments. Support from family and the community can help to mitigate these challenges and influence academic success (Louque, 1999). As noted by Harrison (2000), Black women understand that completion of the doctoral degree is not just for themselves but has significance to the Black race and is a testament to those in the past, in the present and in the future.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Because this study was concerned with examining how the intersections of being Black female, and older than many of their doctoral program peers impacted the doctoral experience, intersectionality was used to analyze the phenomenon. Additionally, to center study participants' experiences and allow participants to control their own narrative, this study also used Black feminist thought as a lens by which to examine the participants' experiences.

As observed by Collins (1997) decades ago and substantiated by more recent studies of Black women in higher education the problems faced by Black women are different from those experienced by either White women or Black men (Bartman, 2015). Black women experience problems that are not only gendered but also racial. To center study participants' experiences and allow participants to control their own narrative, this study used Black feminist thought as one lens by which to examine the participants' experiences.

According to Collins (2000), Black feminist thought provides a unique thought process for Black women referred to as standpoint. This unique view is a direct offshoot of their subordinate status in society and the many intersecting oppressions resulting from their experiences. In a society the centers being white, male, and wealthy, Black women are confronted daily with discriminatory and exclusionary tactics that are exacerbated by the intersection of their race, gender, and class (Evans-Winters & Love, 2015). The separate experiences because of oppression and subjugation form the Black woman's individual thoughts, but when combined, form a group standpoint for Black women.

Although Black women can have similar experiences with oppression and discrimination, Collins (2002) notes that the way each woman understands, interprets, and responds to these situations may differ. These differences can be attributed to the diversity of Black women's sexual orientation, ethnicity, class etc. Collins (1989) stressed the importance of avoiding a standardized version of consciousness, instead advocating for individuality in consciousness. Intersectionality has its roots in Black feminism, with the term being coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. As noted by Mitchell (2014), Crenshaw used the term "to explain the experiences of Black women who, because of the intersections of race and gender, are

exposed to exponential forms of marginalization and oppression" (p.1). Mitchell further explains:

> Because of increased recognition and appreciation for intersectionality as a framework, it is now used more broadly to define (a) the intersecting identities of individuals beyond women of color (b) power relations among groups, and (c) research paradigms used to design empirical studies exploring multiple and interlocking identities.

> Thus, the concept of intersectionality also suggests that Black women can have differing experiences with oppression and privilege, based in other facets of their social positions. Identity is not defined solely by gender, race, and class, but also age and ableness among other social positions (Shields, 2008). According to Bowleg (2012) a major tenet of intersectionality is the focus on the departure of a one-dimensional view of identity to multi-dimensional and intersecting identities. The utility of the intersectionality framework in the current study is that it assists in understanding and framing the experiences of older Black doctoral students and the persistent patterns that present in graduate students in academia (Williams & Lewis, 2021). Using intersectionality as an analytical tool in this study also respects the differing experiences of study participants.

METHODOLOGY

Research methods entail forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies (Creswell, 2009). Scholars note differences in the methodology of qualitative research and quantitative research that are inherent in the research design. Instead of using a lifeless instrument as in quantitative research, the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). The focus on participants and their meaning making and the focus on understanding how phenomena occur are additional distinctions of qualitative research methodology. For this study, phenomenology was used as a research approach to place emphasis on the experiences of the participants.

Research Approach

Phenomenology, according to Patton (2002), seeks to examine how humans make sense of their experiences and then how these meanings become a part of the persons' consciousness, both on an individual level and as shared knowledge. Because emphasis is placed on the personal outlook of participants and interpretation of the phenomena being experienced, phenomenological approaches are "powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions, and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom" (Lester, 1999, p. 1). Thus, in the case of midlife Black female

doctoral students, a phenomenological approach provided a platform for the voices that are often relegated to the margins or even worse, silenced altogether.

The multiple data collection methods used included two in-depth interviews and critical incident reflections. Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenology data analysis method was applied with some modification when analyzing the data. Because the study focused on examining the experiences of midlife, Black females, it was also appropriate to analyze the phenomenon through the lens of Black feminist thought.

Study procedures were designed to protect the privacy of participants and ensure their understanding of the study's purpose and consent to participate. The study was approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.

Participant Selection

This study sought to find participants who were enrolled in a variety of doctoral programs requiring a dissertation and who were at various stages in their doctoral studies. Study participation was limited to individuals who met the following criteria:

- Black female who was educated in the United States, preferably born and reared in the U.S. to increase the likelihood of common understandings of race, gender and age as experienced in the U.S.
- Currently enrolled in a doctoral program requiring completion of a dissertation for at least two terms or a graduate within two years of doctoral program completion.
- At least age 45 at the start of their doctoral studies.

Data was collected from nine participants selected from institutions in several parts of the country and from a diverse group of programs and fields of study. Participants ranged in age from 45 to 65.

Data Collection

As is common for a phenomenological approach, this study made use of two in-depth interviews for each participant. A two-part interview guide was used to uncover the participants' perspectives (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). The guide explored topics selected by the researchers, informed by the review of the literature and associated conceptual frame, but the semi-structured nature of the guide allowed flexibility in following up additional topics introduced by participants brought up during the interview. The interview guide included questions about participant motivations for pursuing the doctorate at this stage in their lives, challenges and barriers faced, factors they perceived as influencing their persistence, and the perceived value of the

experience. Several questions focused specifically on their doctoral experience as a Black, midlife female.

Each participant was asked to share a written critical incident reflection about an experience that had been the most impactful during their doctoral study (Flanagan, 1954; Gremler, 2004). The request for this reflection was shared during the first interview, with an email writing prompt sent to participants following that interview. The reflections were to be sent prior to the follow-up interview, with some collected orally during the follow-up interview if not submitted in writing in advance.

Data Analysis

The first step in the Colaizzi (1978) analysis process was to transcribe the interview audiotapes immediately after conducting the interview. Interviews were professionally transcribed immediately after each interview. Transcripts were compared to the audio recordings of the interviews by the researcher. Audio recordings and transcripts of the interviews were repeatedly reviewed to gain a sense of the experience instead of parts. Hycner (1985) indicated that transcription is an important step in phenomenological analysis. The second step in Colaizzi's analysis is to extract important statements from the transcripts. As the transcripts were reviewed, critical statements were selected from the interviews. Next, according to Colaizzi (1978), the researcher develops meanings as they emerge from the important statements. Then, these statements were condensed into significant meaning categories. These meanings were then organized into clusters of themes. Repeated comparison of the themes to the original transcript helped to ensure that the meanings were valid with nothing being added or left out. Results were integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study. The sixth step is to develop the core essence of the phenomenon. The final step in Colaizzi's analysis method is to validate the description of the phenomenon by completing member checks to make sure participants agree with the findings. Participants were emailed a copy of their brief educational biographies to review for accuracy. Additionally, participants were also asked their response to a survey requesting their agreement or disagreement with the initial overall findings. Then, the remaining data were integrated into the final description.

KEY FINDING: RACE MATTERS

This section presents a summary of the key theme and subthemes identified through phenomenological analysis of data collected focusing on one of the research questions guiding the study: *What challenges and barriers did participants experience as Black, female, midlife doctoral students?* Analysis of data related to this research question revealed one central theme—*race matters*. How race factored into the challenges and barriers participants

experienced was the focus of this theme, not only in terms of microaggressions but also in terms of external and internalized expectations held of them as Black women. Data subsumed within this central theme reflected three sub-themes: *having to prove myself*, *nuances,* and *divergence*.

Having to Prove Myself

Participant statements seen as fitting this theme described ways in which they felt the need to demonstrate their competence or legitimacy as doctoral students. In most cases this perception was derived from interactions with faculty, administrators, or peers in the immediate environment. As an example, Vanessa did not believe that her thoughts were accepted like those of her White counterparts in doctoral classes.

> I have to come from a place of facts and figures. Whereas my counterparts can just spout off their opinions. And I get tired of having to prove. Because I don't want to prove. Why do I need to prove to you that my thoughts are valid?

Kimberly echoed a similar sentiment when she said, "As . . . African Americans, we just always feel like we've got to be better. We've got to prove that we deserve to be here." But her comment suggests this perception could also be based in part be based on socialization and prior experience.

Comments made by Gathel also suggest the possible interplay between current interactions and previous socialization and experience in participants' sense that they must overachieve to be seen as equally competent and avoid reinforcing stereotypes. She initially indicated that she did not let race affect her doctoral experience, stating,

> I think race plays into it with me in the sense of just really in a way to say, you know what? Why can't you? Yes, you can do it, this is obtainable. Has nothing to do with your race unless you make it about your race.

A follow-up interview several weeks later which included a member-checking component allowed Gathel to respond to and expand on her first interview. She explained that although she did not experience explicit racial discrimination from others during her experience, race nonetheless governed her interactions with her professors. To clarify, she shared the following story.

> I've had to meet with my chairperson, [who] happened to be a Caucasian male, and the Dean of the program is Caucasian as well. And all of these folks are really mostly white males. So, usually, it comes up in my first interaction with them. It's more of an internal, subconscious thought of how are they going to perceive me as an African American and certainly as an African American woman? I realize that I probably am preparing for those types of engagements, those types of meetings, those conversations. I got to make sure all my Is are dotted and Ts are crossed. And I know in preparation, I'm

probably experiencing, not probably, I know I'm experiencing some level of increased anxiety.

Nuances

Another aspect of race relations experienced by the participants was navigating the challenge of dealing with interactions with White professors as well as students that presented as having racially loaded undertones. Kimberly shared a personal example of this.

I'm always on alert, I guess, when I am in a class with a White professor. I feel like sometimes I'm hard on them because I'm looking for everything they say. I'm dissecting it. What did you mean by that? What are you trying to say?

Remembering one classroom incident that had her questioning those nuanced communications, Kimberly shared how she felt after the incident.

There was one class that I had my first semester . . . that there were a couple of times where I was like, hmmm, you know? But nothing, I think it's just a part of the unconscious microaggressions and comments and things that they are used to saying and don't see anything wrong.

In her critical incident reflection, Carmen shared an experience that occurred with the students in her area of concentration group.

I had an African professor; she was the acting director of the African Studies Department. The white students were so upset about this Black woman and the way she was teaching and the fact that she was not a full professor teaching us. I'm sitting here, and I'm seeing this Black woman being jumped on by all these people. We had a professor ... a young, white professor, who was trying to get tenure. And didn't the . . . senior White professors say, "When you fill out your surveys about this person, don't you dare put anything negative down there because he's going for tenure this year, and we don't want you messing him up." Now, she said that to all, not just our [area of concentration group], but all 60 people in our cohort; told us, "Don't say anything negative." Now, here's this poor Black woman . . . who also, basically, is in the same situation. But they went down, and they just did her in.

Carmen's frustration with this situation was evident in her statement explaining how this experience seemed to reflect the kind of discrimination she associated with the past "The whole civil rights thing just flashed through my mind." She seemed to have difficulty with how the Black professor was being treated in comparison to the White professor and how the students treated the professor in the classroom. "If you're going to go down and complain about her, then you need to go down and complain about all the rest

of these White teachers." Carmen believes this type of behavior is nothing new. "This is what we have been going through all of our lives."

Divergence

As Black women, participants believed professors and students held different academic and social expectations of them. Vanessa shared her impression that within her doctoral institution "there are expectations based on race, based on gender. The White men are expected to be leaders. And they're given that honor, that privilege." She went on to explain how such differences in expectations based on race were manifested in the instructional context, insofar as she received more requests to clarify or justify her thoughts or reasoning when engaging with content not perceived as informed by her direct experience as a Black person.

> All the professors know that I'm the oldest Black. And so, when I do something, they kind of look at me like, you came up with this? How did you come about this? What was your thought processes for this? Then, I have to map out the thought processes. Now if it's something that I'm doing that you would expect a Black woman to do, like I wrote a paper about irrational Black consumerism. They expect me to talk about Black issues. Even if it's an uncomfortable Black issue. They expect that from me. I didn't get any problems out of that. When I'm talking about governance, when I'm talking about using military strategy to solve economic problems. Well, tell me about your thought processes. What made you go that route?

Vanessa believes that her White professors do not ordinarily give much thought to Blacks, but she is an ever-present reminder of the existence of Black people. "I remind them that they are teaching to a Black person, a Black woman. And I am not a traditional twenty-something Black woman who hasn't experienced life. Because when we're having conversations, you know I've experienced life."

The racial separation is underscored when Vanessa is in class. "And if you are observing our classroom, you can see the racial divide. Not just physically but inside the classroom we sit Blacks on one side, Whites on the other." She has had only one professor of color, "with the exception of one, all of my professors are White males. Despite this atmosphere, Vanessa is determined to complete her program.

> I'm a Black woman, I can't quit. Because when you start talking about the failures of this program, you are not going to point to me. And you're not going to make it difficult for the next Black woman to come behind me. I'm not going to be the reason why another Black woman can't come through this program. I have a duty and an obligation to the Black women that will come behind me.

When Kimberly steps on her campus she too is reminded that race matters. She has a constant reminder of past injustices that live on in the present.

> We're in [the southwest]. Probably every university campus in the state . . . has statues of slave owners, KKK members across their campuses that are being held up as models, of academic or entrepreneurial pull yourself up by the bootstraps mentality or whatever.

> Kimberly also struggled with whether her hairstyle would be considered professional, commenting "as an African American woman and being natural, just the whole, again, making sure my hair looks professional. You know, can I wear my afro, or can I braid it up."

Exceptions to the Theme

Although most participants shared experiences that corresponded to one or more of the sub-themes subsumed under the central theme of *race matters*, Barbie described her experience as follows,

> In the divinity program versus a business or any other discipline, honey, the common thread, people . . . want you to know is that they love Jesus and by loving Jesus, you love people. So, they're not going to show me they don't like me because I'm a woman and Black.

> Similarly, Wendy was the only Black and only female in her cohort of 18 students at a Christian institution. She believed that she did not have any adverse experiences related to her race because "I think it might be the fact that it is Christian oriented, I do."

> The key findings of this study reveal how complex race and race relations within the academy can be for midlife Black women in the academy. Experiences shared by study participants highlight how the pervasive nature of racial bias and stereotypes impacted their interactions within the learning environment. The experiences of the two participants attending Christian institutions spotlights the varied nature of racial interactions within academic settings. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of examining how race can negatively impact the academic experience of midlife Black female doctoral students.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As Black women, study participants believed they had to prove themselves to other students and/or professors. Consistent with Black feminist thought's theme of self-definition which involves an interruption of the negative images of Black women shaped by the dominant culture (Collins, 1986), study participants, including Vanessa and Kimberly, were determined not to allow others to define them. Similarly, Collins (2000) states that Black women are determined to define their own reality and be the artist of their own identities.

Their experiences give them an outlook of what it means to be a Black woman that is not accessible by other groups. bell hooks (1989) contends that "as subjects, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, name their history" (p. 42), however, "as objects, one's reality is defined by others, one's identity created by others, one's history named only in ways that define one's relationship to those who are subject" (p. 42). For example, Vanessa noted that her professors expected her to only do research related to Black people. However, she wanted them to know that she had the ability to conduct research related to a myriad of topics. This sentiment was echoed in a study by Harrison (2000) where participants reported expressions of surprise from Whites when they displayed intellectual abilities different from what was expected. Vanessa also made sure her professors knew they were not dealing with a person who was not experienced but one who had life experience. Collins (1986) posits that Black women will define themselves with more authentic images. This comment also points to her identity as a mid-life student (Anderson, et al. 2022; Spurlock, 1984).

Harris et al. (2015) suggested that the questioning of Black students' intelligence was the most reported microaggression in their study. In the same vein, current study participants reported that professors and students had different academic and social expectations of them than for other students. This perceived inequity of treatment may have led Gathel to make sure that she presented herself in the best light when she interacted with her professors. Another participant, Kimberly, questioned whether her hairstyle was acceptable and professional because she wanted to make sure that she presented herself in what was deemed a professional manner. As Turner (2002) suggested, Black women often believe they must adapt to the dominant culture's standards to be successful within the academy. Collins (2000) suggests it is difficult to break free from the accepted images of beauty controlled by the dominant culture. Hence, even study participants, who were determined to define their own realities could be influenced by hegemonic standards of beauty. Moreover, Turnage (2004) noted, Black women cannot just be Black or female, but the intersection of these two locations is more powerful than when viewed separately. Thus, Black women must contend with challenges associated with their race, but also, all those challenges that deal with their gender such as being concerned with hair, as was indicated when Kimberly was concerned her hairstyle may not be perceived as professional. These intersections of gender with other locations have a unique influence on experiences of oppression and privilege (Morris & Bunjun, 2007). Thurston (2002) noted that participants in her study believed they had to mask their true feelings to survive in academia. Additionally, the face participants presented to the world was predicated on the situation in which they found themselves. Thurston suggested that participants were not deterred

by these hardships but were determined to succeed through hard work and perseverance.

Although some participants talked openly about racial issues experienced during their doctoral journey, others talked about racial issues encountered during their previous educational experiences but were surprisingly quiet about these types of interactions during their doctoral journey. Shields (2008) suggests that intersectionality highlights the notion that there is no one category for identity that will adequately explain people's response to their social environments. Instead, identities can be described as fluid and changing over time. A unique identity will emerge from the intersecting identities, which is experienced as a uniquely combined creation. Wendy was the only Black and only female in her cohort. However, she did not report experiencing any challenges related to her race. Participants in a Borum and Walker (2012) study not attending an HBCU also indicated that they did not sense racial or gender discrimination, despite being the only Black student in their classes. Other participants related similar experiences. The internalization/internalization-commitment stage of Black identity development could provide an explanation for this dichotomy. According to Burt and Halpin (1998) this phase of identity development can be defined by rising above racism. On the other hand, Tatum's (1987) assertion about the Black woman's experience as the only Black or female in their environments could be another possible explanation for this. She contends that this solitary situation leads to measuring the behaviors and thoughts of the Black woman by the dominant culture, hence, making it a challenge to distinguish between racism and normal behavior, resulting in the racist behaviors going undetected. Moreover, Tatum (2003) likens racism to smog, "sometimes it is so thick it is visible, other times it is less apparent, but always, day in and day out, we are breathing it in" (p. 6). Finally, Black feminist thought explains that all Black women will not have the same experiences and may not attach a similar significance to these differing experiences (Collins, 2000). Despite the varying experiences reported by the participants, each was acutely aware of how race interacted with their environments and the impact race had on their experiences.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND POLICY

Although all the participants in this study successfully completed their doctoral programs, research suggests that there are many who never officially complete their doctoral studies (Johnson & Scott, 2023). When students do not complete their doctoral studies, not only does the institution fail to benefit from the financial investment in the students but the student does not gain the return on the time and money invested in the venture (Ampaw & Jaeger, 2012). Therefore, it would be prudent of institutions to gain an understanding of what may hinder the success of their midlife Black female doctoral students

so appropriate resources can be employed to mitigate challenges and facilitate academic success.

Participants in this study indicated that they felt a need to legitimize their role as doctoral students. Institutions need policies that clearly indicate that discrimination will not be tolerated, and consequences need to be implemented for those engaging in this type of behavior. Higher education institutions should promote diversity among stakeholders and create initiatives that create a welcoming environment for all learners. One way to accomplish this is to provide training for faculty and students on recognizing and addressing bias so that all stakeholders can interact with respect and understanding. Moreover, staff in academic advising and support services need to be aware of the unique challenges experienced by Black female doctoral students in academic settings.

Creating a diverse academic environment that is representative of the larger society requires admissions processes that support the recruitment of a student body that is reflective of the diversity seen in society. In addition to recruiting a diverse student population, higher education institutions must hire and retain diverse faculty so they may act as mentors for Black students. The establishment of mentorship programs can help the Black female doctoral student navigate the racial undercurrents experienced in the academic environment. This will lead to a more inclusive and supportive environment, demonstrating the value of diversity and leading to students feeling more valued and respected, which is important to academic success.

Unfortunately, with the current budget, time, and even legal constraints, it is difficult to implement initiatives that are geared toward a specific group. Instead, institutions may exhibit a one size fits all approach leaving some students with support and services that do not address their unique needs and challenges. Therefore, the Black female doctoral student must often seek support from outside the institution. According to Lane et al. (2022), Black women persist in graduate study because they are able to take advantage of a myriad of supports successfully, many outside of the academic setting. Hence, higher education advisors and faculty must be knowledgeable of these supports in order to encourage students to use them. For example, there are Facebook groups for Black doctoral students. These groups can provide a place for networking, mentorship, advocacy, and emotional support. They are a place for sharing resources such as scholarship and conference information as well as academic tips and research articles. Additionally, these groups can be a place to recruit participants for research. Focused Facebook groups can provide support during challenging times in the doctoral program, empowering doctoral students to believe in their legitimacy as doctoral students, enriching their doctoral experience and providing enriching connections, which lead to thriving in their academic endeavors.

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Taking an Intersectional Approach: Immigrant Women Language Teachers' Lived Experience of Identity

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ABSTRACT

This article explores skilled immigrant women language teachers' lived experience of identity through an intersectional feminist lens. It examines how women teachers speak about themselves and their lives as immigrants and aims to understand the complex implications of identity and power relations by focusing on intersectional understanding of inequities. Data was generated through in-person and virtual individual interviews with six participants living and working across Canada. The findings revealed the following main challenges and ongoing barriers: discrimination, overqualification, financial limitations, a lengthy process of re-credentialing and professional reintegration, and insufficient government support. Furthermore, this study sheds light on how heteronormative frameworks pervade immigrant women's personal and professional lives, intersecting with their identities vis-à-vis gender, race, ethnicity, country of origin, immigration status, and English as a second language. These categories collectively and individually present systemic barriers and sites of oppression that negatively impact an already marginalized minority group— internationally highly qualified immigrant women language teachers.

Keywords: Canadian workforce, discrimination, feminist intersectionality, skilled immigrants, women language teachers

INTRODUCTION

Skilled immigrants—including English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers—are admitted to Canada based on a points system that considers their education, language proficiency, work experience, age, and adaptability (Government of Canada, 2021). When assessed, professionals accepted into the country as skilled immigrants are assigned a National Occupation Classification (NOC) code, corresponding with the number of jobs per Canada's official job classification system. This means that they are deemed qualified to fill gaps in the Canadian workforce and do jobs that they are internationally university-trained for. However, a significant number of these foreign-trained professionals encounter challenges associated with entering the Canadian market, including foreign credentialing, gaining local teaching experience, and finding a meaningful place in mainstream society (Beynon et al., 2004; Niyubahwe et al., 2013; Reitz, 2005; Shan, 2009). In addition, recertification varies between Canadian provinces, often leading to the overqualification and deskilling of immigrants (Dean & Wilson, 2009; Subedi & Rosenberg, 2016), which explains that "highly skilled immigrants drive taxicabs and pizza delivery vans" (Cervatiuc, 2009, p. 255). Gender differences are particularly significant for skilled immigrant women, whose unemployment rate is almost double that of their Canadian-born counterparts (7.2% versus 4.3% in 2017) (Yssaad & Fields, 2018). For racialized immigrant women, systemic biases manifest as racist behaviors and language-based discrimination in hiring, advancement, and everyday life in the workplace (Gibb & Hamdon, 2010).

While some scholarship investigates issues related to ESL learners (Dagenais, 2020; Higgins, 2015; Norton, 2019), current research lacks a focus on immigrant women language teachers—the largest group of language teachers in Canada (Walsh et al., 2011). Furthermore, the pay gap between men and women—"the feminization of poverty" (Haraway, 1991, p. 167)—calls for a focus on women, whose experiences need to be understood as different from those of male immigrants (Ng & Shan, 2010; Norton, 2013; Sadeghi, 2008). Given their outsider and peripheral status to the Canadian workforce, immigrant women teachers need extra support to compete for the same jobs as their Canadian-born and educated peers and gain access to new opportunities. To that end, this paper reports on interviews with women-identified language teachers in Canada through, where possible, an intersectional approach. The following section reviews the research literature on language teachers and identity before introducing the study and its participants.

LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY (LTI)

Scholars in applied linguistics conceptualize language teacher identity (LTI) as three-layered (e.g., Leibowitz, 2017; Matsuda, 2017; Richards, 2017).

Leibowitz (2017) envisions LTI as being made up of individual, teacher, and language teacher identity, while Richards (2017) discusses personal (i.e., who the teacher is and how they perceive themselves and others), professional (i.e., a teacher's language proficiency and content knowledge), and social identity (i.e., people and interactions). Richards's three-layered LTI is echoed by Matsuda (2017), who distinguishes between psychological (i.e., a teacher's self-image), professional (i.e., in close relation with the material world), and social (i.e., a teacher's perceptions of the world and those around them). Other scholars, on the other hand, explore LTI through the lens of time and space (Block, 2017; Donato, 2017; Hadfield, 2017; Kubanyiova, 2017; Mercer, 2017; Norton, 2013; Oda, 2017). Norton (2013), for example, theorizes identity as "the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 4). Similarly, Block (2017) and Donato (2017) concur that identity develops in time through a process of "creatively engaging with, responding to, and renegotiating the self" (Donato, 2017, p. 28).

The construct of time also informs Hadfield's (2017) and Kubanyiova's (2017) understanding of LTI as consisting of the actual self (i.e., who the teacher is), ideal self (i.e., who the teacher wants to become), ought-to self (i.e., others' expectations from the teacher), and feared self (i.e., who the teacher is afraid of becoming). Kubanyiova (2017) highlights the benefits of teachers imagining their future persona, while Oda (2017) emphasizes the interconnectedness between a teacher's past experiences and their present and future teaching practices. Finally, informed by the complexity theory, Mercer (2017) proposes a hybrid LTI between self-efficacy (i.e., a teacher's belief in themselves and their ability to succeed) and self-concept (i.e., a cognitive dimension of self-evaluation and an affective dimension of task evaluation). Complexity theory aligns with the time and space approach to LTI in that it views the self as "a never-ending … nonlinear process" (Mercer, 2017, p. 95) and acknowledges that individuals undergo emotional changes across time and space.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study took an intersectional feminist approach, which begins from a feminist standpoint that places women (and women-identifying individuals) as the central matter of concern. The intersectional feminist approach we take here is informed first and foremost by the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), who demonstrated how different forms of oppression intersect across race, ethnicity, gender, sex, disability, and sexuality. One entanglement that happens when using a feminist intersectional lens is between a structural understanding of power (and thereby oppression) and a focus on identity. As Cho et al. (2013) put it: "Intersectionality is inextricably linked to an analysis

of power, yet one challenge to intersectionality is its alleged emphasis on categories of identity versus structures of inequality" (p. 797). While it certainly is the case in this article that we are examining how women language teachers speak about themselves and their lives, we endeavor to connect back to their stated (and very much "in time") identities concerning broader categories of inequities. Such an approach in this study also allows us to see in more nuanced ways how women language teachers constantly renegotiated their positionalities about a move from a more 'insider' status to being 'outside' in the context of immigration. An intersectional approach also allows us to see how heteronormative frameworks are very much in circulation for many women language teachers, which is left out entirely in the above literature review.

DATA COLLECTION

Data was generated by two individual interviews per participant of up to four hours total; for this paper, however, we discuss only data generated by the initial interviews of up to two hours. Informed by an intersectional feminist approach, the interviews asked participants questions about their past and present lived experience of identity—with a focus on gender, physical appearance, skin colour, way of dressing and wearing their hair, and accent—and challenges and accomplishments as immigrants in terms of relocating, re-credentialling, professional reintegration, finding a sense of belonging, adapting to life in Canada, and plans for the future.

Specifically, this paper focuses on six (see Table 1) out of the 17 participants who agreed to the individual interviews. The rationale behind selecting these six women is that: a) their ages represent the overall ages of the participants (i.e., from 38 to 59 years old), b) their home countries cover different geographical locations, such as Eastern and Western Europe, Asia, South, and Central America, c) the time spent in Canada is representative of the overall immigration arrivals (one woman arrived last year, another one has lived in Canada for two years, and others have been here for 10, 20, and 30 years), d) like all the other participants, these women live across different provinces in Canada (e.g., British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario), e) they were teachers in their home countries, like the vast majority of the participants, f) most of them are satisfied with their current teaching positions, and g) their experiences showcase the most significant challenges observed across the interviews. Since data collection was conducted post-pandemic (January to March 2023), the ubiquity of using Zoom was twofold. On the one hand, it allowed for a more extensive reach of potential participants; on the other hand, it impacted the in-person researcher-participant connectivity. For instance, one of the participants residing in Vancouver—the exact location as the researcher—opted for an initial in-person interview and an online second interview, which worked better with her schedule.

Table 1

Overview of Background Information: Six Immigrant Women Language Teacher Participants

Nickname	Age	Home country	Ethnicity	Year of Arrival	Province or Territory of Residence	Job in the home country	Job in Canada	Satisfied with job
Magda	46	The Philippines	Asian	2012	Calgary (AB)	Associate professor	• LINC instructor • Employment workshop facilitator • Curriculum developer	√
Veronica	57	Serbia	Caucasian	1996	Vancouver (BC)	Elementary school English teacher	• LINC instructor • Assistant department head and coordinator in the LINC program	√
Liz	50	The Netherlands	Caucasian	2005	Saint John (New Brunswick)	High school teacher	Online content developer for the LINC national learning platform	√
Glory	59	Nassau (The Bahamas)	Black	2011	First Nations Reserve (ON)	English professor	High school English teacher	√ X
Anna Silva	46	Brazil	White	2021	Richmond (BC)	Manager for curriculum development course design	CELTA tutor freelancer	
Vitalina	38	Ukraine	Caucasian	2022	Saskatoon (SK)	ESL teacher	• Casual translator • Tutor • Teacher volunteer • Youth coordinator (2 months)	√

Participants

Here, we provide brief profiles of each participant to better document their multiple (and shifting) identities as language instructors. To protect their identity, we asked them to choose pseudonyms.

Magda is a woman of color who came as a skilled immigrant from the Philippines in 2012. She lives with her husband and daughter in Calgary, Alberta. In her country of origin, she was an associate professor (tenure), whereas, in Canada, she juggles three jobs: language instructor, employment workshop facilitator, and curriculum developer.

Veronica, originally from Serbia, came to Canada with her husband as a skilled immigrant in 1996, hoping for a better life. They live with their two daughters in Richmond, British Columbia. A former elementary school English teacher in her home country, Veronica works as assistant department head and coordinator with a prestigious non-profit organization catering to newcomer language learners.

Previously a high school teacher and currently an online content developer, Liz, a skilled immigrant from the Netherlands, relocated in 2005 to Saint John, New Brunswick, where she lives with her female partner and three children. Liz is aware that being white and coming from a developed country like the Netherlands, "where there is a good education system in place and a country whose education system Canadians value, definitely was a huge advantage" (interview, January 27, 2023).

Glory and her husband made Canada their second home in 2011. Originally from Nassau, the Bahamas, she lives on a remote First Nations reserve in Northern Ontario. She identifies English as her second and Creole as her first language. She also identifies as a black woman. Glory, an associate professor in her home country, taught linguistics and English for 25 years; in Canada, she teaches high school English to Indigenous students.

Anna Silva, a white woman in her mid-forties, relocated from Brazil with her husband and their dog two years ago. Although they received their permanent residency in 2019, it was impossible to immigrate until 2021 because of the pandemic. Currently residing in Richmond, British Columbia, Anna Silva does not have a job in Canada. She freelances as a tutor in a Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) program and has kept her job as a manager for a curriculum development course design in Brazil, which she does online.

Vitalina, an ESL teacher in her native country for 15 years, arrived in Canada in 2022 through a unique program under the Government of Canada aimed at Ukrainians fleeing their war-torn homeland. She is currently living with her teenage son in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. After fleeing Ukraine, they briefly lived in Italy, where she "planned to make a life because I love the culture" (interview, March 12, 2023). However, they discovered Canada was a better option because the son struggled in school and could not adapt. In March, when the interviews were conducted, Vitalina worked as a casual translator and volunteered as a tutor and teacher. Her two-month paid contract as a youth coordinator was about to end when the interviews took place, and she was worried about her future employment.

Concerning our positionalities, the first author identifies as a white cisgender woman. Like the participants, she is a skilled immigrant who relocated to Canada in 2008 and has worked as a language instructor in the private and public sectors. The second author is a queer, white cisgender woman who is also a settler-immigrant to Canada.

RESULTS

In this paper, we focus on the main challenges prevalent across the stories of all six interviewees, broadly categorized as a) discrimination, b) overqualification, c) finances, d) re-credentialing and professional reintegration, e) insufficient government support, and f) unique challenges.

Next, we take a closer look at each challenge pertaining to the women's lived experience of identity as immigrant teachers in Canada.

A. Discrimination

Four of the six interviewees—Magda, Glory, Anna Silva, and Veronica—reported instances of discrimination. Glory and Magda have been discriminated against based on their race and ethnicity: Glory is a black woman originally from the Bahamas; Magda was born and raised in the Philippines and identifies herself as a person of color. Two women—Glory and Anna Silva—have been discriminated against because of their gender. Three participants—Veronica, Glory, and Anna Silva—mentioned unfair treatment due to their immigration status, having English as their second language, and speaking English with an accent.

Glory connects how she looks, speaks, and behaves with the challenge of convincing people to take her seriously. Although people do not openly say that "Professionalism is not for people like you, sometimes that is what comes across" (interview, February 10, 2023), making it particularly difficult for Glory to prove her worth and value in the workplace. Whenever she speaks, Glory feels like younger white men perceive her as condescending, as if she were teaching them rather than communicating with them. Although white men do not overtly express those sentiments, "that is what I was getting back from [them]" (interviews, February 10, 2023). It should be noted that, unlike "Young white men [who were] very contentious …[and] took umbrage with the way I spoke because I spoke with authority, I spoke with confidence" (interviews, February 10, 2023), Glory specified that "The young white women, the older white men, they did not question my authority, they did not confront me, they did not have a negative attitude, they did not portray stigma against my identity" (interviews, February 10, 2023). A black woman who has the privilege of living and working in "high valued fields, fields that come with cultural opportunities, fields that carry financial opportunities, economic opportunities" (interview, February 10, 2023), Glory understands people's negative attitudes, not as demeaning or aggressive, instead as indirect: "The Canadians are very polite, but they discriminate… They're very quiet with it" (interview, February 10, 2023). As Glory put it, this "subversive racism or prejudice" (interview, February 10, 2023) usually manifests as questioning her confidence, education, and knowledge. She goes on to call it "hush discrimination," adding that "it just wants you to be in place, wants you to be in your place, and wants you to learn the ropes maybe and contribute something first and become Canadian first, and then show up in those places" (interview, February 10, 2023).

Magda, too, has experienced discrimination based on her race and ethnicity, which has impeded her opportunities for growth and a professional career; she attributes it to the fact that "the whiteness culture is still evident in my workplace". Similarly, Anna Silva has dealt with instances of

discrimination in the form of linguicism—unfair treatment based on her use of the English language. Back in Brazil, where she worked as the president of the National Association for Language English Teachers, students, and fellow instructors looked up to her because of her advanced English language skills. In Canada, students tend to appreciate Anna Silva having English as her second language; in contrast, male English-speaking teacher trainees perceive being taught by a woman who speaks English as her second language as "breaking their ego" (interview, March 12, 2023). Like Glory, Anna Silva has been discriminated against, especially when in a position of authority (i.e., teacher trainer), by local teachers who doubt her professionalism because of her gender, second language, accent, and status:

> Most of my trainees are actually native [English] speakers; they look at me and say, 'But you're not speaking it correctly. How are you going to help us?' […] That could be because I'm a woman as well because it comes mostly from men, not women. So, there are a lot of comments on my accent. When asked, 'Where do you come from?' I say, 'Brazil.' 'No, you don't have a Brazilian accent.' […] It is because of the accent or sometimes because of an image because I'm an immigrant and teaching them to teach their language to other people.

> Nevertheless, Anna Silva hopes that fellow Canadian instructors will realize that teaching the language has nothing to do with one's accent or speaking English as their first or second language; it is about skills and the ability to help students learn "regardless of your background" (interview, March 12, 2023).

B. Overqualification

As newcomers to Canada, most women had to settle for non-teaching jobs (e.g., cleaner, construction worker, building manager) before they could work as teachers. For example, soon after immigrating to Canada, both Magda and her husband—experienced teachers and Ph.D. holders—had to take on survival jobs, such as cleaning houses and working in construction. Veronica pointed out that it has taken her a while to get to where she is now—assistant department head and program coordinator. Thinking that no one would hire her, soon after arriving in Canada, Veronica did not apply for teaching jobs; instead, she worked as a building manager. Like other immigrants, Veronica volunteered, "naively thinking, if I volunteer, I can find a job" (interview, January 26, 2023). Importantly, Veronica acknowledges the importance of networking, which is how she landed her first job as a substitute teacher in 1999—three years after she arrived in Canada. While this job was somewhat unreliable, "I got called once, and then I did not get called for the next six months" (interview, January 26, 2023), Veronica recalls that evening jobs like this—that nobody else wants—are how everyone starts—Canadians and immigrants alike. Similarly, Liz—who relocated from the Netherlands—

worked for a daycare first and started working as a supply teacher four years after living in Canada.

It is important to note that Magda and Glory came to Canada with Ph.D. degrees completed in English in their home countries; this, however, did not count toward securing jobs that reflected their education and teaching expertise. As such, Magda's Ph.D. in educational management did not help her land a college or university-level job in Canada; instead, she taught literacy in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) centers, Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) Levels 1 to 3—no to basic English language proficiency levels. While Magda admits that some opportunities are available for newcomers, she insists that these are not the opportunities that skilled workers like herself aim for when applying to immigrate to Canada. In her opinion, the devaluation of immigrants' skills is because "something is rotten probably in the system" (interview, January 20, 2023). Seeing in her current teaching context that fellow skilled immigrants, despite being highly qualified, are facing the same struggles that she experienced a decade ago is why Magda decided to participate in this study—to make her voice heard and raise awareness that the federal and provincial government "did not really push through on this, because a lot of immigrants are ending up frustrated" (interview, January 20, 2023). Significantly, Magda urges the government to show commitment and allow newcomers to participate "to reinforce more on valuing, instead of devaluing, the strength of every immigrant coming to Canada" (interview, January 20, 2023).

C. Finances

Most participants struggled to make ends meet soon after arriving in Canada. Magda and Veronica had to take on menial jobs to survive, whereas Liz and Vitalina used free services such as food banks. Buying food and clothes was one of the first challenges in terms of financial limitations that Liz faced soon after coming to Canada: "There have been times when I had to go to the food bank, and that was a hurdle to overcome because that was something that I never had thought of doing" (interview, January 27, 2023). Liz remembers going to local churches to get free clothes, always ensuring she would return a bag of clothes that her family did not need anymore. She used to buy almost everything from yard sales, flea markets, and second-hand stores. It is worth mentioning that these financial struggles have taught Liz and her family a valuable lesson *vis-à-vis* making more environmentally friendly choices: "Buying second-hand is part of being thrifty, and this is my kids' favorite way of shopping" (interview, January 27, 2023). As far as Vitalina—a single refugee mother—is concerned, given her dire current financial difficulties, she wishes to use the food banks. However, not having a car and relying on unreliable public transport makes her access to this social service untenable. When the interviews took place (beginning to mid-March), the two-month paid contract was about to end, hence her concern about not

having any other teaching prospects lined up, let alone the worry of paying rent and putting food on the table.

D. Re-credentialing and Professional Reintegration

All participants underwent a lengthy process of re-credentialing—completing additional courses and practicum to certify as Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) teachers by Canadian standards—while working non-teaching jobs to provide for their families. Most women specified that it takes a long time to gain local teaching experience—a prerequisite for working in the field—and to secure more stable, better paying teaching job opportunities. Although Magda's and Glory's credentials were recognized in Canada, they did not materialize into better career opportunities. For instance, after having her Ph.D. evaluated and found comparative to a Canadian Ph.D., Magda was advised to study a master's degree in Canada, which she did not pursue given that it required investing time and money and she had no assurance that it would bring better job prospects and allow her to advance her teaching career. Similarly, Veronica's bachelor's degree—completed in a language other than English—was recognized in 1996 when she immigrated; nevertheless, she had to take additional courses to certify to teach ESL in Vancouver. Enrolling in the Building Bridges with the Pacifically Marine Resource Society program that helps refugee and immigrant women was a stepping stone for Veronica. Although it took her longer to finish the program—she was working and became pregnant with her first child—the program gave her a sense of belonging, allowing her to connect with other immigrant women and learn skills that would prove helpful later. Unlike the other teachers, who were able to have their degrees evaluated and initiate the re-credentialing process at some point, this is impossible for Vitalina for the time being. She applied but still has not received the required documents from Ukraine, which she attributes to the ongoing war slowing down all services.

E. Insufficient Government Support

Two participants brought up receiving little to insufficient support from the government soon after immigrating. Glory, Veronica, Magda, and Anna Silva acknowledged that there is (some) support that newcomers are provided with; however, the other two teachers—Liz and Vitalina—were more critical about this issue. As such, Liz talks about the online presence—or lack thereof—of skilled immigrants serving settlement organizations meant to assist newcomers. According to Liz, unlike refugees and other categories of migrants entering the country under different immigration streams who receive pre- and post-arrival support, the lack of available support and information for skilled immigrants leaves them unprepared to relocate. As Liz said, "If you come as a skilled worker like we did, you kind of have to figure it out for yourself" (interview, January 27, 2023). While

Vitalina is grateful for the financial support that she has received, adding that the government gives you money if you do not have a job, she explains that this is just enough to pay rent "but nothing more" (interview, March 12, 2023).

F. Unique Challenges

Of the six interviewees, Vitalina's lived experience revealed a host of unique, ongoing barriers that include having a work permit but not being able to teach or study, being stuck in the entangled re-credentialling process, being a single mother whose access to free services like food banks is problematic given the lack of a car, living in severe weather conditions, losing a family member, fleeing her home country, leaving family behind in a war-torn zone, and dealing with trauma in the aftermath of the war. Vitalina has a work permit and is allowed to work; however, she is not allowed to work as a teacher because she is not certified to teach in Canada—she does not have a Saskatchewan teaching certificate. Moreover, the work permit does not allow her to study to become TESL certified; hence, Vitalina feels trapped and is wondering:

> Why am I forbidden to study? Because I think Canada is also interested in well-educated people. And if they want to see [that] I'm a skilled teacher, I can provide all my certificates and all my degrees, but just give me this chance, open this gate so that I can start.

Living in a province with extreme weather conditions—temperatures drop to minus 40 in Saskatoon—doubled by the absence of a car and a relatively undeveloped public transit system makes this single mother's daily routine acutely challenging. Vitalina recounts that once, she missed the bus and had to wait one hour to catch the next one. She was scared because everything was closed; she was frozen and could not call anyone because her phone had died due to the cold weather.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Intersecting Relations of Oppression

The intersectional feminist approach we take in this study analyzes the complex ways that gender, race, ethnicity, country of origin, immigration status, and English as a second language intertwine in the lived experience of six immigrant women teachers, shedding light on the main challenges (i.e., discrimination, overqualification, finances, re-credentialing and professional reintegration, and insufficient government support) encountered when entering the Canadian labor market and more specifically across the field of TESL. The rationale for our intersectional approach to women's lived experience of identity stems from Crenshaw's (1989) argument against single-axis or single-issue frameworks (prevalent in feminist theory), which are conceptually limited in that they "treat gender and race as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis" (p. 139). As Crenshaw

(1989) explains, gender discrimination is usually associated with white women's lived experience, while race discrimination tends to point to black men's, thus leaving out any discrimination against black women.

Our exploration of the conflicting, fluid relationship between identity categories (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, country of origin, immigration status, and second language) and power through an intersectional lens does not mean that the focus is on identity at the expense of power, which would impede our ability to "see which differences make a difference. Yet it is exactly our analyses of power that reveal which differences carry significance" (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 1012). Furthermore, two concepts put forward by Hill Collins and Bilge (2016) guide our analysis. First, power "operates by disciplining people in ways that put people's lives on paths that make some options seem viable and others out of reach" (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 16). Second, power relations—inherent to lived experience and relationships—point to advantaged or disadvantaged members within a social group, which explains why different people receive different treatment based on which rules apply to them and how they are applied. Analyzing the six women's lived experience of identity considering power relations shows categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, country of origin, immigration status, and second language operating as rules that impose different treatment, thus impacting the women's life trajectories in ways that made many options that they had envisioned when embarking on their immigration journeys seem intangible.

Zeroing in on more subtle intersections—sub-intersections—of the participants' intersectional identities brings to the forefront racial differences between white women and women of color and the inherent dimensions of privilege they warrant. Considering this, first, we discuss the two women of color's—Glory and Magda—intersectional identities, which are twofold. On the one hand, it highlights the importance of understanding black women's experiences as different from those of black men and white women. In doing so, we avoid oversimplifying and marginalizing theories that regard black women as too similar or different from black men and white women. On the other hand, it extends the conversation from a relatively narrow perspective, factoring in only white women, to a broader conceptualization that brings women of color's experiences to the forefront. This point echoes Crenshaw's (1989) argument that if a white woman who is discriminated against can claim that she represents all women, then a black woman who is discriminated against should be able to claim that she represents all women. Carbado (2013), too, refers to this phenomenon—colorblind intersectionality—which allows for white people's "racial presence, racial difference, and racial particularity … [to] travel invisibly and undistributed as race-neutral phenomena over and against the racial presence, racial difference, and racial particularity of people of colour" (p. 823-824).

As an analytical tool, intersectionality addresses Glory's struggles and social problems at one time rather than separately, which is essential given that "race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and age operate not as discrete and mutually exclusive entities, but build on each other and work together" (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 13). Significantly, these categories point to social injustices and "gain meaning from power relations of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and class exploitation" (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 15). As such, understanding Glory's lived experience cannot be done through a single-axis or a single-focus lens that considers only one identity category or social inequality at a time: She is not separately but simultaneously Black, a woman, an immigrant, and not a Canadian citizen. Moreover, unlike the white women participants who have English as their second language, Glory is a black woman who speaks English at a first language proficiency level (although she identifies Creole as her first and English as her second language). Analyzed through an intersectional lens, Glory's lived experience indicates an unbalanced identity-power relationship whereby the reproduction of power is a visible means to discriminate within the field of TESL. It explains why Glory's English language proficiency is pushed outside of power relations, thus marginalizing her as a peripheral rather than a legitimate language instructor in her workplace. For example, especially when in a position of authority (e.g., running an exam, being part of a community program, presenting or leading in various teaching contexts), Glory—Black, a woman, an immigrant, and not a Canadian citizen yet—has been discriminated against, especially by younger white men. In Magda's case—a woman of color, originally from the Philippines— race in concert with ethnicity is at the root of her discrimination. The multifaceted, layered aspects of discrimination at play in the two women of color's lived experience are summarized by Crenshaw's (1989) traffic metaphor:

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

Furthermore, gender, in tandem with race, highly over-qualifies these two women of color: Magda and Glory are the most qualified teachers among the six participants. Both are Ph.D. holders who worked as professors in their home countries. Neither of them has been able to teach at a university in Canada; instead, both work regular teaching jobs like the other (white) women teachers. The mismatch between their teaching status in their home countries and their current teaching situation exemplifies the devaluing of the skills of immigrants. It is no surprise that Magda takes on whatever teaching work is

available, while Glory has put her goals on hold and instead focuses on self-care and traveling.

Turning our attention to the white women's lived experience, we begin our analysis of their intersectional identities with a relevant remark made by Crenshaw (1989): "For [white women], there is no need to specify discrimination as *white* females because their race does not contribute to the disadvantage for which they seek redress. The view of discrimination derived from this grounding takes race privilege as a given" (p. 144). Narrowing in on Anna Silva's lived experience through an intersectional feminist lens brings into focus four interrelated identity categories—gender, race, immigration status, and second language. The intersectionality of being a white woman and an immigrant, in concert with having English as her second language, points to workplace discrimination in the field of TESL. According to Anna Silva, predominantly (white) male teachers doubt her ability to teach and train them. Interestingly, both Anna Silva—a white immigrant woman who speaks English as her second language and is not a Canadian citizen—and Glory—a black immigrant woman who speaks English as her first language and is not a Canadian citizen—share similar instances of discrimination by (younger) white men.

As far as Veronica is concerned—a white, heterosexual, married woman originally from Serbia—although she did not experience overt, direct discrimination, she attests to privileges afforded her by her race. In Veronica's case, the intersectionality of race, gender, immigration status, and second language brings to the forefront what we identify as self-imposed overqualification. This means that her inner doubts, augmented by being a newcomer to Canada and speaking English as her second language, prevented her from applying for teaching jobs; instead, she worked as a building manager soon after immigrating. Some of these interrelated aspects of identity are still at play in Veronica's identity, which might explain why, although currently an assistant department head and highly proficient in English, when in the classroom, she assures the students that she will teach the language to her best abilities but admits that she might make mistakes given that English is her second language.

Across the interviews, gender, race, ethnicity, country of origin, immigration status, and second language act as systemic barriers and agents of oppression against an already marginalized minority group—internationally highly qualified immigrant women language teachers.

Summary

In a world characterized by inequities, intersectionality has the potential—both theoretically and empirically—to shed light on the multifaceted aspects of social injustices and center the conversation around how identity and other categories (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, country of origin, immigration status, and second language) are influenced by

intersecting relations of oppression. In our exploration of immigrant women's issues through an intersectional feminist lens, we were not concerned with highlighting differences as we were to understand the complex implications of identity and power relations by zeroing in on inequalities because of one's gender, race, ethnicity, country of origin, immigration status, and English as a second language. Our exploration of the relationship between identity and power in the women's lived experience draws attention to structural inequalities at a micro (i.e., the TESL industry) and macro level (i.e., the Canadian workforce and society).

Starting the discussion section with an intersectional analysis of the two women of color's experiences was twofold. First, it extended the conversation from white women—a more privileged sub-category within the larger group of immigrant women—to women of color, who "are theoretically erased" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139) from existing single-axis or one-issue analyses. Second, by incorporating race, we avoided colorblind intersectionality (Carbado, 2013)—white women speaking for black women and women of color—while at the same time focusing on the multilayered nuances of privilege (or lack thereof) and difference prevalent across all six participant profiles. We believe that the intersectional feminist approach we took to analyze the women teachers' identity challenges gender barriers and decentralizes the conversation from focusing on white women to including the voices of black women and women of color as equally significant within the paradigm of skilled immigrant women teachers (primarily white women). Significantly, we argued that the role that gender, race, ethnicity, immigration status, and second language play in the participants' lived experience of identity showcases the kind of discrimination manifested against skilled immigrant teachers. We now raise the question of whether this argument can be extrapolated to discrimination against the broader community of (skilled) immigrants, which suggests the potential that intersectionality has to connect individuals with social struggles while at the same time contesting existing unbalanced power relations.

Implications

Importantly, this study revealed struggles and (ongoing) barriers that skilled immigrant women language teachers experience when entering the Canadian workforce. In doing so, this study brings to the table a discussion of women teachers' identity through the lens of intersectionality, whose "insistence on examining the dynamics of difference and sameness has played a major role in facilitating consideration of gender, race, and other axes of power in a wide range of political discussions and academic disciplines" (Cho et al., 2013, p. 788). To date, there is no such intersectionality study dedicated to skilled immigrant women language teachers' lived experience of identity within a Canadian context. The findings of this study suggest a need for change to be made at micro- and macro-levels—whether in communities of

practice, the TESL industry at large, or the mainstream Canadian workforce—to facilitate newcomers' relocating and professional reintegration. Specifically, more government and community support tailored for immigrant women—whose needs are different from those of immigrant men—is essential. The participants in this study were all surprised by the barriers they face(d) in the TESL industry; therefore, communicating those barriers more clearly would potentially help immigrant women teachers personally and professionally.

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Intersectionality and Women Academics in Indian Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Globally, women's representation in higher education has increased rapidly, leading to a dramatic rise in female labor force participation. In India, despite achieving gender parity in access to higher education, progress in closing gender gaps in the labor force remains unsatisfactory. Similar to enrollments in higher education, the percentage of women who pursue careers in higher education as faculty also reflects gender parity within faculty compositions. Women's representation in senior academic positions, however, is negligible, with less than 10% of institutions led by women and fewer than 30% holding professor positions. This study explores the experiences of three female academicians working in public higher education institutes in Delhi, India. Through an intersectional lens, it delves into the complex challenges arising from the interaction of multiple societal identities among Indian women academicians. The analysis highlights the obstacles women face at different stages of their careers, from enrollment and recruitment to career progression in higher education. The study finds that women's motivation and self-belief are crucial in navigating these challenges. Additionally, a conducive environment, supportive leadership, and flexible work schedules are pivotal in facilitating women's advancement in academia. This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge on Indian women in academia, emphasizing intersectional identity and lived experiences.

Keywords: *academia, higher education, India, intersectionality narratives, women.*

INTRODUCTION

Globally, women today enjoy access to higher education that their mothers and grandmothers could only dream about. Over the past few decades, women's higher education attainment has rapidly increased worldwide. The representation of women in higher education has tripled globally between 1995 and 2018 (UNESCO, 2020). Since the beginning of the twentieth century, in the USA and several developed countries, women have benefitted from educational attainment, leading to a dramatic increase in female labor force participation in their countries (Goldin & Katz, 2000; Greenwood et al., 2005). Similarly, in the twenty-first century developing world, many women have benefited from their country's improved education system by transitioning increasingly into the labor force, such as in Myanmar 41%, Malaysia 52% and China 68% (ILO,2024).

Contrary to the experiences of western and other developing countries with similar socioeconomic transitions and greater access to higher education, India's progress in closing gender gaps in the labor force has been unsatisfactory (Klasen et al., 2021). On the eve of independence, women made up less than 10% of total higher education students, and by the 2019–20 academic year, that percentage had jumped to 49% (Ministry of Education, 2021). However, according to the National Periodic Labor Force Participation Survey (PLFS) (2020–21), only 23.5% of women, compared to 72% of men with similar higher education degrees, participated in the labor force (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation,2022). Hence, India presents a unique case of women's rising enrolment in higher education, but inadequate labor force participation among highly educated women.

Similar to the higher education enrollment rate, the percentage of women who continue their careers in higher education as faculty represents gender parity within faculty compositions. Nevertheless, a closer examination of the data reveals their negligible representation in senior academic positions. According to a study by Banker and Banker (2017), only 54 out of 810 Indian institutions are headed by females. Similar to leadership positions, a stark gender disparity is revealed at professor and equivalent positions, with only 28% of women compared to 72% of men occupying this position. Notably, little has changed over the past five years, as the percentage of women in these roles is consistently low. In 2016–17, the figure stood at 26%, witnessing a marginal two percent rise to 28% by 2021 (Ministry of Education, 2021). As Indian higher education institutions become more gender diverse, with a rising number of women enrolling, the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions is a concern.

To understand the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions, we must explore how gender works with other structures of discrimination and oppression, such as skin color, caste, ethnicity, religion, and class, against women in higher education workspaces. These intersectional considerations are crucial as they contribute to the "recovery" of marginalized voices of women (Dhawan, 2019). By acknowledging and understanding how various forms of discrimination overlap and intersect, we might gain insights into the complex and multifaceted challenges women academicians face in Indian academia.

The term intersectionality has been recently imported into Indian academia. The application of an intersectional theoretical framework within studies of Indian higher education is still in its early stages of development (Gaikwad & Pandey, 2022; Dhawan et al., 2023).
This paper seeks to explore how the intersection of gender and other identities of Indian women associated with their caste, religion, class, and demography impact their experiences in academia. The existing studies in Indian higher education lack the application of intersectionality in the exploration of the experiences of women in academia (Gaikwad & Pandey, 2022; Bhattacharya et al., 2018; Gandhi & Sen, 2021; Mythili, 2017). This study aims to address this vacuum in scholarship by adopting intersectionality theory as the theoretical foundation to understand how multiple social identities interact and intersect to impact women's experiences in Indian academia.

This study presents the narratives of three female faculties presently working in the Indian higher education sector at different stages of their academic careers, belonging to different social backgrounds and regions of the country. This study explores the lived experiences of Indian women academicians, shedding light on the obstacles they encounter in academia at every stage, from their enrolment recruitment to career progression. Through an intersectional lens, this study aims to reveal the diverse and intricate barriers women face in Indian academia. From a policy standpoint, it is crucial to recognize that research grounded locally can produce interventions beneficial to women in diverse geographical and cultural contexts.

This paper begins by providing an overview of women's position in Indian higher education. It then delves into the existing literature on barriers to women academics in India, particularly exploring the complexities arising from their overlapping identities. The next section is methodology, followed by the presentation of narratives from three female faculty members, namely Suman, Asha, and Mona. The paper culminates with a section on discussion and concluding remarks that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Indian women in academia.

THE INDIAN SOCIAL CONTEXT

India as a country is diverse, with twenty-eight states, each with distinct languages and cultural practices. However, diversity is uniquely

interconnected with disparities between different social groups based on their gender, caste, ethnicity, and religion. Social structures and disparities are inherent to every country, with India historically structured by a stratified social order, with the caste system serving as the foundational element of India's social structure.

The Indian Caste System has been a prominent aspect that differentiates people in India based on various dimensions such as class, religion, region, tribe, gender, and language. This hierarchical classification system involves the categorization of people into four varnas based on their occupations, thereby shaping their access to wealth, power, and privilege. At the top of this hierarchy are the Brahmans (priests and scholars), followed by the Kshatriyas (political rulers and soldiers), the Vaishyas (merchants), and the Shudras (laborers, peasants, artisans, and servants). Notably, individuals engaged in occupations deemed "unclean," such as scavenging and skinning dead animals, are categorized as untouchables, constituting outcastes who are excluded from the graded caste system (Deshpande, 2010). In the post-independence era, the Constitution of India extended safeguarding measures for historically disadvantaged populations in India.

The terms Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) have been used to officially designate groups of historically disadvantaged people in India (Rani, 2018). The Constitution of India adopted the "schedule caste" definition offered by the British in the Government of India Act 1935, which defines "scheduled castes" as "castes, races, tribes, or specific segments or subsets within castes that, in the judgment of His Majesty in Council, appear to correspond to the categories of individuals previously referred to as "the depressed classes" (Article 341; Article 342; GOI, 1950).

Similarly, the definition for "Scheduled Tribes" has been preserved from the 1931 Census, where they were referred to as "backward tribes" residing in the "excluded" and "partially excluded" regions. Articles 14 and 15 of the Indian Constitution outlaw any discrimination based on caste, religion, race, or place of birth. Despite the legal proscription of caste-based divisions, their influence persists, exerting an impact on both tangible social interactions and the envisioned system of values.

Furthermore, there exist differences based on skin color, ethnic, linguistic, regional, religious, and class distinctions within Indian society, further compounded by immense urban-rural differences (Jacobson, 2004). Discrimination based on skin color is practiced unapologetically in Indian society through the construction of beauty standards and superior social status. In Indian society, the roots of discrimination based on skin color can be understood as having pre-colonial and post-colonial consequences. Indian society is historically stratified based on caste hierarchies where light skin color is associated with upper caste members and dark skin color with untouchables (Ayyar & Khandare, 2012). Moreover, the history of colonialism and the Mughal conquerors from Central Asia contributed to the

white presence in India, which led to a preference for a light complexion over dark skin (Haq, 2013). Therefore, a complex web of interconnected experiences is developed through the intersecting nexus of color, caste, religion, and gender, along with coercive practices in daily life.

Different groups have different notions of gender discrimination and gender power relationships. Gender-based discrimination does not conform to a uniform pattern or approach across all contexts, since women are not a homogenous category (Menon, 2015). Therefore, the experiences of women from various groups are different from one another, stemming from the intersecting dynamics of their diverse identities. Hence, it is critical to deconstruct the multi-dimensionality of Indian women's identities that are otherwise considered homogenous.

These hierarchal power structures—religious, linguistic, regional, ethnic, and other differences—continue to maintain gender differences and alter gender power relations in Indian society. These gender-based differentiations extend from society to organizations, including academic institutions (Vasavada, 2012). In India, certain professions, such as teaching, have traditionally attracted women. Despite this, within the higher education sector itself, the glass ceiling is real.

Women in Indian Higher education

The All-India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) 2021 conducted by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, portrays a relatively balanced representation of gender in faculty compositions, with men comprising 56 percent and women constituting 43 percent (Ministry of Education, 2021). A closer examination of the data, however, reveals that women are predominantly concentrated in lower-ranking academic positions. Men hold 72% of professor or equivalent positions, whereas women hold only 28%. Unsurprisingly, 43 percent of lecturer and assistant professor positions are occupied by women in Indian higher education. Caste-based differences are also evident in the representation of faculty members, with only 9 percent belonging to the Scheduled Caste and 2.5 percent belonging to the Scheduled Tribe. Another fascinating statistic is that women hold 66.5 percent of demonstrator/tutor positions, which are frequently contract-based and temporary. The data indicates that women have been concentrated at the lower rungs of the academic ladder, and very few women reach managerial and leadership positions.

In Indian universities, men hold a disproportionately large share of decision-making positions, including membership in executive, academic, and administrative bodies. Despite women historically favoring the education sector as their career choice, only a modest 5 percent of women currently assume leadership roles in the higher education sector (Gandhi & Sen, 2021). Although women have significantly entered higher education, the attainment of authoritative and leadership positions remains notably limited.

Consequently, women in Indian higher education contend with a dual experience of both inclusion and exclusion.

Within the broader scholarly discourse, Aiston and Yang (2017) characterize the existing body of literature addressing the underrepresentation of women in higher-level academic positions as the 'absent women discourse'. The existing literature brings out various obstacles to women's progress in academia, such as the glass ceiling (Sharma & Kaur, 2019), everyday sexism (Stainback et al., 2011), gender inequality (Ali & Rasheed, 2021), male-dominated networks (Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016), social roles (Morley & Crossouard, 2015), double burden, and stereotyping at work (Dominici et al., 2009; Chanana, 2022). Nevertheless, the present understanding of barriers to women's advancement in academia is primarily based on research conducted in Western contexts. While previous studies on Indian women in academia, albeit limited, have reflected on the prevalence of stereotypical ideas about women's roles, the inclination for masculine hegemony, and patriarchal attitudes in Indian society (Bhattacharya et al., 2018; Gandhi & Sen, 2021; Mythili, 2017), it is imperative to recognize that simply pluralizing the term "patriarchy" falls short of providing a comprehensive understanding.

In the Indian context, limited studies have attempted to explore the underlying causes of *why women academics continue to be disproportionately underrepresented.* The following section emphasizes various occupational and personal challenges faced by women in academia.

What pushes women back?

Hall and Sandler (1982) coined the term "chilly climate" to describe patterns of inequitable internal institutional factors such as inequitable distribution of work responsibilities, unwelcoming departments, biases in recruitment processes, and policies that neglect them because of their gender. Various studies on women's experiences in academia identify a "chilly climate" in universities, which leads them to progress either very slowly or infrequently to top positions (Ramsay, 1995; Mukherjee, 2000; Joyner & Preston, 1998; Chanana, 2003). And others have mentioned the glass ceiling that women encounter when progressing academically (David & Woodward, 1998; Cotter et al., 2001; Sharma & Kaur, 2019). In comparison to men, women face various obstacles to progress in academia.

In response to concerns about the under-representation of women in senior academic roles in higher education in South Asia, Morley and Crossouard (2015) conducted a study using available statistics data in six South Asian countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The study identified a number of complex factors contributing to this issue, including sociocultural norms, expectations placed on women, a lack of training, and the professional development of women in higher education. It was found that socio-cultural beliefs that women are preoccupied with domestic responsibilities reinforce stereotypes of women as unsuitable for leadership roles. Similar results were reported in a study conducted in

India by Khandelwal (2002), where men tend to take more noticeable and challenging roles whereas women take supportive roles in the workplace. Despite the passage of decades, the traditional gender roles of men as breadwinners and women as caretakers continue to remain strong in India's social and professional setups (Gandhi & Sen, 2021). These deeply ingrained gender stereotypes pose significant challenges to the advancement of women in academia.

Even as women climb the academic ladder, gender stereotypes continue to pose significant challenges. Leadership studies on Indian women highlight a bias toward masculine hegemony and stereotypes regarding women's roles, depicting them as secondary within organizations (Bhattacharya et al., 2018; Gandhi & Sen, 2021; Mythili, 2017). Furthermore, resistance to accepting female leaders, differential treatment towards women during selection for leadership roles, patriarchal organizational structures, and socio-cultural factors all serve as obstacles for Indian women leaders (Gaikwad & Pandey, 2022). Therefore, being a woman at the top is perceived as double-demanding, given the lack of support and acceptance from colleagues and pervasive gender stereotypes.

While existing research acknowledges the challenges, gender stereotypes, and disparities in academic positions, the role of leadership support in creating a supportive environment in academia has often been overlooked. Supportive leadership has the potential to establish a welcoming institutional climate that genuinely supports all faculty across gender and social backgrounds, fostering diversity and inclusion at campuses (Buch et al., 2011; Kelly et al., 2018; Aboramadan & Dahleez, 2022; Marchiondo et al., 2023). Academic leaders can play an integral role in acknowledging systemic discrimination rooted in the intersectional identities of women academicians and other forms of oppression present on campuses. They can potentially dismantle systems of inequalities at the individual, departmental, college, and institutional levels, thereby limiting the barriers women academics encounter.

While statistics and literature offer a broad overview of gender inequality, they fall short of explaining a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by women academicians through an exploration of their experiences. Within higher education, the patriarchal organizational culture often manifests in the processes that reflect and perpetuate traditional gender norms and power structures, typically favoring men over women (Townley, 1993; Zhao, 2008; Abalkhail, 2017; Gandhi & Sen, 2021). Studies suggest further that this patriarchal nature of universities creates organizational, structural, and policy hurdles hindering women's success, resulting in lower recruitment and delayed promotions in higher education (Bird, 2011; Savigny, 2014; Agarwala, 2015; Bagilhole & White, 2011). There is a plethora of research on obstacles to women's advancement in academia; nevertheless, the intersectional experiences of Indian women academics have

received less empirical attention. This study attempts to build a deeper understanding of the challenges experienced by women using an intersectional lens.

Chanana (2022) offers an example from India to illustrate how university processes perpetuate gender disparities by denying equal opportunities, impeding women's progress in academia. . In her study, she highlights how women's family duties are neglected while scheduling meetings, in contrast to the considerations made during the hiring process at academic institutions. The research further highlights how selection committees often ask gender-specific, socially-oriented questions to female candidates, a practice rarely applied to their male counterparts. For example, questions like "*If you are posted outstation, who will look after the children? Have you taken your husband's permission?*" indicates the bias. These internal practices significantly contribute to gender disparities within universities and shape the positioning of women within academia.

Traditional norms and societal expectations compound the challenges that women face in academia. With the dual pressures of domestic and professional responsibilities, a constraint is formed on how women perceive themselves. This creates gendered socialization limitations such as less professional mobility, limited mentorship, career breaks, and a lack of networking opportunities (Schipani et al., 2009; Von Alberti-Alhtaybat & Aazam, 2018; Chanana, 2003; Venkat et al., 2023). While various studies have emphasized the factors that impact women's progress in academia, a comprehensive exploration of these factors from socio-cultural and identity perspectives remains significantly under-researched. The identified gender-specific traits and explanations necessitate investigation through the multiple identities of Indian women, considering factors such as their caste, class, demography, etc. The following section delves deeper into the complexities of overlapping identities shaping the experiences of women in academia.

The Overlapping Identities

In "Mapping the Margins," Crenshaw (1990) introduces intersectionality theory as a framework to examine the situation of being at the intersection of various inequalities. The notion has been described in diverse terms, ranging from an analytical tool (Collins, 1998) to a buzzword (Davis, 2008), a concept (Crenshaw, 1989), a perspective (Shields, 2008), and even a paradigm (Hancock, 2007). According to this approach, gender-based inequalities are exasperated by various factors such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and more. Crenshaw primarily focused on the challenges faced by women of color in recognizing their marginalization in both feminist and anti-racism discourses. By incorporating the notion of intersectionality, which takes into account the multiple grounds of identity, she aimed to examine how the social world is constructed, especially for women of color.

Similarly, Indian society is immensely multi-layered, marked by divisions based on gender, skin color, class, caste, religion, ethnicity,

language, and demographics (Gaikwad et al., 2022). As the national-level data (Ministry of Education, 2021) highlights the under-representation of women in senior academic roles, similarly, the caste differences[1] in faculty positions are also underlined in the national-level data. The share of faculty belonging to Schedule Caste (SC) is only 9%, followed by 2.5% from Schedule Tribe (ST) and 32% from Other Backward Classes (OBC). This data on Indian higher education, despite affirmative action mandating reservations for these disadvantageous groups in faculty positions (Varghese et al., 2019), highlights that these groups still fall short of adequate reservation. The intersection of their overlapping identities, which are traditionally underrepresented, can result in unique experiences and disadvantages exclusive to each distinct identity. Therefore, without taking into account the intersectional identities that build perceptions within institutions, researchers may fail to gain a complete understanding of faculty experiences.

Sabharwal, Henderson, and Joseph (2020) used quantitative and qualitative data from a large-scale national study of social inequalities in higher education in India and focused on faculty participation in conferences and professional development activities. The study reported that women from marginalized groups not only experienced discrimination based on their caste but also encountered exclusion based on their gender. This phenomenon of "double discrimination" significantly increased disadvantages for these women. Various disadvantages were uncovered during the interviews conducted for the study, such as unfair distribution of work, unfavorable working conditions, a lack of support from senior colleagues, and a sense of isolation and exclusion within the institutions. The women faculty members were found to experience a threefold burden stemming from their gender, caste, and class identities.

A significant challenge for researchers and higher education institutes lies in identifying these overlapping identities and finding ways to recognize and respect them. Encouraging inclusive environments extends beyond policymaking and is based on a critical synthesis of documented enablers and barriers. Instead, a deeper intersectional examination is essential for revealing the substantial gaps in the body of knowledge concerning the experiences of female faculty in Indian academia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used the feminist methodology of telling the narrated stories of the embodied experiences of Indian women in academia. The feminist methodology emerged in response to the limitations of traditional methodology in adequately capturing the experiences of women marginalized in academic research (Naples, 2007). The feminist methodology can be described by its dual dimension: firstly, the construction of new knowledge

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[1] For caste differences, refer to section "The Indian Social Context" on page 4.

derived from women's lives, and secondly, the production of social change. By centering on women's experiences, it reveals many differences as well as similarities in their experiences of class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion (Harding, 1987). It is particularly relevant for the study, as it avoids stereotyping and universalizing "women" in a homogenous category, facilitating a deeper understanding of women's subjectivities in academia.

The qualitative approach of narrative inquiry was used to gather data for the study. Narrative inquiry is a way to study human lives and experiences embedded in them as a source of knowledge and understanding for others to study (Clandinin, 2016). The importance of using narratives as data has been extensively discussed in feminist literature (Bloom, 1998; Chase, 1995; DeVaul, 1999). The narratives serve as primary data through which we can explore how different power relations and dominant ideologies are upheld, perpetuated, or challenged within the discourses of the narratives. The narratives illustrate how women navigate their "exceptional" gender roles in their everyday experiences, at work, at home, and over the course of a lifetime (Bloom, 1998).

In the Indian context, Rege (1998; 2006) has used narratives as a tool to highlight the struggles and experiences of marginalized women, informing the discourse on caste and gender. Rege (1998; 2006) significantly contributed a new alternative tool of narratives, an area not much explored in Indian academia, through which she spotted the excluded women, scheduled castes, or advivasis'[2] scheduled tribals' voices and perspectives, which earlier remained on the periphery of the cognitive structure of Indian academia.

The narratives in this study are drawn from a larger ongoing thesis study examining the experiences of female faculty in Indian higher education (Khanna, 2024). The ongoing data collection for the study aims for semi-structured interviews with 30 Indian female faculty. The participants in the larger study include female faculties across disciplines and academic positions in central and state universities in the Delhi/NCR region of India. This study includes a non-probability, purposive sampling technique (Guest et al., 2006). While selecting the sample, it was taken into consideration that the sampled population was representative of caste, ethnicity, geography, language, and class.

A detailed literature review was done to develop the questionnaire for the semi-structured interview, focusing on an educational journey, career history, enablers, and challenges experienced by women in their academic journey. The interview questions were left open-ended to capture any potential unexpected themes that may emerge. The semi-structured interviews lasted about 30–90 minutes. The in-depth interviews were conducted in the English language. The interviews were recorded with the written consent of

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[2] Adivasi is a Sanskrit word that refers to Adi (ancient) and Vasi (residents). It is commonly used to refer to tribal communities across the country.

the participants. The respondents are referred to by pseudonyms to protect their identities.

The analysis of interview transcriptions draws from the work Writing Caste/Writing Gender-Narrating Dalit Women`s Testimonios (Rege, 2006). In her book, she unravels that a large part of feminist discourse in India consists of autobiographies authored by women from privileged castes and classes. Through her work, she draws attention to the life narratives that encapsulate the struggles, oppression, and humiliation faced by Dalit women. Furthermore, she identifies how caste, class, and gender work together to oppress women in everyday life (Govinda, 2022). Rege (2006) significantly contributes to reimagining knowledge, pedagogies, political struggles, and higher educational practices from a Dalit feminist standpoint.

Similarly, in the American context, Crenshaw (1989) introduced the term intersectionality in Mapping the Margins to refer to the experiences of Black American women, drawing attention to multiple intersections of inequality based on gender, class, and color. However, the context of the United States has its own unique historical and social dynamics related to race, slavery or forced labor, and immigration. Crenshaw's analytical framework falls short of capturing the intersectional complexity of caste, class, tribe, ethnicity, religion, and gender in the Indian context. The analysis of a caste-based society like India involves underlining the gendered nature of caste and class oppressions and addressing the long-lived histories of struggle. Hence, this study utilizes Rege's feminist research, as it emphasizes the issues of power and hierarchy structured by caste, class, and gender in the Indian context. The idea that the complexities of reality are multifaceted makes it necessary to understand them in the relevant contexts. Pieterse (as cited in Mukherjee, 2019) argued:

> While theories react to other theories and often emphasize differences rather than complementarities, the complexities encountered in reality are such that we usually need several analytics in combination (p.1).

Although both Crenshaw (1989; 1990) and Rege (1998;2006) delved into the issue of intersectionality, they applied distinct parameters, each relevant to their specific contexts. Crenshaw utilized racism, capitalism, and patriarchy, while Rege focused on caste, class, religion, tribes, and languages, which align more closely with the Indian context. Hence, the analysis of this study draws on Rege's feminist research. This will avoid the incomplete interpretation and limited understanding of data, therefore offering a deeper insight into the distinctive challenges encountered by Indian women academicians, who occupy a unique position within India's social hierarchy.

Participants

The narratives of three Indian female faculty working in central universities were selected to explore experiences and analyze the intersectional identities, such as caste, scheduled tribes, skin color and

religion of female faculty in Indian higher education. Out of 30 narratives of women gathered as part of the doctoral thesis research, three narratives were selected to write this paper because they represented diversity among Indian women academics in terms of challenges concerning their caste, religion, and geography at different stages of their academic careers and the innovative ways through which they navigated through these challenges.

RESULTS

Narratives of Women in Academia
Suman:
        The first narrative is of Suman, who hails from a rural area of eastern Uttar Pradesh, India, where she was academically nurtured during her schooling and higher education. She grew up in a middle-income household within a joint family. Currently serving as an assistant professor in the social science department at a central university in New Delhi, Suman brings a decade of teaching experience in higher education and credits her academic achievements to her parents' expectations and support. She does, however, recall the societal expectation, shared by her parents and extended family, for her to marry after completing her undergraduate degree. It mirrors the findings of various studies that validate women's higher education attainment to have greater links with their marriage prospects than workforce participation in India (Klasen & Pieters, 2012; 2015; Chatterjee et al., 2018).
        Despite the prevailing mindset, no one could impede her from pursuing her education after graduation. She continued to pass entrance exams and gain admission into highly reputed higher education institutes within the state due to her intellectual curiosity. Suman's experience adds valuable insights to the body of knowledge that excelling in highly competitive exams and demonstrating her aptitude enabled her to pursue higher education beyond graduation.
        Furthermore, she always dreamed of studying at Delhi's prestigious higher education institutes, such as Jawaharlal Nehru University or Delhi University, to pursue her Ph.D. She was unable to fill out application forms for these institutes because her parents would not allow her to stay far away from her home. The restrictions on her geographical mobility limited her options for accessing higher education. Furthermore, she was concerned about the questions that might be raised by society and extended family members. In Indian society, women's decision-making is complex, as their power of choice and action is limited (Ghosh et al., 2015). The decision-making process is influenced by a complex interplay of socio-cultural factors. Within the Indian family and kinship networks, women often need to take into account others' expectations and meet responsibilities towards them (Kachuk & Rege, 2003). Women's decision-making spaces and authority are significantly constrained at various levels, including the community, extended family, and household. She reflected on a period during her post-

graduate studies when she and her parents had to confront these questions. She shared:

> During my post-graduate classes, I had to travel far from my village by public transport because of the long distance of my department from my home, because of which my extended family members questioned not only my security but also my virginity.

Additionally, it was not only social barriers that she faced but also financial challenges during her higher education journey. Her brothers were growing academically strong and were studying medicine to become future doctors. Coming from a middle-class family with a rural background, the family struggled with persistent financial constraints, particularly given the high costs of medical education. Due to the similar ages of the siblings, Suman described how she was on the verge of dropping out of her post-graduate degree due to a financial crisis. She shared:

> I was pursuing my post-graduate degree when I witnessed my father going through an acute financial crisis. I was supposed to give up my education because my parents' financial support had to go to my brothers.

Once she got admission to a Ph.D. program, it was clear that her goal was to teach at a higher education institute. She got married during her PhD, and her husband resided in Delhi. Unlike her peers in Ph.D., she was not free to apply for academic positions anywhere in India due to sociocultural barriers and security issues as a woman. Once again, restrictions on her geographical mobility reduced her pool of opportunities in the job market. She could only apply in eastern Uttar Pradesh or Delhi, near where her husband resided. She thought her struggles were over once she succeeded in getting a job at one of her dream universities in her preferred city, but little did she know it was only the beginning of her struggles.

When she began working at her dream university, she realized that her research techniques and teaching pedagogies were not adequate as per the university standards. She explained further:

> I had an education in Eastern Uttar Pradesh; I had a very different perspective on research, which was very normal for someone coming from a similar economic and rural background as mine. My approach to research was entirely different from the one being undertaken at the department.

Despite this, during these professionally difficult times at the department, she had no support or guidance from the senior faculty or other colleagues at the department. Similar to the findings of the study conducted by Sabharwal et al. (2019), there exists a feeling of isolation and a lack of support from senior faculties toward faculty who come from different social backgrounds. She further mentioned that she faced challenges at different levels, defining those challenges as follows:

The first challenge that came as soon as I joined the department was choosing what subject I would teach. I started preparing myself to teach the subject in which I did my Ph.D. and passed my National Eligibility Exam (NET, JRF). However, I discovered many others who have been part of the department for a much longer time than me (mostly men) were engaged in teaching that subject. I soon realized that there was not enough space for me. When I insisted, the others claimed the curriculum to be much different from what I studied during my higher education (in eastern Uttar Pradesh).

Here, Suman reveals her feelings of isolation and loneliness, which correspond to a sense of denial of equal access to space. Nevertheless, Suman's intellectual curiosity and hard work paved her path toward navigating through challenges in academia. Describing her strategy, she said:

That phase of my academic journey was like a dark forest; I was unsure if I would ever be able to come out of it. I started an in-depth study of the curriculum and available resources. Instead of calling this phase of my academic journey difficult or worse, I like to refer to it as the evolution phase of my academic journey. It took me one full year, all alone, but I was able to manage.

Suman's narrative demonstrates how she was able to overcome the obstacles because of her optimistic approach, strong sense of self, and commitment. Suman's narrative sets her apart because she shattered the glass ceiling, proving that her gender and social background, belonging to a rural part of India often associated with underdevelopment, do not dictate her competence or ambition in academia. Nevertheless, engaging herself in research, expanding her knowledge base, and keeping her self-confidence high demonstrated her academic excellence and innovative strategy to progress in academia. Suman's journey also emphasizes the nuanced interplay between her gender and regional identity, highlighting the need to pay attention to the complex intersections of various factors that influence individual experiences, especially for women academics.

Asha:

The next narrative is of Asha, who is presently leading a public university in India and belongs to a tribal community in India. She has more than three decades of teaching and administrative experience in academia. She grew up in a middle-income household and was nurtured in an academic and religious environment with a value system that prioritized the principles of promoting social justice. Since childhood, she has had a strong aspiration to pursue a career in higher education as a teacher, driven by her commitment to addressing the needs of society. After completing her schooling, she began applying to higher education institutes. She was surprised to be denied admission to a renowned community college, and she suspected that her gender played a role in the decision.

Despite the existence of Article 15 in the Indian Constitution (1949), which explicitly forbids discrimination based on sex, caste, race, or religion, the refusal of admission based on gender highlights how Indian educational policies are formulated within a narrow framework in which gender concerns find little meaningful space in final policy implementation (Chanana, 2011). She recollects:

> I wanted to study mathematics at a prestigious college in my state; nevertheless, I was denied admission because they permitted admission only to boys in that particular college in mathematics.

Soon after her denial of admission to the prestigious college in the state because of her gender, Asha's parents advised her to look for more options outside their state. The availability of higher education institutions in India was limited during that period, the late 1980s. The only good options were Delhi and southern India. While caste-based hierarchies within the Indian context have received much attention, it is necessary to acknowledge that hierarchies and discrimination persist beyond the caste-based system (Srinivas, 2003; Desai & Dubey, 2012; Jodhka, 2017). The experiences of the tribal population significantly differ from those of the scheduled-caste population. The tribal indigenous population of India faces even lower status compared to those placed at the bottom rung of the caste-based hierarchy. This additional layer of hierarchy and discrimination stems from their isolation and social detachment from the broader mainstream population (Mitra, 2006).

Asha's approach to selecting a college reflects the deeply entrenched hierarchy based on tribal affiliation and skin color[3] embedded in Indian society. Indians exhibit diverse skin tones and facial features that often correspond to the geographical regions they originate from. For instance, Indians from the northern regions tend to have lighter skin, whereas those in Southern India, often have darker skin tones. Most Indians practice discrimination based on individual's skin tone with caste, religion, class, region and gender also playing a significant role (Mishra, 2015). It extends to systematically operate in Higher education institutes, as Asha describes:

> My social background can be identified in Northern India because of my features and dark skin. and I assumed that probably I would not to be subjected to discrimination based on my appearance coming from a tribal background, therefore, I preferred Southern India, because of my complexion and features I assumed that I will be identified under a general label of north Indian

However, things were not as simple as she assumed. As soon as she joined higher education, she was exposed to an environment of discrimination and social hierarchical systems in everyday conversation on campus. To

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[3] For discrimination based on skin color, refer to section "The Indian Social Context" on page 4.

overcome the questions about her background, she resorted to sports. Asha started playing for her college hockey team. She wanted to subsume her social background identity of a dark-skinned tribal woman. Therefore, she adopted the identity of a player to avoid questions about her background. She shared that being in athletics was to find one's identity besides my name and caste-based identity.

By subsuming her identity through sports, Asha found an alternative space where personal achievements and capabilities can define her identity rather than societal stereotypes associated with one's caste, ethnicity, or gender. For her, sports provided a bridge to empower herself by fostering self-confidence and a sense of achievement. She viewed it as a platform to showcase her skills and abilities, contributing to a more empowered self-identity. Sports were a means through which she navigated and negotiated her multiple identities, creating a nuanced sense of self within the higher education environment.

After completing her higher education, she joined a teaching position at a university. Along with teaching and research, she was always active in the membership of various committees and administrative tasks. Throughout her three-decade-long career, she achieved the pinnacle of success by attaining the highest position within a university. She attributed her success to the inclusive environment of the institute, which ensured the representation of all groups, and the support provided by colleagues and senior faculty. This included flexible timing, guidance, academic freedom, and various other forms of training and mentoring. In addition to the inclusive work environment, she had a supportive family where her husband shared equal domestic responsibilities. She mentioned:

I have been blessed to have an environment that did not put me in a spot all alone. I had the support of my family throughout in terms of sharing domestic responsibilities, whether it was my husband or my children.

The support at home and inclusion at work enabled Asha to succeed and progress in academia. However, reaching the highest position came with its challenges because of her intersectional identity as a tribal woman. In India, tribal communities are enormously diverse and heterogeneous with regard to their language, demographic traits, modes of livelihood, cultural exposure, and practices. Although they exhibit considerable diversity among themselves, they all have one point in common: they differ from the dominant community in the region. Such people have always been seen as aliens and outsiders (Xaxa, 2004). The expectations and consequent tensions generated by such positions affect women more than men. The annual report from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India (2023) reveals substantial disparities between Indian Tribal men and women regarding literacy, workforce engagement, and health status. Thus, tribal women's challenges encompass not only the discrimination associated with their tribal identity but

also their gender. This highlights a distinctive interplay of overlapping identities within tribal communities in India, emphasizing the depth and complexity of intersectionality concerning women belonging to these communities.

Reflecting on her appointment as the leader of the university, Asha recounted two key expectations conveyed by students, subordinates, and colleagues. She clarified that the first expectation was articulated as "we have lots of expectations from you," while the second was expressed with the sentiment "you are like our mother."

The first expectation is rooted in her social background, and the second is based on her gender. Ensuring social justice in higher education is a universal responsibility for leaders, irrespective of tribe, caste, class, or gender. Expectations for her were linked to her social background and gender, suggesting she should champion social justice based on these factors. This contradicts the universal principle that all leaders, irrespective of personal attributes, share responsibility for social justice. Similarly, the perception of a motherly figure is problematic. Many studies have emphasized how women leaders are often expected to adopt a mothering role by different groups, including students, colleagues, senior management, and society in general (Crisp, 2020). The leadership position of the institute should not be limited to gender stereotypes. These unfair expectations hinder female academics' progress (Crisp, 2020). Just like their male counterparts, women should be evaluated based on their qualifications and skills rather than gender stereotypes.

Finally, Asha's narrative presents various incidences of caste-based discrimination in higher education and her innovative approaches to dealing with these biases. The inclusive and supportive workplace and domestic environment enabled her to progress in academia. Nevertheless, despite attaining the highest position in academia, she still had to confront unjust expectations stemming from her intersectional identity as a woman belonging to a tribal background. Asha's narrative adds a new perspective on the study of women's leadership in academia. It provides valuable insights into the unprecedented challenges faced by women leaders to gain acceptance from colleagues and students, irrespective of their social background and gender.

Mona:

Finally, Mona's narrative is different because it adds a religious and geographical dimension to women's identity in India. It is commonly assumed that all Sikhs are the same, but there are diverse beliefs and practices within the Sikh community, which vary according to geographical location. Punjab, India, is the birthplace of Sikhism, where the culture is deeply ingrained in the everyday lives of people in the state. Mona's belongs to an educated Sikh family in Delhi.

In states such as Delhi, Sikhs often encounter a cosmopolitan and diverse environment that influences their language, cultural beliefs, and

practices. Therefore, while Sikhs share a common religious foundation, the expression of their identity can vary significantly across geographical locations. Mona presently works as a professor at the Central University in Delhi, India. She completed her graduation and post-graduation in Delhi. She always had an academically supportive environment at home. She was very keen to join the workforce after completing her degree. As soon as she completed her post-graduation, she joined a special education school as a teacher. And later, she appeared for a lecturer's position in the state of Punjab. Despite having little expectation after the interview, she was offered the job.

Due to their conservative beliefs, Mona's father opposed her moving from Delhi to Punjab. Furthermore, Mona's father never permitted his daughters to participate in school or college trips. Nevertheless, the support from her mother and the availability of a working women's hostel on the campus enabled Mona to convince her father. She recalled how difficult it was to convince her father; she said:

> My father would not allow me to join this job because we had no relatives or friends there, and I had never moved out of home without my family members accompanying me. However, my mother rebelled at home and convinced my father to let me join the job.

She joined a newly established department at the university, where she found herself as the sole woman with expertise in the relevant discipline. Other colleagues were shifted from different social science departments to the newly established department. However, Mona's acceptance into the department was not easy because she belonged to a different state and a distinct group of Sikhs; her Punjabi accent and slight differences in cultural practices made her easily identifiable as an outsider. She explained further:

> People from different states were not easily accepted into the Institute. I was a woman from a Sikh background, but others at the Institute were Jatt Sikhs, who were different from the Sikh group to which I belonged. Along with that, I was a woman of substance[4], which made my acceptance more difficult in the department.

The male-female competition was always there. However, the competition was not healthy. Mona recounted two incidents. The initial incident occurred shortly after she joined the department. She said:

> In the beginning, I was given the wrong syllabus and wrong reports from seniors about me. In the timetable, I was deliberately given only the first and last class. However, I took my complaint to the Vice-Chancellor, and he understood how I was being harassed in the department. He supported me and talked to my Head of Department about the same. The issues were resolved after that.

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[4]Mona was vocal in academic and administrative discussions, and she didn't shy away from expressing her opinions.

Throughout this period, the Vice-Chancellor and administration were supportive. But, soon after the Vice-Chancellor changed, the work environment in the department quickly reverted to being chaotic. During the early 1990s, computers were newly introduced in Indian universities, and the state government provided each department with a single computer. The computer was placed in the department office for everyone to use. Mona was always curious to learn new skills, and soon she excelled in creating PowerPoint presentations and typing her class lessons, research work, and more on the department computer. However, her senior male colleague would often engage in gossip with others, criticizing Mona for constantly using the computer and wasting her time. The reaction from Mona's colleague highlights Agarwalas' (2018) point that some men find it difficult to swallow if a female academician is doing well. Mona could always sense the ego and insecurity in him when senior faculty or students appreciated her.

During this period, she was also completing her Ph.D., and she went on study leave for fieldwork. Upon her return, Mona's world was shattered when she discovered that during her absence, someone had deleted 80% of her data from the department computer and had password-protected it. Fortunately, Mona had managed to save a portion of her data on floppy disks before her departure, but it was not a complete backup. She recalled her harrowing experience:

> I was so scared that I started crying as soon as I found someone had deleted my data (class slides, Ph.D. data, research work, etc.). My other colleagues suggested I take this matter to the new Vice-Chancellor. I went straight to the Vice-Chancellor while I was crying through the lobby without waiting for him to finish his meeting with a professor from the physics department. With God's grace, he listened to me patiently, and after some inquiry, my senior male colleague was reported to have done this out of jealousy. The Vice-Chancellor suspended my senior male colleague right away and called the IT team, and the physics professor who was in the office at that time helped to recover my data.

These two incidents echo Westring et al.'s (2012) identification of a key area of supportive leadership that plays an important role in establishing an institutional culture that is conducive to women's academic access. In both incidents, the Vice-Chancellors took Mona's complaints seriously and took action. An important line of research also suggests that inclusive leadership requires intentional effort and a commitment to creating an inclusive culture (Schiltman & Davies, 2023). Despite experiencing a lack of acceptance within the department due to her intersectional identity as a woman from a different religious group and state, the leader's commitment to creating an inclusive culture was evident in both incidents described in Mona's narrative.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has aimed to emphasize women's lived experiences in Indian academia with an intersectional lens. The narratives highlight the intersectional identity of women academics based on their caste, geography, and religion. These narratives present diverse experiences of women at different stages of their careers: Suman (assistant professor), Mona (professor), and Asha (leader of the university). It reflects the experiences of women at different stages of academic progress.

A core finding of this study is that women experience challenges at every stage of their lives, from enrolling in higher education to recruitment, and later at every step of progressing up the academic ladder. The intersectional identities of women contribute to the gendered challenges that they face in academia.

The restrictions on geographical mobility were found to acutely limit women's opportunities for career advancement. Various studies have highlighted restrictions on women's mobility due to husbands' careers, children's education, or social-cultural barriers as a challenge (Rosenfeld & Jones, 1987; Clarke et al., 2013; Momeni et al., 2022; Prozesky & Beaudry, 2019). Nevertheless, this study emphasizes the adverse consequences of such restrictions, as they hinder the progress of women in ascending the academic career ladder.

Undoubtedly, the feeling of isolation within the institute because of their gender (being a woman) and intersectional identity is challenging for women. All three narratives have also highlighted the feeling of isolation and the internal struggles regarding their identities, encompassing womanhood, social backgrounds, religion, and being an academician.

Studies such as Venkat et al. (2023) and Sabharwal et al. (2019) have also found faculty members from disadvantaged social groups excluded from social connections, which leads to isolation and deprivation. However, these studies have not emphasized how the feeling of isolation can be overcome.

The narratives presented in the paper reflect on how their self-confidence, motivation, and belief in themselves enabled them to overcome the feeling of isolation and separation. Unsurprisingly, supportive leadership also prevented female academicians from dropping out and continuing to progress in higher education. The conducive work environment, support from senior faculty, flexible timings, and democratic representation of all groups in the institutional committees were found to be other enabling factors that provided female academicians various opportunities to learn the skills and training in administrative work to progress to leadership positions in academia.

The overarching theme of the study was expectations from women based on their gender and social background. The narratives highlight that women were expected to act in a certain way professionally. If they failed to do so, they were not well accepted at the institute. For instance, Asha's

narrative illustrates how, even after reaching the highest step of the academic ladder, the expectations of her leadership were rooted in her gender and social background rather than her capabilities and skills. Women as leaders are expected to have traits such as kindness, empathy, interpersonal sensitivity, and nurturing (Kubu, 2018). Therefore, even though the institutes' leadership norms may be gender neutral, the expectations shared by peers, subordinates, and students often confuse the managerial role with the gender role of women leaders. Similarly, it is the responsibility of all leaders, regardless of their own social background, to ensure social justice in institutes.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study underscores the intersectional challenges faced by women in Indian academia at various stages of their careers, exploring the narratives of Suman (assistant professor), Mona (professor), and Asha (Vice-Chancellor). The findings reveal that women encounter obstacles from enrolment in higher education as a student to career progression in higher education as a professional. Women face a variety of gendered challenges based on differences in their intersectional identities. A significant overarching theme is the imposition of traditional gender and social background-based expectations on women in academia. Even at leadership levels, expectations are rooted in gendered stereotypes rather than skills.

The challenges women academicians face due to gender and intersectional identity are recurring, as emphasized by the narratives. While previous studies acknowledge these challenges, our findings highlight that self-confidence, motivation, and supportive leadership play pivotal roles in overcoming them. Female academicians are also able to benefit from a conducive work environment, senior faculty support, flexible work schedules, and inclusive institutional policies and practices, according to the study.

This paper contributes to the existing body of knowledge on women in academia, with a specific focus on the diversity of challenges faced by Indian women because of their intersectional identities. This study shares strategies on how women navigate through these challenges. It adds empirical evidence to the existing body of knowledge about women academicians in Indian higher education.

In the future, the empirical findings of this study can serve as an initial step toward exploring women's experiences working in Indian higher education from an intersectional perspective. Furthermore, this study is based on a sample collected from one state in India, leaving huge scope for primary research to gather narratives of Indian women academics across the country from an intersectional perspective.

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An Intersectionality-based Policy Analysis Framework: Advancing the Multiple Equity Measures

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to devise intersectionality-based policy analysis to advance multiple equity measures, with the in-depth analysis of access to land resources by Dalit community in rural-agrarian settings, and a special focus on their current state and causes of landlessness and its effect on social exclusion/inclusion. Contributing to the theoretical debate on caste and class formation, the study depicts on how the caste system influences land ownership and access. It addresses the complex and multiple inequalities embedded in the lived experiences of Dalit communities, reflecting their lower social status and class position in Nepali society. The intersectionality framework proves highly relevant for examining innovative policy approaches related to land accessibility among Dalits, facilitating the translation of intricate knowledge into accessible messages essential for a new policy discourse that prevents the concentration of resources and services in the hands of elites within marginalized groups.

Keywords: Caste system and hierarchy, historical privileges, intersectionality, multiple equity measures, policy discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Land is considered to be the most critical productive asset in an agrarian and developing country like Nepal (Regmi, 1999). In addition, it is the broad economic indicator and the measurement of socio-economic standard of living that signifies the social power, prestige, pride, dignity and a symbol of prosperity (ICIMOD, 2000, CBS, 2006). Looking back to the historical and structural deprivations in the Nepalese context, access to land and resource entitlement along with the economic, social and political opportunities are considered as the key to resolving such deprivation (Amartya Sen, 1981). This will be the emancipating pathway for the overall socio-economic empowerment, poverty alleviation, good governance and social inclusion in the Nepalese society (Nepali, 2021). The potential gain in the labor market through increased bargaining power of the owner and in the international labor market through collateral of land to obtain loan for seasonal migration has been contributing factor in such empowerment of the Nepalese (CBS, 2006).

Unfortunately, landlessness prevails among the Dalits of Nepal. Landlessness is defined as the state of being devoid of access to or private ownership of land required to meet the basic needs and fulfilment of human rights (Sinha, 1984; Shrestha, 2019). It is one of the main causes and effects of poverty. The land access of less than 0.1 ha or less than 2 ropani is considered landless in agricultural context. A study by UNDP (2004) and CBS (2006) states that around 24.5 percent of landless and 8 percent of semi-landless fall below the poverty line due to the inequitable and biased distribution of land. While the top 5 percent hold around 37 percent of land, the bottom 47 percent hold only 15 percent of arable land (CBS, 2002; and UNDP, 2004).

The social hierarchy formed based on the caste system is sufficient for class distinction (Seddon, 1987; Müller-Böker, 1981). The same has been the basis of class formation in Nepal, where the caste system directly corresponds to land ownership and economic prosperity. Particularly, the lower hierarchy placed Dalits have reduced access to economic resources and are excluded from the society, due to their limited or no ownership of land (ILO, 2005). Most Dalits lived on government-owned land like Aailani, forest land or any public land without any legal right or land certificate (Adhikari, 2006). Though bearing the possession, they lack the right or command of the land resources. Also, the access to land is determined by the social institutions and set of rules allowing the privileged group (in this context, the upper

hierarchy, i.e, Brahmin, Chhetri, Janajatis) ownership of land through Birta, Raikar/Jagir or Rakam system and supported by other formal and informal law, legislation and social practices. The Dalits were, also hereto, devoid of land resource and in the state of landlessness. In this context, the social debate and discourses on social exclusion, land access and ownership in relation to the caste system and social hierarchy have been pertinent in Nepal (Nepali, 2021), where caste system is used as a weapon by the landlords and capitalists to exploit the lower Dalits.

This state of extensively spread landlessness has a significant impact on the livelihood of Dalits having marginal or small land holdings and food deficiency (Dahal et. Al, 2002). They are much vulnerable to economic shocks and food insecurity. Looking from the gender perspective, Dalit women's land access and ownership is minimal and is almost negligible in the Madheshi Dalit women (MoAC, 2008).

Different laws and legislation have been formulated and implemented regarding the land issues in Nepal. Attempts have been made for land and agrarian reform by securing tenancy rights to the tillers, an equitable distribution of land, and adoption of scientific methods in farming (Sharma, 2004). Amendments are being done to the Land Reform Act, 1964. The Squatters Commission was established in different time periods. However, these efforts do not seem sensitive from a Dalit perspective as there is a lack of substantive constitutional and legal provisions and loopholes within the provisions that are subject to various misinterpretations and ultimately act as barriers to the inclusion of Dalits in the development. This further obstructs their right to land not guaranteeing their socio-economic and political rights (Nepali, 2021).

With the institutionalization of federalism and the socio-economic and political transformation in the country, land issues and resources are given due priority. These issues have been widely reflected in the Five Year Development Plans, election manifestoes, annual programs of government and other plans and policies. In this context, this paper assists in forming a substantive basis for Dalit inclusion in the current policy for their socio-economic and political empowerment with disaggregation of facts and figures by caste and intersectionality. Intersectionality helps to understand the ways by which multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not considered in conventional decision making. Here, the paper examines the accessibility of the Dality community to the land resources with an intersectionality perspective in terms of caste, class and gender among Hill Dalit, Madheshi Dalit and Marginalized

Dalit in three study districts of Nepal, namely Mahottari, Kaski and Dang. Specifically, the paper attempts to answer the following research questions:

i. What is the current state of accessibility of land resources, especially the possession and ownership of land, in Dalit communities in the study areas?

ii. What are the underlying causes of landlessness and its consequences in Dalits' social life regarding the nature and extent of social exclusion and inclusion?

iii. What are the contributions of the existing and previous land policies, legislations and programs to promote access to land resources through scientific land reforms from a Dalit perspective and intersectionality within the Dalit community?

Therefore, this paper generates and analyzes the empirical data of land statistics in relation to Dalit people in the research region to provide an explanation of the underlying causes of Dalits' landlessness, which is highly debated and subject to various interpretations. It explores the effects of landlessness on social exclusion and inclusion of the Nepali Dalits and contributes to the debate on caste and class relations in the agrarian society. It finally suggests the important points to the ongoing discourse on "scientific land reform" from the *Dalit* perspective with elements of intersectionality and gender.

METHODOLOGY

The study was primarily based on the field survey of three districts of Nepal, namely Mahottari, Kaski and Dang, selected purposively due to the following criteria:

i. There is a higher concentration of marginalized Dalits in these areas (Gandarva in Kaski, Badi in Dang and Madeshi Dalits in Mahottari)

ii. In addition, the selected districts have other Dalits like Kami, Damai, Sarki from Hill Dalit and Chamar and Paswan from Madhesi Dalit.

Intersectionality is a methodological approach defined and devised to explore and understand the complexity of social life in multiple dimensions (e.g., multiple forms of subordination and landlessness based on gender, caste/ethnicity and class) by use of analytical category (McGall, 2005). There are three approaches by intersectionality.

i. Anti-categorical complexity deconstructs analytical categories due to a great skepticism of using categories.

ii. Inter-categorical complexity provisionally adopts existing analytical category to assess social relations and inequality.

iii. Intra-categorical complexity, lying between the above two forms of intersectionality, acknowledges the stable and durable relationship that social category represents and focuses on social groups at neglected points, thus revealing the complexity of life experiences within such groups. As such, the cultural patterns are bound together by the intersectional system of society, such as race, gender, class, and ethnicity (Collins, 1990, 2000), termed as the 'matrix of domination'.

This study employed the second and third approaches of intersectionality to explain caste hierarchy within the Dalit community, focusing on the social exclusion/inclusion based on land ownership and possession, named 'inter-categorical complexity' and 'intra-categorical complexity'. DFID (2005), ILO (2005) and Gurung (2006) used three categories of Dalit communities using poverty line, landlessness, and caste hierarchy. The same categorization is adopted in this study. These categories were Hill Dalit, Madhesi Dalit, and Marginalised Dalit. While the Hill Dalit and Madeshi Dalits are identified by the National Dalits Commission (NDC, 2004), the other category Marginalized Dalits is used to indicate those who are minority population disadvantaged by their political and social representation. They are Gandharva and Badi from Hill Dalit and Mushhar, Halkhor, Khatwe, Tatma, Dhobi, Khatik are from Madhesi Dalit (Nepali, 2021). Therefore, Marginalised Dalit can also be further termed as "Marginalised Hill Dalit and Marginalised Madhesi Dalit" (intra-categorical). Other Hill Dalits such as Kami, Damai and Sarki and Madhesi Dalits such as Chamar and Paswan have been categorized as Advanced Dalit for this study. The Advanced Dalits have access to land resources and better opportunities as compared to Marginalized Dalits who are landless and more exploited.

The study employed exploratory and descriptive research designs, using both non-probability and probability sampling procedures. The authors used purposive sampling technique for selection of districts, while multistage and stratified sampling techniques were used for selecting 300 respondents, 100 respondents from each district. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative techniques such as household survey, key informant survey, case study, observation, in-depth interview, and focus group discussion for data collection. Data was collected by employing both qualitative and quantitative

techniques. Secondary review of the relevant documents, papers, articles, reports etc. were also done. Descriptive and inferential analyses, through use of computer software package like statistical package for social science (SPSS), were done for this research. In particular, household (as main production and economic unit); settlement (for cases of exclusion and inclusion at community level), and individual by sex (men/women within household- ownership and possession of land, issue of autonomy and dependence) are taken as unit of analysis. Analysis techniques included frequency, percentage, chi-square test and other statistical tests. The study ensured the reliability and Validity (method and content) by cross-checking, verification, and qualitative triangulation of data from various sources and methods for its wider acceptability and generalization. The conclusions were drawn by qualitative triangulation of information derived through the methods mentioned above.

THEORETICAL APPROACH AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework adopted for the study is informed by prevailing social theories of class, caste, institutions and structures and their relations with access to land and its subsequent implications on social exclusion/inclusion. The framework involves the following elements: i) Caste hierarchy — *Dalit* and castes within *Dalit* community in relation to land ownership and possession; ii) Social institutions (relational), such as caste system, *Haliya*, *Khalo*, *Haruwa*, *Charuwa* system in an agrarian society; iii) Land-related barriers to social inclusion; and iv) Class and caste-related structural causes of social exclusion. Furthermore, gender issues and issues related to autonomy and dependency (due to resource possession and ownership, or lack thereof, at household and community levels) were taken into consideration during the entire research.
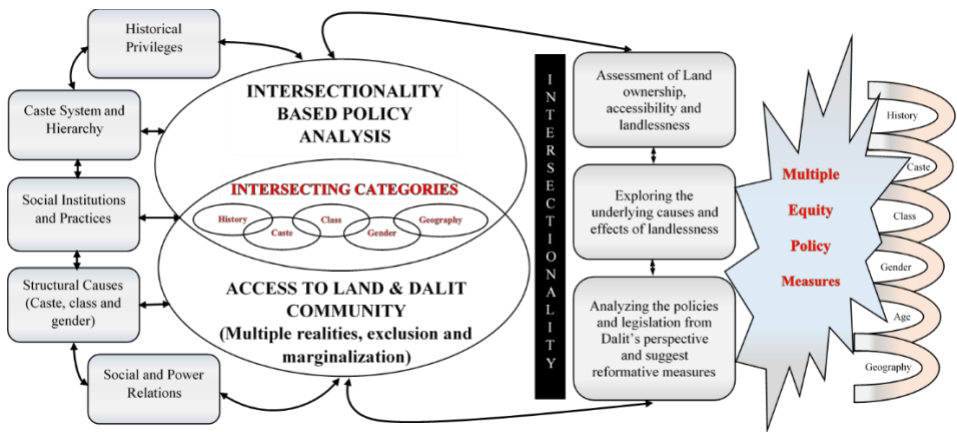
Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework for the study*
Source: Based on authors' own study, experience and evidence based analysis

INTERSETIONALITY BASED POLICY ANALYSIS APPROACH AT THE CONCEPTUAL LEVEL

Analyzing specific policies necessitates a distinct and meticulous examination of the various issues within society, deviating from the conventional approach to policy analysis. Policies and acts designed without recognizing and comprehending the manifold realities and social concerns must be approached differently from generic and traditional methods, considering every aspect of lived experiences that significantly differ. The intersectionality approach provides a diverse perspective for comprehending the complex realities concerning various social dimensions and categories. This approach probes into constituencies within constituencies, rooted in lived experiences, capturing the complexities of social identities.

The intersectionality-based policy analysis approach comprises two core components: a set of guiding principles and 12 overarching questions that emphasize a distinct series of descriptive and transformative inquiries. Descriptive questions focus on how policy problems are explained, while transformative questions reframe and explicitly integrate differential experiences and impacts, reshaping approaches to identify and understand potential solutions (Humphries, Sodipo & Jackson, 2023). These solutions are then evaluated for their ability to address the root causes of disparities, inequalities, and social determinants related to land possession among the Dalits. This study further explores intersectionality across various dimensions of society and marginalized communities (social categories), including i)

unique and lived experiences of privilege and marginalization, ii) interactions among and between social groups, iii) heterogeneity in multiple dimensions, iv) social power hierarchies, v) multiple oppressions and realities, vi) visible and invisible systems of oppression, and vii) true and historical disadvantages in structural and institutional dimensions.

The proposed multi-dimensional aspects have cumulative effects which are interwoven in society. The intersecting categories and cumulative policy problems are critically assessed and analyzed in terms of creating inequities, privileges, and non-privileges to ensure fine-tuned and equitable policy measures. The proposed policy measures also prescribe an alternative policy responses and solutions aimed at structured and institutional causes. Finally, it ensures meaningful uptake of equity-based policy solutions as well as measurement of impacts and outcomes of proposed policy responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study. The section is divided into four main parts. Firstly, the paper assesses the extent of the land accessibility and landlessness among Dalit households in study area. Highlighting the major underlying causes of landlessness in the study area and its effects on the Dalits, the section critically analyzes the scientific land reform from Dalits' perspective.

Assessment of Land Accessibility and Landlessness

The study revealed that only about 1.78 kattha land was entitled to Dalit households, of which land possession was 0.57 kattha and owned land was 1.21 kattha. This implies that the Dalits, irrespective of the categories, Advanced or Marginalized, are agriculturally landless and poor. Statistically, landlessness is highly significant (p=0.0026) at 5% significant level since larger number of Marginalized Dalits have no lands in comparison to the Advanced Dalit despite variation in districts. This state of landlessness, as compared to other privileged groups, can be attributed to the historical distribution of land to royal relatives and followers in the form of Birta, the use of state machinery or apparatuses to register land, social structure and caste system, and heavy dependence on caste-based occupations institutionalized by Khalo, Rithi, Balighare, Pulo Pratha.

It was found that 28% of the Dalit households under study were absolutely landless, neither possessing nor owning any land. There were variations in the state of landlessness between Advanced and Marginalized Dalits. Only 37% of Advanced Dalits were landless as compared to Marginalized Dalits who were 85% landless. This state of landlessness among

Advanced and Marginalized Dalits was statistically significant, denoting the high differences in land accessibility among these categories of Dalits. Looking from the gender perspective, majority of males (82.3%) possessed, and 99.2% males owned land. It reveals the poor status of females' land holdings.

As the Advanced Dalits were comparatively owning and possessing the lands, the dispossession of land was also found to be higher (18.8%) than in Marginalized Dalits (6%) in the study areas, with such dispossession occurring from the society and landlords. Illiteracy, Fake documents (Jali Tamsuk) and the loans with higher interests which they could not pay back, were found to be the major reasons behind land dispossession among Dalits.

The Marginalized Dalits, on the other hand, were unable to have enough access to loans and food grains as compared to Advanced Dalits in the study areas. The respondents from Mahottari District were only found to be selling household properties to maintain their daily life. Thus, the Dalits in the study area were found to be engaged in other coping strategies like rickshaw pulling, fishing, driving, etc. Only 6.3% Advanced Dalits adopted such coping strategies, compared to 16.1% of Marginalized Dalits.

As land entitlement, the resource entitlement as described by Sen (1981) in an agrarian context is a direct contributor to food sufficiency and security through utilizing socio-economic opportunities. Hence, the food insecurity in the study areas among Dalit community was linked with the gender, caste and class-based discrimination and exploitation and the limited access to basic services and human rights due to the power economy of land politics and accessibility (Adhikari, 2006; Upreti, 2004). Also, the Dalits employed caste-based occupation as the livelihood option in study areas at the subsistence level. These occupations, based on human skills and knowledge, were highly regulated by *Rithi*, *Khalo*, *Pulo Pratha* and the caste system (Nepali, 2021).

Underlying Causes of Landlessness

The Dalits in the study area have been dissociated from the land resources through devising and formulating social systems and practices resulting in landlessness. These causes of landlessness were assessed and identified from the responses of the Dalits in the study area. They are consolidated and explained as follows:

- Social structure and caste system confines the Dalits to serve the society by virtue of their caste-based occupation and restricts them from getting access to land (possession and ownership),systematically marginalizing and excluding them

from the productive resources and resulting in the lower social position and deprived of socio-economic and political rights such as land rights and social dignity.

- Heavy dependence on caste-based occupation institutionalized by informal institutions like Balighare, Khalo and Khan System, i.e. providing their services to non-Dalits and, in turn, receiving remuneration in kind in different arrangements with the set of norms (also called informal social institutions).As a result, they suffer from unfair wage and caste-based discrimination. Some respondents also reported that the lack of other livelihood options further dissociates them from land ownership and entitlement.

- The insufficient livelihood means inflicted livelihood insecurity among the Dalits through institutionalized Haliya, Khaliya and Poverty Trap. Thus, they gradually started to take loans in higher interests resulting in debt bondage and caste-based discrimination. Ultimately, they fall into the poverty trap. Such systematic exclusion and marginalization are one of the causes of Dalits' landlessness.

- Historical Land Grant System: The Birta Land grant system had a vivid distribution of lands to military chiefs, royal family members, priests and other influential persons, leaving a large number of people, especially the excluded and Dalits devoid of land property.

- Use of state machinery or apparatus to regulate others' land, especially by those close to political power centers who are well informed about legal provisions compared to Dalits and the excluded.

- Caste system and power structure: The social and economic factors have direct implications on the power structure. Hence, the caste system, following the same structure and function under stratification, hierarchy and inequality, has Dalits excluded in the lower strata, leaving them deprived and weak. The local proverb '*Sero khane ki Phero khane*' was institutionalized in society, leaving them with which option to choose either from land ownership (*Sero*) or the production (*Phero*), of which Dalits chose later option due to their food insufficiency and inability to pay land tax to the government. Further, they also chose phero due to existing structural constraints.

- Dalits' lands are usurped in different land measurements (Bhumi Napi in Nepali) in temporal dimensions.

Thus, the caste hierarchy seems to have greater significance in land ownership Dalits structurally fall into the lower stratum and get excluded from access to resources. Also, the use of savings for alcoholism resulted in an inability to purchase land in Madeshi Dalits, causing landlessness, as reported by the respondents of Mahottari.

From a gender perspective, land holding is considered the main economic or production unit for the overall progress of households, ignoring gender concerns (autonomy and dependency) in resource distribution and decision making (Nepali, 2021). The patrilineal society has made the women weak, and they are not able to raise their voice for property rights and remain silent. Also, the claim to patrilineal property has been granted to women at present context through policy reform, however, there are minimal instances of such claims, and they are negligible in case of Dalit households.

Amidst these causes of landlessness, there are instances of Dalits who are not landless and have reasonable land holdings till today, especially seen in cases of Advanced Dalits. It is imperative to understand why some Dalits are accessible to land while others are not. Regmi (1999) reported the local revenue functionaries and intermediaries as principal source of revenue for land as they were powerful and influential to enjoy their privileges and right to own land. Some Dalits, in rare cases, benefitted from this opportunity. Also, some respondents in the study area pointed that the physical strength of the Dalits made them mobilized for security of political leaders, where they exploited such social and political networks to register the land. The remittance obtained when Dalits joined British and Indian army was also used for land purchasing by their families. Some Dalits also reported that their exposure to India and overseas made them realize the importance of educating children to enhance their human capability. Accordingly, they, were able to own land being placed in good economic sphere,. Also, there were instances of land allocation in name of gods, which the Dalits were allowed to use and cultivate. They were able to register such lands during different land measurements.

A renowned historian, Prayag Raj Sharma (2006) writes: "It is true that Nepal's earlier land tenure system was exploitative. But the hallmark of feudal orders has always been that any group which can exploit another does. This basic human trait of selfishness exists in all groups and cannot be imputed to any one religion or philosophy".

Thus, based on the historical processes and empirical observation in the realm of exclusion and inclusion, landlessness is the state where the privileged groups could command over and possess the land resources through different mechanisms mentioned above. Inclusion of these groups itself excluded the others indirectly, denying them access to resources.

Effects of Landlessness

About 78% of the Advanced Dalits and 68% of the Marginalized Dalits in the study area perceived the effects of landlessness in their personal life. Total 63% respondents felt the effect on their freedom and about 49.1% respondents had their personality development severely affected due to landlessness. Also, landlessness had serious impact on the educational attainment of the respondents as perceived by them.

As reported by Kollmair et al. (2006), the caste system restricts and prohibits the Dalits from engaging in certain coping strategies like running teashops, hotels, or restaurants. A similar pattern was also observed in the study area. The caste system determined the social relations of the Dalits and modified their access to livelihood assets. The traces of effect of landlessness were also seen in the productive activities. 61.8% Advanced Dalits and 55.9% Marginalized Dalits reported the difficulties in starting a business or an enterprise due to the prevalent constraints in the society. Women were reported to have lesser dignity, assisting their male partners or involving in household chores. The issues of untouchability, partiality and insults were found affecting the production activities of the Dalits in study area. This result was supported by the findings of Nepali (2021).

Considering the socio-political life of the respondents in the study area, the issues of non-recognition was serious effect. Majority of the respondents i.e. 62.1% of Advanced Dalits and 56.3% of Marginalized Dalits felt that they were not recognized as the individuals with social and human dignity in the society. They felt landlessness as serious cause of lower dignity in the society (Nepali, 2021).

While 38% of the Advanced Dalits were involved in the share cropping in study area, the ratio was relatively lower for Marginalized dalits at only 17%. Further, the Marginalized Dalits from Dang and Mahottari districts were found engaged in the land-mortage farming system (1.6% in both districts). Also, effects were seen in the constraints faced for educating the Dalit children in the study area. 70.9% Marginalized Dalits reported the difficulty in educating their children, while the data was relatively lower in Advanced Dalits (57.6%). Also, there were instances of the food

insufficiency, food insecurity, wrong perception of the community and less participation in socio-political organizations among the Dalits in study area. It was found that about 48% Advanced Dalits and 38% Marginalized Dalits of the study area have taken loan from others, with loan take tendency seeming far higher in Mahottari District as compared to other districts. The loans were taken from both Dalits and Non-Dalits, while some were taking loan even from Women Development Groups formed at their localities or Agricultural Development Bank. However, majority of respondents from both categories were found taking loans from Non-Dalits (about 82% Advanced *Dalits* and 95% Marginalized *Dalits*).

The debt burden also seemed increasing due to landlessness. While 73.3% Advanced Dalits reported the increased debt burden, only 44.1% Marginalized Dalits scored the increasing debt burden. This might be due to the fact that Marginalized Dalitsdid not have access to loans from others in first hand, with no other sources of collateral. Also, the respondents from both Advanced and Marginalized Dalits were engaged in bonded labor institutions like Charuwa, Haliya and Haruwa. These informal social institutions through certain 'rules of games' operate to further exploit the Dalit community. This finding was in line with the earlier findings by Seddon (1987) and Müller-Böker (1981, 1986).

The study further revealed that only about 13% of Advanced Dalits and 11% of Marginalized Dalits were dependent on others for their livelihood/food security. The smaller land holdings and lower accessibility to loans and credits forced them to engage in the wage labouring as they had to depend on themselves to meet their ends. Similarly, the livelihood options of the respondents were largely shaped and regulated by the existing social institutions in the study areas such as Kamaiya, *Rithi, Mate Bandaki, Perma Sytstem, Pulo, Balighare, wage labour system, Khalo Pratha*, sharecropping, *Haliya, Haruwa, Charuwa etc.* Many respondents reported to be exploited and not happy with the procedure and effect of these institutions.

Tara Nepali, a tailor by profession and Jun lohar, a blacksmith by profession, both were depending on Balighare pratha for their livelihood, however, they were not satisfied at all. They reported to have never worn new clothes or bought medicine ever in their life. The Balighare Pratha does not seem appropriate due to: i) Less economic return (profit), ii) No social prestige, and iii) Unfair power relation in society.

Bal Bahadur B.K., inhabitant of Dhangadhi Municiaplity-6 (Tallo Matiyari) and Haliya of a landlord, took a loan of NRs 700 about 15-16 years ago. He continuously ploughed the landowner's land to pay for the interest.

Gradually, his sons grew up and were able to earn and to pay back this loan (NRs 16000 in total) to the landlord.

Dhan Bahadur Tamrakar, a blacksmith from Dipayal under Khalo pratha, has 28 household clients and collects 3 suppa paddy and wheat (equivalent to 9 kg paddy and 12 kg wheat) from each household. Altogether, he collects 252 kg paddy and 336 kg wheat in a year. His cash earning per annum from this grain is NRs 8,970. In addition to this, he also earned NRs 4000 last year by making Gajuri (apex part of temple). But this is not regular source. He says that this amount of earning is not sufficient for livelihood of his family and is not happy with this amount and the procedure of Khalo arrangement. Rithi and Khalo Pratha are closely associated with landlessness and respective social relations. Being landless, Dalits are adopting caste-based occupation for their livelihood. Dalits provide service to Non-Dalits in two ways: i) By working as a wage laborer in farms, and ii) Service through the caste-based occupation by tailoring, black smithy, and leather work.

Khajendra Ram Lohar of Salena VDC has been working for eight years as a Haliya, for a debt of Rs. 3,000 (approximately US $ 54). "It was during the time of rice planting. I was working for many days in mud and water. My legs and feet became so painful and swollen because of water that I could not go near water anymore. Then one evening my landlord ordered me to go and wash the oxen in the stream. I showed my legs and said I could not go near the water again because I was in pain. I refused to go, and he beat me. Some other people stepped in and stopped him in the end."

Ram Khelawan Sada and his wife do all the household chores for their master; and then sleep in their landlords' cowshed. They have to wake up early in the morning. If they cannot perform as asked, they have to face a great insult. Due to their overburdened work, they want to quit this job, but have no option. They have been provided 4,063 square meters of land for cultivation. The production they derive from this is not sufficient for them.

These empirical cases from study area highlights the effects of the aforementioned social institutions in the lives of Dalits. These institutions characterized by the unfair wage, debt bondage, social control, semi-slavery, serfdom, physical exploitation, mental torture (harassment), and social discrimination (gender and caste discrimination) etc. possess feudal characteristics, thus exert negative relationship with the Dalits. They are the basis of maintaining hegemony or status quo and of exploiting land-poor households in varied degrees, forms, and intensities. The skewed and inequitable land distribution as seen in the study areas, had inherently made the society more structured and hierarchical, allowing the upper land-owning classes to exploit, control and exercise their power over the landless and

nearly landless Dalits of lower hierarchy. It was revealed that such labor exploitation is the primary factor of institutional exclusion for both Advanced *Dalits* (16.5%) and Marginalized *Dalits* (15.8%).

About 85.2% respondents reported the existence of the caste-based social structure in the study areas. About 19% respondents believed that the ruling is under class-based structure. However, both Advanced Dalits (83.7%) and Marginalized Dalits (88.2%) highlighted the caste and class as two crucial factors for their exclusion from mainstream of the society.

The state of landlessness and the subsistence livelihood, as observed in the respondents, had their social participation quite lower and limited to nominal level, implying their passive participation in the societal works, both in terms of social position and performance. Most of their time was invested in securing their livelihood, thus further restricting them from social participation.

Thus, the higher extent of landlessness among the Dalits in study area has made their livelihood scenario very vulnerable due to unequal and inequitable distribution of productive resources (land). This is in line with Marxist view, where Dalits, the exploited ones are in conflict with the previledged ones (the upper caste groups). Hence, the Dalits have full realization of the cause of their vulnerability and insecurity. Further, they felt injustice and exploitation due to their livelihood options and its negative impacts on their individual and social life. This situation is similar to the context of Equity Theory.

Assessing the livelihood scenario minutely, majority of Dalits were suffering from lack of livelihood resources and options, being excluded from the sharecropping and the prevalence of landlessness. The Dalit women were further subjected to exploitation, exclusion and discrimination to greater extent. Hence, women and youths from *Dalit* and other excluded communities had joined the Maoist insurgency during 1996-2006.

Analysis of "Scientific Land Reform" from a Dalit's Perspective

Different efforts have been made regarding land reforms to benefit the excluded people by enabling access to land resources. However, those people are still not beneffited substantially and are still struggling against their class position and demanding their socio-economic security. Analysing the context of study area, only 2.5% of the Advanced Dalits and 2.3% of Marginalized Dalits have been beneffited from the efforts of land reform and the Squatter Commission (Sukumbasi Aayog).

Though the political parties all have the agenda of land reforms and land accessibility in their principle, however, difference exist in their

perceptions and positions. While the Dalits feel injustice and excluded, the political leaders exhibit the characteristics of landed class to protect their interests. This resulted in the continuous and constant struggle between the privileged and non-privileged groups, with the privileged groups wanting to maintain their status quo in the existing power structure in line with Marxist principle (Upreti, 2004). Such context was also observed and reported in the study areas.

Current policy documents (Nepal Constitution, 2015, Land use Policy 2015, and Fifteenth Five Year Plan) have stressed the need for 'scientific land reform' in Nepal. The reform initiatives look comprehensive and multidimensional with provisions of abolition of feudal land ownership, distribution of land to tillers, providing economic and social security and justice to landless people, ex-kamiaya, Haliya, Haruwa, Charuwa who are actually economically and socially backward.   However, different stakeholders have different views and positions in this regard, particularly the political parties. There seem a divergence of views/positions on land reforms among the political parties as reflected in their manifestos.

Hence, in the ongoing debate and realm of Scientific Land reform at the policy level, it is necessary to note that land has several potentials of generating the social conflicts due to the scarcity of land, disparity on livelihood, power relation and perception of different stakeholders on scientific land reform. The Dalits have been systematically marginalized and excluded from the productive resources with the legally introduced caste system being major cause for denial of economic resources to the Dalits and exerting the multiple effects on the socio-economic, political, and cultural spheres of Dalits. Thus, to address this inequalities and marginalism in the Dalits, it is important to focus on the root cause for marginalization and exclusion originated from the Hindu Caste System and the state's policies and institutions, which resulted in the various forms of bonded, semi-bonded slavery, and other forms of discrimination and exploitation. Being a class issue, land in Nepalese context have been largely shaped by the complex nature of structural and institutional issues of feudal caste system resulting in socio-economic inequality in and among Dalits.

Despite the insecure situation and high vulnerability of the Dalits, no land policies have addressed the substantive issues of Dalits effectively. Thus it can't be just expected to liberate them from caste, class and gender based sufferings. Though embracing the notion of overall socio-economic and political agrarian transformation, the Scientific Land Reforms have not been effectively implemented due to varied and conflicting perceptions of different stakeholders, ill political will and established ideological camps. Thus,

landlessness, livelihood insecurity, exploitation and discrimination among the Dalits need to be the key driving forces for land reforms. Until and unless the reform measures address these issues with Dalit's perspective, the suffering will continue and rather deepen injustice and inequality. Thus, in line with the aforesaid essence of the land reforms and redistributive land reforms, Dalit friendly reform strategies focusing on the structural and institutional reforms should be implemented.

This context, along with the following substantive issues, needs to be kept in centre for making Scientific Land Reform sensitive to Dalit issues and ultimately lead to equitable and all-round socio-economic transformation.

- Abolition of feudal and informal social institutions considered in this study (which are dominant and established institutional frameworks for social exclusion resulting in structured poverty trap.) by declaring them illegal and punishable
- Equitable distribution of land (land to tillers) with special focus on landless *Dalit* and bonded laborer (e.g. Haliya, Haruwa, Charuwa etc)
- Post-land reform measures should focus on institutional reforms, social justice and equity to landless *Dalits*, and bonded laborers. Targetted programs should be formulated and implemented to eliminate different forms of bonded labors
- Gender (autonomy and hegemony for resource allocation/distribution/utilization) and regional/spatial concerns should be taken into consideration for each section and complexity (intersectionality) of *Dalit* community.

Thus, the state, from the policy level, needs to make some bold steps in enunciating an effective scientific land reform program for equitable socio-economic changes in the Dalits and free them from caste, class and gender-based sufferings addressing the following points (Nepali, 2021):

- Land reform program, going beyond the mere distribution of land, should embrace broad agrarian context and sound agricultural system should be launched focusing on the landless Dalits for overall agrarian transformation.
- Effective abolition of all the intermediaries responsible for resource and service capturing and depriving the Dalits and excluded for utilizing those resources for their development.
- Exploitative and discriminative practices like the Haliya, the Bali, the Khali, and the Khan system should be condemned by the law.

- Social security of the Dalits, excluded people, tillers and bonded labors needs to be ensured. Their rehabilitation should overcome past failures.
- Social justice to the haves and have nots should be ensured through tenancy reform.

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

Thus, the study concludes that the caste system and hierarchy have implications on access to land resource (land ownership) whereas land ownership is one of the key determinants of class status. This applies to both *Dalits* and non-*Dalits* and the various categories within the former. While the larger sections of the Dalit community are ignored and excluded in socio-economic and political spheres in Nepalese Society, the study argues that such exclusion is differential when visualized through the intersectionality perspective in terms of class, caste, and gender. Hence, for their inclusion and all-round development, it requires differential treatments and multiple social equity measures which need to be translated into policies and programmes and implemented keeping in mind the Dalit's perspectives and substantive issues forcing them to historical and structural deprivation, exploitation and discrimination based on caste, class, and gender.

Theoretical Implications of the Research

The theoretical discussion on "caste and class" and "class formation processes" has benefited from the theoretical framework used in the study to examine the exclusion and inclusion of the Dalit group with a focus on access to land resources. It might be argued that caste and class standing are strongly related.

While employing an intersectionality approach within Dalit community, the Dalit community is diverse in terms of caste hierarchies and caste categories. The social and class standing of the various Dalit categories are affected by this system.

The study made two methodological contributions. First, it used a mixed method approach, which is particularly helpful in studying the Dalit community more deeply and comprehensively, thus understanding their complexities. Even while triangulating qualitatively, quantitative, and qualitative methodologies complemented one another in drawing findings. Second, intersectionality provided better explanations to the evidence from inside *Dalit* reality, i.e. multiple levels of exclusion and oppression within the *Dalit* community.

Policy Implications

The empirical realities and evidence illustrate unique opportunities for analyzing multi-layered inequalities in multi-scalar ways. Both the experienced and lived experiences of Dalits, within and between categories, are deeply ingrained and institutionalized in society, shaping their access to land resources. This represents a groundbreaking exploration within Nepal's policy domain, focusing on the disadvantaged community. Considering specific policy analyses struggling to recognize and comprehend the multifarious realities and social concerns, there is a need for an intersectionality-based policy analysis to scrutinize diverse societal issues concerning both social categories and Dalits, recognizing their dynamic nature that evolves over time.

As intersectionality unveils multiple dimensions contributing to layers of inequality and disparities within Dalit communities, a more advanced analysis is necessary in the policy-making process. This involves capturing the diverse experiences of discrimination, dispossession, and oppression faced by Dalits within and between categories. The proposed intersectionality framework is highly relevant for exploring new perspectives on policy issues related to land accessibility among Dalits, translating complex knowledge into accessible messages for a new policy discourse. The empirical cases presented offer an innovative mechanism for reconsidering, revising, and addressing different social categories among Dalits in policy analysis, preventing elite capture of resources and services within marginalized communities.

The proposed intersectionality lens is not static but dynamic, evolving over time due to societal diversity and changes in state policies, services, and opportunities. It can be piloted, tested, and improved to make it more practical and effective in addressing emerging issues faced by the truly disadvantaged. This dynamic and transformative perspective empowers policy actors and decision-makers to see themselves as critical players in policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation in diverse societies.

This intersectionality approach is additive, examining issues through multiple dimensions beyond the status quo, including various social categories such as caste, race, class, gender, and geography. It also embraces a multi-stand approach, considering experienced and lived experiences in multi-scalar ways. Consequently, this paper contributes to the current paradigm of policy analysis by introducing the intersectionality approach with dimensions of inequality, exclusion, disadvantages, power, and structural asymmetries in the context of politics and policy. It facilitates an effective diagnosis of policy concerns and generates prescriptions at the policy level.

While there are challenges and issues to be addressed over time, requiring new types of expertise and social competencies, the intersectionality-based analysis at the policy discourse allows space for these challenges and issues within Dalit communities. Empirical cases demonstrate an innovative mechanism for analyzing diverse power dynamics, asymmetries, and highlight the dynamic and transformative nature of the intersectionality approach. It encourages policy makers to be critical and transformative in accommodating new changes and lived experiences in complex social settings.

Lastly, this approach offers a complete, comprehensive, and sophisticated analysis to capture how public policy is experienced by disadvantaged women and men in multi-scalar ways. It informs policymakers to be accountable and implement efficient and effective policy decisions. The proposed intersectionality policy analysis approach and framework are novel, addressing lived experiences, historically and systematically structured, and institutionalized inequities in multi-scalar ways, providing in-depth and comprehensive diagnoses for effective and accountable prescriptions of public policy issues.

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Table 1:

Occupations by Major Dalit Categories

Districts	Description	Advanced Dalit		Marginalized Dalit		Total Responses
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	
Occupation in Overall	Agriculture	15	11.6	5	3.1	20
	Business	0	0.0	1	0.6	1
	Caste based occupation	12	9.3	16	9.8	28
	Remittances	20	15.5	2	1.2	22
	Job/employment	9	7.0	20	12.3	29
	Others	4	3.1	38	23.3	42
	Wage laborer	69	53.5	81	49.7	150
	Grand Total	129	100.0	163	100.0	292

Table 2:

Status of absolute landlessness

Districts	Advanced Dalit				Marginalized Dalit				Overall			
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Dang	29	96.7	1	3.3	51	83.6	10	16.4	80	87.9	11	12.1
Kaski	36	75.0	12	25.0	38	90.5	4	9.5	74	82.2	16	17.8
Mahottari	37	60.7	24	39.3	28	45.2	34	54.8	65	52.8	58	47.2
Overall	102	73.4	37	26.6	117	70.9	48	29.1	219	72.04	85	27.96

Table 3:

Land Distribution status

Districts	Land Possession (in Kattha)			Land Ownership (in Kattha)		
	Advanced Dalit	Marginalized Dalit	Total	Advanced Dalit	Marginalized Dalit	Total
Dang	1.02	0.83	0.89	2.90	1.16	1.74
Kaski	0.16	0.45	0.28	1.20	0.44	0.89
Mahottari	0.28	0.79	0.57	0.96	1.14	1.06
Overall	0.39	0.72	0.57	1.49	0.97	1.21

Table 4:

No. of respondents reporting dispossession of land

Districts	Advanced Dalit					Marginalized Dalit					Grand Total
	No		Yes		Sub-total	No		Yes		Sub-total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%		Nos.	%	Nos.	%		
Dang	25	96.2	1	3.8	26	50	98.0	1	2.0	51	77
Kaski	34	65.4	18	34.6	52	30	100.0		0.0	30	82
Mahottari	23	100.0		0.0	23	31	83.8	6	16.2	37	60
Grand Total	82	81.2	19	18.8	101	111	94.1	7	5.9	118	219

Table 5:

Status of food sufficiency by districts

Districts	Advanced Dalit								Marginalized Dalit								Grand Total
	< 3 months		3-6 months		6-9 months		Sub-total		< 3 months		3-6 months		6-9 months		Sub-total		
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%			Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%			
Dang	20	83.3	2	8.3	2	8.3	24		16	76.2	5	23.8		0	21		45
Kaski	24	80	6	20		0	30		42	87.5	4	8.3	2	4.2	48		78
Mahottari	8	57.1	2	14.3	4	28.6	14		12	70.6	3	17.6	2	11.8	17		31
Overall	52	76.5	10	14.7	6	8.8	68		70	81.4	12	14	4	4.7	86		154

Table 6:

Responses on whether effects of landlessness in personal life exist

Districts/Responses	Advanced Dalit					Marginalized Dalit					Grand Total
	No		Yes		Sub-total	No		Yes		Sub-total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%		Nos.	%	Nos.	%		
Dang	10	35.7	18	64.3	28	10	17.2	48	82.8	58	86
Kaski	3	5.0	57	95.0	60	12	30.0	28	70.0	40	100
Mahottari	16	34.0	31	66.0	47	28	49.1	29	50.9	57	104
Grand Total	29	21.5	106	78.5	135	50	32.3	105	67.7	155	290

Table 7:

Response on whether effects of landlessness at household level exist

Districts/Responses	Advanced Dalit					Marginalized Dalit					Grand Total
	No		Yes		Sub-total	No		Yes		Sub-total	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%		Nos.	%	Nos.	%		
Dang	5	17.9	23	82.1	28	9	15.5	49	84.5	58	86
Kaski	3	5.0	57	95.0	60		0.0	41	100.0	41	101
Mahottari	9	19.1	38	80.9	47	14	23.7	45	76.3	59	106
Grand Total	17	12.6	118	87.4	135	23	14.6	135	85.4	158	293

Table 8:

Effects of landlessness at household level in details

Districts	Description	Advanced Dalit		Marginalized Dalit		Grand Total
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%	
Dang	Food Sufficiency	18	60.0	38	62.3	56
	Educating the children	16	53.3	39	63.9	55
	Perception of community towards household	16	53.3	38	62.3	54
	Participation in socio-political organizations	16	53.3	37	60.7	53
	Sub-total (response)	30	100.0	61	100.0	91
Kaski	Food Sufficiency	31	50.8	31	73.8	62
	Educating the children	38	62.3	28	66.7	66
	Perception of community towards household	37	60.7	27	64.3	64
	Participation in socio-political organizations	29	47.5	35	83.3	64
	Sub-total (response)	61	100.0	42	100.0	103
Mahottari	Food Sufficiency	26	54.2	42	67.7	68
	Educating the children	26	54.2	50	80.6	76
	Perception of community towards household	25	52.1	41	66.1	66
	Participation in socio-political organizations	19	39.6	40	64.5	59
	Sub-total (response)	48	100.0	62	100.0	110
Overall	Food Sufficiency	75	54.0	111	67.3	186
	Educating the children	80	57.6	117	70.9	197
	Perception of community towards household	78	56.1	106	64.2	184
	Participation in socio-political organizations	64	46.0	112	67.9	176
	Overall effects of landlessness at household level (responses)	139	100.0	165	100.0	304

Table 9:

Effects of landlessness on debt burden at household level

Districts/ Responses	Advanced Dalit								Marginalized Dalit								Grand Total
	Decreasing		Increasing		Same (No change)		Sub-total		Decreasing		Increasing		Same (No change)		Sub-total		
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%			Nos.	%	Nos.	%	Nos.	%			
Dang	2	6.7	25	83.3	3	10.0	30		8	14.3	25	44.6	23	41.1	56		86
Kaski		0.0	51	87.9	7	12.1	58		1	2.5	23	57.5	16	40.0	40		98
Mahottari	1	2.3	20	46.5	22	51.2	43		1	1.8	19	33.9	36	64.3	56		99
Overall	3	2.3	96	73.3	32	24.4	131		10	6.6	67	44.1	75	49.3	152		283

Table 10:

Status of loan taken

Districts	Advanced Dalit				Sub-total (responses)	Marginalized Dalit				Sub-total (responses)	Grand Total
	No		Yes			No		Yes			
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%		Nos.	%	Nos.	%		
Dang	23	76.7	7	23.3	30	48	82.8	10	17.2	58	88
Kaski	39	66.1	20	33.9	59	36	87.8	5	12.2	41	100
Mahottari	9	18.8	39	81.3	48	13	22.8	44	77.2	57	105
Overall	71	51.8	66	48.2	137	97	62.2	59	37.8	156	293

Table 11:

Respondents' response in getting benefits from Squatter Commission

Districts	Advanced Dalit				Sub-total	Marginalized Dalit				Sub-total	Grand Total
	No		Yes			No		Yes			
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%		Nos.	%	Nos.	%		
Dang	29	100.0		0.0	29	55	98.2	1	1.8	56	85
Kaski	56	98.2	1	1.8	57	40	100.0		0.0	40	97
Mahottari	31	93.9	2	6.1	33	30	93.8	2	6.3	32	65
Overall	116	97.5	3	2.5	119	125	97.7	3	2.3	128	247

Table 12:

Conversion Table for Land Size

Unit	Hectare	Bigaha	Ropani	Kattha	Acre	Square Meter
1 Hectare	1	1.5	20	30	2.47	10000
1 Bigaha	0.67	1	13	20	2.49	6772.63
1 Ropani	0.05	0.07	1	1.5	0.12	508.74
1 Kattha	0.03	0.05	0.65	1	0.83	338.63
1 Acre	0.40	6.25	7.95	11.95	1	4046.86

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Peer-Reviewed Article

Revisiting Intersectionality: Theoretical Debates and Their Viability in the Indian Context

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ABSTRACT

Intersectionality, introduced within the Black feminist movement, gained momentum in feminist, sociological, and political identity-based discourses as a theoretical framework for its focus on women's intersectional experiences of violence, often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class. While the framework addresses social power structures and lived experiences, concerns have been raised due to its generalizability, ambiguity, and catch-all nature. This paper explores critical voices from India, questioning whether intersectionality remains a viable theoretical approach within Indian feminist discourse. It traces the contextual origin of this concept and its arrival and validity in the Indian context. The paper argues that women's lived experiences should not be treated as universal; instead, they must be considered unique, shaped by various marginalized social identities that women embody. The paper contributes to ongoing debates about the relevance and adaptability of intersectionality in diverse cultural and sociopolitical landscapes.

Keywords: Indian feminist discourse, intersectionality, marginalized identities

INTRODUCTION

> Almost all the Dalit spokesmen (and most, in fact, are men) clearly recognize women to be the most oppressed of their group the 'Dalit among the Dalits or downtrodden among the downtrodden' as it is sometimes put. They cite Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to support this view.
>
> Gail Omvedt (1979)

On September 20, the Lok Sabha successfully passed the Women's Reservation Bill, a significant legislative development that occurred 27 years after its initial introduction in parliament. The notable aspect of this development the unanimous support garnered from both Houses of Parliament. The Bill aims to allocate 33% of seats for women in both the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies (Phukan, 2023). This widespread endorsement highlights the perceived potential of the Bill to bring about positive changes in the lives of women and enhance their active participation in public affairs. However, the Bill has faced criticism and demands, particularly concerning issues of intersectionality.

Various opposition leaders, including Sonia Gandhi and Mayawati, among others, are strongly demanding a "quota within quota". The demand for "quota within quota" within the Women's Reservation Bill refers to a nuanced approach to further address the diversity among women and ensure equitable representation. The Women's Reservation Bill seeks to reserve a certain percentage of seats in legislative bodies for women, typically around 33%. However, within this broader quota, there is recognition of the need for sub-quotas or reservations for women from marginalized and underrepresented groups to avoid perpetuating existing inequalities among women (Livemint, 2023). The advocates argue that a single percentage reservation might not adequately address the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as caste, religion, or socio-economic status. The concept of "quota within quota" emphasizes the importance of ensuring proportional representation for women belonging to various marginalized groups.

The reintroduction of the Women's Reservation Bill has reignited the debate on the viability of intersectionality within the Indian feminist movement and the broader societal context. This renewed discussion underscores the need to explore how intersectionality can provide a more nuanced understanding of women's experience in India. To build a comprehensive perspective, it is essential to trace the roots of intersectionality and its evolution within feminist discourse. This paper aims to conceptually analyze the emergence and development of intersectionality, arguing that the lived experiences of women in India should be examined through an

intersectional lens. By doing so, we emphasize the importance of recognizing the unique challenges faced by women shaped by multiple intersecting identities, making a case for why this approach is crucial for a more inclusive feminist discourse in India.

CONCEPT OF INTERSECTIONALITY

Since the very inception of philosophy and the later emergence of theory, women as a specific category of recognition and consequent analysis have been either ignored, invisibilized, or considered unfit for a political arena and larger public presence (de Beauvoir, 1949). Women have been the "other" as introduced by Simone de Beauvoir in her seminal work 'The Second Sex' (1949). Women were and are still, in some significant ways, defined in relation to men. However, women challenged the way they were perceived and confined within the theoretical boundaries of disciplines and socio-cultural boundaries of households.

As Anuradha Ghandy (2006) argues, the women's movement arose in the context of the growth of capitalism and expansion of democratic ideologies, along with other social movements of the time. In the 1830s and 40s, the abolitionists included some educated women who braved social opposition to campaign against slavery. Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan Anthony, and Angeline Grimke were among the women active in the anti-slavery movement who later became active in the struggle for women's political rights (Ghandy, 2006). Thus, the Black feminist movement emerged out of dissatisfaction with the 19th-20th century social movements in general and the feminist movement in particular, which primarily focused on the challenges faced by white women, neglecting the intersecting issues of racism, sexism, and classism confronted by Black women. For the same purpose, the conceptual framework of intersectionality emerged in the 1970s as an approach to understanding the complex web of gender and race, recognizing and representing the violence against Black women in the US. Intersectionality is not just looking at multiple identities but also looking at the underlying complexities and how these complexities generate the social power structures that exist. Sojourner Truth for the first time brought serious attention to the issue of intersectionality with her speech delivered in 1851 at the Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio. Truth in her powerful speech questions the inherent misogyny and patriarchy within the Black community,

> Then that little man in Black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him (*Sojourner Truth: Ain't I a Woman?, 1851*).

In 1892, Anna Julia Cooper, a prominent Black woman, authored a

significant book titled *"A Voice from the South."* This book was chiefly centered on advocating for the recognition and consideration of the perspectives of Black women as essential catalysts for societal transformation. Cooper (1892) emphasized the pivotal role of listening to and acknowledging the voices of Black women in fostering social change. Moving forward to the 1980s, Ida B. Wells, a distinguished journalist and activist, spearheaded a passionate campaign against the prevalent issue of lynching during that period. Wells dedicated herself to addressing and combating the alarming instances of racial violence through her advocacy and tireless efforts. With such a solid foundation laid ahead, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) formally brought the concept of intersectionality to the forefront theoretically, which was further developed by bell hooks, Audre Lorde, among many others, who were using the intersection of race, class, and gender to map out the history of violence that women of color had suffered. Crenshaw (1991), in her work *Mapping the Margins,* argues that the violence that many women experiences is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class. Focusing on male violence against women, Crenshaw examines how the experiences of women of color are shaped by the intersection of racism and sexism. She observes that social, political, and economic resources get distributed on the basis of patterns of race, class, and gender. A lower-class Black woman in America is one of the most vulnerable beings in society. She further adds, "The concept of political intersectionality highlights that women of color are situated within two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas" (Crenshaw, 1991).

Feminist discourses around the world developed and used the concept of intersectionality to understand the realities of women better. However, it has been an important concept in discussion in the fields of sociology, law, cultural theory, comparative theory, etc. Intersectionality as a theoretical and practical concept helps us make sense of the social power structures and different axes where power gets exercised. According to the intersectionality perspective, it is crucial to understand gender in the context of power relations, as social identities have a substantial influence on a person's gender ideas and experiences. Feminists from different social settings dismissed the single feminist standpoint, often based on the interests of the women from the dominant social community. For example, Black Feminists opposed the US feminist movements, arguing that this movement only represents the white upper class women's interests. Similarly, Dalit feminism reflected that Indian feminism is largely attributed to the interests of oppressor caste Hindu women (Chakravarti, 2018). According to McCall (2005), intersectionality is the most important theoretical contribution in the field of women's studies. The intersectional approach not only diversifies the feminist epistemology and stand point but also provides a space for unique and diverse experiences.

"Women" has never been a homogenous category, but with the emergence of different strands like Dalit or Black feminism, the heterogeneity among women gained recognition. Different social identities, such as caste, religion, tribe, and gender, co-construct each other as critical elements of our lived experiences.

We argue that the intersection is not only determined by the social power structures, but it also problematizes and questions the very power structures in return. At intersections, people interact through different social relations to struggle for power, capital, dignity, and social resources. These struggles then often result the conflict and ultimately to subordination-domination relations, which reinforce, get solidified, and normalize over time. The task of resisting these structures becomes very hard. These structures generally produce and reproduce specific vantage points, which serve the interests of dominant and powerful parties.

Rukmini Sen (2023), in her recent work, examines three Indian legal moments that took place between 2019 and 2021, which transformed intersectional feminist activism in India. She takes case studies of the legal discourse of transgender legislation, political mobilization of Muslim women-led anti Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens (CAA-NRC) movement, and response to Hathras case of gangrape of a Dalit woman. Through these case studies, she presented an attempt to methodologically practice intersectionality through feminist activism in India. Additionally, the 'Me Too' movement highlighted the intersectionality debate, where a section of Indian feminist academicians and activists opposed the idea of publicly releasing the list of prominent Indian academics who were allegedly sexual harassers. In 2017, Raya Sarkar, a law student at University of California of Dalit background created and shared a crowdsourced List of Sexual Harassers in Academia (also known as LoSHA) identified academics accused of sexually harassing students. Indian feminists who called for the withdrawal of names of accused were primarily from upper castes, and were not in favor of releasing the names in public. Thus, being upper caste- "savarna was not only about birth status but also access to social and cultural capital" (Banerjee & Gosh, 2018, p. 3). This incident unfolded the caste imbalances in the Indian feminist movement (Banerjee & Gosh, 2018).

Oppression and subordination happen on the fronts of sexuality, mental trauma, and control over domestic and reproductive decisions, particularly affecting women from marginalized and oppressed communities. Women from lower classes and castes not only face systemic exclusion from resources, opportunities, and capital, but also experience marginalization in culture, religion, public spaces, and economic benefits. Intersectionality involves understanding and addressing these overlapping social structures that perpetuate marginalization and exclusion.

METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, this study conceptually explores the viability of intersectionality in the Indian context, both at a theoretical and practical level. Building upon the secondary literature, and contemporary debates, and conversations between major proponents of intersectionality, the paper provides a comprehensive and critical analysis of what intersectionality means in the Indian context. It situates it within the Indian feminist discourse and examines its impacts on various social phenomena specific to the Indian society, while also looking into crimes against women through a case study. This paper aims to present the viability of intersectionality in India. For doing so, the paper expands its scope to engage conceptually with various scholars of Dalit feminism, providing a deeper understanding of the role of intersectionality in Indian identity-based discourses. The paper, through the engagement with a case study of the Hathras gangrape case, presents a case for a methodological lens of intersectionality in India. The Hathras gangrape case is an example where crime against women was influenced by the caste of the victim and accused.
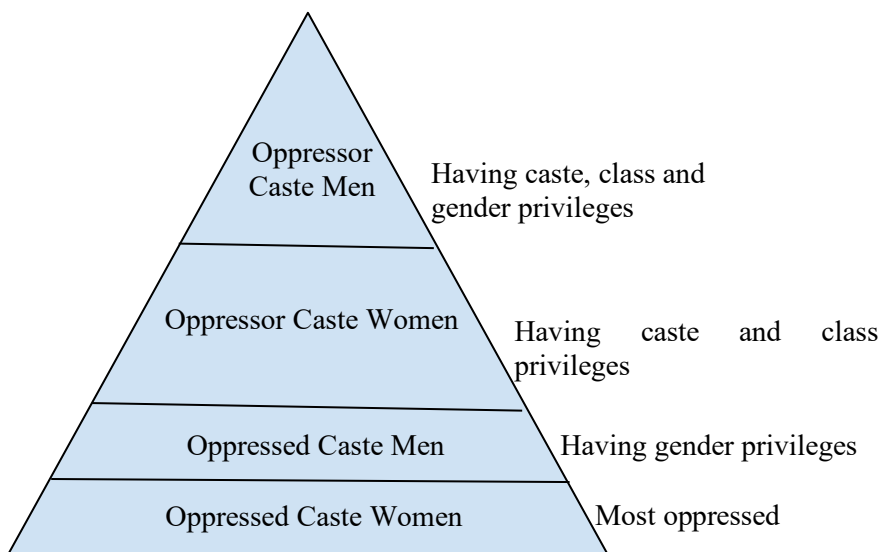
THEORETICAL ORIGIN

The opposition to the widespread U.S. feminist movement began in the late 19th century when Black feminists criticized it for excluding the voices and experiences of Black and Native women. Activist and writer bell hooks (2007), in her book *Ain't I a Woman?*, analyzes the effects of prevalent racism and sexism on Black women in the West. She critiqued both the feminist movement and the Black rights movement for their exclusionary approach toward Black women. The feminist movement in the West, largely driven by white middle- and upper-class women, often failed to address the needs of non-white, poor women because it did not consider racism and classism as factors of oppression. Meanwhile, the Black rights movement did not consider sexism as a cause of Black women's subordination. Thus, hooks (2007) argues that Black women's experiences have been overshadowed by the dominant political movement—the Black rights movement—and theoretical discourse that focused on Blacks and women as two separate groups. In the following decades, strong Black feminist voices consistently challenged the underlying problems within both the feminist and Black rights movements.

Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the concept of intersectionality in the 1980s as a legal framework to analyze discrimination against Black women, particularly in cases of battering and rape. Kathy Davis (2008) described it as a "buzzword," noting its ambiguity, incompleteness, and novel twist. However, she also acknowledged that the concept possesses all the essential features that a theory requires (Davis, 2008). In contrast, Nira Yuval-Davis

(2006) has presented a critique of this concept. Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that any attempt to essentialize "Blackness," "womanhood," or "working-classness" as specific forms of concrete oppression in additive ways inevitably conflates narratives of identity politics with descriptions of positionality and constructs identities within the terms of specific political projects. Such narratives often reflect hegemonic discourses of identity politics that render invisible experiences of the more marginal members of that specific social category" (Davis, 2006, p. 195). Adding to the scholarship, Patricia Hill (2016) argued that a single axis lens to address social inequality left no or little space for complex social problems. Thus, using intersectionality as an analytical tool can foster a better understanding of global inequalities.

ARRIVAL OF INTERSECTIONALITY IN INDIA

Caste has very much been intrinsic in the social hierarchy and relations of Indian society. Present Indian society is a complex field where the structures of capitalism, Brahminism, and patriarchy interact and intersect to demean the bodies and lives of women. Ruth Manorama (2008) brings out four features of caste that have a significant bearing on gender. Firstly, caste defines a social division of labor thus lending status to one kind of work and status loss to another kind of work. Secondly, it determines sexual intercourse through marriage alliances. Thirdly, it structures groups in hierarchical relations, thus labeling some castes as high and others as low. Finally, the concepts of pollution and purity provide prescriptions and prohibitions about social interactions. All these features have negative and worsening implications for gender equality and justice. The increased constraints on women are an essential part of a rise in caste hierarchy. Moreover, Dalit women work under the most exploitative, dehumanizing, and unhealthy conditions where neither their work nor their wages are regularized. These women have to work hard to meet the survival needs of their families. They are consistently denied the most basic facilities like adequate drinking water, and they face the constant threat of eviction. Consequently, their livelihood has become synonymous with insecurity. *Figure 1* demonstrates a visual representation of where Dalit women stand in the social hierarchy and power dynamics, illustrating the complex and challenging context that these women navigate. Manorama (2008) laments, "the majority of Dalit women do not even know the smell of education and school because of their improvised situations."

Oppressor Caste Men — Having caste, class and gender privileges

Oppressor Caste Women — Having caste and class privileges

Oppressed Caste Men — Having gender privileges

Oppressed Caste Women — Most oppressed

Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework for Understanding: Social Hierarchy at the Intersection of Caste and Gender*
Source: Figure conceptualized by the authors, based on existing literature.

Sharmila Rege (1998), in her seminal essay *Dalit Women Talk Differently: A Critique of 'Difference' and Towards a Dalit Feminist Standpoint Position,* argued that Dalit women are the most oppressed in this structural web, facing a triple burden of caste, class, and gender- based oppression. The Dalit feminist movement in India gained substantial traction during the 1980s and 1990s, a period when caste politics was particularly prominent (Rege, 1998). However, the intersection of gender and caste oppression was initially and extensively addressed by Savitribai Phule and Jyotiba Phule. Savitribai Phule established and ran three schools to educate mostly girls from lower caste backgrounds, a challenging endeavor at a time when educating both girls and lower caste individuals was considered a sin. Phule was the first to recognize how lower caste girls faced double oppression, making access to education nearly impossible to them.

In his writing, *Who were Shudras?* Ambedkar (1946) examines how *Upanayana*[1] ceremonies for Shudras and women were prohibited over time, which resulted in their exclusions from property rights. He drafted and proposed the Hindu Code Bill, for the liberation of all women by providing them with property rights, the right to divorce, etc. He argued that patriarchy and Brahmanical caste systems run parallel. Without controlling the bodies of women, casteism could not operate. He demonstrated how the custom of endogamy was imposed over exogamy to maintain caste-based power relations in society. He asserted, "With exogamy as the rule there could be no Caste, for exogamy means fusion...the superposition of endogamy on exogamy means the creation of caste." (Ambedkar, 1916, p. 9)

Post-independence, many Dalit feminist scholars depicted how the combination of caste and gender deepen the level of oppression experienced by Dalit women, an issue that neither feminist movements nor caste-based movements adequately address. Uma Chakravarti (2018), in her book, *Gendering Caste*, outlines how the history of caste is gendered and why systematic oppression of women needs to be acknowledged and understood to understand caste history. She uses some of the most heinous crimes of sexual harassment to demonstrate how rape is being used as a weapon by upper-caste men to assert power and control over Dalit women's bodies. Chakravarti (2018) outlines three distinct forms of oppression faced by Dalit women:

1. As subject to caste oppression at the hands of upper castes
2. As laborers subject to the class-based oppression, primarily by upper- and middle-caste landowners
3. As women who experience patriarchal oppression at the hands of all men, including men of their own caste

Sharmila Rege (1998), argues for "autonomous assertion" by Dalit women. She explains that the inclusion of Dalit women's struggles in the historiography of modern India has encountered numerous challenges, as our perception of nationalism is shaped by pre-existing dominant narratives. In her other work, *Writing Caste/Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonies,* Rege (2006) introduces the Dalit feminist standpoint, which, emerges from the practices and struggles of Dalit women. She further argues that the Dalit feminist standpoint cannot flourish if isolated from other groups' experiences and thoughts.

While the intersection of gender and caste identities began to find a place in the feminist discourses, Dalit feminism also emerged within these discussions. The concept of intersectionality gained traction much later,

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[1] Upanayana is a Hindu ritual exclusive to the upper three social classes (varnas), that marks the male child's beginning of student life. The guru (guide) gives the child a sacred thread to wear around his chest throughout his life.

particularly after the 1990s, as neoliberalism intensified identity discourse by promoting individualism and new class-based identities. With the rise of neoliberalism, intersectionality gained momentum, aligning with arguments for individualism (Evans, 2015). In recent years, many Indian feminist and Dalit scholars have criticized the concept for various reasons.

The concept of intersectionality is refuted by Nivedita Menon (2015) in the context of India. According to her, intersectionality has its roots in a Western framework built on 'western' experience that is unable to solve the problem of the 'non-west'. She argues that 'single axis framework' was never dominant in our parts of the world, as we have been dealing with plurality and multiplicity of social identities for ages. She questions the universal validity of the concept, which is primarily based on western experiences. She asserts that theory must be located—that the temporal and spatial factors should be taken into consideration to impose a theory in any particular context. Menon (2015) also claims that because a person only carries one significant identity at any one moment, intersectionality is an "empty place". According to her, intersectionality is much more beneficial for NGOs or funding agencies than feminism per se. She said "feminism is heterogenous and internally differentiated across contexts." Thus, any one universal concept to address these diversities might not work (Menon, 2015).

Mary E. John (2015) urges interaction with the intersectionality paradigm and criticizes Menon (2015) for rejecting its application in India. According to John (2015) the framework undoubtedly makes more general use of the double, triple, and numerous axes of oppression. John (2015) adds that "single axis" objectives within the women's movement have a surprising amount of tenacity in India, and we need to come up with a good explanation for this. The intersectional framework analysis reveals that mainstream feminists have not given those who experience "double or triple discrimination" much attention. Dalit women have always carried a triple burden; as a result, their challenges can only be fully comprehended within an intersectional context. She forwards that "if intersectionality is to have any genuinely liberatory potential, it must be that it contributes to building solidarity across subjects that are recognized as otherwise getting lost between movements and agendas" (John, 2015, p. 76). She adds, "We have been trapped by false particularism, and even false rejections of universalism." Thus, rejecting a concept without contextually engaging with it will be harmful (John, 2015, p. 75).

Furthermore, adding and supporting the arguments of John, Meena Gopal (2015) stringently criticizes Menon (2015) for raising several points as problematic regarding the relevance of intersectionality but not systematically clarifying them. Menon's account suggests that there is a binary between caste politics and feminist politics. Historically and practically, Dalit women have

always been triply burdened subjects whose issues can thus only adequately be understood within an intersectional framework considering the triple burden of class, caste, and gender atrocities. Finally, she concludes that contrary to her intentions, Menon's essay opens up the possibilities of claiming intersectionality for one's own purposes (Gopal, 2015).

Adding to the dialogue on Dalit feminism, Gopal Guru (1995) examines the importance of 'social position' while talking about Dalit women. "Social location which determines the perception of reality is a major factor that makes the representation of Dalit women's issues by non-Dalit women less valid and less authentic" (Guru, 1995, p. 2548). He examines how women solidarity movements have whitewashed or subsumed the experiences of Dalit women. And the phenomenon of Dalit patriarchy has enabled the Dalit men to exercise similar oppressive means that upper caste men have been using for years. Thus, Dalit women need to talk differently, different from women's solidarity and caste-based movements, and "the local resistance within the Dalits is important" (Guru, 1995, p. 2549).

In addition to conversations about Dalit feminism, there are other notable aspects of intersectionality that have drawn criticism. It has been targeted for being a vague, ambiguous, and catch-all natured concept that, has ill-defined boundaries. Critics argue that it lacks the precision a theory needs. It is believed that this concept has fallen into the traps of minimization, tokenization, and misinterpretation. Critics consider that the intersectional approach reduces the complexities and essentializes categorization (MacCall, 2005).

Let's tackle some of the critical evaluations of this concept in an Indian context and assess its viability for Indian feminist discourse.

VIABILITY IN INDIAN CONTEXT

The ambiguity and fluidity of this concept can certainly help in the Indian context, where social identities remain in a constant flux. Rigidity of a theory often fails to adapt to ground realities and changes in social realities. In addition, rigidity and theoretical articulation lead to the end of a theoretical paradigm. As Kathy Davis rightly observed, "it (imprecision of intersectionality) encourages complexity, stimulates creativity, and avoids premature closure, tantalizing feminist scholars to raise new questions and explore uncharted territory" (Davis, 2008, p. 79). Therefore, it is better to have certain levels of open-endedness and ambiguities to allow space for further engagements and theorizations.

Apart from gender and caste intersections, Indian feminist discourse also needs to look deeply into the complex web of class, region, tribal, and religious identities that Indian women carry. In India, women have distinct identities based on the social hierarchy of caste, class, and region, and they face varied degrees of brutality and marginalization. As Crenshaw opined,

"intersectional subordination need not be intentionally produced; in fact, it is frequently the consequence of the imposition of one burden that interacts with existing vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1249).

Annie Namala (2008) argues that the disabilities and limitations placed on Dalits in terms of education, occupation, social interaction, and social mobility have pushed them into the lower class, so much so that caste and class are synonymous in our society. She prefers to refer to this phenomenon of indistinguishability of caste and class as *claste* (Namala, 2008).

In India, where hate crimes against Dalits and Adivasis are on the rise every year, an intersectional approach to studying not only those crimes but the overall social experiences is much needed. According to the Newsclick report (2022), an analysis of the National Coalition for Strengthening Prevention of Atrocities Act's (NCPSA) National Crime Records Bureau's 2021 data report showed that crimes against Scheduled Castes (SCs) have increased by 1.2% in 2021, with a total of 50,900 reported cases. The analysis indicated that rape cases involving SC women (including minors) accounted for 7.64%, while those involving Scheduled Tribes (ST) women made up 15%. Incidents of attempted rape, minor rape, assault to violate a woman's modesty, and kidnapping of women and children were reported by 16.8% of SC women and 26.8% of ST women. Both Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe are constitutional terms referring to categories of lower caste and marginalized tribal groups in India.

Crimes against Dalits and tribals should be examined to identify how many women are victims, while crimes against women should be analyzed through a caste lens, as many horrific cases have been driven by caste-based hatred. Gender violence and crimes against women are often directed by several factors beyond gender alone. Rape, in particular, has been used as a tool to oppress women from lower class, caste, and tribal groups and to assert domination by higher caste-class men.

The issues of class and caste violence received attention in the wake of the Mathura rape case. As argued by Elisabeth Armstrong (2013), the Mathura rape case and the Towards Equality Report changed the very course of the feminist movement in India. It brought to the forefront not only the violence women are suffering on a day-to-day basis, but also its inherent caste and class dimension.

As mentioned by Virginius Xaxa (2008), the women in tribal societies have been subject to many disadvantages. Tribal women become highly marginalized as they carry the identity of the tribal group along with their gender. The gendered division of labor, unequal customary practices, exclusion of women from land ownership, and witch-hunting practices are

some of them (Xaxa, 2008). In 2015, a mob in Jharkhand decided to massacre five tribal women because they were suspicious of witch practices. A group of villagers dragged these women from their homes and beat them with stones, rods, and sticks till their deaths. As reported by Rahul Jha and Aishwarya Tripathi for Gaon Connection (2023), the NCRB report stated that there were 663 reported murders related to witch-hunting practice in India from 2015 to 2021, an average of 95 witch-hunting deaths per year. Almost all victims were tribal women, who were targeted for their tribal identity and prevailing belief that witchcraft is exclusively a woman and tribal activity. These cases should not be dismissed as mere murders or lynchings, but rather as instances of hatred and misinterpretation towards women from particular tribal groups. The identities of the accused should also be looked upon to understand how mainstream dominant communities decides the "norm" and "acceptable" practices of society, and how these groups assert their dominance by targeting and oppressing certain groups. By looking at one of such cases where the caste of the victim and accused impacted the crime against Dalit women, we can better equip ourselves with the intersectional feminist praxis.

CASE STUDY: HATHRAS RAPE CASE

Crimes against SC women are disproportionately higher than other communities in India. According to IndiaSpend's analysis of crime in India in the 2019 report, there were 3,486 cases of rape against SC women, including girls, and 3,375 cases of assault, each constituting around 7-8% of total crimes against Scheduled Castes. Cases of rape and assault on SC women have increased by 37% and 20%, respectively, since 2015 (Srivastava et al., 2020). Findings from the Indian National Human Rights Commission Report on Prevention of Atrocities against Scheduled Castes reveal that every hour, two Dalits are assaulted, three Dalit women are raped each day, two Dalits are murdered, and two Dalit homes are torched. Balatkaram Virodhi Manch, a platform against rape, revealed that more than 80% of the victims of rape belong to the lower caste Dalit and tribal groups as well as the poor classes of society (Manorama, 2008). Former chief justice of India, P.N. Bhagwati, while inaugurating the 32nd Biennial Conference on the "Status of Women in Our Changing Society", organized by the Maharashtra State of Women's Council, said, "Rape and molestation are the new dimensions of caste war, used as weapons of reprisal and to crush the morale of a section of the people. This is an increasing feature in the rural areas."

   This September completes three long and anguished years since the Hathras rape case. On 14 September 2020, a 19-year-old Dalit woman was raped by four oppressor caste men of Bhulgarhi village, Hathras district, Uttar Pradesh. All four of the accused belonged to the Shikhawat Thakur community of the village. When her mother rushed towards her after hearing

her scream, she was already lying in a pool of blood with her tongue cut off. She was taken to the nearby police station in a hurry. Her family claims that the police deliberately delayed the registration of FIR and instructed them to take the victim away. She was carried from hospital to hospital due to lack of infrastructure, and finally she took her last breath, unable to recover from the fractures and mutilations. As reported by LiveMint (2023), "When the news broke out initially through social media, Agra Police, Hathras District Magistrate, and UP's Information & Public Relations called it 'fake news'. Later, a senior UP Police officer claimed that no sperm was found in samples as per the forensic report and that some people had 'twisted' the incident to stir 'caste-based tension" (p. 1). The officer also said that the forensic report revealed that "the victim was not raped" (p. 1). As alleged by her family, even her body was hurriedly cremated. Throughout the case, there could be seen an institutionalized anxiety to bring forth caste discourse in the case. As argued by Anjali Chauhan (2023), to counter this, Kiruba Munusamy, a Dalit lawyer, came forward and highlighted that the case was being passed deliberately without the caste angle and extended her unconditional support to the victim to fight the systematic caste- laden patriarchy that uses rape and other forms of physical violence against women, particularly Dalit women, to degrade and dehumanize oppressed communities and to maintain caste hierarchy.

The recent judgment by a Uttar Pradesh court, which came after almost 2.5 years of the tragic incident, acquitted three of the four accused men. The fourth accused, Sandeep Sisodia, was found guilty of culpable homicide but not of rape and murder. In terms of the outrage, Rukmini Sen (2023) highlighted that the kind of nationwide protest we saw following the 2012 Delhi Nirbhaya Case were unprecedent, and was the victim's caste never discussed. In contrast, the Hathras case, another horrendous gangrape, that received sufficient media attention, could not gather the same level of feminist outrage and activism (Sen, 2023).

Currently, her family is protected by 24 CRPF personnel, 8 CCTV cameras, and a metal detector. Beyond her parents and siblings, she leaves behind three younger nieces, whose lives are characterized by a dystopian reality. The eldest niece has been separated from her parents and relocated to her grandmother's residence to attend school. Meanwhile, the younger girls remain in Hathras, unable to engage in outdoor play, lacking interaction with peers, and facing reluctance from the family to enroll them in school (Lavania, 2023). This brings us not only to the fact that women of oppressed caste are systematically more exposed to violence, especially at the hands of oppressor caste men, as brought out by various reports and studies time and again, but also that they are being failed by the institutions functioning to ensure safety of people and to bring about justice in society. Especially in cases of violence

against women, we need to look into the various identities involved to understand how our social fabric is backing some while exposing others to gross injustices.

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

As demonstrated by conceptual discussion and the case study of the Hathras gangrape case, the intersectional approach to feminism centrally considers lived experiences as a criterion for meaning and developing consciousness. The Intersectional approach considers marginalization in terms of the social power structures and the consequent power play. An intersectional standpoint allows complexity of subjectivity and numerous epistemologies. Intersectionality criticizes unitary knowledge and unitary subjects with a single aspect of identity as well as challenges the false universals by exposing how certain kinds of experiences are universalized. It recognizes the heterogeneity within the category of women. However, it promotes solidarity or coalition without relying on homogeneity. It does not enforce the commonality of oppression; rather, it practices solidarity among communities of women who have chosen to work and fight together despite their differences. An Intersectional approach to study violence against women India could help Indian feminist discourse and activism to develop a more empathetic framework. The paper was an attempt to further the viability of intersectionality in Indian feminist discourse. As John (2015) also argued, instead of discarding the concept fully, we should be engaging with it, because refuting intersectionality as a whole would do more harm for Indian feminism, where the fight is not only against the patriarchy, but "graded patriarchy." Thus, this paper is an attempt towards making intersectionality a tool to study crimes against women and contributing to the conversation on intersectionality in India. Rather than outright rejecting the concept, it seeks to foster a dialogue with it.

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The Change is Here, and the Change is Her: Pakistani American Representation in the Disney+ series *Ms. Marvel*

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ABSTRACT

Ms. Marvel (2022) from the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), adapted from the Marvel Comics series of the same name, follows a Muslim Pakistani American teenager from Jersey City who adores her hero, Captain Marvel. This paper engages with intersectionality of Kamala Khan's representation in Ms. Marvel through the lens of her multiple intersecting identities: as a Pakistani American, a Muslim, a teenage girl, and a superhero. We utilized José Esteban Muñoz's theory of disidentification (1999) and bell hooks' critical feminist lens (i.e., her ideas of the dysmorphic body and the deconstruction of women as parts) to do a critical analysis of the six episodes, We found three changes from her comic book origins to the new superhero found in the Disney+ series: Kamala's powers, her character growth, and her identity as a Pakistani American teenager. The study discusses the intersectionality of Kamala's unique relationships on screen with her family, subverting typical cultural cues and gender roles, and her conformity and subversion of identity as a Muslim Pakistani American. while creating her new identity as a superheroine, all of which highlight the lived experiences of marginalized communities.

Keywords: Ms. Marvel, Disney+ series, Pakistani American teenager

Superheroes are dominating our screens in theaters and on streaming sites, where seven of the 11 top-grossing films of 2017 were superhero movies based on comic book characters (Bowden, 2018). The New York Times calls it Hollywood's Comic Book Age and argues that with the trending global obsession with superhero movies, and with ongoing worldwide fascination of superhero movies, they have become the "most consumed stories in human history" (Bowden, 2018, p. 3). Films reflect the social values of the time they are made in. The same can be found in the changing status of women and evolving ideas about masculinity, religion, race, and crime in the last decade of Hollywood.

The Disney+ series *Ms. Marvel* depicts the first Muslim Superhero in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), adapted from the Marvel Comics series (2014-2015) of the same name. The series follows a Pakistani American teenager named Kamala Khan (Iman Vellani), from Jersey City, who obsessively idealizes MCU fellow character Captain Marvel, to the point where Kamala is perceived by her family and community as someone with difficulties separating fantasy and reality. The series delves into the family and social life of Kamala Khan as a Pakistani Muslim teenager, where it touches on the ancestral history; struggles of her parents as immigrants from Pakistan to the United States (U.S.); and her grandparents and mother (as a child), as they migrated from India to Pakistan due to the partition of India in 1947, that defined the lives and relationships of four generations of immigrant women in Kamala Khan's family. Kamala's identity as a Muslim Pakistani American and as Gen Z serves as markers of her multifaceted identity and have changed from the comic book to the on-screen adaption (e.g. her identity shifting from a millennial to Gen Z to be more relatable to the younger audience and to express the difficulties of dual identities in today's American society). These changes shifted the focus from her millennial identity to her role as a teenager in a Muslim Pakistani American household and community.

With the addition of *Ms. Marvel* to the MCU lineup, the production team behind *Ms. Marvel* includes extensive involvement of Pakistanis, Pakistani Americans, and people from the broader South Asian-American community. Sharmeen Obaid Chinnoy, an Academy Award-winning Pakistani director and documentary filmmaker, and Meera Menon, an Indian-American director, directed two episodes each. The writing team includes Bisha K. Ali as the head writer, along with writers Sabir Pirzada and Fatimah Asghar, both of South Asian origin. Ali also serves as executive producer, along with Sana Amanat, the editor of the *Ms. Marvel* comic series who is also a consultant. Joined by a star-studded cast, Kamala Khan's introduction on television serves as a celebration of difference and is a love letter to the re-imagined character and her Pakistani American family. The diverse

production team in the creation of the *Ms. Marvel* series contributes to greater authentic and inclusive storytelling, empowers underrepresented communities, and helps foster a greater appreciation for diversity and cultural complexity in the media landscape.

In an interview reported in the Washington Post, Amanat emphasizes that Kamala Khan's character was inspired by her own experiences as a Pakistani American girl growing up in New Jersey. Amanat asserted that there is no explicit political agenda behind Kamala's creation; rather, Kamala's popularity lies in the fact that her story is relatable to the immigrant experience and resonates with a diverse population of readers who can relate with the life of an immigrant household (Cavna, 2016).

However, we argue the modifications from the comics to the television series offers new perspectives on cultural representation while weaving together the intersectionality of migration, heritage, and modern diasporic experiences. These new perspectives are created through three main changes: the renovation of her physical powers and her origins, her character growth, and a new narrative which focuses on her Pakistani American, Generation Z (Gen Z) identity. This paper is influenced by the two co-authors' positionality. Author one is a Pakistani Muslim mother and academic, who grew up in Pakistan in a household where her grandparents directly witnessed and were impacted by the 1947 partition of the subcontinent by the British. The partition of British India founded two separate countries, Pakistan and India, forcing the mass migration of Muslims and Hindus across the newly formed borders. The partition serves as a major story arc in the latter half of the television series. Author two is a White Queer American critical scholar whose research focuses on intersectionality of identity in media and the cultural impact of the American mythos of superheroes. As Marvel fans, we bring our identities to this research to examine how *Ms. Marvel* represents both the Pakistani American identity and Kamala's navigation through her teenage years and as a superhero entering today's hostile world.

We provide an extensive literature review to establish a scholarly foundation, which we organized into three sections. The first part is the context of the cultural background of Kamala, in which we describe the Pakistani identity and differentiate from the Pakistani American identity. In the second section, we explore the portrayal of Pakistanis in American media. Finally, the literature review ends with a discussion on the current studies that examine *Ms. Marvel* as a comic superheroine, as there is limited literature on the *Ms. Marvel* Disney+ series.

We then move into the theoretical framework followed by a thematic analysis and concluding with a final discussion and explain the need for future research. Throughout the paper, we highlight the significance of *Ms. Marvel* as a novel media contribution in crafting a Pakistani American identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Context of Cultural Background

      The partition in the Marvel television series refers to historical facts that changed the subcontinent landscape forever. The end of British colonial rule in India led to one of the biggest migrations of people in history. Approximately 12 million individuals were forced to flee their homes and become refugees, while religious violence claimed the lives of between 500,000 to one million people (Mateen & Sebastian, 2022). The British left India after a 300-year rule, and the subcontinent was partitioned into two independent nations based on the presence of religious and ethnic majority: India with a Hindu majority, and Pakistan with a Muslim majority, including East Pakistan, now known as Bangladesh (Dalrymple, 2015; Siddiqui, 2022). People who either stayed in Pakistan or migrated at the time of Partition are called Pakistani. Hence, Pakistani are the citizens and nationals of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. On the other hand, Pakistani Americans are people who live in the U.S. as permanent residents or citizens, have dual citizenship (Pakistan and U.S.) but have their origins and ancestral roots in Pakistan (Moore, 2011; Zaki, 2016; Batalova, 2024). Religion plays a central role in the lives of Pakistanis and Pakistani Americans. Despite the overwhelming majority of Muslims in Pakistan, the Pakistani American community is more religiously diverse with Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, and Pakistani Zoroastrians (Afzal, 2021). Religion plays a vital role in the construction of transnational identity and community for Pakistani immigrants in North America (Afzal, 2021). Pakistani Americans' religious and cultural heritage are intertwined and cannot be easily separated (Bashir & Tang, 2018). The communal identities of Pakistani Muslim Americans are shaped by how they are perceived and treated by American culture, both as South Asians and as Muslims (Moore, 2011).

Portrayal of Pakistanis in American Media

      The portrayal of Pakistani culture and identity in American media and entertainment has evolved and continues to change over time. At the same time there are some stereotypical ideas about Pakistanis have not changed in American media. These ideas often connect Pakistanis to terrorism, extreme beliefs, or exaggerated cultural traits (Muffuletto, 2018). A study investigating the depiction of Pakistan in the Hollywood film media found that Hollywood sees Pakistan as a terrorist and extremist country. Films depict Pakistanis as hating Americans and that they are prepared give up their lives and kill in the name of Jihad (Bilal et al., 2021). In addition, multiple studies found that Hollywood movies eternalize Islamophobic rhetoric. Hollywood films' post 9/11 has fueled anti-Muslim prejudice (Elouardaoui, 2011; Uzma Kiran et al., 2021).

While media representations of Pakistani and Muslims have historically been limited and shaped by Islamophobia and post-9/11 narratives, *Ms. Marvel* offers a fresh portrayal of a Pakistani American, highlighting their complex identities and lived experiences (Muffuletto, 2018). Ms. Marvel subverts negative stereotypes by portraying a Pakistani American protagonist who navigates her identity as both an American and a Muslim in a positive and nuanced way. The series showcases cultural pride, familial love, and a complex view of what it means to be a young Pakistani American woman, offering a refreshing and empowering representation. This critical analysis adds to the existing body of literature by examining how the series challenges long-standing portrayals of Pakistani culture and identity, providing a more authentic and multifaceted representation of the Pakistani American experience.

SCHOLARSHIP ON COMIC BOOK SUPERHEROES AND *MS. MARVEL*

Superheroes within the Marvel and DC Comic universes have been the focus of many scholars who examine how superheroes were on the rise as a popular genre in media studies and the recent turn to gender and superheroines throughout various forms of media (Brown, 2011, 2015, 2022; DeGalan, 2020; Frankel & Robbins, 2017; Olufidipe & Echezabal, 2021). Likewise, discussions on race, ethnicity, and minority populations' depiction on screen and in comic books have been circulating in scholarship in the recent decade (Brown, 2017, 2021; Gipson, 2019; Haider, 2020).

Most literature on *Ms. Marvel* has been limited to her comic introduction in 2014, where scholars address Kamala's racial and gender identity (Khoja-Moolji & Niccolini, 2015; Cooper-Cunningham, 2020; Ruthven, 2020). Additional scholarship has focused on her Pakistani American and Muslim identity in the comics (Aayeshah, 2018; Jackson-Preece & Bhambra, 2021; Kent, 2015; Khoja-Moolji & Niccolini, 2015; Paramita, 2019) and on her comic book powers of elongating and engorging her limbs (Gibbons, 2017; Linton, 2018). These scholars are helping to build a connection between the societal awareness of the minority groups and communities' contributions and struggles for the welfare of their community.

Our article addresses the gap in existing scholarship on *Ms. Marvel* concerning the shifted narrative focus of her identity and her changed powers from Kamala's comic book origins to the television show. These changes critically reflect a reimagining of Kamala's identity, making her more relatable while addressing the complexities of how media adaptations reshape diasporic and minority identities, addressing issues of representation, visibility, and cultural negotiation in a transnational context. Kamala's character in the TV show serves as a lens for examining the broader cultural

dynamics that influence the crafting of Pakistani American identity in popular culture.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following theoretical frameworks enabled us to conduct a critical analysis of Disney+ *Ms. Marvel* to understand how it represents the narrative and characterization changes from the original comic debut of Ms. Marvel to the television show. Ms. Marvel serves as a space for "disidentification," where Kamala Khan navigates dominant cultural narratives to create a hybrid identity that both engages with and resists stereotypical portrayals.

José Esteban Muñoz's theory of disidentification (1999) was used to understand Kamala's family dynamics, community relations, religious and cultural practices, and historical events such as the partition, as found in the second half of the *Ms. Marvel* television series. According to Muñoz, "disidentification" draws from a political act that goes beyond resisting dominant ideology by embracing a disempowered perspective. Muñoz's disidentification involves a complex process of engaging with and subverting existing cultural representations and norms (Arrizon, 2002).

We are also integrating bell hooks' (2015) ideas of dysmorphic body and deconstruction of women as a critical feminist lens to analyze the narrative of Kamala's powers and her growth as a character. hooks (2015) argues that the representation of black women's bodies is hypersexualized, and "in 19th century pop culture and media, representations of black female bodies were deconstructed into parts to emphasize that these bodies were expendable, and how contemporary images (even those created in black cultural production) gave a similar message" (p. 64). Because of this focus on the "other body" and its segmented reduction, we used hooks as our entry point into critiquing Kamala's comic book powers of "embiggening". Further, hooks highlights the importance of challenging the objectification of women's bodies and recognizing the inherent wholeness and agency of women's experiences (Mpofu, 2021). Kamala's journey towards embracing her powers as part of her complete identity serves as a powerful example of breaking free from the confines of patriarchal norms and reclaiming autonomy over one's own body and self (Biana, 2020).

METHOD

We conducted a critical discourse analysis of the *Ms. Marvel* series by utilizing the disidentification and critical feminism frameworks. Critical analysis recognizes the significant role of sociopolitical and historical events in shaping any form of text, including comics, videos, and scripts (Allen, 2017). The critical analysis method helped us see beyond the surface level the six episodes comprising the first season of the *Ms. Marvel* series. We took each episode as a unit of analysis and split the series into two halves consisting

of distinct thematic story arcs. The first three episodes establish Kamala Khan as a Pakistani American within her community who is exploring her powers and role as Ms. Marvel. The second three episodes incorporates the painful legacy of the partition of British India that led to one of the world's bloodiest mass migrations in history. In the following section, we map out the specific changes of her characterization from her comic book debut to the television show.

OVERVIEW OF *MS. MARVEL*'S COMIC TO TELEVISION ADAPTION

Kamala Khan's transition from comic book hero to headlining her own show is shaped by the producers and writing team behind the iconic character. In the *Ms. Marvel* comics, Kamala's coming-of-age story reflects the personal experiences, ideologies, and biases (conscious or otherwise) of Pakistani American and Muslim identity of the production and writing team (Landis, 2016, 2019). Amanat believed introducing Kamala Khan and the new Ms. Marvel would offer readers a heroic persona worthy of admiration while also offering an avenue to exploring unique narratives found in her life. The production team includes G. Willow Wilson, a White American woman who converted to Islam while in college, who has claimed that her creation of Kamala's story mirrors many of her own experiences and the duality of identity, stating in an NPR interview:

> I spent a lot of time talking to colleagues and friends of mine who have grown up with those hyphenated identities, who come from immigrant backgrounds — Arab or Pakistani, South Asian, African — and sort of asking them, what was it like? What did you have to go through in high school, you know, growing up, that maybe is not as obvious to me or somebody who is not from that background? So, I feel very strongly about these things and about the need to create space in which it is okay to talk about them ("The Woman Behind Marvel's Newest Team of Heroes, 2015).

Ms. Marvel's success as a comic is credited with being a female-created, female-centric story in a male-dominated genre and industry, while also encoding the creative team's experiences and identity into their work (Landis, 2016; Priego, 2016). Kamala Khan became what thousands of young comic book readers needed in the early 2010s: a strong, teenage superheroine who looked, talked, and prayed like the audience who read her stories. A hero who saved the day and was not just a footnote.

The authors of the comic run include Willow Wilson, Sana Amanat, and Adian Alphona's whose work, *Ms. Marvel Volume 1: No Normal*, introduced Kamala Khan as Ms. Marvel in the February 2014 issue. *Ms. Marvel* has since gained attention from scholars such as Kent (2015) and Priego (2016) because the success of *Ms. Marvel* as a Muslim superheroine

with Marvel Comics. Additionally, there have been many works that examined Kamala's identity as a Pakistani American Muslim superheroine, but in the context of a coming-of-age story of a young millennial girl living in Jersey City, New Jersey. Her new identity as a member of Gen Z in the show allows for a greater conversation of how her identity is girl is often overlooked or seen as one-dimensional by the older generations from within her community. These previous texts specifically examine her minority status within a predominantly White America and its predominantly White hero-listing but not how this may change her interpersonal relationships within her family and community (Cooper-Cunningham, 2020; Gibbons, 2017; Mahmutovic, 2021).

This article expands on the works of Jennifer Jackson-Preece and Manmit Bhambra's (2021) "In-between identities and cultures: Ms. Marvel and the representation of young Muslim women" found in the *LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series,* Winona Landis's (2016) "Diasporic (dis)identification: the participatory fandom of Ms. Marvel", and Andrea Modarres's (2021) "Aamir's just a dork': Ms. Marvel's re-vision of Islam in America" as examples of Esteban Muñoz's theory of disidentification with a narrative involving Kamala Khan's family. This work provided us with a method of exploring her identity as a superheroine while touching on the role of partition in defining the lives and relationship between the four generations of immigrant women (i.e. Kamala Khan, Kamala's mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother).

The existing literature provides several insights, including the context of the cultural background of Kamala (i.e., Pakistani identity and differentiate it with the Pakistani American), the portrayal of Pakistanis in American media, current studies that examine *Ms. Marvel* as a comic superheroine, and specific analyses of *Ms. Marvel* as a character, particularly her identity as a Pakistani American Muslim superheroine and her coming-of-age story. While this review of the literature is by no means a comprehensive list of the scholarship being produced around the MCU, it does offer insight on a gap in the literature surrounding Disney+ *Ms. Marvel,* and with it, Kamala Khan's rise from teenager to superheroine. The gap indicates the need to examine Kamala's unique relationships on screen with her family, subverting typical cultural cues and gender roles, and her conformity and subversion of identity as a Muslim Pakistani American while creating her new identity as a superheroine. Kamala's characterization in the comics focused primarily on her identity as a Millennial, with her Pakistani American identity as secondary for the narrative in terms of importance. As such, this article expands on the existing literature by focusing on certain aspects that have yet to receive attention. These characteristics include intra-family dynamics and a modest interpretation of religious practices in Kamala's home, along with the role of

the 1947 Pak-India partition in defining the lives and relationships of four generations of immigrant women in Kamala Khan's family.

In the next section, we provide an analysis of Kamala's characterization based on the show, which focuses more on her Pakistani American roots, with her Gen Z status acting more as a comedic factor within the series' plot, including two other major changes from the comics to reflect the recent times.

FROM MILLENNIAL TO GEN Z

One of the more prominent shifts from comic Kamala to show Kamala is her identity change from a Millennial to a member of Generation Z. Some of the modernization of the character is in the smaller details being "dated" and thus, "updated" to be more popular culture relevant to today's society. For example, we witness one of these minor changes immediately with the opening sequence in Episode 1: *Generation Why*, where Kamala Khan is recording a voiceover for her YouTube channel, Sloth Baby Productions, with a fan re-enactment of the battle against Thanos and the role Captain Marvel played therein. This deviates from Kamala's comic fascination from writing fanfiction to the more technology-savvy lifestyle of Gen Z with video editing as her nerdy hobby (Ali et al., El Arbi & Fallah, 2022). Stepping away from Kamala's Millennial identity in the new show eliminated the need to have antagonists and villains focusing on environmental issues and could instead provide a focus on government overreach (i.e., Damage Control), racism, and prejudice against the Pakistani American and Muslim communities.

In addition, there are two major changes from the comics to reflect the recent times. The first one is the cast, such as Zoe switching from a bully to a popular girl/influencer stereotype. The second one is the changing of the "type" of villains Ms. Marvel fights (i.e., from villains representing environmental issues to the Clandestines, people Kamala shares her origin with). The following section reflects on Zoe's characterization change from "mean girl" to influencer and ally to the Muslim community.

From Bully to Influencer

We start with Zoe Zimmer (Laurel Marsden), a fellow student at Coles Academic High School who is portrayed as a bully to Kamala's friends with racist undertones. Such confrontations found in the comics included scenes, as described by Sarah Gibbons (2017):

> ... [T]he first issue of the series begins at the Circle Q corner store, where Kamala and her best friends Bruno and Nakia face uncomfortable questions and comments from a high school peer named Zoe. Bruno refers to Zoe as "the concern troll", for her ability to mask her criticisms of Kamala and Nakia's beliefs and values as expressions of concern for their well-being (Wilson and Alphona,

2014, 1). As the narrative opens, Zoe compliments the color of Nakia's scarf before questioning whether a man had forced her to wear it, explaining, "I'm just concerned" (Wilson and Alphona, 2014, 2). Rather than straightforwardly criticizing the practice of wearing a hijab, Zoe exhibits an ideology of western superiority, imagining that her role is to protect Nakia from Islam's purported oppression... [Kamala's] transformation takes place when she heads home from a party where Zoe had expressed surprise that she was allowed out on weekends and chided her for smelling like curry (p. 455).

While Zoe does later apologize in the comic series for her rude behavior (Wilson, 2014, p. 83), it still stands at her core of being an antagonist to Kamala at the start of the series as a sort of high school rival. On the other hand, this is eliminated from the Disney+ series with a dramatic reimaging from a bully to a "popular girl" and unlikely ally/friend by the end of the season. Instead, in Episode 2: Crushed, Zoe tries to protect Kamala's identity while interrogated by Damage control (Gritmon et al., Menon, 2022). Later in the season in Episode 6: No Normal, she also uses her social media platform as a TikTok social media influencer to bring awareness to the battle at the school against Agent Sadie Deever and the S.W.A.T. units of the United States Department of Damage Control, and the injustice faced by the Muslim community (Dunn et al., El Arbi & Fallah , 2022).

Fighting Djinns and the Noor Dimension

One of the major changes to the writing behind the two *Ms. Marvel* series is placing the Clandestines, a group of exiled Djinn from the Noor Dimension, as the antagonists in the show, rather than her comic book enemies who focused on terrorizing teenagers (Cooper-Cunningham, 2020). The Clandestines attack Kamala to try to steal Aisha's (Mehwish Hayat) bangle that has the power to open the rift between the dimensions. The Clandestine, or Clan Destine in the Marvel comics, are a dysfunctional family of immortal beings born of an ordinary human named "Adam" and the Genie "Elelayth" (*Clan Destine Members, Enemies, Powers | Marvel*, n.d.). In *Ms. Marvel*, the Clandestines, led by Najma (Nimra Bucha) in the present day, are exiles from the *Noor* dimension. This *Noor* dimension is effectively another part of the multiverse that is hidden behind a veil of light. *Noor* literally means "light" in Arabic; however, it is often contextually used to mean Holy or Divine Light. What little we see of the Noor Dimension establishes it as a shadow realm hidden just behind the real world, an assumption borne out by the holographic projection shown by Waleed to Kamala in Episode 4: *Seeing Red* (Pirzada et al., Obaid-Chinoy, 2022).

These otherworldly beings are much more culturally significant to the story than Kamala's first comic book villain, the Inventor, who is bent on using the energies of the living teenagers as batteries to reverse the effects of

Global Warming (Gibbons, 2017). The comic series focuses heavily on the identity of Otherness as often found within millennial culture, so much so that many millennials identify as the odd generation out from older generations in terms of work ethic, upholding tradition, and as a generation of youth whom previous generations blame from global crises that were inherited (Gibbons, 2017).

While they have no direct relationship to *Ms. Marvel* in the comics, their origin from the "Djinns" allows them to be set up as a perfect foil for Kamala Khan's *Ms. Marvel*. Being Djinn, from the *Noor* dimension, allows these people to be connected to the vast and epic Islamic mythology surrounding the Djinn, as well as explain the powers and the connection they have with Kamala and her family. What is notable about the Djinn narrative is that they differ from how they are portrayed in Islamic mythology. Within Islamic mythology, the Djinn are a rival creation to the humans. In fact, *Shaitan,* the Islamic equivalent of the devil or Satan in Judeo-Christian mythology, is explicitly identified as a Djinn who was so devout to Allah (God) that he was considered better than the angels. The only time he disobeyed Allah was after the creation of Adam, when Allah ordered all of the angels to bow down to Adam. Shaitan refused and was subsequently cursed to stay away from the grace of Allah, tasked with luring humanity away from Allah's appointed right path. Waleed (Farhan Akhtar), leader of the Red Daggers, explains to Kamala why people view people from the Noor Dimension as Dijnn in Episode 4: *Seeing Red*, stating, "The Clandestine are not like the Djinn you've heard about in stories or in religious texts. I mean, if Thor landed in the Himalayan mountains, he too would have been called a Djinn" (Pirzada et al. & Obaid-Chinoy, 2022, 0:20:43). By reinterpreting the Djinn, the TV series emphasizes that identity is complex and multifaceted, challenges rigid definitions and highlights the value of embracing intersectionality of identities in today's world. Both Kamala and the Djinn share a celestial origin, yet their life choices distinguish them—Kamala choosing the path of heroism while the Djinns follow a more destructive route. While individuals may share common origins, it is their choices that define their moral compass, reinforcing the idea that identity is not just inherited but actively shaped by personal decisions, values, and actions.

THE MARVELOUS POWERS OF MS. MARVEL

Gibbons (2017) has already discussed at length how in the comic, the Otherness and the literal, and metaphorical, flexibility of *Ms. Marvel*'s superpowers allow her to break away from the gendered standards of society, by stretching and engorging her fists and other limbs to fight crime. However, with the Disney+ debut of *Ms. Marvel* changing her powers from "embiggen" to "hard light," the social and cultural context for why she was given these powers in the comic and why they were replaced for this newest adaptation

of the superheroine needs further academic scrutiny. Therefore, we begin with feminist scholar Kent (2015), who explored how Kamala's comic book presence was about assimilation to American culture and being an American hero post-9/11. Kent (2015) critiques how in the first comic book Kamala, with the use of her powers, shifts into a mirror image of Captain Marvel, also known as Carol Danvers, who went by the moniker Ms. Marvel. As Kamala previously expressed that she wants to be like her childhood hero:

> Kamala's powers are an externalization of Kamala's inner conflict: if only she could change herself, then she would be happy and fit in. However, she soon realizes that in order to fit in, she would have to compromise her own identity. This crucial development in Kamala's character resonates with issues of assimilation and arguably represents an embrace of her "otherness" (Kent, 2015, p. 525).

Priego (2016) claimed that when bestowed with powers in the comic, the imagery is aligned with Christian iconography, with Captain Marvel's open palmed hands appearing before Kamala, reminiscent of Raphael's (1520) *The Transfiguration* or Titian's (1518) *Assumption of the Virgin*. This image of Captain Marvel greeting Kamala in a vision mirrors the placement of subjects and composition of the paintings, thus the superheroine's presence in the comic, "Metamorphosis part one of five", *Ms Marvel #1* is presented as Judeo-Christion iconography inspired (Priego, 2016; Wilson et al., 2014) the floating gilded Urdu words *"Sakal Bun Phool Rahi Sarson"* ("The yellow mustard is blooming in every field") from a poem by the famous thirteenth-century Sufi poet Amir Khusro, instead furthering the Judeo-Christian underpinnings of the superhero genre (Priego, 2016). Thus, Ms. Marvel's original powers were trying to mimic, whether subconsciously or otherwise, the looks of others; in this case, the white, blonde, blue-eyed Captain Marvel (Gibbons, 2017).

On the other hand, in the TV show, her powers are retconned from flexibility, shapeshifting, and augmentation to light manipulation, which she dubs "hard light". Hard light is the construct, or physical manifestation, of energy from the *Noor* dimension, which she can access as a power from within her soul/body via Aisha's bangle. Kamala uses this power to create a protective body armor around herself, shielding her body and navigating through surroundings while remaining unharmed. Hard light manifests in the form of curved body forcefields that serve as a symbol of defense and protection, acting as both a symbolic and literal shield. The use of these constructs demonstrates Kamala's role as a defender, someone who actively safeguards herself and others. Traditional notions of acceptance often require marginalized individuals to conform to dominant norms and structures, leading to the suppression of their individuality and the reinforcement of oppressive power dynamics. However, Kamala's ability to shield herself and others challenges this notion of assimilation. Rather than conforming to fit in,

her ability to create body armor allows her to assert her presence and protect her own identity. This protective act can be viewed as a form of resistance within a larger society that disregards and erases the experiences of marginalized individuals. Furthermore, Kamala uses hard light to mimic an elongation of her limbs and fists, reminiscent of her comic book origins. However, this is not a physical distortion of her body and her "Otherness", but rather a perceived shapeshifting ability as a consequence of manipulating the Noor energies.

Kamala's power can also be understood through the lens of disidentification. Disidentification involves navigating and resisting dominant norms and representations, while simultaneously creating alternative forms of identity and belonging (Muñoz, 1999). Kamala's ability to create a protective shield can be seen as a disidentification act, as she constructs a barrier that not only safeguards herself but also those around her. Kamala's powers disrupt the expectations and stereotypes imposed upon her as a marginalized individual, carving out her own space and asserting her agency. It allows her to resist assimilation into oppressive structures while simultaneously creating an alternative form of protection and identity. By embodying the role of a defender and challenging societal expectations, Kamala showcases the power of marginalized individuals to shape their own narratives and assert their existence in the face of adversity.

Kamran's (Rish Shah) destructive powers and his lack of control can also be examined through disidentification. Muñoz (1997) argues that marginalized individuals often develop alternative modes of identification as a means of resisting dominant narratives and societal expectations. Kamran's uncontrolled attacks, fueled by his emotions and trauma, can be seen as a manifestation of his disidentification with societal norms and his struggle to fit into the prescribed roles of a "proper" individual. Kamran's marginalization operates on both cultural and personal levels. As a being from the Noor Dimension, he exists between two worlds—human and supernatural—without fully belonging to either. His familial ties to the outcasted Clandestine place him at odds with both society and other marginalized groups. His relationship with his mother, characterized by both love and fear, further complicates his identity. Kamran's trauma deepens when his mother sacrifices herself to save him. In a fight with Kamala, Najma accidentally opens a rift to the Noor Dimension, which threatens to consume the universe (Asghar et al., Obaid-Chinoy, 2022). To protect Kamran, she sacrifices herself while closing the rift, and in the process, the Noor energy activates his powers. This leaves Kamran emotionally vulnerable and burdened with uncontrollable abilities he doesn't fully understand. His powers become a rebellious act, albeit unintentional, challenging the expectations placed upon him.

THE NEW FOCUS ON MS. MARVEL AS A PAKISTANI AMERICAN SUPERHEROINE

As mentioned in the previous section, the *Ms. Marvel* comics touches on her identity of a Pakistani American teenager with the first few issues of the series more "focus[ed] on the pressure to not only be the hero, but to look the part of one" (Gibbons, 2017, p. 450). The show steps away from this notion of copying existing heroes, showcasing Kamala's fascination with Captain Marvel as her childhood hero worthy of emulation as a heroine/persona but not as a person — essentially breaking from the blue-eyed, blonde stereotype of a superheroine while keeping her identity . Throughout the first season of *Ms. Marvel* (2022), Kamala's journey revolves around developing and creating her own identity. Kamala's unique individual identity formation holds particular significance as she represents a significant portion of the Pakistani American community. This theme is explored in her conversations with family and friends, as well as in the subtext of the narrative. The series uses animation and graffiti to represent Kamala's inner thoughts that serve as a visual subtext to her identity struggle. These artistic sequences reflect her daydreams and fantasies about being a superhero. The conversations with her friends Bruno and Nakia also reflect on the struggles of negotiating her identity. Bruno represents her American side, supporting her superhero aspirations while grounding her in teenage life while Nakia represents Kamala's cultural and religious expectations and challenges. Likewise, the details of Kamala's jewelry, such as her pendant with her name written in Urdu, play a significant role in emphasizing her cultural identity. The connection between the Urdu letter kaaf (ک) (the initial of her name) and its transformation into the Ms. Marvel emblem on her costume further reflects her journey of self-discovery. In Episode 6 of Ms. Marvel, Kamala's signature costume and her name take on significant meaning. In a heartfelt rooftop conversation, her father shares the story behind her name. "[Y]ou sure are, and have always been, our own little Ms. Marvel" (Dunn et al., El Arbi & Fallah, 2022, 0:38:17). Yusuf (Mohan Kapoor) explains how her parents longed for a second child for years, and when she finally came into their lives, she was perfect—just as *Kamal* means "perfect" in Arabic. In Urdu, however, *Kamal* translates to "marvel," hence the name Kamala. Ms. Marvel's latest costume, created by her mother Muneeba (Zenobia Shroff), is inspired by traditional Pakistani attire, the shalwar kameez. This choice celebrates Kamala's Pakistani roots and symbolizes the family support and bond between mother and daughter, emphasizing how Kamala's cultural identity is intertwined with her superhero persona. Kamala's journey from identity confusion to resolution is exemplified in the iconic scene of Ms. Marvel sitting atop a streetlamp, gazing across the bay — an image that mirrors the cover of comic book *Ms. Marvel #5* (Wilson et al., 2014).

In addition to the first three episodes focusing more on Kamala's transition into Ms. Marvel, the second episode of the series titled *Crushed* touches upon the sensitive historical event of India's partition and its impact on individuals and families. At the dinner table, while talking about the lived experience of Muneeba's mother and grandmother and its impact on families, Aamir (Saagar Shaikh) says, "Every Pakistani family has a Partition Story, and none of them are good" (Gritmon et al., Menon, 2022, 0:27:29). By exploring the consequences of the partition through Aisha's character, the series touches on the intergenerational effects of historical trauma and the ways in which it shapes the experiences of subsequent generations. Muneeba's grandmother, Aisha, went missing from her family during the Partition, causing uncertainty in their lives. Throughout her life, Aisha's daughter and granddaughter heard rumors, gossip, and vague accounts suggesting that Aisha was either involved in an unacceptable act or was abducted and forced to convert religiously. The struggle of identity development and maintenance can be seen by Ms. Marvel's mother in the subtext where she is running away from all the rumors and talks about what happened to Aisha during the journey of migration and its impact on the emotional stability on Muneeba's mother. While aspects of Kamala's identity are played out in the comics, it primarily focuses on her being Muslim, rather than being Muslim Pakistani American, and there is no mention of the partition in her comic debut.

In the fourth episode, Kamala and Muneeba (Kamala's mother) travel back to Pakistan and the series explores the impact of trauma on Sana (Samina Ahmad), Kamala's grandmother, who lost her mother during the partition (Pirzada et al., Obaid-Chinoy, 2022). This traumatic event affects Sana's relationship with Muneeba. The series breaks apart patriarchal power structures and societal norms that perpetuate violence against women, especially during times of conflict and upheaval. It highlights how these structures often blame the victims for the circumstances they face, further marginalizing their voices and pushing them into the darkest margins of society. By shedding light on the silence and secrecy surrounding Aisha's experiences during the partition, the series challenges these power structures and brings her story back to life, giving visibility to her experiences. This serves as a powerful example of resisting and subverting the oppressive narratives that silence and erase marginalized voices.

As mentioned above, Kamala's unique individual identity formation holds particular significance as she represents a significant portion of the Pakistani American community. This subpopulation, consisting of individuals who were either born in Pakistan but immigrated at a young age or born in the United States to first-generation immigrant parents, often grapple with a sense of being a misfit, struggling to fit in with their American peers while also feeling disconnected from their Pakistani counterparts. This identity confusion is commonly referred to as "ABCD" or "American Born Confused

Desi," as mentioned by one of Kamala's cousins in Pakistan, a term Kamala dismisses (Pirzada et al., Obaid-Chinoy, 2022).

The evolution of Kamala's identity as a Pakistani American teenager and a superhero can be mapped through the changes in her costume. Initially, she dresses in a facsimile of Captain Marvel's outfit, attempting to fit in with her American peers. However, as the series progresses, she embraces her roots and acquires different elements that eventually form her signature costume. These include her great-grandmother's bangle, the blue waistcoat presented by Waleed, the lightning bolt symbol derived from her name in Urdu, and the red scarf given by Kareem (Aramis Knight). Each acquisition coincides with revelations about Kamala's origin and her connection to the Noor dimension. These symbolic pieces reflect her unlocking different aspects of her identity and ancestral ties. Waleed's gesture of giving Kamala the traditional Pakistani men's waistcoat holds profound symbolic meaning. It signifies that Kamala is welcomed and embraced as part of the Red Daggers community, with shared history and experiences. This act aligns with bell hooks' (2015) concept of *border-crossing*, inviting cultural critics to adopt a fresh perspective that transcends their limited viewpoints. It encourages a more comprehensive analysis and active engagement in the struggle as subjects, fostering empowerment and inclusivity. Waleed's words, "you should know, there is history in every thread of this fabric, so you always remember where you came from" (Pirzada et al. & Obaid-Chinoy, 2022, 0:32:11), acknowledge Kamala as an integral part of the Red Daggers and recognize their collective struggles, including those during British rule and the partition.

The culmination of Kamala's self-discovery quest occurs when her mother, Muneeba, presents her with the complete Ms. Marvel outfit before Kamala sets out to help her friends. This gesture represents acceptance and approval from her family while embodying the essence of Ms. Marvel's roots and identity (Dunn et al., El Arbi & Fallah, 2022). The final part of Kamala's self-discovery journey involves a conversation with her father Yusuf , which establishes a connection to her heritage through the interpretation of her name in Urdu (which translates to "marvel") and solidifies her identity as the superhero Ms. Marvel.

CONCLUSION

 Ms. Marvel (2022) not only provides an insider's view and perspective on Pakistani American and Muslim culture to the Western world, but also offers a significant source of representation for Pakistanis who have long awaited an authentic relatable portrayal. The involvement of Pakistani individuals within the production team further contributes to the originality of the presentation of Pakistani culture in the series. While the musical aspect of the series could not be extensively explored in this discussion, it is crucial to acknowledge its significant role in cultural representation. We leave an examination of the

music to be explored in a future publication. However, we do note that by incorporating classical music from the subcontinent (as part of this new focus on her identity), the series adds depth to its cultural authenticity and fosters a more immersive experience for the audience.

The changes made to Ms. Marvel's powers and identity, from embiggening to hard light and from Millennial to Gen Z, have greatly impacted the narrative of the show, as well as the characterization of Kamala Khan. By changing her powers from the physical distortion of her body to a project of her "inner light" Kamala gains a sense of agency that her previous comic book rendition was not awarded. This is an oversight that the MCU has tried to reconcile with this new narrative of multi-generational trauma from the partition and later with the dysfunctional family dynamics among the Clandestines. Finally, *Ms. Marvel* as a series fearlessly confronts the harsh realities of her people, particularly the loss of lives, honor, and families that men and women have experienced during the Pak-India partition and the brutality of British Raj.

Through the aforementioned points of departure from the comics, *Ms. Marvel* (2022) beautifully weaves together the exploration of cultural identity and heritage, leading to acceptance, and empowerment. From her debut in the comics to her new television show, Kamala Khan's journey as Ms. Marvel can resonate with individuals who navigate the complexities of their own intersectional identities, and demonstrates the significance of embracing and celebrating one's roots while forging a unique path forward.

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Peer-Reviewed Article

Limitations of Drawing Borders: An Analysis of the Indian Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 in the Light of *The Shadow Lines* and *Cracking India*

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ABSTRACT

This paper engages with the enduring legacy of the 1947 Partition of India through a literary lens, examining its lasting impact on contemporary socio-political contexts. Drawing on themes of displacement and boundary-making in Amitav Ghosh's (1995) The Shadow Lines (1995) and Bapsi Sidhwa's (1991) Cracking India, the paper explores the possibility that literature can shed light on the complexities of national identity, belonging, and citizenship. Ukil Babu's poignant question in The Shadow Lines (Ghosh, 1995), "Suppose when you get there, they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then?" (p. 215), highlights the ongoing uncertainty created by borders defined along religious lines. This uncertainty, the paper suggests, parallels current debates surrounding the Indian Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, which seeks to redefine national belonging based on religious identity. Rather than offering definitive conclusions, this paper serves as an invitation to critically examine the socio-political dimensions of partition, citizenship, and contemporary legislative acts through the interpretive lens provided by literary narratives. By juxtaposing historical and contemporary line-drawing practices, it seeks to foster a broader conversation about the intersection of policy, memory, and identity in the Indian subcontinent.

Keywords: Indian partition, Indian Citizenship Acts, Religious divide, Marginalization

INTRODUCTION

The partition of India in 1947 was a traumatic event, marked by its dreadful nature and far-reaching consequences. The two predominant religious communities, Hindus and Muslims, were engulfed in mutual animosity during this period; the political leadership prioritized their own agendas, and a lack of farsightedness further ignited the pre-existing religious hatred, ultimately leading to an uncontrollable force akin to Frankenstein's monster. That violent hatred speeded devastating riots and massacres almost all over the Indian subcontinent. In particular, the worst victims of the Indian Partition were the people of the Bengal and Punjab provinces of colonial British India. These provinces experienced a 'double partition,' as they faced the cruel impacts of the Indian Partition and the partition of Bengal and Punjab by the infamous Redcliff Line. As Khan (2017) commented,

> The partition plan itself was brought through acts of violence. Partition's elitist politics and everyday experiences are not as separate as they may seem at first glance because mass demonstrations, street fighting and the circulation of rumors all overlapped with the political decision-making process. (p. 7)

Both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League were engaged in negotiations with the colonial British for their share in the partition process. The Muslim League remained inflexible in its demand for a separate Muslim majority country, recognizing it would be unable to achieve absolute authority in an undivided India. Similarly, the Congress leadership and the Hindu elite shared a common goal: establishing a homogeneous polity. They too understood that full control over the subcontinent would remain unattainable without accommodating the demands for religious and political separation. As Joya Chatterji (2007), a very prominent historian, observes, "Both had decided that a partition that rid them of Muslim majorities was the way to achieve such a polity" (p. 65).

It became evident that the leaders, motivated by their own interests, had abandoned the century-long collective desire for Swaraj (self-rule) and instead agreed to the colonial plan of dividing the country into religious lines. The decision provoked unprecedented violence, with riots and massacres, that caused almost two million deaths and almost 18 million refugees on both sides of the border. The situation rendered it nearly impossible to determine the precise number of total deaths and displacements at that time and just the aftermath of the partition. Uditi Sen (2018) remarks, "While no accurate numbers are available of Hindu and Sikh minorities who left Pakistan for India, or of Muslims who left India for Pakistan, the total number of refugees is estimated to be anything between 11 to 18 million" (p. 2). Those 11 to 18 million refugees were forced to leave their homeland only for the newly drawn arbitrary boundary line based on religion.

The partition of India was to initially be thought a solution to the aspirations of the millions across the subcontinent; however, the religion-based partition created a permanent scar in the history and politics of the Indian subcontinent, especially in the history of Bengal and Punjab, as the partition pierced the two provinces very reprehensibly. Jeff Hay (2006) describes the chaos that ensued:

> The border was revealed to the public on August 17, and those Punjabi villages whose residents had cautiously flown both Indian and Pakistani Flags on August 15, now know their status. The immediate effect was to vastly increase a torrent of migration toward India or Pakistan that had begun already within weeks, 11.5 million people were on the move. (p. 83)

Even the leaders of the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress were disillusioned when confronted with the new map of the subcontinent. They had their own vision, which was different from what they were forced to acknowledge by the colonial British Raj. William Dalrymple (2015) remarks, "None of the disputants were happy with the compromise that Mountbatten had forced on them" (para 23).

The disillusionment of the leaders of both parties, the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress, intensified while they were grappling with the challenges of rehabilitating almost 11 to 18 million migrants on both sides of the border. A critical question emerged in this context: What will be the identity of those migrants? "Are they citizens or refugees?" (Daiya, 2008, p. 18). The situation made the task of defining citizens very difficult in the post-partition period in India and Pakistan. To accommodate the huge influx of refugees, both nations were compelled to initiate a robust citizenship plan. Unlike Pakistan, which primarily received Muslim migrants, India became the destination for not only Hindus but also a significant number of other religious and ethnic minorities displaced during partition. These complexities contributed to India taking nearly eight years to formulate its first Citizenship Act, which was finally enacted in 1955.

Though the Indian government framed the Indian Citizenship Act in 1955, the act was not accommodating enough to address all the issues and difficulties regarding the complex situations of post-partition refugees and migrants in India. In 2019, the Indian government finally brought a bill to the parliament to amend the first Citizenship Act of 1955. The bill was passed, and the *Indian Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019* was initiated. However, the new Act has faced severe criticism for its overt religious bias and discriminatory provisions.

By focusing on two seminal novels—Amitav Ghosh's (1995) *The Shadow Lines* and Bapsi Sidhwa's (1991) *Cracking India*—this paper attempts to explore the discriminatory biasness of *line drawing* based on religious identity. The setting and themes of these two novels are associated with the worst consequences of the partition in two provinces of colonial

British India, Bengal and Punjab. The first novel centers on the effects of partition in Bengal, while the second one underscores the process and its aftermath in Punjab.

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL ALIGNMENT

This paper employs a qualitative analysis method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the limitations of line drawing and its impact on the lives of the underrepresented people who are yet to forget the violent memories and trauma of the religion-based partition. Drawing on secondary sources—books, articles, and various literary texts—this paper aims to examine how the *Indian Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019* impacted the lives of underrepresented people who are trying to move beyond the haunting memories of the Indian partition and secure recognition as citizens in post-partitioned India. The paper focuses on the depiction of partition discourses in two literary texts: Amitav Ghosh's (1995) *The Shadow Lines* and Bapsi Sidhwa's (1991) *Cracking India*. These texts illustrate the partition processes, consequences, and aftermath in Bengal and Punjab, and a qualitative text analysis method is used to analyze the sociopolitical implications of the *Indian Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019*.

The paper follows Widdowson's (2004) position, who, referencing Fowler (1996) and Eagleton (1983), argues "not to distinguish literary texts from texts of other kinds" (p. 130). Widdowson (2004) prescribed "to read texts in a certain way, for their purpose is to enquire not into the aesthetics of verbal art but into its socio-political significance, and prompted by such a purpose, all texts can indeed be treated alike" (p. 130). Analyzing the partition discourse and its related texts illuminates the minority and discriminatory discourse that complicates defining citizenship in post-partition India.

Through CDA, the paper explores the complex issues of defining citizenship based on religious identity, as well as the related social issues of power, hegemony, social inequality, and injustices. CDA focuses on the account of complicated interactions between text, politics, society, and religions. As Van Dijk (2006) asserts, CDA focuses on how power abuse, dominance, and inequality are perpetuated within the discursive practices of socio-political contexts. Similarly, the concept of intersectionality plays a crucial role in analyzing the challenge of defining citizens and drawing boundaries based on various identities in the Indian subcontinent. The legacy of British colonization and the political historicalization of violence and displacement make the task of defining citizens both critical and complex. Intersectionality offers insights into issues related to the minority discriminations and the policies and politics behind the discriminations. Smooth (2013) notes, "Intersectionality encourages us to embrace the complexities of group-based politics by critically examining the variances in social location that exist among those claiming membership in groups" (p. 11). Furthermore, Grzanka (2019) highlights that intersectional

research consistently demonstrates how contemporary societal structures are inherently unjust: they work to the disadvantage of people identified along certain interacting categories, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or class, in manifold ways.

PROBLEMS OF DEFINING CITIZEN

The cross-border settlement of those 11 to 18 million refugees and defining their positions into the newly formed nation-states based on religion created immense complexities. What will be their identity are they "refugee or the citizen?" (Daiya, 2008, p. 18). These complexities, particularly regarding the status of refugees and their citizenship, became deeply entangled in the socio-political fabric of the newly established nations, especially in India. In India, many Hindu refugees asserted their claim to citizenship, aligning this with the notion that the country was intended as a homeland for Hindus. This assertion was further strengthened by the state's official rhetoric, which implicitly favored their claims. Daiya (2008) offers a significant perspective on this issue, as follows:

> Moreover, the status of Hindu refugees coming to India from Pakistan (and of Muslim refugees in Pakistan) was unique because they were not placeless like most refugees: The state's official rhetoric offered them both national identity and a palace—a new nation—to come to. Thus they were simultaneously citizens and refugees. (p. 18)

Another significant challenge faced by the Indian authorities arose when many Muslims who had initially migrated to Pakistan after partition, driven by fears of riots and violence, returned to India and reclaimed their land and properties. To the authorities, these individuals were treated as migrants rather than citizens, and their claims to citizenship were heavily scrutinized. These returnees were rightful citizens of India, but their loyalty to the nation was questioned as their initial decision to leave the country, followed by their return after a few years, created doubts about their allegiance and integration into the newly defined national framework. Moreover, the situation of being "refugee" and "citizen" became more complex when most of the Hindus who had relatives or any other kinds of settlement in India had boldly claimed that they were not refugees in India.

The dilemma of being both a refugee and a citizen not only caused agony and anxiety among the dispersed, but it also made it difficult for the newly formed India to define the citizen. Roy (2020) comments, "Refugees shared with their hosts a notion, a form of subjectivity defined in relation to the sociocultural hierarchies of the ancestral place and one's traditionally assigned place within that structure" (p. 116). In other words, the Hindu refugees were displaying characteristics and performing actions that seemed to be rooted in their identity as members of the Indian state as their homeland—whether they themselves were born in India or they are the descendants of those who were born in India. Almost the same situation

happened on the other side of the border with the Muslim refugees and their demand to be identified as citizens in the newly formed Pakistan.

Therefore, it became very difficult for the two countries, especially India, to clearly define who would be treated as citizens and who would be refugees. Sen (2018) remarks, "The refugees who sought shelter in India and Pakistan in the aftermath of partition claimed to be both refugees and citizens of their putative homelands. This allowed partition refugees to occupy a visible and central place in the post-partition polities of South Asia" (p. 3). So, to define citizen, Indian authority had taken the secular *jus soli* concept (Gopal, 2013, p. 53). However, this was not sufficient to resolve the complexity of defining a citizen, and India also needed to introduce the *jus sanguinis* concept.

THE CITIZENSHIP ACT OF 1955 AND ITS FAILURE

The complexities surrounding national identity and citizenship arose from the very beginning of the partition, stemming from the dual status of citizens and refugees. The Indian Government had taken almost eight years to formulate an act regarding citizenship, whereas Pakistan formulated the first Citizenship Act in 1951. The first Indian Citizenship Act was formulated in 1955, which is known as the *Indian Citizenship Act, 1955*. Despite the secular ethos upheld by the Indian constitution, the first *Indian Citizenship Act, 1955*, exhibited a conservative nature due to persistent attempts to preserve religious identity. Considering Joya Chatterjis' observation, Uditi Sen (2018) comments,

> Joya Chatterji has traced how the political crisis of managing partition refugees gradually and definitively shifted the contours of legal citizenship in India from jus soli, i.e., citizenship by birth, towards jus sanguinis, or citizenship by heredity. The result was a peculiar form of citizenship that combined these two principles and was designed to elevate Hindu migrants to full citizens while simultaneously reducing Muslim residents to second-class or abject citizens. (p. 16)

It was also evident that the question of religion was vital in the formation of the very first Citizenship Act of India in 1955, while the "Indian Ministry of Rehabilitation Reports until 1954 expressly state that only non-Muslim refugees are to be aided by the Indian government." (Daiya, 2008, p. 18). Though the *Citizenship Act, 1955* had brought a kind of statutory solution for the partition refugees, the flood of refugees was not stopped. So, the act could not provide the solution to the situation, as Gopal (2013) comments,

> The most consequential amendment to the statute was enacted in 1985 to cope with the in-migration from Bangladesh. An open-ended process of migration from 1947 onward, peaking in 1971, and continuing steadily thereafter, had resulted in large numbers of refugees/migrants, regardless of religion, getting enfranchised. (p. 63)

It was hoped that the leadership in post-partition India would be farsighted and recognize the immense loss of life and the displacement of millions on both sides of the border. This hope appeared to be realized in reality, as the Indian constitution upholds the secular ethos. The *Citizenship Act, 1955* had the potential to be very clear and distinctive regarding the question of national identity and citizenship. However, it failed because it violated the secular ethos of the Indian constitution by preferring Hindu refugees. This failure, along with the violation of the secular character of the constitution, further polarized not only the refugees but also the entire community.

THE CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2019

The *Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019* did not come as a sudden upheaval, as the issue of national identity and citizenship was deeply complex from the onset, and the *Citizenship Act, 1955* was unable to provide a solution. The complexities arising from the partition and the intricate situations of post-partitioned India rendered the definition of citizenship extremely complex and problematic, as it disregards the secular ethos of the Indian constitution. The preference for the Hindu refugees was very much evident in the official treatment of the newly formed Indian government, and their preference made a very grave discrimination among the Sikhs and Parsi refugees. The issue of citizenship in Punjab was so acute that it remains crucial in today's Indian politics. In this regard, Pandey (2003) comments,

> The 'Sikh problem' arose in 1947 and has remained a major factor in Indian politics ever since. Their homeland, Punjab, split down the middle, and with a large part of their property and pilgrim sites left in West Pakistan, the Sikhs as a political community have never been allowed to forget what they suffered at Partition. (p. 16)

The Sikhs had their own wound of the partition, and the preferential treatment granted to Hindu refugees in the *Citizenship Act, 1955* exacerbated these wounds. As Fazal (2015) observes, for the Sikhs, "religion and nation emerged as two distinct entities" (p. 178). Later, it was seen that the Sikh issue became very critical in Indian politics and even caused the killing of a Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi.

However, the issue lies in the *Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019*, which, instead of introducing a general asylum system, once again targeted the persecuted minorities, primarily Hindus, from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, while excluding the Muslim minorities from neighboring countries. It does not include Rohingya Muslim refugees from Myanmar, Buddhist refugees from Tibet, China, and, very interestingly, Hindu refugees from Sri Lanka. Therefore, the new act clearly prioritizes religion. This amendment act also came under severe criticism from not only religious and ethnic minorities but also from the various civic and legal rights movements that did not accept it, as it pushed certain citizens to accept second-class

citizenship. The *Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019*, like the *Act of 1955*, primarily relies on religious bias, leading to yet another significant division in the Indian national identity.

The new Act again violates the secular character of the Indian constitution by excluding the Muslim migrants, ethnic minorities of Assam and North-Eastern states, Tamil Buddhists, and many other religious and ethnic minorities. Therefore, critics accuse this new confrontational amendment act of violating both the constitution and India's secular attitude, leading to significant protests and chaos in numerous Indian states. According to Reyaz et al. (2023),

> Driven by the survival instinct of now or never, Muslims feared losing citizenship like many did in Assam after the state-wide NRC process. Reyaz (2021a) notes instances of inhabitants of Assam such as the Assamese Muslims, Hindus with North Indian origin, ethnic Koch Rajbongshi also being "declared illegal immigrants" by the Foreigners Tribunals. (p. 183)

Given that India is widely regarded as the largest democracy in the world, the Indian government has the potential to establish a robust asylum system, provided they truly intend to provide shelter to all refugees, regardless of their race, creed, class, or religion. The *Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019* presents India with an opportunity to transform into a more secular and equitable nation. This act could provide a safe haven for refugees and migrants who struggled to become citizens after India's partition and faced persecution in neighboring countries due to their religious identity, ethnicity, caste, and creed. So, it is very evident that this new amendment act could introduce an asylum system for the people who are persecuted for their religious identity, race, ethnicity, and freedom of speech in the neighboring countries, and that might definitely give India a very honorable position in the world. Unfortunately, the new amendment act primarily concentrates on religious beliefs, and similar to the 1947 partition, it only grants citizenship to those who are religiously persecuted, particularly the Hindus. The amended act's exclusion of various communities hinders the representation of underrepresented groups. Leeuwen (2008) remarks about the exclusion of others as he states that "Some exclusions leave no traces in the representation, excluding both the social actors and their activities." (p. 29) Thus, instead of providing solutions to the existing problems of citizenship in India, the *Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019* has drawn new, divided lines among the religious and ethnically persecuted minorities.

WHERE IS MY COUNTRY?

In *The Shadow Lines* (Ghosh, 1995), the narrator's father reminded Th'amma that she was a refugee in India as she was migrated to Calcutta from Dhaka, but Th'amma refused to be identified as a refugee, and she said, "We are not refugees" (p. 131) as they had relatives and part of the family in India who

came "long before Partition" (p. 131). She also indicated that refugees were those poor people who were living in places "as filthy as babui's nest" (p. 131). Despite Th'amma's claim that she was not a refugee in India, she could not forget her old identity as a Dhakaian, having come from the ancient Dhaka of East Bengal. Therefore, Ukil Babu's question from *The Shadow Lines* (Ghosh, 2005) remains highly relevant, as leaders and statesmen continue to draw boundaries based on religion or race, disregarding the significance of one's own homeland, heritage, ethnicity, and national identity. Ukil Babu questioned the partition of 1947 as he asked, "I don't believe in this India-Shindia. It's all very well; you're going away now, but suppose when you get there, they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then? Where will you move to?" (Ghosh, 1995, p. 215). Therefore, it can be easily deduced that the newly drawn lines through the *Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019* will create again, as it has already brought, the same kind of massacre and riots in the subcontinent, and thus it has paved the way for further catastrophe and traumatic situations in the lives of the people of India.

A similar question is raised by the novel's narrator, the little girl Lenny in Bapsi Sidhwa's (1991). She also questions the border drawing by asking, *"*There is much disturbing talk. India is going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is?"(p. 101). By posing this question, she is primarily challenging the abrupt boundaries drawn by the Redcliff Border Commission. This is now very obvious that the prophetic questions of Ukil Babu of *The Shadow Lines* (Ghosh, 1995) and the question of Lenny of *Cracking India* (Sidhwa, 1991) have proved that anyone can be a refugee and lose their home at any time for the illogical line-drawing based on race, religion, caste, creed, and nationality.

In *The Shadow Lines* (Ghosh, 1995), Th'amma bleeds for her ancestral home, and on the other hand, Ukil Babu would rather die in his ancestral home than be a refugee in India. In *Cracking India* (Sidhwa, 1991), Aunt Mini talks about "the Mountbatten plan to tear up the Punjab" (p. 121), and she comments, "And the vision of a torn Punjab. Will the earth bleed? (p. 124). Surely, the earth bleeds with the bleeding hearts of millions of dispersed refugees; maybe that's why famous cinematographer Deepa Mehta named the adaptation of *Cracking India* (Sidhwa, 1991) as *1947:Earth* (Mehta, 2005). After discussing the issues from the following two novels, Rita Chowdhury's (2018) *Chinatown Days* and Monica Sone's (1953) *The Nisei Daughter*, Himadri Lahiri (2023) concluded that:

> Rooted only in the present and amnesic of the past, hegemonic groups forget that the current demographic picture of a nation is the result of the aggregated inflows of migrants who arrived in the interest of the nations at different points of time and gradually became an inalienable part of the demography. (p. 51)

CONCLUSION

The Indian Partition of 1947 left an indelible mark not only on the history and politics of the Indian subcontinent but also on the mindset of the people there. The partition, conceived as a solution to the age-long hatred among the two contesting religious groups, failed to achieve reconciliation. Instead, it initiated crises and enduring problems across the Indian subcontinent. As Pandey (2002) states, "There are many different stories to be told about 1947, many different perspectives to be recovered" (p. 44). The political leadership of the time was unable to foresee the catastrophic situation they were about to create, nor were they prepared for it. Their focus remained on securing their share in the partition process, while the unfolding ground realities eluded them. Sen (2018) comments, "The political leadership of India and Pakistan did not anticipate any large-scale movement of minorities. As a result, in both India and Pakistan, policy lagged behind ground realities" (p. 3). The violence, the killing, the rape and the loss of the partition will never be fully assumed as the inner psyches of the victims are yet to understand.

The millions of refugees and the partition survivors had the traumatic memories, and it was expected that society would help those to recover from the traumatic situation by providing a safe place to live in. But alas! The state did not adequately comfort the millions of refugees who were dispersed, nor did it provide them with an equitable identity. First of all, the *Indian Citizenship Act, 1955*, very severely failed to address the problems of those dispersed refugees and had put them in an unending limbo. Nandrajog (2018) writes, "The millions of people streaming in on both sides of the border had a tremendous impact on society...This set in motion retaliatory violence, leading to fresh instances of exodus as helpless minorities on either side of the border became the scapegoats" (p. 119). Finally, it was expected that the amendment of the Act of 1955 would provide solace to the thousands of dispersed refugees. However, the new act has not only caused division among the people but has also caused serious havoc in India, resulting in violence in many states such as Assam and Delhi. The partition of India raised more problems than it solved, and the new acts will also breed various problems, like religious fundamentalism. From the discriminatory bias toward the Hindu refugees and migrants, it is assumed that the newly amended acts will also have triggered the communal politics in India again. If this situation persists, it could potentially push the Indian union towards disintegration. As Nair (2011) predicted, "In recent years, the debate on loyalty and citizenship in South Asia has included historians who urge a reconsideration of the idea of the nation-state as it emerged in 1947" (p. 11). Therefore, by initiating the *Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019*, the Indian government, rather than providing relief, is exacerbating the issue of defining citizenship and further complicates the lives of those still recovering from the trauma of the partition.

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