Creating Spaces for Filling the Gender Gap in university leadership and management: The case for Zambian Women Professors.

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Abstract

This narrative study was aimed at exploring the life experiences of senior women academics, in leadership and management positions in Zambian universities. Specifically, the study sought to interpret the women's lived experiences and identities, through a combination of the feminist and intersectionality frameworks in creating and utilizing spaces to attain professorship and senior managerial ranks. The women's experiences under gender performance were events or situations that advanced attainment of senior academic and administrative positions within traditionally patriarchal universities, commonly exclusive to women. The study demonstrates intersectionalities of identities and commonalities among the participants that are tied to the women's determination, faith, family and education. The women performed, challenged and defied gender permutations through self-and gender norms reinvention to create spaces for their achievements. Through personal agency of determination, faith and family and education they created a threshold for career and professional achievement in the highly gendered cultures and institutions.

Keywords
Gender gap, leadership, management, spaces, universities, women, Zambia

1 Introduction

The leadership and management composition of universities is highly skewed in favor of men (Barry, et. al, 2001; Obura et. al, 2011). Additionally, the prevailing institutional structures and cultures are equally gendered and systematically possess inbuilt mechanisms geared to reproduce and perpetuate the social and cultural processes that create inequality within the academy (Acker, 1990). The gender imbalance in higher educational institutions is spotlighted by the dominance of men in most senior decision-making positions (Seshamani & Shalumba, 2011). Here women are systematically, through institutional culture and structure, eliminated from frontline leadership and management posts, and shunted largely to middle management positions. And even there they are often consigned to care work (Blackmore and Sachs, 2000) and mostly serve in feminized positions including secretarial or student support which add little educational or scholarly value to their career rise prospects (Lynch, 2010). Additionally, for women who achieve senior leadership and management positions, professional and institutional factors may intersect with gender to mostly hinder their progress (Healy et al., 2011) by exploiting their low self-perceptions, entitlement and worth (Valian, 2005). Consequently, women have very limited and unequalled access to employment opportunities.

Women in Zambian universities live and work in highly gendered institutional cultures and structures, attitudes, and processes (Evans, 2014). These factors not only tend to exclude women from senior decision- and policy-making positions but serve to 'construct and regulate' their routine experiences (Morley, 2010: 547) even at the workplace. Further, most women are confined to the 'the informal, invisible, and often feminized work of institutional maintenance and interpersonal services' at the universities (Mama, 2003: 120). As such, women are sidelined and obscured into

background positions where they are less visible, 'voiceless' and overall grossly underrepresented in top rank leadership and management, decision-making positions (ibid).

Women make up only 13% (SARUA, 2011) of the academic staff at the three public Zambian universities and face very low probability of rising to senior academic and management positions. At the regional level, only 12 out of the 117 universities in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) were led by women (Guramatunhu-Mudiwa, 2010). One of Zambia's three public universities has women holding the top two posts. Educational organizations are often described to be hostile places for women due to gender-based violence, sexual harassment and discrimination (Ampofo et al., 2004). The highly patriarchal Zambian 'culture has had a significant influence on gender stereotyping, socialization, family and work relationships, and the status of women…' (Nkomo and Ngambi, 2009: 60) has barred women from quality and equitable experiences in higher education system. Moreover, the educated Zambian women may often not contest the status quo and tend to accept barriers like discrimination due to the same traditional socio-cultural belief system (Rathgeber, 2003; Maluma, 2013). The result has been the exclusion of women from influential institutional positions. However, the women in this study, show that these practices are resistible and 'turn their condition of marginalization into a source of critical insight' (Chilisa and Ntseane, 2010: 620) to reinvent identities and strategies to create spaces within the 'men's world' to advance themselves in higher education leadership and management.

2 Background

Most workplace organizational structures in Zambia are still highly hierarchical, bureaucratic and dominated by men except for a few private enterprises. This is despite the restructuring attempts aimed at modernizing the workplace and organizational landscape. In public universities leadership and administrative positions and opportunities are very restrictive. The pyramidal hierarchical authority structure of the universities lays out power flow from the vice-chancellor at the top dissipating to deans/directors and down to heads of departments (Teferra and Altbach, 2004). In such cases, holding administrative positions may not necessarily entail power and leadership. The real leaders and managers with real power are the people right at the top of the pyramid. This is the situation under which Zambian women operate in universities. Here, leadership is male dominated and continuously constructed in such a way that it mostly excludes women's expertise and experiences, leaving them in the fringes (Macwan'gi, et. al, 2007; Johnson and Thomas, 2012). As noted by Walker (1998) women's administrative attributes are sparsely expressed in university structures. Women have had to 'fight' their way up this hegemonic academic culture that often views them as inadequate or at most less willing to participate in administrative functions. And in most cases, institutions have been forced to make room for women at the influential policy-and decision-making by women themselves or by implementation of women friendly policies (Prah, 2002).

The strong traditional Zambian socio-cultural heritage together with it offshoots which permeates and constitutes the most prevalent organizational culture in public universities is a pervasive tool against gender equality. The system disadvantages women with regards to access and participation in leadership and management in higher education (Evans, 2014). Hence, women suffer inequalities and are massively underrepresented in senior leadership ranks. The status quo has consolidated and propagated the unfair exaltation of men's status over women's. The system rewards women conformity to the values of the majority but punishes and even vilifies any portrayal of different independent behaviors and values that may not necessarily be harmful. The system achieves by tolerating only very little room for the asserting of a non-hegemonic view to the prevalent man dominated culture. Men saturate the senior academic and administrative positions literally 'crowding out' the women. And if any woman is to rise and settle in these higher echelons, they must 'fight' in order to create and utilize spaces within these 'women tight workplaces'.

Women in academia experience hostilities such as subtle discrimination, psychological and other harassments, and other inequalities based on gender (Mabokela, 2003). There is also pressure from socio-cultural gender expectations which impede women ambitions. For example, traditionally, Zambian women, as is the case in most of sub-Saharan Africa, are socialized to value marriage and motherhood so much so that non-conformity is derided by stigmatization (Okeke, 2004; Rathgeber, 2003). This is a socio-cultural conspiracy which is detrimental to women attainment of high levels of education and senior leadership positions in Zambian universities (Prah, 2002). The university workplace also has a way of promoting a certain perception, among men and women, expecting and believing that universities are not the sort of place where women could excel as leaders (Kiamba, 2008; Shakleton et al., 2006). Such deeply entrenched patriarchal mindsets coupled with what Okeke (2004) terms the rigid domestic relations tend to restrict the quality and quantity of women's experiences. The larger traditional society exacerbates the women's position by loading them with additional demanding caretaker roles besides those of being wives and mothers. Paradoxically, the roles are publicly 'honored by society and yet women are then punished for these identities when they become influential within the university' (Johnson, 2014). In certain instances when women's reproductive roles become unavoidable, they have

suffered outright discrimination from managerial positions (Odejide et al., 2006). The general justification is that 'she won't be able to perform. She will be asking you for permission to take her children to hospital' (Lindow, 2011cited in Johnson, 2014). Apparently, such reasoning is deeply embedded in some work places and continues to influence the undervaluing and sidelining of women with potential.

3 Framing the study
3.1 A Feminist Perspective of Gender

Butler (1988) holds that gender arises from a series of sustained acts that produce beliefs about certain characteristics qualifying and identifying them as gender identity. By this token, gender is neither a fixed identity nor a locus of agency from which various acts proceed. Rather, it is an identity formed in time and appropriated in space or created through stylized repeated actions. Therefore, gender must be understood to mean the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self (Butler, 1988: 519–520).

Under this perspective together with intersectionality framework, it became useful to explore the gender dimension that considers the fact that not all women acknowledge the mundane gender acts. Mejiuni (2013) believes most mundane gender acts imposed on women are wrapped up in their nurturing disposition highlighted as care, housework, but also acceptance of inferiority to men through deference, respect, and the transferral of gender norms to younger generations. Incidentally, the traditional Zambian society has also erected arduous standardized expectations to which women must conform failure to which they are either punished or ostracized. Consequently, most women spend their lives in fear, either living at the bidding of societal dictations or struggling through self agency with the support of family to go through and advance their education, career and life.

Lester (2008) explains that one way of 'doing gender' in universities is through the performance of informal 'mom' roles (caring and nurturing) and 'glue work' (social organizing, note-taking) which are enforced by students, colleagues, and administrators. However, when women deviate from these expectations their credibility is challenged and agency limited within the organization. This point validates the idea that gender is not an intrinsic identity but one constructed through expectations, acts, and enforcement. Hence, 'as a corporeal field of cultural play, gender is a basically innovative affair, although it is quite clear that there are strict punishments for contesting the script by performing out of turn or through unwarranted improvisations' (Butler, 1988: 531).

In Zambia, gender and women identity are further burdened by historical circumstances. Evans (2014) illustrates how women's identity and value were undermined first by the traditional cultural norms and the imposition of a foreign identity through colonization and Christianity. Western religion and traditional Zambian patriarchal constructions of women are often embedded in language and rituals, socializing the acts commensurate with gender. Notwithstanding, intersections of life experiences can create sites of resistance against gender-based oppression and inequality (Chilisa and Ntseane, 2010). And women resist through negotiation and compromise, knowing exactly 'when, where and how to detonate patriarchal land mines' and when, where, and how to go around them (Nnaemeka, 2003, p. 378). In most cases, however, the acts of defiance have met with resistance and punishment. To their credit, the Zambian women are increasingly discovering how to use the gender expectations, norms, and acts to advance in life.

3.2 Women, Gender and Intersectionality Perspective

The foregoing discussion shows how gender can be both a site for innovation and conflict for women. Generally, women's social status varies in contexts and matrices of domination at different points in their lives. However, women's identity comprises a set of identities laden with inconsistencies and paradoxes. It is within these that spaces are created and exploited resulting in resistances and creativity (Mejiuni, 2013: 80). But, only enlightened and empowerment women have been able to utilize these spaces to positively advance themselves.

Under intersectionality, women are not wholesomely classified. They are differentiated basing on factors and contexts that form 'intersections' to produce complex experiences and constructions for the individual woman. The 'intersections' commonly lead to the marginalization and categorization of particular groups of women (for instance, black and white women) (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw (1991: 1249) notes that 'intersectional subordination need not be intentionally produced; in fact, it is frequently the consequence of the imposition of one burden that interacts with preexisting vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment.' The categorized woman, individuals or groups are constructed in relation to one another in terms of opportunities, interactions, and social standing. Unfortunately, the 'marginalization' of women in society 'follows them into the workplace and shapes their work experiences' (Johnson and Thomas, 2012: 159).

In this study, intersectionality focuses on how gendered organizations such as universities and their processes may have victimized the women. Notwithstanding, intersections create opportunities which women positively exploit

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(Shields, 2008). Nnaemeka (2003) argues 'for going beyond a historicization of the intersection that limits us to questions of origins, genealogy, and provenance to focus more on the history of now, the moment of action that captures both being and becoming, both ontology and evolution' (p. 361). Moreover, since women's identities are more than the sum of the parts that oppress them; they are made up of potentially empowering lived experiences, such as familial relations, motherhood, education, values, and vocation. It is this realization that has led to the shift in recent research work on women and gender, rapidly moving away from negative accounts to those that may empower, employing 'positive paradigms' (Airini et al., 2011: 48). This study demonstrates the current trend where women have achieved positions seen before as a preserve for men in a patriarchal society. Further, the women's accomplishments were in work environments that are hardly friendly or supportive but often considered hostile to their 'being' and 'becoming' senior academics and or leaders in Zambian universities.

4 Context

All the women in this study are Zambian senior academics who have worked or are still working at any of the three public universities. They were all socialized under the same social and cultural contexts, policies and practices that inform gender. Indeed, they were all raised, went to school and all except for one undertook undergraduate studies at a public university within the highly patriarchal, male dominated Zambian traditional society. However, slight differences arise from their family social status and some tribal practices (either matrilineal or patrilineal) depending on the region of origin, whether urban or rural.

In 1985, Zambia became a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (CEDAW, 2010: 50). The CEDAW, international bill of rights for women is strategic in lobbying nations to incorporate equality principles into their legal systems, to create tribunals to ensure effective protection of women, and to eliminate discrimination. In fact, the Zambian Constitution through article 11 guarantees equal status of women in recognition of the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 2010: 50). So far the Zambian government has made some notable progress in domesticating the demands of the declaration with some considerable impact on the cultural, religious, and traditional impediments of a deeply rooted gender problem. As a former British protectorate, the country became independent from the United Kingdom in 1964. However, that was not after the British had entrenched a male dominated system of governance that equally advanced and reinforced the pre-colonial traditional and Christian patriarchal perspectives (Evans, 2014). In addressing gender imbalances, in 2002, the Zambian government implemented a national gender policy meant to re-orient culture, promote human, women rights, and empower women's political participation. However, to date as is the case elsewhere in Africa, there remains a wide 'gap between policy and practice' (Eme, 2011: 1148).

The powerful agency of colonialism and Christianity ensured gender inequality was institutionalized in Zambian society. The effects show Zambian women continuing to have low literacy rates and are trapped in the low status, low skilled, highly visible informal economy (street vending, petty trading) (Prah, 2002). Moreover, a prejudiced 'traditional female' perspective that places low priority and value on the education of women has persisted (Prah, 2002). However, latest status show gender parity in primary school enrolment figures while secondary schools have a promising outlook. There is, however, no gender parity at tertiary education level, especially at universities where a wide gap exists between males and females (González-Tirados, 2012). Women here, compare in the ration 46% to 54% men (Macwan'gi, et al, 2007). Some long-standing customs and traditions have continued to enforce obedience to men resulting in a low visibility of women in the public sphere, especially in positions of influence (Evans, 2014).

4.1 Research method

This qualitative study explores the life experiences of the women who achieved senior academic, leadership and managerial positions at any of the three public universities of Zambia. I combined a feminist perspective of gender and intersectionality framework, used 'conversational interviews and descriptions of life experiences (Kamau, 2009; Van Manen, 1990) at work and outside of work to collect data of how identities at the personal, professional and organizational levels intersected with gender to create spaces for women's success in the highly gendered social and work contexts.

I captured the experiences through the broad research question, 'How do the women professors describe their life experiences with regard to creating spaces for advancement in career and rise to leadership or management in universities?'Further, I attempted to both describe and interpret the creation and utilization of spaces in the women's life experiences then analyzed and interpreted the data, offering novel ways of understanding the experiences of Zambian women in achieving seniority in light of gender, leadership and management.

4.2 Participants

The participants were the currently known, Zambia's only eight women professors, who were also present in the country at the time of the study. Through a narrative inquiry research approach of multiple case studies and interviews I obtained information from participants. The sample size was critically and purposively determined as '…the participants had the experience that I was seeking to understand?'(Englander, 2012). All the eight women obtained their PhDs from various universities all over the world; seven were associate professors while only one was a full professor. Five of the eight women were in health related fields of medicine (Human and Veterinary), Microbiology, Public health while the other three were drawn from business leadership, education and law backgrounds. At the time of the interviews, two of the women were in government Porto folios, one held the position of Vice Chancellor, another Deputy Vice Chancellor, two were Directors of institutes, an immediate past Dean of the school of Law and the eighth one was running a Department at one of the universities.

The eight women were purposefully and critically selected basing first on their ranks as professors, their roles within the universities and their experiences in the Zambian higher education system. The interviews took place in Lusaka and Kabwe, Zambia, in July of 2014. The women were directly contacted via postal mails, email and phone calls prior to the interviews.

4.3 Data collection

The data was collected through in depth 'conversational interviews' (Kamau, 2009. p.55) focusing on how women created and utilized space to rise to academic leadership and management. The participants shared incidences that made room for their progression to senior ranks, explaining how they negotiated their various commitments, and describing their experience as a woman. It is because I would usually seek clarification on anything during the interviews, probing for specific incidents and descriptions of situations, that the interviews assumed their conversational nature. However, each interview section had a guiding question which was 'oriented to sense-making and interpreting of the notion that drives or stimulates the conversation' (Van Manen, 1990: 98): gender, leadership and management in universities. All the interviews were carried out in English; all except one were audio-recorded and lasted up to 80 minutes. The recorded interviews were later transcribed in order to facilitate data analysis.

4.4 Data analysis

Data analysis was performed basing on how the personal, professional and organizational identities or factors intersected with the gender identity to generate themes around the life experiences of the participants (Kohler Riessman, 2000; Van Manen, 1990). I selectively read the transcribed interviews and listened to the recordings several times so as to segregate data into main thematic statements. In this way I was able to isolate significant statements and phrases pertinent to the study. Next, through open, axial and selective coding strategies I coded related data into concepts as represented in the textual themes. Lastly, I selectively coded related emergent categories, integrated, refined and developed them into descriptive concepts of an individual's faith, family support, family-work balance and self agency (self-determination) emerged. These were then linked to the conceptual framework for discussion and conclusion. The grouping of the participants' narratives was possible because salient points in their experiences were related but differences were also noted though not commonly encountered.

This study does not wholly reveal the status of Zambian women's experiences in academia. My own position as a middle-aged man may have distorted the narrative. I cannot claim to speak for Zambian women or university women; therefore it is not the purpose of this work to generalize from the data presented. My firm intention and conviction is to call for constructive attention for remedying women's experiences regarding senior academic and management positions in Zambia's higher education. I seek to highlight critical intersections in the interaction of gender, leadership and management in the personal, professional and organizational lives of women. It is no mean feat that the women have achieved senior administrative positions that empower them to manage the important functions of the universities and other similar high offices. Moreover, this study prompted insight into the main persistent constructs of women and what spaces can be created and utilized to fill the gender gap in senior university positions.

4.5 Findings

The data analysis process yielded several key consistent themes from the participants' responses about their life experiences. Each woman described some key events in their own contexts of the intersections that created room for their maneuver to professorship and seniority in university leadership and management. The critical areas were highlighted as the woman's determination and self agency, the role of family and mentors. Furthermore, the participants assertively re-engineered themselves at certain junctures of their lives in order to effectively deal with the multiple,

often overlapping, identities they possess in the workplace and communities. The identities were constructed from expectations imposed by the society; however, the women's narratives demonstrate conscious defiance of these societal constructs and expectations. The common narratives typified deferment of marriage and motherhood, foregoing most of 'traditional social life' and at other times risking dissolution of marriage. The women faced obstructive forces at the professional and organizational levels like unprofessional practices, difficulties in finding meaningful mentorship, accessing sponsorship or funding for higher qualifications and research studies, 'unconscious and unintentional' discrimination, and 'psychological' harassment. However, within this enmeshed and interwoven life the women managed to create some space for their career development and advancement.

Lastly, the participants naturally accepted the notion of 'being woman' and performed 'gendered work' which intersected with their personal and professional identities in their work places. The strength of the intersections determined their advancement prospects. Through the feminist and intersectionality approaches, it is possible to find and describe spaces within university contexts in which women can thrive. In the following section, I provide a detailed discussion on the findings using the compelling data from the interviews to illuminate the nature of the women's experiences.

4.5.1 Creating Spaces for Women through Education

This group of women typically represented the life a Zambian woman academic that aspires for educational leadership. The cause for the exclusion and underrepresentation of women is traced mainly to the education system, quality and quantity that they receive. Any remedial works therefore must primarily touch and better women's education. The women in this study were inspired and supported by family throughout the education system and upheld by personal agency resonating as a deep sense of personal responsibility or determination. Through personal and professional intersections, each of the women was able to maneuver, worked hard, and advanced academically and professionally in spaces created by lack or rarity of specialized skills or training. They became specialists in niche fields where they wielded authority through the expert power and commanded respect. As doctorate degree holders and professors, the women became exceptionally valuable to both institution and society. Critical room became available where the women could be both seen and heard. All the women, except for one, accredited faith (in the Christian God) as the personal force behind their determination and achievement demonstrated as personal agency as being fundamental for their identity and success.

Each woman and spouse made conscious decisions concerning marriage and family size, as areas that could free up spaces to facilitate professional and career advancement. The women negotiated and were supported by their husbands mostly because the men had equivalent or higher academic qualifications and were therefore able to understand the implications of the pursuit for higher academic attainments. The decisions and choices concerning marriage, family and higher qualifications are so serious that they can be critical check-mates which if not astutely handled and can result into grave conflicts. The situation is therefore aptly described as a quid pro quo relationship (Johnson, 2014.p.8) where normally the woman sacrifices for the husband first, only to reclaim her chance once presented. Ngwabwino described the dilemma: *You will find that the time that you are supposed to be building yourself in the career as an academic, that is the same time that you are also building up a family, it's very big conflict and it is very difficult"*. In Anyankulu's experience the solution lies in:" *…You know it is very important for women to have a very understanding background because we are made in such a way … that we become very family oriented and we start trying to push …your husband [up], which is a good thing. But you can do it at …not being able to realize your own potential.* In the face of the strong socio-cultural expectations of marriage and family life, women must be prepared and equipped to negotiate with their spouses and sometimes the institutions too for leave of absence.

Successful negotiation and support from husbands is invaluable in maintaining progressive and successful career paths: *"…I think I was lucky that I was very much supported…I was in the UK for eight years, alone…and everybody said we had divorced and all that…"*(Anyankulu). For others like Wodeka and Chipadzuwa, there was more than could be imagined: *"My husband was very supportive. We went to the US together… he is very supportive, very supportive"*(Chipadzuwa). She, applauded the support more in the face of a predicament: '*…Then I had a challenge because at that time I had just gotten married…and we had a baby…six months or so old… but at least he was willing to leave and accompany me.'* Moreover, Chipadzuwa had to negotiate with her sponsor-institution to include her husband as the policy then, only favored men being accompanied by their wives and not the other way round:*"…my husband is willing to accompany me …and I would like you to include him [my husband] …to buy him a ticket like you buy for the wives of the other [men] and they said No…because all the forms said [read]…and his wife…so I argued my way out … and so basically I am the reason they changed the forms …and that's how we went …I had to challenge the status quo."* The persistence and determination of one woman challenged and changed unconscious gender biasness, and opened the door wide for many other couples to follow later.

Closely associated with the challenges of opening up and exploiting spaces in gendered institutions is the lack of sponsorship / scholarships for advanced study or research work due to institutional financial limitations. Ngwabwino the Deputy Vice Chancellor summarizes the problem: *"...Our environment in Zambia is very hostile...academic environment...research is a very expensive venture...you need good funding and if there is no funding what can you do... one of the things is that you should publish in a renowned journal... and the environment[is]very discouraging."* Space was found and exploited through local and international networks where collaborative works and possible funding and scholarship were accessed by some of the women. The institutions have no capacity to offer funding and thus women themselves must be proactive for their progress.

The participants also acknowledged the important role of mentors through the different stages of their career development and advancement. Parental guidance shaped the foundational years while family members, teachers/lecturers and colleagues provided the much needed refining touch to skills and character for successful careers accomplishment. Mentorship both motivates and equips women with the necessary skills needed to pursue and advance their careers in the face of imminent prohibitive cultural values. Ngwabwino explains, *"...and in fact if there is anyone who has pushed me, it's her,"* talking about her former and late lecturer and colleague who encouraged her to apply for professorship. Nyakapete is categorical in her praise of the role of mentors in inspiring, equipping and affirming capabilities for success even in areas considered 'out of bounds' to women: *"I think it is just one of the important aspects of life, in everybody's life is to have a mentor....and for me I was privileged to be mentored and to have somebody that I could look up to in terms of achievement... She actually mentored me a lot...she actually mentored me for a period of two years."*

The support given to women to persist in acquiring meaningful education signifies the irreplaceable value of education as the progenitor of ontological self-determination for the women which enables them to assert agency in their career and other life choices (Johnson, 2014). Education is generally the only effective way to equalizing the inequalities between women and men in as far as opportunities in life are concerned. Apparently, it is that the lack of the right level of education that disenfranchises women leading to their under appreciation and exclusion from the leadership experience. However, the converse is needed to create space for the leveraging of women through education and training opportunities to enable them participate alongside men in senior ranks of leadership and management.

4.5.2 Creating space through challenging and changing existing gender stereotypes

Parental and early life inculcation of an assertive mindset predisposed the women to live as equals with their male counterparts. Indeed, the women were further geared during their educational course, towards a way of 'being' in the traditional and misogynistic Zambian male domineering socio-cultural environment. Anyankulu has a lasting experience: *I just didn't think that I was any inferior... and I remember all the boys moving away from me,...they literary just didn't want to pair with this woman who had come late and that really made me angry...and I said o-k-ay, I will work very hard, ...don't blame people...and I work very hard.'*
Tontola narrates similar experiences: *'... and I think that made me in a way fearless in a man's world, I didn't feel anything like the way some girls might feel intimidated, I never had that. I just felt we're all equal right from the beginning.'* In the course of the interview, Nyakapete confessed to her being called names for her 'fight' against perceived unfair treatment of women with regards to promotion to professorship: *'For me there have been attempts to intimidate me but I have always been very clear and I have been called names, in fact. Because I've been fighting, I have fought battles, where I have just said to these people...no chance, this is my stake.'* Wodeka remarks: *'You see when one applies once and people do not grant you the promotion, you tend to feel this harassment, psychological harassment.'*

And in most cases women have had to consciously exert themselves as attested to by Ngwabwino:*'….So you put up that courage...so...it's like we have reached that stage where now we ...are becoming courageous...whereas in the past I think we haven't been courageous enough...you know you just feel intimidated, this world of men...says aaahh, after all the panel will be full of men...'* The women faced intimidation, 'psychological harassment' and discrimination from the overwhelming numbers of patriarchal and misogynistic men. There is a mental paradigm shift in which women became more proactive and assertive that enabled them to overcome the challenges. The developed a very strong sense of self agency, an invaluable and inevitable asset for any women aspirant university leader. Self agency empowers women to actively seize opportunities as well as tackle obstructions in their way. Naturally, therefore, the women strongly emphasized and top-listed a lot of hard work as the corner stone for success in academia. The resultant quantity and quality of work would make the count in the attainment of high ranking positions.

4.5.3 Exploiting spaces through resistances, creativity and hard work

The participants in this study noted that progress and success in their careers as women was out rightly contingent upon building and leveraging personal agency. Each woman, without doubt discovered, mastered and evolved a powerful sense of personal agency which enabled them to overcome the obstacles that the gendered culture, society and workplace held in their way to higher educational and career accomplishments. When intersections occurred at the individual, professional and organizational levels spaces for opportunities were opened for women. The women evolved through self agency, manifesting in hard work, assertiveness and competence to quietly defy and overcome exclusion from professorship and leadership positions.

Nyakapete was aware and prepared herself for what she terms gender inequality 'fight':"*Because I knew there was [a] cultural problem in this country, especially how men relate to women... and how men can achieve with very little struggle than women had to... I have always been 'fighting.'* Awareness of various subtleties of gender based inequalities and injustices such as 'unintended' discrimination and psychological harassment are primary keys to appropriating the use of agency in the institution. Within the professional environment, elements exist that are at best unprofessional and worst of all stumbling blocks to women's progress. Mawaine decries professional blackmail: *'Like at ...the thing that was there was that...people were just saying openly that senior lecturer is the highest rank that...you should aim for, because professorship is special...it's for...not for everybody...so that was the culture.* Awareness of the existence of such preconceptions and negativity within the professional collegiate prepared Nyakapete to effectively handle the blockades, opened up space and persistently carried her aspirations into the '...*men's world*' (Ngwabwino) of professorship: "*After he left my whole promotion was blocked but I kept on applying and reapplying and I told them that you're not gonna stop me because I have what it takes to be a professor and I will be patient.*" The use of the word 'fight' intransitively connotes struggling to recover in this sense the right position one feels they are qualified for. Tontola described her experiences as "*...I knew how to fight my battles...I remember at some point when I had applied for promotion...two senior lecturers stopped me and they said to me go and produce your publication...and I came with this pile of publications...so I knew how to fight my wars.*" Sometimes, women experience downright discrimination by the men and only improved and meaningful dialogue will help the men realize their role as cooperating partners.

All the women confirmed that given the extenuating circumstances, women in academe have to work harder than their male counterparts – in order to accomplish senior academic status and later on earn educational leadership and management positions. Although the rule of thumb expects every academic to embody hard work and diligence as universal characteristics, women in general and Zambian women in particular face hurdles and challenges uncommon to men. Women require additional tenacity and determination to overcome barriers like family care chores so as to juggle multiple roles and negotiate their way in order to reach their full potential. The feat required more than double the effort compared to men.

Each of the women had children during the course of their studies, spanning first degree to the doctorate level. On average, each woman had two children although a stand out case of five children made was noted. They described marriage and motherhood as a compelling choice as it was a deeply entrenched cultural expectation that also constituted part of their identity. The participants, however, acknowledged that both marriage and motherhood posed a serious checkpoint to their career and life trajectories. The socio-cultural expectations were burdensome and always ran counter to their aspirations. This huge dilemma extended to the workplace where women could sacrifice promotion for marriage or child bearing or rearing. For example, Ngwabwino, acknowledged the daunting though surmountable identity of being a wife and or mother is in academia: *And probably worse for females because of their biological functions...as mothers and so on, it is very difficult...So for the females we even have more [challenges], because of our nature.* In a follow up question as to how she managed, Ngwabwino explains further: *Well, you just managed, sometimes by chance and...You will find that you may have to give up on a lot of issues in life...you forgo a lot actually...*" The women first defied the traditional norms, remodeled themselves and reinvented norms to agreeable and acceptable hybrids. As Tontola reiterates "*your social life has to be something that takes the backseat...takes a lot of time management because your day does not end at 5 [pm]...because you have to really go the extra mile in terms of commitment.* On further reflection, Tontola counts "*... [it]was a bit easier for me because I only had one child and was not bogged down with a bunch of children...because it was a choice...it left me free to follow where my heart tells me to go the way men are free to follow their careers*".

Once again, family unit and spousal support played very strategic roles in ensuring success. Chipadzuwa reflects 'we *were very good friends...we met when I was in first year [of undergraduate studies]...and we would talk about these things...opportunity to study...we had very good relationship...we had communicated.*'
All in all Anyankulu recommends ...*You know it is very important for women to have a very understanding background because we are made in such a way that we have... and it is very good for a family unit to try and support.*

Clearly, having children may alter the order of priorities in the life a woman. This is because maternal instincts can powerfully introduce a complicated emotional tug in the equation between home (family) and work lives (Evans, & Grant, 2008). And depending on the woman's ability to balance or rather lack of, a tilt in either direction may result into a terrible pulling apart leading to self or family tearing apart. In the current Zambian traditional socio-cultural configuration the tug is not as fierce for most men but clearly disadvantages women.

Chipadzuwa acknowledges *"…it was just hard, because you are to make sure that you have…you take care of the child, you take of …you are the wife and a mother, you have to juggle between the studies and make sure …it was just hard but not impossible…so I just cut down on some things, some activities, I cut down on socializing too much, I cut down social life…and I worked harder…'*

The tenacity with which women rose above the challenges along the journey to greatness is what makes the difference between ordinary and successful women and this was well illustrated in the life of Anyankulu who was honored by the head of state *"Not because I was the first but because I was married and was a mother of one. I paid tribute to my husband. We got married while I was still a medical student and I had my first child while I was still at … and I managed with determination."* The honor was in deep recognition of the powerful resolve, hailing it as an example that every woman regardless of circumstances surrounding them should seize every opportunity presented to succeed in life.

4.6 Intersectionality of Women (Professors) and Identity

When asked about the key works upon which their upward trajectory was curved, each woman underlined three pertinent roles: teaching/lecturing; researching / supervising graduate or post graduate students and publications, and contribution to or involvement in public/community service. These landmarks are generally prescribed and expected of each of the women as they formed part of the performance evaluation as well as the criteria for promotion in most universities. Nonetheless, the participants also described some of the informal roles they played within the universities, apparently because they "were personally engaging in situations characterized by more psychological" undercurrents (Kahn, 1990) of gender stereotyping. Women are dictated to by the socio-cultural expectation to serve as mothers and role models in their social and professional lives. The intersection created space for opportunities to advance careers though it also created room for additional career-burdening socio-cultural responsibilities.

The women were 'mothers' at work besides them being substantively professors or administrators. Owing to their maternal disposition, they as expected fulfilled the motherly role by supporting not only colleagues but students too (O'Connor, 2008). This demonstrates how the intersection of personal and professional identities could create space for support but also added extra responsibilities that the men counterpart did not have. The women, in spite of their high qualifications and achievements yielded to the socio-cultural expectations developed close and supportive relationship with colleagues and students, exerted positive influence and out of which they developed useful networks. Conversely, the additional role could have worked to distract the women from the most important demands of academia; research work and publications and thus slowed or altogether derailed their careers. However, the study showed determination in responses:*"…it was a little bit difficult for them to accept that…they can have this lecturer, a woman and a black [person], so they would do things…speak to students, incite them against you…but the same students…would come back to say…you are one of our best…people don't want you here…"* (Chipadzuwa).

Moreover, Wodeka's experience in dealing with the expectation of being a mother shows that she had to stretch herself beyond the professional and institutional job prescription as an academic leader and administrator. Women never shade off their 'motherly identity' despite being highly qualified and occupying senior managerial offices. *You see, as a woman …I have students and other members of staff with personal issues coming to me for help, counseling. I spend time and resources beyond my job boundaries to be a solution to the challenges of students and other the people. For example, here under this project I encourage every person to advance in their education. They expect me to be a model and as a matter of fact, my students and other colleagues do look to and come to me as a mother* (Wodeka).

The socio-cultural expectations transcend women behavior such that they are expected to serve as moral examples. *I can only say that being a woman, you have a lot of…moral responsibilities because if you are the first woman, then eyes from so many other women, the young, our daughters and our what…are looking up to you. So you carry a bigger burden than your male counterparts to motivate these* (Anyankulu).

It is very clear that the women in this study understood the high expectations brought upon them by virtue of their achievement and positions as leaders for best practices modeling more so for female students. Nyakapete, makes a firm declaration regarding her status being useful as a positive model of modern Zambia women: *"But we hope we*

can...although we are not...we are born within certain families...we hope those young ladies can also look up and say...even if that's not my sister or that's not my mother I can also achieve."

Having attained the post of vice chancellor, Ngwabwino reckons herself as serving as a role model as well as a representative for women in university leadership and management. *So, equally even for us who are up here, we are forever fighting also...to get higher. You see, because we are like role models.* In like manner, Chipadzuwa assumes women would not only succeed but add value to good institutional management practices. These examples are for the inspiration of other aspiring women to seize and exploit opportunities into possibilities.

Being a woman, you have a lot of moral responsibilities.... So you need to be very conscious that you are there not only as a woman but also to motivate those other women, so that they can look up to you...and you see if you are the first woman and you do a bad job, you know what they men will do...ooh she's just a woman...What did you think...the responsibility goes beyond yourself... We should be motivators (Anyankulu).

The women fulfilled the socio-cultural expectations projected onto them by the university and the Zambian community as role models, mothers or women representatives. Through intersections, however, some collaborative identities where parts of the self were tied to gender emerged as useful spaces in which women operated to serve both the university and the larger community in a more holistic manner which was one of the criteria for promotion to professorship. Unlike and unseen before in the familiar gender narratives, the intersections are not disenfranchising to the women, rather empowering them towards their goals as they make notable contribution to the community.

4.7.1 Gender and Women (Professors) Identity

From each conversation came the sense that in order to be a successful professionally, women required a specialized effort. The women had to fulfill social practices predetermined by the traditional Zambian socio-cultural disposition. The participants were well aware being a woman came with certain socially prescribed works, activities, and actions, regardless of their qualifications, profession and employment status at the university. For example, Chipadzuwa narrated how the institution expected her to perform professionally but also responsibly as a woman. The 'conflict' between her professional identity and her being a mother was emphasized in an effort to exclude her from the job: *When I applied for a position to go to university... the interviewing panel had twelve...men...they were asking me questions... like...how are going to take care of your children, this is a very demanding position.* In spite of all her qualifications and earlier experience, doubt was raised on her abilities and capabilities on account of her motherhood. However, Chipadzuwa through assertiveness affirmed her capabilities, highlighting her success in her previous position. *'I will take care of them...in the same way I was taking care of them in...'* Such patronizing predispositions can deter women's aspirations. But for enlightened and determined women like Chipadzuwa and the rest, it was an inspiration to take up the job and use themselves as a case studies for women success: *'...That also inspired me...they need somebody to add some value...some diversity...so even that motivated me to say okay let me...for the sake of the...and black women let show...that brains don't have gender... '*

4.7.2 Women identity and self agency

The women in this study all put their individual identity and self agency to effective use in the workplace. Most often and shocking to the system, the women's responses to the prescribed societal expectations were divergent and against the grain. Nyakapete described how while being constrained by dominant socio-cultural expectations of what she can and cannot be or do, employed self agency through expert power (as a doctorate-holder-specialist) to overcome social norm barriers at the work. *So this thing about the male domination is real and I have experienced it myself. So, our biggest problem in this country... that time, was the patriarchal society and they didn't want to see any woman out there... I mean there are those of us who spent our days and nights struggling [fighting]...Because I had what it takes to be a professor and I will be patient.*

For effective use of self agency, Wodeka implores collaboration with men: '*men are not necessary our enemies, we have to work with them, cooperate with them, and not really fight them.'* The women's 'fight' for space at the table of decision- and policy-making is real but needs enlightened wits on how to effectively negotiate and get more men on board as partners.

4.7.3 Creating Spaces through increasing Power in Women's lives

The more educated the women are, the more powerful they become. Women gained power and authority through expertise in their respective specialist fields and position as leaders within the organization and society. The empowered women were able to exhibit behavior deviant from the assumed norms. Such is the power and voice that women acquire that they influence and shape society by introducing some divergent but acceptable norms. *'I attracted more funding for projects as the first professor of microbiology'* (Nyakapete). Ngwabwino clarifies *'...we are coming*

out of it…we are becoming courageous...' such that women now venture into areas society never expected of them. For example, women are challenging for influential jobs or contributing to top-decision deliberations where they are heard. *'You have what it takes, just apply for the job'* (Ngwabwino).

5 Discussion

In examining ways in which the eight women created spaces for their integration into top rank positions in universities I drew and discussed their lived experiences in the light of gender and identity in the workplace. The intersections opened up spaces in which agency was used to attain senior academic and leadership positions (Burke, 2014). The common experiences of different women confirmed that stereotypic gender role expectations and institutional financial challenges constrained their development, involvement and advancement in leadership (Mavin, 2001). Following the definition of gender by Butler (1988) as a series of acts, Wodeka affirms that '*… in all this, I'm still a woman, wife and a mother. I have to take care of my husband and family, I have to take care of my house.'* This statement underlines how the Zambian society has stylized and defined women. Wodeka internalized the gender beliefs as the cultural norms and lived them out consistently with the social expectations. This gender performance gives credence to Butler (1988: 524) who asserts that 'reproduction of gendered identity takes place through the various ways in which bodies are acted in relationship to the deeply entrenched or sedimented expectations of gendered existence.'

The women used self agency to penetrate and influence positive gender response at within the organization. But this is against most familiar research narratives that have reported motherhood and perceptions of motherhood to impede women's advancement in higher education (Okeke, 2004; Rathgeber, 2003; Walker, 1998, among others). Much as the women might legitimate gender beliefs through replication (by fulfilling expectations for motherly behavior) (Johnson, 2014), they have equally exhibited defiance to gender norms by advancing in a field that typically bars their entry. In addition, it must be noted that four of the women whilst married and with children held qualifications in the natural sciences, a standout hindrance, itself. The women managed to alter the acts or repetition of gender to create gender transformation (Butler, 1988). In this particular case, women altered gender performance by their personal agency, through hard work, diligence, and competence that made room for their career enactment. The women also evolved as they passed through the different stages of education and exposure that set them in comparatively powerful positions where they asserted themselves. The women gained power and influence with the acquisition of higher qualifications as well as attaining senior positions. At this stage, women also acquired both expert and legitimate or position power that earned them respect and authority. Therefore, the women were able to exert influence as their voices regarding decision making carried weight and became 'audible'. Through the astute use of power and influence, spaces were created where beneficial intersections fostered the emergence and visibility of women in the institutions.

These findings provide insight into the intersections that support women's identities and leadership in Zambian universities. Intersectionality, as a theory focuses on the often fixed parts of one's self-image that disenfranchises the individual, such as gender, race, religion, and sexuality, among others, and how those combine to compound the marginalization of one's social location and opportunities (economically, legally, etc.) (Crenshaw, 1991). Despite the necessity to perform gender in both their professional and social lives, the women employed their faith, family support, education, and personal agency as neutralizing gender in the university and in the Zambian context. These mechanisms disrupted the sentiment that women don't belong, established a natural space and a sense of belonging. As Chipadzuwa aptly put it; women have their *'part to play'* within the university.

The women's multiple self-images also intersected to create a site of resistance. 'Clearly, there is unequal power, but there is nonetheless some degree of agency that people can and do exert in the politics of naming . . . identity continues to be a site of resistance for members of different subordinated groups' (Crenshaw, 1991: 1297). This quote from Crenshaw brings to mind the statement made by Nyakapete in our interview: *'This is why, when I was first made professor and there was all this excitement and even myself I used to go and introduce myself as the first woman professor. I had to stop at some point because I knew there was a structural problem in this country, especially how men relate to women...'*

Intersections in the identities of women such as mother and role model created space in which they simultaneously enacted and defied gender roles. When a woman in this context performs both functions they create a contradiction that Collins (1986, 1999) refers to as 'outsider within' status. The term 'outsider within' describes the social locations occupied by groups of unequal power (p. 86). Moreover, Johnson (2014) affirms that this is 'an organizational identity marked by the simultaneity of privilege to be among the ranks of insiders (men) and shaped by race, class, gender, and historical circumstance that mark them as interlopers'. Put differently, the status is 'a kind of belonging and not belonging, a ''both/and'' orientation that allows women…to be members of a particular group . . . and at the same time stand apart from it as the ''outsider within''' (Holvino, 2010 cited in Johnson, 2014). The women do not cease to perform their gender roles instead they make spaces through which they are present in male-dominated

positions. The presence of women within senior university leadership and management raises tough questions about the continued marginalization of women basing on generalized factors. And while I do not suggest that the findings described here are generalizable, perhaps the women's status as outsiders within the leadership and management of Zambian universities may stimulate change to increasingly outmode edicts about who should have access to leadership in academe. Coupled with the intersection of performance and agency, the outsider within status may create a threshold within women's lives that allows them to be acknowledged by others as enacting both 'being a woman' and 'being a professional' in higher education.

6.0 Conclusion

The above findings on creating spaces for filling the gender gap in university leadership and management through the lens of women professors' experiences are only an initial venture aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of the successful entry and stay-in of women into senior positions in higher education. The immediate call is for future studies to look deeper into the factors that go beyond those associated with gender, culture, and work in Zambia to explore socio-economic status, tribal affiliation, and the parental educational levels as being mutually constitutive to the mechanisms that would accelerate the betterment of the situation.

The eight senior women academics, leaders and managers at the heart of this study described experiences that demonstrated how they were variously seen as women (less-than-men in education, employment and leadership opportunities), wives and mothers (the other) in the Zambian universities under the patriarchal society's myriad ills against women in general: gender -inequity, -inequality, -injustice, less impeded women's rights violations and the specified hardships of lack of sponsorship for higher studies and lack of funds for research works, psychological harassment and the ever present challenge of balancing time for work and family responsibilities. In spite of all these conspiring forces, the women told of incidences where personal forces of will/determination, faith, and family support converged into educational prowess to leverage their situation propelling them to greater heights of academic and management pinnacle.

Most importantly the study illustrated women's ability to 'perform gender' at work and outside of work while resisting, opening up and utilizing spaces or opportunities through overcoming the gendered expectations within their lives and careers by essentially performing as 'outsiders within'. It was mainly through radical self-determination, faith and family support that the women defied and conquered societal gender expectations. Above all, it was on the bedrock of the successful attainment of higher educational that the women evolved to construct experiences that supported their career progress and upward trajectory in higher education. Each education level accomplished did not only serve to empower the women socially but also acted as the ladder for economic mobility, ever increasing their power base, and earning them respect and independence for a place at the decision-making table. All in all, intersections of personal, professional and organizational factors created spaces in which the women exerted themselves to actualize their lives and careers.

Table 1. Description of Women professors

Aliases	Official Title	Position	Institution
Nyakapete	Associate professor	Government leader	Government Ministry
Chipadzuwa	Professor	Vice Chancellor	University
Anyankulu	Associate professor	Government leader	Government Ministry
Wodeka	Associate professor	Director	University
Tontola	Associate professor	Dean	University
Ngwabwino	Associate professor	Deputy Vice Chancellor	University
Maiwane	Associate professor	Director	University
Kangetenge	Associate professor	Director	University

Table 2. Characteristics of participants.

Alias	Qualification	Field	Marital Status at PhD attainment
Nyakapete	PhD -Immunology	Health	Married
Chipadzuwa	PhD -Business Leadership	Business	Married
Anyankulu	PhD - Paediatrics	Health	Married
Wodeka	PhD - Paediatrics	Health	Married
Tontola	PhD- Law	Law	Married
Ngwabwino	PhD - Entomology	Health	Married
Maiwane	PhD- Education policy	Education	Married
Kangetenge	PhD- Public health	Health –Research	Married

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