

# Caregiving while in Academia, Strategizing by Minoritized Women: A Rendition of Career Trajectories

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## Preface

*“All day / every day / therapist / mother / maid  
Nymph / then a virgin / nurse / then a servant”*

Paris Paloma - LABOUR (the cacophony)

It surely is remarkable how one song can inspire just as much rage as reading several books on gender inequality (and I've read a couple by now). Thankfully, the rage in question has been turned into the thesis that is currently in front of you. It has indeed required a fair amount of labor, but I consider myself incredible lucky for the support I have had, during the past months.

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## Abstract

Diversity and Inclusion in academia is slowly gaining attention, but there remain substantial gaps in current scholarship. This study contributes to filling said gap, by focusing on the experiences of women from minoritized backgrounds, who have caregiving responsibilities. This group faces many barriers in their careers and were expected to have unique experiences due to the intersections of their identities. The research aim is to understand how minoritized women in academia have used strategic decision-making to navigate their careers, and by doing so confront the notion of the ideal worker. This qualitative, inductive research used a narrative approach from which the career trajectories of 5 women in Dutch academia were rendered. The stories were analyzed using Grounded Theory methodology, to minimize bias from the researcher. The study shows that in their careers, women were highly mobile, were actively engaging in family planning, and faced many (often structural) barriers. They received support from their environments, their partners and extended families, but their personal mentors all helped them carry the responsibilities and navigate such barriers. Their roles as caregivers fostered connections to the people around them and placed women differently in certain contexts. The conclusion of this study reimagines the notion of the ideal worker as a caring one, which should be considered more ideal than an 'unencumbered' worker, as the study shows how ties of care embed a worker in their social environments. The study also concludes that universities should strive to partake in caring *with* their employees by creating more supportive environments for them.

**Keywords:** academic parenthood, caregiving, career trajectories, minority women

## 1. Introduction

Diversity in organizations is becoming widely recognized as an important theme and has been adopted by many corporate organizations as a strategic pillar. However, as noted by Gandhi & Sen (2021), this influx of attention has not yet transferred to the context of higher education. Diversity in academia is recognized, by some, as crucial, but has not yet gained enough traction to build a considerable body of scholarship. The work that has been done, has offered insights into the positions and experiences of women in academia (Elg & Jonnergård, 2003; Gandhi & Sen, 2021; Teichmann et al., 2022); and, to a lesser extent, those of people of color in (predominantly white) academia (Carroll, 2017; Espino & Croom, 2022; Rollock, 2021; Settles et al., 2022).

When discussing issues of diversity in academia, the topic of parents in academia quickly arises and has gathered research interest as well (Amsler & Motta, 2019; Maxwell et al., 2019; Villar-Aguilés & Obiol-Francés, 2022). The importance of addressing parenthood is argued by Maxwell et al. (2019), as it has been consistently shown that having and raising children negatively impacts the career progression of female academics and researchers. Furthermore, they point out, that their experiences in the workplace around pregnancy and maternity leave are often left unaddressed or silenced in the discourse of academia. When we acknowledge that parenthood can be a barrier to success in the environment of academia, it becomes an intersection of marginalization. The ways in which they are disadvantaged by different aspects of their identity, not only compound but may interact with each other; creating unique forms of marginalization. It is because of those unique experiences that this topic requires an intersectional approach.

To understand the dynamic of marginalization fully, it is important to understand how childcare forms a barrier to success in the academic context. When considering the broader concept of care, we find that there are multiple ways in which employees with caring responsibilities face what has been described by some as conflict (Ecklund & Lincoln, 2016) or guilt (Allard & Whitfield, 2023). The way in which such caregiving responsibilities are problematized, is often through the notion of the 'ideal worker', as coined by Joan Acker (Acker, 2006; Allard & Whitfield, 2023). The theoretical background of this problematization will be further explored, but the general assumption is that having responsibilities regarding care, while simultaneously being in paid employment, make an individual less-than-ideal. Being considered as such, can, again, be described as a barrier to a successful career in academia.

This means that for a specific group, namely for women with a minority ethnic background, or women with a migration background in academia, that have caregiving responsibilities, there are multiple intersections making them more likely to experience barriers. As the prevalence of barriers likely has impact on the career trajectory of these individuals (Kirton & Greene, 2015; Lin & Kennette, 2022), the impact becomes tangible. Research with a focus on this specific group seems to be missing. I argue that a group which is underrepresented, under-researched and at-risk for exploitation, is deserving of a dedicated research initiative, with the intention to hold space for their specific experiences. This study makes a societal contribution by working on issues of intersectionality and inclusion, creating a platform for this group, uncovering their experiences and thus to bring academia, as centers of knowledge production, a step closer to being representative of society. Naturally, this aim derives from a found caveat in the existing publications: both diversity in academia and strategies used by caregivers have been gaining in attention, but the link between these issues has not yet been thoroughly explored in research.

The aim of the research is then to understand how minoritized women in academia have used strategic decision-making to navigate their careers. By analyzing their experiences and decision-making, the implications of being a caregiver during the academic career are considered. The intersectional approach of the research looks to confront the notion of the 'Ideal Worker', by showing the strategic decisions of minoritized women to navigate the structural barriers they face to be successful in their careers and the challenges they have as caregivers in academia. From this aim, the following research question was formulated:

*How do women from different ethnic backgrounds or different countries of origin, with caretaking responsibilities, navigate their career trajectories in Dutch academia?*

The theoretical background will be discussed in chapter 2, where the scholarship on diversity and inclusion in academia will be discussed, as well as that on care and caring workers. A brief reflection on the concept of career trajectories follows, introducing the methodological starting point for the research. In chapter 3, the methodological choices are discussed, addressing data collection, the inductive nature of the research, and its use of Grounded Theory. In chapter 4 the results of the analysis are presented, and these are concluded and further discussed in chapter 5.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Diversity and Inclusion in Academia

Academia is, as the context in which this research will be done, one of the core concepts in the theoretical framework. In the context of this study, we will look at faculty members of universities. The work that has been done on the inclusion of women in academia will remain relevant for this research. However, as the aim is to analyze women with a minority ethnic or migration background, that makes previous work on intersectionality within academia the most relevant. Here, I will briefly recap some of the work that has been recognized in that field, drawing from a recent literature review (Chaves & Benschop, 2023) and from publications which were collected through a snowballing approach.

#### 2.1.1. Diversity and Inclusion

Haynes et al. have reviewed the development of the topic intersectionality and how the concept has been applied in publications about Black women in higher education, here they recognize that there are certain methodological patterns in research centering Black women in higher education. They note a prevalence of ethnography and storytelling to create new narratives, opposing the existing ones which often leave Black women “inadequate and expendable, or otherwise invisible” (Haynes et al., 2020, p. 772). Such approaches were indeed found often in this field. Here, mix of studies are discussed: some of quantitative nature, others drawing from such narrative approaches.

When it comes to women of color in academia, multiple themes have emerged. Thomson writes about entryism and ‘micro-emancipation’, theorizing the role organizations play in contributing to the reproduction or disruption and transformation of regimes of inequality (Thomson, 2020). Her findings remain on the theory level and are not based on empirical data. Settles et al. set out to find barriers to the retention of women and faculty of color. They did a quantitative analysis, from which they remark that faculty diversity has received increased attention from researchers and institutions of higher education, yet faculty demographics have not changed substantially for many underrepresented groups (Settles et al., 2022). In their findings they present several barriers, including a lack of belonging, discrimination, social exclusion, and tokenism. Their publication is mainly focused on retention and turnover, not the specific individual experiences. Miller & Roksa (2020) note a similar problematic pattern: a tradeoff between research and service and an unequal gendered, racial, division of tasks. These publications have all paid attention to the problematic patterns and have discussed barriers to academic success. However, their methodology somewhat forced the researchers to pre-conceptualize what such barriers might look like.

Rollock, too, has discussed the barriers to reach professorship for Black female professors. She, however, did specifically take their personal experiences into account through semi-structured interviews (Rollock, 2021). Two of the main questions she asks in her research are: What are the career pathways of these academics and, specifically, their experience of attaining professorship? And; what strategies do Black female professors make use of to support their career advancement? This makes her research aim very similar to that of this research project, albeit with a somewhat different point of focus, since here Black women are researched specifically. In her findings, she points out that universities tend to communicate a commitment to increasing the inclusion of underrepresented groups, but that such communications rarely translate into improvements in the daily experiences of these groups (Rollock, 2021).

Those daily experiences were also the focus of Carroll, who published a narrative analysis to illustrate the marginalization of faculty women of color. Practices of marginalization are described in a critical race context. She describes the micro-invalidations that Women of Color experience as betrayal by the academy (Carroll, 2017).

### 2.1.2. Intersectionality

Intersectionality, a concept introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw, considers how race, gender, and other identity ‘categories’ create different dynamics of being marginalized and excluded (Crenshaw, 1991). In this study, I refer to ‘aspects of identity’ rather than using the word categories, but the concept is central to the research aim. Here, we are not merely interested in researching minoritized individuals, but take a specific interest in what it looks like when different aspects or layers of their identity, intersect. This is what informed the choice not to do a comparison between different ‘categories’ as the aim is not to categorize, and moreover, the point is to give these voices a platform. A comparative approach would, I argue, take away from the space for marginalized voices. The underlying belief for this study is that these women are deserving of a dedicated research initiative, into their specific experiences; paying attention to how their intersecting identities affect these experiences.

## 2.2. Care and Caregiving

The role of care in the context of the career developments of women, is only implicitly mentioned in the description of the notion of the ideal worker by Joan Acker: “Because women have more obligations outside of work than do men, this gendered organization of work is important in maintaining gender inequality in organizations and, thus, the unequal distribution of women and men in organizational class hierarchies.” This surplus of obligations is not random, it refers to the fact that women do most care labor at home (Pecis & Touboulic, 2024).

Care has been a topic of interest in scholarship, leading to a substantial body of publications. Joan C. Tronto is often cited for a definition of the concept: “a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible” (Tronto, 2013, p. 19). She describes different phases of care: caring about, caring for, caregiving, care-receiving and caring with. She acknowledges that care is persistently viewed through a gendered lens, as it remains to be considered women’s work, an idea which is institutionalized and reinforced (Tronto, 2013). Others have defined care as “a relational practice that aims at addressing concerns for another person’s needs” (Fotaki et al., 2019, p. 4). Within scholarship regarding ethics of care, intersectionality is a crucial aspect, even if not always explicitly mentioned. Care, however, is often addressed in the context of ethics and gender, making it a political concept (Fotaki et al., 2019).

This line of argumentation connects to a strand of publications regarding care and its ethics, being care in organizations, or caring organizations. In some contexts, this means the ways in which an organization takes part in ‘caring’ for its employees. In other contexts, the concepts care and organizations are connected to mean: the way the people within the organizations partake in care. When analyzing individuals’ experience of care responsibilities, this second understanding is the most relevant one. Employees that handle caretaking responsibilities seems to be recognized as a topic of research, although not drawing widespread attention.

### 2.2.1. Strategies for Caregiving responsibilities

The researchers that have set out to research the ways in which employees deal with caretaking responsibilities, have done so by using different lenses and methods, making the available body



of scholarship varied. Some of the recent publications use a quantitative approach to uncover possible patterns. Maxwell et al. (2019) articulate the need for research into women in academia with caretaking responsibilities: They make their arguments through the lens of ‘doing gender’ coined by West and Zimmerman, and that of the ‘ideal worker’ coined by Joan Acker (Acker, 2006; West & Zimmerman, 1987). While their aim seems to align with the aim of this research, theirs is Action research, and the methodology is based on a quantitative survey. They remark on their methodology: “Others have highlighted the advantages of online spaces for conducting research with women by providing safe environments for articulating experiences and views they might not feel comfortable expressing in face-to-face encounters.” Maxwell et al., p. (2019, p. 140). It could, however, be argued that this approach is somewhat limiting to how well these personal stories can be captured. An important finding was that a significant number of respondents stated that they expected that maternity leave would have a detrimental impact on their promotion/progression prospects, and several had directly experienced this.

The relationship between caregiving and the academic career has been researched in the Spanish context by Villar-Aguilés & Obiol-Francés (2022). Their approach was to use mixed methods, both quantitative and qualitative. Their main conclusion was that the care burden women bear, is overlooked in their university. From the quantitative approach emerged that women generally have more caregiving responsibilities than men; and that women make greater career sacrifices than men (Villar-Aguilés & Obiol-Francés, 2022).

Their findings become more insightful when contrasted with other quantitative findings, for example by Raiber et al., who mapped out which strategies for adapting to paid work are used the most by caregivers, notably not in the academic context. The study found no significant gender differences in the strategies that were involved to mediate this conflict, but did find that women reported more difficulties with combining work and care (Raiber et al., 2023). For both research findings, the transferability of the findings to this project is limited due to their different research design. Because the strategies (or sacrifices, as they are called by Villar-Aguilés & Obiol-Francés) were articulated within the survey, they do not fit with the theoretical positioning of this research. However, when these publications are contrasted, it is interesting that the findings on strategic choices of Raiber et al. (2023), which are based on the general Dutch population, are different from the findings by Villar-Aguilés & Obiol-Francés. This raises the question whether employees with caregiving responsibilities in academia might use different strategies compared to the general population. That question is clearly outside of the scope of this research project, but it does confirm the need for (more) qualitative analysis of the strategies used by academic caregiving employees, to gain insight into the decision-making process.

Upon looking further into previous qualitative ‘working carers’, as Allard & Whitfield call them, the importance of an intersectional analysis becomes more pronounced. Their publication analyzes the relationship between Acker’s notion of the ideal worker and working carers (Allard & Whitfield, 2023). The authors highlight that “carers (whether paid or unpaid) are at risk of experiencing specific forms of internalized guilt related to the intersection of care and work, and that this guilt perpetuates an “ideal worker norm” among carers” (Allard & Whitfield, 2023, p. 667). The authors also make explicit how they approach care ethics as intertwined with power dynamics. By acknowledging that the topic is gendered and is tied to power dynamics, it becomes very clear that an intersectional analysis is needed. The authors acknowledge themes of inequality, as they theorize that due to a tendency of the negligence of own needs and self-sacrifice, carers are particularly vulnerable to forms of exploitation (Allard & Whitfield, 2023). They also reported that interviewees appeared disinterested in utilizing their voice as workers

or enforcing rights. For a group already experiencing discrimination on the account of gender and ethnicity, it would be crucial to know if and how that group of people is at extra risk for exploitation, making an intersectional approach the appropriate choice.

These quantitative studies show the prevalence of marginalization. Qualitative, often inductive approaches in other studies offer further insights into the experiences of strategies which are used. Ollilainen (2019) sets out to describe how academic mothers make themselves ideal workers by blending personal and professional spheres, often working throughout their periods of official leave. Novich & Garcia-Hallett (2018) found that parents of color in academia used timesaving strategies to work more efficiently, but that consequently, they faced personal and professional isolation. França et al. (2023) studied parenthood in academia in the context of family life becoming more visible during the covid pandemic. They found three main resistance strategies used by academic parents: naturalizing, managing expectations, and refusal. They noted that with choosing refusal, came the fear of consequences for their career trajectory.

They are not the only authors to raise career consequences, as Raiber et al. (2023) point out how certain strategies, such as reducing labor supply, have financial consequences and might negatively impact career progression. The relevance of looking at strategies for care responsibilities within the context of a career trajectory, thus becomes clear.

### 2.3. Career trajectories & Narratives

Whereas many publications on career trajectories aim to find patterns and thus opt for a quantitative approach (Ibourk & El Aynaoui, 2023; Raiber et al., 2023; Seo et al., 2021; Vinkenburg et al., 2020), this research will shift the focus from patterns to specific experiences with the decision-making process. In the context of the academic career path, which is mostly suited to the male life and career trajectory, the experiences of women with children become of increased importance (Ollilainen, 2019). Haynes et al. (2020) noted the prevalence of storytelling in this field, which can capture such experiences. Espino & Croom (2022) published a narrative analysis in which the narratives are provided by the researchers themselves. Their publication analyzes their own experiences as women of color in academia, focusing on critical reflexivity, responsibility-taking, and labor (Espino & Croom, 2022). Their approach of ‘plática’ methodology<sup>1</sup> showcases their interactions which are then analyzed to discuss themes of resistance and solidarity. Bowyer et al. (2022) use an autoethnographic narrative approach to give a feminist reflection on their return to the academic work environment after taking maternity leave, describing the struggles they faced to regaining their professional identity. Amsler & Motta, p. (2019, p. 82) too, use dialogical autoethnographic methods, reflecting upon their experiences as academic mothers. Their research has a specific focus on motherhood but considers the intersections of marginalization dynamics with race and class. They reflect, as researchers, upon the strategies they had used and opinions they upheld as academic employees. Thus, they narrate their own experience: “To work in this way requires courage to embrace being the othered, the marginal and the outsider and to become more critically aware of how acts of othering, marginalization and exclusion are oppressing those around us every day” (Amsler & Motta, 2019, p. 94).

Those daily experiences are allowed to take center stage in this way of doing research. We can recognize their relevance in much of the research related to careers of marginalized academic employees (Carroll, 2017; Espino & Croom, 2022; Rollock, 2021). Their methodological approach was to use narratives as a primary form of data. A narrative approach facilitates the

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<sup>1</sup> Chicana/Latina feminist conversational methodology

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emergence of concepts that are hard to pre-conceptualize, like resistance and solidarity by Espino & Croom, betrayal by Carroll and guilt by Allard and Whitfield. For this reason, a narrative approach to career trajectories is considered the most fitting and insightful method for the research question at hand.

### 3. Methodology

Career trajectories emerged as one of the core concepts of the research, but they are simultaneously a key part of the methodological approach of the research. Here, the theoretical positioning underpinning this research is introduced, and an explanation on the methodology, data collection and procedure is provided.

#### 3.1. Theoretical Positioning

Reflexivity is a crucial consideration in contextualizing the choices made regarding the methodology in any research project. The topic and methodological choices that are made in this project, have been informed by the researcher's epistemological and personal position. The study is written from a critical theory perspective, in the sense that it is under the assumption that what we perceive as reality, is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The intent of the researcher, from this positioning, is to use theory and research for change: these intentions can for instance be emancipatory, advocacy, or feminist convictions (Moon & Blackman, 2014). From this theoretical perspective, we arrive at the conviction that "what can be known is inextricably intertwined with the interaction between a particular investigator and a particular object or group" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). It follows that as a researcher, I should acknowledge my personal position: that I am a white woman, without caretaking responsibilities other than for myself. I am not employed in academia but a student, so my (academic) responsibilities are vastly different from the women I have spoken with. In the academic context I have benefitted from the knowledge of women (from minority groups) who have faced marginalization to be in that position. It makes me sensitive to the fact that I do not want to speak *for* this group, I want to create space for *their* experiences to be recorded and understood. However, I should also acknowledge that in the interviews, very personal experiences were shared, of which it was only natural that this on occasion turned conversational for a period. My presence and responses as the interviewer surely at times shaped the direction of the conversation, but also fostered connections.

#### 3.2. Data collection and analysis

This study is qualitative in nature. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with five women, from four different Dutch universities. In these interviews, their career trajectories were rendered and their experiences as caregivers were discussed. The interviews lasted between 75 and 120 minutes. The interviews took place between April 16<sup>th</sup> and May 27<sup>th</sup> of 2024. The possibility for a follow up interview was offered, but in none of the cases this was deemed necessary. Two of the interviews took place in person, three were held online. Four of the interviews were recorded and then transcribed, one was transcribed during the conversation and checked for accuracy afterwards. The data was then analyzed using a Grounded Theory approach. The theoretical framework informs the sensitizing concepts which were expected to arise: decision making in academic careers, intersectionality and roles as caregivers.

The use of semi-structured interviews aligns with the narrative approaches that are often used in research into diversity issues, which were found during the literature review (Amsler & Motta, 2019; Carroll, 2017; Espino & Croom, 2022; Haynes et al., 2020; Rollock, 2021). As my position as the researcher is very different from the people whose experiences are analyzed, the method should avoid becoming too deterministic. This makes the use of Grounded Theory fitting (Gioia et al., 2013). The data was approached without a pre-conceptualized hypothesis, but with sensitizing concepts in mind, informed by the theoretical background which was reviewed. The findings were formulated by using a systematic coding process, to minimize biases and let the findings emerge from the data. The coding process is structured according to

the Gioia method, meaning that very close to data level, there are first order concepts, which are grouped into second order themes, for which then aggregate dimensions were formulated (Gioia et al., 2013). This inductive approach was used to code interviews A, B, C and D. Taking time constraint into account and the later date at which interview E took place, the data from this interview was coded using a more deductive approach, as most of the codes had then been formulated based on interviews A-D. However, the coding process remained iterative and the data from interview E made unique contributions.

The envisioned participants of this research were women with a minority ethnic background, or a migration background who work in Dutch academia and *have* or *have had* caregiving responsibilities. To make the call for participants as clear as possible, being a parent was given as an example of being a caregiver. The five women who participated are all parents. As has been mentioned, this group is not well represented in academia. The initial aim was to find participants among the population of tenured professors, but this requirement was let go of. The profile for participants thus became: women with a minority ethnic and/or migration background who work in Dutch academia, who are parents and possibly have (had) other caregiving responsibilities. The participants were found by using interpersonal networks.

### 3.3. Researching academic career trajectories

As Vinkenburg et al. (2020) remark regarding academic career trajectories: “From a holistic life course perspective, careers are not (only) marked by singular specific events but also a sequence of states that may differ in progression and timing.” Vinkenburg et al. had a quantitative approach to career trajectories, as patterns were their main research interest.

Another publication on career trajectories is that of Miller & Roksa, p. (2020, p. 132), which asks whether, and how “gendered and racial processes emerge much before newly minted PhDs take on faculty roles.” Their methodological approach was to hold interviews with PhD-students (in biology) with a racial- or ethnic minority background, who they found through a previously held survey. Their analysis used a grounded theory approach, developing an initial set of open codes that was refined and resulted in a coding scheme with multiple dimensions. Their approach is similar to mine: the lens of intersectionality, using interviews for data collection and an inductive approach for analysis.

We must conclude that there are different definitions as to what an academic career is. I have taken the broader interpretation of the trajectory as proposed by Miller & Roksa in this research. Thus, I consider the process of obtaining the PhD a part of the academic career. This choice is strengthened with the practical argument that a PhD is often considered as a first step towards pursuing a tenure-track career in academia (Seo et al., 2021). Tenure track and thus staying in academia has been one of the primary outcomes of doctoral education (Seo et al., 2021), and those who stay in academia are also the people relevant for this research. That is why the interest is in those who have received tenure or are still in the “tenure-track”. Any developments between the decision to pursue a PhD and obtaining, then retaining, tenure are considered as the career trajectory. This means that in this research, the women were asked to narrate their career trajectories, and to reflect upon their career, from deciding to pursue a PhD up until the moment that we spoke.

### 3.4 Research ethics

A risk for seeking participants in this research was that women might be hesitant to contribute because they experience their positions as precarious. Those who chose to share their narrative on their career trajectories and caregiving responsibilities, shared a substantial part of their

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professional and personal lives with me. As has been mentioned, the women who are the subject of this research are already at the intersection of multiple regimes of marginalization. The level of intimacy of the data, and the vulnerability of those interviewed, prove the importance of keeping interviewees anonymous. This has been done as thoroughly as possible, by redacting specifics that may make them recognizable, while keeping the narrative understandable.

## 4. Results

From the data collection, the five career trajectories were rendered. The conversations proved rich in data, from which concepts, themes and dimensions emerged. The concepts were kept as close to data level as feasible, and due to the richness of the data, a great number of them emerged. The concepts codes can be consulted in the *Appendix 3: Coding structure*, in this results section, a selection of the themes and dimensions are discussed. These were selected because they emerged as a shared phenomenon between multiple women, or because they offered an insight which complements or contrasts existing theory.

### 4.1. Profiles & Trajectories

Five women were interviewed, who are currently employed at four Dutch universities. Their expertise lies in different disciplines, but the majority works in social sciences. Their profiles and visualized trajectories are included, to help familiarize with the women whose experiences are discussed.

Interviewee A is a (cis-)woman<sup>2</sup> who is born and grew up in an Asian country. She currently lives and works in a city in the Netherlands. She works at a Dutch university as a lecturer and researcher. She lives with her family, consisting of a husband and two children.

Interviewee B is a woman who was born in a South American country in a bi-cultural family and grew up in multiple countries, who currently lives and works in the Netherlands. She works at a Dutch university as an assistant professor and lives in a different Dutch city from the one she works at, joined part-time by her two children who she co-parents with her former partners.

Interviewee C is woman who was born in a European country and grew up there and in an Asian country. She is Muslim. She lives and works in the Netherlands, at a Dutch university as a lecturer and researcher. She lives with her husband and her child.

Interviewee D is a (cis-)woman who was born and grew up in a Central American country, who currently lives and works in the Netherlands. She works at a Dutch university as a lecturer, and lives with her husband and two children.

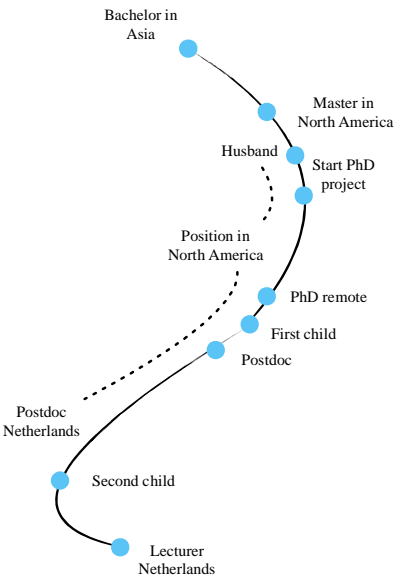
Interviewee E was born in Africa and grew up in Asia. She is Muslim. She now lives and works in the Netherlands, at a Dutch University as a research manager, and lives with her husband and two children.

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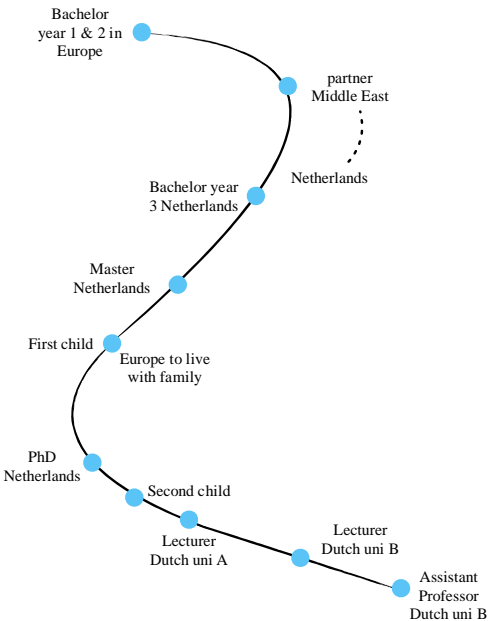
<sup>2</sup> “Cis-”, being short for “cisgender”: *of, relating to, or being a person, whose gender identity corresponds with the sex the person was identified as having at birth* as defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary. As all five of the women were biological mothers, it is likely they are cisgender. However, only Interviewee A and D vocalized this identity.

CAREGIVING WHILE IN ACADEMIA  
STRATEGIZING BY MINORITIZED WOMEN

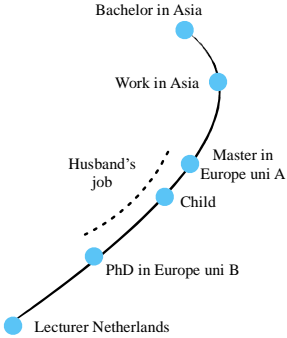
Interviewee A



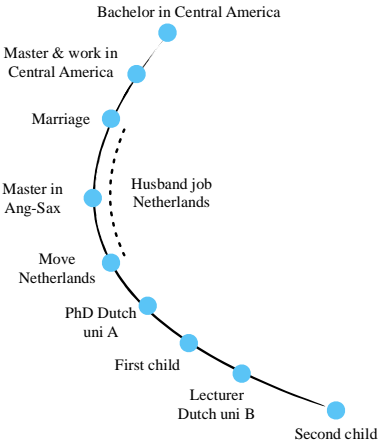
Interviewee B



Interviewee C



Interviewee D



Interviewee E

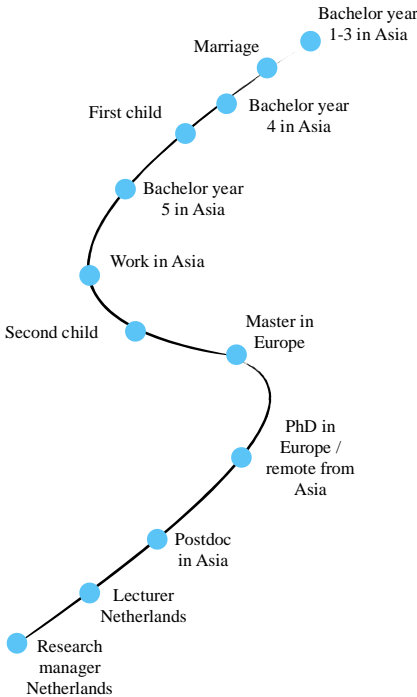


Figure 1: (Career) Trajectories of Interviewee A-E



## 4.2. Strategic Planning of Career Progression and Caregiving Responsibilities

From the notion of the ideal worker, it became clear that these women did not fit the ideal, making them marginalized within a system which was not designed for them. That they were able to navigate this system makes it interesting to observe the ways in which they moved through their careers. However, when considering the career progression of minoritized groups, it becomes clear that the concept of ‘progression’ is not as obvious of a trajectory. It has been pointed out that the ‘classic’ academic career path, the tenure track, is often considered to be modeled after a male life course (Ollilainen, 2019; Pecis & Touboulic, 2024). Women expressed some discomfort of finding themselves on this track: because of the demanding, exploitative expectations, because of a lack of progression, or because the track did not seem compatible with their personal life. It should also be acknowledged that multiple women said they did not always have a conscious strategy for the decisions they made during their career trajectories. While taking note of that, I will refer to the bigger decisions on employment, mobility and family planning, as “strategic”. When taking the perspective of the trajectories, such decisions taken together do constitute the strategy, to the extent that there was one.

‘Navigation’ was found in multiple ways: making plans, being mobile, in some cases disrupting the academic career path. One way in which women were agentic, was when they made decisions on family planning. In their consideration of the planning of pregnancies, employability and financial security were central to their contemplations.

*“And then once I came here, I was debating: second child or postdoc, so I was applying for postdocs and... but I got pregnant first.”* (Interview A)

*“I wanted to have kids. But I was scared of doing that on just one salary. It didn't sound sensible. So, we kept putting that off.”* (Interview D)

What stood out was the way the timing of pregnancies was discussed. Three women had their (first) child during their studies: one during her bachelor’s program, two during their master’s program.

*“I was not young in absolute terms, but in academic terms, it's young to be a [mother], because I often see a woman gets pregnant after their studies or after their PhD. And for me, also because I've done all these pauses, it would not make sense.”* (Interview B)

*“So, I'm really glad that I have already reached this stage of my career, when I can focus on improving my career path.”* (Interview E)

From their remarks, it seems that there are norms for a ‘right’ timing of pregnancy. By having an early career pregnancy, they possibly deviated from that norm, but it resulted in their children being significantly more independent by this point in their careers. This gave them more space to focus on their work. By delaying their studies, instead of taking maternity leave during their career in academia, they circumvented one of the major pain points, of struggling to access leave (Ollilainen, 2019) and regaining the professional identity upon return (Bowyer et al., 2022). It seems that by having the peak of their parental responsibility early in their career, they are making themselves more ideal.

Another consideration in the planning of their family life, was its impact on mobility and career progression. Two women made a point of restrictions that being a parent put on their career choices and how free they were in applying to certain positions or programs:

*“It's often recommended to go to abroad, right. There are, for instance, also the scholarships, the Marie Curie and the Rubicon, that you can apply to in order to go abroad, and to have experience abroad. But for me, that was just off limits. So, I don't even have to look into those websites because yeah...”* (Interview B)

*“And a lot of people assume, that mobility and raising a kid, are two conflicting aims. But we had agreed, we would not make it a reason not to. We didn't want to have regrets about not applying when we are old [...] So my husband applied for this grant, he got it and went to [European Country 2]. I still consider it a good idea. It made it easier to not see [childcare] as a burden.”* (Interview C)

Interviewee C's resolution and experience makes it very interesting to see the perspective of Interviewee B, whose mobility was indeed more restricted because of a co-parenting situation.

*“And it makes some decisions also easier. Any job that would be beyond commuting time for [Dutch City] was simply not an option. So, there was no use at applying, at looking, at even thinking about... the choice was made, you know.”* (Interview B)

What is seen as a burden, then, seems to shift based on what is seen as the main objective by the woman herself. In this case, it is mobility which is another theme which arose in many of the conversations. All women had lived in, and most had worked in, multiple countries. Interviewee C reflected upon why she believes moving was easier for her:

*“I was in a position where I was really okay with moving anywhere really, I think I could in that sense benefit from being an immigrant already.”* (Interview C)

Partnerships also played a significant role in the planning of mobility and career decisions, in two cases (A and D) as the leading factor. After the move, they both succeeded in finding a position in Dutch academia too. In Interviewee E's case, the move was led by her finding of a position in the Netherlands, of which her partner was supportive:

*“My husband also leaned into moving or going back to Europe. [...] He was totally OK with quitting his own job. And then he said, I can go anywhere.”* (Interview E)

We see that the mobility of the women was in general, quite high. Some of their mobility was initiated by their partners, other times it was supported or enabled. It is interesting to see the narratives that arose around parenthood (possibly) restricting opportunities and mobility, as three out of five women made the move to the Netherlands while they already had children. The existing theory informs us that women are likely to make career sacrifices to fulfil a role as caregiver, but it seems that this 'sacrifice' can also be experienced as a parameter that was simply put in place, as for Interviewee B. The prevalence of the kind of 'career sacrifice' coined by Villar-Aguilés & Obiol-Francés (2022) is not reflected in the experiences women shared.

### 4.3. Caregiving & Being Cared For

Care played many roles in the lives of women, not limited to their role as caregivers to their children. They discussed how they managed childcare, which often was a collaborative effort

with their partners, family members or community members. For those who are partnered, a large part of the caring responsibility was shared between the mother and father. Most women mentioned that they had a system of taking turns with childcare, for example when they were newborn or during sickness. For interviewee E, her husband was a stay-at-home parent during her master's degree. In Interviewee A's case, her partner also takes on a bigger share of the care responsibilities:

*"He does half, or even more, in terms of childcare. Because he sees... He's a white, [native] English-speaker. And he sees his advantage, privilege. I struggle in terms of writing in academic English and so on. I write slower, think slower, and read slower so: more time. Right. So, he's recognizing that and is taking over childcare responsibilities, household... Grocery shopping, to cooking and cleaning, and so on, it's taken care of by my partner, so that really helps." (Interview A)*

In these partnerships, the caring activities are not as sharply gendered as described by Tronto. By dividing these tasks fairly or evenly, women and their partners share in the impact of how much they are set back by their care responsibilities. Some women were also assisted by family members with childcare. The ways in which this was organized varied: from splitting rent with a sibling, parents coming to the Netherlands for a period, or help from a mother (in-law). The support, in that sense, varied from more on the financial level, to doing a substantial part of the childcare or household. Interviewee E looks back on the situation:

*"At that time, I had also my mother-in-law there. She was really helping also, for instance, with the dinner and preparing things for us. I mean, maybe I had a luxurious position because I didn't have to take care of much. For instance, the house and the meals, etcetera. It was all like really prepared by my mother-in-law and I just had to take care of my kid." (Interview E)*

By the time her family moved to the Netherlands, she mentioned her kids were older and needed less support. Care in these instances is a shared activity, where extended family helps relieve the burden. This activity is reminiscent of Tronto's term 'caring with', though we can still recognize that in this case the activity is gendered. Women gave care to others than their children, for example, family members or colleagues.

*"I went the extra mile to help one of my colleagues. I really admire him, and I learn a lot from him, and I really care about him." (Interview B)*

As an activity of receiving care, many women spoke of their mentors and how those played a role during key moments of their lives and careers.

*"Fortunately, I met a wonderful person. Which just completely changed the rules of my career. And he really became my mentor." (Interview D)*

The benefit of being in a supportive environment at work has been mentioned in the context of enabling 'academic motherhood' (Bowyer et al., 2022) but the crucial role that is attributed to their mentors by the women here, seems to be a new insight. However, the care women received was not strictly related to their work environments. The bonds that formed with their mentors sometimes reached into their personal lives.

*“I was told by these mentors, kind of past the active reproductive age, telling me: it's really important to raise a kid with a feminist mind, so to speak.” (Interview A)*

*“I had a bit of a fight with my mother during both, especially in the second pregnancy and we were not really on talking terms. And it was actually my supervisor who was there during the birth.” (Interview B)*

Two women discussed the ways in which their identity as parents placed them differently in social contexts. Their identities made them connect to other caregivers, forming communities which also cared for each other.

*“When they're with me, or even when they're not with me, it's really like an opening to start talking to people in the field. About your kids, “these are my kids”. [...] And also, because I took her. So yeah, it made me stand firmer.” (Interview B)*

*“If anything, it even creates this sort of community of colleagues that we have done that. Then you take out the pump parts and everyone's like. “Ohh, that's so fucking triggering” and so that's fun. You entered that, kind of like, motherhood club. I can't really explain, a community as sort of shared understanding, once you've been through that. That that feels really nice and by being able to do that for other parents.” (Interview D)*

One unique contribution from Interviewee B was on the topic of self-care. Most women shared their experiences with searching for a healthy balance between their work and personal lives.

*“Because, you know, because food had to be ready. Because I was exhausted, and I had to sleep because I could not work as hard as other people. It made me healthy in a way.” (Interview B)*

Her statement contests the notion that the ideal worker is free to work all the time, as in her view those who do, suffer in terms of their health. Her (forced) prioritization of her own health is reminiscent of what França et al. (2023) describe as refusal: for parents in academia to consider the role of caretaker and not go beyond their limits. They too, link this decision to self-care.

## 4.5. Working Conditions

An important aspect of how women navigated their careers, depended on the conditions of their work environments. They named conflict with their supervisors, exploitative expectations and the lack of a network within the organization, as reasons for struggling in their careers and their progression. In contrast, finding joy in their work, having flexibility and the visibility of parenthood at work were themes that helped them navigate.

A structural barrier in their career progression arose from the contractual barrier caused by maternity leave. The PhD contract is a temporary one, which is extended to accommodate for the leave. However, as in the Netherlands, there is a maximum of such contracts and extensions, this later resulted in a situation where their contract could not get a (necessary) extension. This is a painful example of how some of the notions of the ideal worker have been institutionalized. By deviating from the norms, a pregnant person under a temporary contract becomes marginalized. This marginalization also occurred when access to facilities was restricted.

*“I never heard about time for pumping. There was never any discussion. Nobody ever mentioned it. I did not know I could get that time. So that I was completely screwed over in that sense.”* (Interview D)

It became clear that not in every academic environment, parenthood is regularly visible or accommodated. The notion of the ideal worker materialized once more in the experience of Interviewee D. Unfortunately, issues around taking leave in the academic context are unsurprising (Maxwell et al., 2019). We can see, as did Pecis & Touboulic (2024), that a university which institutionalizes the ideal worker notion, becomes an uncaring one.

There were some experiences where women felt that their work environment could support them in balancing their multiple responsibilities. The themes that were mentioned most frequently, were the visibility of parenthood and flexibility in the work requirements.

*“There's lots more colleagues that have kids, and that you know they have kids, and it's a thing. So: My kid is sick, can you cover for me? Like, it was a really different vibe. [...] It's more normalized. We have lots of colleagues having kids at that point. So, it was like people taking paternity leave, maternity leave, and that's just not an issue at all.”* (Interview D)

The result of parenthood being normalized, seems to be that access to facilities is increased. The presence of other parents who deviate from the ideal worker notion seems to dilute the institutionalization of the notion itself.

*“When kids are having a cold and then skipping the class, I can be at home and nobody complains. And because working at home is considered OK so...”* (Interview A)

*“So, I think that for motherhood really helps. Because I can go to my son, for instance, he needs therapy at the moment. And it's on Tuesday and Tuesday is a working day, but then I can, you know, work around that. And it's fine. Yeah. And it would not have been possible before [the pandemic]. Would have been more difficult.”* (Interview B)

We have indeed seen the norms shift in academia when it comes to parenthood during the covid pandemic (França et al., 2023), which caused a blend in personal and professional lives, resulting in higher flexibility and visibility. As these themes are seen as helpful, it will be interesting to see to what degree these new norms towards combining work and care will hold up.

#### 4.6. Implications of Intersectionality

One of the main aims of the research has been to offer women who experience an intersection of marginalizations, a platform. That is why during the data analysis, specific attention was paid to instances where the implications of intersectionality became apparent. These instances reflect an array of experiences and occur in the context of all the aforementioned topics. There are differences between these examples, which parts of their identities are at an intersection, the contexts where they intersect and differences in how they experience these instances.

In one instance, being a woman with a racialized background is introduced as an identity which offers a benefit in the context of teaching diversity themes:

*“You know, when you say you're teaching gender and diversity. You have kind of less trust, when the white Dutch privileged women [are] teaching the topic. Compared to that, like, the audience, students, appreciate the person who is teaching the topic have more than gender, more than kind of women, identity.”* (Interview A)

Her interpretation shows us her specific identity being valued in (that part) of the university. Because she has these two marginalized identity markers, she is presumed to be a more trustworthy source on the topic that she teaches and researches. This is a remarkable insight, as the ideal worker notion would suggest that she would be the less-than-ideal candidate, while she feels and argues, she is.

When discussing her experience of guilt for not spending more time with her son, Interviewee C substantiates her remark by addressing the intersection of her identity as an academic mother with her identity as a migrant:

*“Especially as an immigrant, wanting to impart my culture. Of course that doesn't happen at the daycare. And once I have him at home in the evenings, the interaction is limited. I imagine the identity struggle might be more profound for him.”* (Interview C)

Her experience seems in line of what Allard & Whitfield (2023) described as internalized guilt for those at the intersection of work and care, especially when in this context the migrant identity is added to the profile. However, where Allard & Whitfield attribute this guilt to the experience of not living up to being the ideal worker, Interviewee C's guilt is directed at her role as a migrant parent. She has experienced the discomfort of being disconnected from one's cultural heritage herself. The accumulation of these layers of identity leads up to a clear implication of intersectional friction.

When describing who was part of the community that supported her and helped with childcare while she was working, Interviewee E mentions how her religion complicated the situation.

*“My mother-in-law would stay with us, [...] sometimes even a few weeks. But then her son, which is the brother of my husband, sometimes would also come and stay with us, for a couple of days or weeks. And for us, it was not really comfortable. I mean, when I'm home, I don't have to wear the hijab or even dress modestly, I can just be in my shorts or pajamas. When he is around, I should dress modestly in front of him and also wear my hijab. So, I didn't feel comfortable in my own house. And we try to communicate this many times, but then he was he was just having excuses...”* (Interview E)

She could rely on her extended family for care and support, which she earlier in our conversation described as a “luxurious position” but reveals here that, taking her faith into account, it also meant she experienced a specific burden. The role and implications of religion in considering the experiences of working carers was not included in the theoretical framework, but clearly is an aspect of intersectionality at play.

## 5. Conclusion & Discussion

### 5.1. Conclusion

Upon the rendition of these career trajectories, five life stories were addressed. This means that while the theoretical framework told us to expect stories about marginalization, guilt, and resistance (which were all present), these were also stories about supportive partnerships, ambition and joy. It would be a loss of nuance to restrict our discussion to the ways in which these women have met barriers in their careers. In the stories, moments of agency arose where women forged their trajectories and navigated the barriers that they faced.

The notion that the ideal worker is an unencumbered worker is called into question by the conclusion of this study. It seems that connectedness to others, the ties of care that, indeed, add responsibilities outside of work, is also what enables these women to do well in their careers. Not only does it enable them, but it also adds depth to their experiences at work, as this connectedness offers them unique experiences and opportunities to learn and progress. Caring embeds them in their social environments. The ideal worker is one who cares for themselves and others.

In turn, the ideal worker can then receive care: women were encouraged and enabled to build their careers in academia. However, as the aim of this research has been to take an agentic perspective as to how these careers were navigated, it would be in discredit of their work to simply attribute their successful careers to their partners or other supporters.

Ollilainen concluded that there was a need “to dig deeper into how the blending of work and parenthood can also be a source of empowerment for academics” (Ollilainen, 2019, p. 427), to which the findings of this study have attempted to contribute. We see empowerment in some of the motivations women have for raising their children: raising a new generation of feminists or imparting their culture which is marginalized due to colonialism. We see it when they take care of a colleague, from whom they in turn were able to learn. Their embeddedness in social environments has the possibility to improve their work, while they can draw support from it as well. Drawing from their environment as a way of navigation also mitigates what Novich & Garcia-Hallett (2018) saw was the risk for parents of color in academia, namely ending up in isolation of their personal and professional environments. As Tronto commented on her conceptualization of caring *with*: “It requires that citizens care enough about caring — both in their own lives and in the lives of their fellow citizens — to accept that they bear the political burden of caring for the future” (Tronto, 2013, p. xii). Without universities accepting that they should bear the burden of care, upholding the institutionalization of the ideal worker notion, they become uncaring. This means that academia should care about care. Universities should care about caregivers and support them.

### 5.2. Discussion & Limitations

As discussed in the methodology section, personal networks were used to reach out to potential participants for interviewing. This resulted in the division of disciplines that was presented: four women with a background in social science and one woman with a background in natural science. The women in the former group all had a scholarly interest in topics of diversity and inclusion, if not as their formal research aim, then as their personal ambition within their position. This resulted in an interesting finding, where several women mentioned they felt that working in an environment where there was attention to diversity and inclusion, meant they were more appreciated.

The strategy for seeking participants also resulted in a set of women who all had migration backgrounds. This could imply multiple things, the networks used might simply be connected most to women with migration backgrounds. It could also point to a pattern of those who have lived and worked in multiple countries, have built a CV which made them better equipped for certain positions, or gave them the right tools to resist the pressures of the environment. These are all questions that this research most definitely cannot answer, but they did arise.

The fact that the role of religion was not considered before starting the research, implies a blind spot or bias. I am not sure if it is my bias that caused me to not incorporate it in the theoretical framework, or if fellow researchers share this blindness, and the research is lacking. Whichever way around the gap came to be, the emergence of religious friction in the Implications of Intersectionality dimension at least confirmed that the inductive, Grounded Theory approach left room for concepts to arise. An aspect which did not arise at all, is physical health and disability. The women who were interviewed for this project did not report any barriers of physical health or ability. This is another aspect in which the group of participants could have theoretically been more diverse and would have potentially shown other dynamics of care (receiving).

Finally, intersectionality has been one of the core concepts in this project. However, as the design of the research was not a comparative one, no formal conclusions can be drawn on differences between different identities and their experiences. This choice was made to give a platform to the experiences that are not often represented. In essence, the study is of course a comparison to the institutionalized standard of the ideal worker and the career progression of those who are not him.

### 5.3. Contribution to theory

Some authors have previously contested the notion of the ideal worker by looking at the positions of academic parents: namely Ollilainen (2019), Pecis & Touboulic (2024) and in the case of Novich & Garcia-Hallett (2018) specifically at parents of color. Pecis & Touboulic view academic motherhood through the lens of ethics of care. Allard & Whitfield (2023) also draw from Tronto to conceptualize care. That publication has also been at the foundation of the theoretical framework for this study, as I argue that parenthood is care (and should be called as such), making Tronto's definition a key concept. Allard & Whitfield's theoretical contribution was the reimagination of the ideal worker as a guilty worker, as his guilt makes him more exploitable. This study makes another contribution while drawing from the same overarching theories. Here, we express that one of the key deviations of women from the ideal worker norm is through caregiving responsibilities. In their careers, this marginalizes women, who navigate this to some degree by receiving care from others in their environment. The roles they have as being people who care, make them in some ways embedded more firmly in their personal and professional environments. This conclusion not only offers a contrast with the finding of Novich & Garcia-Hallett (2018) in the USA, where parents' strategy resulted in personal and professional isolation, it offers a new confrontation of the ideal worker notion. It can perhaps be captured in a question: How ideal is it, really, for the ideal worker to be "unencumbered"? Answering that question requires, instead of elaborating on the ideal, contesting it: by reimagining the ideal worker as one who cares and thus is socially embedded in their environment.



## 5.4. Recommendations

### 5.4.1. Recommendations for further research

The first recommendation for future research inquiring in this topic, would be to broaden the scope of women who are represented. The first reason this is desirable lies at the heart of the original research aim: to give a platform to those who are underrepresented and marginalized. The second reason is that from an empirical point of view, the study is likely to offer more insights when there is a broader array of perspectives included. A second recommendation would be to examine if some of these dynamics occur in men, who are often seen as partaking less in caring activities. Especially if sets of parents could be interviewed, this would offer an interesting perspective on the dynamics of care responsibilities and their division.

### 5.4.2. Practical implications

Several themes arose that enabled parental navigation through the academic career: visibility, access to facilities (pumping) and flexible working circumstances. A review of the policy regarding such facilities, their accessibility and the fair implementation thereof, would be strongly recommended. Universities can also consider whether they sufficiently support the needs of incoming staff that are newly arriving in the country and/or underrepresented in the organization. The often-crucial role that mentors played in how supported the women in this study felt, could be taken as a sign to, on a personal level, become a mentor; and on the organizational level, consider mentorship programs.

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## Appendix 1: Interview Invitation

Dear [name],

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project! The aim of the research is to understand how minoritized women in academia have used strategic decision-making during their careers. In this decision-making, the implications of being a caregiver during the academic career are taken into account. The intersectional approach of the research looks to confront the notion of the 'Ideal Worker', by showing the strategic decisions of minoritized women to navigate the structural barriers they face to be successful in their careers and the challenges they have as caregivers in academia.

The interview would be set up for you to narrate your career trajectory, the factors that affected your decisions and your strategic thinking when making such decisions. Therefore, I am interested in knowing your story from the moment you decided to pursue a PhD up until your current position. After that, I would ask some questions which focus specifically on the topic of care, for example childcare/parenthood. The interview is expected to take about 60 to 90 minutes. If afterwards, you feel that the time was not sufficient to properly convey your story and experiences, we could schedule a follow-up session.

If you are willing to be interviewed for this project, I would really appreciate it! The next steps would be to schedule a date; ideally, the interviews are conducted in April or the first week of May. If you have an opening between April 15th and May 2nd, I would be glad to hear it. I am also sending you the consent form in this email.

In case of any further questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out!

Kind regards,

Josephine Slangen  
Master student Gender Equality Diversity and Inclusion in Management

## Appendix 2: Interview Guide

### Opening statement & Background

1. Read and sign the consent form
2. Explain the project:  
“This research centers around the experiences of women from a minority ethnic background and/or a migration background in academia, who also have (had) caregiving responsibilities. The interview will discuss your career trajectory and decision-making during the trajectory. We will then discuss taking care of others during your academic career trajectory, in more detail.”
3. Ask if everything is clear. If yes: *start the interview & recording.*

### Introductions

4. Who are you?
5. This research centers around the experiences of women from a minority ethnic background and/or a migration background in academia.  
How would you describe your background? In which ways do you feel you fit in or stand out here?
6. Where are you currently employed?
7. Since when have you been employed there?
8. How or why did you become employed there?
9. What does your work entail? What is your ambition within this position? How is it going?

### Academic background

10. What did you study? When and where was this? (Why or how did you decide to?)  
How did it go?
11. How did you decide to do a PhD and why? When did you do your PhD project?  
Where was this? What did your work entail? How did it go?
12. So, what happen after you obtained you PhD? Why and when did you decide to stay in academia?
13. Where were you employed after receiving your PhD? When was this? Why or how did you decide to? What did your work entail? How did it go?

### Care

Introduction to the topic: We are interested in care as a topic within career trajectories, as employees that handle caretaking responsibilities can experience this as a burden. We will first focus on childcare and parenthood.

### Parenthood

14. If you were, how was it when you got pregnant? Did you plan it? Why at that moment?
15. Did you have any issues with your maternity leave?
16. Were you at some point worried that having your children (child) will affect your career progression?
17. So, how did you navigate these concerns?
18. Did you make any strategic decisions there?
19. Did you have any support from relatives and how did it work?
20. Did you feel that your caring responsibilities also increased when having some help from relatives?
21. Did you feel that there were any long-term consequences on your career in that period?

**Other care situations**

We will now discuss other situations where you may have been a caregiver, outside of parenthood. You can think about any situation that applies in your opinion. We can discuss the instances separately. (Repeated if there were multiple “episodes” of care)

22. During your career in academia did you experience any moment when you had to take care of someone else than your children and this affected your career? Tell me the story of it. How did it go?
23. How did you deal with/navigate with this responsibility and your job at the same time?
24. Did you feel that there were any long-term consequences on your career in that period?

## Appendix 3: Coding structure

First, tables of the themes per dimension are presented for clarity, as the large number of concept codes makes the complete tables somewhat cluttered. The compact, theme-tables are followed by the complete tables.

### Themes and Dimensions

*Table 1: Themes of Strategic Decisions*

Theme	Dimension
Access	Strategic decisions
Acquired skills	
Adapting to expectations	
Career progression	
Continuing as a researcher	
Downplaying family life	
Elderly care	
Family planning	
Financial incentive	
Finding niche	
Finding opportunity	
Leaving the tenure track	
Living with family	
Mobility	
Motivation	
Parenthood discouraged	
Parenthood encouraged	
Responsibility for parent	
Restricted opportunities	
Security	
Uniqueness	

*Table 2: Themes of Balancing work-life*

Theme	Dimension
Boundary setting	Balancing work-life
Combining activities	
Confidence from combining parenthood and work	
Done with research	
Downplaying family life	
Efficiency	
Joy	
Limited freedom	
No overtime	
Partner support	



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Perfectionism
Prioritizing parenthood
Prioritizing work
Quitting study
Quitting work
Self-care
Visibility
Work-life balance

Table 3: Themes of Caring Communities

Theme	Dimension
Community building	
Community caregiving	
Community support	
Family doing childcare	
Family expectations	
Family support	
Mentor as caregiver	
Caring communities	

Table 4: Themes of Working Conditions

Theme	Dimension
Conflict	
Continued work encouraged	
Contractual barrier	
Disillusionment	
Dislike	
Exploitative expectations	
Facilities	
Finding joy	
Fitting in	
Flexible work environment	
Glass ceiling	
Guilt for taking position	
Lack of network	
Lack of organizational support	
Learning from colleague	
Mentorship	
Organizational support	
Political dynamics	
Pressure to progress	
Pushback	
Recognition	
Role model	
Working conditions	

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Satisfaction	
Self-esteem	
Visibility parenthood	

Table 5: Themes of Implications of Intersectionality

Theme	Dimension
Anger	Implications of Intersectionality
Different rights as migrant	
Exclusion	
Faith adding tension to family support	
Financial disadvantage	
Identity shared experiences	
Identity valued in environment	
Migrant identity	
Privilege	
Translating at home	

## Concepts, Themes and Dimensions

Table 6: Concepts and Themes of Strategic Decisions

Concept	Theme	Dimension
Access to position through previous experience	Access	Strategic decisions
Access to a position to connections		
Shorter selection procedure		
Improved teaching skills from teaching different students	Acquired skills	
Progression in teaching skills		
Quality teacher due to knowledge from different disciplines		
Adapting proposal to fit expectations	Adapting to expectations	
Delay in master thesis	Career progression	
Delay in PhD process		
Low expectations for promotion		
Navigating towards a permanent contract		

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No intention to continue in academia		
Searching for a job		
Wanting to leave academia		
Enjoyment of research	Continuing as a researcher	
Enjoyment of management tasks		
Downplaying importance family life	Downplaying family life	
Father in law living with the family	Elderly care	
Limited to giving financial support		
Saving time off in case of elderly care		
Early career pregnancy	Family planning	
Financial insecurity impacting family planning		
Happy about early career pregnancy		
Not having another kid		
Pregnancy before employment		
Preparation for pregnancy		
Unplanned pregnancy		
Caregiving an incentive to earn more	Financial incentive	
Financial advantage from scholarship		
Financial insecurity impacting family planning		
Financial insecurity relieved by family support		
Needing more income for childcare		
Stretching contract time		
Joy at finding own niche	Finding niche	
An opportunity to good to pass	Finding opportunity	
Description made that fit the profile		

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Happenstance			
Opportunity to learn more from others			
Position opened that fit expertise			
Searching for a job			
Struggling to find a job			
Living with family during PhD	Living with family		
Being mobile because of long distance project	Mobility		
Increased mobility from lack of responsibility			
Moving because of partner			
Moving because of previous connections			
Not being restricted in mobility			
Partner supportive in moving			
Reduced mobility over time			
Staying because of position partner			
Wanting to become an expert			Motivation
Wanting to stay in academia			
Negative narrative parenthood	Parenthood discouraged		
Early career pregnancy advised	Parenthood encouraged		
Mentor encouraging parenthood			
Mentor supporting parenthood			
No pressure from supervisor			
Cannot let go of responsibility of parent	Responsibility for parent		
Needing to return the care for a parent			
The responsibility for parents is gendered			

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Unclear division of responsibility in elderly care		
Easier choice due to restricted mobility	Restricted opportunities	
Negotiating limited teaching options		
Not letting the responsibility of childcare restrict opportunities		
Financial burden of the household	Security	
Financial insecurity impacting career progression		
Relief of getting a contract		
Making self more unique	Uniqueness	

Table 7: Concepts and Themes of Balancing Work-Life

Concept	Theme	Dimension
Struggling with boundary setting	Boundary setting	Balancing work-life
Navigating pressure by combining research and education	Combining activities	
Feeling cool about combining parenthood and work	Confidence from combining parenthood and work	
Feeling done with research	Done with research	
Downplaying importance family life	Downplaying family life	
Increased efficiency	Efficiency	
Enjoyment of management tasks	Joy	
Academic expectations of progressing on the tenure track	Leaving the tenure track	
Jealousy of colleagues with more freedom	Limited freedom	
Cannot work overtime	No overtime	

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Missing out on activities outside of work hours	
Encouraged by partner to stay in academia	Partner support
Feeling alone in being supported only by husband	
Feminist partner	
Partner bigger role in household	
Partner doing more of the elderly care	
Partner support in childcare	
Becoming less perfectionist	Perfectionism
Commitment to parenthood	Prioritizing parenthood
Prioritizing	
Wanting to be present in parenthood	
Guilt about not spending time with child	Prioritizing work
Quitting study program	Quitting study
Quitting work alongside studying	Quitting work
Caring for colleague also good for self	Self-care
Childcare preventing burnout	
Prioritizing health necessary because of childcare	
Slower but healthier progression	
Making self visible	Visibility
Struggling with work life balance	Work-life balance

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Table 8: Concepts and Themes of Caring Communities

Concept	Theme	Dimension
Mentor helping to find a home	Care by mentor	Caring communities
Developing communities	Community building	
Gaining access to communities through parenthood		
Lack of caregiving responsibilities due to lack of community ties		
Lacking communities		
Struggling to build local communities		
Supporting a colleague		
Being in a community prevents suffering	Community support	
Community members doing childcare		
Having a supportive environment		
Key actors giving support		
Lacking communities		
Not being in a feminist environment		
Staying because of community	Family doing childcare	
Mother-in-law supporting in childcare		
Mother supporting in childcare	Family expectations	
Expectations from family		
Family support causing tensions	Family support	
Mother-in-law supporting in household		
Receiving family support		
Sharing financial burden with family		
Mentor support during childbirth		

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Table 9: Concepts and Themes of Working Conditions

Concept	Theme	Dimension
Conflict with supervisor	Conflict	Working conditions
Encouraged to continue research during pregnancy	Continued work encouraged	
Extensions of temporary contract	Contractual barrier	
Fixed contract terms		
Maternity leave results in contract extension		
Contract running out		
Disillusioned from being let go	Disillusionment	
Feeling attached to the former position		
Not enjoying teaching	Dislike	
Care for colleague not recognized by the university	Exploitative expectations	
Care not recognized because it is not productive		
Expectation to work during maternity leave		
Feeling exploited by the work expectations		
Frustrated and overwhelmed with the teaching load		
Overburdened		
Tension between research and educational duties		
Wanting to escape the pressure of academia		
Organization discourages using facilities	Facilities	
Organization explicitly facilitates support		
Pumping facilities not discussed		
Enjoyment of teaching	Finding joy	



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Muslim faith more common	Fitting in
Flexibility in working structure	Flexible work environment
Leniency working from home	
More flexibility in the Netherlands	
A glass ceiling between being assistant and associate professor	Glass ceiling
Feeling guilty for taking someone else's position	Guilt for taking position
Disadvantage from lack of network at work	Lack of network
Lack of guidance	Lack of organizational support
Social differences not acknowledged in work environment	
Improved teaching skills from supporting colleague	Learning from colleague
Finding a mentor	Mentorship
Mentor intervening in conflict	
Mentorship by the community	
Supervisor became mentor	
Accepting environment	Organizational support
Finding your people within the university	
Staying because of community at work	
Supportive work environment	
Political dynamics in academia	Political dynamics
Academic expectations of progressing on the tenure track	Pressure to progress
Difficult to push back in the work environment	Pushback
Experiencing pushback	

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Feeling limited in expressing oneself		
Feeling limited in expressing oneself		
Feeling flattered from being chosen	Recognition	
Lack of role models	Role model	
Presence of a role model		
Being satisfied from the work environment	Satisfaction	
Feeling unproductive but satisfied		
Room for research interest		
Being qualified for the role	Self-esteem	
Feeling flattered from being chosen		
Feeling incompetent		
Feeling the need to prove oneself		
Feeling the need to prove oneself		
Impostor syndrome		
Impostor syndrome		
Lucky to be chosen		
Pride in doing a PhD		
Surprise at doing a PhD		
Being perceived different during pregnancy	Visibility parenthood	
Child traveling along for work		
Doing research while pregnant		
Parenthood visible at work		

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Table 10: Concepts and Themes of Implications of Intersectionality

Concept	Theme	Dimension
Turning anger into articles	Anger	Implications of Intersectionality
Teaching as work allowed as a foreigner	Different rights as migrant	
Being blamed for not voicing marginalization	Exclusion	
Cultural background different from Dutch norms		
Marginalization through language barrier		
Missing out on informal conversations, creating a glass ceiling		
No appreciation of internationals		
Not feeling welcome		
Remarks made about faith		
Unconscious exclusion		
Unwillingness to use English		
Hijab wearing adding tension to family support by in-laws		
Financial disadvantage from travel costs	Financial disadvantage	
Connections through being other	Identity shared experiences	
Identity not recognized		
Gender and diversity valued at work	Identity valued in environment	
Being a migrant	Migrant identity	
Insecurity from migrant status		
Pressure of imparting cultural heritage to child		
White passing	Privilege	
Translating responsibility at home	Translating at home	