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Enacting Feminisms in Academia

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Preamble

Aims of the Study

This study, *Enacting feminisms in academia* engaged five feminist lecturers teaching English in multicultural tertiary institutions, at five different universities in Southern Africa, in a critical reflection of their practice. It aimed to identify the socio-economic, geo-political, historico-cultural variables that shape their identity, and subsequently informs their language teaching philosophies, and pedagogies. Through teacher narratives it explores:

- the complexity of socio-linguistic, and feminist identity construction in multilingual seascapes; and by extension
- how feminist educators' interpretation and enactment of their personal world–view informs their language teaching, in terms of what they teach, how they teach, and why they teach what they do.

Research Questions

The following critical questions are explored in relation to the aims of the study:

1. **Who** is the feminist teacher? In attempting to understand the identity construction of the feminist teacher, this question:

(a) provides a profile of the feminist teacher as presented in the literature related to feminist pedagogy; then

(b) draws on the theoretical profile that emerges from the literature, and re-visits the question to investigate the extent to which the research participants have challenged, changed or conformed to descriptions of the feminist teacher. This is explored in relation to how each teacher's authority is constructed by herself, her students, and the university community.

2. **What** does it mean to be a feminist teacher in a multilingual English language classroom? In responding to this question I:

(a) glean insights from the literature related to multilingualism, English Second Language (ESL) teaching and learning, and the feminist critique of language, and

(b) draw on insights from these socio-linguistic discourses to investigate how the feminist teacher's identification with feminist and multilingual sensibilities informs what she teaches; What constitutes curriculum knowledge; and Whose/What knowledge is legitimated in the feminist English language classroom?

3. **How** does the feminist educator teach? What pedagogical strategies does she employ? In responding to this question I:

(a) revisit the literature on feminist and ESL pedagogy, which deals with preferred pedagogical teaching methods, such as student-centred learning, and dialogic interactions; and
(b) examine from lecture observations how the feminist teacher employs these pedagogic methods in demographically diverse classes.
4. **Why** does the feminist teacher consider it important to teach what she does? In responding to this question I:
(a) examine the philosophies and world-views that feminist educators generally subscribe to (as presented in feminist and language and gender discourses); then
(b) consider why the feminist teacher chooses to impart the kind of knowledge that she does?

Rationale for the Study

As an English language teacher I have taught at previously disadvantaged educational institutions in both Apartheid and post Apartheid South Africa. English language education in Apartheid South Africa faithfully perpetuated colonial agendas that favoured both androcentric and Eurocentric traditions. My desire to engage in this study was driven by a three-fold rationale:

Firstly, in the climate of redress, post Apartheid South Africa has pledged an unequivocal commitment to the promotion of a unitary, non-sexist, non-racist education system premised on the tenets of multilingualism and multiculturalism. From my engagement with the sociolinguistic discourse through the lens of postmodern feminism, (See Perumal 1997), I believe that exploring the intersection between feminist pedagogy and multilingual philosophies holds the potential to transform democratic hopes into happenings. The discourse privileges a wide-angled lens that is sensitive to issues related to race, class, gender, age, among other significant variables configuring sociolinguistic identity construction.

Second, the feminist discourse has for a long-time endured scathing attacks for being removed from the experiential realities of those in whose name it justifies its existence (Tong 1989). This study confronts this critique by engaging five feminist educators in a critical reflection of the theoretical foundations that undergird their enactment of feminist tenets in the multilingual classrooms. It challenged the feminist educators participating in the study to reflect and examine how (if at all) what they espouse and profess in theory manifests or translates at chalk-face.

Third, the intersection of feminist pedagogy and multilingual education is an under-researched area. There is a growing body of literature within the international community that examines feminist pedagogy and multilingual education as discrete disciplines. This study endeavoured to contribute to this under-researched area by:

- combining two important concerns in South African education, i.e. the promotion of an education system respectful of gender equity and multilingual sensitivities, and
- documenting the voices of South African feminist educators. The body of available literature proliferates with the voices of Western feminist educators. The teaching and learning experiences of African feminist educators is conspicuous by its absence. It is hoped that this study will help excavate the lost narratives of African feminist educators, an un/under-represented voice in the feminist conversation.

Parameters of the Study

Mapping a field of study is always controversial, because the project itself, inevitably oversimplifies, sorts and categorises highly complex theoretical lines whilst simultaneously excluding others. In delineating the parameters for this study, I wish to point out that although the following two aspects are interrelated to the main issues under investigation, they are not engaged with in significant detail:

First, the feminist teacher is the primary unit of analysis in this study. While it is acknowledged that her identity and practice is configured within the complex and dynamic matrix of teacher-student relationship, this study unfolds primarily from the perspective of the feminist teacher, and turns for supporting evidence from student input. In short, students' input does not constitute the primary unit of analysis.

Second, although assessment is of paramount importance to the discourse on pedagogy, this study does not engage this issue in any significant detail.

Structural Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is presented in two parts.

Part One

Surveying the Theoretical and Methodological Seascape

Part One comprises three chapters that outline the theoretical, and methodological insights which guided the conceptualisation, and implementation of the research agenda, and the data that was subsequently produced for the study.

Chapter 1: *Knowing the Ledge on Which We Stand: Assembling A Theoretical Toolkit* is presented in three sections. The chapter surveys central debates in the study of feminist pedagogies, ESL teaching and learning, multilingualism, and the feminist critique of language.

Section 1: *Exploring Conceptions of Identity* commences with an acknowledgement that feminist discourses are characterised by theoretical diversity, and commonalities with much of its diversity emanating from women's various social positionalities, as they relate to race, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, language, etc. The section explores conceptions of identity in relation to the history and scope of identity politics by linking its emergence to wide ranging political activism and theorising which are aimed at eradicating the disenfranchisement of women and other marginalized social groups.

Section 2: explores the cautious alliance between critical and feminist pedagogies, which as oppositional discourses, address power relations within educational encounters. Given that the discourses on feminist pedagogies are themselves diverse, the discussion draws on Gore's (1993), observation that despite this diversity, constructions of feminist pedagogies revolve around at least three recurrent themes, viz. *authority versus nurturance, authority as authorship,* and *authority as power.* Using these three themes as a framework, the discussion explores central tenets in feminist pedagogies as they relate to the role and authority of the feminist teacher, and the politics of difference and dialogue in the feminist classroom. The section concludes with various empirical studies on feminist teachers and their classrooms. It highlights nuances of feminist teacher authority and power; complexities of student-teacher-student resistances, (which emerge from a politics of difference); the epistemology of teachers and students' personal, and the dialectics of creative and divisive dialogues.

Section 3: presents debates relating to multilingual policies in a newly democraticised South Africa, ESL theories, and the feminist critique of language. Commencing with an overview of the divisive language policies of Apartheid South Africa, the discussion acknowledges multilingualism as a national resource, which embodies the spirit of respecting language rights, and psycho-social values that promote cross-cultural communication. Since this study is located in multilingual classrooms where both the target language and the medium of instruction is English, the literature review critically explores the role of English, the pedagogic strategies that are employed in efforts to move away from strictly linguistic preoccupations to understanding the more inclusive social, political and psychological realms of language use. In addition, it explores the recommendation that English curricula be unhinged from their colonial roots by infusing it with indigenous sensibilities. Finally, the section presents debates pertaining to the feminist critique of language, which argues that language as a patriarchal construct has been instrumental in extolling male supremacy while ensuring the inferior linguistic socialisation of girls and women. The discussion provides an overview of three recurrent themes in the feminist critique of language, viz. (i) the *difference and dominance paradigms*, which attempt to identify, analyse and explain purported differences in men and women's language usage; (ii) *speech and silence* and women's aspirations to be speakers and

writers in all socio-cultural spheres; and (iii) *naming and representation conventions*, which illustrate ways in which women are depicted in literary genres.

Chapter 2: *Methodological Ruminations* is presented in two sections.
Section 1: *Overview of Feminist Research Methodologies* explores the theoretical underpinnings that inform feminist research methodologies, and which shaped the ethos of this study*, Enacting feminisms in academia*. Recognising that feminist research methodologies attempt to democratise the research process through the establishment of non-hierarchical, dialogic, mutually educative encounters between the researcher and the researched, the section addresses some of the recurrent themes that inform feminist research methodologies, and also highlights the principles of biographic research. In this regard the discussion provides an overview of the motifs of *reflexivity*, *voice*, *difference*, and *power dynamics*, themes that raise incisive questions regarding the ethical and methodological challenges of employing feminist research methodologies. The section proceeds to survey examples of studies that have employed narrative research to explore the personal, professional and pedagogic experiences of educators in general, but women educators, in particular.
Section 2: *Data Collection and Production Processes: strategies and analysis*, presents the mechanics of the research in terms of data collection and production procedures. It describes the sample selection process, the instruments that were used, and the purposes they served in eliciting, and producing the data. It includes a brief description of the research instruments, that is, the autobiographical essays, the lecture observations, student questionnaire, and the semi-structured interviews. Discussion on data management includes the data transcription, organization and categorization of the data. In addition, a theoretical discussion on the analytical toolkit that comprised principles of grounded theory, content and discourse analysis that was used to analyse the data, is also provided. Finally, the section comments on the process of respondent validation. Where appropriate it identifies possible ethical and methodological challenges that I anticipated encountering during the research process.

Chapter Three: *Insider and Outsider (Re)presentations* commences with a brief discussion regarding conceptions of autobiography, realism and postmodernism. It presents the schedule of questions/issues that guided the participants in their autobiographical essay writing. It then proceeds to present the discussion in three sections.
Section 1: *Partial Institutional Sketch* provides a historical and contextual overview of the educational institutions at which each participant teaches.
Section 2: *Profile of Research Participants* presents the autobiographical essays written by the research participants. In the essays the participants reflect on the contiguous variables,

(cultural, religious, linguistic, political, personal, academic, theoretical underpinnings, etc.), that shape their feminist and socio-linguistic identities, which in turn informs their teaching of English in multilingual tertiary institutions. I refer to this as 'Insider Representations'. This is followed by a section titled: *Partial Student Demographic Profile* which tabulates student demographics in terms of age, race, gender, courses enrolled for, etc.

Section 3: *Overview of Course Taught, Classroom Activities and Reflections,* which I refer to as 'Outsider Representations' contain my descriptions of the micro (classroom) activities. It provides an overview of the courses that the research participants were teaching at the time of this study, it summarises lecture content, activities and teacher-student interactions, and concludes with the participants' reflections on the challenges of teaching demographically diverse students.

Finally, in a section titled: *Methodological Interlude: reflections on writing the autobiographical essay* draws on those extracts from the semi-structured interviews where participants reflect on the process of writing their autobiographical essays.

Part Two

Exploring Webs of Personal and Professional Feminist Identities

Part 2 of the thesis comprises three analytical chapters, which glean from the theoretical insights developed in Chapter One to explore conceptions of feminist identity constructions. These analytical chapters draw discursively from the autobiographical essays, semi-structured interviews, and lecture observations, to explore the questions: Who is the feminist teacher, how her affiliation to feminist sensibilities influences and impacts her pedagogic and educative practices, and the status of her academic citizenship?

Chapter 4: ***The Personal as Political and Potentially Pedagogical: Exploring Public Collective Identities*** is presented in two sections.

Section 1: *Mini-Portraits of Participants' Public Collective Identities*: combines a cursory analysis of each participant's public collective narratives. It focuses on family influences, experiences from childhood and early adulthood to explore the impact nationality, culture, language, sexual orientation, religion, and politics have on an individual's identity formation.

Section 2: *Cross-analysis of Public Identities and Pedagogic Potentialities*: engages in a cross-analysis of nationality, culture, language, sexual orientation, religion, and political issues

that surface among the participants' autobiographical reflections. It identifies themes that are of potential pedagogic significance.

Chapter 5: ***Identity as Ideology: Trajectories of Feminist Identity Construction*** examines three discernible movements in the participants' identification and espousal of feminist discourses. These include: Movement One: introspective gaze: sensing and experiencing the dailiness of patriarchy; Movement Two: outward gaze: naming patriarchy and coming to feminist consciousness; and Movement Three: theorising and teaching about emancipation from oppression. Taking the view that coming to feminist consciousness is not a linear process, the three movements, which share points of intersection, offer a framework for examining the processes that invariably characterise assuming feminist identity. Discussions in this chapter also include an examination of two distinct patterns in feminist identity development, viz. (i) *pattern of change: transformation of personal world,* which postulates that in identifying with feminist ideologies, some participants move from traditional conceptions of gender and sexuality to a transformed personal and political worldview, and (ii) *pattern of continuity: discovery of fit,* which postulates that some women resist gender-based discrimination from an early age, and assume the label 'feminist' when they find a vocabulary to articulate what they have always felt. The chapter briefly explores the influences of people, places and publications that supported the participants' trajectories of coming to feminist consciousness. Further, it signals the need to differentiate between identity formation and ideological identification, arguing that the distinction is important when considering the pedagogical agendas of the feminist teacher.

Chapter 6: ***Exploring the Complexities of Feminist Teacher Identity*** investigates the nuances of feminist teacher identity in relation to the themes of difference, dialogue, and epistemologies of experience, all of which invariably converge under the overarching theme of feminist teacher authority. Acknowledging the slippery terrain of both teacher and student identity calibrations, in this chapter I draw on Gore's (1993), differentiation of three ways in which authority is generally conceived of in feminist pedagogy, viz. (i) *authority versus nurturance,* (ii) *authority as authorship*, and (iii) *authority as power*. I use these themes as conceptual markers and present the discussion in this chapter in three sections.
Section 1: *authority versus nurturance,* the discussion considers the maternalisation of teaching in relation to identifying language as a possible source for the conflation of female teacher with mother; highlighting the consequences of operationalizing the teacher as mother personae in academia; and employing technologies of distancing oneself from being cast in the role of extended family member (such as mother, sister or friend).

Section 2: *authority as authorship* I first, present different views regarding the positive and negative repercussions participants forward regarding drawing on teacher and student self-disclosure in the classroom. This is examined in terms of both its impact on teacher-student relations, and as pedagogic content and strategy. I then examine participants' different perspectives on the employment of student personal disclosure in the classroom. By identifying and analyzing various instances from the lecture observations, I examine the ways in which the feminist educators encourage students to assume *authority as authorship*, by activating: *authorship as invention* (engaging students in the writing of autobiographical essays); *authorship as experiential and theoretical praxis* (integrating personal and social experience with theory), and *authorship as positionality* (encouraging students to declare their positionality through legitimising and/or challenging theories, texts and theorists). Second, I refer briefly to student disclosures from different lecture observations, and present an exemplar of a student-teacher disclosure from a lecture observation to illustrate the nature of some of the disclosures teachers and students make in the classroom, and their explicit and tacit pedagogic significance. I consider this in relation to the potential for personal disclosure to be sensitive and the strategies teachers employ to ensure that they and their students are not traumatized, hurt or embarrassed in the classroom. Third, I explore the criteria of relevance, integration, contextualisation and critical analysis, which the feminist educators employ as benchmarks against which to weigh the pedagogic significance of student disclosure. This is an issue I explore in relation to the value, validation and evaluation of student personal disclosure in the feminist classroom. Issues of value, validation and evaluation are invariably inked to the assessment and accreditation demands of the institutions the feminist teachers teach at.

Section 3: *power as authority,* I draw on Gore's (2002), propositions for a theory of power by considering the assertion that: first, pedagogy is the enactment of power relations and is endemic to the teaching and learning dynamic. Thus, rather than construe it negatively, its positive and enabling elements should be harnessed to foster emancipation. Since much of the discussion in this chapter focuses on teacher authority, discussion in this section examines the ways in which students exert their power by challenging the teacher, and in some instances acting as accessory to the teacher's authority by challenging fellow students who default or express discriminatory ideological viewpoints.

Second, bodies are the objects of pedagogical power relations, and in pedagogy, different differences matter. Given that bodies are raced, sexed, classed, languaged, etc. these identity markers constitute difference and impact pedagogic power configurations depending on teacher-student positionality within the relational dialectic. The discussion is framed so as to highlight the similarities and difference these women educators experience in

relation to contextual and ideological specificities regarding race, age, gender, dress, etc. Other factors that shape power differentials in the professional and pedagogic encounters of the feminist teacher are her *dress sense, patriarchal conceptions of her as disembodied scholar, her physical and mental wellness,* and *disaffected student bodies.*

Discussion then returns for a more elaborate examination of women's gendered citizenship status in academia. It draws on Marshall's (1950), tripartite conceptualization of citizenship in macro society. Marshall differentiates among civic, political, and social citizenship. I adapt these three conceptions of citizenship from macro society to examine the status of the participants' gendered citizenship within the micro context of academia. The examination identifies the barriers these women academics have to negotiate in relation to institutional political, social and civic rights, roles and responsibilities. The discussion then explores the strategies they employ in order to negotiate the barriers impacting their institutional academic identities.

Third, the kind of knowledge produced in pedagogy interacts with its site and the techniques of power employed there. I argue that first, the selection, sequencing and assessment of teaching material are not arbitrary, but entail premeditated considerations and planning on the part of the teacher. Here, I identify an assortment of teaching methodologies, which include the *demonstrator approach*, *facilitator approach*, and *formal authority approach,* which were discernible in the lectures I observed for my study. These approaches exemplify the pedagogic authority and epistemological labour of the feminist teacher as she attempts to bring students into a working relationship with the curriculum. Second, the conceptual and ideological perspectives enshrined in the goals, aims, mission, vision of both the feminist educator and the institution within which she performs her pedagogy shape the corpus of knowledge produced. This constitutes the educative authority of both the institution and the feminist teacher. Jointly the educative and pedagogic authority of the feminist teacher confirm that attempts at divesting the feminist class of power differentials, succeeds only in masking the authority of the teacher.

Fourth, in considering the proposition that pedagogy proceeds via a limited set of specific techniques of power (I discuss the pedagogical strategies/teaching methodologies educators employ in the teaching/learning situation. Here, I focus more expansively on dialogic student-centred learning: a preferred pedagogical strategy in feminist and critical discourses). I draw on select extracts/episodes from my lecture observations to argue that despite features of student-centred pedagogy prevailing in most of the lectures I observed, when there was an emphasis on the formation of radical understanding students offered resistance to pedagogic and educative normalisations. In this regard, I examine student resistance to pedagogic technique (for example resisting participating in group work and classroom dialogue). In

addition, I turn the focus away from students resisting to engage the course content, to students' challenging ideologies expressed in the course content, that is, students resistance to feminist and radical ideological perspectives. Here, I identify four postures of resistance, viz. *denial, discounting, distancing* or expressing *dismay* over social oppression. I explore how the feminist teacher attempts to entrench a new normative by exercising her educative authority to make students suspicious of hegemonic narratives of oppression. In doing so she attempts to effect a conceptual shift in students' ideologies so that they would be sufficiently provoked to confront and subvert social injustices.

Chapter 7: *Endnotes: Enacting feminisms in Academia:* concludes the study. The chapter revisits for the purposes of reflective synthesis, salient insights that emerged from the study. The chapter is presented in two sections.

Section 1: *Theoretical Reflective Synthesis: insights, hindsights, oversights* synthesises issues that emerged in relation to the key theoretical lines of argument that were identified for investigation, in relation to the politics of subjectivity and difference, the trajectories of coming to feminist consciousness, and debates on feminist teacher authority. It also points to other 'stories' that need to be investigated by making recommendations for further research.

Section 2: *Methodological Reflective Synthesis: talking back to the researcher* presents the responses received from the participants to the analysis chapters, and serves as a participant corrective and clarification process. It also presents their reflections on the personal and professional value participation in the study had for them. By way of providing a narrative synthesis it describes and summarises the types of stories (romance, tragedy, heroic, ironic, etc.) that emerged from the research.

The study concludes with a composite reference list and an annexure list.

All knowledge
is to know the ledge you stand on
half way between earth and sky
where the clouds slide
form and dissolve around you
a way of moving in the fluid
surely not as a man who walks in water
where swimming would better do
or as Christ did
walking upon it
to teach them
the stupidity
of rigid category

bpNichol (in Relke 1994).

Chapter One
Knowing the Ledge on Which We Stand
Assembling A Theoretical Toolkit

Introduction

This chapter assembles a theoretical toolkit with a view to exploring central debates in the study of feminist pedagogies, ESL teaching and learning, multilingualism, and the feminist critique of language. Section 1 commences with an acknowledgement that feminist discourses are characterised by both theoretical diversity, and commonalities. Despite the non-unitariness of feminist discourses, the debates emanating from them provide partial and tentative resolutions to the issues facing women in patriarchal and capitalist societies. Accepting that much of the diversity characterising the fissures in feminist discourses spring from women's various social positionalities, as they relate to race, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, language, etc. the chapter explores conceptions of identity in relation to the history and scope of identity politics by linking its emergence to wide ranging political activism and theorising which are aimed at eradicating the disenfranchisement of women and other marginalized social groups. Central to this discussion is the ongoing tension between theorists advocating essentialising aspects of identity in order to mobilise and agitate for social rights, and those calling for the recognition of identity as multiple and in-process. As a way of reconciling the tensions between essentialist identity and multiple identities, for practical purposes, some scholars advocate the formation of provisional coalitions based on principled and strategic alliances, which could be used to mobilise for social transformation.

Section 2 proceeds to explore the cautious alliance between critical and feminist pedagogies, which as oppositional discourses, address power relations within educational encounters. Inextricable to this discussion are feminist critiques against progressive pedagogies that privilege discussion on race and class, but neglect or ignore robust analyses of gender issues. Given that the discourses on feminist pedagogies are themselves diverse, the chapter draws on Gore's (1993), observation that despite this diversity, constructions of feminist pedagogies are addressed in at least three ways, viz. *authority versus nurturance, authority as authorship,* and *authority as power.* Using these three themes as a framework, the discussion explores central tenets in feminist pedagogies as they relate to the role and authority of the feminist teacher, and the politics of difference and dialogue in the feminist classroom. The section concludes with cursory survey of empirical studies on feminist teachers and their classrooms.

Section 3 of the chapter concerns itself with debates relating to multilingual policies in a newly democraticised South Africa, English Second Language (ESL) theories, and the feminist critique of language. Commencing with a brief overview of the divisive language policies of Apartheid South Africa, the discussion in this section presents the recognition of multilingualism as a national resource embodied in the spirit of respecting language rights, and psycho-social values that promote cross-cultural communication and acceptance. Since this study is located in multilingual classrooms where both the target language and the medium of instruction is English, the literature review critically explores the role of English and pedagogic techniques and strategies that are employed in efforts to move away from strictly linguistic preoccupations to more inclusive social, political and psychological realms of language use. Furthermore, it points out that despite the symbolic acceptance of multilingualism, English commands a high premium in South African education, and educators of English need to unhinge English from its colonial roots and infuse it with indigenous sensibilities.

Finally, the chapter presents debates pertaining to the feminist critique of language, which argues that language as a patriarchal construct has played a decisive role in extolling male supremacy while ensuring the inferior linguistic socialisation of girls and women. The discussion provides an overview of three recurrent themes in the feminist critique of language, viz. the *difference* and *dominance* paradigms which attempt to identify, analyse and explain purported differences in men and women's language use; *speech and silence* and women's aspirations to be speakers and writers in all socio-cultural domains; and *naming and representation* conventions, which illustrate ways in which women are portrayed in literary genres.

Through the exploration of these various theoretical debates, this chapter attempts to examine conceptions of identity, outline feminist pedagogies, multilingualism, and the feminist critique of language as a way of possibly better understanding the intersection among these various discourses in the English language classroom informed by feminist sensibilities.

Section 1: Exploring Conceptions of Identity

Feminist pedagogies are keenly concerned with difference and diversity, especially as they relate to understanding the social, political and cultural positionalities of teachers and students. In the light of educational institutions becoming increasing demographically diverse, it is important to understand that in the teaching/learning encounter knowledge construction and interpretation are subject to, and mediated by participants' different ideologies, and affinities. Given that my study explores feminist identity construction, the ensuing discussion attempts to locate processes of identity formation with the debates informing the politics of difference. To

this end, discussion in this section investigates the history and scope of identity politics; claims and counter claims for conceiving of identity as essentialist or polyphonic, and it concludes with a more in-depth focus on how identity politics is being framed among feminist scholars.

Post-structuralists such as Derrida, problematised identity by arguing that identity presupposes differences; that it involves the suppression of difference, or that it entails an endless process of deferral meaning. Post-structuralism, therefore, contributed to the complication of identity politics by introducing what is sometimes termed a *politics of difference,* which aims to decentre or subvert, rather than to conquer or assert. It does this by seeking to reclaim a stigmatised identity, to revalue the devalued pole of a dichotomised hierarchy, such as White/Black, male/female, First World/Third World, etc. Before, the question of identity evolved into the question of difference, however, there was a prior history (Zaretsky 1994:200).

Gergen (1995), argues that although the laden phrase 'identity politics' has served many different purposes, it has come to signify a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice to members of certain social groups. Rather than organising solely around ideology or party affiliation, identity politics typically concerns the liberation of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context. Such marginalized groups generate a self-designated identity (group consciousness) that is instantiated by the individual identities of its constituents, for example, Afro-Americans, physically challenged, etc. who are politically marked as individuals. Politics and personal being are virtually inseparable. This inseparability owes largely to the 'natural' conditions of its members who lay claim to certain inalienable rights, such as equal opportunities, equal treatment, freedom to practice, participation in democratic governance, etc.

History and Scope of Identity Politics

The second half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of large-scale political movements such as Black Civil Rights in the U.S, second wave feminism, etc. These movements were rooted in claims about the injustices done to particular social groups. These social movements addressed questions about the nature, origin and futures of the identities being defended (Heyes 2002). Young (1990), observes that identity politics as a mode of organizing is closely connected to the idea that some social groups are oppressed; that is, one's identity as a woman or as a Chinese South African, for example, makes one peculiarly vulnerable to violence, exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, and cultural imperialism (including stereotyping, erasure, or appropriation of one's group identity). Despite its conflicts with Marxism and other radical political models, the discourse on identity politics shares the

view that individuals' perceptions of their own interests may be systematically distorted by ideology and must somehow be freed of misconceptions by group-based transformation. Thus, identity politics starts from analyses of oppression and makes various recommendations regarding the reclaiming, redescription, or transformation of previously stigmatised accounts of group membership. Rather than accept the negative scripts offered by a dominant culture about one's inferiority, one transforms one's sense of self and community, often through consciousness-raising. The scope of political movements that may be described as dealing with identity politics is wide-ranging: the examples used in the literature are predominantly of struggles within Western capitalist democracies, but indigenous rights movements worldwide, nationalist projects, demands for regional self-determination, etc. employ similar arguments. There is no defining criterion that distinguishes a political struggle into an example of 'identity politics' instead, the term serves as an umbrella for a broad spectrum of political projects from different social locations that have hitherto been neglected, erased, or suppressed (Heyes 2002).

Since the 20th century heyday of the well known political movements that made identity politics so visible, a plethora of academic literature has emerged. Although identity politics draws on intellectual precursors from Mary Wollstonecraft to Franz Fanon (writers that actually used this specific phrase), the discourse has gained prominence in the last 15 years. Barely had intellectuals started to systematically outline and defend the philosophical underpinnings of identity politics, then they simultaneously began to deconstruct it. The notion of identity has become indispensable to contemporary political discourse, at the same time arousing troubling implications for models of the self, political inclusiveness, and possibilities for solidarity and resistance (ibid.). Underlying many of the pragmatic debates about the merits of identity politics are philosophical questions about the nature of subjectivity and the self. Taking on discourses that recognise multiple selves, Calhoun (1994), asks which self are we addressing when we enter into discussions on subjectivity and multiple selves?

Taylor (1989), argues that modern identity is characterised by an emphasis on the authenticity of its inner voice and the quest to finding a way of being that is somehow true to oneself. Heyes (2002), maintains that in this regard, while discourses of equality espouse the notion that each human being is capable of deploying his or her reason or moral sense to live authentically, the politics of difference has appropriated the language of authenticity to describe ways of living that are true to the identities of marginalized social groups.

Appiah (2000:614), ponders if what matters is an individual's authentic self, why is much contemporary talk about large collective identity categories, which seem so far removed from the individual? What is the relation between this collective language and the individualist thrust of the self? He suggests that there is a connection between individual identity, and other

collective identities (that each person's individual identity has two major dimensions). One is a collective dimension comprising race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, etc. and the other is a personal dimension, comprising socially or morally important features such as intelligence, charm, wit, cupidity, etc. that are not themselves the basis of collective identity. Although these constitute logical categories there are, however, no social categories for the witty, or the clever, or the charming, or the greedy, that is, people who share these properties do not constitute a social group, in the relevant sense (ibid.:612-613). The importance of collective identities is evident in that they provide narrative scripts that people can use in shaping their life plans and in telling their life stories.

Identity politics in the 21st century points to the continuing intellectual crisis surrounding the discourse, while paradoxically, also confirming its importance to contemporary political philosophy and practice. Perhaps more important for philosophers, is that the concept of identity itself appears to be in a period of rapid evolution. Changing technologies are impacting profoundly on our philosophical understandings of who we are. We are capable of changing our bodies in ways that dramatically change our identities, through, for example, sex change or cosmetic surgeries, with immediate consequences for the kinds of identities that are constructed. Attempts to decode human genetics and potentially shape the genetic make-up of future persons (Wald 2000), to clone human beings, or to xeno-transplant animal organs, etc. all raise deep philosophical questions about 'the kind of thing a person is,' and supports Sandiland's (2000), question, whether identity politics is too limited, in that it is too person-centred?

Identity Politics: from essentialism to polyphony

Intrinsic to the philosophical debates it seems that what is crucial about the 'identity' of identity politics is the experience of the subject, especially his or her experience of oppression and the possibility of a shared and more authentic alternative. Concern about the 'authenticity' aspect of identity politics has crystallized around the transparency of experience of the oppressed. From these notions of subjectivity, it is easy to see how critics of identity politics, and cautious supporters, have feared that it is prone to essentialism.

In the case of identity politics, two claims stand out as potentially essentialist. The first is an understanding of the subject that makes a single axis of identity stand in for the whole, as if being South African Indian, for example, were entirely separable from being a woman. To the extent that identity politics urges mobilisation around a single axis, it pressurises participants to identify that axis as their defining feature, when in fact they may well understand themselves as heterogeneous with multiple identities and political goals (Spelman 1988). In

extending this critique Calhoun (1994:27), points out that every collective identity is open to internal subdivisions, and in earlier discourses on this debate, there was a tendency to treat individuals as though they were unitary and internally homogeneous, thus erasing the capacity for internal dialogicality.

The second form of essentialism revolves around generalisations made about particular social groups. In the context of identity politics this has the potential to serve a disciplinary function within the group, not just describing but also dictating the self-understanding that its members should have. Heyes (2002), observes that:

> Liberals, among other critics, allege that the reliance of identity politics on notions of sameness to justify political mobilisation, that is looking for people who are like you rather than who share your political values, courts the risk of sidelining critical political analysis of complex social locations and ghettoising members of social groups as the only persons capable of making or understanding claims to justice.

In explicating this criticism, Gates (1994), proposes that blackness, for example, is 'not a material object, an absolute, or an event,' but only 'a trope'. Lodging his argument in social process, he contends that, '[r]ace is only a socio-political category, nothing more'. As this socio-political category is applied to individuals it also acts as a reductive agent, circumscribing one's identity, and reducing one's potential to be otherwise. Carter (in Gergen 1995), proposes that such labels operate as problematic stereotypes, covering over complexities and generating misleading social policies. Perkins (2001), maintains:

> Political identity in terms of gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity and race is just as restricting and depressing. These are all stereotypes, and socializations that are out dated and no longer necessary for a society wishing to unite. By looking beyond those boundaries and seeking what is fundamentally right and wrong and doing something about it our world community will reach advancements not yet known by humanity. The struggle for equality is the same struggle for everyone, civil rights to gay rights to women workers in developing countries! It is the struggle to be appreciated for who you are, not discriminated against and taken advantage of for what you happen to be. … By uniting the struggles of oppressed people and educating the oppressors, by sharing personal theories, and … experiences, we may all learn to appreciate each other, not as black, white, poor, rich, gay, straight, woman, man, American or any other nationality, but as people.

In elaborating on this conceptualisation of justice and additive analysis, Jordan (in Perkins 2001), cautions that to label one aspect of our identity and cling to it will not engender unity or social justice. Her example, of the poor Irish woman feeling resentful towards a Black woman's class status, and the Black woman feeling resentment towards the poor Irish

woman's race status is a clear picture of how unnecessary, and confining the current boundaries of political identity are.

Gitlin (1993:173), also despairs of what has become of identity politics. He is critical of its proliferation, which he says, 'leads to a turning inward, a grim and hermetic bravado celebrating victimization and stylised marginality'.

However, after an initial wave of relatively uncompromising identity politics, proponents have addressed the criticisms relating to essentialist identity and sectarianism and have adopted more philosophically nuanced accounts that appeal to coalitions as better organizing structures. This critique of identity political movements has taken different forms in relation to different identities. Laden (2001), observes that it is increasingly difficult to see what divides contemporary positions. This owes largely to problems in sorting through the vagaries and fissures in conceptions of identity politics from debates, which are often content to list their rubric under the mantra of 'gender, race, class', etc. Somer & Gibson (1994:40-41), in elaborating on this observation propose that once we have acknowledged the potential significance of identity, however, we must reject the temptation to conflate identities with what can slide into fixed 'essentialist' singular categories such as those of race, sex, gender - a tendency which has categorised a number of recent feminist theories in their efforts to restore previously marginalized female 'other'. They suggest that we do not have to resort to cultural 'others' to recognise the false certainties imposed by categorical approaches to identity. They maintain that this can be avoided if we incorporate into the core conception of identity the dimensions of *time, space and relationality: a conceptual narrativity,* which combines studies of action and identity. Such a conceptualisation proposes a narrativist understanding of social action and agency which accepts that identity is temporal, relational, and cultural, as well as institutional, material, and macro-structural.

Castells (1997:8), notes that from a sociological perspective all identities are constructed, and given that the social construction of identity always occurs in a context marked by power relationship, he proposes distinguishing among three forms and origins of identity building, with each type of identity-building process leading to different outcomes in constituting society. He distinguishes among:

- *Legitimising Identity*, which is introduced by the dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalise their domination. It is a theme central to theories of authority and domination, and various theories of nationalism. *Legitimising identities* are said to generate a civil society characterised by organisations and institutions, as well as a series of structured and organised social actors, which reproduce, sometimes in a conflictual manner, the identity that rationalises the sources of structural domination.

- *Resistance Identity,* which is generated by those in positions/conditions, devalued and/or stigmatised by domination. They build a defensive identity by mounting resistance and advocating principles different from those permeating the institutions of society. *Resistance identity* leads to the formation of *communes* or *communities.* It constructs forms of collective resistance against oppression, usually on the basis of identities that are defined by history, geography, or biology, thus making it easier to essentialise the boundaries of resistance (ibid.:9).
- *Project Identity,* which results when social actors drawing on cultural materials available to them construct a new identity that redefines their position in society by seeking a transformation of the overall social structure. *Project identity* produces subjects not as individuals, but as collective social actors through which individuals reach holistic meaning in their experience. In this case, the building of identity is a project of a different life, which may be viewed as a way of transcending an oppressed identity, by effecting social transformation. Castells (ibid.:8), argues that identities that start as resistance may induce projects, and may in time become dominant in the institutions of society, thus becoming legitimising identities. The dynamics of identities along this sequence shows that no identity can be an essence, and no identity has progressive or regressive value outside its historical context.

As an extension to Castells' categorisation of legitimating, resistance and project identities, Bucholtz (1999:9-18), distinguishes among:

- *Transgressive Identities*, which rebel against normative expectations. Performing a transgressive identity risks not only exclusion but also retribution. (This shares features with Castells' resistance identity).
- *Identity as Ideology* refers to the role of ideology in the construction of identity and is concerned with not only how individuals conform to an accepted or imposed ideology, but also how they rebel against or subvert a powerful system of beliefs. Ideological systems themselves exist as cultural constructs, subject to processes of change and revision by individuals and groups. Identity thus, acknowledges ideology as one of many elements in its framework. (This combines features of Castells' legitimising and resistance identities. When identity as ideology conforms to imposed ideologies it bears the same features as legitimising identity. When identity as ideology subverts/rebels against ideologies it bears the same features as resistance identity).
- *Identity as Invention* makes visible the often invisible process of identity construction. It refutes the belief that identities are given in advance for individuals to step into, and posits that identities are invented/produced in interaction, through processes of

contestation and collaboration, and they may be simultaneously chosen and imposed. This bears similarities to *Identity as Improvisation.*

- *Identity as Improvisation* suggests that new social arrangements provide the means to shape new identities. Often individuals employ resources in ways that cannot be predicted in advance. Through the innovative reworking of previously formulated structures, they transcend deterministic frameworks of identity, demonstrating through their actions that identity is instead a continuous creative practice.
- *Identity as Ingenuity* refers to the creation of identity from the point of view of the agent and how s/he works within and against cultural ideologies of identity in order to construct a consciously chosen identity.

Adding yet another dimension to the debate on identity politics, in espousing a post-structuralist theory of the subject, Foucault (in Zaretsky 1994:211), postulates that society should be conceptualised as separated into a plurality of power strategies, discourses, and practices, all of which intersect, succeed one another, and are distinguished by the type of discourse formation to which they pertain, and by their degree of intensity, rather than their relation to any totality. He maintains that:

> … if we overthrow structures, discourse, and power strategies, there is no 'true' or essential identity waiting to be liberated. … identity is not something whose assertion leads to liberation but rather something we need to be liberated from … the purpose for studying genealogy is not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit (ourselves) to its dissipation.

Insofar as he proposed this idea, Foucault may be described as a theorist of non-identity.

Feminism and Identity Politics

Women have been subjected to male subordination and oppression in varying degrees and societies since pre-capitalistic times through long-standing historico-structural arrangements that have initiated, supported, legitimated and consolidated our subjugation (Farganis 1994a: 15). Thus, the question of identity politics, which is committed to agitating for marginalized rights, has also been taken up with rigor within feminist discourses. Feminist theories and perspectives attempt to describe women's oppression, explain its causes and consequences, and strategise towards women's liberation (Agger 1993:57; Farganis 1994b:102-103).

Bucholtz (1999:4), observes that early varieties of feminism either finessed the question by assuming the universality of the experience of middle-class, White Western heterosexual women, or reduced it to an essentialist principle by taking the difference between men and

women as axiomatic. It appears that this was allied to the belief that some notion of the identity of 'woman' was required to propel political action within the feminist movement. Feminist identity politics has made evident the problem of radical divisions in a theoretical discourse that had constituted itself upon a principle of unity based on what was perceived as the shared oppression of all women at the hands of patriarchal societies. This has resulted in a proliferation of oppositional feminist discourses, which have unearthed various other interlocking systems of oppression. Johnson-Roullier (1997), points out that this has foregrounded the notion of multiple oppressions in place of the traditional conception of oppression as operating in terms of a simple binary: man/woman, and has introduced other binary oppositions unexplored in the early days of Second Wave feminism. Such binaries include White woman/woman of colour, rich/poor, heterosexuality/ homosexuality, Jew/Gentile, and all of the permutations of female and sexual identity that are interrelated. These oppositional feminisms not only demand to be heard; they also challenge retrospective feminist scholarship. They challenge its truth claims and its ability to speak for all women, at least in the form of a generalised normative notion of 'woman'. Tanesini (1997), cautions that engagement with normative discourses entails making explicit the fact that claims about 'women' are always claims about what some individuals ought to be like, rather than about what they are like. She advises that one should be incredulous about identity politics when it is used from a narrow perspective to prescribe how others should be. In short, she adds her voice to a proliferation of voices in feminist discourses highlighting the oppressive consequences of assuming a fixed identity.

Many, although certainly not all, feminist theories identify their approach as essentially Marxist, radical, socialist, or postmodern (Banks 1981:8; Tong 1989:1; Watkins *et al.* 1992:120-121; Forster 1984:2; Firestone 1979:38-43). As feminism diversifies other feminisms continue to emerge: for example, Christian feminism, humanist feminism (Farganis 1994b: 105), Muslim feminism, eco-feminism (Weiner 1994:66-67). These different strands in feminist thinking have resulted in theoretical and methodological wranglings. Radical feminists criticise Marxist and socialist feminists for their innocence over patriarchy. Socialists accuse Marxists of being too economistic, and radicals for being too subjective (Thompson 1983:12). Feminists of colour accuse all three of being racist (Blair 1995), and lesbian feminists point out to women who are not lesbians the oppressive nature of compulsive heterosexuality (Stanley 1990). Prevailing trends point to new feminisms emerging, which are more reflective of the different cultural, psychological and material concerns of new generation of women (di Stefano 1990:73; Perumal 1999).

As many critics now attest, feminist theory is currently experiencing a crisis of identity, one that not only threatens the very foundations of feminism as it has been articulated to date,

but also its continued existence. The voices of 'other' feminists, such as women of colour, Jewish, the physically challenged, have introduced the notions of 'feminisms,' rather than simply 'feminism'.

Among the daunting challenges facing contemporary feminism is the pressure to reconcile diversity and difference with integration and commonality. Each feminist strand, however, provides a partial and tentative resolution to the woman question(s) (Spender 1983:367), by offering a fresh perspective with its own methodological merits and de-merits. But these attempts to find integration and agreement, to establish one paradigmatic feminist standpoint representative of how women experience the world have not escaped unchallenged. Postmodern feminists consider the whole enterprise as:

> ... yet another instantiation of phallocentric thought. It is typical of male thinking to seek the one, true feminist story of reality. For postmodern feminists such a synthesis is neither feasible nor desirable. It is not feasible because women's experiences differ across class, racial, and cultural lines. It is undesirable because the One and the True are philosophical myths that have been employed to bring into submission the differences that best describe the human condition.

It is this suspicion towards mainstream feminism and its *innocent* collusion with patriarchal and modernist tenets that precipitated the reactionary paradigmatic slide into the postmodern feminist moment. A defining characteristic of the postmodern feminist conversation is its strong commitment to recognising and celebrating difference. Castells (1997:200), also takes a more optimistic view about the fragmentation. He observes that:

> Increasingly the feminist movement is being fragmented in a *multiplicity of feminist identities.* This is not the source of weakness but of strength in a society characterised by flexible networks and variable alliances in the dynamics of social conflicts and power struggles. These identities are self-constructed, even if they often use ethnicity, and sometimes nationality, as boundary making. Black feminism, Mexican American feminism, Japanese feminism, black lesbian feminism, or territorial/ethnic self-definitions, are but examples of endless possibilities of self-defined identities through which women see themselves in movement. So doing they oppose the standardisation of feminism, which they see as a new form of cultural domination, not alien to the patriarchal logic of overimposing officialdom to actual diversity of women's experiences.

The net effect of oppositional feminist concerns has resulted in a demand for a transformation of feminist knowledge. This concern has been reformulated in that where previous scholarship acknowledged that identity was, in fact a problem, currently the disagreement lies in how to characterise the *kind* of problem that identity is. This is illustrated in two insightful books in feminist theory, viz. Anzaldúa's *Making Face, Making Soul/Hacienda Caras,* and Butler's *Gender Trouble.*

Bucholtz (1999:4), notes that despite considerable theoretical differences most contemporary feminist scholars agree that identity is far less static than previously thought. In offering one perspective aligned to this line of thinking, Anzaldúa (1990:xvi), writes:

> 'Making faces' is my metaphor for constructing one's identity … In our self-reflectivity and in our active participation with the issues that confront us, whether it be through writing, front-line activism, or individual self-development, we are also uncovering the inter-faces, the very spaces and places where our multiple-surfaced, colored, racially gendered bodies intersect and interconnect.

Describing the *kind* of problem that identity is, Butler (1990:146-147), offers the following formulation:

> Just as bodily surfaces are enacted *as* natural, so these surfaces can become the site of a dissonant and denaturalised performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself … As the effects of a subtle and politically enforced performativity, gender is an 'act', as it were, that is open to splittings, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of 'the natural' that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status.

Both Anzaldúa and Butler view identity as a construct, however, they differ in the role they assign to the body. For Anzaldúa, gender and other aspects of identity are inextricably interconnected, so that bodies are not simply racial and gendered but racially gendered. Butler, on the other hand, views the body as the stage on which gender is performed, where elements of the self, rather than being uncovered, as Anzaldúa proposes, are projected and made to seem natural at some times, and unnatural at others (Bucholtz 1999:5).

Some scholars (for example, Houston 1997; Lorde 1984), implicitly align themselves with Anzaldúa and the multiplicity of selves available to speakers, as well as the multiplicity of identities within what is often seen as a monolithic social category. Other scholars align themselves with Butler (for example, Fuss 1989; Epstein 1993). They focus on the hegemonic cultural and socio-linguistic forces, which influence identity production. Still others (hooks 1984; Eagleton 1998), combine the two paradigms by underscoring the interaction between fluid identities and rigid social structures. They conceive of identity as a practice rather than a category, an actively constructed performance rather than a pre-existing role (Bucholtz 1999:7).

In expressing concern over the fragmentation of feminist politics Seyla Benhabib (in Houston 1997), fears that with a shift to the politics of identity/difference, feminist theory is now in danger of 'being unable to develop a voice to address the difficult issues of conflicting and competing identity claims'. According to Benhabib, the difficulties of identity/difference politics

derive ultimately from the fungibility[1] of identity, which runs the risk of rendering certain identity categories replaceable and substitutable. Benhabib cites the Canadian example, where during the 1985 Constitutional Talks the premiers of the provinces literally bargained with each other about granting equal rights to women provided aboriginal claims were left out of the equation. Basing her arguments in such material circumstances, she believes that there is a need to avoid a 'mindless empiricist celebration of all pluralities'. Benhabib suggests that feminist theory must develop a concept of normative agency robust enough to say something significant, and provide guiding principles individuals could subscribe to. Her suggestion emanates from a desire for a politically effective feminism that has enough sense of a common direction or a shared vision, so that we can avoid 'being caught by a tribalism within or without'.

While acknowledging the legitimacy of Benhabib's fear, Houston (1997), suggests that we must be careful in how we interpret this call for principles that would make choices amongst our identities. In fact, she not only cautions against the impetus to order our identities but regards some attempts at ordering identities as undesirable for the same reason Audre Lorde does. Lorde (in Houston 1997), writes:

> As a Black lesbian feminist comfortable with the many different ingredients of my identity, and a woman committed to racial and sexual freedom from oppression, I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of myself. But this is a destructive and fragmenting way to live. My fullest concentration of energy is available to me only when I integrate all the parts of who I am, openly, allowing power from particular sources of my living to flow back and forth freely through all my different selves.

Houston (1997), believes that we can achieve Benhabib's proposal by separating the ways in which power holders use identity politics to divide and conquer from the ways in which people struggle to define and empower themselves. She declares:

> There is no reason why it has to follow that once I recognize multiplicitous facets of myself, or alternative identities, I must feel fragmented, or conflicted. Or, more to the point, if I do feel conflicted, fragmented, there is no reason why I need necessarily regard that as a bad thing rather than as something to work with. … I think we need micro-narratives that tell the story of

[1] In providing insight into how the fungibility of globalisation and by extension identity operates, Hall (2000) writes that the notion that identity could be told as two histories, one over here, and one over there, never having spoken to one another, never having anything to do with one another, Hall illustrates the fungibility of globalisation as follows:

> People like me who came to England in the 1950s have been there for centuries; symbolically, we have been there for centuries. I was coming home. I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea. I am the sweet tooth, the sugar plantations that rotted generations of English children's teeth. There are thousands of others beside me that are, you know, the cup of tea itself. Because they don't grow it in Lancashire, you know. Not a single tea plantation exists within the United Kingdom. This is the symbolisation of English identity. I mean, what does anybody in the world know about the English person except that they can't get through the day without a cup of tea? Where does it come from/Ceylon-Sri Lanka, India? That is the outside history of the English. There is no English history without that other history. The notion that identity has to do with people that look the same, feel the same, call themselves the same is nonsense. As a process, as a narrative, as a discourse, it is always told from the position of the Other.

> interlocking oppressions. … first and foremost, it is a principle of non-exclusion. No identity can be excluded.

In recognizing the interaction between fluid identities and fluid social structures, Houston (1997), concedes that our identities are permeable with the lives of others past and future, and involves asking the questions: What is the moral content of [my] cultural identity? What are the political consequences of this moral content and cultural identity? Concurring with the intersection between moral aspiration and identity, Calhoun (1994:30), believes that:

> … our identities are always rooted in part in ideals and moral aspirations that we cannot fully realise. There is therefore, a tension within us which can be both the locus of personal struggle and the source of an identity politics that aims not simply at the legitimation of falsely essentially categorical identities but at living up to deeper social and moral values. Claims to the priority or dominance of large collective identities, therefore, are not only the material of manipulations, but sources of heroism and self-sacrifice that are as hard to understand in the conventional terms of social theory as in popular ideologies of purely individual self-fulfilment.

From the foregoing discussion, what emerges is that debates in feminist theories relate to whether feminists should replicate traditional ways of 'doing power', by invoking a single, unified identity for women to mobilise around, or whether feminisms need to engage counter-hegemonic theoretical arguments, so as not to reproduce the structures of exclusion and power/knowledge relations which have previously served to position women in negative and powerless ways.

As a way of addressing both Benhabib and Houston's contentions while also ensuring that a politics of identity is framed in moral content, some scholars suggest the building of strategic coalitions to challenge oppressive regimes. Young (1990), argues that our preoccupations with the ideal of community is informed by a notion of consensus that forecloses the possibility for coalition because it insists upon seamless correspondence within and between the constituents of the ideal community. The discourse of consensus is a reductive means by which to fulfil the desire for social wholeness. Sasaki (2002), concurs that unlike consensus discourses, coalition building challenges us to understand and acknowledge that we occupy many, often contradictory subject positions, which may not be easily reconciled. By acknowledging the ways in which discourses of identity essentialism, social cohesion and consensus mask material, social, and historical differences, we can entertain the possibility of building coalition with these multiple, at times divergent positions and experiences. Thus, coalition building addresses the ways in which identities, affiliations and desires are dynamically produced in the multiple, intersecting, and often competing narratives of the personal, political and social. As Young (1990), argues:

> Rather than seeking a wholeness of the self, we who are the subjects of this plural and complex society should affirm the otherness within ourselves, acknowledging that as subjects we are heterogeneous and multiple in our affiliations and desires.

This suggests that by reconfiguring difference as something that includes an interrogation of one's own subjectivity, a coalition approach acknowledges the points of resistance that arise when social actors are faced with contradictions that they often find threatening to who they are (Young 1990).

In supporting the call for coalition building, Reynolds & Trehan (2001), propose that *sub communities* based on differences are of more value and more realistic than notions of identity essentialism, identity erasure, identity suppression, or community based on mutual understanding, consensus or social wholeness. Fisk (1993), also argues that as members of society, each of us belongs to *multiple communities* because of our various groupings by age, gender, race, class, etc. Each community is a place where individuals or groups should be able to summon the necessary support and solidarity to enter into negotiation with and/or contest dominant groups in more public spaces, while ensuring that other differences are not suppressed, subsumed or obscured in the process. For this purpose, forming coalitions with multiple communities is preferable to affiliating strictly with a single communal entity. In order for coalitions to be successful, there must be a clear understanding of what it means to be part of that particular group. Coalition-building is not tantamount to blind solidarity. Individuals must coalesce around some notion of *principled solidarity* - a unity based on certain shared values and visions. Coalitions cannot be based on shared experience and certainly not on shared fear, as is evident in the following statement attributed to the anti-Nazi peace activist, Reverend Martin Niemöller:

> When Hitler attacked the Jews I was not a Jew, therefore I was not concerned. And when Hitler attacked the Catholics, I was not a Catholic, and therefore, I was not concerned. And when Hitler attacked the unions and the industrialists, I was not a member of the unions and I was not concerned. Then Hitler attacked me and the Protestant church-and there was nobody left to be concerned.

Niemöller's call to action is based on fear that one could be the next target of oppression. While this kind of fear may unite disparate groups of people for specific short term campaigns, it may not prove useful in the long run since it does not force individuals to see how an injury to one is an injury to all. This is why certain scholars find empathy a really problematic concept because it does not force people to be personally invested in causes that do not immediately affect them. Empathy, alone, cannot foster horizontal comradeship because, like sympathy it is based on vertical, hierarchical power differentials. Coalitional politics, on the other hand,

purports to be based on a shared understanding of oppression. Brah (1991:175), contends that coalitions are possible through a politics of identification as opposed to a politics of identity. She explains that we develop our first sense of community within a neighbourhood but we soon learn to see ourselves as part of many other 'imagined communities' - imagined in so far as we may never actually meet those people face to face, but we learn to identify with these groups, their experiences, and their struggles. These processes of political identification, and formation of communities of struggle do not erase the diversity of human experience rather; they enable us to appreciate the particular within the universal, and the universal within the particular. However, this politics of identification is only meaningful if based on understandings of the material and ideological basis of all oppressions in their global manifestations; their interconnectedness as well as the specificity of each oppression.

Molina, (1990: http://sitemaker.umich.edu/psundar/principled solidarity), suggests that by examining the ways in which we as individuals are constituted in and through interlocking oppressive ideologies, as well as how we benefit from them, should lead to outrage and action on the part of *all* individuals, not just the oppressed. This requires recognition that we are *all* disadvantaged by ideologies such as racism, sexism, classism, etc. Molina, points out that coalitions are temporary and strategic. They are formed with the express purpose of achieving a concrete goal, and require an honest examination of our differences, knowledge of our interdependency, and an understanding of the necessity of interdependency. Coalition building is difficult because it is oppositional and relational, largely provisional, and uncomfortable. The paradox that makes coalition so difficult is that it requires a constant and simultaneous engagement with others, and one's multiple selves. In this regard, Mohanty (in Sasaki 2002), suggests that the project of coalition must promote 'the active creation of oppositional analytic and cultural spaces,' while bearing in mind that, despite the common goal of equality and justice, community members continue to occupy diverse locations within the institution, locations that arise from and give rise to asymmetrical relationships of power. However, because it frames identity construction as dialogical (not just oppositional), it opens the possibility for alternative critical spaces and relationships, by casting the self as a subject-in-process.

While a shared understanding of oppression and commitment to principles of social justice and equality enable people to build coalitions, Reagon, (in Sasaki 2002), emphasises the importance of keeping our principles intact as we embark on coalition building. She advises, 'the thing that must survive is not just the record of your practice, but the principles that are the basis of your practice'. Combating oppressive ideologies is a struggle for the future not just for individual survival. This is why the *principles* on which a politics of coalition are based are more important than the specific actions we undertake.

Weiler (1991:470), considers the importance of the politics of coalition work in education, by drawing attention to the significance of a politics of coalition for a pedagogy of difference and dialogue. In addressing difference, dialogue and conflict in the classroom context, she signals the need to build coalitions around common goals, rather than a denial of differences. She argues that, in an approach to education in which differences are acknowledged, the minimum grounds for solidarity are a shared belief in the value of learning in the company of others. This common interest in learning, even when individual purposes for learning may be irreconcilably diverse, might provide sufficient compatibility for working together, while ensuring that differences are kept in the foreground. Also elaborating on the significance of coalition building for pedagogy, Sasaki (2002), maintains that how educators move from the paradigm of consensus to a more complex notion of coalition is at the centre of pedagogical praxis. Such praxis may invite conflict, within and among members of the community. By providing an alternative conceptual model in which to examine difference as both an external and internal operation of identity formation, a pedagogy of coalition disrupts the consensus model, which insists upon an integrated, non-conflicted sense of wholeness. It is not consensus that is important, but the common/shared context of struggle because we are all implicated in one way or the other in various interlocking systems of oppression. Of equal importance is the knowledge that we are not isolated, and the experience of working with others against common oppression strengthens the challenge against oppression.

Synthesis

The various strands in feminist thinking give credence to post-structuralist and postmodernist conceptions of identity as presupposing difference. However, as a result of the tendency to view difference as deficit, discourses on identity politics have attempted to reclaim those groups in society (among them women, ethnic minorities, etc.), who have been devalued and denied inalienable democratic and human rights. Despite the emancipatory impulse of identity politics, it has been criticised for mobilising the struggle for social transformation by essentialising single categories of identity, for example agitating for women's rights, without acknowledging that the category woman is not unitary. Arguing for recognising that, for example, women comprise a diverse group, whose subjectivities are further defined by internal subdivisions and inter and intra dialogicality, has highlighted a crisis as to how to negotiate multiple subjectivities and the inherent fragmentation into a desirable, and feasible project of social redress. In this regard, rather than seeking social cohesion through consensus politics which invariably mask differences and diversity among social actors, some scholars are

proposing the formation of strategic alliances/coalitions. Such coalitions/alliances congregate together for specific projects and disband after accomplishing the specified aims.

The relevance of the exploration of identity politics for this study is linked to the fact that it is crucial to the discourses on feminist pedagogies. Feminist pedagogies are keenly concerned with difference and diversity, especially as they relate to teacher-student dynamics. In the light of educational institutions becoming increasing demographically diverse, it is important to understand the social, political and cultural positionalities of teachers and students. This is especially so since knowledge construction and interpretation is mediated by the different participants in the teaching/learning encounter. In the following discussion, I explore constructions of pedagogy and central tenets in feminist pedagogies, which also address the question of difference and dialogue as they relate to pedagogic relations.

Section 2: Feminist Pedagogy: a counter-hegemonic discourse

Etymologically, the term pedagogy refers to the science of teaching children. While this construction is based on who is taught, most commonly pedagogy is used interchangeably with teaching or instruction, referring with varying degrees of specificity to the act or process of teaching (Gore 1993:3). However, the term pedagogy, like any other term, has no single meaning in and of itself. According to Lusted (1986:2-3), pedagogy as a concept:

> … draws attention to the *process* through which knowledge is produced. Pedagogy addresses the 'how' questions involved not only in the transmission or reproduction of knowledge but also in its production. Indeed, it enables us to question the validity of separating these activities so easily by asking under what conditions and through what means we 'come to know'. How one teaches … becomes inseparable from what is being taught and, crucially, how one learns.

Proceeding from the fluidity and variety of meaning regarding pedagogy, this study tailors the concept to explore the identity of the feminist teacher, and how her identification with feminist and multilingual sensibilities informs what she teaches, how she teaches, and why she chooses to impart the kind of knowledge she does. Thus, the study adopts and links notions of feminist pedagogy to constellations of political and theoretical identifications. The attachment of the term pedagogy to particular socio-political approaches has resulted in the emergence of inter alia: progressive pedagogy, socialist pedagogy, and radical pedagogy (which includes in its ambit feminist and critical pedagogies). These approaches have their roots in particular political and theoretical movements, and are variously constructed as oppositional to mainstream/traditional schooling practices and theories. Radical, progressive, and socialist approaches focus on pedagogy as constitutive of power relations.

One such strand of critical work has concerned itself with the development of theories that explore the power dynamics in pedagogical relationships, and is discernible in the writings of Freire 1973; Giroux 1988; McLaren 1998; Shor 1980; and Simon 1987. This school of thought has focused on *pedagogy as possibility,* and has been concerned with developing a discourse of critical pedagogy that is sensitive to inter alia: class and race variables and their concomitant power dynamics. In elucidating on the composition of a pedagogy of possibility, Roger Simon (1992), adds that it must include the ability to interrogate both social forms and their possible transformations, and be compatible with the following three founding principles, viz.: a) securing human diversity; b) securing compassionate justice; and c) securing the renewal of life. Despite the differences within and between the discourses of critical and feminist pedagogy, an examination of their central claims reveals a shared concern for democratic schools and societies. Both pedagogical discourses emphasize:

- teachers' authority and the contradictions inherent in the notion of authority for emancipation;
- student experience and voice; and
- self and social empowerment toward achieving broader social transformation.

Feminist educational critics, influenced by postmodernism and cultural identity theories of difference, want to retain the vision of social justice and transformation that underpin critical liberatory pedagogies, but find that their claims to universal truths and assumptions of a collective experience of oppression do not adequately address the realities of their tension-filled classrooms where the force of sexism, patriarchal structures and the power of race, sexual preference, physical ability, and age, continue to divide teachers from students and students from each other (Weiler 1995:23). This accounts for the increasing attention within feminist pedagogy to addressing questions of power and authority, and negotiating and validating student diversity as it relates to the variables that configure social identity (Lewis 1990). In discussing these central concerns, feminist pedagogy broadly explores the role and authority of the teacher, the politics of difference, and the validation of personal experience as a legitimate source of knowledge (Weiler 1991:450).

While recognising the importance of socio-political and economic difference, some scholars, which include among others, Lewis 1990; Maher 1985; Morgan 1987; Schniedewind 1985; Mumford 1985, have argued that schooling is administratively and procedurally patriarchal. They agitate for the articulation and practice of a feminist pedagogy, which extends the recognition of hierarchical power enclaves to include gendered power imbalances prevalent in the discourses on schooling.

While the available body of literature identifies a range of feminist styles of teaching in the classroom (e.g. Maher & Tetreault 1994; Ropers-Huilman 1997), feminist pedagogy is better understood as a political standpoint and personal practice that seeks to transform relations of domination and oppression, rather than simply a set of instructional strategies. In Lather's (1991:122), words: 'feminist pedagogy aims at interrupting relations of dominance'. Feminist teachers who are committed to creating education that would be empowering for students, especially women, have attempted to promote more egalitarian classrooms responsive to difference(s) of identity, location, history, and experience. Transforming relations of power in the classroom has been manifested in pedagogies that are generally described as participatory, experiential and non-hierarchical, focusing on concepts such as 'student voice', 'critical thinking' and 'dialogue'. These forms of pedagogy engender a new understanding of the nature of knowledge in teaching and learning.

There are multiple definitions and descriptions of feminist pedagogy, but most include the following two elements: first, its proponents are feminists; and second, its adherents believe that educational institutions have perennially been the province of male domination, thus it is a vital site where feminist practices can effect positive transformation in girls' and women's lives by taking up the struggle against sexism, racism, classism, and other discriminatory practices (Warren 1998:54). Cohee *et al.* (1998:6), confirm this description by identifying the following tenets as being prominent in feminist pedagogy:

- it evolves from feminist social practice. It is therefore oriented toward social transformation, consciousness-raising, and social activism;
- it emphasises the development of epistemological frameworks that stress both the subjective and communal reality of knowing. It asks whose interests are served by knowledge? It requires *knowers* and *learners* to be accountable to the uses of knowledge;
- it is concerned for women students, both within and outside the classroom, and is committed to improving their lives;
- it addresses race, class, and gender as crucial categories for analysing experience and institutions. It also explores the complex and frequently ignored interactions of these categories; and
- it addresses the undeniable force of sexism in society by exploring issues of sexuality with students, and aiding them in discovering a language with which to discuss sexualities.

Central Tenets in Feminist Pedagogy

The issue of 'authority' is central to the discourse of feminist pedagogy. The preoccupation with the issue of authority is linked to the promotion of self and social empowerment with a view to effecting broader social transformation and the erasure of multiple forms of oppression (Roffman 1994:79-80). Conceding that traditional teacher-student relations have been hierarchical, potentially oppressive, and authoritarian, the discourse on feminist pedagogy recasts the role of the teacher as joint learner with students. While rejecting teacher authoritarianism, feminist pedagogy posits that the teacher's authority emanates from the fact that s/he holds authority by virtue of greater knowledge and experience (Maher & Tetreault 1994; Woodbridge 1994:146-147). Feminist pedagogues also address the different forms of power wielded by teachers by virtue of their race, class, gender, and the historical and institutional contexts in which they work (Ellsworth 1992). According to Gore (1993:68-69), authority in the construction of feminist pedagogy, is addressed in at least three ways, viz: *authority versus nurturance, authority as authorship, and authority as power.* In the following discussion, I briefly explore these variants of authority and the themes of difference and dialogue, which are central to the exercise of authority in the feminist classroom.

Authority versus Nurturance

In order to understand the feminisation of teaching that occurred in Western societies during the 19th century, it is useful to identify those attributes of femininity and pedagogy that became associated with each other. During this period of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation when women entered teaching as a way of fleeing domesticity they were inducted into an institutional paternalism that expected them to assume responsibility for the moral fabric of the family. In commenting on the genesis of women's entry into teaching, Grumet (1988:84), observes that:

> Women were not asked to create this moral leadership in either the home or school, but they were expected to be the vehicles through which laws, rules, language, and the order of the father, the principal, the employer were communicated to the child. Thus it is not surprising that the structure of the school replicates the patriarchal structure of the family. Women teachers' own passivity was to provide the model of obedience for the young to emulate. The women who maintain daily contact with children and nurture them are themselves trained, supervised, and evaluated by men.

In elaborating Grumet's observation, regarding the implications of the roles women were expected to play in education, Walkerdine (in Mercer 1997:40-41), suggests that from the late

19th century onwards women teachers were exhorted to use their 'natural' talent for loving nurturance; an exhortation emanating from the associative and traditional functions of woman as care-giver, and nurturer. In addition, Walker (1983), points out that the symbolic maternal which is also embodied in the concept of Alma Mater, is discursively constituted on the relation between women and universities as maternal. The concept Alma Mater, which is variously translated as `bounteous mother', `foster mother' or `soul mother', is also the name attributed to the Roman goddess of teaching, especially the teacher of the mysteries of sex. Ironically, the cult of maternal nurturance has been critiqued for ignoring female sexuality, and the sensual and sexual life of the women educator. The female teacher was expected to banish sensuality from the classroom and from her life, and this perhaps provides a convincing explanation for the Mind/Body split that regulates patriarchal curriculum discourses. Instead the association between sexuality, maternity and teaching was rendered invisible in favour of the benign and self-less maternal teacher. In this regard, the emergence of nurturance or maternal pedagogies remains one of the major discourses to develop within the ambit of feminist pedagogies, and is based on the caricature of women as nurturer and care-giver. Mercer (1997:42), observes that not only did many feminists embrace such conceptions of maternal pedagogies, but it was a particularly narrow version of the maternal that was embraced. In practice there are a multitude different ways of mothering, but one that has been perpetuated in much feminist pedagogy, is that of the bourgeois, all-sacrificing, all-nurturing, well-resourced, power-sharing 'good' mother.

Kirby (1994), is also perplexed as to why we have not overturned the apparent delusions of maternal stereotyping, which have resulted in the subordination of teaching to the cult of motherhood. She asks:

> Why is the maternal guise of benign innocence, purity of purpose and desire, natural devotion and selflessness, not openly recognised as fraudulent, and a burden of prescriptions that are ultimately paralysing for women?

Bell & Nugent (2001), caution that any departure from the benign, innocent, virtuous Madonna, mother-teacher trope is likely to be construed as bitch-mother or nag. In spite of this, Corning (in Lubrano 2002), critiques the implementation of nurturance and maternal pedagogies. She maintains that nurturing pedagogies when construed in a narrow way that portray teachers as self-sacrificing and ever-bounteous impacts negatively on students because they are not challenged to discourse due to the accepting nature of their environment, in addition to the fact that their teacher as an authority has been deconstructed. Corning attributes lawlessness in the class to this.

Grumet, in her book, *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching* (1988), also critiques the contradictions of women's roles as teachers. She notes that it was an attractive model/ fantasy, which many feminists sought to implement over the years. However, more recently many women educators have subjected these pedagogic fantasies/theories to a power analysis and have realised that they are fraught with intolerable contradictions, and parochial expectations.

One such contradiction is manifest in the epistemological and social dynamic within the feminist classroom. This refers to instances when the politics of nurturance provokes conflicting relations between women teachers' authority and nurturance. While institutional authority requires women to assume authority in educational and social spaces, traditional conceptions of women, on the other hand, render notions of authority incompatible with the role of women as nurturers and care-givers within public domains of patriarchal society (Weiler 1991:456-457). Friedman (1985:206), also points out that:

> … as feminist teachers, we have paradoxically ignored the lens of gender as it operates in classroom dynamics and pedagogy. Both our students and ourselves have been socialized to believe (frequently at a non-conscious level) that any kind of authority is incompatible with the feminine. … A man stepping into the role of professor has a certain authority granted to him by his students that operates immediately. Women, on the other hand, must earn that authority and respect, which is in any event often granted with great resentment, even hostility.

Dorsey (2002:221-224), points out that race and feminist politics accentuate the complexity of the gender quandary. White students, unlike Black students, generally do not confuse Black females with their mothers, but they are capable of envisioning Black female faculty as caretakers who exist to offer them succour. Black students, on the other hand, tend to construe Black female faculty as substitute mothers and in so doing conjure the intellectualised mammy. While not related to race dynamics exclusively, committing female faculty into the role of (surrogate) mother/mammy weighs teacher-student relations down with familial emotional patterns, and expectations. The tendency to re-create familial structures with obedient female teacher cast in the role of mother, and male teacher as head is not uncommon. It is against this backdrop that Mercer (1997:42), asks:

> … why [should] teachers be modelled on either mothers or fathers? Why not develop an ethics of teaching which steers well clear of any romantic, version of the nuclear family?

A parochial expectation emanating from the conflation of mother with teacher is explored by Grumet (1988:46), who argues that although many of the economic and social conditions that accompanied the feminisation of 19th century teaching no longer obtain, the curriculum still bears the character of this era. She argues that what is most fundamental to our lives as men

and women, is the process and experience of reproducing ourselves. The process refers first to the biological reproduction/procreation of the species, which is not the project of schools, and second to the metaphorical 'cultural reproduction' intended to be realised via the school curriculum through banking and transmission methods of teaching. Such teaching paradigms script women educators in passive reproductive roles, which are seen as an extension of their biological functions. According to Grumet (ibid.), an analysis of how women teachers experience their femininities in schools, and how this in turn influences their pedagogical ideologies and curriculum interpretations and enactments, show women educators subverting these prescriptions by contradicting biology and ideology. Grumet argues that this:

> … signifies ruptures of compliance and recasts curriculum as a project of transcendence, which while immersed in biology and ideology simultaneously attempts to transcend them. Even in the most conventional scene of classroom practice it is possible to detect traces of transformative consciousness, no matter how veiled in apparent compliance and convention.

Ruptures in compliance are not only visible in the way women educators have reconceptualised epistemology. Acknowledging the value of nurturance pedagogy in so far as it amounts to being a supportive teacher who is in touch with her students' holistic development, many women teachers are suggesting that it is possible to recast the traditional roles they have been expected to play. Rather than acquiesce to images of the Madonna, or angel of the schoolhouse trope, they are showing that it is possible to be female, yet remain un-embroiled in expectations of performing motherly roles with their students. In doing so they are able to transcend subscription to nurturance/maternal ideologies by defining, positioning and modelling themselves on multiple identities, and enacting authority in relation to the educational contexts and academic demands they are responsible for.

In trying to maintain a balance between (over) indulging nurturance pedagogy, Eagleton (1998), tentatively proposes 'impersonality' as a possible strategy to prevent the feminist teacher from being fixed in the position of the maternal, nurturing subject who is supposed to know, and the subject whom the student wants to know. She wonders what would such a strategy look like in practice? How would it differ from the position of distant superiority which feminism has rejected? Is it possible for the feminist teacher to be, connected, supportive, nurturing without being construed as unscholarly?

Authority as Authorship

In addition to conceptualising feminist teacher authority in the imagery of nurturing maternal, Gore (1993), points out that authority in feminist pedagogy is also delineated in terms of

authority as authorship. In expanding on this conception of feminist teacher authority, Pagano argues (1990:99), that feminist educators can approach questions of authority by focusing on authorship. She suggests that authority as authorship involves sharing stories based on particular attachments to the world and to each other. She postulates that feminist educators might consider teaching as an enactment of a narrative in which authority refers to the power to represent and challenge versions of reality, a power that both teacher and students can exercise. Authority as authorship embraces epistemologies of teacher and student experience and interpretation. Within feminist discourses, the conception of *authority as authorship* is encapsulated in exhortations for the validation of personal experience as a legitimate source of knowledge.

In seeking to provide both a place and the power for women to speak, the concepts 'voice' and 'speech' have become commonly used metaphors in women's self-definition (Gawelek *et al.* 1994:181; Maher & Tetreault 1994). The need to challenge patriarchal definitions of women and to overcome their voicelessness by naming their experience is central to the feminist project of liberation (Farganis 1994a:20). The realm of personal experience (Private), has always been trivialised, particularly for women. Thus, central to the feminist movement in the United States since the 1970's has been the argument that the *personal is political* (Firestone 1979:44). This slogan is the umbilical cord connecting the self to political reality by redefining the personal as political (Wright 1998:91).

In appropriating the concept of voice within the classroom, feminist pedagogy attempts to act as an emancipatory strategy by positing that what transpires in the private sphere of students' lives has political import within the classroom and broader society. Thus, redefining the personal as political through the validation of student experience and voice has become central to the discourse of feminist pedagogies (Middleton 1993). Much of the concern to encourage student voice and experience in the pedagogic encounter emanates from the disenchantment with mainstream pedagogy, which silences their voices and denies the representation and acknowledgement of their experiences.

In her thesis on the validation of personal experience as legitimate knowledge, Lorde (1984), postulates that feeling and experience should be used as guides to accessing a deeper truth rather than relying exclusively on abstract rationality. This draws attention to the critical challenge being mounted against epistemologies derived from a binary logic (James 1998:77), which dichotomises and elevates rationality over emotion, mind over body, culture over nature, etc. (Warren 1998:47).

Lorde (1984), conceptualises feeling as a source of power and knowledge, based on the assumption that as human beings we have the capacity to feel and know, and can engage in self-critique by challenging our ways of feeling and knowing. Since experience and feelings

are claimed as a kind of *inner-knowing* shaped by society, but at the same time contain an oppositional quality, experience can serve as a basis for challenging dominant schemes of truth if what is experienced does not correlate with officially accepted definitions of Truth.

By valuing and accepting as true the knowledge and discursive power that grow out of communicated experience, feminist pedagogy poses an epistemic challenge to what counts as knowledge. Based on the premise that one's own experience is a valid source from which learning proceeds, feminist pedagogy contends that the recognition of student voice should also eventuate in the demystification of traditional knowledge. In this regard feminist pedagogues are joining in the challenge being made by people of colour, women, and other oppressed groups to grand Western narratives, modernist knowledge claims masquerading as universal Truth, and transmission approaches to learning (Brady 1995:43). This does not imply that traditional knowledge should be ignored, but critiqued to examine its underlying assumptions, gaps and silences thus, ensuring that diversity is attended to in its complexity. Hernandez (1997:86-87), suggests that we speak of *knowledges*, since all knowledge is relational and can only be understood within the context of production, distribution, and consumption by different individuals and groups. Apart from being invariably mutable and contingent, knowledges are ridden by power relations because diverse values and interests often come into conflict as a result of the multiplicity of social and political concerns. During this process of conflict and contestation, the knowledge and experiences of the disenfranchised are invariably subjugated, and ostracised from the regimes of official, sacred knowledge. This has wide ranging implications in terms of what should constitute curriculum knowledge (Maher 1998:25), an issue that is investigated in this study, which poses the questions whose/what knowledge is legitimated in the feminist English language classroom? Williamson (1981), concedes that while it is essential to commence with students' experiences, this can be problematic, because it is personally threatening for many students to place their lives under scrutiny as the very sense of themselves is at stake. She asserts that students can never understand these issues purely intellectually; they need to encounter them in the course of practical, productive work. Other cautionary signals regarding the accommodation of students' personal as epistemology include the potential for students to remain within the mode of the vernacular and familiar and resist connecting and analysing their experiences within the matrix of broader public discourse (Bell, Morrow & Tastsoglou 1999). There is also the potential for personal disclosures to be traumatic and sensitive and the classroom may not be the most appropriate context to open painful wounds, which may need professional counselling to help the student negotiate/contain the experience. Allied to this is the possibility for certain students to exploit their painful and traumatic experiences as a way of evoking sympathy and concessions from the teacher.

Another common theme is the relation of the teacher's personal, and its various manifestations in the feminist classroom. Feminist teachers bring the 'self' into the classroom, and ask their students to do the same, both as pedagogical strategy and pedagogic content. There are obvious implications for the relationships between teachers and students within this context.

Broughton & Potts (2001), suggest that the teacher's 'personal' as a problematic can arise in at least two, not always overlapping ways. The first is that the feminist class, ideally, should be made aware of and able to challenge those aspects of the institutional and pedagogical setting, which by virtue of power differentials, have a direct bearing on the scene of learning. This might include, for example, such basic matters as how teachers and students address each other, who is allowed to say what, and why. The second continues the call for egalitarianism, and argues that if one of the premises of women's studies praxis is that we value students' experiences as legitimate topics for discussion, debate, and as a basis for theorization (if their personal is political and pedagogical), then it is arguable that students should have a right to call upon the teacher's 'personal' as a resource just as teachers might encourage them to make theirs available to the class.

In practice, however, teachers slide along a spectrum of pedagogies, from the most personal to the most impersonal. This slippage is not always for strictly pedagogical reasons. Lingard & Douglas (1999:77), outline the complex 'regendering' effects of globalisation, performativity and managerialisation on education, highlighting the ways in which teachers deal with the new emotional labour demands of marketised schooling systems. What becomes apparent from Lingard & Douglas' (1999), observation is that feminist technologies of self disclosure may have been 'safe' within contextual and temporal specificities if they did not have to be made in campus climates pervaded by prospects of retrenchment, financial scarcity, professional defensiveness, competition for students and income. Sensitive to these harsh institutional realities, hooks *et al.* (1996:824), caution:

> Academe is, essentially, a competitive corporate structure. Many of us academics now operate competitively within feminist circles. In an atmosphere of competition, people become more guarded, more defensive, and, frankly, more paranoid. When you begin to draw on personal experience you become vulnerable. The questions, critiques, and interrogations that may be made of you and your work may not be directed at those individuals who never speak about their personal lives. To be always scrutinized is difficult. To live openly, honestly, in such a way that there is nothing that cannot see the light of day, that's difficult. It requires constant vigilance. This is not a path everyone can walk.

The discussion on a*uthority as authorship* recognises the importance of encouraging student voice in the classroom. Drawing on student voice and experience for the purposes of

theoretical clarification and exemplification, and as a way of countering received theories, justifies the pedagogic value of the practice, in the same way as calling upon teacher personal in the classroom would. Cautionary signs about the use of teacher-student personal as authorship in the classroom relate to differentiating between the personal as private and the personal as political, and the pedagogic relevance of such disclosures. Apart from the need to guard the class from becoming a theatre to enact self-absorption/ solipsistic/egocentric scripts, the impact these have on teacher-student pedagogic relations needs also to be factored into the equation. Given that feminist pedagogy strives to eradicate hierarchical pedagogic relations the discussion around *authority as authorship* needs to be debated alongside another recurrent theme in feminist discourses, viz. *authority as power*.

Authority as Power

In addition to teacher authority being associated with nurturance and authorship, Gore (1993), points to the delineation of feminist teacher *authority as power*. The general currency of thought is that patriarchal models of authority are based on hierarchical power relations, competition, and control (Kenway & Modra 1992). Some feminist educators are attempting to alter perceived characteristics of patriarchal pedagogy. Discussions on the authority and role of the teacher in feminist pedagogy attempt to redefine the pedagogic relationship with a view to promoting connected, collaborative and negotiated teaching and learning (Gawelek *et al*. 1994:182), thereby creating classrooms that are non-hierarchal, non-competitive, and more democratic (Friedman in Gore 1993:70).

Although not all writers of feminist pedagogy use the same terminology in their writings about authority, invariably the concerns discussed seem to support the view that the authority the feminist teacher seeks is authority with, not authority over his/her students. It is a form of authority that is not authoritarian but based in caring and reciprocal relationships (Gore 1993: 71-72).

A common explanation given for the discussion of authority in feminist pedagogies lies in the intention of feminist teachers to empower their students and themselves by encouraging the interrogation and critical analyses of their experiences thereby becoming theorists of their own lives (Wolfe & McNally 1994:21). Feminist pedagogies attempt to move beyond the mere identification and articulation of experience to the creation of a critical understanding of the forces that shape experiences (Weiler 1991:456-457). This implies acquiring a critical literacy that transcends a mere consciousness of social power configurations, by developing the political and ethical will to confront and transform discriminatory social practices.

Shewsbury (1987:9), for instance, identifies some empowering strategies that feminist teachers employ to encourage students to find their own voices. She contends that:

> … empowering classrooms are places to practice visions of a feminist world, confronting differences to enrich all of us rather than belittle some of us. Empowering pedagogy does not dissolve the authority or power of the instructor. It does move from power as domination to power as creative energy.

Despite the emancipatory intent inscribed in feminist pedagogical discussions on *authority* and *empowerment*, these concepts are frequently acknowledged as problematic. Ellsworth (1992), contends that such terms can be repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination; myths that are based on rationalist assumptions and that posit a universality that is, in fact, oppressive. Orner (1992:74), expresses concern that certain critical, and feminist pedagogues, preoccupied with issues of *empowerment* and student *experiences,* often position students as deficit Other, and condescendingly assume that students do not already value their own language, experiential realities and backgrounds. Furthermore, Orner, argues that such a stance by critical and feminist pedagogues presumes, that they themselves are already enlightened and are 'empowerers' and not themselves oppressors. Maher (1998:29), contends that sometimes teachers set up a pseudo-democracy in the classroom. In her article, *My Introduction to 'Introduction to Women Studies: the role of the teacher's authority in the feminist classroom*, Maher writes, she gave up some of her classroom authority by allowing students a great deal of latitude in determining what they would read for each class. Class periods would be devoted to particular issues, but students could choose the articles they wanted to make from a selection. Maher had decided to include articles by women of colour among the selections for each topic. She found, however, that her students, who were mostly White, did not choose to read the articles by women of colour, and questions of race were marginalized or not brought into the discussion at all. Students tended to resist those voices that questioned rather than deauthorized their own experience. In response, Maher decided to reassert her authority by requiring students to read writings by women of colour. The episode that Maher experienced confirms the need to reconceptualise the dynamics of feminist teacher-student authority relations. In this regard, Bright (1987:98), contends that:

> Discussion of the student/teacher relationship must include a look at the power of the teacher. Feminists have often avoided the topic of power, preferring structures and situations where power is shared. However, the educational system is not an egalitarian one, and regardless of the extent to which a teacher tries to minimize her power, it cannot be completely given away. When the institutional power of the instructor is not acknowledged, the situation is mystified; abuse of power may be obscured, rendering subjects incapable of naming their experience accurately.

Supporting Bright's sentiments, Gore (2002), draws on the work of Foucault (1980), to outline five theoretical propositions for the functioning of power in pedagogy, which she postulates resonate with the personal experiences of pedagogy that most of us have had in different educational settings. Foucault (ibid.), argues that power is ever present, thus teachers need not be afraid to use their authority (to exercise power). Aligning herself with the inevitability of assuming power as authority in the pedagogic encounter, Gore proposes recognising that:

- pedagogy is the enactment of power relations: Rather than teachers disassociating themselves from enacting technologies of power, they should instead embrace power and use it knowingly, whether in the construction of relations among participants, in the construction of self, or in the construction of knowledge. In addition to acknowledging the power of the teacher, there is a need to acknowledge that students are also bearers of power, and may resist submitting passively to the authority of the teacher.
- bodies are the object/instrument of pedagogical power relations: Foucault (ibid.), argues that power operates through bodies; which renders the micro-level enactment of power relations visible, and observable in the pedagogic encounter. In addition, viewing bodies as material and physical sites, proposes seeing teachers and learners not as generic individuals, but as people who have differential capacities to enact definitions of power based on their place in the hierarchies of the social world. This precipitates a need to expose the differences and similarities that teachers and students experience in the classroom by virtue of differences in skin colour, language, economic status, personal experiences, etc.
- pedagogy proceeds via a limited set of specific techniques of power: Gore (2002), suggests that overcoming the repressive power relations of pedagogical interaction will not be solved by simply adopting different classroom practices, (for example, different teaching/learning methodologies, like group discussion, etc.). The issue is not whether or not certain techniques are used, but rather how the techniques are used and with what effects. Whatever techniques are most strongly experienced are likely to encounter resistance. Foucault (1980), contends that, 'there are no relations of power without resistances'; and these become more real in the classroom because they are formed right at the point where pedagogic relations of power are exercised.
- the kind of knowledge produced in pedagogy interacts with the location of the site, and the techniques of power employed there: Within educational institutions, a substantial proportion of knowledge generated will pertain directly to specific institutional norms and practices. This implies that in educational sites, the vast majority of knowledge will pertain directly to the formal curriculum, and the techniques of power will play a role in the kind of knowledge produced. In contexts where there is great emphasis on the

formation of radical understandings, normalisation will be a dominant technique, and there is likely to be some resistance by students. Normalisation of pedagogic techniques and epistemological content, and student resistance to these bring to the fore teacher-student power dynamics.

- in pedagogy, different differences matter: Pedagogy is more than a relay of external power relations. Dominant techniques of power will be evident whether or not categories of social differentiation, like race, class, gender, etc. are implicated or not. Thus, even in for example, classes that are homogeneous in terms of race, class, gender, etc. technologies of power will manifest, anyway. However, where more demographic diversity is present, social dynamics such as race, class, and gender are likely to be addressed differently in different contexts, using different techniques of power. This suggests that micro-level analysis of pedagogical power may be more effectively understood if it emerges from a consideration that contextual differences *might* impact the specific configuration of techniques of power, rather than *a priori* assumptions that it *will*. Micro technologies of power include:

Surveillance: teachers supervising, closely observing, watching, threatening to watch, avoiding being watched.
Regulation teachers controlling by rule, subjecting to restrictions; adapting to requirements; acting or invoking a rule (including sanction, reward, punishment).
Normalisation: teachers invoking, requiring, setting or conforming to a standard, defining the normal (for example in the use of grammatical rules/conventions).
Exclusion: teachers tracing the limits that will define difference, boundaries, and zones (for example, epistemic paternalism).
Distribution: dividing into parts, arranging, ranking (either students and/or knowledges).
Classification: differentiating individuals and/or groups from one another (possibly for group work).
Individualisation: giving individual character to, specifying an individual.
Totalisation: giving collective character to, specifying a collectivity/total, will to conformity.

In considering a theory of power for pedagogy, Gore (ibid.), notes that the overarching impulse is that teachers should recognise that in their search to find better pedagogies, some efforts, such as attempts to rid classrooms of power, will be futile. Rather, teachers should embrace power and use it more knowingly, by being conscious of its effects in terms of interpersonal relations, habitus and the discourses produced through pedagogy.

The Politics of Difference and Dialogue

Another pervasive theme that has informed the tenets of feminist pedagogy is its preoccupation with the politics of difference and dialogue. What became clear quite early in the Women's Movement is that claims about experience as a source of women's knowledge rested on certain assumptions about commonalities in women's lives. Women were conceived of as a unitary and relatively undifferentiated group (Curry *et al.* 1994:9). But what women of colour and postmodern feminist theorists have made clear is that there is no single woman's experience to be revealed. Thus, both experience and feeling, as the source of an unproblematic knowledge of the world have been called into question (Weiler 1991:466). However, this has not meant the abandonment of experience as a source of knowledge for feminist teachers. Instead, the critical self-examination of lived experience is considered a source of knowledge that can illuminate the different processes and ideologies that shape shifting social identity (Maher & Tetreault 1994). Thus, an exploration of experience leads not to a common knowledge and solidarity based on sameness, but to the tensions that emerge in the articulation, and recognition of difference (Weiler 1991:466). The recognition of difference highlights the tensions among students, as well as between teacher and students (Brady 1995:28).

Recognizing that students' perspectives are shaped by their experiences of class, ethnicity, sexuality, race, gender, and other socially defined identities has powerful implications for pedagogy, in that it emphasizes the need to make conscious the subject positions of students and teachers (Rothenberg 1998:135). This has implications for understanding pedagogy as a contested discursive site occupied by pedagogic participants whose identities are contradictory and in process (Weiler 1991:470; Brady 1995:41). Hall (in Brady 1995:41), suggests that identities cannot be fixed within closed systems of meaning. She postulates that the convergence of difference and identity is a marker not only for rethinking the self in multiple and contradictory terms, but also a dialogic process in which the issue of self-representation is constituted in our relationship with others. Hall (in Brady 1995:41), points out that:

> The critical thing about identity is that it is partly the relationship between you and the Other. Only when there is an Other can you know who you are. … And there is no identity … without the dialogic relationship to the Other. The Other is not outside, but also inside the Self, the identity. So identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also a relationship of the Other to oneself.

Ellsworth (1997:139), suggests that teaching about and across social and cultural difference is not about bridging our differences and joining us together in understanding, it's about engaging in the ongoing production of culture in a way that returns yet another difference.

In attempting to negotiate the politics of difference and validate personal experience as a legitimate source of knowledge, feminist pedagogies have encouraged critical, creative, communicative dialogic participation in the teaching/learning encounter. This echoes Freire's (1968), postulation that agency begins when students not only have access to different forms of knowledge, but also when they have the opportunity to interrogate all propositions, cultural practices, and disciplinary assumptions. Essentially, it is the opportunity to engage knowledge through dialogue, thereby asserting its historically and socially constructed nature. Freire (ibid.), posits that social revolution can only transpire through creative dialogue. He contends:

> Dialogue with the people is radically necessary to every authentic revolution. This is what makes it a revolution, as distinguished from a military coup. One does not expect dialogue from a *coup*-only deceit (in order to achieve 'legitimacy') or force (in order to repress). Sooner or later, a true revolution must initiate a courageous dialogue. It cannot fear the people, their expression, and their effective participation in power.

Freire posits that liberatory education and social revolution can only transpire through courageous dialogue. In acknowledging the primacy of dialogue, critical and feminist pedagogies emanated in response to the disenchantment with anti-dialogical and epistemic paternalism (pedagogical practices that patriarchal knowledge has been critiqued for). Burbules (1993:153), draws attention to the following anti-dialogical tendencies in instructional practices which have fostered:

- a content-driven conception of curriculum, in which 'coverage' of materials becomes a primary goal;
- a test-driven conception of educational aims, in which outcomes that cannot be measured in this way are pressed further into the background of educational aims; and
- a management-driven conception of the teacher's role, in which maintaining conditions of order and discipline become, not means for educational ends, but ends in and of themselves.

Burbules (ibid.), maintains that while the diversity of students and teachers in classrooms, in many ways, creates valuable educational opportunities for dialogue across difference, it also creates some impediments to dialogue. Different cultural groups possess different languages, but even where they have a common language they may have different styles of expression. What is acceptable communicative conduct within one cultural group may not be acceptable to

another. There are, for example, numerous studies, which report on the different strategies and patterns discernible between men and women's communication styles.

Furthermore, Ellsworth (1997:124), notes that communicative dialogue is characterised by speaking across discontinuities, that is, one speaker speaks from one side of a discontinuity, the next speaker speaks from the other side, and the discontinuity they speak across becomes an indicator that someone is not telling the 'truth', or is ignorant of the 'truth'. In communicative dialogue, there is thus a striving towards finding a match between question and answer. In playing with the words *understanding* and *standing under*, Ellsworth (ibid.:93), proposes a dual structure to capture the dialogic processes of communicative dialogue. She posits that *understanding* is paramount in communicative dialogue. First, the participants must establish a presumed common ground of comprehension. Starting by *standing under* the speaker's position, perspective, or sense, and confirming a sense of *understanding*. This is a prerequisite before disagreement is allowed, that is, disagreement, differences, and entertainment of personal feelings are only permissible after *standing under* the speaker's position. Granted, this moment of *standing under* may be fleeting, but the dual structure and necessarily continuous nature of the dialogical relation seeks to guarantee that that moment of mirroring will return repeatedly. Ellsworth (1997:102), in writing about communicative dialogue, draws attention to the unproblematic way in which the concept is used in pedagogic circles. Ellsworth (1997), paraphrases Rooney, who observes that:

> ... dialogue is an ordinary word, a non-technical term, an integral part of ordinary language and popular consensus. In all common uses, dialogue is an honorific. The very notion of dialogue is often identified with democracy. … Calling dialogue into question, questioning its will to power and its mechanism of control, has the potential to cast more doubt on the one raising the questions than it does on dialogue itself.

Criticism levelled against the reverential acceptance of communicative dialogue, as a master strategy for accomplishing pedagogic miracles emanates from the neglect to interrogate the paradoxes of democracy. This is particularly evident in education projects informed by radical pedagogies, which emphasise that educators teaching across social and cultural differences should make diverse narratives coexist (MacCorquodale in Maher & Tetreault 1994:231). Such a stance is inattentive to the fact that students may wish to exercise their democratic right not to participate in communicative dialogue. Courting the risk of being construed as anti-democratic, lacking in the moral virtues and character traits that support democracy, they may wish to exercise their democratic right to resist compulsory or obligatory participation in communicative dialogue (Ellsworth 1997:105).

Ellsworth points to the shortcomings of communicative dialogue, and expresses a preference for analytic dialogue, arguing that it produces textual knowledge, which is knowledge of how routes of knowing and reading are always multiple, and different. Analytic dialogue, thus promotes the ability to change answers into new questions, and to change the routes we take to arrive at an interpretation. Such a view of textual knowledge resonates with views expressed by proponents of reader response theorists, such as Barthes (1967), who also maintain that answers and interpretations are not settled; instead they encourage questioning the answers, and questioning the questions.

In expanding Ellsworth's (1997), proposition to produce textual knowledge, via analytic dialogue, Gallop (1991:419), concurs that:

> The process of questioning is a specific dialectic shattering stable assumptions and producing textual associations. To bring in ready-made definitions as answers to questions is not really to allow one's discourse or authority to be called into question. Such prepared answers are not part of a specific dialogue, but simply immutable truth that is unaffected by dialogue. That sort of relation that mocked-up artificial, Socratic dialogue of pedagogy with the 'answer' prior to and independent of the question and the questioning denies any possibility for unsettling contact with the questioner's otherness, one that might affect definition. Good pedagogic definition remains aloof from the situation, free from the desire of student and teacher, free from desire ... .

Ellsworth (1997:137-138), suggests that while the project of feminist pedagogies empowers students to participate in dialogue, she cautions that they never participate as the *one* with the right *Story*, but as participants who can never fully know, understand, and/or control. Similarly, Lacan, articulates a dynamic of learning and teaching, which denies representation and reproduction. According to Lacan (in Felman 1990:33), 'No knowledge can be supported or transported by one alone'. Drawing on and reinforcing Lacan's conception of knowledge, Felman (ibid.), elucidates that:

> Knowledge, in other words, is not a substance but a structural dynamic: it is not contained by any individual but comes about out of mutual apprenticeship between two partially unconscious speeches, which both say more than they know. Dialogue is thus the radical condition of learning and knowledge, the analytically constitutive condition through which ignorance becomes structurally informative, knowledge is essentially, irreducibly dialogic.

In considering the dynamics of difference in relation to the role of dialogue, attention needs to be given to critiques of idealized claims for equality in communication, and of concepts of community in which differences and asymmetrical relations are denied. This means contesting the fiction of equal relationships implied in propositions of liberatory forms of education (Weiler

1991:450). In this regard, McLaren (in Brady 1995), urges for understanding difference in relation to power. He points out that:

> … the personal is always understood as social, and the social is always historicized to reveal how the subject has been produced. … Subjectivity is understood, therefore, as a field of relations forged within a grid of power and ethics, knowledge and power. It is worth emphasizing that a celebration of difference without investigating the ways in which differences become constituted in oppressive asymmetrical relations of power often betrays a simpleminded romanticism and exoticization of the 'other'.

In expressing a similar sentiment, Mohanty (in Brady 1995), contends that a politics of difference that refuses to treat issues of power as domination reduces difference to:

> … benign variation (diversity) … rather than as conflict, struggle, or threat of disruption, bypasses power as well as history to suggest a harmonious, empty pluralism.

Thus, while a pedagogy of difference may be expected to spark creative dialogue, it is important to remain cognizant that the limits of our ability to understand others' positions, and to appreciate the emotional costs of their taking particular ideological positions, may produce dialogic outcomes that lead neither to convergence nor conciliation, but as Narayan (1988: 34), suggests to, 'working tenuously across differences to form risky bonds of understanding'.

Reynolds & Trehan (2001), also argue for an approach to working with differences, which go further than mutual respect. Their premise is that radical pedagogies are often inadequate to the task of understanding or working with differences, and may in fact contribute to suppressing, denying or assimilating differences, thereby reinforcing consensus. Even critical feminist pedagogies are not immune to this criticism, for as McLaren (1998:448), has observed:

> The conceptual net known as critical pedagogy has been cast so wide and at times so cavalierly that it has come to be associated with anything dragged up out of the troubled and infested waters of educational practice, from classroom furniture organized in a 'dialogue friendly' circle to 'feel good' curricula designed to increase students' self image.

Reynolds & Trehan (2001), propose an approach to working with differences, which transcends mutual respect, to include understanding of differences in beliefs, values, gender, race, status, and learning styles. They support Fisk's conceptualization (1989 in Reynolds & Trehan 2001), that as members of society, each of us belongs to *multiple communities* because of our various groupings by age, gender, race and class. According to Vince (1996), it is this dynamic that renders learning environments powerful and contained arena for viewing negotiations on autonomy and dependence. Apart from being powerful contained areas, they

are also sites of power inequalities, often rendering working with structural, or personal value and belief differences emotionally painful. While conceding that critical learning is not void of anxiety or personal struggle, they caution that it can also discourage learning through defensiveness, denial, and avoidance. The basis of denial, defensiveness and avoidance may be linked to the pervasive myth that different individuals participate as equals in dialogue and experiential learning groups. Confirming that engaging with differences, for many, is an anxiety-provoking and difficult enterprise, hooks (1994), cautions that learning cannot take place without anxiety, or personal struggle. Pitkin & Shumer (1982:47), aptly capture the personal, and political merits, and the potential for psycho-social risks as follows:

> Democratic politics is an encounter among people with different interests, perspectives, and opinions-an encounter in which they reconsider and mutually revise opinions and interests, both individual and common. It happens always in a context of conflict, imperfect knowledge, and uncertainty. … The resolutions achieved are always more or less temporary, subject to reconsideration, and rarely unanimous. What matters is not unanimity but discourse.

Against the risky landscape of dialogue in contexts of diversity, Ellsworth (1992), suggests that diversity should be embraced as an opportunity to build a social and educational inter-dependency that recognises difference not as deficit, but as different strengths. She urges that difference must not be tolerated, but seen as an opportunity to spark creative dialogue; only then, does difference become non-threatening.

Synthesis

From the preceding discussion, the overwhelming sense that emerges is that feminist pedagogues have been critical of patriarchal society and phallocentric knowledge. They have posited that patriarchal educational institutions perpetuate uneven power dynamics between students and teachers, and among students themselves. Despite this problematic, they see educational sites as potentially transformative. In seeking to exploit this transformative potential, they have focussed strongly on social vision, self and social empowerment. In order to achieve this aim, the feminist pedagogical imperative has been to seek strategic classroom alternatives by accommodating student experience and voice as epistemologically relevant, and striving towards egalitarian teacher-student relations, through more nurturing and connected pedagogies. In addition, feminist pedagogy also shows a strong commitment towards recognising the diversity that exists among teachers and students by virtue of differences in their racial, cultural, ethnic, sexual positionalities and locations in society. The most visible attempt to recognise difference is evident in the encouragement of creative, critical

dialogic participation. However, the enactment of these tenets of feminist pedagogy, despite their noble intents, sometimes prove counter-productive and signal the potential to defeat the ends of education. For example, in the pursuit of enacting nurturance pedagogies, female faculty are often cast in the role of teacher-mother, thus undermining their scholarly identities. Attempts to reconceptualise student and teacher personal as relevant epistemology, often blur the boundaries between regimes of self-absorption thereby, obscuring or obliterating their pedagogic significance. In addition, attempts by feminist teachers to rid their classes of power, by sharing or trying to empower their students mask the educative and pedagogic authority of the teacher. Furthermore, the purported merit of communicative dialogue, through student-centred pedagogies, does not necessarily ameliorate cultural, gender and ideological differences; instead it engenders consensual politics, which often eventuates in masking difference, rather than recognising it. The cumulative effect of over investing in nurturance pedagogies, student-teacher personal as epistemology, and the erasure of difference through dialogic pedagogies, often results in the mystification of power, and returns the pedagogic encounter to experiences reminiscent of what feminist pedagogy set out to dismantle and demolish. While imbibing the social justice ethos of feminist pedagogy there emerges a call for a reconceptualised practice of feminist pedagogical ideologies by holding in creative tension its merits and likely pitfalls. The preceding discussion has presented a theoretical overview of the tenets of feminist pedagogy. In the following section I present a few studies that have been conducted on feminist teachers, to understand empirically the implications of enacting feminist pedagogical sensibilities in classrooms.

Studies on Feminist Teachers and their Classrooms

Munro observed (1997), that there has been little systematic empirical research conducted on the working lives of feminist teachers in classrooms. In further confirming the dearth of empirical studies conducted in feminist classrooms, Bell, Morrow & Tastsoglou (1999:35), admit that their own efforts at working with feminist and critical pedagogies have been largely individual and/or outside the academy. They testify to having had limited experience in witnessing feminist pedagogical processes unfold in their classrooms. They attribute the pedagogical dilemmas they experienced to the fact that, except for their desire and political commitment to engendering social equity and reform, they have had little formal preparation for enacting feminist pedagogies. They say in their classrooms they, ‘grope toward an *unknown* with little support from their institutions’.

In an attempt to contribute to this body of research, my study engaged five feminist educators in a critical reflection of their enactment of feminist tenets in multilingual classrooms.

To this end, I reflected on, and examined how the participants' theoretical espousals manifested or translated at chalk-face, if at all. In addition, I was keen to see how the various theoretical concepts associated with feminism/feminist pedagogies were operationalized in the participants' respective classrooms.

In the following brief review I refer to a few studies that specifically investigate the classroom teaching experiences of feminist teachers. The available material has highlighted the importance of paying attention to feminist accounts of teaching, because such accounts demonstrate the lived realities of feminist struggles within patriarchal educational institutions, and the ways in which feminist teachers navigate their identities and daily work.

Maher & Tetreault (1994), in their often-cited book: *The Feminist Classroom,* outline that their study aimed to explore teaching and learning in the classrooms of seventeen feminist professors at American colleges. Each of the seventeen professors was portrayed as responding to rapidly changing student demographics and introducing egalitarian and inclusive epistemologies and pedagogies. Their responses took the form of integrating multicultural content and experimenting with 'risky' pedagogies, which support the view that learning proceeds largely from the everyday experiences of ordinary people, and the questions students raise for discussion.

The relevance of Maher & Tetreault's study for my research emerges from the reconfirmation that the discourse on feminist pedagogies is not monolithic. It assumes various complexions in relation to contextual variations; the multiple identities of teacher and students; construction, interpretations and enactments of knowledge. A pertinent question for my analytical consideration was: what makes this or that practice/ideology peculiarly feminist?

In an article titled: *Tara's Story: the feminist teacher's voice in the student-centred classroom,* teacher educator Sharon Shelton-Colangelo (1996), offers lively discussion on the issues of identity politics, the development of feminist identity formation, autobiographical reflection as a tool in reflective teacher practice, and sociological theories of production and reproduction. Shelton-Colangelo documents the dilemma faced by Tara, who was one of a diverse group of six, mainly female, prospective English teachers. Shelton-Colangelo's study explored the experiences of students traditionally marginalized in schools to determine what implications their early learning stories might have for their emergent classroom practice. A parallel narrative in her study was the notion of autobiographical reflection. Furthermore, an examination of student teachers' early experiences help in illuminating whether these stories engender progressive change in their emergent teaching practice.

My study employs autobiographical essays as a data source to trace the trajectories of the feminist and linguistic development of the five tertiary educators that participated in the study. It did so by exploring the impact various socio-biographic factors played in shaping their

personal and professional identities. In this regard, the article: *Tara's Story: the feminist teacher's voice in the student-centred classroom,* proved insightful in that it also examined prospective English teachers' retrospective gaze of the possible influences that inform their pedagogic ideologies. My study also explores conceptions of feminist teacher authority, and the dialectics of exercising authority in student centred classes.

The recurrent theme on conceptions of feminist teacher authority is further explored in an article titled: *Authority Is Not a Luxury: 'Courageous Dialogue' in the Feminist Classroom.* Feminist teacher Gunter (1995), reiterates that one of the basic tenets of feminism is its rejection of hierarchical authority. She posits that understanding feminism's concern with dispelling hierarchical power relations emanates from the social arrangement that destines women and minorities to the bottom rung of the power ladder. In this article she expresses consternation at seeing herself enacting oppression in her classrooms, not dissimilar to those of her patriarchal predecessors whom she has critiqued for prescribing binary thinking regarding what is 'absolutely right and what is, if different, therefore, absolutely wrong', and by extension, what constitutes intelligence versus ignorance, or thoughtful versus reactionary speech?

In this article Gunter refers to the hate speech uttered by a homophobic male student in her class, and reflects on her struggle of being caught in the irony that feminist teaching, by rejecting teacher authority, often enables students to proclaim the very hate speech that undermines feminist principles of equality, liberation, collaboration, community, and non-violence.

The Gunter article is insightful for my study in that it alerted me to the various conceptions of teacher authority likely to manifest in the classes of the five participants whose lectures I observed. It also sensitised me to the various ways in which feminist teachers who teach to demographically diverse classes respond to students whose cultural and religious ideologies are less than egalitarian, open minded and respectful of difference. Gunter's article is useful in that it illustrates that a feminist teacher does not relinquish her pedagogic authority in the name of encouraging student voice, but encourages critical, creative, analytic dialogue.

In an article titled: *Constructing Feminist Teachers: a complexity of identity,* Ropers-Huilman (1997), documents the struggle over identity politics that feminist teachers in higher education classrooms experience. Basing her discussion on post-structuralist conceptions of identity as multiple, she addresses the following three pivotal themes:

1. teachers' self-representations in terms of their feminist or political/cultural stances;
2. how students and teachers relate identity constructions to classroom authority; and
3. how teachers use their identities and identity constructions as educational tools for understanding and critiquing assumed or constructed identities.

By way of extending the debate on the complexity and multifaceted nature of teacher identity Ropers-Huilman poses the following questions:

- How can we teach for radical change if we don't challenge our students' androcentric readings of literary texts or their classist, sexist, racist, and homophobic discourses as they arise in journals, essays, and class discussions?
- Does challenging these readings and writings necessarily mean denying student subjectivities?
- Can there be a truly `safe space,' in or out of the classroom? Should there be? Is there in our desire for a safe space also a refusal to recognize that our different locations as men or women, as Anglos or people of color, as faculty or as graduate students are and have always been unequal?

Ropers-Huilman's study, which explored feminist teacher identity, resonated with the sensitizing themes ethnicities, race, ages, professional backgrounds, and genders, which I had also identified as important variables in my study. Like Ropers-Huilman, my study is also concerned with the intersection between feminist teacher, her pedagogical ideologies and student-teacher relations. Equally significant for my study is her discussion of the pervasive theme of feminist teacher authority, as it relates to appearance, style of presentation, professional background, age, institutional affiliation, and cultural identity positions.

Adding to the debate on teacher personal as pedagogical tool, Broughton & Potts, authors of the article: *Dissonant Voices: the teacher's 'personal' in women's studies* (2001), were involved in a collaborative project between two UK institutions of higher education during 1997-1999. Based on seminar presentations, the project researched nine feminist educators who boasted extensive experience in teaching women' studies in various institutional settings. The project aimed at exploring a range of issues arising from their teacher and feminist identities. A common theme was the manifestation of the teacher's 'personal' in the teaching-learning encounter. The authors considered the ways in which feminist educators bring the 'self' into the classroom, and ask their students to do likewise. They explored teacher and student 'personation' both as pedagogical strategy, and as material for use in women's studies seminar discussions.

The Broughton & Potts' article was important for my study in that it interrogates a key tenet of feminist pedagogy, regarding the utilization of teacher and student personal as pedagogic tools. The politics and dynamics of difference transmit cautionary signals to teachers working with students racially, and culturally different to them since they impact power relations in complex ways. This is an issue that I presented for comment to the

participants in my study, to ascertain their views on the merits and de-merits of engaging the personal as pedagogic content and strategy in the teaching/learning situation.

An article that does explore more extensively the complexity of working with and across difference, is Reynolds & Trehan's (2001), study: *Classroom as Real World: propositions for a pedagogy of difference*. The authors examine tensions which tutors are likely to experience when they attempt incorporating pedagogies of difference within postgraduate programmes based on participative models. Their discussion identifies ways in which differences might be recognized and valued as a source of learning, and as the basis for understanding confrontation and change. The authors consider three tensions, which they perceived as inevitable when working within frameworks of critical pedagogies. These include tensions between: (i) tendencies to fragmentation and conformity as responses to difference; (ii) tensions between democratic, participative ideals of education and the latent tendency to hierarchy; and (iii) teachers' dilemmas of resolving the contradiction between participative methodologies and the authority inscribed in their pedagogic role. The authors present illustrative incidents to discuss these tensions.

The Reynolds & Trehan article drew my attention to the various likely manifestations of difference in classes espousing critical pedagogies. In providing concrete illustrations of pedagogic tensions and dilemmas that students and teachers experience in classes functioning along egalitarian principles, the article sensitized me to the possibility that democratic intentions do not guarantee democratic outcomes. Structural and political differences surface at every turn in the pedagogic encounter, and while conflict, and creative dialogue is educative, it can also produce social fragmentation, emotional discomfort, and coercion to conformity.

In a chapter titled: *Teaching in Environments of Resistance: toward a critical, feminist, and anti-racist pedagogy,* Bell, Morrow & Tastsoglou (1999), reflect on their individual teaching experiences, inspired by the ideal learning environments described in the literature on critical, feminist and anti-racist pedagogies. The courses Gender, Ethnicity and Migration; Feminist Perspectives on Violence Against Women; and Feminist Methodology and Directed Research, were taught by Bell, Morrow & Tastsoglou at different universities in the Maritime region of Canada. The classes comprised mixed gender, predominantly Euro-Canadian students from working class backgrounds who, in varying degrees, had had prior exposure to feminist and anti-racist discourses.

In critically reflecting on their pedagogical dilemmas Bell, Morrow & Tastsoglou offer the following key lessons they learnt from attempting to enact feminist and critical pedagogical insights in their teaching:

a) the authorization and validation of experience is a crucial form of empowerment for

students, however, to do this is easier when teachers perceive a student's voice to have been marginalized based on their social location, rather than when they are dealing with students whose realities they most wish to challenge (i.e. those of dominant social groups). For example, in the Gender, Ethnicity and Migration course validating the voices of challenging male students was complicated by the fact that affirming their voices might result in negating the teachers' and others' marginalized voices. In addition, authorising only some students' experiences and not others can be problematic for the silencing effect it has, and the antagonistic classroom dynamic it can foster. In this instance the teacher not only has to use her authority to constructively encourage as many voices as possible to speak, but she has also to strive for relations in the classroom that allow for a critique of various positions. But her position is fraught with tension, as she uses her authority in order to deconstruct authority.

b) authorising experience presented the dilemma of how to avoid the dichotomy between personal experience and a structural and political understanding of experience. It challenged the teacher to guard against the classroom becoming simply a space of personal disclosure and support, while resisting to engage issues more critically so as to contribute to theory building and effective intervention strategies.

Bell, Morrow & Tastsoglou's study highlighted several issues pertinent to my study. Primarily, the chapter documents students' resistance to counter hegemonic pedagogies, in relation to course content, and teaching methodologies. Student resistance emanated as a result of variance in teachers' and students' conceptualisation, interpretation and expectations of teaching and learning processes, which were often rooted in differences in teacher-student identities, and their divergent identifications. Several chapters in my study explore teacher identity and their ideological identifications as manifest in the content of the courses they teach. Central to this discussion are the issues of teacher authority, and student autonomy, and the epistemology of experience as a valid source of knowledge.

Synthesis

The studies cited in the review provide analytical markers/sensitising concepts on the recurrent themes that present themselves in research on feminist pedagogies. These include the various guises that power and authority can assume in the feminist classroom. A central

question regarding the concept authority is: how each teacher's authority is constructed by herself, her students, and the university community? These studies illustrate feminist teacher authority as constantly shifting in relation to circumstances and contexts. Despite attempts to divest their classes of hierarchical teacher-student relations, it emerges repeatedly, that feminist teachers cannot completely abdicate their authority because of the institutional obligations they are required to fulfil. Equally significant is the way in which teacher appearance, her style of presentation, professional background, age, institutional affiliation, and cultural identity positions are employed by students, in particular as markers to either submit to teacher authority or to challenge it. In acknowledging the importance of teacher authority, there is also a need to attend to student authority in the class, especially given the potential for asymmetrical power relations among students that may be used adversely against other students who have inadequate socialisation in the codes for participation in student-centred university classes.

Inextricable to the theme of power are the attendant issues of teacher and student positionality and the politics of identity, which impact pedagogic relations in a variety of ways. Sensitizing themes that emerge point to the need to further consider the intersection between feminist teacher, her pedagogical ideologies and student-teacher relations, which are mediated by differences in race, class, gender, language differences, etc. Teaching to demographically diverse classes necessitates teachers to respond sensitively, but pointedly to cultural and religious ideologies especially when these ideologies threaten to sabotage attempts at promoting social justice. Despite the challenges associated with teaching demographically and ideologically diverse classes, drawing on teacher and student experiences for pedagogic purposes is regarded as a valuable source of knowledge, and is credited for bringing insightful reinterpretations of dominant discourses. While the validation of personal experiences of all participants in the teaching and learning dialogue is affirmed, there emerges the call for it to be nestled in a theoretical dialectic that moves narratives of self-disclosure from the realm of the personal into the arena of public discourse and theorising. The intention being to facilitate the interplay of personal voice, the languages of theory and experience, and the construction of multiple identities. There is also mounting support for feminist teachers not to relinquish their pedagogic authority in the name of encouraging student voice, but rather to encourage critical, creative, analytic dialogue. However, while analytic communicative interchanges in heterogeneous classrooms, are likely to produce educative creativity, they also have the potential to engender tensions, and conflict, emotional discomfort, social fragmentation, and coercion to conformity. This in turn may produce students' resistance in relation to course content, and teaching methodologies. There is also a call to view student resistance positively,

and utilise it to engender critical and courageous dialogue, which are consistent with and endemic to feminist pedagogical aims.

Section 3: Multilingualism, Language and Gender

Language Policies in South Africa

Language policies affect a wide range of language related issues from the variety to be used on street signs to major constitutional questions of rights and powers. Language education is the key to understanding many aspects of social organization, including the structure of the labour force, ethnic and linguistic conflict, and the allocation of economic resources. Since education in much of the world is subject to explicit policy decisions by governmental bodies, the impact of the policy approach to solving language problems is starkly visible in language education. Perhaps the most visible demonstration of the effects of language policies is evident in South Africa, where due to Apartheid legislation, the linguistic reality of multilingualism was for many years not officially acknowledged. The linguistic reality that was acknowledged, and which determined language practice in South Africa's institutions (education, administration, business, media), was the colonial bilingualism of English/Afrikaans and later Afrikaans/English. English/Afrikaans bilingualism dominated the period 1795-1948, during which time the British ruled South Africa; this was followed by Afrikaans/English bilingualism from 1948-1994, when the Afrikaners had the reins of government (Kamwangamalu 1998:119-123).

Linguicism has had oppressive effects on the majority of South Africans who in most cases found themselves disadvantaged by their lack of proficiency in the languages of power, English and Afrikaans (Alexander 1995:79). Although the Bantu Education Act of 1953, in accordance with the recommendation of UNESCO and Organisation of African Unity (OAU), advocated mother-tongue tuition in initial education (grades 1-4), following which learners were required to choose either Afrikaans or English as a language of learning, it is generally known that there was vehement protest against it due to the association of Afrikaans with the Apartheid policy of the National Party. Thus, the majority of Black learners opted for English as the medium of instruction (Verhoef 1998:185-186; Kloss 1978; Desai 1992). Mawasha (1996), claims that English became a symbol of empowerment, which indicated the educational, economic, political, and social liberation of Black individuals and communities. This perception of English being the gateway to attaining self-sufficiency and worthiness probably alienated Black people from their indigenous languages and cultures.

With the delegitimisation of Apartheid, and the subsequent birth of democracy in 1994, South Africa has officially become a multilingual state. To celebrate multilingualism as a linguistic reality, South Africa has adopted a multilingual language policy, which has been enshrined in its new constitution. The policy accords official recognition to eleven languages, (viz. English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, TshiVenda, siSwati, isiNdebele, Northern Sesotho, Southern Sotho, isiXhosa, Tswana, and Xitsonga).

According to Webb (1998:143-144), multilingualism is often understood in a quantitative way, for example, knowing three or more languages constitutes individual multilingualism, while the presence of three or more languages in a community is referred to as societal multilingualism. While a quantitative view of multilingualism is regarded as technicist, when multilingualism is viewed qualitatively, it entails the acceptance that people may be different racially, culturally, and linguistically. Engendering a multilingual attitude creates spaces for people rightfully to be different, and to receive recognition for their full humanity. Webb maintains that the spirit of multilingualism is characterised by a specific set of values and norms, which include:

- an acceptance of multilingualism as a national resource,
- a conscious rejection of linguistic and cultural imperialism,
- an acceptance of the equal value of all languages and a respect for their speakers,
- an understanding of people's sensitivity about the socio-psychological meaning of their languages,
- an acceptance of language rights as inalienable,
- a willingness to respond to others in the language they feel most familiar with,
- an understanding of the difficulties people have in acquiring and using a foreign language,
- an accommodation (especially by educators) of people using 'interlanguages' (thus also an acceptance of the legitimacy of local standards), and
- an ability to handle cross-cultural communication.

The antithesis of the spirit of multilingualism is a colonial attitude, which engenders the belief that some languages are better or more effective than others, an attitude typical of communities dominated by a single language.

Official language planning initiatives in post-Apartheid South Africa reflect a concerted effort to ensure a language dispensation that meets the expectations of all stakeholders. The interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 200 of 1993), the establishment of The Pan South African Language Board, and Language Task Group, and the final Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), are but some of the initiatives aimed at

affording official status to the eleven languages, thus promoting multilingualism as an asset for nation-building and democracy. Akinnaso (1989:139), claims that such a policy is driven by an ideological orientation known as the *language-as-a-resource-model,* which sees all languages as potential national resources and respects linguistic and cultural diversity.

Notwithstanding these official measures, it appears that the pursuit of multilingualism in South Africa may be at risk because of the clear tendency towards monolingualism. Despite speech communities' positive attitudes towards multilingualism, preference is given to English. Language planners have suggested that English is likely to be the lingua franca in South Africa during the transition period (Luckett 1995:77). However, according to Verhoef (1998:183), there appears to be an internal tension between *symbolic* and *functional multilingualism,* that is, South African speech communities seem to appreciate the symbolic value of multilingualism, but not its functional value.

It is important to note that the multilingual language policy in South Africa is not implemented in a social or historical vacuum. It is underpinned by a number of ideological undercurrents. Thus, the language policy for education has to be sensitive to the language attitudes of South Africans. According to Luckett (1995:74), the following dominant everyday attitudes, and beliefs to our languages are observable:

First, most South African speakers of the African languages believe that they have been denied proper access to English, yet it is proficiency in English, which unlocks the doors of learning and upward socio-economic mobility. Embedded in the conceptualisation of *language-as-problem,* Young (1995:64), contends that speakers of indigenous South African languages forsake their first languages because they perceive English as being the language of power, upward social mobility, access to learning, employment, and an improved quality of life. African languages are devalued because of the popular belief that they are not suitable for functions such as further education, science, technology, business, law and government. Although a large majority of South Africans are bi-or multilingual, African languages are used only in certain contexts such as the home, the street, religion, sport and local culture; they are most often used to express solidarity and social equality. In contrast, English is used for writing, print, and higher education. Thus, a person's status is often measured by his/her proficiency in English.

In critiquing this view of the status of English, Tollefson (1991:84-85), maintains that the spread of English, and of English Second Language (ESL) teaching, is linked to modernization theory in that, English is seen as a tool for the process of modernization, and monolingualism (preferably English) is seen as a practical advantage for modern social organization. Although there is widespread belief that English is a useful tool to facilitate modernization, it neglects to connect the spread of English with inequality and exploitation. Critics of modernization theory

argue that underdevelopment in some societies is a result of development in others, that is, differences in development emanate from relationships of inequality and exploitation.

According to Luckett (1995:74), a second dominant belief among South African speakers of the African languages is the notion that the best way to gain proficiency in English is to learn English for as long as possible, and the sooner the better. This runs counter to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, which supports the view that the more proficient students are in their first language, the more proficient they will be in their second language (Versveld 1995:26). An important question to be addressed is: if prolonged exposure to English is sufficient for mastery, why then do so many students fail to achieve the proficiency in English necessary for academic success? Some clues to this perplexity can be traced beyond the language itself, to the socio-cultural context in which learning occurs, and is related to the status and validity educational institutions afford to students' languages, cultures, and modes of cognition (Diaz-Rico & Weed 1995:40).

ESL Theories and the Politics of Diversity

Fanon's (1968 in Bryan 1994:98), examination of the psychological damage of colonialism, identifies language as a key instrument in the process by which individuals can become dominated by another culture. He contends that:

> To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilisation.

Fanon construes the function of language as transmission of cultural ideology and values. Thus, language is a primary means by which people express their cultural values, and it is the lens through which they view the world. This conceptualisation of the function of language demands serious consideration in language teaching and learning. Since language learning and teaching occur within social and cultural contexts, in a multilingual society educators need to be sensitive to the differences in students' worldview, learning styles, behaviour, and sense of humour, in verbal and non-verbal communication. To deny or ignore the existence of cultural, ethnic, religious, and other social differences is to undermine their self-concept, and negate their experiences and those of their families and communities.

In an article titled, *I Won't Learn From You/Thoughts on the Role of Assent in Learning*, Kohl (1992 in Mancus 1994:77), discusses the phenomenon of wilful not-learning, often mis-labelled by teachers as failure. Capable people, he argues, sometimes make conscious decisions not to learn from teachers they feel they cannot trust. Kohl describes refusal to learn

as a way of protecting culture, integrity and identity, adding that students exchange failing grades to protect their personal and cultural integrity. He insists that teachers and school systems must be able to discriminate between failure to learn and wilful not-learning. Kohl's solution for wilful not-learning are teachers who are committed to political activism for social justice. When teachers share this commitment with students, a basis of trust is established and learning can take place.

In elaborating on the relationship between language and culture Diaz-Rico & Weed (1995:40-41), explain that students adapt patterns of behaviour in a new language and culture based on experiences from their own culture. For example, a student's success in learning English as a second language is dependent on such extralinguistic factors as the pattern of acculturation for their community; the status of their primary language in relation to English; their own speech community's view of the English language and the English-speaking community; the dialect of English they are hearing and learning and its relationship to standard English; the patterns of social and cultural language usage in the community; and the compatibility between the home culture and the cultural patterns and organization of schools.

In attempting to understand and bridge the gap between culture and language, several theories and models have been developed to address the social and individual factors involved in English second language learning and acquisition.

Lambert's social psychology model (1974), argues that the development of proficiency in a second language has important implications for an individual's self-identity. This is the case since language often emerges as the most important aspect of group members' self-identity. When language proficiency in the second language fosters no need to replace or reduce the importance of the first language, additive bilingualism results and changes in self-identity are positive. When proficiency in the second language entails a threat to the first language, subtractive bilingualism results and may lead to a loss of cultural identity and social alienation. Subtractive bilingualism is often experienced by linguistic minorities who are encouraged to learn a national language as a way of promoting cultural assimilation to the dominant host culture.

Schumann's acculturation model (1978), is concerned mainly with second language acquisition in 'natural,' non-instructional settings such as the street and the playground. Schumann's model alerts us to the importance of a broad range of social, affective, personality, cognitive, and biological factors that could influence bilingual proficiency.

Clement's social context model (1980), places great emphasis not only on the motivation of speakers to learn a language, but also on the cultural milieu and relative group vitalities of the speakers involved in becoming bilingual. Like Lambert's (1974), model, this model also focuses on self-identity changes that occur as a result of learning a second language.

Clement's model was designed to apply in cultural settings where one of the two language communities has a low level of ethnolinguistic vitality relative to the other. *Ethnolinguistic vitality* has been described as that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations. The more vitality an ethnolinguistic group has, the more likely it is to survive as a distinctive linguistic collectivity in multilingual settings, and vice versa.

Giles & Byrne's intergroup model of bilingual proficiency (1982), focuses specifically on the second language acquisition of linguistic minorities. The major construct in this framework is the self-concept, and the major motivating force is one of developing and maintaining a positive social identity. Giles & Byrne propose that *motivation* is central to second language acquisition, and that the *integrative motive* is the strongest form of motivation. Primarily, this model concerns itself with how minorities can maintain their cultural identity while acquiring the language of the dominant majority.

Hamers & Blanc's bilingual development model (1982), analyses the acquisition of bilingual proficiency from a social-development framework, and focuses on bilingual proficiency in the child. Important elements within the model include the *relative value system* and *social networks* of language learners. The model also incorporates the notion of *perceived ethnolinguistic vitality,* the *valorization* of functional and formal aspects of first (L1) and second (L2) language, and the *motivational* process for learning and using L1 and L2 for different language functions. These socio-cultural, social, and motivational factors interact to affect the development of linguistic and communicative competence in the L1 and L2.

Gardner's socio-educational model (1983), incorporates many of the features included in the other models. The major features of the model include the *social milieu, individual indifferences, second language acquisition contexts,* and linguistic and non-linguistic *outcomes* of the learning process. Gardner proposes that four different types of individual differences will directly influence bilingual proficiency: *intelligence, language aptitudes, motivation,* and *situational anxiety.* This model is useful when dealing with minorities who have little choice in deciding whether or not to learn the language of the dominant majority.

Gardner's social process model (1985), describes the above social process models as conceptual formulations concerned less with the linguistic details of language proficiency, and more with the social factors that either motivate or demotivate individuals from learning languages. They focus on individuals' attitudes toward the target language and its speakers; motivational processes for learning and using the target language; the influence of language learning contexts; and linguistic and non-linguistic communicative proficiency.

Bourhis (1990), identifies other SLA and ESL theories that have appropriated accommodation theory in the conceptualisation of: language and social identity, language

attitudes, and inter-ethnic relations. These theories have developed an approach to second language acquisition based on accommodation theory, and have sought to integrate social-psychological and cognitive variables to explain style shifting in second language dialects. For example, the relationship between values, language and cultural differentiation has been examined in the Welsh-English context.

There are a number of more recent SLA theories that emphasise student variables to explain second language acquisition. For instance, one of the most popular attempts to develop a theory of SLA is the Monitor Model of Krashen (in Ellis 1990:56-60). This model claims that comprehensible input is necessary for language acquisition. What is comprehensible is determined by the learner's affective filter. That is, the student must be open to input, which depends on low anxiety, high self-confidence, and positive feelings about speakers of the target language. Tollefson (1991:26-27), observes, like other models of SLA, such research assumes that students' talent, personality, and experience are the keys to successful language learning. In this neoclassical approach to SLA theory causal variables are located within the individual. Tollefson notes that a counter argument to the neoclassical approach in SLA and language policy studies has developed. This counter-tendency referred to as the *historical-structural approach,* aims primarily at locating individual's language choices and actions within the larger political-economic system, with a particular focus on social class.

However, Abu-Lughod (in Tollefson 1991:33-35), a critic of the historical-structural approach, argues against viewing individuals strictly as victims or beneficiaries of historical and structural factors, controlled by forces that leave them no room for creativity, innovation, and choice. He contends that such a view to human decision-making, neglects the role of individual agency in language teaching, learning and planning.

A survey of the SLA theories and models is significant for my study which has a double focus of exploring first, how individual and broader socio structural factors influence the identity construction of the five English language educators in my study, and second, based on their experiences how their linguistic philosophies and ideologies impact on the way they teach English students in multilingual classrooms. As the educators in the study reflect on the factors that have influenced their personal linguistic identities, these serve as conceptual sensitising markers for my examination of how they negotiate differences in students' styles, preferences, attitudes and anxieties, motivation (intrinsic or instrumental) for learning English in linguistically diverse classes.

From the foregoing discussion, it appears that what is required is a more holistic conceptualisation of English second language teaching and learning that would take into consideration both individual learner variables as well as variables located within the macro socio-historical and political structures of society. If we are to avoid replacing racism with

linguicism and classism in a multilingual society such as South Africa, we must adopt a proactive approach that matches the complexity of racism and other biases, and that tackles them on personal, institutional/structural and cultural levels. This poses critical imperatives for English language teaching and learning in South Africa, in order to bridge the gap between language policies, sociolinguistic theories, and educational practice.

Sociolinguistic Theories and Pedagogy

Lyons (1981 in Harrison & Marbach 1994:47), attributes the gap between sociolinguistic theory and educational practice to the fact that linguists and educationists themselves carry the prejudices of particular social, ideological, cultural and geographical backgrounds. Who teaches what to whom? Why? and How? are curricular decisions fraught with political allegiances that confirm the non-neutrality of language pedagogy.

In recent times educational reformers have proposed ways of using the educational system to reduce inequality, change discriminatory values, and attitudes and alleviate social problems. An increasing number of language theorists and practitioners argue that it is essential to address the personal, cultural, and political implications of language teaching if students are to learn. Important questions to be addressed in this regard are, how does the method used for language teaching affect power relationships and student-teacher trust? Do students see the method as helping them meet their own needs, or does the pedagogy require that they function outside, or in opposition to that which is important to them?

According to Carter (1994), a quick glance at the history of English language teaching philosophies and methodologies, unfortunately, shows that it has been preoccupied with grammatical correctness based on normative standards. This has discouraged language variability, in favour of linguistic purity; it has encouraged the memorisation of grammatical rules, and persisted in the prescription of select texts that celebrate classical Western traditions. Agnihotri (1995:4-5), observes that sociological positivism, psychological behaviourism, and linguistic structuralism all demand that oral fluency, accuracy, and a native-like control of the language be learnt. Within these language teaching and learning paradigms, students are increasingly viewed as empty receptacles who can be programmed by the environment to learn the appropriate linguistic codes. Language is construed as a set of structures and the learning process as largely linear and additive.

Agnihotri (ibid.), notes that these are the basic principles, which underlie such celebrated language-teaching methods as the Direct Method and Audiolingualism. The Cognitive Theory reaction to these principles in recent times has simply idealised the concept of a native

speaker. One fortunate consequence of the Cognitive Theory in language teaching is that the student is no longer seen as deficit, but as being equipped with innate abilities and an enormous potential for creativity. However, despite this reconceptualisation of the student, the asocial and apolitical nature of the work in the cognitive sciences and in sociolinguistics undermines the language-teaching enterprise. Even in recent methods and models such as the Monitor Model, the Communicative Approach, the Silent Way, Suggestopaedia, Total Physical Response etc. the dominant mode is still monolingual, and the acquisition of an elite standard still the target.

The pressures of global trade and marketing have only succeeded in worsening the situation in that language learning is becoming increasingly instrumental with the focus on acquiring certain skills. In critiquing this trend Fairclough (1992:6), cautions that:

> … a language education focussed upon training in language skills without a critical component, would seem to be failing in its responsibility to learners. People cannot be effective citizens in a democratic society if their education cuts them off from critical consciousness of key elements within their physical or social environment. If we are committed to education establishing resources for citizenship, critical awareness practices of one's speech community is an entitlement.

In this regard, the notion of communicative competence, which was first proposed by Hymes (1970), has provided great impetus to those linguists, and educators frustrated by the preoccupation with grammatical competence alone. Current theories influenced by Hymes have thus moved away from the merely linguistic components of a language to the more inclusive realm of language, which is concerned with its use in social, political, and psychological domains (Diaz-Rico & Weed 1995:7). Also responding to the narrow focus on grammatical competence, advocates of the Whole Language Approach (McLaughlin 1996: 131-149; Schachter 1990:39-40), maintain that language is learned not from drills and worksheets but, from the active process of seeking meaning, which occurs when language is used for specific purposes. Agnihotri (1995:3), observes that languages are learnt best when the focus is not on language learning. In fact, most children in multilingual societies learn several languages simultaneously since their focus is not on language, but on the messages contained therein. In order for language learning to be successful, the situation needs to be informal; the learner should be free from anxiety; the teacher should essentially be a friend, observer and facilitator; and most of the learning process should be centred on meaningful tasks and peer group interactions. This reconceptualisation of the teacher-student relationship resonates with the non-hierarchical, and dialogical relationship that has become a defining

characteristic of feminist pedagogies. (See Chapter 6, titled: *Exploring the Complexities of Feminist Teacher Identity* for more elaborate discussion on this issue).

While sharing the ideological stance of Communicative Competence and Whole Language learning, the discourse on Critical Language Awareness (Fairclough 1992), extends the debate by making students conscious of the ways in which language is used in the domination, subjugation, and denigration of peoples whose language, culture, gender, race, etc. does not enjoy social prestige and power. Mancus (1994:78), suggests that one way to empower students through critical language awareness is to consider the nature of language as revealed in the social and political history of various languages. By examining language-related issues of class, culture, and domination, students are better able to understand the potential for political and personal conflict which language and literacy learning creates for all those whose language heritage enjoys preferential status. When the study of language pedagogy is applied across the curriculum, what emerges is a personal discovery, a reconstruction of the nature of language, an interrogation and deconstruction of taken for granted linguistic traditions, and the construction of important principles for working effectively and respectfully with diverse populations. In this regard Janks (1993:iii) writes:

> Critical Language Awareness stresses the constructed nature of texts. It suggests that anything that has been constructed can be de-constructed. This unmaking or unpicking of text increases our awareness of the choices that the writer or speaker has made. Every choice foregrounds what was selected and hides, silences or backgrounds what was not selected. Awareness of this prepares the way to ask critical questions: Why did the writer or speaker make these choices? Whose interests do they serve? Who is empowered or disempowered by the language used?

Important debates around socio-linguistics are currently showing that as English becomes ever more a language of international importance it is no longer possible, if it ever was, to think in terms of a 'pure well of English, undefiled'. The strength of English as a world language can be attributed to its capacity to accommodate deviations from parochial notions of 'standard' English, which flout the preservation of linguistic purity (Hayhoe & Parker 1994:xiv).

Carter (1994:21), maintains that the more we reflect on language and on the discourses of society which produce language and views of language - the stronger our own frameworks become for analysing, supporting and developing our students' language and literacy. It requires a constant recognition that language varies and changes, with reference to its place in education.

In drawing attention to the shortcomings of modern English language teaching methods and materials, (which include primarily, Communicative Competence, Whole Language Learning and Critical Language Awareness), Tollefson (1991:99-100), maintains that despite

the widespread belief that these language approaches empower students, they actually reinforce unequal power relationships in two ways, viz.: (1) through the paradoxical situations in which students and teachers are placed, and (2) the distorted manner in which students' lives are depicted.

In elaborating on these paradoxical situations, Clarke & Silberstein (1988 in Tollefson 1991:99-100), explore the rise of *pragmatic paradoxes,* in modern ESL teaching. They postulate that a pragmatic paradox occurs when three conditions are present: individuals in a significant relationship have unequal power; an injunction is issued that cannot be ignored, obeyed, or violated; and the situation cannot be resolved through discussion. When these conditions hold, individuals are in double binds in which it is impossible to act, although action is required. When students are told to take control of the classroom, for instance, they know that the teacher is in charge, and therefore they do not have the power to truly take control of the classroom. Yet, because the teacher is in charge, the students must obey the command to take control.

The distorted manner in which students' lives are depicted is evident in many teaching practices, which place them in paradoxical circumstances on a regular basis. For example, methodologies claim that the best class is one that most resembles 'real life', and so instructors require students to discuss intensely personal topics and experiences, even though the students may feel that the classroom is an inappropriate place for such discussion. However, because the teacher has the power, students may feel 'unfree' to refuse to participate, as they would be in a 'real' discussion outside of class (Tollefson 1991:100). These pragmatic paradoxes highlight the issues of teacher authority, student voice, and disclosure of personal experience, which are underlying tenets of feminist pedagogies. (See Chapter 6, *Exploring the Complexities of Feminist Teacher Identity* for more elaborate discussion on this issue).

Another aspect of the ideological nature of ESL classrooms is the depiction of reality implicit in classroom practices, textbooks, and other curricula material. In surveying the hidden curriculum in ESL, Auerbach & Burgess (1985 in Tollefson 1991), and Auerbach (1986 in Tollefson 1991), found that most texts ignore the economic, political, and social problems that underlie students' educational needs. For instance, lessons on housing emphasize the tenant's (i.e. the student's) responsibility to pay rent, but ignore the landlord's responsibility to maintain health and safety standards. More generally, many ESL classes assume that personal discussions in ESL classes can sufficiently empower students to resolve their major economic and social problems. The emphasis on communicative and humanistic teaching methods creates the illusion that there are simple solutions to educational questions, and that education can resolve major social problems rooted in economic inequality. Thus, teachers

work within institutions in which they have little power, while they seek solutions for problems over which they have little control. This optimism is grounded in the neoclassical assumption that problems and solutions are located in individual students rather than in historical and structural forces largely beyond their control (Tollefson 1991:100-101).

Synthesis

The literature review on SLA and ESL highlights the need to reconceptualise English language teaching and learning so that its role and status in multilingual classrooms is sensitive to differences in student variables as well as the social, historical and political contexts in which learning occurs. Coupled with this is the need to understand that languages are not monolithic. They are social constructions that can be subjected to de-construction, re-construction and co-construction. This supports Janks' (1993:iii), contention that, language should be used to challenge the status quo. She also urges that by refusing to consent and by working collaboratively people can effect positive linguistic transformation. Since transformation cannot be achieved by language awareness alone, as language users we need to focus on the political dimension of meaning: the ways in which dominant meanings are maintained, challenged and changed.

Furthermore, given the divisive history of language policies in South Africa, and despite current democratic language policies that promote multilingualism, the escalating preference for English as a medium of instruction, locates English in a paradoxical role. English has to divest itself of its association with colonialism and slavery, and reinvent itself as a language of socio-economic liberation. In this regard, Carrington (1988 in Bryan 1994; Cele 2000), asserts that it is possible for societies to learn an a-cultural English for the purposes, be they academic, financial or otherwise, and still maintain their own separate cultures. This requires uncoupling English from its colonial past, and infusing indigenous sensibilities in the teaching and learning of English in multilingual classrooms. This entrusts language professionals with the responsibility to explore the ideological foundations of their theories and practices to ensure that they expose the non-neutrality of language, and are sensitive to the cultural and linguistic diversity in their classrooms.

The Feminist Critique of Language

It is often said that the most distinctively human quality we possess is the ability to communicate with each other by means of languages. Linguistic communication is crucial to the organisation of human societies and people with an interest in the workings of any society

must concern themselves with its languages. Feminists are deeply interested in the workings of their societies, since in order to fight their oppression, they must first understand it. Much feminist effort is directed, therefore, to re-analysing society as a patriarchal system, in which language as a patriarchal construct has been crucial in maintaining male supremacy, and ensuring that women remain borrowers of man-made language.

A point of affinity between postmodern feminism and postmodernism is their mutual recognition of the primacy of a language of possibility and critique. Supporting the argument that language is itself a social system subject to cultural and historical variability, feminist writers are employing deconstructionist techniques to analyse phallogocentrism by appropriating the poststructuralist terms of *language* and *differance*. The term, *language* is used to mean not simply words or a set of grammatical rules but, rather, a meaning-constituting system without a basic or ultimate correspondence to the world (Scott 1994:282-284; Graddol & Swann 1989:157-165). The concept of *differance* accepts that any unitary concept contains repressed or negated material established in opposition to another term. Derrida (in Lewis 1995:27), developed the concept *differance* to explain how social identities are defined through the binary logic of language. Unlike difference which refers to the distinction between identities, *differance* captures the way identities are always measured against each other so that they can never be explained in isolation: man, for example, means something only when seen in relation to woman. Opposition rests on metaphors and cross-references, which serve to encode or establish hierarchical dichotomies (Scott 1994:285-286; Stanton 1990:73). Repeatedly, sexual difference, embodied in the culturally determined conceptual couple masculine/feminine; rational/emotional; active/passive have been used to establish meanings that are arbitrarily related to gender or the body (Stanton 1990:73; Lakoff & Johnson 1980:17; Cixous 1994:37-39).

In combining these concerns, feminists have developed a 'critique of language'. The feminist critique of language is really a 'shorthand,' by virtue of its fragmentary and constantly fluctuating ethos. Although critics of research on language and sex portray generic pronouns as the entire issue, the critique is in fact more sweeping. Studies of society and power, in recent years, have focused increasingly on how language reflects and reproduces socio-cultural values, thereby confirming that it is culture and not an independent world of objects that is encoded in language (Dickens & Fontana 1994:8; Chaika 1994:357). This has led feminists, generally, to concur that the study of language is important both for considering how gender hierarchies and identities are maintained, and for strategising challenges against patriarchal hegemony (Graham *et al*. 1992:16; Cameron 1990:1; Lewis 1995:24).

In addressing these challenges, scholars fall into two main groups. The first concerns itself with historical and social change and argues that the 'theft of language' is part of women's

relative powerlessness. Thus, women have been encouraged to rework and subvert traditional forms in order to create women-centred-language and meaning. Such pragmatic and empirical approaches, attentive to daily linguistic usage, dominate thinking about gender in the United States (Thorne *et al*. 1983:230; Jordan & Weedon 1995:200). The second group assumes the existence of a naturally different female/feminine language. In drawing close ties between symbolic structure and experience the voices of certain American feminists harmonize with those of contemporary French feminists such as Cixous, Kristeva, Irigaray and Wittig, who regard language both as 'critical restraint and release' (Thorne *et al*. 1983:11; Cameron 1990:1; Jordan & Weedon 1995:200). Although there are crucial differences among French feminists, they share an intellectual and political tradition anchored in existentialism, Lacanian psychoanalysis and post-structuralism. Arguing that women's oppression/repression is embedded in phallogocentrism and that our perceptions of the real are but a manifestation of the male constituted symbolic order, they are determined to inscribe women's experiences in language and thought, not through altering specific usages such as sexist pronouns (which the French see as minor repairs), but through relating language to the unconscious and to the body (Stanton 1990).

Cameron (1990:3), notes that from such diverse perceptual perspectives, feminist writers on the subject of language return to the exploration of three major themes:

- behavioural differences in language, (their relation to male dominance and female culture);
- the silencing and exclusion of women from language, (which also raises the question of finding an authentic female voice); and
- naming or representation, (in which the meaning of gender is constructed and contested).

In the following discussion, I explore these themes.

Dominance and Difference: power and culture in women's linguistic behaviour

Historians of folklinguistics have unearthed interesting findings about language and gender differences, and purport that there appears to be a long received perception that women and men differ significantly in their linguistic usage. The differing styles of language, particularly speech, used by women and men, apart from providing another perspective on women's exclusion from some areas of language, also highlight cultural representations of the feminine (Cameron 1990:20-21). Feminists concerned with socialization processes confirm that an individual's speech reflects culturally learnt identities. Such a socio-linguistic focus has now

become linked to a feminist critique of gendered roles and socialization (Crawford 1995; Boois 1993; Lewis 1995:25; Coates 1986; Andersen 1988:194-196). Coates (1986:156-157), argues that children acquire not only gender-appropriate behaviour, but also knowledge of the folk linguistic beliefs of our society. Expressions such as ‘little girls don’t say that’ mean that children are taught the gender-appropriateness of some linguistic terms. As happens with other features of child language, when a rule is learnt it is frequently over-generalised, so it seems that children over-generalise the rule for gender-appropriate language and treat such differences as gender-exclusive rather than gender-preferential.

This analysis of gendered linguistic practices has led anti-feminists to argue that since women speak differently from men, men and women must naturally be unequal and different. While it would be shortsighted to deny the gendered patterns in particular speech communities, the uses to which such findings may be put are often disturbing. Linguist Jespersen (1990:201-219), for example, 'castigated women for their lack of innovation', calling their language 'languid and insipid', and referred to men as 'the chief renovators of language'.

Faced with such a skewed reality, a feminist critique could respond severally to the criticism of gendered linguistic practice. One option being to challenge the stereotypes, but the contemporary feminist critique has accepted that stereotypes may contain a measure of truth. It has therefore settled for the reinterpretation of what stereotypical behaviour means. This reinterpretation has assumed two distinct forms embodied in the *dominance* and *difference* paradigms (Cameron 1990:23; Ting-Toomey & Korzenny 1989:228-229; Tannen 1994). The d*ominance* approach retains a traditional, negative evaluation of women's language. Viewing women as an oppressed group, it interprets linguistic differences in women's and men's speech in terms of men's dominance and women's subordination and contends that although females and males may use the same linguistic resources, they utilize them in different ways (Andersen 1988:201). Early research considered talk to be simply an index of identity: one of many behaviours learned through socialization and forming part of men's and women's different social roles and positions in a patriarchal society. However, recent reconceptualization of gender rejects this theory and argues that gender is better understood as a system of culturally constructed relations of power, produced and reproduced in interaction between and among men and women. Language is manipulated to service patriarchal ideology, thereby ensuring that women remain 'borrowers of the man-made English language' (Gal 1991:176). Lakoff (1981: 60-67), in her investigation, acknowledges female linguistic *inadequacies* as pointed out by people like Jespersen; but she explains them in political and cultural terms, rather than simply as natural sex differences. She maintains that, 'women are forced to learn a weak, trivial, and deferential style as part of their socialization, which is essentially training in how to be subordinate'. She regards women's style as being

indicative of their relative powerlessness in patriarchal society. However, Lakoff erroneously identifies the differences between men and women's speech as differences between men and women's language. In her analysis of the speech of women, Lakoff concluded that the tentativeness, hesitancy, incomplete sentences, descriptions, hyperbole, euphemisms, quotes, the use of the passive voice, and tag questions cumulatively contribute towards rendering women's speech lacking in assertiveness, conviction and confidence. Even women's co-operative, consensus-reaching linguistic strategies (Fishman 1990:234-240), have been described as indecisive and lacking in authority. The speech of men, on the other hand, is seen as powerful, authoritative and confident because it is full of instructions and commands. Men choose the topic of conversation (often politics or sport), control its direction, avoid the personal, interrupt at will and are perceived as forceful, decisive and in control (Andersen 1988:202-203; Lee 1992:122). Men use shorter sentences, slang, the active voice, are experienced at rhetoric (persuasion) and paraphrase - and this is valued because of the powerful positions they officiate in patriarchal society. Their lower pitched voice is viewed as authoritative while the higher pitch of women is viewed as emotional, irrational and hysterical. One common claim is that women's speech is more emotive, impulsive and rambling while men's is considered relatively direct, unadorned, rational and logical. The *difference* approach, on the other hand, emphasises the idea that women and men belong to different subcultures. In linguistic terms, the differences in women and men's speech are interpreted as reflecting and maintaining gender-specific subcultures. This approach seems to be a reaction against women's invisibility and their treatment as a minority group in patriarchal culture (Coates 1986:12-13). The difference paradigm acknowledges that women use language in a different way from men, and perhaps exactly as stereotypes suggest, but it celebrates this positively (Lee 1992:121). Interpreting it as an authentic manifestation of a female culture, women are now asserting that they have a different voice, psychology, and experience of love, work and the family from men. The implication is that women can cease from assessing things by the chauvinistic male bureau of standards. The features labelled trivial and differential now emerge as women-centred, and supportive (Cameron 1990:24).

Both the *dominance* and *difference* paradigms seem to yield valuable insight into the nature of gender differences in language. According to Coates (1986:13), many socio-linguists have adopted a compromise position while simultaneously maintaining a healthy scepticism about the actual facts concerning male and female use of language. Fruitful further discussion requires sifting through the stereotypes to ascertain their validity. Researching actual behaviour is also vital in so far as it confirms that 'women' and 'men' are heterogenous groups; class, ethnic, and cultural divisions signal important differences among them (Spivak 1994: 103; Cameron 1990:24).

Linguistic differences are quantitative not absolute. For example, linguists have found that women in a number of communities tend to make more use of hedges like: 'sort of, y'know, well,' than men. This is seen as a sex- preferential speech tendency, rather than a 'genderlect', and does not warrant the development of a separate women's language (Cameron 1990:24; Andersen 1988:205; Lee 1992:120).

Both the *dominance* and *difference* perspectives are valuable for the theoretical and political insight they offer. At a theoretical level, they encourage an appreciation of women as complex social beings whose speech styles may appear as either a strategy for negotiating powerlessness, or as reflective of their alignment with alternative, women-centred values. At a political level, each approach underpins important strategic options. One strategy feminists have used is to develop more assertive styles, to prevent being constantly interrupted and ignored in verbal encounters. Yet confrontational, unsupportive styles of discourse, common in public arenas are not always appropriate. Apart from being destructive to group solidarity and a spirit of democracy, they also hinder the achievement of collective goals. As is typical of feminist politics, two differing approaches become complementary, urging a linguistic intervention and appropriation that promote gender sensitivity (Cameron 1990:26).

Despite what has always been said about women and their speech, feminists have encouraged women to resist being defined in terms of their sexual relations to men. Coupling such resistance with efforts to find an authentic women's voice in culture is the theme that I explore in the following discussion.

Speech and Silence: the quest for a female voice in culture

There is an old belief that women talk too much. English literature is saturated with characters who substantiate the stereotype of the talkative woman (Coates 1986:35; Chaika 1994:376). The flip side of the coin is the image of the silent woman, often held up as the ideal: making silence synonymous with obedience. The idea that silence is the desired state for women is supported by the theory of ‘muted groups’ proposed by anthropologists, Shirley & Edwin Ardener. They argue that in any society there are dominant modes of expression, belonging to dominant groups within that society. If members of a ‘muted group’ want to be heard, they are required to express themselves in the dominant mode. While muted groups are not necessarily silent, their muteness means that they have difficulty making themselves heard because they are silenced by rules laid down by the dominant group. Yet, regardless of gender, language is in a sense the birthright of every human being. However, some forms of linguistic activity are probably associated more with women than with men. These include gossip, (see Jones 1990:

242-248), storytelling, private letters, and diaries. This list of 'female genres are valuable in indexing the constitution of women's silence' (Coates 1986:35). As private forms of language, they wield little or no currency in the public domain. Studies on the cultural links between speech and power show that some linguistic strategies and genres are decorated with greater value and authority than others (Cameron 1990:4; Gal 1991:175-177). Since women's speech is treated so contemptuously, we find that in society's most prestigious linguistic registers, (religious ceremonial, political rhetoric, legal and scientific discourse), women's voices are for the most part silent or rather silenced. It is not that women do not speak, often they are explicitly prevented from speaking, either by social taboos, custom or practice. For example, according to Coates (1986:35-36), sacred ritual silence may be imposed on women in synagogues, and in Greece, after weddings, secular social rituals require women to be silent.

Struggles about gaining a women's voice in public life, draw attention to a clichéd and influential metaphor currently circulating in social discourse. Terms such as 'women's language,' 'voice,' or 'words' are generally used not only to designate everyday talk but also to denote the public expression of a particular perspective on self and social life, rather than accepting patriarchal representations. It is in this broader sense that feminist historians have rediscovered women's words. Here 'word' becomes a synecdoche for 'consciousness'. Similarly, the terms *silence* and *mutedness* are used not only in their conventional sense as an inability or reluctance to create utterances, but also as the failure to produce one's own separate, socially significant discourse (Gal 1991:177). It is particularly in the second context that feminists have strained to shatter the silence barrier and to orchestrate women's realities. In western societies, silence is generally deplored, because it is construed as a symbol of passivity and powerlessness. Those who are denied speech cannot make their experiences known, and consequently cannot influence the course of their lives or of history (Stanton 1990:77). While severing the Gordian knot of women's silence, and exclusion, many studies exploring the links between linguistic practices, power and gender have shown that in certain contexts, silence and inarticulateness are not necessarily signs of powerlessness (Gal 1991:175-176). For example, the masculine strategy of stressing silent strength and the masking of emotions is very prevalent in western culture. Male inexpressiveness is linked to the positions of power and prestige that men are socialised to aspire to. Exuding the aura that all one's behaviour emanates from unemotional rationality is strategic in exercising power (Gal 1991:189-196).

Apart from patriarchal endeavours to hinder, ignore and denigrate women's speech, writing and particularly the production of literature, subjects them to a different set of exclusions. Like most technologies it has been male dominated. Thus, illiteracy in global and historical terms has been crucial in silencing women and denying them opportunities for

creative expression (Cameron 1990:5-6; Coates 1986:28-29; Penelope 1990:xxvii). Though literacy is an obvious prerequisite for women's writing, illiteracy has not been its only obstacle. Often women have alluded to the lack of economic independence and the practical and psychological difficulties of writing while keeping the home fires burning. Even those women who have had the time and means to write have encountered barriers and incitements to silence (Cameron 1990:6; Kaplan 1986).

Furthermore, bent on monopolising the role of narrator, sons of patriarchy have systematically and incessantly excluded women and their contributions from the stories of science and history. Thus, feminist historians have urged the redistribution of the narrative field to recover *herstories*, craft new meanings to re-form social memory, and to narrate women's stories with fresh insight (Smith-Rosenberg 1986:32).

In addition, many women have also felt constrained to keep silent about specifically female experiences and concerns. The pressure to avoid discussing female experience is not confined to the literary domain. Initially, consciousness-raising groups aimed at politicising the personal by discussing and testifying to socially taboo subjects like incest and backstreet abortion (Cameron 1990:6-7; Coates 1986:8).

Thus, central to the feminist analyses of women's silence has been the quest for an authentic 'women's language' or 'feminine writing'. Feminists in some traditions have questioned whether it is adequate for women to speak and write as men do? They argue that a passport into literature and culture only on condition that we accept conventional, masculine ways of expressing ourselves, is tantamount to trading in one silence for another (Cameron 1990:7). In lamenting the plight of the literate woman, Woolf (in Coates 1986:29), bemoaned:

> But it is true that before a woman can write exactly as she wishes to write, she has many difficulties to face. To begin with, there is the technical difficulty - so simple, apparently; in reality, so baffling-that the very form of the sentence does not fit her. It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman's use ... And this is a woman who must make for herself, altering and adapting the current sentence until she writes one that takes the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it.

The idea popular among many feminist literary critics in the seventies and eighties was the urgency to find ways of writing, which acknowledged and embodied women's difference. 'Difference' in women's writing does not only refer to what is written about, but also the language in which it is written. For many women, the kind of writing that addresses female sexuality and experiences requires a new form of language (Lewis 1995:26; Moi 1985).

French feminists, in particular, have pursued this line of argument. Irigaray (1993:94-100), claims that the 'style and grammar of the written sentence is irredeemably male', and

urges a new 'feminine syntax'. Both Kristeva (1994:45-51), and Irigaray (1993), have argued for the development of a language linked to the maternal and to the uniqueness of female sexuality, while Cixous (1994:78-93), encourages women to 'write their bodies'.

In the writing of many women influenced by these ideas, there is a challenge to the notion of rational discourse, an interest in toying with language forms so that its less rational aspects, like puns and parapraxes, are foregrounded. Feminists subscribing to these views insist that 'feminine writing' done by either sex is progressive because it challenges essential patriarchal myths about rationality and unity (See Cameron 1990:10).

This strand in the feminist critique of language is based on the writings of Jacques Lacan (1994:37-44), in which language constitutes a 'symbolic order'. Lacan argues that it forms the cornerstone of culture, and it is as the child acquires language that s/he becomes a cultural being. But language acquisition is affected by gender because in a patriarchal culture the most privileged symbol or signifier is the phallus. Hence, the fallacy that those who do not possess the phallus should remain marginal to language; in the culture but not entirely of it.

In prophesying doom over the pragmatic empiricism of American feminist criticism, French feminists regard any enterprise for equality within the Logos, as a reinstantiation of the dominant phallocentric order (Stanton 1990:78). American feminists, on the other hand, have criticized the development of 'feminine writing' on the following grounds: first, apart from disagreeing over the meaning of 'women's experiences' they express concern over the extent to which women's experiences derive from natural, biological/sexual differences or from cultural norms. They argue that although French feminists reverse the patriarchal values attached to male and female language and experience, they create sharply dichotomized worlds thereby reproducing gender binarism: an ancient oppressive patriarchal strategy (Lewis 1995:26-27; Cameron 1990:10-11).

Second, 'feminine writing's' thematic preoccupation with the body, sexuality, and irrationality is closely related to traditional anti-feminism, in which women are identified with sex, the body, and passion, while men are identified with reason and the mind. In this regard, de Beauvoir recommends that reason and emotions should not be gendered. Rather the whole spectrum of human possibilities should be opened to humanity (See Cameron 1990: 11).

Finally, Sellers (1991:37-38), points out that much of the feminist project of Irigaray *et al*. misconceives the nature of language. Irigaray's vision of a totally different language, outside the grammatical structures we know, cannot be an actual possibility because as a social practice, language is grounded in history. Whatever changes in perception and expression collectively effected, we will always be saddled with an historical linguistic baggage.

By accepting the characteristic diversity of feminist discourse, feminists caught in the linguistic cross-fire can contribute more meaningfully if they first, systematically interrogate the prevalent empiricist notion that linguistic change follows rather than determines social change, and second, combine pragmatics with theoretical speculations thereby 'bridging the Franco-American logocentric divide' (Stanton 1990:81).

Terminating the silence and oppression of women is integral to feminism, an achievement that can be realised by empowering women to be producers and not consumers or victims of discriminatory socio-linguistic practices. The objective of such resocialization being to create a society that is gender sensitive and equitable.

Naming and Representation

I have discussed women's aspirations to be speakers and writers in all domains of culture, I now consider a slightly different issue: not women speaking but women spoken about. Were it simply the case that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, we would have no offence with the use of certain terms to define and describe human beings and their experiences, but as Farganis (1994b:113-114), points out that even as a technical language affects understandings of actions; a gendered language structures our perceptions of people. Contrary to the assurance given in the old nursery rhyme that, 'Sticks and stones may break our bones/But words can never hurt us', sexist language is a crude weapon that has been used to bruise, injure, denigrate and oppress women, and marginalized *Other*. Scott (1994), points out that:

> ... language broadly understood, matters because of the role it plays in constructing and communicating cultural practices. Language and discourses, texts and the like, construct what kind of women exist, and women themselves can use the power of discourse, language and texts to construct their own lives.

Names as a cultural invention are employed in codifying what will actually constitute reality. Many feminist linguistic critiques have specifically concerned themselves with analysing naming and representation conventions. They have concluded that generally our languages are sexist: they represent or name the world from a masculine perspective in accordance with stereotyped beliefs about the sexes (Cameron 1990:12; Graddol & Swann 1989:90; Andersen 1988:187; Ross-Munro:1987). Although most contemporary linguists reject or express scepticism about strong determinist theses, a number of strands in the feminist critique of language concur first, that many languages act as a fortress for sexist assumptions which are underpinned by a naturalized semantic or grammatical rule whereby male is positive and

superordinate and female is negative and subordinate (Cameron 1990:13; Boois 1993). The second reason has been linked to the fact that rules and meanings have literally been 'man made': women have been excluded from naming and definition, and it is insightful to understand how this exclusion accounts for existing sexist expressions, and also for the absence of words (lexical gaps) to describe certain feelings and ideas that are extraneous to the official man-made worldview (Cameron 1990:13; Mills 1991:xiii; Graddol & Swann 1989: 99). The pervasiveness of sexist language became a focal challenge for feminist in the 1970's. Feminists showed that language as a transmitter of cultural beliefs perpetuated dichotomised gender stereotypes. In this regard, interest in linguistic gendering focused mainly on vocabulary: the use of individual words to define gender roles and statuses. Of major concern was the use of the he/man generic, to refer to both male and female subjects. What has subsequently been dubbed 'pronoun envy' is actually a protest against the social and psychological exclusion of women by installing man as the official representative of human beings (Lewis 1995:24). Penelope (1990:xvi), argues that for centuries prescriptive grammar has served men's agenda for linguistic colonisation.

> Like the cars and boats that men possess, English is referred to as if it were female-the ‘mother tongue’. Men will tolerate only proper women and proper English. Linguistic deviance, like social deviance, must be suppressed or forced into conformity. Mother-tongue is seen as a damsel in distress and men must rescue her from contamination to maintain linguistic purity.

Incensed by such patriarchal persistence to propagate phallogocentric deception, feminist linguists are enthusiastic to debunk disempowering linguistic practices. Hence, their preference for figurative genres such as metonymy, euphemisms and the metaphor. For example, in rejecting etymological oppression, (that is, the charge that the ancient roots of ordinary English words by themselves render those words oppressive), it traces sexism in language to metaphoric identification. Proceeding from the premise that metaphors often express attitude, there is a claim that the metaphors implicit in sexist language express attitudes of contempt and disdain towards women. Among the more familiar categories of metaphorical identification employed are: animal terms, toy terms (doll), juvenile terms (babe, sis), food terms (tart, crumpet), as well as more explicit sexual and/or anatomical terms (Andersen 1988:189).

Schulz (1990:134-145), provides an insightful and extensive coverage of the semantic derogation and devaluation of women, indicating that words originally neutral in both meaning and sex reference assume pejorative connotations when used in reference to women. For instance 'tart' (an affectionate person) and 'spinster' (a spinner) have been devalued into 'prostitute' and 'old maid'. In addition, there are over 220 words to describe women of 'ill-repute' in the English language as opposed to 20 for men (Graddol & Swann 1989:110; Mills

1991:xv). Words like 'lord', 'king', 'master' and ‘sir’ have remained words of power whereas 'lady', 'queen' and 'mistress' have all suffered devaluation.

English words typically name, define, and divide the patriarchal universe into two unequal, stereotypical spheres, one female and the other male (Baron 1986:1), for example: ‘waiter/ waitress, cosmos/cosmetic, grammar/glamour’ (ibid.:38), where the first term is accorded primacy. Following the patriarchal dichotomy of sex-based task assignment, the inside of a house becomes the female realm, and the outside, the male sphere of activity. Ranking marriage as the ultimate destiny of women patriarchal priorities diarise the nuptial ceremony as being a more important event for women than for men. Hence, the word ‘bride’ appears in: bridesmaid, bridal gown, bridal attendant, and even ‘bridegroom’. The word groom does not appear in any of the words pertaining to weddings except for bridegroom (Adams & Laurikietis 1976:29).

Faced with a biased and sexist lexical heritage, many feminists in the 1980's resorted to a policy of affirmative action by engaging in their own critical re-writings of feminist dictionaries and other works of vocabulary (Kramarae & Treichler 1990:148-158). In this area attention was being drawn to the authoritarian and sexist nature of malestream *(sic)* lexicography (Cameron 1990:20). Lexical forms like *malestream* (as a substitute for mainstream), *herstory* (as a substitute for history) registers defiance against a received androcentric lexicography (Coates 1986:30). Such revisioning of 'neutral' words highlights the androcentricity of the written Logos, and its cultural representations. This substantiates the view that women have had their identities and experiences defined for them. There is an increasing sensitivity to the inherent power hierarchy inscribed by the generic masculine, and many language users consciously employ non-gendered referents like, humanity, person or an inclusive s/he pronoun reference.

The argument that linguistic renovation is trivial and cosmetic because *real* feminist struggles need to be waged over material relationships and concrete sexist practices ignores the impact of language as a material social practice. It dilutes, for example, the role that language plays in a child's acquisition of social identity (Lewis 1995:24; Coates 1986:156-157). However, sexist language should not be dismissed as just a matter of certain words being offensive. It is better understood as occurring in a number of quite complex systems of representation, embedded in historical traditions. The battle against sexist vocabulary must be seen as part of a broader political struggle against the subtle naturalization of gender entombed in stereotypes (ibid.).

Our ways of talking about things reveal attitudes and assumptions that testify to the deep-rootedness of sexism. An example of this is evident in the following two reports, cited in Cameron (1990:16-17), involving a married couple whose house was broken into:

> A man who suffered head injuries when attacked by two men who broke into his home in Beckenham, Kent, early yesterday, was pinned down on the bed by intruders who took it in turns to rape his wife. (Daily Telegraph).
>
> And
>
> A terrified 19-stone husband was forced to lie next to his wife as two men raped her yesterday. (Sun).

The above reports show that we are dealing with a 'discursive practice'. There are a number of linguistic features, which support the interpretation that the reports are making rape into a crime against the man by foregrounding his experience. The sequencing of events creates the impression that the rape itself was less appalling than the fact that the husband was forced to witness it (ibid.). This kind of analysis shows the limitations of considering sexism in representation exclusively in terms of specific single words or expressions. The report contains no generic masculines or overtly derogatory descriptions, just a series of syntactic and textual preferences that construct an androcentric worldview (Lee 1992:111). These examples stress the need for us to recognise the human agency in constructing and changing linguistic practice. Cameron (1990), recommends that this is especially important because:

> ... some ways of talking about language portray it as a sort of triffid: an organic growth that develops a life and will of its own. This might be a useful image for discussing certain processes ... but it is hardly applicable to the linguistic representation of gender. We need to look at languages as cultural edifices whose norms are laid down in things like dictionaries, grammars, and glossaries-all of which have historically been compiled by men, and conservative men at that.

In certain strands of opposition to the feminist critique of language we find a retreat from political action. Such political quietitude requires remediation through an acknowledgement that the conventions of naming and representation have been socially and historically constructed, they can therefore be de- and re-constructed. Increased sensitivity to the non-neutrality of naming and representation; our notions of the naturalized dichotomies of the masculine and feminine, the active and the passive, need to be challenged and changed.

Synthesis

What was previously accepted with passive reverentiality in our linguistic usage has become the terrain for the negotiation of meaning. This consciousness-raising process towards

developing critical language awareness would confront disempowering linguistic practices that have nurtured gender discrimination. Such awareness is the first step towards self and social emancipation because it encourages us to interrogate the apparently monolithic authority of phallogocentrism thereby debunking time-honoured myths about gender naturalization. When language users recognize the highly fluid nature of linguistic categories, and begin engaging collectively in using language in a consciously critical, sensitive and confident way will we contribute to the continuing struggle against phallogocentrism. Such an empowerment enables us to reconceptualise rather than just add in women's meanings to a patriarchal world and language.

The relationship between English teaching and feminism is not an easy one to tease out. While the discourses on feminism, and multilingualism share the common interest and social vision of inclusivity and egalitarianism, Perumal (2000), notes that English language teaching from a feminist perspective embedded the following tensions: feminist pedagogy is an oppositional discourse that occupies marginal status in relation to mainstream pedagogy; on the other hand, English enjoys premium status. It is seen as a gateway to upward social mobility. In multilingual contexts, such as South Africa, the acquisition of English is much sought after because of its instrumental value. This is especially so among students who hail from marginalized/disprivileged communities whose native languages have been devalorised, and denigrated. The feminist English language teacher is thus placed in the delicate position of:

a) negotiating her/his own status in relation to the inherent hierarchical power dynamic that characterises teacher-student relationships;
b) negotiating a relationship whose delicacy is further accentuated if his/her students come from marginalised race, class, and language communities.

English teaching occurs within stratified institutions where structural distinctions are always drawn between teachers, and the taught. Feminism depends upon identifying oppression through the sharing of women's experience and so turns the personal into the political. According to Moss (1995:157), English teachers may encourage personal expression, through the accommodation of student personal voice and experience as pedagogic content and strategy, but how and where that translates into political action is not very clear. Different things happen to the category 'personal' in the context of the class and within broader social structures. Given these kinds of contradictions, Moss contends that it is perhaps not surprising that English classes have seldom looked like consciousness-raising groups, even when gender issues are being most strenuously addressed.

Moss (ibid.:158), points out that it may be argued that feminism may already be represented in the English classroom, in the form of anti-sexist strategies. She, however, argues that anti-sexism is not synonymous with feminism. It remains one particular strand in feminist thinking, one that, in the context of English teaching has been appropriated to fit existing approaches rather than constitute a challenge to them. For example, many English Departments have reviewed the kinds of literature they offer in courses. There has been a sustained effort to feminise the English curriculum by including texts authored by females, and books with female central characters. While anti-sexism has been appropriated within existing approaches in English teaching, it leaves intact many of the existing assumptions that English teachers already make, about their students, the English language, and English curricula material. Feminism has much to offer English teaching, because it raises questions not just about course content, but also about pedagogical practices and relationships. By examining who teaches what, why and how, and the pedagogical and epistemological power differentials they engender, educators who teach English language from a feminist perspective are provoked to interrogate the taken-for-granted practices, procedures and pedagogic patterns that prevail in their classes.

In an attempt to familiarise myself with the *ledge on which we stand* in this chapter I have surveyed the received theoretical narratives and paradigms that define the discourses on identity politics, feminist pedagogy, and language and gender. Having acquainted myself with the general currency of thinking in these discourses I extrapolate aspects of general theory, to guide the research design, and data collection and production processes. In this regard, the purpose of this chapter resonates with principles of grounded theory. When employing principles of grounded theory, Layder (1993:206), suggests that the researcher ask the following questions:

- will a specific background concept help to stimulate my theoretical thinking about the area or problem in question?
- will it help me to come up with further ideas, hypotheses, concepts, etc?
- will it help me organise the empirical data at my disposal?

Thus, this literature review chapter serves as an initial sounding board to stimulate ideas and concepts. It also serves as a retrospective framework for organising and analysing the data. I return repeatedly to this chapter for concept clarification, concept redefinition, concept recontextualisation, concept exemplification (that is the enactment/manifestation of theoretical concepts), and for theory elaboration (establishing an explanatory dimension to the data produced for this study).

In the following chapter, *Methodological Ruminations,* I pursue a similar line of thinking. I survey the methodological insights (that is the theory of methods) of feminist and narrative research with a view to extrapolating sensitising concepts for employment in the data collection, production and analysis processes.