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Enacting Feminisms in Academia

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bleed
and the blood red earth
is your mirror
weep
and the soil erodes
with your sorrow

write
and the ground beneath you
grows fertile
with hope

she has written
and she says
it moved her

it pierced
a forsaken place
with sharp words
searchlighting
gargantuan pain

cut open the words
spill the juices
of your hidden longings

Every Woman who writes is a Survivor
Hammar (in Kitson 1994:44).

Chapter Three
Insider and Outsider (Re)presentations

Because the story of our life, becomes our life
because each of us tells the same story differently
and none of us tells it the same way twice …
and though we listen only haphazardly, with one ear,
we will begin our story with the word and …

Mueller (1980 in Wagner-Martin).

Introduction

This chapter commences with a brief discussion regarding conceptions of autobiography, realism and postmodernism. It also presents the schedule of questions/issues that guided the participants in their autobiographical essay writing. It then proceeds to present the discussion in four sections. It does so by drawing on Merriam's (1998), checklist, which identifies elements likely to be present in any research 'setting'[1]. Merriam (ibid.), recommends being alert to the following:

1.*The physical setting:* What is the physical environment like? What is the context? What kinds of behaviour is the setting designed for? Section One, titled: *Partial Institutional Sketch,* provides a historical and contextual overview of the educational institutions at which each participant teaches. I refer to this as 'outsider representations'. These institutional sketches are based on information obtained from Internet sources, and information brochures obtained from the Public Affairs Offices of the respective universities.

2. *The participants:* Describe who is in the scene, how many people, and their roles. What brings these people together? Who is allowed here? Who is not here who would be expected to be here? What are the relevant characteristics of the participants? In Section Two, titled: *Profile of Research Participants,* I present the autobiographical essays written by the research participants. I refer to this as 'Insider Representations'. In the essays the participants reflect on the contiguous variables that shape their feminist and socio-linguistic identities, which in turn informs their teaching of English in multilingual tertiary institutions.

[1] I use the term 'setting' to refer to the metaphorical, ideological, temporal and spatial processes in which the research participants are implicated.

In order to facilitate reference to the essays in the analysis chapters, I have numbered and bracketed the paragraphs in bold font. Apart from that minor inclusion, the essays are presented in the manner the participants sent them to me, after they had edited and effected whatever changes we deemed necessary. Although the study did not identify students as a unit of analysis, this section also provides a descriptive sketch of the student demographics of those enrolled for the courses/modules/papers that the research participant were teaching at the time of lecture observation.

3. *Activities, interactions, and conversation:* What is going on? Is there a definable sequence of activities? How do the people interact with the activity and with one another? How many people and activities are connected or interrelated-either from the participants' point of view or from the researcher's perspective? What norms or rules structure the activities and interactions? What is the content of conversations in this setting? Who speaks to whom? Who listens? What are the informal and unplanned activities, nonverbal communication, etc. In Section Three, titled: *Overview of Course Taught, Classroom Activities and Reflections* (outsider representations) contain my descriptions of the micro (classroom) contexts in which the lecture observations were conducted. I describe the classroom activities and the interactional and dialogical relations between teachers and their students. In this section, I present an outline of the courses that each participant was teaching during the time of this study, with special mention of texts and theories being studied, and a summary of discussions entered into during the period under observation. The section concludes with a brief reflection by the participants on the trials, traumas and triumphs of teaching in demographically diverse tertiary institutions in Southern Africa. The section also contains a summary from the interviews outlining the objectives the participants hope to achieve in their courses, reflections on teaching at the institutions that they do, and their impressions and relationships with their students.

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

Framing the Autobiographical Essay

In attempting to excavate the socio-linguistic and feminist identity constructions of the participants, they were presented with a series of questions to guide in the writing of their essays. The following questions were presented to them:

- What influences from childhood and early family life shaped your personal, political, intellectual development?
- What influence has your age, class, culture, race, religion, ethnicity, linguistic background, had on your identity formation?
- What programmes, activities, consciousness-raising groups provided the initial impetus for the development of your feminist and multilingual interests?
- How has this affected your interpersonal relationships with family, friends, and academic-institutional colleagues?
- What theories/theorists influence(d) your thinking about feminism and multilingual teaching?
- What are your personal theories regarding feminist and multilingual teaching and learning?
- What are the defining characteristics that inform the feminist ideologies/language teaching philosophies that you subscribe to?
- What impact did feminism have on your view of yourself and how does this affect your conceptualisation of multilingual teaching?
- Have you written any academic or mainstream articles/papers that capture your theoretical/philosophical world-view on feminism and/or language teaching?

The autobiographical essay, which serves as the primary data source for this study is not without its methodological shortcomings. In the following section, I briefly explore the nature of (auto) biography as a precursor to presenting the insider representations.

Realism, Postmodernism and (Auto)biography

Both autobiography and biography strive to present the subject in a serious manner, to tell the 'truth' about the subject, as honestly and openly as possible. Taylor (1991 in Roos 1994), suggests that in an autobiography the author endeavours to present her life as directly, naturally, and realistically as possible.

While generic definitions of autobiography describe it simply as the writing of one's own story, Maclure (1993:331), cautions that it is clearly more complex. The autobiography cannot be accepted in terms of the classical representational mirror theory, preoccupied with the romance of the real, portraying a unified and coherent social actor. Stanley (1992),

maintains that, 'Both biography and autobiography lay claim to facticity, yet both are by nature artful enterprises which select, shape, and produce a very unnatural product'.

Weiner (1994:11), observes that autobiographical accounts are concerned with claiming identity rather than describing experience, and that people often use autobiographies to defend attitudes and conduct, to make sense of themselves and their actions, and to work out where they stand in relation to others. What is important is that autobiographies cannot be treated as revelations of the honest or unbiased self. It is essentially a model or theory of one's self. This echoes the postmodernist critiques of autobiography which contends that there is no Truth, no Reality, no one 'true' way to connect the object world and the spoken or written wor(l)d, instead lots of interpretations, all of which equally possible[2]. Roos (1994), further contends that this raises important questions about the way society, culture and history infiltrate the process of writing an autobiography. The simple original project: I want to write/tell my life, is seriously discredited under the postmodernist gaze. According to this perspective, there is no life to tell, there is no I telling the life, and even if there were, there would be so many intervening factors that the resulting story would have nothing to do with the actual intent.

Evidently autobiographies are very subjective versions of something, which may be very far from the truth, or may change several times during the person's lifetime. However, Roos (ibid.), proposes that autobiographies be treated essentially as reality-and truth oriented narratives where the truth is seen from a unique, concrete view point-that of the author. Although postmodernism has alerted us that it is impossible to write an autobiography in the ordinary sense-all aspects of the process are problematic-story, self, life etc. however, people go on writing their life stories under the assumption that there is a life outside, that they are describing it, that their selves are contiguous, not contingent and that there is a causal narrative connecting the different events. This is also true in the domain of education. Graham (1995:196), notes that in spite of the difficulties experienced by biographical and autobiographical inquiry as a research methodology, a link has been established in the minds of teachers and researchers between the telling of stories and the exploration and development of personal and professional voice and identity.

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[2] According to Roos (1994), in the field of autobiography, the effects of postmodernism have brought about:

- An awareness of narrativity as a very important factor in autobiography.
- An understanding of the tenuous relationship between the author and the self and the 'reality'.
- The problem of the identity of the self (continuity, perspectives, multiple identities, etc).
- Multiple levels of authors and audiences.
- The primacy of the text, not the life that we are dealing with. In the extreme case autobiography may be seen as determining the determining the life, not vice versa, the autobiography and the life may have a totally contingent relationship.

Furthermore, the stories that teachers tell are highly reflective of their cultures and ideological selections. For this reason, while acknowledging the nuanced insights derived from narrative research into teachers' background, Fendler (2003), is concerned that autobiography prescribes a particular definition of experience, which can re-circulate and reinforce existing stereotypes by taking sociological constructs of identity such as race, class and gender and applying them to individuals in the form of expectations. It is critical that these categories, which are frequently used in autobiography, what Fendler refers to as populational categories, and what Appiah (2000), refers to as collective identities of race, class, gender, age, ability, and sexuality, generally invoke stereotypes, and are silent about historical circumstances, which would provide another kind of autobiographical context and identification. They argue that when the device of autobiographical narrative is considered together with the technique of self-disclosure the combination functions to construct the idea of teachers as a people who repeatedly confess and affirm their identity in terms of categories that reflect existing popular assumptions. This construction is a technology of the self that tends to perpetuate the status quo because the autobiographical markers are based on stereotypes and the conventions of what constitutes an autobiography are historically constructed. Thus, the autobiographical identification circumscribes what it is possible to think and authenticates only certain ways of being a teacher while obliterating others. However, Brah (1991:175), notes that to view social actors in a way that stereotypes them according to cultural categories would be to ignore the contention that human subjects are not fixed embodiments of their cultures. Since all cultures are internally differentiated and never static, though the pace of change may be variable, individual subjectivities will be formed within the range of heterogeneous discursive practices available. A sense of ourselves as located within heterogeneous and unstable discursive practices shows not only that we inhabit multiple and changing identities but that these identities are produced and reproduced within the fluid social relations of race, gender, class and sexuality. Thus, in self-articulated accounts it is more usual to present what is in effect a model of 'I', a theory of one's self.

In the sections that follow, I present the autobiographical essays (insider representations), and the biographic data (outsider representations), of the five research participants.

Carol's (Auto)biographical Profile

Gender, Language, and Teaching English in a Multilingual, Multicultural University
English Department, University of Western Cape

Section 1: Partial Institutional Sketch

The University of the Western Cape: A brief history[3]

In this section I present a brief background description of the University of Western Cape at which Carol was employed at the time of the research.

The University of the Western Cape is one of the youngest institutions of higher learning in South Africa. It was established in 1959 by an Act of Parliament as an ethnic college for 'coloured' students. The University College Western Cape was placed under the tutelage of the University of South Africa (Unisa) in Pretoria, and was run by academics who supported racial separation and who saw their role as 'white guardians' of their 'coloured wards'.

During the first decade, students attended the university under protest, with many viewing it as a second-choice institution. However, in the absence of alternatives, student nevertheless enrolled at the institution. The first expression of student frustration with the conservative administration came in 1970 when students burnt their ties in protest against the university's formal dress code. Three years later protest action started by students and Black staff led to the appointment of the university's first Black rector in 1975.

In 1982 the university adopted a new mission statement in which it formally rejected the apartheid ideology on which it had been founded and committed itself to non-racialism and the development of the Third World communities. It now considers itself the 'intellectual home of the left'. The university adopted an 'open admissions' policy to make it more accessible to disadvantaged students. Students currently enrolled at UWC come from all of the country's 11 language groups. It has developed a model for integrating academic development support for students into mainstream teaching. Enshrined in its vision and mission statements, the university has committed itself to excellence in teaching, learning and research, to nurturing the cultural diversity of South Africa, and responding to the needs of a democratic, post-apartheid society. (http://www.uwc.ac.za).

Section 2: Profile of Research Participants

Carol's Autobiographical Essay

Developing a South African, Feminist Identity

(1) The prime concept around which my identity was constructed when I was a child was Englishness. I was born in 1944. As I grew to consciousness, talk of "The War", so recently

[3] This partial biographic profile of the University of the Western Cape was summarised from the university's website: http://www.uwc.ac.za
See also Cooper, D & Subotzky, G. 2001. *The Skewed Revolution: Trends in South African Higher Education: 1988-1998.*

ended, charged our home with stories of heroism and sacrifice. How relieved we children (three, then four, then five daughters) were that the "English" had saved us from the evil of "the Nazis". Good, the English, had triumphed. The War brought my nineteen-year old father, in 1940, from Lancashire to Cape Town, where he would marry my South African mother. "Englishmen make the best husbands," my mother and my grandmother taught. Gran, too, had chosen to marry a man who was, like her own father, English.

(2) In a home where raincoats were bought hanging down below the knees and where even shoes were passed down, our self-respect was fortified by knowing that we were better than all other people in the world--except the English of a "higher" class. We were forbidden to play with the "coloured" children next door while "natives", whom we hardly ever saw, were an alien, primitive species. More solid satisfaction lay, though, not in our 'natural' superiority to those whose dark skins were the overt sign of their backwardness, but in our superiority to other "Europeans", whether Portuguese (none too clean), Italians (cowards who had run away during The War), Irish (rough, uncouth) or Afrikaners. The Afrikaners were a crude, poorly educated people who had cheated their way into power in 1948. We despised their language which we saw as coarse, its guttural sounds we heard as ugly sounds; I learnt a chauvinistic pride in the English language and I strove to emulate the 'correct' version of the language ("BBC English") as heard on the radio.

(3) The printed form of English affected my imagination and sense of identity even more deeply than the oral forms of home and the radio. I was a "bookworm" and the highlight of each week for me as a reader was Thursday, the mail ship day. The Union-Castle liners that docked on Thursdays brought girls' magazines like School Friend and Girl's Crystal, tabloids like the Daily Mirror and News of the World, and women's magazines, like Woman's Weekly, Woman's Own, Home Chat, and Woman. These publications fed my certainty that the English nation was decent, brave, stoical and self-sacrificing, as did the hard cover novels in my grandmother's bookcase and the paperback "war stories" that I devoured. English womanhood was modest, noble, restrained, did not assert itself but waited for its true virtue to be discovered and rewarded, by marriage to an Englishman. He was strong, silent, and "sardonic" (a favourite term in the "love stories"), with a chin whose "firmness" signalled his sterling, if austere, character.

(4) Believing we were English meant that we had a sense of a special destiny. [4] In time I would become aware of the cruel edge to this belief, its arrogance and intolerance, but as a child, I wallowed in its soft-focus, romantic heroism. An intense child who was in search of a sticking-place for her sense of devotion, I also looked to the range of Christianities to which I was exposed: Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodism. But the religion that made the most forceful impression upon me was not Protestant, but Catholic. Despite our being "non-Catholics", we attended a local convent school. Our Irish (Dominican) nuns taught us folk songs, some believed

[4] In an e-mail correspondence, Carol recalls: the first time I visited England was between December 1985 and January 1986, after a huge conference in Chicago. I was already 41 years old. I remember weeping in front of the portrait of the Bronte sisters in the National Portrait Gallery in London. And I visited relatives in Lancashire (whom I found to be openly racist, and Tory voters, except for one cousin who is a trades union official). Also drove through to Haworth (home of the Brontes) with relatives; it was snowing and I imagined I could hear the ghosts of the Bronte's coughing. Most of the Bronte children died of TB. What small, cold comfortless rooms (they had no curtains, for example).

in fairies, and they were genuinely interested in our homes and families; but they taught us that human nature was in essence, due to Original Sin, corrupt. Their dogma fostered crippling self-doubt: your motives would always be, if you were honest enough and dug deep enough, contaminated at some point. This was particularly true if you were a girl, as then you carried a particular burden of shame. The first woman, Eve, tempted Adam into sin (which we understood was sexual sin) and so introduced death into the world. For, the wages of sin is death. Woman-as-Eve was the "carnal", and thus a source of temptation for superior Man. Since the shamefulness inherent in women's bodies had been redeemed by the woman who, while the mother of Christ, remained a virgin, we were encouraged to stay chaste and become nuns ("brides of Christ"); failing this, the best way of redeeming our essential corruptness, there was secretarial work or teaching, then marriage and motherhood.

(5) As the painful lumps under my nipples turned into small breasts, my sense of shame grew. Then, when 'going out' with men in my late teens, I found most of them had an ambivalent attitude towards their own sexuality and mine. If we became involved in passionate kissing, they would afterwards seem disappointed, afraid, even disgusted, with both themselves and me. Their responses confirmed the nuns' theology: I was morally tainted. The ingrained sense that my body and my sexuality were shameful would, in time, be dissipated by marriage to a man who encouraged me to enjoy our reciprocal expression of desire. I would also learn, through my readings of feminist scholars, to situate the misogynistic teachings of Christianity within the sexism found around the globe and through the centuries.

(6) After matriculating, I spent six months at a secretarial college, became a secretary, and then graduated to personal assistant. I married at 21, had a daughter at 25, and returned, aged 28, to part-time secretarial work while our three-year old daughter went to a lively, well-equipped playschool. By now I had everything that, according to my upbringing, a woman could want, yet I was unhappy and my unhappiness made me deeply anxious. I felt both mad and wicked: it was greedy to want more than I already had. Although I did not know it at the time—school, church, and home had taught me to repress, indeed fear my emotions and my desires—I was profoundly bored by the office work I had been doing for ten years and was under-stimulated by my domesticated existence. A new friend and a book, both feminist, were to change this.

(7) Jenny would bring her three children to the local park then sit with her nose buried in the Times Literary Supplement. This is what drew me to her, that she read what I knew was a publication of ideas, about books. Once I persuaded her to lower the TLS and listen to me, I found that, instead of condemning my unhappiness, she encouraged me to acknowledge and act upon my desires, and she lent me a book. Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique (1963) enabled me to relate my personal experience to that of other women, and to accept as valid my dissatisfaction with domesticity and the paid work I was doing. Through the influence of my new friend and Friedan, I would extend the boundaries of my learned definitions of femininity to include a desire I had hardly been able to articulate—to find out more about the world, to discover and explore areas of knowledge, and to do this in a structured, guided way, through tertiary studies.

(8) There was another hurdle besides that of timidity and guilt related to gendered

conditioning: this was the fear instilled by my working-class background. Nobody in either my mother or father's families had at that time "been to university", and I believed that those who studied at university were of a superior species of human being from me. I knew that I was therefore bound to fail. I was extremely frightened of taking this step, yet I had to try. In the years of studying that followed, class as well as gender would contribute to my not viewing myself, despite gaining consistent 'firsts' for essays and examinations, as worthy of aiming at an academic career. My learned femininity also manifested itself in my perfectionism; every comma in my essays had to be placed exactly, every title on a list of recommended reading should be read. I took it one anxious step at a time. But, once launched as a student, I was also exhilarated. Doors opened, in my own mind and externally. Members of the UNISA study groups that I joined became soul mates in ways that work colleagues never had done: we shared our passion for literature and learning. When lecturers showed appreciation of my essays, they were telling me that my ideas had some value. I was developing the ability to critically analyse material as I read it and to write expository essays, while I was also slaking my thirst for knowledge and understanding. I would struggle to tear myself away from my books.

(9) Despite feminism having launched me into academic studies, for many years my feminism would remain more 'felt', 'experiential' than underpinned by analysis and argumentation: I lacked an effective vocabulary and discourse. However, post-World War Two feminism was finding its way to South Africa, and the first feminist theorist I heard in person was Juliet Mitchell, who visited Cape Town in the early 1970s. Her provocative ideas were an illuminating inspiration to her audience, and we were hungry for whatever fiction and academic work on feminism came our way during this early period of the so-called Second Wave of feminism. In my mind and that of the feminists who became friends and associates—we were not all white and middle-class--the battle was always against apartheid as well as sexism. Even if I lacked the knowledge, at that time, to distinguish between the liberal feminism of a Friedan and the Marxism-based arguments of a Mitchell, the South African social context meant that white feminists like me could not retreat into protest only against the plight of women like me. I joined the Women's Movement, a multi-racial grouping, who demonstrated, submitted petitions, and organized relief action (for instance, during winter floods). I participated for three years in a 'rap' (discussion) group whose members I met through the Women's Centre in Rondebosch, and I joined the Black Sash. The women I met in these groupings were often articulate, intelligent, and efficient organizers of public meetings and protests; they were also more confident and more informed about public affairs than the women I had encountered so far. For the first time, I had black friends. Like the intellectual world I stepped into when I registered with UNISA in 1974, this world of women activists allowed me access to new areas of thinking and experience. Growing up in the late Forties and the Fifties, I had taken for granted the restrictions attached to race, class, and gender; now, the foundations of my childhood training were shaken to the core, my circle of friends was enlarging and changing, and the basis of my identity became linked to South African, indeed global, phenomena and experiences.

(10) Rigid boundaries remained, however: these were due not only to the social and topographical divisions of apartheid, but also to newly absorbed intellectual notions that reinforced some of my childhood attitudes to the English language. During the Seventies,

English departments were still strongly influenced by Leavisitism, a fact of which I became aware only when I began Honours study in English at the University of Cape Town, in 1979. There, historicists and Marxists attacked the notion that the English literary heritage could function as a potential moral force for redeeming and improving the world; on the contrary, Shakespeare et al. were presented as part of the oppressive paraphernalia of British imperialism. So began a radical shift in the nature of my commitment to English studies: the pleasure in literature remained, but the choice of texts as of their content and form became markers of a complex "context". I began to 'read' literary forms and tropes in relation to historical, anthropological, psychological, sociological, and economic studies. And, most rewarding of all, at UCT, I began to find an academic vocabulary and register for my 'felt' but still frequently inarticulate feminism. I joined a campus study group on psychoanalysis and feminism, and I began to incorporate feminist readings into my essays.

Becoming a Feminist Tertiary Teacher of English

(11) While in my early twenties I began to realize I was not nor ever would be English but was instead a South African. At that time, however, my South African identity was to a large extent defined in resistance to apartheid and was based in grief at what was being done to the people of what I was now able to call "my country".

(12) Further, despite my new awareness of the role of European-based languages within the broad social and cultural structures of apartheid, I remained, while teaching and studying at UCT and Stellenbosch Universities during the late Seventies and early Eighties, able to work more confidently and fluently when analyzing cultural forms as they affected either 'women' or the working classes (or both) than as they took racist expression.

(13) Amongst the early feminist 'classics' that I read were Olive Schreiner, Germaine Greer, Ellen Moers, Elaine Showalter, Patricia Stubbs, Mary Ellman, Tillie Olsen. This strong emphasis on literature was augmented-and feminist studies has always had permeable inter-disciplinary boundaries-by reading social/political commentators such as Juliet Mitchell, Gloria Steinem, Ann Oakley, Andrea Dworkin. In my Masters thesis and in a section of my doctoral theses, I focused on Doris Lessing's fiction. Lessing's The Grass is Singing, was a significant influence in leftwing circles during the sixties. In Lessing's work I found narratives that inscribed, in ways new at that time, the internalized oppressions of femininity, especially of wifehood and motherhood, within a social context (Southern Rhodesia, in the period of World War 11) that was, like that of South Africa, dominated by racism.

(14) The fact that my doctoral thesis (passed in 1991) examined the work of only white Southern African women writers was an acknowledgement of the limits to my experience and understanding. However, from the time I took up permanent employment at the University of Western Cape, in 1986, I became part of an education context that required more emphasis on South African and African writing. With regard to feminism, I introduced into UWC's English Department's courses the study of feminist theories at postgraduate level. Some of the theorists/thinkers studied have been Dale Spender, Chandra Mohanty, Benita Parry, Gayatri Spivak, Toril Moi, Rosemary Tong, Julia Kristeva, Nilufer Gole, bell hooks (sic), Alice Munroe,

and Toni Morrison. I also devised and taught an undergraduate course entitled "Women Writers in Africa". I taught this course for ten years, changing theoretical approaches and set works as time passed. Feminist thinkers and writers studied have included Nawaal al Saadawi, Fatima Mernissi, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, and Ifi Amadiume; the fiction writers have included Mariama Ba, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Bessie Head, Zoe Wicomb, Gcina Mhlophe, and Yvonne Vera.

(15) The matrophobia (fear and hatred of the real and internalized mother, and of motherhood itself) that characterized the fiction of Lessing and others in the 'west' until the 1980s, and on which I focused in my doctoral thesis, has proved a fruitful connection with studying motherhood, its practice and ideology, in the writings of women in Africa, in the context of liberation and post-colonial discourses, and in the context of current reactions against feminism among African scholars. This remains a specialization in my published journal articles and conference papers.

(16) Feminist literary studies have from the start focused on language. This has meant, firstly, the analysis of the sexism, frequently normalized and unrecognized, in terminology used. There are, for instance, the associations with words such as "spinster" and "bachelor", "Miss" and "Mrs.", and the tendency for forceful men to be "powerful" while forceful women are "aggressive" and "shrill". I always begin a course, whether under- or postgraduate, by examining some basic binary terms that expose the dualistic, and sexist worldview underlying Christian culture (examples are man/woman, male/female, masculine/feminine, gender/sex), and will explore with students whether or not such binaries are present in the other cultures represented in the classroom (Muslim, Hindu, African Christian, Buddhist). Xhosa students at UWC will make the connection between words and gendered social status in relation to the practice of hlonipha, a special variety of the Xhosa language that married women must use to show their deference to their husband and his family, while they are forbidden to use terms permitted to other persons.

(17) The study of words per se was augmented by the study of the gender implications of aspects of narrative form and structure. An example of form would be the stereotypical characterization of female personages in fiction by male writers as either saintly Madonna or sinful vamp, of structure would be the phenomenon that the endings of stories by nineteenth-century women writers tended to postulate death as the way out of a unhappy marriage: neither 'career paths' nor financial independence were available to even middle-class women at that time. The focus on words in their context and on narrative form and structure has fed into deconstruction and its techniques, where the critic reads for gaps, silences, sub-texts, and might seek to illuminate some of the narrative "strategies" adopted by women to "find a voice". Post-colonialism literary studies (of theorists such as Gayatri Spivak, Benita Parry, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Anthony Appiah) have fitted readily with developing feminist criticisms and theories suitable for South Africa. South Africa makes for an invigorating, and demanding context for feminist studies in that it challenges the assumptions of 'western' feminist theories. For instance, it used to be fairly common for feminist thinkers to assume, overtly or covertly, that formal religion and feminist were incompatible, and many such thinkers are themselves probably non-believers; while feminist theology has become a vigorous branch of feminist studies in the 'west', it has never been realistic, in South Africa, because

the majority of the women in this country are firm believers, and would consider it irreverent to decry faith itself. I have, however found it useful to explore, especially with mature, postgraduate students, the sexist nature of church structures.

(18) Post-colonial feminist practice in the English Department at UWC has been assisted by the fact that for years now we have felt free to incorporate into our courses both texts translated from other languages, e.g. Arabic, French, Xhosa, Afrikaans and texts not usually included under the term "literature": such texts as popular forms (romances), travel writing, and diaries. My orientation is materialist (thus I will focus on what social practices are in existence, as well as on what fiction is 'saying') rather than psychoanalytic, although I will employ aspects of, say, Spivak and Kristeva, which seem useful to developing my own intellectual growth and to teaching and researching within the South African context.

(19) I have always focused on the influence of sexism in the images and words of advertising and, for the past four years, I have been using even more pictorial images in courses at both under- and postgraduate levels. Many English departments have in the past ten to fifteen years incorporated cultural and media studies into their curricula. My own method of teaching cultural and media studies falls within the British tradition, as influenced by Stuart Hall, which includes examination of such questions as who owns the media? Who produces the programmes? How do viewers/readers respond to programmes? Such questions have a particular importance in our country, where the media, especially the powerful medium of television, are still in the course of being shaped. The recognition of the importance of pleasure, one arrived at via theorists such as Bourdieu, is vital in relation to feminism/gender studies and the media.

(20) Although it was at UCT that I began to understand how 'colonial' my views were on the superiority of English, and of a particular version of English (one that was, due to class, not mine by inheritance), it was only with my move to UWC in 1986 that I was forced, in my daily teaching practice, to alter my assumptions, especially concerning 'correctness'. At UWC I encountered a body of students who were multilingual. Increasingly at UWC, there are now fewer English- and Afrikaans-speakers while there are more Xhosa-speakers, while some students who have moved around South Africa might have encountered by now, at school and at home, as many as five languages. In UWC's English Department we have had to confront constantly the questions and problems raised by such demographics. We have moved from demanding 'correct' grammar and spelling, to acceptance of variations of English. We have constantly identified the kinds of 'transfers' from other languages that occur; during the Eighties and early Nineties such 'transfers' were predominantly from Afrikaans, now those from Xhosa dominate. We have constantly to make decisions as to which of such influences from Afrikaans and Xhosa should be accommodated, and which in fact blur meaning. When does an 'unidiomatic' phrase become vividly expressive of a student's worldview? How important are 'correct' prepositions? How formal does the language of an academic essay have to be? We have had to distinguish between rules and conventions, recognizing that language conventions are just that, a matter of what is socially acceptable, rather than a fixed rule of the language.

(21) My own practice of language teaching has evolved through the frequent staff discussions and seminar presentations that take place in the English Department and with other

departments, though working with, being trained by, the Academic Development staff, and attending conferences on language teaching. Although I have not followed the ideas of any particular theorists of language teaching, I have read and listened to papers and articles on language teaching, most of which have emerged from changing situations in English departments in South Africa, from shifts in theorizing about language teaching, and from the common problems encountered in a bi- or multi-lingual teaching situation. I have had the advantage of being part of a department that constantly reflects on its teaching methods, where the university's ethos has always been to be as inclusive as possible (e.g. in terms of admissions), and where innovative ideas for teaching material are always plentiful due to the commitment and talent of its staff members.

(22) The most important aspects of feminist theories of teaching and learning are those that could be expressed most broadly: that is, alerting students to the ideology in cultural forms, as expressed in the words and images that we use and by which we are surrounded. Our conditioning by family, and often by teachers in primary and high schools, can have the effect of normalizing and neutralizing, rendering 'innocent', the ideological. If you can succeed in alerting a student to this, you have educated a young South African as to how to begin to interpret their world, socially as well as culturally, in a more informed way; ideally, you have also suggested a way in which they might in the future reform that world. It seems that the new school curriculum aims partially to open pupils' eyes to such interpretation, but, as is widely recognized by now, much training and retraining of teachers is required before this curriculum can begin to succeed. In the meantime, tertiary education has a vital role to play in enlarging the perceptions and the understanding of those who will move into influential positions in policy-making in government, education, the media, and in business.

(23) In apartheid South Africa, feminism tended to be pushed to the back burner and huge tasks remain in terms of changing minds and hearts with regard to gender. I will, at the start of a course, point out that women are oppressed simply because they are women, as others have been oppressed simply because of the colour of their skin. I may also point out that democracy is meant to be inclusive; that women, too, deserve full human rights. But I also will mention that feminist thinkers have noted that change at the rational level, by way of laws and in the rational thinking process of the individual, is usually in advance of change in hearts and minds, that even if culture is constantly changing, it can be remarkably resistant to change when vested interests are concerned, and that change in the law is insufficient to remedy abuse of the oppressed: proper enforcement of the law is essential. It is notable that 'culture' and 'tradition' is still so frequently appealed to, in this continent, when justifying the treatment of females as of less worth than males. It is instructive to raise with students such points as (i) 'culture' and 'tradition' are exactly what the Afrikaner apartheid state appealed to justify their racist structures, and (ii) there is little reluctance on the part of male leaders to appeal to notions of democracy, freedom, and equality, even when they are articulated by 'western' thinkers, so long as they concern race and class (and thus would benefit men).

(24) The defining characteristic informing the feminist ideology/language teaching philosophy that I subscribe to is that it is post-colonial. The main focus is on South Africa, its literature, autobiography, media and its popular culture, but my reading and teaching of South African fiction and autobiography is always contextualised within writing from Africa, and often also

within the context of diasporic writing, Indian writing, as well as developments among 'western' feminist writers. In line with the requirements of informed academic work that follows on post-colonial, deconstructionist, and post-structural theories, I attempt to establish general tendencies, to work comparatively, and, at the same time, establish specific characteristics. I quote from an article, South African Feminism and Characterisation in Novels in English by White Women", that I had published in Current Writing (11:1, April 1999: 51):

> … the main task for feminists concerned with cultural production is to extend cultural agency, in a variety of forms, to those who do not have it. So illiterate women may use a video camera to tell their stories. Nevertheless, the stories of minorities too, even privileged minorities have a value in the context of feminist thought, which is an approach that calls for a comprehensive re-conception and reshaping of society. Here [Elleke] Boehmer is … helpful: feminist thought, she says, steers away from "pure ideologies" in favour of "a differential positionality and hybridity" that offers "a comprehensive scrutiny and re-vision of the competing scripts and the patterns of past behaviours on which they are based."

(25) The emphases on difference, hybridity, and comprehensiveness (so as to facilitate joint activism) are essential in the context of a multi-cultural society that is in the process of attempting to form itself into a single nation, and a democratic one at that. Such emphases are also essential when the term "Africa" is frequently used so as to blur local identities and, in fact, to obscure the very existence, let alone the significance of the Muslim and Arabic cultural and religious worlds. An interest of mine has been to 'place', in teaching and publications, the Muslim and Arabic regions of the continent and their rich literary tradition. But my use of feminist work from these regions also enables me to provide a way for students to make connections with some oppressive practices within the South African Muslim communities.

(26) Another sustained interest, in the light of the continued mystification of motherhood, in popular and academic discourses, is that of examining what women writers and thinkers say, and have said, about motherhood as practice and ideology. Yvonne Vera is not only one of the most distinctive and distinguished writers to have emerged on the southern African sub-continent in the past decade, she also, in writing for post-independence communities, sustains a contemporary focus on gender politics and its abuses. In an article I wrote entitled "Zimbabwean Nationalism and Motherhood in Yvonne Vera's Butterfly Burning" (published in African Studies 59:2, 2000: 229) I say that in her writing Vera consistently destabilizes the gender divisions of liberation and post-independence nationalist discourses, including those that elevate women exclusively in relation to their fertility and their links to the land.

Reflections of Life in Academia

(27) Looking back over my career as a student and a university teacher and the institutional factors that have influenced me, I focus first on two areas where I believe I have been disabled in my personal and professional life. I have identified factors concerning gender and class that undermined my confidence with regard to even registering for university studies at first, in 1974. I would have benefited in the years that followed from mentoring, by way of encouragement and information. While I was teaching and completing a Masters degree at

UCT, from 1982 to 1985, I participated as a volunteer in a campus-wide survey on why it was that the top women students did not see themselves as worthy of an academic career even though they consistently performed better than the top men students. But I myself was in need of guidance from the women academics with whom I worked on this survey. Even though I consistently gained 'firsts' for essays and exams, it was only as I was completing my Masters thesis that I began to dare to think of a university career. Further, much useful information, for instance, such as how to apply for research funding, has come to me years after I would first have found it useful. In an English Department such as was the case at UCT at this time, much was unstated, oblique, part in fact of a deeply middle-class style of restrained behaviour. To enthuse, or to enquire too curiously, was poor behaviour. I was aware of having to learn codes of behaviour, as well as having to work extremely hard. The department had, in fact, at that time, the air of an exclusive, elitist club. I was not awarded a Junior Lecturer's post at the end of my Honours degree, even though I gained a 'first'; instead it was awarded to a highly clubbable young man, who gained a lower second, and left after two years.

(28) This brings me to a second strand of institutional life that I believe affects women. At supposedly progressive universities such as UCT and UWC (and they are, indeed, much more progressive than Stellenbosch University, where I taught during l980 to 1981), feminist thinking and practice have been deliberately encouraged, if only by virtue of the fact that even non-feminist academics will want to stay abreast of current developments. The conditions of service have been improved to grant equality to women. But, sexist power structures, may although now concealed, retain a vigorous life. This is not surprising: humans do not shed their early conditioning overnight; hearts and mind lag behind rationally argued and improved conditions of service and new legislation. One only has to look at the figures of women employed in senior academic positions to see that something is still seriously wrong when it comes to fostering the career of women, especially black women. Furthermore, I have observed that men Heads of Department will tend to 'punish' women colleagues, openly (by, say, cutting comments in meetings) or behind their backs (by, say, speaking about them as a person or colleague in a derogatory way, or failing to promote their career by way of giving them information) if women colleagues do not use 'feminine' methods of appeasing and flattering them; other women colleagues, too, who might resent your outspokenness and independence of mind, as a feminist, will undermine you, usually in allegiance with dominant males and so as to gain their favour.

(29) Women also work harder at proving themselves, often ending up doing much of the 'donkey' work, and retarding their careers. While women need to take responsibility for doing this, their men colleagues should prove more collegial, by warning them of the dangers and by working harder themselves. Women's tendency to pay attention to students' needs in line with their conditioning as women, particularly at a university like UWC, which serves a disadvantaged body of students, means they are not promoted as quickly. On the whole, men have a greater sense of their own worth, and a greater sense of entitlement to promotion and pay rises, than women.

(30) At UWC, our Women's and Gender Studies Centre has struggled to continue at times, for lack of institutional support (funding for academic and administrative staff, mostly). Academics who, like me, teach courses in this centre do so by taking on teaching over and

above their departmental workload. This is despite the fact that all students registered for the centre's courses are graduate and postgraduate students (so attract more subsidy than undergraduates).

(31) Feminism is endorsed by nearly all male as well as female staff in the English Dept at UWC and a critique of sexist practices is frequently included within courses not specifically having an overt concern with gender. Yet, although I have felt discriminated against as a woman by men in power in the English Department, both overtly and covertly, I believe that my femaleness has at times been an advantage to me at UWC. While I have worked very hard and have given service freely in many aspects of university life, I believe I have benefited from a kind of deference that many men give to women: I do not mean to imply that I have set out to exploit this deference, and at times it has made me uncomfortable (especially since I am 'white' and some of the administrative staff have called me "lady"). Further, UWC is an environment within which academics in particular are eager to show themselves progressive and democratic, in line with the stated mission of the university. I have found that in senior committees, meetings, the Senate Appointments Committee, say, that other members might take their bearings from me (often, one of only two women in the room) if a woman is being interviewed for a post. There are conditions, though, for such respect: I behave courteously and dress with a certain degree of 'professional' style; I try to convey the fact that I take men colleagues on trust, as human beings, and that I neither dislike nor fear men, unless they do me or others harm. When men colleagues have raised doubts and fears they have concerned with feminism, I try to show that I understand their reservations and to discuss the matter unaggressively, though presenting feminist viewpoints. Again, as a 'white' person, I have had to do my best not to project arrogance and moral grandstanding.

Conclusion

(32) I registered as a student for the first time in 1974; 27 years later, my evaluation of "English" has changed, in ways that register changes in South African society. In 1974 still affected by values of childhood and school education, I saw English language and literature as superior to others, and I desired to acquire adeptness in speaking and writing standard British English. Now English has, partly by virtue of the extent of the British imperium, become a world language. But the class- and race-based fortifications erected to protect the claims of the variety of any one variety of English, emanating from any single place, to be definitive have been deconstructed. I have found myself struggling, in the days of late-apartheid, Afrikaner-dominated South Africa, with ideas articulated by ardent 'black' students to the effect that English is the language of liberation. English, now dominant in business, maritime, air travel, and science, are also linked with cultural and economic imperialism of the USA. As a teacher of English, I see it as part of my business to counter such contemporary forms of imperialism, by encouraging students to read texts (of all kinds) in English more critically. And fluency in English is, because of the widespread use of the language, indeed a means of empowering students, so that they 'read' their world in a more informed way, and so that they more readily have access to a wide range of careers. When the study of English is combined with gender studies, the potential pedagogical potency is multiplied. While much has still to be done regarding the oppressions of racism and classism in this country, most remains to be done regarding the abuse of women and children. It has become a cliché that we have an epidemic

of rape and violence towards women, and black women have the highest rate of infection of HIV/AIDS. The beliefs that the use of condoms prejudices 'manhood', that intercourse with a virgin may cure HIV/AIDS, and that women do not have the right to refuse sex to their partners or boyfriends are all linked to the devaluing of women. Post-colonial feminism and gender studies offers to women their rights as liberated members of the human race, both in terms of 'ethnicity', but also as women. English studies as it has developed in many South African English departments, so as to incorporate a critique and to include cultural and media studies, promises to keep pace with the changes required to equip young South African to become effective and responsible citizens.

Students' Partial Demographic Profile English Honours and Masters: 2001

I presented Carol's autobiographical essay, which gave us insight into Carol, the principal research participant. The following partial biographic details of student demographics, is meant to provide an overview of Carol's students. The following table contains a summary of student demographics in the English Honours and Masters Courses. Despite the fact that Carol had been on sick leave for most of the year, she did, however, manage to track down some of her students and this is a small sample of responses we were able to elicit:

Age	21(2), 22 (1), 25(1), 26 (1), 43(1)
Place of Birth Urban/Rural area	Urban: 6
Race	2 South African 2 Human 1 Motswana 1 White
Sex	Female: 4 Male: 2
Religion	4 Christians (includes various denominations) 1 no religious affiliation 1 Islam
Degree currently registered for	1 MPhil 1 MA 4 BA Honours
Majors taking towards degree	English (4) Women's Studies (1) Journalism & Literary Theory (1)
Year of study currently in	various stages of Postgraduate studies
In what language did you receive your: 1.Primary school education? 2.Secondary School education?	1.English 4, Afrikaans (1), Setswana (1), Xhosa (1) 2.Afrikaans (1), English (4), Setswana (1)
How many languages do you speak?	4 people speak 2 languages (2 English L1, 1 Afrikaans L2, 1 Spanish L2, 1 Afrikaans L1, 3 English L2, 1 Setswana L1, 1 Xhosa L1, 1 no specifications
Reasons for studying English • I was interested in Media and Gender Studies, as I'm currently enrolled for Journalism Modules, theory and practice, and a module on masculinities. • It's my niche • It was my major in my 3rd year. • I have always been interested in languages and reading. Writing is also a major interest. • It's my passion. • I was interested in the culture/gender aspects to the English course.	

When were you first exposed to/became conscious about feminist/gender/sexist issues?

- On my second level of my junior degree when I read Tsitsi's Dangeremba's *Nervous Condition.* This was a novel prescribed for our English lecture.
- High School (1994-1997).
- In the second year of studying in the English Department.
- In secondary school.
- At high school (1993-1997).
- No response (1).

Section 3: Overview of Course Taught, Classroom Activities and Reflections

This section summarises lecture content, classroom activities, interactions, and provides an overview of the two courses that Carol taught. Early in the research process I received the following e-mail from Carol:

Dear Juliet,
There is a problem, for me, with the second tier of your research, in that I'm going to be on six months disability leave from UWC, so I won't be giving any classes in that time. After six months, I'll be reviewed and will probably be found fit to return to work. I could write about my experiences in teaching with a feminist perspective, something I've been doing at UWC since 1986, but it sounds as if you've incorporated into your project observation of the teaching situation. If you can find a way around this obstacle, I'd really like to join you in the project and I do feel that (in all modesty) I could probably contribute something of value to it.
Kind regards
Carol

As stated in the above correspondence, Carol remained on sick leave for the latter part of 2001, thus she was not involved in teaching, and I was unable to visit her lectures for observations. I however, decided to sacrifice uniformity in research design to gain insight into the rich and robust experiences of an educator who has contributed enormously to the promotion of gender studies and social justice. Her application to be boarded was pending approval at the time of the interview in November 2001, thus, rather than observe Carol in her classes, both in her autobiographical essay and the interview she spoke at length, and with greater detail than is evident in the other participants' responses, about her pedagogical decisions, choices and experiences. In particular, she talked about two courses she had taught, which were specifically related to language and gender. These were an undergraduate course called *Some Women Writers in Africa* and a postgraduate course titled: *Topics in Gender and Cultural Studies*. She explained that she chose to teach women writers because their voices are still underrepresented in Africa; and values like democracy and human rights should include women, who constitute half the population of the world.

Some Women Writers in Africa

In the undergraduate course, *Some Women Writers in Africa*, Carol includes texts from parts of Africa influenced by Arabic and Muslim culture, because she wishes to give her students a sense that Africa includes such cultures. The Islamic world also has a very long literary tradition, so the works it produces are often very aesthetically pleasing. Given that South Africa in general, and the

Western Cape in particular has a fairly large Muslim population, this sometimes leads to fairly interesting responses which are not always articulated openly in the classroom.

Most of the time Carol stresses that gender is related to an imbalance of power and that women are disadvantaged, oppressed and often ill-treated simply because they are women. She maintains that it helps to compare sexism to racism: if racism involves oppressing and abusing people simply because of their race, and has nothing to do with their quality as human beings, so too does sexism-women are oppressed simply because they are women, not because of their endemic qualities as human beings.

Other themes that she addresses relate to:

- the confinement of women to domestic kinds of tasks, even when they are professionally trained: this often results because women tend to be seen as intellectually inferior to men.
- the poverty of women: although women do 90% of the world's work they only own 1% of the world's wealth. In addition, child-care is one way in which women are impoverished, because it breaks their careers, they stay at home, and this reduces their authority in relation to the working world. This raises discussions about the dichotomy between the world of home and the world of work.
- In addressing questions such as: Is feminism Eurocentric? Is feminism only for middle class women? Isn't feminism attacking our traditions, she often quotes Molara Ogundipe-Leslie's argument, which is encapsulated in the question: 'Why do you want to reject feminism even if you do regard it as Eurocentric when you're prepared to accept arguments about human rights in relation to racism? These human rights arguments often derive from the European Enlightenment and male African thinkers and theorists are very eager to latch onto them in relation to racism, but tend to reject them when it comes to sexism.' Carol believes that the attack on feminism as only existing to suit middle class women is a distortion of the history of feminism which has involved a lot of working class, socialist, Marxist thinkers and movements in the UK and in Europe, especially women's groups who have often worked along with the trade union movements. (Summary from Interview).

Topics in Gender and Cultural Studies

In the postgraduate course, *Topics in Gender and Cultural Studies*, Carol indicated that students mostly work with material that they contribute. Over the years, the course has looked at articles that focus on the gendering of language around Sport (the lack of finances channelled towards women in sport; the predominance of male sport televised and covered in newspapers; media representation of male sports as opposed to women's sports; the implications of behaviour in sport and why it should be necessary for women to want to develop sports, and how these are linked to general attitudes towards men and women and the relative privilege of men over women).

For example, in 2000 the course looked at the 'Hansie Cronje Affair'. Students amassed articles on how the language used by Cronje and the journalists writing about the saga reflected a masculinist notion of an 'old boys' network of protection around Cronje. Fellow cricketers like Shaun Pollock, talked about loyalty, which fuelled discussions about what does loyalty actually mean? Does it mean loyalty towards masculinist notions and a team spirit at

the expense of other values like truth, honesty, and integrity? Given that sport has become the most powerful way in which to appeal to a sense of nationhood what message does it convey to little boys in terms of their becoming men of integrity, and being heroes?

Most importantly, Carol tries to communicate that she sees feminism as giving a global perspective on culture and behaviour across the world, but also through history. She tries to create a curiosity about the phenomenon: why is it so that women are abused or oppressed as women? (Summary from Interview).

Reflections on Teaching Demographically Diverse Students

In reflecting on the implications of teaching at the University of Western Cape, Carol points out that it has a heterogeneous student population in terms of language, cultural backgrounds and educational experiences. Whilst she regards this as an advantage, if she can accommodate it, there are however, occasions when it is difficult to predict the best way to proceed with attending to student diversity. She explains that, for example, sometimes the language she uses, the range of ideas that she can introduce, or how provocative she can be need to be cognisant of students' diverse home and educational backgrounds. Thus, she would need to be sensitive to different ideological stances. In reflecting on her teaching experiences at different universities in South Africa, Carol contends that at an English language university (e.g. the University of Cape Town), ideas are generally debated very passionately; whereas at the University of Stellenbosch, for example, ideas cannot be easily debated. She attributes this to the more authoritarian structure at Stellenbosch, where students are likely to become quite dismayed or threatened. She notes that similar tendencies prevail at UWC, where students are generally very deferential to their lecturers, and want to be told exactly what to think.

Religion is another area that can prove difficult at times. Teaching a feminist course often challenges the relativity of religious beliefs, for example, the conventional Christian notion that the man is head of the family. This can make certain students rather upset. Thus, Carol has to be very careful about how ideas are presented so as not to offend students' religious beliefs. Furthermore, if she is working with undergraduate students who come from rural areas she has to pay attention to the way she presents herself as an educator, since most of these students have been socialised into an authoritarian education system. Thus, if she were introducing fairly provocative ideas she would have to adapt them so as not to intimidate students who are likely to perceive what she presents as gospel. In working with postgraduate students, she admits to being a bit more adventurous, and provocative because she has a surer sense of how far she can extend discussions.

Having taught at the universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch, it was only when Carol took up permanent appointment at UWC in 1986, did she realise that she had become part of an education context that required more emphasis on South African and African writing. It was here also that she introduced feminist theories at postgraduate level.

Depending on the availability of texts, Carol has also had to change course content in relation to student demographics. More texts that deal with, for example, township life are being introduced. In courses offered in the English Department, there is an emphasis on the Western Cape (e.g. the Coon Carnival, etc.), and a greater incorporation of Xhosa history.

Carol indicates that in recent years UWC has been enrolling an increasing number of students from the Eastern Cape. Both mainstream media and educational reports show that schooling in this province is, on the whole, very poor. This has required her to change her teaching methods, for example, speaking at an increasingly slow pace and prescribing fewer texts. This altered demographic situation means that she has to cater for differentiated student requests. She cites the following example to illustrate the point:

> … the Black students say, "You're going too fast" and the Coloured students say they're bored, because they've had a better education and they're more fluent in English, they're also used to hearing English … the students from the Eastern Cape have often not been taught English by a native English speaker, so their ear isn't attuned to it, and they resist it for all sorts of principled and practical reasons. We don't have the resources, but we're going to have to stream students to cope with this problem because we're losing Coloured students to Stellenbosch University. On the whole, most Coloured students will choose to go to UCT if they can get in. If not, they will come to UWC, which has been a university established for the Coloured community and one in which, I think, a lot of them found a very comfortable identity and moved into academic and administrative positions. But there's been quite a lot of resentment, at the number of Black students coming in and how they influence teaching methods. There's a feeling (I don't know if this is true) that they tend not to pay their fees, more than the Coloured community do. There's been a fair bit of resentment. But it's definitely affected our teaching. (Interview).

Carol observes that although many students are timid about approaching staff, over the years they have tended to become more dependant on lecturers. In this regard, she has encouraged students to talk to their lecturers, by saying: 'But lecturers like that, it shows you're keen if you talk to them about your work'. Carol describes the ethos of the English Department as being premised on an open-door policy. Lecturers are available quite a lot for student consultation. Primarily, she credits the department for making allowances for students who usually come from disadvantaged home and education backgrounds. Rather than viewing this as a limitation, the department encourages staff to give a bit more of themselves. (Summary from Interview).

Vijay's (Auto)biographical Profile

School of Languages and Literature
University of Durban-Westville

Section 1: Partial Institutional Sketch

University of Durban-Westville: A Brief History[5]

In this section I present a brief description of University of Durban-Westville at which Vijay was teaching at he time of my study.

The University of Durban-Westville is located within an environmental conservancy in Durban and Pinetown. A Hindu Temple and Mosque greets the visitor at one of the University's three entrances. Though the majority of today's students are not of these religious persuasions, the buildings speak of an earlier period in the University's history when it had a very specific profile of students. It was established at the height of political repression forty years ago as the University College for Indians on Salisbury Island in Durban Bay. The apartheid legislation of the day designated universities on ethnic and racial grounds. UDW was compelled to only admit students of Indian origin, the vast majority of whom trace their forbearers to the indentured labourers shipped to the sugar cane fields of Natal by the British colonial authorities. Politically progressive sections of the Indian community boycotted the University in line with the Congress Alliance's policy of shunning apartheid structures. Student numbers remained low throughout the 1960's.

The late 1960's witnessed a change in the boycott strategy in favour of 'education under protest' designed to transform apartheid institutions into 'sites of struggle'. Student numbers increased rapidly, drawing ideological impetus from the emerging Black Consciousness Movement.

In 1971, the College was granted academic independence and became a fully-fledged University. The following year, the newly named University of Durban-Westville moved to its new campus. The University gained a reputation as being the bedrock of radical student activism, and became a rallying point for activist politics. In the wake of the 1976 Soweto Uprising many UDW activists fled the country to join the exiled liberation movements both as combatants and organisers. Its numbers grew after 1980, when UDW students actively promoted the school boycotts of that year. A change in the Education Act and pressure from students and Faculty resulted in a more open policy on student admissions in terms of race, language or ethnic origin. The wave of political resistance and state repression sweeping the country in the 1980s saw running battles between student activists, the police and militia. The increasingly authoritarian posture of the Apartheid State was confirmed with the military establishing bases on the campus during the periods of virtual martial law. The State Security Branch's presence on the campus had been well known for several years. Despite these constraints, a rich diversity of ideological opinions flourished on the campus. Faculty and staff

[5] This partial biographic profile of the University of Durban-Westville was summarised from the university's website: http://www.udw.ac.za
See also Cooper, D & Subotzky, G. 2001. *The Skewed Revolution: Trends in South African Higher Education: 1988-1998.*

energetically engaged in national policy debates about the form of the post-apartheid dispensation. In its mission statement the University sees teaching, research and community service as its central activities. (http://www.udw.ac.za).

Section 2: Profile of Research Participants

Vijay's Autobiographical Essay

(1) I think that our parents were the strongest early influence on my personal, political and intellectual development. They tended to be quite liberal on the issues of power and freedom of expression and encouraged independent thinking. Of course there were contradictions but everything was up for debate in our home and that flow of ideas was more valuable than twelve years of the formal programme at school.

(2) My left-leaning politics may be related to very early experiences of the Group Areas Act. We had to move from Welbedacht (now a part of the township Chatsworth, Durban) in 1962 and from Seaview in 1966 as both our parents' families lost their homes of many decades because of apartheid legislation. As children we made our first friends in mixed-race Seaview. It was here that I observed mum's impassioned resentment and fear of the Group Areas' inspectors. My political attitudes are perhaps also rooted in our parents' insistence that we treat everybody with respect. We also heard many stories about the difficult circumstances in which our parents were raised. Many people in our large immediate and extended families had working class lives and our parents made sure that we did not take the benefits of our class position for granted. We were always being told how fortunate we were ("You kids must be grateful for the food/clothes/books you get, how many children in this country are so lucky?"). They were very strict with us about money because although they were teachers their salaries were very low (with Mum earning considerably less than Dad).

(3) When we began attending school in Chatsworth in 1970 the poverty of some of my Std 3 classmates (who had no sandwiches or shoes) had a profound impact on my consciousness of class although I did not have the words for it. The rest of my political attitudes probably developed through reading, encountering class and race based bigotry at high school (against 'Zanzibari' children), in the buses, on the radio, in the press and in the circle of family and friends. My twelve years at school represented a prison term that I endured with great impatience even though there were a few teachers who were kind. I felt quite ashamed of being middle class when some of our high school teachers treated the middle class children with more respect than the majority of children. This made me very critical of the middle classes, their privileges, power, arrogance and stupidity, and this was strengthened beyond personal experience when I discovered Marx (indirectly, as his work was banned), Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu at university. On reflection it strikes me that the reason I react strongly to class-arrogance and racism against other people and myself may be the result of my experiences of gender inequity at home and in the broader family (and there was no discourse in which to challenge it at the time). Although my brothers had fairly similar experiences and information, they were at times more conservative on issues of class and race equity than I was (as beneficiaries of patriarchy they were perhaps less sensitive).

(4) What I valued most about being middle class was the access to reading material and the expectation of a university education. In my second year at UDW I was surprised to find myself interested in academic work. (I hadn't wanted to attend the segregated, less-than-intellectual institution that UDW was in the 1970s under the Broederbond, preferring to work and study part-time through the equally hopeless alternative, Unisa.) I had never intended to be a teacher, except perhaps when I was at the end of my working career, and full of the experience and wisdom of life.

(5) The centrality of work in my life may be related to the fact that Mum worked, as did our great grandmother (the other great grandparents were dead by the time we were born) and there was a lot of respect for their work in the family and the community. Mum was the youngest girl in her family and the first to go to high school. After Standard 8 she trained as a teacher at the training college (two of her brothers also had a tertiary education). Our great granny came to South Africa as a widow with young children, worked out her indenture on the sugar cane fields and then became a midwife. (Her daughter, our granny, had been married at the age of twelve and had eleven children, so even though she did not have a career she had a full time job.) We watched our *thatha* (maternal grandfather) work as a carpenter until he was eighty. He was the only grandparent who spoke English and he died when I was fourteen. In his spare time he advanced his knowledge of Telugu, Sanskrit and a range of religious texts and, as I learned later, wrote extensive critical commentaries in the margins of books and articles. He was involved in the formation of a cultural group to promote Tamil, Hindi and Telugu in the 1920s, and was a founder, in the 1930s, of the Andra Maha Sabha, which propagated the Telugu language and Hindu culture. Like mum our dad was the eighth child of ten. His father was a farmer who died before we were born. His mother was a housewife who died when we were quite young. Dad has been a very enthusiastic teacher of Geography and English. He was the first child of two males in his family to acquire a tertiary education, and he did his studies (up to a Bachelor of Education Degree) part time while he taught.

(6) All this busyness and respect for education in the tribe may explain why work has been the central theme of my life. Work promised independence and fulfilment. When I started working at the age of 22 as a junior lecturer on six-month contracts at the University of Durban-Westville (UDW) I felt tremendous satisfaction. Before that I had taken tutorials as a graduate assistant in my honours' year in 1981, and done some part time teaching of English at a technical school in 1982-3. However, the struggles of great granny, mum and other workingwomen and mothers influenced my early feeling that I could not subject myself to the stress of managing a family and a career. Observing the violence that women do to themselves as they juggle work, children, partner, extended family and community responsibilities was very instructive. At the same time, finding work that exercised my passion for independent thinking, reading, writing, teaching and problem solving has been immensely satisfying.

(7) The influence of age, class, culture, race, religion, ethnicity and linguistic background on my identity has been quite complex. My birth was registered on the 100th anniversary of the indentured Indians arrival in South Africa, which may explain why backward-looking ideas of Indian-ness have seemed futile to me; such an anniversary seems to impel new generations to go forward as South Africans.

(8) Perhaps because of my parents and grandfather's seriousness about being both Indian and part of South Africa I have never felt embattled about my Indianness. It is something I accept as a natural part of my identity along with the curly hair. No need to fuss about it. I have little patience with the endless rehearsal of the petty superficials associated with Indian culture, but this is probably a characteristic of insecure folk in any diaspora. If only people spent a fraction of their energy informing themselves of their histories and the significance of their cultures rather than the endless grand and empty gestures that say more about insecurity. There are enormously valuable aspects of the culture that receive short shrift in the diaspora, like yoga, meditation, and the spiritual literature. Examples of these include the Rig Vedas, the Gita, the Thirukurral and various works on yoga, meditation and ayurveda. Although I rejected the religious rituals at the grand age of eleven and still don't have any use for them, I decided that there was value in the philosophy when I encountered a passage in the Rig Vedas that conceded that god may not exist.

(9) The strongest influence my originary identity has in my life is in the practice of yoga, although many of my books were produced in the west (hybridity characterises so much of modern experience). When I shifted to vegetarianism in 1985 mum was really surprised with this child who had never paid any attention to her injunctions to eat only vegetables on certain days. I thought that there was enough discipline in my life without adding some clock-bound observance that emanated from the guilt of naughty meat-eaters. Mum decided that my switch to vegetarianism was the result of karate (which I had been practicing for some years). She was probably right. Karate, as I learned, was really about avoiding conflict and injury to everyone and we were cautioned that using the carefully honed skills was actually a sign of failure as a karateka. It was all about the avoidance of violence – how much more un-macho does a martial art get?

(10) The political experiences of the 1970s and 1980s shaped my identity as a South African, as reflected in some of the speeches I delivered in class in 1975. There was one on why we should study African literature and politics (and was inspired by the Kenyan freedom fighter Oginga Odinga), and another on the informal settlement Tin Town (based largely on Fatima Meer's work in her book *Portrait of Indian South Africans*, which was subject to some form of banning). At university I chose social science courses at undergraduate level, with Sociology, Psychology and English majors, while dodging the apartheid-aligned History and Political Science. English has always been a part of the social sciences to me, although I have often been alone in this conviction. In English 2 we were briefly introduced to African literature. The most interesting module in the Honours degree was African literature, and for my MA I wanted to examine the poetry of Wally Serote but believed that there would be ideological struggles with the supervisor or examiner. Serote was a very 'political' poet, and his African National Congress membership was a problem to many fellow academics (indeed, my Head of Department who was also my thesis supervisor, called me later, in 1984/5, to request that the teaching of Serote's poetry be 'less political', which I managed to challenge by querying how this might be done?) So it was a pragmatic decision to work on Douglas Livingstone's attempts to make sense of Southern Africa in the 1960s-80s. I was interested in Livingstone's experimentalism with language as he struggled to come to terms with the socio-political situation. It didn't help that he was the most highly ranked of the living poets (in the dominant

canon), and there were ideological conflicts over my readings with my supervisor and subsequently with some academics at the 1986 Association of University English Teachers of South Africa conference. The form in which these differences were expressed were interesting: it was argued that I was mistaken in judging some of Livingstone's personae to be flawed (most readers tended to conflate my critique of the positions of assorted personae with a critique of the poet) and that anyone on reflection would see that he meant well. I was concerned that people were conflating the work of the poet with the person (with whom I had no personal grouse, indeed he had been very kind to me). And, having engaged very thoroughly with Livingstone's work over several years, I remained unconvinced by the arguments that were presented and resisted them openly. During question time I found myself retorting to a particularly aggressive professor that the differences in our readings arose from our different historical subject positions and that he should not try to reinvent me (by way of getting me to change my mind). On reflection I realise that I was reacting as much to the hegemonic assumptions of conservative liberalism as to the patronage of white masculinity, in that I was being constructed as a misguided Indian woman who would accept the sense of a forceful argument. Later, another progressive academic remarked that he had heard that I was a historical materialist. The term had little meaning to me and when I looked it up I discovered that it meant 'Marxist', which I was quite comfortable with even though I had had little access to Marxist thinking under apartheid.

(11) The opportunity to broaden my intellectual development arose in 1990-1991 with a fellowship at Northwestern University's Program of African Studies, which gave me access to the vast collection in the African studies library (I also went to various libraries across the US and, on my return journey, spent some time at the School of African and Oriental Studies library at the University of London). Back home my studies were interrupted when I was prevailed upon to serve as general secretary of our staff association in the critical post-apartheid period, and this, an enormous teaching and administrative load, and commitments to the national university staff structure took up the next three years but helped me think through and act on my ideological commitments. I wrote UDW's Social Redress Policy (to correct the racial, gender and class inequities in student and staff representation) and piloted it through the union and the university structures. This was a first for a SA tertiary institution, although the proof of any policy is in the implementation. I also began the move to integrate the cleaning staff (who were subcontracted under miserable conditions) into the union, and started a literacy programme (ongoing). As a representative on the Union of Democratic University Staff Association's policy task team I worked on a policy to improve the access of students to the university system (years later this policy has begun to be implemented in Kwa-ZuluNatal, in the form of a centralised admissions' office). There was also the challenge of managing a dynamic union with over a thousand very diverse members, struggles in the executive with male comrades who were unaccustomed to dealing with women who held positions of power, struggles among the union's secretariat with women who had similar challenges (some of it race related), some Student Representative Council men who thought that my teaching responsibilities should be sacrificed to their notions of time-keeping, some academics who were outraged that I was championing the move to have the cleaning staff join the union (fortunately the rest of the executive was very supportive and carried the wage and service negotiations). Although it consumed most of my life it was an incredible learning experience. The executive was not impressed with my resolve to serve one term of office (a

decision that was as much pragmatic as it was ideological, in that I believe that organisations benefit from having a steady turnover of officials), but I undertook to continue to work on the policy forum of the national university federation. This was part of another trade off: my union and the national federation had decided that I should serve as a national vice-president. Desperate to get on with my research, I motivated that we consider a very capable woman colleague, who was thankfully open to persuasion, and everyone was satisfied. I relinquished all my activism and my membership of all the organisations (except for ordinary membership of the union), reasoning that I could always rejoin but that if I did not advance as an intellectual I would be of little use to anybody in the academic context. It was also becoming increasingly clear by 1992-1993 that it was critical to generate research or be subject to the old hegemonies that were becoming even more entrenched. Most of my energy went into the PhD, on the popular-democratic character of the culture of resistance (1970-1990), and, after several struggles involving gender; it was completed in January 1998. My classroom and union activism proved invaluable to the subject and I got tremendous satisfaction from the focus on the research and writing processes.

(12) It is interesting how life confounds the hoary stereotypes, as I find particularly when I get a chance to travel. The most amusing affirmation arose during the delivery of a paper in Bangalore in December 1999. Teju Niranjana, the Director of the Centre for the Study of Culture & Society, introduced me saying, "although you may think that Vijay is an Indian you will hear from what she says that she is actually an African and not an Indian at all". During discussion time, when I was challenging several academics that they needed to organise to deal with the reactionary elements who controlled their teaching, Teju said, "See, I told you, that's how South Africans solve their problems". So although I have always been a feminist and have learned much from feminist reservations about nationalism, as a Third World postcolonial (I didn't always have this word for it) I have been heavily influenced by our own national (in the sense of nation-state) struggle for liberation. However, the limitations of nationalism are growing ever more apparent under neoliberal globalisation.

(13) For as long as I can remember, what I have least wanted to be identified as is "Indian", although this has never been intended as a rejection of South Africans who identify themselves as such. However, it seems to me that minorities tend to grow unwittingly conservative in mistaken assertions of difference that are more appropriate to the struggles of say, Africans and Asians living in societies built on colonialism like Britain and France, but which do not apply in the same way to societies that have suffered colonialism, like South Africa. The confusion tends to be produced by liberal notions of multiculturalism, which are sometimes absorbed uncritically without attention to the huge differences between societies that were colonizers and those that were colonized. Of course, globalisation is making the issue even more complex.

(14) The ways in which I defined myself came up during a second year Psychology class in which we were required to list the words that best described our identities in order of their importance. I remember describing myself as a black South African. My ethnic and gender identities did not seem to have any meaning. Until the mid-1980s I considered it necessary to assert myself as a person rather than a woman, which seemed to be a compromised and undermined category. Although the title 'Ms' was infinitely preferable to the old honorifics

that were based on the absence or presence of a man, I had little use for it because my feminist instincts have always led me to prefer my first name to celebrating my male line as my identity. However, the title 'Dr' has been useful to the extent that it deflects the curiosity about women's marital status that tends to characterise patriarchal culture (by distracting the questioner), and it can be useful when trying to cover up one's gender for reasons of security. Of course, for many years now I have increasingly identified with women and their various struggles, and try to understand who we (and men) might be beyond the boundaries of patriarchy.

(15) More recently I have been thinking beyond the limits of national identity, quite different from the 1970s and 1980s when it was an article of faith for me to be a South African and to insist that that identity was not circumscribed by the apartheid state, as in PW Botha's exclusivist definition in "South Africans are opposed to sanctions" – which Orkin (1986) challenged statistically in the mid-1980s. Of course, socialists and feminists have long argued that nation states tend to serve elites. In the current conjuncture, thinking about ourselves as world citizens is important if we are to tackle our serious environmental, political and health problems, particularly as globalisation assails so many of us.

(16) Our linguistic development was tended by both parents, our aunt and grandfather, and even, occasionally, great granny, who was in her eighties. Mum corrected our language with great clarity and patience and told us (western) children's stories, our aunt had a store of ribald Indian folktales as well as amusing and subversive stories featuring various relatives, Thatha told us formal stories from the Mahabaratha, and great granny and everyone else told us stories about their youth and their lives. Dad delivered the most gripping performances of 'Mafutha and the Lion'. I first remember hearing the story when I was about three years old, and believed it to be about Mafutha, a strong, handsome farm labourer we had known. The story was full of drama and action, and strong on geographic detail of the surrounding districts that both Mafutha and the lion traversed as they stalked each other. We were so engrossed with each telling of the tale that we never got to the end because we jumped up and fled when dad got to the words: "the lion is coming, the lion is coming". Eventually mum banned it for a while because it upset our young brother who was a toddler. It is still my favourite story although I have not heard it for decades. Thinking back I wonder if the fact that some of the words and choruses are in isiZulu may have set the ground for my attitudes towards multilingualism.

(17) Given our grandfather's involvement in the propagation of the Telugu language it is quite interesting that he never commented on the fact that we could not speak Telugu. Nor can I ever recall him attempting to teach us any Telugu or suggesting that our mother (his daughter) deal with it. I wonder if he accepted that it was not viable in such a small community. Whatever the reason such tacit positions strengthened my refusal to consider learning the language when mum began to badger us about it later. We were teenagers when our parents grew more interested in preserving their mother tongue (sparked largely, I think, by the appearance of Radio Lotus which purports to service Indian 'culture') but this contradicted the liberal way in which we had been raised and we resisted. As our parents themselves barely spoke the language any more we were not impressed by their arguments, and I told my mother that I would rather learn isiZulu.

(18) My belief in multilingualism arises, I suppose, from a belief in equality. Despite my earlier decisions regarding the fading mother tongue of my parents, I believe that learning another language does not detract from but can add value to one's experience of the world. In my own case, when I began to study English at university (under fairly conservative white lecturers) I realized that it may be my first language but it is not my mother tongue, which caused quite an existential crisis at the time. I do not have a mother tongue, a condition shared by an increasing number of people in the migrations that characterise modernity. At university I also chose to study French because I was interested in African literature and politics. I wondered why UDW was offering French and German but not the largest language in the province: some intellectual I was going to be if I couldn't speak Zulu. I think UDW began to offer Zulu in 1983 and I got permission to study it for non-degree purposes in 1986, as soon as I finished my MA. Dissatisfied with my level of competence, the following year I decided to study Zulu 2, but had to drop out after a few months when the lectures clashed with my teaching commitments.

(19) The curious thing about my support for multilingualism is that it seems to indicate that this wayward child was listening with half an ear to mum's arguments about the value of mother tongue. It seems as if it was just that in my reception as a third generation South African I transferred value to the undermined indigenous languages.

(20) My feminist consciousness developed when I was quite young, out of observing that our mother over-valued my brothers and tended to undermine me and somehow never supported me when there was a clash. I thought this was just something personal and fought it as such but at ten I realised that this was how our grandmother behaved, in addition to discriminating between the children of her sons and daughters. I raised the latter with mum, who tried to defend our granny. I asked mum how different were granny's prejudices from apartheid? I did not raise it with our granny. She was old and could barely speak English and we had never been taught Telugu. But I did make my rejection of such behaviour quite plain to our mum, not that it made much difference to her practices. I resented Granny's behaviour for many years and only grew to accept that she was a just a sad case the year before she died. Making peace with mum on the issue has been more of a challenge, particularly as she seems to understand how she is advancing the inequities of patriarchy through such practices but cannot help herself. However, at various critical points in our lives I have raised such matters openly with my brothers in the hope that they do not perpetuate such practices in their families. At the time though, although I subsequently dealt with the matter, mum's behaviour long made me resent being a girl. I was accustomed to being empowered through other sources. Dad was more egalitarian than mum and less invested in patriarchal values. Reading was a particular source of worldly power and games, sports, general knowledge, debates and examinations offered opportunities to assert my equality with my brothers and peers. Perhaps in over-reaction to mum I tended to be critical of the behaviour of other women (including my peers) and tended to prefer male friends and teachers. At social functions (the few I did attend) I spent much more time with the boys or men (my dad was very welcoming) where we talked about politics and world affairs rather than what I privately dismissed as petty girls/women's talk (only later did I realise how this played into patriarchal constructions). However, there were a few women friends from high school and university who felt the same impatience with their mothers and that were supportive. I was very fortunate to have Betty Govinden briefly as a lecturer in

African literature in English 2, she has been a long-standing role model as an outstanding teacher and a feminist academic who treats her students with kindness and consideration. Unfortunately she moved over to education shortly after that and we had little contact until the 1990s.

(21) When the municipal libraries in Durban were opened to all races in 1983 I came across *Ms* Magazine, which made a huge impression on me. I discovered a whole new discourse and began to understand that my concerns about male privilege were about the system of patriarchy. I began to get a better sense of the complicity of men and women with the system. My perception that things were a little complicated in our home, because the more obvious bearer of patriarchy was our mum, rather than our dad (who had seemed quite benign and open to being challenged), became more complex. As women's studies began to develop in the late 1980s I observed other contradictions: although some colleagues claimed to be feminists, their constructions of gender did not go beyond middle class eurocentrism. I could not imagine not focusing on questions of race, class and human rights in my research and lectures on gender. It was only when I discovered the research into black, working class, third world and postcolonial feminism that I stopped feeling like the other. I think that we have a responsibility to ground our emancipatory discourses in the history and reality of our students' life experiences.

(22) I have long felt that it is unfair and counter-productive to have a single medium of instruction given our student intake and the impact of apartheid and the continuing chaos in education. Given my location in a publicly funded educational institution my lack of communicative competence (which I am working on), and the fact that it took a great deal of effort to challenge the dominant notions of syllabus content, mode of instruction and assessment, putting this into practice has not been possible so far. What I have done, since about the mid-1990s, was to encourage students to use the language in which they felt most competent to brainstorm and develop ideas. This was particularly well received by tutorial classes (and students' independent study groups) but the large size of the lecture classes and the small number of lectures allocated meant that I could only suggest it as a technique. I had not anticipated that multilingualism could in any practical way be part of our policy, too many academics are first language English speakers and this group is known to be the least capable in our society of speaking another language or understanding the need to learn an African language. So the affirmation of indigenous languages served principally as a technique to enhance students' capacity to ultimately produce writing in the medium of English, for assignments, tests and examinations. There has been no space in the curriculum for isiZulu as a medium of instruction, but this simply indicates the need for structural changes to be effected at the institutional level. For my part, I have taught my students, since my first year of teaching, that they should get over their complexes regarding the status of their mother tongue and understand the history (of colonialism and apartheid) that produced the dominance of English. In the early years I was influenced by Chinua Achebe's essays on the role of the African writer as well as Ngugi wa Thiong'o's essays in Writers in Politics (1981) and Barrel of a Pen (1983). I dealt with language policy in Language and Power in the early 1990s, and drew on Neville Alexander's work and the NEPI publications and on the work I was doing on institutional policy (on social redress at UDW which focused on student intake and staffing, and on a national scheme for increasing student access to tertiary education). The NEPI work on "Unpacking common-sense notions about language policy" in the publication entitled *Language*

(1992) proved of enormous value in challenging commonsense assumptions such as all children should learn English/Afrikaans at school, and the lingua franca should be English. Many students were quite surprised to receive information that challenged the hegemony of English in the English department (such as the HSRC findings regarding the number of language speakers – which contradicted their impression that more South Africans spoke English than any other language), and I had to point out that no English teacher in a postcolonial society could do otherwise. But in a module of 17 lectures there was never enough time to do justice to the issues (even additional lectures were insufficient). It was heartening when the Education faculty began to prepare teacher trainees to work in multilingual classrooms.

(23) My graduate students have also expressed great surprise that their mother tongue and the voices of ordinary people are being affirmed in the English department. However, the students need a great deal of encouragement to overcome the history of institutional neglect of their mother tongue and its speakers. A MA and a PhD student are basing their research on interviews with poor African women. One is examining how rural women are dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the other is working on how women break the silence of poverty and patriarchy to tell their life stories. However, as an individual I have no power or skill to do more than support my students' research (apart from ensuring at least one examiner who has facility in both Zulu and English), which still has to be rendered in English. Individual academics can do little on their own; we have to work together to produce institutional change. The work our Sociolinguistics group is doing on language planning at tertiary institutions attempts to address such a need.

(24) Notwithstanding GEAR and the neoliberal structural adjustment programmes, multilingualism needs to inform our media of instruction at all levels if our society is to have any thorough-going transformation. What this conjuncture alerts us to is that our efforts around multilingualism cannot be piecemeal and that it is important to make it part of institutional policy and practice if it is to be effective. In the last few months, members of our Sociolinguistics strand decided that we had to tackle the problem of the alienating singular medium of instruction (English) at an institutional level and that we had to do it as part of a research programme. So we have met with a range of people involved in developing the language policy and the language in education policy. We also hosted workshops to gauge how other institutions are dealing with the issue. Through a great deal of collaborative work we eventually set up a full-scale research project with UDW as the case study. I find myself with my work cut out as the project leader (I also have to serve as the discipline chair of Sociolinguistics). Our research is scheduled to commence in 2002 although we were recently inspired to produce a report on the state of language planning at public sector tertiary institutions in the region. The research team is also part of the Language Planning task team, a subcommittee of the University Planning Committee to effect institutional development in response to the constitutional provisions on language in education and the Language Policy Framework document for higher education. A graduate programme is planned to develop personnel to undertake language planning and policy implementation.

(25) Among the theorists who have laid the ground for my thinking about feminism and multilingual teaching are Audre Lorde on the power of utterance, Carole Boyce Davies on how gender and race contribute to silencing, Trinh Minh-ha on third world representation and

intellectual marginalisation, Gayatri Spivak on intellectual representation and pedagogical practices, Amina Mama on African feminism, Desiree Lewis on South African feminist intellectual practices, Obioma Nnaemeka on building gender networks to address the challenges of modernity, Judith Butler on the limitations of heterosexist constructions of gender, Chandra Talpade Mohanty on questioning the limits of white middle class feminism, Mary Eagleton on teaching gender, Paulo Freire on popular education, Ngugi wa Thiong'o on committed writers and the limitations of writing in English, Terry Eagleton on deconstructing the power of institutionalised English studies, Noam Chomsky on the public responsibilities of intellectual, Edward Said on challenging eurocentrism and neoliberal globalisation, and Jacques Derrida on deconstructing power.

(26) Remlinger (1999) makes the point that no particular theory, approach, or school of thought adequately charts and analyses the relationship between gender and language. In my experience multilingualism is an expression of a democratic ethos and represents anti-racist struggle for linguistic equity against the domination of English and Afrikaans in South Africa. Elsewhere in the world, and to a lesser extent here, as a result of the apartheid state's attempts to divide and rule the oppressed majority through entrenching language differences via Bantustans that serviced ethnic chauvinism, multilingualism is a part of anti-ethnic-reductivist struggles.

(27) While feminists are particularly alert to the importance of speaking for ourselves, it is interesting that US feminism has its roots in the Black civil rights movement, from which the archaeology of voicing can be traced. So, even the archaeology of feminism makes it difficult to talk about multilingualism without including anti-racism.

(28) The link between multilingualism and feminism in South Africa is contingent upon the form that feminism takes. If feminism remains vested in minority interests and is class bound then its relationship to multilingualism is tenuous at best, but usually reactionary, in its attempt to re-legitimate minority interests in the name of liberalism. It is apparent that the more important value of multilingualism is to enable access for the majority of people. This is an especially urgent issue in publicly funded institutions, which are neglectful of such responsibilities. Some try to escape their responsibilities by going through the motions of rewriting policy while what they actually implement is no advance on the unilingual status quo. So the question is really what kind of feminism would have an interest in social redress and the most promising would seem to be African feminism, although it is still an emerging discourse in this country and not necessarily engaged in questions of class. A socialist feminism, or a materialist feminism arising out of this conjuncture could be very engaged though weak on race and even a South African feminism might offer possibilities, arising out of the historical contradictions between nationalism and feminism while being driven by the exigencies of globalisation.

(29) It is interesting that the people who are most committed and active in the Language Planning group are women. Currently three women are driving the process (the former chair of Sociolinguistics, the chair of the Language Planning task team and I), supported by two other academics. Women seem to have fewer investments in the father tongue and to be more open to multilingualism in their institutions and classrooms. Women also appear more committed to

learning other languages themselves and show greater sensitivity in this area. Girls' skills in language seem to be related to women's social skills, perhaps also suggesting that not being the privileged subjects of patriarchy makes women more flexible and open to sharing, inclusiveness and change. It is as though this is political, in that these attributes, critical to a multilingual consciousness, are linked to women's power positions as assigned by patriarchy. Women's tendency not to over-invest in the language of prestige seems to be a consequence of the fact that their interests have never been privileged (the other is a valuable site of difference). Women come to social interaction as less than equal, so our investments in social power tend to be more tenuous, more nuanced and more critical. What informs my own dialectical position on English has been the fact that although it is my first language it is not my mother tongue, and I do not know that a man with large investments in patriarchy can maintain such a binaried (Janus-faced?) position.

(30) The impact of feminism on my view of myself has been deeply affirming. It confirmed my sense of women's oppression and male privilege, and has given me a tremendous intellectual and personal framework to address the questions of gender in my life, politics, research projects and teaching activities. Gender has strengthened my understanding of race and class and how one of these may be deployed to advance learning where the other/s may contribute to a blind spot. Feminism influences my conception of multilingual teaching by raising the challenge that research into developing and implementing multilingual policies in higher education institutions does not just mean proposing the inclusion of as many languages as possible but must address the patriarchal ideologies latent in those languages (such as gender chauvinism). It is necessary to challenge the sexism (and other oppressions) in all of the languages; otherwise the interests, voices and development of women (and oppressed men – for there many, living unsuspectingly under patriarchy) will remain as stymied as they are at present. Given the need for advances in these areas, I am at present working on a paper on curriculum development and research in the areas of language and gender (primarily for a conference in Sociolinguistics). It is interesting that Sociolinguistics and Gender Studies programmes (whether in South Africa or most other places) do not deal with the intersection of language and gender in any substantive way. Yet there is an enormous interest in gender among students taking Sociolinguistics and this growing discipline would do well to develop the area, particularly as it is an important way of addressing issues such as civil rights, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS and social movements. Later in the year I will work with academics at Spelman and Michigan on research, curriculum design and student exchanges in these areas.

Students' Partial Demographic Profile: Language & Power Course: 2001

The following partial biographic details of student demographics, is meant to provide an overview of Vijay's students, which she refers to both in her essay and interview. The following table contains a summary of student demographics of the *Language & Power* Course.

Age	19(1); 20(6); 21(6); 23(1); 24(2); 31(1)
Place of Birth Urban/Rural area	Rural: 4 Urban: 13
Race	12 Black (described variously as African, Zulu, Black) 4 Indians (described as Asian or Indian) 1 (non-respondent: presumably Black if languages spoken can be used as an indicator of race)

Sex	Female: 11 Male: 6
Religion	13 Christians (includes various denominations) 4 Hindus
Degree currently registered for	15 B.A 2 B.Paed.
Majors taking towards degree	English (8); Science (2); Zulu (2); Psychology (9); Criminology (6); Sociology (3) Geography (1); Public Admin (1); Politics (1); Business management (1); Philosophy (1); Sociolinguistics (1)
Year of study currently in	2nd (5); 3rd (7); 4th (3); Postgraduate (1); Non-response (1)
In what language did you receive your: 1.Primary school education? 2. Secondary School education?	1.isiZulu (8); English (5); isiZulu & English (3); isiXhosa & English (1) 2.English (12); IsiZulu (2); isiZulu & English (1); isiZulu; English & Afrikaans (1); English & Afrikaans (1)
How many languages do you speak?	1 Language (3 people speak English only) 2 Languages (4 people speak: isiZulu as L1& English L2) 3 Languages (3 people speak: isiZulu L1; isiXhosa L2; English L3) 3 languages (4 people speak:isiZulu L1; English L2; isiXhosa L3 & 1 person speaks English L1, Afrikaans L2, isiZulu L3 4 languages (1 person speaks: isiZulu L1; English L2; isiXhosa L3, & seSotho L4. 1 person speaks isiXhosa as L1; isiZulu L2; seSotho L3, & English L4

Reasons for studying English 2

- to enhance my skills & acquire a broader perspective of the language.
- I want to work in media.
- to enhance my power of the language for better argument formulation and to enhance the critical reading skill in English as well as writing.
- English can afford number of employment opportunities after years of study.
- to be able to communicate with different people who might not understand Zulu.
- increase my writing skills and to understand it and to be able to talk perfectly.
- to benefit me with writing skills and to be able to write, speak and be good in English, most especially in grammar.
- it is useful; to communicate well with other people who do not know my first language, Zulu.
- In order to communicate with the entire world.
- It is a language of power and means of communication throughout the world.
- I've done English. I Need a 2nd level course, so I've decided to do English 2.
- To gain a better knowledge of the language and to be able to use English effectively.
- I wanted to learn more about other languages.
- To improve my skills and because I have always liked English from school because of my secondary school teacher.
- I intend working with people from different racial groups after I complete my degree. Most people use English to communicate in the workplace. Through this course I am increasing my knowledge.

When were you first exposed to/became conscious of feminist/gender/sexist issues?

- When I was 13 because of the chores of home where I would be told to this chore because I am a girl.
- When I was doing Sociology in my 1st year.
- On campus when I started doing English & Education.
- At university in several modules, and the Language & Power module which dealt with it in much detail.
- My first year at university.
- At university.
- First year at university.
- At university.
- Tertiary education.
- During matric and at the UDW community organisation that I was involved in.
- At high school when we used to conduct debates on these issues.
- In high school and in relationships with different kinds of people.
- At secondary school since I have a brother and there was always a comparison between us.
- At secondary school.
- In my 4th year at university.
- At university e.g. in the Language and Power Course.
- No response.

Section 3: Overview of Course Taught, Classroom Activities and Reflections

This section summarises lecture content, classroom activities, interactions, and sketches an overview of discussions that transpired in the lectures that I observed:

Vijay's autobiographical account briefly captures her academic and professional trajectory at the UDW, where she continues to be involved in various curricula and extra curricula research and teaching activities. I first became acquainted with Vijay when as co-ordinator of the Gender Module in the Masters in Education and Training in the UDW School of Education, I had invited her to co-teach on the programme. At the time of the study she was also teaching a Masters in Gender and Politics. She continues to teach a range of language and development related issues in various interdisciplinary programmes at the university.

Having been an undergraduate student at the University of Durban Westville during the height of political activism who returned after almost a decade to teach in the School of Education, it was with a keen sense of nostalgia that I returned in April 2001 for a month long visit to attend the *Language and Power Course* Vijay was teaching. The familiar sight of posters announcing the death of young students, interspersed with HIV/AIDS pamphlets and posters announcing AIDS Awareness Week greeted me as I walked down the corridors.

On my first official visit to the class students were being handed back their test scripts and Vijay had scheduled a test review. The rest of the contact session was utilized in reviewing the test questions. In this session Vijay focused on the following aspects:

- **Planning:** Vijay pointed out that evidently most students had responded to the test questions without mobilizing their preparation in a well-structured plan. She stressed the need for a plan to guide both a clearly thought out response to the question, as well as help with time management.
- **Responding to the Question:** Taking the view that 'The question is God,' Vijay urged students to pay attention to the question and to tackle it squarely. She suggested underlining important words in the question to gain focus in order to respond to it appropriately, and relevantly.
- **Conventions of Academic Writing:** Given that students were engaged in academic writing, they were advised to avoid flowery introductions, the use of figurative and alliterative language, and being too subjective. Vijay distinguished between the Arts, and subjectivity, stressing that students should separate their own discourse from the discourse of the subject, English. She expressed concern that students were unaware that a paragraph is about presenting an argument, and seemed oblivious to the concept of presenting a structured argument.
- **Critique of Texts/Authors:** Students were asked to be critical not only of the prescribed text by Webb and Kembo-Sure that they were using for the *Language and Power Course*, but of all texts they read. Vijay assured students that it was fine to disagree with textbook writers.

The HIV/AIDS Assignment

For the duration of my visit, the class was involved in the *HIV/AIDS Assignment*. Committed to developing the intellectual in a postcolonial society, Vijay built into the *Language and Power Course* a component, which required students to conduct ethnographic research. In motivating for the use of this research genre she pointed out that unfortunately within English Studies or Language Studies the focus has tended to be on elite forms rather than on what ordinary people had to say. Thus, she outlined the need to construct a question that was going to

accommodate listening to the voices, of one's peers, friends, people one knows: those one lives with, whose voices are not so well heard.

Charged with a strong socio-linguistic sensitivity, the AIDS Assignment was intended to instil in students a sense of their need to become actively involved in the upliftment and positive transformation of their societies. Acknowledging that the AIDS pandemic is a social scourge that requires intervention, the class engaged in a long process of negotiating a suitable topic to be researched. Some of the suggestions included: the role that education/language plays in HIV awareness; effects of HIV/AIDS in society; different attitudes of people towards AIDS; AIDS Awareness (causes, symptoms; how the virus is transmitted; diagnosis and treatment); how awareness can help in HIV prevention?

After debates, dissention and discussion that spanned many lectures, it was eventually decided that through ethnographic interviews students would research the topic: *HIV/AIDS Prevention: an analysis of people's awareness and attitudes*.

Over the remaining lectures students were engaged in the following discussions regarding the assignment, and more specifically the research process. Issues raised included, inter alia:

- **Gaining Knowledge about HIV/AIDS:** Vijay encouraged students to read information on HIV/AIDS. She distributed articles that she had downloaded from the Internet, and encouraged students to pick up pamphlets and information packs that were being circulated on campus during AIDS Awareness Week.
- **Sample Selection and 'Representativity':** Discussions in this regard included: Who to study; sample variety in terms of gender, class, race, geographic location; sample size; how to access prospective participants; etc. Wide scale discussion was entertained regarding the issue of the language to be used in the interview. Given the critical socio-linguistic ideals of the *Language and Power Course*, students were already aware that some of their respondents would not be English language users, and it would be necessary to pose questions in clear and simple English. However, one student echoed the concern that: 'Most people in disadvantaged communities don't understand English well enough. It maybe difficult to communicate, because they may not get the gist of what the interviewer is saying'. As a way to circumvent such a situation, Vijay suggested that students team up with students who did speak the language of the respondent. While that provided a way forward, some students were averse to the idea of group or teamwork.
- **Managing entry into the research context and setting up interviews**: Students were engaged in numerous simulated interview sessions, in order to refine their interview questioning skills, sharpen their listening skills, and the recording of field notes and transcription skills.
- **Report Writing:** Vijay informed students that she expected draft reports, because apart from stressing the connection between writing and re-writing; they would also be continuously assessed for their submissions. She alluded to research being a process rather than a product that required reflective thinking.

Parallel Narratives: Homework, Absenteeism and Punctuality

Throughout the various lectures that I attended, the parallel narratives of homework, absenteeism and unpunctuality played themselves out. In the interview, Vijay explained that

with *Language and Power* being an undergraduate course, these issues had to be constantly addressed, since it remained an ongoing problem. Thus, in the lectures, there were regular references to issues that were a carry-over from the previous section of the course that the class had been working on in the earlier part of the year.

Reflections on Teaching Demographically Diverse Students

In reflecting on the implications of teaching at the University of Durban-Westville, Vijay commented on the institution's heterogeneous student population in terms of language, cultural backgrounds and educational experiences. Her retrospective gaze regarding the evolution of the *Language and Power* Course indicates that it is a far cry from its original design. Anonymous evaluations have been beneficial in eliciting and gauging student's impressions of the course. Vijay recalls that in the early days of teaching this course students would say, 'Do less. Talk slowly. Don't put in a million things'. Like most of her academic colleagues, Vijay laments that there is unfortunately never enough time to address everything, thus there is a tendency to rush through texts, when she feels she should be focussing on developing students cognitive, and learning skills. She explains that, for instance, language teaching needs to occur in a small class; even in a class of 18 students there is insufficient time to do adequate language work with every student. She has had to rely on students negotiating for what they need, and as she has learnt more about their academic abilities she has attempted to respond appropriately.

In addition, she admits that there was a time when students were expected to do far too much independent reading, and she realised that they were not. It then occurred to her that the first thing she needed to do was 'demand' a summary. This would arguably ensure that students were reading. Although she was aware that she could not obviate the possibility of some students cribbing, the real issue for her remains critical analysis of both the primary texts and the summaries. She explains that the summary is students' primary engagement with the text, and it serves as evidence that students have done their reading, but more importantly it serves as shorthand so students don't have to re-read the text.

Returning to the demographically diverse student population at UDW, Vijay views group work as important. In commenting on the merits of group work she addresses the tension between group work and individual interests. As a socialist, she is inclined to think that there are benefits from group work that even students don't recognise. She maintains that peer learning is enabled by group work. While acknowledging that it does prejudice against minority interests in that it does trade on the strengths and industry of committed students, and there will always be some students who are parasitic or passengers, she is convinced that group work allows students to develop interpersonal communication skills. In referring specifically to the *Language and Power* course, she observed that:

> … students do not know how to talk across race, and group work allows for that to happen, otherwise they are talking through me. Speaking to and through me abstracts the issue, and nobody else needs to react or negotiate that. But when they are working in a group there is more space for dialogue.

Although she endeavours to engender a democratic classroom, there are at least two issues that are not open for negotiation in her class. First, given that many students have not

benefited from sound pre-tertiary education, attendance of lectures is not negotiable. The second non-negotiable relates to Bill of Rights issues, like, respect for humanity. She is intolerant of unfairness, prejudice, and rudeness.

Vijay mentioned that she focused on developing the intellectual in a postcolonial society, which is what she attempted to achieve through the AIDS Assignment. She regards the role of the postcolonial intellectual as very critical because she maintains that we cannot simply absorb everything from textbooks and theories that come from the West. The role of the intellectual in a developing newly democratised society, such as South Africa is serious, and needs sustained reflection. (Summary from Interview).

Section 1: Jennifer's (Auto)biographical Profile
The Privilege of Womanhood
University of South Africa

Section 1: Partial Institutional Sketch

The University of South Africa: A Brief History[6]

In this section I present a brief background description of the University of South Africa (Unisa) at which Jennifer was teaching at the time of my research.

The University of South Africa is situated in Pretoria. The University has its roots in the Cape, where it was formed as an examining body in 1873. In 1916 it changed its name from the University of the Cape of Good Hope to the University of South Africa. Two years later it moved to Pretoria. Several South African universities have their roots in Unisa. In the 1940's with these universities and colleges becoming autonomous, Unisa stood at the crossroads. The need for extra tuition for students who studied independently became clear. For the most part, these students could not attend conventional residential universities for a number of reasons, including personal circumstances, occupational obligations, etc. and most were older than the average student entering university for the first time. Taking as its motto, 'Spes in Arduis' which means: *hope through difficulties*, the idea of distance teaching was born. The University began with a few thousand students and a handful of staff in offices in Pretoria. Today, it has about 3000 personnel including academic, administrative and support staff.

Unisa is one of 11 distance education universities in the world (universities with more than 100 000 students) and its qualifications are internationally recognised. The university has examination centres in most countries around the world, with students that include prison inmates.

According to Unisa's vision and mission statements, it is committed to developing and improving the quality of life of students and their communities across international boundaries, through open distance teaching, learning and research, which is accessible, relevant and of service to all sectors of society. (http://www.unisa.ac.za).

Section 2: Profile of Research Participants

Jennifer's Autobiographical Essay

Childhood background and identity formation

(1) I grew up in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal in the 1960s and 1970s.

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[6] This partial biographic profile of the University of South Africa was summarised from the university's website: http://www.unisa.ac.za
See also Cooper, D & Subotzky, G. 2001. *The Skewed Revolution: Trends in South African Higher Education: 1988-1998.*

(2) Like most children, I was raised in a heterosexual home, with two parents, one of each sex. (I hope that this model of the standard family is losing its grip over our society somewhat.) My parents were lower middle-class. My mother worked as a primary school librarian and my father sold tyre retreads. Our home was always on the 'wrong side of the tracks' (this referred to a real railroad) and my mother, in particular, felt economically inferior to the rich sector of conservative Pietermaritzburg society.[7] My father was not the conventional 'masculine' South African man: he was Irish; a compulsive reader who drank a lot of beer and enjoyed parties with 'the boys', but he hated sport, did not aspire to muscular prowess and avoided expressing aggression. My mother wanted six children and fell pregnant five times, but only had one successful pregnancy, of which I was the outcome.

(3) Politically and intellectually, my parents made a fairly common blend of intellectual aspiration and conventionality. My mother grew up in a politically liberal home in the Western Cape and was vehemently opposed to the Apartheid government, while my father was a multi-national citizen, having lived in Canada, China, the old Rhodesia and a variety of multi-ethnic societies. But I grew up in a much more conservative political climate than he: in the 1970s it was not considered acceptable to have friends of other races (which my parents did). Children in my class at school were terrified of black people, an attitude that I found extremely alienating, as I had been taught to treat people on their own merits irrespective of their skin colour. At the same time my parents were armchair liberals who were terrified of the violence associated with political activism and would never have become involved in the struggle against the government. As a student, I belonged to some activist groups, mainly in the production of radical student newspapers, but did not get involved in any form of active protest. Being white in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s meant taking on collective guilt for the injustices of a racially bigoted government policy. As an idealistic student, I constantly felt that I was not doing enough to alleviate the sufferings of black people in the country as well as being hamstrung and silenced by the restrictive and censorious policies of the increasingly conservative government.

(4) My language development, predictably, followed the structure of my parents' home languages. My mother came from a bilingual home (English/Afrikaans) and used the two languages interchangeably, as do my extended family (aunts, uncles and cousins). I have always considered monolingualism to be a restriction on the individual's thought processes as it hampers expression when one has only one language in which to put one's thoughts across. To this day I consider Afrikaans literature more creative and innovative than South African English literature and am thoroughly bilingual. At university I added French to the languages I

[7] Whiteness' as in skin colour. 'Whiteness' as a whole lot of cultural meanings and class meanings. When I was a child, I went to a white school and my peers were all White. I had grown up Black friends but not Black children friends. I took that for granted. I also took spatial segregation for granted. I grew up in Pietermaritzburg, which is very spatially segregated. It's a big class thing. You have a railway in the middle of the town and the river on the other side. Up the river all the rich people lived, in the middle is the CBD and on the other side all the poor people lived. We lived in the poor area. It was a poor white area. One takes all those organisations for granted. I only interrogated them when I got to university. I had a very sheltered existence. I also took for granted that everyone had the same background as me. Although, I got a bit of a shock when I met people very far outside of my class context- children from much poorer homes attending my mother's school-where she taught and children from much richer homes. This made up most of the people at the school I was at. I got a bit of a shock. But that's economics; it's not only race. It cuts across all sections of society. (Interview).

can speak and found that it gave me an entry point into a European mindset, which has been invaluable in my studies of international philosophy and theory.

(5) At the same time, I love my own language (English) with a deep and abiding passion. English has the largest vocabulary (and the most erratic spelling) of all languages in the world and it is an all-encompassing medium for me. At the same time, I am aware that I do not speak my 'other' languages with the fluency of a first-language speaker, despite my extensive vocabulary in both, but have an English accent and often battle to find the correct idiomatic expression. I realize that speaking Afrikaans or French with an English accent stigmatizes the speaker and can lead to one's having the status of a second-class speaker, even though one's thoughts or vocabulary may not be second-class. I try to bring this sensitivity to my teaching of English to speakers of other languages and to listen to their thoughts and ideas, not their fluency or pronunciation.

(6) I have beyond doubt inherited my father's facility with language and his passionate love of literature of all kinds. When I began to develop language, my father is reputed to have spent many hours with me teaching me words and how to say them (he was extremely particular about politeness and pronunciation and carefully taught me the correct way to pronounce each new word). He also had a fascination with the physical world, shapes and mathematics, which he passed on to me: I still enjoy mathematical conundrums and use them to relax my thoughts, much as some people use crossword puzzles. My father's diary recorded the fact that he read 200 novels in one year; I am a similarly voracious reader who will read almost any story I can lay my hands on. The love of narrative, which is supposed to be a trans-cultural characteristic, is very close to my heart. I believe that individuals define themselves by the stories they tell about themselves (and that this story, too, in some senses defines me).

(7) Class and political considerations apart, it was gender that occupied me for most of my formative years as a toddler and later as an adolescent. My ideas about life in general and gender roles in particular were largely formed by my mother, a very nurturing and maternal woman who enjoyed children's company.

(8) My childhood home was thoroughly conventional in terms of gender divisions. My mother took complete responsibility for the kitchen, clothing and child-rearing. Her apparently semi-permanent, yet contented ensconcement in the kitchen has instilled in me a lasting attachment to cooking and cleaning in my own kitchen. My father (who died when I was 10 years old) provided the household income and the intellectual input into our family interactions. He didn't, however, do any household maintenance: as a result, I still have no idea how to fix anything even slightly complicated around the home.

(9) The formative narrative about gender relationships is a story about a princess that I first encountered at the age of three or four. This tale has developed into an archetype. Princesses, in my mind, never do anything except to look decorative and adorn their parents' palaces while they wait for the inevitable arrival of a prince. Princes invariably arrive on large white horses and then rescue their chosen princesses, whom they carry off to live happily ever after with them (as their wives, naturally). This story, which is an amalgamation of a number of culturally embedded narratives and bears very little relation to reality, contains a number of

features that have shaped my thinking about love, romance and domestic relationships. First, there is the passivity of the heroine; second, her propensity for getting into distress; third, the need to be rescued by a man or other suitable hero (I am too much aware of gender stereotypes now to think that only men can be rescuing heroes); fourth, the value placed on sexual and romantic union with another person as the culmination of one's adventures and tribulations. Upon reflecting on my own life and relationships, I observe that this tale has played a determining role, with my own roles alternating between those of the princess in distress and the rescuing prince.

(10) At the same time, I have always been drawn more to girls and women than to men and I identify myself as gay. It is possible to speculate about the origins of this predilection (for example, to wonder whether my mother's dominance of my childhood years 'made' me gay), but I prefer not to as such reflections can never be conclusive. What happened, in any event, is that I entered adolescence at the age of 13 utterly bewildered by the opposite sex, whom I encountered very seldom as I attended an all-girls' school. My school had a 'social' understanding with several boys' schools in the area, in terms of which a certain number of girls would be 'ordered' for a particular Saturday evening and then thrown together in a darkened room with the same number of boys. This habit seemed utterly barbaric to me. Each girl was expected to dress attractively and provocatively and to attract some unknown boy, who was allowed to engage in light sexual activity with her (although there was no such thing as sex education at our conservative school, which simultaneously espoused virginity). I was extremely shy and would usually find myself against the wall for most of the evening, counting the minutes until I could go home. In addition, I was overweight and my mother could not afford to dress me in the height of adolescent fashion, so I felt very uncomfortable under the scrutiny of my age-mates of the opposite sex. To my eyes, they looked completely uninteresting, anyway: I preferred to look at the attractive girls.

(11) During adolescence I had two very close and romantically tinged friendships with girls of my age. There was, however, absolutely no tolerance of lesbian sexuality, either at school, where one of my classmates had been expelled for having a lesbian relationship with another girl, or in the social circle to which I belonged, which was fairly conventionally Christian in its sexual mores. As a result it has taken me longer than most lesbian women to accept and understand my own sexual orientation and to be comfortable with a gay lifestyle. Having achieved this, I now feel very strongly that every individual needs to find his or her own gender position completely free of value judgements from the people around. Such denials and judgements do immeasurable harm to emerging gender identities. In my case, the overweening requirement of heterosexuality prevented me from living my own sexual orientation for many decades.

(12) The final shaping influence on my identity and outlook was religion. My mother was an Anglican who became a charismatic Christian when I was 13. My father, on the other hand, was a passionately convinced atheist. His parents were, of course, Irish-Catholic and my father left Ireland largely in order to escape his parents' demand to become a Catholic priest. My parents' conversations often turned to religious matters and these would always end in a deadlock, with my mother trying unsuccessfully to convince my father that there was a larger meaning to human existence. As a child I was taken to the Anglican Church for the obligatory

three services a year, which my father never attended. I didn't object too much to the rituals of communion and the idea of a divine being, but as an adult, I found I could not make peace with the misogyny, heteronormativity and sacrificial ethic of Christianity. I have learned to divorce the idea of God from the conservatism of religious individuals, and I have embraced Buddhism as a more helpful and life-loving religious paradigm, which allows the individual to make up her own mind without having to pay mental or lip service to a divine legislative authority. Buddhism has many variants, and I feel especially drawn to Tibetan Buddhism's emphasis on compassion as a cardinal virtue. In this way I have followed my father's rejection of transcendental metaphysics as well as retaining the idea of a loving god in my life. Buddhism is a far more enlightened religion than Christianity in terms of gender relations; it promotes tolerance of suffering amongst all beings; and believes that all people are equal and are all in search of their own nature and enlightenment.

I am a feminist

(13) I feel that I have 'always' been a feminist, just as I have always been gay. I do not know whether a feminist affiliation has to do with one's genetic make-up or one's socialization (including education); but I have always been politically and socially woman-identified.
(14) I have taken on the field of gender as my particular academic speciality because it is inexhaustibly fascinating to me and it is so strongly imbued with power in Western society. I am continually amazed at the force of the dichotomies that give men dominance over women, so that they associate themselves with the mind, rationality, insight, strength and achievement, relegating women to the denigrated spheres of the body, emotion (hysteria), the trivial, weakness and the domestic realm. Furthermore, I find the heteronormativity of our society, which cannot tolerate same-sex attraction and marginal gender identities, but instead persecutes them in a range of subtle and less subtle ways, thoroughly repugnant. For example, invitations to social functions that include 'bring your partner' almost always assume that the partner is of the opposite sex. Same-sex relationships are denigrated to the level of 'just friends'. If I need to assist my woman partner in distress, this is seen as strange and deviant; a 'real' wife would not encounter any such resistance if she needed time to assist her 'real' husband.

(15) I first became aware of the contingent and constructed nature of sexuality and gender through the fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin, especially her award-winning science fiction novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, which imaginatively represents a society of 'ambisexuals' where there are no gender divisions since there is only one sex and one gender. I read *The Left Hand of Darkness* in 1985 and it completely changed the way I thought about gender and literature. I then revisited Le Guin's fantasy trilogy, *The Earthsea Trilogy*, where two of the novels focus on a man's development and the third concerns a woman's. Le Guin has stated that she wrote the novels with adolescent psychology and adolescent readership in mind and they deal with crucial questions in identity formation, such as ego-development, death, the relationship between the individual and power structures and love object choice (desire and sexuality). With my literary/critical eyes newly opened, I could see how Le Guin imaginatively traced the differences between boys and girls in terms of psychological growth. This became the foundation for my doctoral thesis on Le Guin, entitled *Selves and Others: The Politics of Difference in the Writings of Ursula Kroeber Le Guin*, which I completed in 1995.

(16) I was equally stunned by gender theory, although I came to it rather late in my research. Consciousness-raising texts such as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, which outlines the conditions of women's confinement to their homes in 1950s and 1960s America and the resulting depression and frustration they felt; and feminist psychoanalytical texts, such as Kristeva's 'Women and Time', helped to shape my interests both in the psychology of women and their social position. My thoughts about feminism are very eclectic. I take Freud as my starting point in the sense that any informed view on human psychology needs to deconstruct Freud's position on women. I have read and been influenced by a wide range of feminist theorists, including Simone de Beauvoir's Preface to *The Second Sex*; Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*; Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering*; Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*; Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her*; Mary Daly's *Pure Lust*; Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* and Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. These works examine and critique the construction of gender identities and the practical and ideological results of a global hierarchy based on gender inequality.

(17) My ideas have also been strongly influenced by feminist science fiction. I am an idealist who believes that human beings could, if they chose, take apart the structures of our society and 're-mould them closer to the heart's desire' and science fiction satisfies my need for change, speculation and a different mode of existence. It is the only literary genre where existing configurations relating to power, gender, desire, sexuality and reproduction can be re-imagined and re-envisioned in a different, more satisfactory way while questioning the received order of society. My hero is Ursula Le Guin (especially in her recent writings such as *Four Ways to Forgiveness* and *Tehanu: The Last Book of Earthsea*), who compassionately explores gender as a construct that disadvantages everyone. Other key figures are the radical feminist Sally Miller Gearhart; Suzy McKee Charnas; the socialist revolutionary Marge Piercy; Lisa Tuttle; James Tiptree Jr. and black science fiction writer Octavia Butler.Likewise, lyrical poetry offers women the opportunity to explore their own emotions and experiences, and I enjoy the writing of radical feminist poets such as Marge Piercy, Judy Grahn and British feminist poets.

(18) My feminist affiliation is a fundamental principle in my interactions with people both socially and professionally and in my relationship to academic endeavour. I believe that the hegemony of patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality operates across the world to the disadvantage of women on all levels of life. I am sensitive to gender discrimination in social and professional situations. The frequent conversations that stereotype people on the basis of their gender or sexual orientation, raise my hackles, and I have on occasion made myself very unpopular by vociferously challenging such prejudices about women. Likewise, I am aware of the complications in the workplace around gender divisions, where women are expected to play certain roles and/or to commodify their bodies by dressing and presenting themselves in certain male-determined ways; and where men have the right to speak in meetings and to make decisions about work to be done; and so on. As a professional woman, I am typecast in many subtle ways by the expectations of my colleagues and I often feel very constrained by these. The academic institution is notoriously conservative, with most full professorships still being

occupied by men, while women are entrenched in middle-management positions with little or no promotion prospects.

(19) At the same time, having become a mother in 1998 has given me the suspicion that Freud's 'anatomy is destiny' could be true — although not in the way that he meant it. Women's experience of embodiment is unquestionably different from that of men and this becomes vividly clear in the experience of bearing and nurturing a child (in this respect, I am something of an essentialist in my view of gender differences). As a mother of a girl-child, I aspire to deconstruct the myth that every woman needs a man to rescue and take care of her, and to ensconce her in a kitchen. Rather, I hope that my daughter will grow up to be self-determining, to find her own way in life, whatever that may be: and to know that she will always have my support.

I teach what I like and what I believe

(20) I teach English language and literature at Unisa, the largest distance education provider in the southern hemisphere. This has several implications. In the first place, I believe there is no gender-free use of language. For me, this means that the entire literary canon has to be re-evaluated in terms of gender as there is a long literary tradition of representing masculinity as prototypically human. There is also an extensive legacy of fiction representing marriage and union between men and women as the highest fulfilment for both sexes; but this masks many of the ways in which women have been and still are used as exchange objects between men and are made financially and emotionally dependent on them. This 'marriage writing', which stretches from Shakespeare to Mills & Boon, also perpetuates the myth of heterosexuality as natural, given and a goal to aspire to. I believe that this myth needs to be thoroughly investigated, overthrown and replaced by an alternative one that enshrines and promotes the self-actualization of the individual, whether male or female. In this regard I am following Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* as well as Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* in their emphasis on gender as constitutive of the representation of people in literature. A first step in this direction is teaching students suspicion of the representations of gender that they encounter in literature. This may be at the level of language (for example, the use of the masculine pronoun as generic), characterization or wider plot structure. Once students have developed a critical attitude towards received ideas about gender in writing, they can begin to encounter alternative depictions and perhaps write their own creative pieces. As a teacher, I try to explain to my students that gender identities and gender roles are never given or inborn, but instead are constructed in accordance with patriarchal power structures: and that this holds true for men as well as for women, despite the often-criticized split between 'women's studies' and 'men's studies'. I would like to see an inclusive branch of enquiry called 'gender studies' that explores all the ramifications of gender identity, construction and positioning, but the academy has not yet achieved such a multi-disciplinary or co-operative approach (probably because of individual vested interests).

(21) Second, as a feminist teacher of language, I believe that students' own experiences are relevant to their studies and to their language acquisition. This is in contrast to the traditional model of academic study; where the student is supposed to develop objectivity and erase all traces of his or her own subjectivity. Therefore, I use autobiographical writing exercises as a

resource for students to develop fluency and communicative competence in what is often a second or third language. This extends to my teaching of literary critical skills, where the text is no longer seen as oracular, but rather as interactive and constantly under construction by its readers, including my students. (I hasten to add, though, that I do not embrace radical relativism in literary interpretation, but still adhere to the guiding principles of coherence and inclusivity as criteria for acceptable interpretations).

(22) Above all, feminism has taught me to regard myself, not as a human subject, but as a gendered one. It has taught me that we create ourselves and are constructed by others in the medium of language, which has been called 'the Symbolic order' by psychoanalytical theorists such as Kristeva and Lacan. The Symbolic order, a linguistic realm characterized by difference and separation, is constructed upon the foundation of erasure of the maternal union with a child. In this dyad, boundaries are fluid, dependency is acceptable and even body spaces are permeable. In order for the child to enter society, s/he has to forsake the maternal and construct a sense of self that is premised on separateness. Language, therefore, is made possible by revoking union with the beloved other, whose very body encompasses all the infant's desires. This, I believe, is a key aspect of what Kristeva means when she describes women's position in society as primarily sacrificial. The element of choice enters in when the individual becomes aware of herself as gendered by others' expectations and discourse and can then choose how to respond to that construction. In my case, I both choose and like to unsettle gender expectations in my dress and presentation of myself. I believe students should, above all, not regard language as value-free or transparent, but must, instead, develop sensitivity to its use in buttressing power interests (including those of race, class and gender). I would like my students not to consume the discourses they encounter without question, but to become extremely critical of these discourses' inherent mediacy and bias.

Life at Unisa

(23) Fortunately and unfortunately, I work in the Department of English at Unisa. This is a double-edged sword, as I explain below.

(24) I occupy the same institutional position as many other white women in my institution: that of a senior lecturer with limited decision-making powers. In the climate of government demands for employment equity in terms of race, I am unlikely to be promoted to a position where I have any more power in policy-making than at present. This means I shall probably remain in a middle-management role for the foreseeable future, while men occupy real policy-making positions. My power to change anything is limited to curriculum revision and to teaching my students. In this regard, I am very fortunate in that my immediate superiors are both feminist women (one of them founded the Centre for Women's Studies at Unisa) and are very sympathetic to my desire to work in the field of gender teaching. To that extent, I have institutional support. Likewise, Unisa has a body known as the Unisa Sexual Orientation Forum, which both promotes and protects gay rights and this is very helpful to me as a gay member of staff and also as a gay teacher (although I have never experienced any kind of discrimination on the basis of my sexual orientation). I believe that my department, which is known as one of

the most creative and forward-looking in the university, entirely supports my pedagogical decisions.

(25) Like many of my colleagues, I began work at Unisa relatively young (in my twenties). Previously, I taught in the English department at the University of Durban-Westville, where, in the politically turbulent 1980s, racial and political concerns were paramount and there was little or no space to pursue any kind of gender analysis. The then head of department was, in any case, utterly contemptuous of feminism and regularly treated his colleagues to his erotic poetry about women he knew, including his wife. I joined Unisa, then, as a rather naive temporary junior lecturer whose job was to do as she was told. In the last fourteen years I have learned to speak up for what I believe in and to work at developing courses that effectively communicate and express a liberal outlook on power and its machinations, including those of the gender hierarchy.

(26) While my feminist views form the foundation for all the research and teaching I do, there is no one paper or article that sets them out in full, as I have done here. The clearest and most current expression of my approach is to be found in the study material that I write for the Honours course in Contemporary Women's Writing (CONTEM-A), of which I am the team leader and which I helped to design. The compulsory seminar for that paper is entitled 'Deconstructing Gender' and requires students to confront and explore their own and socially prevalent ideas and assumptions about gender. This is followed immediately by a seminar on 'Heterosexuality and its Alternatives', which examines literary representations of lesbian existence (taking its cue from Adrienne Rich's seminal article, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence'). Throughout the course, we insist that students read widely in the field of gender theory and integrate their findings with the literary texts they read. Although I am involved in several Unisa modules, Contemporary Women's Writing is the one that most closely expresses my academic and philosophical interests and gives me the opportunity to teach what and as I like.

Conclusion/s

(27) As many social theorists have noted, individual subjects occupy a range of social positions. In my case, I am first and foremost a mother; I am also a single woman householder; and an academic who teaches, researches and administers cultural phenomena and educational affairs. These identity positions do not always coalesce into a single seamless whole, perhaps in large measure because each day stubbornly resists people's demands for more than 24 hours. But running through and grounding each of the positions I occupy and the roles I perform is the irreducible experience of myself as a woman in body and mind. There are those who identify themselves as human first and gendered second: for me it is the opposite as I feel myself to be first a woman and second a human. All I undertake, every relationship I enter, pursue or engage in, all my thoughts about the world I inhabit are all coloured through the lenses of my woman's being. Despite years of reading about gender and debates about its constructed or essential nature, I still do not fully understand why I should experience myself as a woman so deeply and pervasively. On reflection, though, I have come to believe that it is something to be celebrated in all its vicissitudes and that womanhood is a privilege for me.

Partial Demographic Profile of Students

The following table contains a summary of student demographics of the *Contemporary Women's Writing*, English Honours Course. The details were elicited from those students who attended the session. Jennifer decided to have the Departmental secretary post the questionnaire to students who did not attend, in the hope that they would respond and submit by return mail.

Age	25(1), 26(1), 27(1), 29(1), 32(1), 33(1), 42(1), 51(1), 53(1),59 (1)
Place of Birth Urban/Rural area	Rural: 5 Urban: 5
Race	2 Black (described variously as African, Zulu, Black) 9 White
Sex	Female: 9 Male: 1
Religion	6 Christians (includes various denominations) 4 no particular religious affiliation
Degree currently registered for	2 MA 8 English Honours
Majors taking towards degree	English (2); Psychology (2); Anthropology (1); Economics (1); Comparative African Governments (1); Law (1); African Literature (1); None Response about other majors
Year of study currently in	2 non respondents; 1st year Honours (4); 2nd year Honours (2); 6th Year (1); 9th Year (1)
In what language did you receive your: 1.Primary school education? 2.Secondary School education?	1. Afrikaans (1); English (8); Xhosa (1) 2.Afrikaans (1); English (9)
How many languages do you speak?	1 Language (2 person speaks English only) 1.5 Languages (1 person English L1; read s & listens to Afrikaans) 2 Languages (4 people speak: English L1; 2 Afrikaans L2; and 2 French L2) 3 Languages (2 people speak: English L1; Afrikaans L2; 1 speaks German as L3; and 1 speaks Irish as L3) 4 languages (1 person speaks: siXhosa L1; English L2; isiZulu L3, & seSotho L4.

Reasons for studying English Honours

- For human issues.
- For pleasure and information.
- I have a great love of literature, combined with a talent for writing. I thought whom better to learn from than great writers through the ages.
- There's no one answer to this. I've found I've learned more about social issues and psychology by studying English than by studying Psychology. I love reading and have always used it as a way to learn about the world. I love the English language and it's power to paint images and convey ideas.
- I have an interest in it and it would be beneficial in my employment as a prospective teacher/lecturer.
- I have an abiding fascination and delight in the language.
- I have an interest in the language and it can provide better job opportunities.
- I enjoy it and I use it as a journalist.
- Self-interest and fulfilment.
- Career reasons.

When were you first exposed to/became conscious about feminist/gender/sexist issues?

- During English 3 (in my BA course).
- At university.
- In high school and then later at university when I did a course in gender issues. In high school girls were treated as 'sex objects'.
- Probably 16 years ago.
- At age 17.
- From a very early age- approximately 8/9, when I tried to get a place on the cricket team, I could not understand why I was allowed to play casually but not as part of a team.
- When I was around about 8. My social upbringing also had a bearing on my maleness and my overall behaviour.
- As a teenager.
- Can't remember.
- Probably my most initial experience came in Standard 8. I went to a convent school. It had no Science teacher, and only 10 girls were allowed to go to the Catholic Boys Convent for Science. The headmaster of the Catholic Boys Convent didn't think girls should be studying Science. Since he was also the Science teacher, this prejudice carried over into lessons, and into our male classmates' attitudes towards us. I worked my butt off, came top of the class all three years in a row, for the simple pleasure of thumbing my nose at a bunch of bigots, but walked away frustrated at the unchanged views of the headmaster. There have been other experiences, but definitely my most informed and consciously considered exposure has come doing English Honours

Section 3: Overview of Course Taught, Classroom Activities and Reflections

This section summarises lecture content, classroom activities, interactions, and provides an overview of discussions that transpired in the seminars that I observed.

English Honours: Contemporary Women's Writing Seminar

Although Jennifer also teaches a course on *Feminist Theory and Methodology* at Unisa's Institute for Gender Studies, and a course work masters, titled: *Embodiment, Gender, and Identity*, she invited me to attend a day-long seminar with her English Honours class on *Contemporary Women's Writing,* a course which she says she and her colleagues (Lisa and John) are most passionate about because it is so close to what really excites them intellectually, and also because it is close to their own experiences.

Given that Unisa is a distance university, students attend short periods of intensive contact sessions. Approximately 10 students attended the one-day Honours seminar that I observed. Jennifer explained that the contact session had fallen during a time when most students would have just returned to work and were therefore be unable to attend this 3 part contact seminar. Jennifer co-taught this seminar with two colleagues and the sessions took the form of individual input by the different lecturers, dialogue among the lecturers and lively student participation, laughter and the sharing of personal anecdotes as a means of grounding theory in lived experience. The day-long seminar was divided into 3 sessions, viz.: *Deconstructing Gender, Heterosexuality and its Alternatives, and Women's Magazines.*

Session One: Deconstructing Gender

In this session discussion revolved around why gender needs to be deconstructed; what does it mean to deconstruct gender and how does one go about doing so?

The session commenced with Jennifer engaging students in a five-minute exercise, which asked the question: What gender are you? Students were to write in, at the most three sentences, their gender position. Thereafter, they were asked to volunteer their responses to the question.The session then moved into a lecture-based theoretical input on Freud and his

theorisings about the male-female binary. This part of the seminar posed the question: How can we unthink/is it possible to unthink binaries? The question: What happens when you unfix the binary oppositions that privileges one term over another, was posed? Jennifer suggested that one way to show how this could be done is through subverting dressing conventions; that is: what one puts on is how one may appear and subsequently be defined. It asked the question: how important is dress/clothes? This question was then explored through the genre of film. The class watched excerpts from the movie, *Boys Don't Cry,* which is based on a true story about a gay woman (Brandon) who dresses and acts as a man. The movie captures Brandon's identity crisis, and explores society's power to punish those who transgress conventional gender expectations.

Session Two: Heterosexuality and its Alternatives

In this session, Jennifer and team-teacher, John talked about Queer Theory. They pointed out the distinction between Queer theories and identity, and Jennifer read an extract from Diana Fuss' book, *Essentially Speaking.*

> In this session the class was shown excerpts from the film, *All About My Mother*. It is a Spanish movie, with English sub-titles and deals with unconventional mothering. The movie makes the point that women are not 'summarisable' into their mothering roles. The class also watched excerpts from the movie, *Shakespeare in Love.* By looking outside literary texts, Jennifer pointed out that we can see how prevalent, and dominant the idea of gender identity, and gender roles are in popular media.

Session Three: Women's Magazines

In this session Jennifer referred students to Tutorial Letter 102, which dealt with research into women's magazines. The discussion interrogated the alleged goal that many women's magazines attempt to create a sisterhood of women with an image of men as intruders. Implied in the notion of sisterhood is the assumption that women readership understand and identify with each other.

Reflections on Teaching Demographically Diverse Students Through Distance Education

According to Jennifer, one advantage accruing from teaching at the University of South Africa, is that as a distance education provider it is able to reach a large number of people. In most of her reflections she outlined the challenges of teaching at the institution; the primary one being that of impersonality. Jennifer explained that generally, students feel alienated from the study, the lecturer, the course, and the institution. For the lecturer, the students are just faceless numbers on exam scripts, assignments, e-mail or files. The other significant problem is the time lapse between the lecturer formulating material/information that she wants students to have and the students' receipt of them. The time-lapse also works in reverse (i.e. the student writes an assignment and it takes weeks before it arrives at the lecturer, then there are further time lapses before students receive feedback on their submissions).

In reflecting on the university's language policy, Jennifer confirms that Unisa originally had 2 media of instruction viz. English and Afrikaans. These languages remain the medium of instruction, amidst heated and extended debates about how to resolve the situation. Jennifer accepts that it would be absolutely impossible for Unisa to publish material in South Africa's 11 official languages. She points out that the majority of students prefer to have their material in English. However, many departments in Unisa translate material into Afrikaans. On paper, Unisa recognises the right of students to be instructed in their mother-tongue, and also to write exams, and submit assignments in their first language. The problem is that not many of the staff can read these languages. There are attempts by the Department of English, to help students in terms of language ability. There is a general expectation by other faculties for the English Department to provide more remedial assistance to students who are disadvantaged in terms of their language skills. Jennifer strongly feels that Unisa needs a dedicated language assistance department that could teach basic literacy skills (learning to write, helping students with expression fluency, vocabulary building, etc.). She maintains that sustained and dedicated writing, and reading helps students advance their language ability. In the case of very weak students, she directs them to Skills Handbooks that can be used to correct grammatical usage, and develop essay-writing skills.

In commenting on the heterogeneous student population, she acknowledges that some students live in very difficult circumstances. Most of Unisa's students are attracted from the Gauteng catchment. Jennifer also has a student in Turkey, one from Ecuador, and one who teaches at a Catholic institution in Japan. She recalls that they did have a number of students from Robben Island, when it was still a prison. She provides the following examples to illustrate the challenges of teaching distance education:

> We have one student who lives in Botswana and he cannot get books. He can't get the Unisa library to send it to him, because it is so remote that the post does not go there; he can't get it in the bookshops, he can't get it over the Internet, and with these students I have to try very, very hard to help. Another student lives in Swaziland and she can't get her books either. I photocopy books and send these to them. I really bend over backwards so that the student can manage. (Interview).

Jennifer is excited that an increasing number of students are gaining access to e-mail facilities and can contact their lecturers. She reports that there has also been a great paradigm shift in the way Unisa, as an institution, thinks about its students. She recalls that when she started at Unisa in 1987, students were viewed as receptacles to put information into, and they were often regarded as being somewhat defective and less important. Recently, there has been a change to seeing students as clients who deserve the best service that they can get. To this end, Unisa has set up an enormous Call Centre so that students can contact the institution. The changed attitudes mean that students are guaranteed that they are being taken seriously.

In teaching the *Contemporary Women's Writing Course*, Jennifer wants to encourage students to cultivate a culture of suspicion, to question and not simply imbibe the received opinion uncritically. She maintains that:

> … it is about destabilising ideas, pulling threads, and willowing the wisps, and seeing whether the edifices of our society are really founded on sand or perhaps quicksand, or whether they are founded on stone? To take things apart and look at what is underneath the apparently solid brick. (Summary from Interview).

Phumzile's (Auto)biographical Profile
Living Black History, Living Womanist Contradictions:
Teaching, Language and Power in South Africa
University of Free State

Section 1: Partial Institutional Sketch

University of Free State: A Brief History[8]

In this section I present a brief background description of the University of Free State where Phumzile was teaching at during the time of the research.

The University of the Free State in Bloemfontein is one of South Africa's oldest universities. It was founded almost a century ago by the people of the Free State Province, with the ideal of establishing their own university to train and educate the young people who would shape the future of the Province.

On 28 January 1904, six students enrolled for a full BA course and received their tutoring in a two-roomed building then known as the Grey University College. In the beginning the medium of instruction changed several times from English-Afrikaans-English-Afrikaans and the name of the University was changed to University College of the Orange Free State (UCOFS). The University became independent on 18 March 1950 and the name was changed to the University of the Orange Free State. The motto of the university is: *in Deo Sapientiae Lux* (*In God is the Light of Wisdom*). In 1993 the University changed to a system of parallel medium instruction and all classes are currently presented in Afrikaans and English. Today, it has a multicultural student body, with growing numbers of students from abroad and other South African provinces such as the Northern Cape and Gauteng. According to a university publication titled, *Poised to Lead,* the university has introduced programmes to bridge the gap of first-generation university students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. Since 1991, the university has been involved in the development of partnerships with historically disadvantaged communities, the private sector and the government of the Free State. The university's mission is the pursuit of scholarship, as embodied in the creation, integration, application and transmission of knowledge (Publicity Brochure 2001: The University of the Orange Free State).

Section 2: Profile of Research Participants

Phumzile's Autobiographical Essay

> We are 'written' all over, or should I say, carved and tattooed
> with the sharp needles of experience (Anzaldua, 1990, xv).

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[8] This partial biographic profile of the University of Orange Free State was summarised from the university's website: http://www.uovs.ac.za.
See also Cooper, D & Subotzky, G. 2001. *The Skewed Revolution: Trends in South African Higher Education: 1988-1998.*

(1) Being born at the end of 1972 meant that the Alice I would grow up in was a dynamic one. Alice, a small town in the Eastern Cape, is the home of three institutions of higher learning, which have played key roles in Black education and political history in South Africa. Lovedale College was one of the first missionary colleges targeted at educating Africans in Southern Africa. It was to produce many of the early key thinkers and writers whose works were later published by the Lovedale Press. The University of Fort Hare is the first Black university in Africa in modern times and has traditionally drawn students from all over Africa, as well as being imbued with a history of educating some of Africa's most perceptive leaders of the post-independent moment. The small town of Alice was also home to Cecilia Makiwane, the first Blackwoman to qualify as a professional registered nurse in South Africa. She was to qualify as such at Victoria Hospital, not far from Lovedale.

(2) As a child I was aware of this history since it would be repeated at different ceremonies. My immediate nuclear family was middle class: both parents were professional. Since my father lectured at the University of Fort Hare at the time of my birth (and the time of my writing this), and my mother was a professional registered sister involved also in the training of young nurses at Victoria Hospital's clinical department, my socialisation meant that I could perhaps not be the poster child for South African Black children at the time[9]. In this essay then I am uninterested in claiming that my childhood experiences are representative of the lives of many Black South Africans. Nor am I interested in either occluding the privilege, which accompanied my childhood, or overstressing it. As a scholar of and participant in Black cultural activity[10] I am well aware too of the need to unpack and read the variety of Black experience in apartheid South Africa. The bulk of the material literary, visual and academic focuses on the urban township experience as the representative experience of Black people under apartheid. Without trivialising these locations, it becomes important nonetheless to pay attention to the variety of other spaces, which make up Black experiential location. This essay makes my assumptions and influences clear, rather than assuming them to be universal and self-evident. By laying some aspects of my early childhood bare as an entry into a broader discussion of how the nexus of power influences my teaching practice, I also draw attention to the contradictions, which characterise my life.

(3) My early world was, to the extent that there are a small number of Black academics in South Africa even now, an exceptional childhood. Since my parents were able to provide for all my financial needs and wants, it was clearly one of privilege. However, my privilege was never of the sort that I was sheltered from the realities which accompanied being born Black in apartheid South Africa. It was a form of class privilege mediated by race and gender and does not approximate a white South African middle class privilege. In this sense, even as middle class Black children we could not claim the kind of protection or safety from the political reality of the country around us that I would come to hear articulated as a kind of ignorance by some white age mates later.

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[9] 'Black' is used here in the Black Consciousness sense and when used to denote 'race' is always capitalised. The small case 'black' will be used solely to denote colour.

[10] I use cultural activity here in the broad sense in accordance with sociological definitions of culture, not narrow literary ones of specific performance, which is deemed cultural. The former category includes the latter but is extends beyond it.

(4) Most self-representations by Black South Africans in artistic/cultural production explore urban, working class, township experience. The most significant literary movements (the 1950s and later, Black Consciousness inspired) opened this identity to creative signification and interrogation. The time of my birth and the choices my parents had made exposed me to a world inhabited by few South Africans at the time, although it is one which is part of the reality of living in a post-Apartheid country now. The Group Areas Act of 1950 delineated separate residential areas for South Africans of different 'races'. It is a well-known fact that racial identity in Apartheid South Africa was an insidious network of mystery and brutality. However, as a response to this Act universities such as Fort Hare made use of loopholes whereby academic and administrative staff members could live on university premises. This meant that our neighbours were often people we would be unable to legally live next to otherwise. There was rigorous discussion and questioning of the law, which was implicitly encouraged even in us as children. Our reality flew in the face of apartheid illogic. Since my own parents had grown up speaking different languages, my multilingual mother had used a variety of tongues during even her childhood, and my neighbours were at different times, Sibanyoni, Khoali, Naidoo and Cloete, I was a young adult when I realised conclusively the various ways in which difference is perceived as threatening even by progressive people. When your childhood is one where you are surrounded by differences in language, nationality and 'race', variety remains for a significant part of that childhood a taken-for-granted reality. Difference is not meaningless for a child who grows up in this manner in South Africa, and it is not always free of tension. However, it was not for me in and as of itself a problematic category.

(5) It would be absurd to suggest that I did not see difference, in the manner that most proponents of colour blindness argue is possible and ideal, since as a child growing up in South Africa I was well aware of its existence as well as the meanings which the Apartheid government sought to inscribe it with. I knew and understood that there was variety in human appearance and social activity however, since difference was not pathologised in my immediate community, the variety of meanings, which emanated from it was learned later.

(6) The earliest memories of childhood, which precede school, were of Black fists painted on the white walls of Tyali 1 & 2, two male residences[11] on Fort Hare's east campus. These were the residences closest to our home. Since this was the time of Black Consciousness I remember shouts of Black power as commonplace. This revolutionary slogan of Black affirmation worldwide was one of my first English phrases. As a child I was aware of the explicit politics of Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) only vaguely since adult conversation clearly addressed the apartheid policies of the day. I knew enough to recognise names of political activists I liked[12] and that there were secrets not to be disclosed to the police when Fort Hare was on strike and students were hiding in our house. I was familiar with the stinging sensation of teargas, and was aware that the police were nobody's friends and thus had no business entering the university campus. Their presence was unwanted and unwelcome. It was not necessary for somebody to sit me down and explain these dynamics to me; they were obvious from the world I was part of. A more nuanced understanding of what this was all about

[11] These are the names of the residences today. They were renamed to this at some point during my primary schooling. Technically then, it is more historically accurate to admit that the fists were painted on the walls of Adams 1 & 2.

[12] Read: whose political affiliations had my parents' sympathies/loyalties.

was to come only later in my life. As a child, I was unaware of the theoretically delicate relationship between voice and willed silence that I now theorise in my academic work, even though I negotiated when and what to speak about to whom.

(7) My first willed illegal act was at the age of five. As already discussed, there were other crimes earlier, but these were of omission. When I went to school for the first time, I was five years old. This was in itself illegal since the apartheid state had deemed the appropriate age for Black children to start school as eight. Black parents did not seem to pay much attention to this law. Furthermore, given that almost all my Black South African friends (regardless of which part of the country they were raised in) started school before the stipulated age, Black teachers turned a blind eye to this law. Although school had started in January 1978, my first day was at the beginning of March in that year. The events, which led to this, are detailed and are not essential for my purposes here. Although I cannot claim to have enjoyed school more than other children, I am the only person I know who *decided* at that age to go to school.

(8) My parents seemed especially enthusiastic about everything I learned and shared. My father would wait patiently as I lay next to him reading his Sunday paper out in isiXhosa pronunciation because I had not yet learnt to read English at school. He seemed to share my bliss as I recognised the letters and could read. My mother bought me a variety of books from the Lovedale Bookshop in town, which stocked textbooks for the surrounding schools as well as for Fort Hare University students. This bookshop was special to me because I realised it also stocked books for me. As it turned out, of course, my mother *ordered* some of these books through them. She introduced me to the prospect of reading as something that needed not be limited to school, but as a pleasurable activity which opens up possibilities. This did not strike me as strange for I saw books regularly at the Mafanya, Khoali and Gebeda households as well, when I went to play.

(9) My first school was Lovedale Primary School, later renamed Tyhume, after the river, which runs through the town of eDikeni (Alice). The story of the more famous Lovedale was related to us at concerts and so forth. But the college, a mere stone's throw away from my school, and the Lovedale Printing Press building, which we could see from the schoolyard and whose old books we sometimes had access to, did not seem too glorious to us. For one thing, the college building was neglected. There were no windows, and the stairs creaked everywhere except in the concert hall we still used. There was always talk of this history. However, the disregard with which the South African National Party and later Ciskei Bantustan governments treated these sites contradicted their celebrated status in public oral history. So, with our confusion intact, we sat with your knowledge of how great Lovedale had once been and that was that. In contrast, the glory of Fort Hare was still obvious to a child's eyes then.

(10) All this time I was attending Catholic mass *in English*. Unlike all my siblings, I never went to a single Catholic school; but my family were Catholic several generations on both sides. Mass intrigued me as one who was brought up speaking predominantly isiXhosa, where the infamous 'generic male' is absent. I was very aware, as I was learning to speak English, that girls and women were never mentioned in mass. There was constant talk of men, sons of God, heirs to the Kingdom, and so forth. When women featured at all it was in very specific, named instances: they were Mary the virgin mother, Magdalene and so forth but there did not seem

to exist a category which encompassed women outside of these. This was in sharp contrast with the daily assemblies at my Protestant school, which were in isiXhosa and therefore spoke in gender-neutral language. Our teachers spent a considerable time explaining the 'generic male' rule to our class of children who spoke isiXhosa and I found the entire exercise lacking in logic. Later, as a language tutor, I was to notice the extent to which the generic male use and the differentiated third person pronoun caused confusion to many Black students irrespective of language background. Often Black South African students use 'him' and 'her' interchangeably.

(11) However, the absence of a generic male and gender differentiated third person pronouns in many indigenous languages does not translate into an absence of sexist language and regulation of female behaviour therein. If the effects of the generic male are to absent women and girls from full participation in language thus perpetuating their silencing and limitation (Cameron 1992, Gqola 1999, Gqola 2001a, Martyna 1980, Yates and Gqola 1998), then these effects were simply achieved in different ways in my vernacular. Various prescriptions on female behaviour meant that negative labels were used to describe girls who deviated. Sexism was both explicit and clandestine[13]. We were aware of gender difference and accepted it as normal or rebelled against specific limiting manifestations of it. While occasionally somebody would suggest that there were certain mental capabilities which only boys were endowed with, it was never possible for me to accept this as valid given the mixed gender make up of the overachievers in school. It was only many years later that some of us realised that this rebellion, as well as those linked to the gendered division, which influenced who did sewing and garden work as subjects, and our feelings about it had a name. It is with great difficulty that I came to understand later that this was not something that was obvious to many girls; that many women claim to only have come to feminism through reading. I was therefore bolstered when years later, in an interview with Mamphela Ramphele, a former Black Consciousness activist, scholar, public intellectual, author, and then vice chancellor of the University of Cape Town, she echoed my own feelings about how many women come to feminist politics[14]. I am also aware of many others for whom the language of feminism only helped name what had long been identified through their own experiential location. Thus while I was to later call myself feminist, Black feminist and womanist/postcolonial feminist, the insight into the key regulatory role of gender in society had far preceded the naming of the observation and refusal to submit to prescriptions on female behaviour. A large part of the attraction of womanist naming and theorisation for me later would no doubt have much to do with its insistence that experience informs theory, or that indeed the 'everyday' should be the basis for theorising our lives (cf. Philips & MacCaskill 1995).

(12) Later, I went to Inanda Seminary, outside Durban, a prestigious Black girls' private school. This was my first high school. The second was All Saints Senior College, an experimental private school that was non-racial when other schools were either single-raced or prized themselves on being *multi*-racial. The two schools could not have been more different. Where the first one was regimented in that establishment's effort to turn 'unruly' teenagers

[13] I have written about this in a short story 'Homeland Banter', in Isabel Balseiro (ed) Running Towards Us: New Writing from South Africa (Heinemann, 2000).

[14] See Yates, *et al*': This little bit of madness: Mamphela Ramphele on being black, [female] and transgressive', Agenda 37, 1998.

into ladies, the second valued academics and regulated conduct less. Inanda had history, prestige, authority and education of the highest quality. Students were called oomemba (members) of a sisterhood, which continued long after we left the school. The tradition was that 'Inanda girls shine': upon leaving the school Inanda girls were to excel in all fields. Being average or moderately successful was simply not an option. On Inanda Day, old girls, ranging from the recently matriculated to those of grandmother age, would arrive in all their glory to testify that they continued to shine where they were. Inanda girls were expected to be outstanding, and given the fees, also mainly middle class. Inanda doctrine was also extremely moralistic and we were warned *ad nauseam* about boys as the enemy out to get us intoxicated and pregnant. I was ambivalent about the ways in which our lives were shaped at this institution for many years, as I was about the language rule, which meant that we were punished for speaking anything but English.

(13) Women with a feminist consciousness often celebrate exclusively female domains and safe and affirming. While I recognise that a school which teaches you as a Black girl in apartheid South Africa to value your thoughts, opinions and to know that you are destined for greatness is revolutionary, I am hesitant to romanticise my time there especially given the Victorian morals which dominated notions of gender decorum[15]. Having said that, however, Inanda is an institution, which deserves to be celebrated.

(14) When I left Inanda for good at the end of 1987, I was thrilled since I no longer wanted any connection to a school I was experiencing increasingly as suffocating. Some of the aspects I deal with above seem, in retrospect, Black feminist/womanist, even as there were others, which were undoubtedly patriarchal. An email discussion list with oomemba classmates reminds me regularly of these entanglements. It also convinces me increasingly of the need to record a history of this institution given that many of the most outspoken public feminists in South Africa are Inanda girls. As an institution, which taught young Blackwomen to take excellence as their natural entitlement and to claim it, Inanda deserves celebration. It is testimony to the pervasiveness of patriarchal ideology, however, that the same space seems to have strengthened the anti-feminist stance of some within the ranks of oomemba.

(15) All Saints was new, fun, and difficult to rebel against since it was every teenager's dream. Once you passed the daylong entrance tests by escaping elimination at every round, you were accepted. While the fees were exceptionally high, corporate sponsors were found to supplement what each student's parents could afford to pay. I remember very little about the politics of All Saints internally apart from the open political discussions, which took place. These are foremost in my mind because most of the issues and organisations were banned and therefore by definition illegal to discuss openly. I remember it is also here that I encountered the *label* 'feminist' for the first time and started to use it to describe myself. I was not the only self-defined feminist here.

(16) This ended my school career and although interesting, I am not sure what it means that none of my schools exist today: Lovedale/Tyhume Primary moved to the centre of town and

[15] I cannot remember how old Inanda was exactly when I was a student. But given the fragments that I remember about its history, it is possible that Ms Edwards, the founder of the school was Victorian. It had been started as an institution to provide suitably educated wives for the outstanding Black men that Adams and Ohlange colleges would produce in colonial times.

became Alice Primary, Inanda closed down a few years ago and All Saints campus is now a Fort Hare satellite campus.

The Cape of Good Hope[16], the Cape of Storms

> And remember Cape Town is full of troubles with people throwing stones and getting shot. And what with you being a stranger in Town. Have you listened to the wireless today? (Wicomb 1990,1-2).

(17) I arrived eKapa for my studies at the University of Cape Town on the day Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela walked out of prison. This was an exciting time to be at university and I participated in organisations, which espoused anti-racist and feminist politics. It is here that the feminist and critical race *theory* came. UCT also helped me put many things in perspective regarding political trajectories and the importance of historical analyses and informed activism. It is at UCT where I learned to integrate my race and gender politics since the 'everyday' challenged my ability to keep them separate.

(18) UCT was a liberal institution and was not always receptive to these developments, which challenged its own machinations as limited and oppressive. It is, after all the nature of liberal people and institutions to imagine themselves as progressive. To the leftwing, however, liberalism has a reputation for being paternalistic, static and reactionary. This recognition was articulated regularly in progressive student societies and organisations. However, the academic domain remained liberal-informed. In her article 'I was a white liberal and survived', Margaret Legum has identified some of the limitations of liberal thinking as including the persistence in using 'words like race prejudice, race discrimination and racism interchangeably, as though they mean roughly the same thing', a denial of any remnants of racist conditioning in their own behaviour by virtue of opposing some racist practices which amounts to 'claim[ing] a place in the Guiness Book of Records as being the only people who have ever grown up without being affected by their culture' (1996, 1).

(19) In keeping with the contradictions which plague liberalism, I did not see myself in much of the undergraduate work I studied at UCT. For, example, after a BA with English and History as my majors, my knowledge of literature, which reflected what bell hooks repeatedly, calls a radical Black and/or feminist subjectivity was very limited. I was well versed in the canon, but could only read African American, Chicana, Native American, South American and Asian writing in my spare time. I had read so few texts by continental Africans within the course that I could name only a few African writers at the end of that degree. Within the UCT curriculum I often saw lies about myself, was infuriated by the suggestion that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* presented only refreshing and dynamic representations of the Other. Sometimes the curriculum angered me though its omissions as well as through the brevity of the material, which did engage, race, history and gender meaningfully. Courses like Carli Coetzee's 'Prosa' lectures and tutorials in Afrikaans 1 where race and gender were not side issues, or Kelwyn Sole's 'Contemporary South African Writing' in English 2, or my third year modules on the Amampondo, the Algerian revoluition, Namibian and Mozambican history offered useful glances

[16] Spes Bona is still inscribed on UCT's crest.

into the world which lay beyond some of the academic choices being made for me in my other courses. The highlight of my undergraduate academic learning was a course taught by Professor Kay McCormick on language and gender for which I was permitted to write a project on Black feminist criticism at the last minute. I had previously chosen a different topic but McCormick recognised the importance of the change and approved it. She was supportive of this project to the very end. In the context of UCT, where I felt, '[s]o many things are said so often to us, about us and for us, but very seldom by us' (Biko in *Black Viewpoint*, 1972, 1), this was highly unusual.

(20) However, there was an air of questioning and progressive militancy within the student body and pockets of staff groupings. UCT was also rife with contradictions even within these sectors. When Mamphela Ramphele's sexual harassment policy was met with hostility from some Black male quarters on campus, whom I considered fellow thinkers, fellow comrades, progressives, and so forth, I felt betrayed. I also felt inspired by Ramphele, a woman whose politics and career I would have several responses to over the years. She was standing her ground. Given my upbringing, this was something I was drawn to. Later still, I was struck by the manner in which a woman who speaks her mind and refuses to be silent is treated[17]. The message communicated to me, was, to use Thenjiwe Mtintso's words, that '[t]hey do want you to be political, to be active, to be everything, but they still need a complement of women who are subservient' (Thenjiwe Mtintso to Lindy Wilson, 1991, 60). Pumla Gobodo Madikizela was to later identify this tendency exhibited by some Black men at UCT thus:

> What does a black male chauvinist do to rally support from fellow blacks, including women, against a black woman seen as a threat -- 'to the nation'? He invokes the notion of 'we-ness'. He casts himself into the role of custodian of culture (1995, 2).

Insider-outsider politics of teaching

(21) Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1990) maintains that as 'Other' teachers we need to make interventions into the academic institutions we inhabit. This intervention she invites us to negotiate is similar to what bell hooks refers to as insurgent subjectivity because it is informed by an awareness of the imbalance of power in the institutions we inhabit. Failure to participate in it equals our complicity in these structures. Indeed, Spivak suggests that 'the more vulnerable your position, the more you have to negotiate' (Spivak 1990, 72).

(22) As a graduate student and tutor simultaneously at UCT in the English department and the Academic Development Programme (ADP), and later at the Academic Development Unit at the Cape Technikon, I was challenged to translate my anti-racist, feminist politics into practice. It was an invitation to respond to the systematic lie, which propped the UCT English department up. Graduate tutors were responsible for the bulk of English 1 teaching, marking and administration. However, as tutors we had no input into the restructuring of this same course even as we were to implement whatever changes the tenured staff had decided on. As

[17] She was to later comment on how people often expected her either to conform to the expected role of mother, or to allow herself to be cast as simple appendage to Biko and not an activist in her own right. There have been several controversies regarding this for Ramphele and the Mail and Guardian (or Weekly Mail, as it was then) has covered most of this in some detail. AC Fick and Kimberley A Yates have noted that similar tendencies existed in the representation of Winnie Nomzamo Mandela in the South African media.

graduate tutors we were called therefore to negotiate this terrain in ways, which required initiative.

(23) This was not the only way in which I was inspired to intervene or participate as an insurgent Black subject. At an ADP training workshop, Stella Clark stressed the importance of thinking about our teaching practice and actively pursuing forms of shaping the pedagogic setting to ensure that it was in keeping with what we sought to achieve. When she suggested that is was possible to be at all times an anti-racist and feminist teacher, it invited me to think of how to be a teacher who invited critical thinking. I knew that although my teaching explored issues of language and power explicitly, Clark was inviting me to delve deeper within myself for answers on how to be an affirming teacher. Clark's invitation was to engage in feminist praxis even when I was teaching reading and writing skills, in other words, all the time. She made us all think of ways we would like to teach and although this workshop took place in 1996, I think of it as the most significant moment for my teaching. From then on, it was crucial that I continue to ask:

> beyond naming the problem, reworking our theory and our research, what does an anti-racist feminism mean for what we do --in our organisations and in our daily activities? [...] if we are serious about social change, we must deal with the question of doing and undoing that which may be taken for granted; that which is both familiar and unfamiliar (De la Rey, 1997, 9).

(24) Teaching at the ADP encouraged me to develop a meta-language with which to think and talk about teaching praxis. This environment illustrated the importance of making skills acquisition explicit and fostering a linguistic space within which to participate. This was in sharp contrast to much of my experiences of tertiary education where I felt much of the disciplinary and academic skills (rather than the content), for example, were acquired through osmosis. I then committed to demystifying the learning situation in my classroom situation and to constantly rethink my praxis within that space.

Onder draai die duiwel rond[18]

With an increasing sense of confidence in my teaching, I moved from the status of graduate tutor to a contracted member of staff with the possibility of tenure. It was with much excitement that I greeted this opportunity, and with a dismissive attitude that I responded to warnings of how rampant racism was in the Free State. However, teaching at the University of the Free State (UFS) was to present serious problems for my teaching style.

(25) Whereas at UCT and Cape Technikon students were exposed to a range of teaching styles as a matter of course, where initiative was encouraged, the UFS worked on a different rationale. I soon discovered that in my literature classes race and gender were swear words. My first lecture provoked protests from a rightwing student organisation at the prospect of being confronted not only with a Black lecturer but of the content of that lecture which was on

[18] This is the last part of an Afrikaans idiom, which warns of the difference between the calm surface of a river under which a whirlpool exists. I find it a fitting description of what awaited me at UOFS.

Staffrider literature from the Black Consciousness era. Although I received support from members of my department, the then Dean chose to side with the protesting students. Even as I continued to assert myself, I did nonetheless recognise the event as demeaning for:

> [i]nequity does not have its most severe effects on our intellect -- it destroys our dignity and self-esteem and these are experiences of our 'self' -- our psychosocial construct (Persand 1999, 2).

(26) This has been one of a series of incidents, which were overtly racist, and sexist directed at me since I started teaching the university. As a recent audit of the Black staff of the Faculty of Humanities revealed[19], I am not alone in experiencing an assortment of tactics accompanied by (often stated) scepticism about our ability to function as credible professionals. This has had several challenges for the ways in which I have chosen to participate in the lecturing space. Clearly, my new terrain demanded radically different forms of insurgency. Gone was the liberal pretence at equality in diversity and free speech; and in its place, as I soon realised, was a rigid regime, which declared that naming racism, and sexism was forbidden. I would not stop naming the patriarchal and racist practices, which permeated exchanges, but I did realise the need to re-examine and re-evaluate my teaching models for ones, which work better within my new context.

(27) Robin Powers suggests that the servant-leadership ethic is an example of feminist and anti-racist epistemology. For Powers,

> [t]he basic tenets of this model state that one is a servant first and leads second. The skills necessary to do this include: listening and understanding; acceptance and empathy; knowing the unknowable – beyond conscious rationality; foresight; awareness and perception; and a sense of community and other things (1996: 5)

(28) While much is attractive in what the teaching style facilitates, the limitations are clear. It is unclear how one simply wills some of the identified skills into being. How does one 'know the unknowable', among other things? However necessary it is to reshape the classroom, the tools we put to this end should not escape our critical attention. Like bell hooks, I too, see the classroom as a location of possibility. However, my teaching at UFS calls to question my own assumptions about what models are appropriate in teaching as well as the extent to which I am able to use tools I have employed successfully elsewhere.

(29) Traditional models value the teacher as all-powerful and it is precisely this position, which allows us as educators, according to more progressive standards, to introduce non-hierarchical dynamics into the teaching situation.

(30) A grappling with the competing discourses on classroom practice begs the question, what implications are there for how our 'enabling' acts are read by students in our classrooms? When I, as a Blackwoman lecturer, walk into a classroom composed of mainly white students who are not much younger than I am, what meanings stem from my use of servant-leadership

[19]This is an audit conducted by the Faculty Equity Committee of the Humanities Faculty, of which I am part, as part of the requirement of the Employment Equity Act (No 55 of 1998).

paradigms? If, indeed, '[t]eaching is a performative act … meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become active participants in learning' (hooks, 1994: 11), what participation am I enabling? What lies beyond the usual theories of paying particular and more focused attention to Black and/or women students?

> There are, of course, hierarchies in teaching. Feminists have argued that teaching should be grounded in equality, non-hierarchy and democracy, but we find this problematic. Whilst a critical pedagogue will not establish her/himself as the definitive source of knowledge about the world, even feminist teachers have knowledge, power and responsibility in the classroom (Jarvis & Zukas, 1998: 3-4).

(31) The non-hierarchical classroom model is contradictory and counterproductive. It is difficult to maintain responsible and efficient co-ordination when an organisation is truly non-hierarchical. It is also misleading to think that classrooms can ever be truly non-hierarchical for learners are not educators within the classroom context. While their multiple literacies are not called into doubt, it is clear that the area they chose to register for a course in is not one they identify as within the ambit of their expertise. By contrast, the lecturer has herself undergone extensive training in precisely the field she offers the course in. Thus the choice of lecturer is not arbitrary and the systems of knowledge present in the lecture room are not interchangeable. A commitment to equity need not be so idealistic as to deny that difference has currency and that hierarchy is not always bad. In a lecture situation it is true that I know more about literary critical analysis than my students do. To the extent that several meanings stem from a reading of the same texts, students are free to explore multiple and even counter-readings. However, this space cannot be free of hierarchy because:

> [t]he relationship between experience and power/knowledge lies in the fact that the teacher (not the taught), the researcher (not the researched) and the supervisor (not the supervisee) has the most power to determine which experiences will count as knowledge (Jarvis & Zukas, 1998: 5).

(32) Further, the students at the university at which I am presently employed, in the main, may read my performance of servant-leadership in ways which are at odds with those Powers had in mind. Thus it is not necessarily Powers' model *per se* which is wanting, but its inapplicability to the same ends in my situation. The choice of model should be responsive to the context, and suited to the desired ends. My decision then needs to be strategic:

> If we're talking strategy [...] teaching is a question of strategy. In that context, it seems to me that one can make a strategy of taking away from them the authority of their marginality, the centrality of their marginality, through the strategy of careful teaching, so that they come to prove that that authority will not take them very far because the world is a large place. Others are many. The self is enclosed; the concrete is fabricated. One can do it *in* teaching rather than talk about it *ad infinitum* because they're not ready to take sides (Spivak, 1993, 18).

(33) When I walk into a first year lecture at the beginning of the year, there is no instant recognition that I might be the lecturer until I signal this in some way. The dominant image of

a knowledgeable person on any subject (read expert) is male, white, older. That I am Black, female, younger has three discernible simultaneous effects:

i) it challenges this dominant perception of the expert by inviting thinking and the questioning of stereotypes in my students;

ii) it marks me as an exceptional Black/woman/young person (even though *all* my friends who are my age have been professional for several years);

iii) but it also introduces doubt about my ability as one not-male/white/older to impart any valuable knowledge.

(34) For many of my (white) students, maybe less so now than when I arrived here in 1997 at 24 years of age, by their own admission, I am a very rare example of a Blackwoman they have encountered in a position outside of (potential) servitude to them. Servant-leadership then does not challenge their thinking in any way if their expectation is that as a Blackwoman servitude is my role. Forms of service can be read as submission especially when they are seen as natural. It is therefore to be expected that learners who respond to me as though I ought to mother them would do so even more where I to participate in this paradigm. I would be challenging none of their preconceived ideas, conscious or otherwise. I would indeed be reinforcing racist and patriarchal ideas about the appropriate behaviour and station of a Blackwoman in South Africa.

(35) More immediately, I would be complicit in what Ply Khusi (2002) has identified as the relationship between institutional culture and 'the hidden curriculum' which serves to undermine the reconceptualisation of systems of knowledge production as well as meaningful engagement with the discourses of how Africa and Africans register in the world.

(36) Finally, whereas dynamics differ between large and small groups, there are some texts, which I prefer to teach in large groups and others, which are better taught in tutorial mode. My teaching is sometimes relaxed, laughter is allowed, initiative encouraged, alternatives to the boring staid traditional lecture format encouraged, but disrespect is unacceptable. In a situation like the university I am attached to, where undermining activity stems from colleagues and students with equal frequency, aspects of the hierarchy remain useful. When the Blackwomen learners in my class see me as a Blackwoman in power choosing to play it down, give it away and become complicit in her own silencing, they are not empowered. My lack of assertiveness would neither affirm white women or Black male students nor force them to question their own sexism and racism. If my teaching evokes in some of my rightwing male and female students a violent reaction because it symbolises a threat to all they hold dear, I choose to measure that as a form of success.

Conclusion

(37) There have been successes. Some responses to texts I have taught which invite critical thinking and the rethinking of sexuality, sexual orientation and gender more generally as well as how these are permeated by race and class have been exciting. The matter of the relationship between teaching and hierarchy is one I continue to grapple with. There is still no

single model with guaranteed results but when a range of approaches, or strategies has been experimented with there have been successes. None of these entail freeing myself of hierarchy in the classroom for I remain convinced that when I stand, Blackwoman, teaching literatures written and theorised by postcolonial Others, the position of power I hold is not the same as if I were teaching the same material in a manner that makes the Other's reality, my reality, invisible, valueless and unvalued. Perhaps, given the low status of women (of all races to differing degrees), people of colour (of all genders and classes), gay, lesbian, bisexual and non-Christian perspectives, my position in the hierarchy is one of the few ways I have of ensuring that these 'experiences will count as knowledge'.

Partial Demographic Profile of Students in REN 108, EBE 122 and ENG 225 Courses

The following table contains a summary of student demographics of some of the courses Phumzile teaches. Over a three-day period, I visited and observed courses in English that were being offered as core modules to different groups of students.

Age	19(3), 20(8), 2196), 22(1), 23(2), 25(2), 29(1), 43(1), 46(1)
Place of Birth Urban/Rural area	Rural: 6 Urban: 17 Non-responses 2
Race	5 Black (described variously as African, Zulu, Black) 15 White 1 Coloured 1 European 3 non-responses
Sex	Female: 24 Male: 6
Religion	22 Christians (includes various denominations) 1no religious affiliation 1 Rastafarian 1 Zionist
Degree currently registered for	B.A (8); B.Prim Ed. (5); B.Comm. Economics (1); B.A Media Studies (3); B.Comm.IT (1); B.A Communication Science (1); B.Com. Marketing (1); B.Ed. (1); B. Music (1) No response (3)
Majors taking towards degree	English 10; Psychology 8; Advertising 1; Communication 3; Music History 1; Geography 2; Afrikaans 3; Netherlands 3; Philosophy 1; Marketing 1; Economics 2; Sociology 1; Human Movement Science 1;Corporate Communication 1; Informatics 1; Statistics 1; Media Literacy 1; Money & Banking 1; No Response 4
Year of study currently in	Postgraduate (1); 4th year (1); 2nd year (19); 1st year (4)
In what language did you receive your: 1.Primary School education? 2.Secondary School education?	 1.Afrikaans 18, English 7, Sesotho 1, Xhosa 2, Setswana 3 2.Afrikaans 17, English 10, Setswana 1
How many languages do you speak?	2 Languages (16 people speak: 3 English L1; 11 Afrikaans L1; 23Afrikaans L2, 13 English L2, and 1Shana L1, 1 Sesotho L1) 3 Languages (5 people speak: 5 English L2; 34Afrikaans L1; 1Setswana L1, 2 Sesotho L3, 1 French L3, 1 Netherlands L3, 1German L3 4 languages (4 people): 2 Setswana L1, 3 English L2, 1 English L3, 1 Xhosa L1, 1 Sesotho L3, 1 Afrikaans L3, 1 Afrikaans L1, 1 Sesotho L2, 1 Dutch L3

Reasons for Studying English for Specific Purposes

- It helps me to think critically and gives me the opportunity to know more about other cultures, other than my own.
- I have been passionate about English, therefore I have decided to major in it. It also stimulates and broadens my mind.
- More work options and I want to go overseas.
- It is prescribed in the degree that I am studying.
- To keep teaching as a way out ,if journalism does not workout; also for the use of writing skills, analyzing texts, etc.
- I love the language.
- To fully equip myself for the business world.
- It's part of the curriculum.
- To improve in communication with other people from different cultures with different languages.
- One would need good English in the business world (improvement basically).
- I need English as a school subject and to qualify for a Higher Education Diploma.
- English is the major language for the whole world. I am, and want to teach children/adults to speak as well as the grammatical form of the language.
- It can help me to be employed overseas, and in South Africa.
- I thought it would be the best choice to study English because in teaching it may be a bonus point to hiring me.
- It is a useful and enlightening subject to take.
- I was looking for a subject that can teach me how to see deeper into stuff.
- I would like to have the option of teaching and English is the only subject I would be interested in teaching.
- It is an international language. (2 respondents)
- In order to study BA Geography, I need a language, so I chose English.
- To maybe go and teach overseas for a few years.
- It is interesting.
- It is cool.
- The employment opportunities become faster than when merely studying Music.
- It is compulsory; moreover, my career choice will need communication, which is why I need English.

When were you first exposed to/became conscious about feminist/gender/sexist issues?

- During my tertiary training I was made more conscious of such issues.
- From birth.
- At secondary school. (5 respondents).
- The latter part of high school and university. (2 respondents).
- In high school they were actually introduced to me by my English teacher who was female. I had the same English teacher from standards 6-10.
- When I was in high school- more towards the end of high school.
- Since I can remember, I have been aware of the so-called superiority of men over women in the religious and career sectors. In my home education, my mother frequently made me aware of the female's struggle in the world, and how it would affect me.
- Around the age of 6 or 7 when boys were allowed activities because they were boys and girls were not allowed because they were girls.
- Primary school. (1 respondent).
- From my community.
- Two years after school- in my previous workplace.
- At high school about 20 years ago.
- Standard 4 or 5. I had a wonderful English teacher who made me familiar with Ingrid Jonker, Antjie Krog and Sylvia Plath.
- I cannot pinpoint an exact moment but it feels like these issues have been with me for a number of years.
- In 1993 when I was in Grade 9. I attended a mixed gender primary school, though I guess I only realized females for what they are when 'teenagehood' set in. I was 13 years old then.
- No response. (4 respondents).

Section 3: Overview of Course Taught, Classroom Activities and Reflections

This section summarises lecture content, classroom activities, interactions, and an overview of discussions that transpired in the courses that I observed.

English for Specific Purposes and ENG 225

I visited the UFS in September 2001. Phumzile, lecturer in the Department of English had volunteered to participate in my study and even prior to my meeting with her, I got a sense of an individual who was passionate about her work, and enthusiastic to contribute to what she regarded as a 'worthwhile and important study'.

Media reports about the conservative Afrikaner ethos formed the background of my impressions about the university. After two days of my being on the campus, it became evident to me that the students' accommodation was segregated along race and gender lines. Statues of white male icons decorated the lush gardens of the campus. The early spring blooms of September belied the aged roots of institutional racism that Phumzile reflects on with candour in both her autobiographical essay and the interview.

Phumzile teaches the following courses related to English for Specific Purposes:

REN 108: a language course designed for law students, meant to teach them reading, writing and analytical skills.

EBE 122: a language course designed for business students. The course aims at teaching critical language skills.

ENG 225: a predominantly literature-based course, which Phumzile co-teaches with other staff in the Department of English.

ENG 702: a Masters course on African Literature. In this three part course Phumzile teaches a section which deals predominantly with women's writings.

During my three-day visit for lecture observations, I had the opportunity of sitting in on the REN 108 and EBE 122 lectures. These courses were designed at the request of the Law and Commerce Faculties, which felt that students were not getting much English language practice. It was specially designed for students who had grown up speaking Afrikaans or South African languages. Historically, the course was meant to provide students opportunities to develop and sharpen their Englsh language skills. Phumzile explained that students usually have a passage of approximately 2½ to 3 pages on any topic related to Law or Commerce. The passage is not necessarily from legal or business texts, but it is likely to deal with controversial issues that generate substantial discussion. The exercises range from ones, which encourage debate, to compiling summaries, to word games, puzzles and a whole range of 'word work', or language exercises. These activities are aimed at encouraging students to talk or write as much as possible.

During my visit, the law students engaged in small group work around a passage that dealt with jury selection. Although the South African legal institution is not based on a system of jurors, the passage raised issues of power as they relate to sex, gender, race and class dynamics of the accused and the jurors.

The course on English for business purposes addressed the issues of generalisations, over generalisations and sweeping generalisations and encouraged students to identify how the writer manipulated language to forward arguments through generalisations.

Phumzile also taught part of the literature section in the ENG 225. At the time of my visit she was teaching the text, *Journey to Ithaca*. This session which, was almost exclusively done via a lecture mode, covered a variety of issues, which interrogated the representations of India, and how this novel in particular, could be seen in conversation with other colonialist novels that deconstruct travel into India. Phumzile contrasted *Journey to Ithaca* to other

novels, which denigrate journeying towards the Orient. In this section of the course she usually teaches Southern African, Caribbean and Indian literature written by women novelists. (Summary of Lecture Observations).

Reflections on Teaching Demographically Diverse Students

In her interview, Phumzile mentioned that most of the English for Specific Purposes Courses that she teaches cater for a vast range of students in terms of levels; i.e. all students are not in the same year of study. Owing to the large student numbers subscribing to the English for Specific Purpose Courses, these courses are taught by a number of different lecturers in the Department of English. Phumzile was not instrumental in designing these courses, but she finds, for the most part, the written exercise component useful.

In reflecting on her teaching experiences at UFS, Phumzile dwelt on the dual medium language policy of the institution. She pointed out that students have a choice of attending lectures in either English or Afrikaans. Thus, every lecture is duplicated for day and evening classes. Historically the English for Specific Purposes Courses aimed at providing students with practice in English. The courses were intended for students who had grown up speaking Afrikaans or for whom Afrikaans was primarily the target language. However, as Black students were enrolled at the university, it also became necessary to provide them with practice in English, since a significant number of the Black students also speak Afrikaans.

Phumzile commented at length on the political and ideological dynamics of the institution as it related to the English-Afrikaans dichotomy. She stated that:

> The pervasive atmosphere on campus is very defensive about the place of Afrikaans being eroded or losing its status. Often students feel that they're entitled to speak Afrikaans in classes, because anything that suggests the opposite is perceived as an attack or a personal affront. The discourse of entitlement is couched ironically in, a language of rights around Afrikaner disempowerment and discrimination. … then there's the Black students. There's kind of, "I'll speak, but only in a group" or "I'll only speak in a group that has only Black people in it. I don't feel confident speaking in large groups, or in public".

Teaching the courses in English for Specific Purposes to linguistically diverse students, Phumzile adapts the teaching material in relation to cues she gets from students. These cues usually take the form of requests to stress certain aspects of the curricula content as well as incorporating topics that may be of interest to students. She accedes to these requests provided they are in line with the general ideas of the subject area. She laments the limited time available to do justice to the course material. She is also perturbed that the university had not factored in time for tutorials. This she considered unfair to the students because it deprived them the much needed time and space to engage with the material. She felt certain that students were not going to successfully learn everything they need to know if they were not afforded sufficient opportunities within the course to do so.

Phumzile mentioned that, ideally, she would like to spend more consultation time with her students, especially to address writing issues. However, this is hindered by the way the university operates and the fact that students are generally reluctant to consult, and are unwilling to invest in their education.

The main objectives that Phumzile wishes to achieve in these courses are to develop critical thinking around power; i.e. dismantling the processes through which we think. Proceeding from the view that we are all racialised, jaded, marked by class, and sexual orientation she believes that:

> … we engage our worlds with these identities, that is, we think things and our thoughts have power, our actions have power and we're going to act and think and do things with who we are. This creates the imperative for us to be critical of how we do things; how we participate and how we are implicated. As social actors we all have agency; and that is something we cannot give away.

She admits that she has no illusions about being able to change the world completely, however, she likes to think that she can make some people think differently. She is not very optimistic that the right wing student in her class is going to walk out and become a communist who is outspoken on the rights of people of colour, gay, lesbian, bisexual, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, African traditional religions, etc. She does however, cherish the hope that some people in the class may and will. Ultimately, she hopes that her students won't feel invisible; the way she and several other academics say they felt in their classes. (Summary from Interview).

Thembi's (Auto)biographical Profile
Phenomenal Woman

University of Botswana

Section 1: Partial Institutional Sketch

In this section I present a brief description of the University of Botswana, where Thembi was teaching at during the time of my study.

University of Botswana: A Brief History

The opening of the University of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland on January 1st 1964, was the outcome of an agreement reached in mid-1962, between the High Commission Territories and the Oblate of Mary Immaculate of Pius X11 Catholic University in Lesotho. Pius X11 College of Roma was itself the product of the desire for an institution of higher learning for African men and women by the Catholic hierarchy of Southern Africa. Courses at Pius X11 College were taught and examined under a special relationship entered into in 1955 with the University of South Africa, which awarded students degrees and diplomas in Arts, Science, Commerce and Education. Pius X11 College experienced financial difficulties over the expanding institution and over racial restrictions on student residence required by the University of South Africa. Negotiations with the High Commission Territories to transform the University College into a fully-fledged university were therefore initiated during 1962.

On June 13, 1963, the Oblates and the High Commissioner of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland signed a deed of cession, and indemnity. The new university, with Ford Foundation and British Government funds, purchased the assets of the Roma Campus for an indemnity of half of its value, in exchange for guarantees of a continuing Catholic presence.

For the period 1964-1982 numerous negotiations were entered into, which saw the devolution and nationalization of the universities of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. Thus, the University of Botswana was only established on the 1st July 1982 by an Act of Parliament, but continued to co-operate for a further six months for the purpose of examining and awarding degrees, diplomas ad certificates. In terms of an agreement between the governments of Botswana and Swaziland the national universities in Botswana and Swaziland continued to exchange students and to co-operate in certain areas, and to that end a consultative board was set up to advise on how best to co-operate.

At the beginning of the devolution phase of the Universities of Botswana and Swaziland the following ideals were identified:

> The University must be a committed institution, committed to the fulfilment of the ambitions and aspirations of the communities it was created to serve. One of these is rapid development, another is nonracialism, and the third is simply pride in ourselves and in our past, which in turn would lead to a greater degree of self-confidence, which is one of the basic ingredients of true independent nationhood (University of Botswana 2001/2002 University Calendar: pp.10-11).

In this regard the university is closely involved in the national development process of Botswana. The special functions of the university are to engage in improving the quality and

expanding the quantity of the human resources needed for development, and to act as the repository of the collective knowledge and experience of the nation and the world. (ibid.).

Section 2: Profile of Research Participants

Thembi's Autobiographical Essay

(1) Influences from early childhood and early family life that shaped my life would be the unwavering emphasis my parents made on the virtues of education. Both my parents were by profession teachers. My father, the son of one of the first Batswana ministers of religion in the London Missionary Society (LMS) church, earned his BA degree with English and Setswana as his majors. He also took a concurrent Teacher's Education Diploma at Fort Hare University during the early 1940's. My mother, from the family of Tswana royalty, obtained a teacher's certificate in "Domestic science/housewifery" (now termed Home Economics) with cooking, dressmaking, crocheting and knitting as her subjects.

(2) Cattle ranching and farming were central to Setswana life in the 1940's through the 1950's, and to have parents who emphasized intellectual development over rearing cattle was unusual. I was fortunate to have parents who understood that holding a book in your lap instead of running after cattle was not a sign of laziness, but an indication that though one's hands were still, one's mind was engaged in some type of work.

(3) In the context of Tswana societies of the 1940's therefore, both my parents' background could be classified as enlightened and privileged with an excellent blend of Christian values, western education and African cultural values. Their methods of raising their children were thus along formal and informal lines. They never stopped teaching and instructing; whether they were teaching us the virtues of sharing and the values of cleanliness, or giving us distinctions on proper Setswana or English grammatical forms. These lessons were very important because we were living in what was then rural Botswana and issues of English pronunciation or Setswana 'heavy' accent were bound to affect either our learning of English as a second language or our use of Setswana as our mother tongue. My father especially would conduct special evening lessons to guide us through our reading of our primary school English texts. He would typically demand our attention: "come on girls and boys, watch my lips and tongue and repeat after me: fa<u>th</u>er not fa<u>d</u>a, mo<u>th</u>er not ma<u>d</u>a, power not pa<u>w</u>a, <u>z</u>ebra not <u>s</u>ebra."

(4) My father unfortunately suffered long periods of illness, and back then, tuberculosis as a disease was hard to diagnose and treatment would take a long time. During his illness my mother single-handedly raised their five children, one niece and two nephews, all making one big family of very lively and active children. The neighbors nicknamed us "busy-bees" because of their fascination with the systematic and coordinated way a group our age fulfilled its assigned daily and weekly duties. Mother's allocation of duties and workload was largely based on age not sex: the younger the child the lighter the task. Clean-up programs were always at the top of the 'to-do' list, her motto being "cleanliness is next to Godliness." This is one of the English expressions I picked up at an early age. Despite the fact that she had so many curious

children, so many naughty minds working on 'plots' that were oozing with mischief, she never missed a beat. Her straightforward, unpretentious manner meant that she was transparent about the problems we faced. Her forthrightness, her shocking frankness and incredibly big heart made her a role model for me. She didn't apologize for her bluntness, and she had a sense of truth and integrity rare to find in most people. We knew we had a rock to lean on, so we always felt secure despite any hardships we faced.

(5) Mother had an entrepreneurial spirit, and ran a very small shop while her husband frequently lay helplessly in hospital. Back in those days a village would have one or two shops owned by white or Indian families, and almost none would be run by a woman, especially an African one. Her example was ample proof that a woman could have a career and family, though in those days it didn't quite seem like she was "having it all." Her struggle did not have the glamour of self-sufficiency women could cling to in the 21st century, but her economic independence, and uncompromising determination to provide for her children made her a force to be reckoned with.

(6) In terms of class we were undeniably privileged. Our lifestyle was not lavish, but distinguished people surrounded my parents. Guests to our home included doctors, ministers of religion, teachers, nurses, and people who would later be members of the cabinet once Botswana became independent. This gave us a sense of pride but it was also humbling to see my parents give so much to their community, and be held in such high esteem. While we were surrounded by prominent figures, we were never allowed to forget that we were in fact part of a community, and were tied to everyone in a symbiotic relationship of give and take. Our mother never hesitated to help the poor or economically disadvantaged people without belittling them or doing so to make herself feel heroic. She had the ability to see a person's essence and empathize with his/her situation in an honest manner that completely lacked pretense. This dichotomy of living with privilege, and sharing with the disadvantaged around us all the time, ensured a balanced ego and an open heart.

(7) I knew that my father did important work when I was growing up. I didn't always understand it or think much of it when I was younger, but I was aware of it. I remember being urged to "keep quiet, my father was busy." And now that I've grown up and grasped the enormity of his contribution, I am awed by the presence I had around me all the time. He was the author of the first monolingual Setswana Dictionary and had a distinguished career as an intellectual, writer and editor. It is mainly as writer and promoter of Setswana language and culture that my father made his mark.

(8) Colonial Botswana, like all colonial countries was gripped in a mentality that denied our ability, our intellect, our beauty as a people, and thus instilled in us a lack of pride in our traditional culture. On the contrary, my father was one of those few Batswana who fought hard to promote the Setswana culture.

(9) Like many growing up in colonial, and post-colonial, Botswana the changes occurring socially and politically influenced me greatly. As a young woman who during Botswana's first year of Independence completed Form V and immediately married a young black South African (also my former teacher) with a BA degree in History and English, I cherished the freedom from both

my colonial and parental rule. What was paramount in my mind then, at the age of nineteen, was a marriage certificate and a family of my own which of course would be modeled after that of my parents. The only difference would be the family size. Mine would be smaller.

(10) I could immediately discern parallels if not similarities though: my husband, like my father, was a university graduate. My husband, like my father, had specialized in English. My husband's first teaching post, like my father's, was at Moeng College. And for my part, like my mother who was a mere teacher's certificate holder, I was a mere school leaver; like my mother who had done housewifery, I too had been trained as such (though informally) by her. The lessons I got from my mother, a domestic science person, would be useful in my own "domestic" sphere. In fact when I married, my mother had compiled a cookbook for me and provided samples of "Daily menu" for my use as the new and inexperienced wife.

(11) During the early years of our marriage our duties as husband and wife were distinct. My husband went to school to teach, and I remained at home to cook and clean the house. I was quite satisfied with the arrangement. After all I had my marriage and would soon have babies. I never thought seriously about what the implications of this situation were; that because I did not have formal employment I would not be looked at in the same light as my husband; he the successful one, and I less so.

(12) When our first baby did not come as early as we thought it would, I got bored, worried, irritable and miserable. The only solution our female family doctor recommended was that I "get out there" and do something different. As a result, finding a job at Barclays Bank immediately changed my life. It offered another dimension and an alternative attraction: economic security. Since that time, virtually close to thirty-five years ago, I have cherished my financial independence. When I later resigned from the bank to pursue further studies, I did so with the conviction that after my attainment of a university degree, I would measure up to my husband who was already socio-economically advantaged.

(13) Botswana was opening up its doors to expatriates and I formed friendships with individuals from all over the African continent and overseas. I saw women from all over the world who were my age, but talked differently, thought differently and behaved differently. But the bonds we formed were often instant. This embrace of foreign influences through my parents' foreign friends and acquaintances, through my "foreign" husband, his relatives and friends, through former schoolmates who had pursued further education at universities outside Botswana, made me curious and made me want to experience life in a broader context. I also learnt that interest in other people's culture frees you to learn and experience them without the clouds of stigma and prejudice looming over one's head.

(14) I hungered for increased knowledge and I resigned from the Bank to enroll for a BA degree at the newly established University of Botswana and Swaziland. My choice of majors, which were English and African languages (my father's majors as well), constantly reminded me that I was indeed my father's child. I had obviously internalized his interests and values.

(15) At this university, my whole orientation and my entire learning process was shaped by male professors and male lecturers who taught male authored texts e.g. Senghor, Achebe,

Soyinka, Ngugi, Mphahlele, La Guma etc. And issues, which these lecturers addressed, were basically those of identity in terms of race and class. Gender was not an issue at all. So whenever I wrote research essays as part of the requirement for the degrees I was studying, gender was never my focus. In fact I did not even know it *was* an issue. For example, for the BA degree requirement, I wrote on Ezekiel Mphahlele, for my MA I wrote on Alex La Guma and for my PhD I wrote on Nadine Gordimer- all South African authors-and a thread that ran through all of these authors' work was largely racism and class.

(16) As a Motswana woman in the sixties, seventies and eighties it was good to feel pride in my husband, my parents, my country and myself. The question of race was never a feature of my young life in Botswana, although I frequently experienced it in apartheid South Africa whenever I visited relatives. In Botswana most people around me were black, so the distinctions we made among our selves were not around race. More likely than not, the distinction would be ethnic. But even the question of ethnicity was never a sore point. But of course this evaluation could be attributed to the fact that I am part of a racial and ethnic majority, and the perception would be that I was always in the dominating sector of society and was not subjected to prejudice on this basis.

(17) When I went off to Canada to study for an MA in English, I was for once a racial minority. Being black was not always the best thing to be in the seventies. That was before political correctness existed and some people weren't shy about displaying their negative feelings about sharing their space with a black woman. Racism is not something you can ever prepare for. To be confronted with this in adulthood was a shock, after all my skin hadn't been offensive to anyone in Botswana (so I believed), now it marked me like a plague. I was no longer a member of a majority race. I was no longer, just a woman, I was black.

(18) Being an African in an unfamiliar English department at a time when Africans were rare in Western educational institutions carried its burdens. The confidence I once had completely dissipated when I found myself a lone Motswana woman in an MA class of about twenty all white Canadians. I withdrew into myself and became the 'silent' one, thereby confirming the multiple misconceptions about the inferiority and incapability of Blacks. Angry with myself for allowing the creation of such senseless and baseless categorization, I began to work towards correcting the lie by simply proving my worth. It only took an in-class test on Shakespeare's *King Lear* to turn the tables. Unbelievable to the white class, I had topped them all. My white professor said (as an aside) that he had scrutinized my paper. He had read and re-read it over and over again, he admitted. First, he did so out of disbelief and several times thereafter, out of sheer enjoyment.

(19) Being scrutinized by the external world forced me to scrutinize myself as well. I wanted to see what they were all looking at. This self-scrutiny made me peel away the layers of myself. I looked at the blackness, the Africanness, the femaleness and the intellect. Each of these layers felt like a cocoon. I felt good in the knowledge that my spirit was cloaked in such a solid covering: African, female and black. This was an unbeatable combination in the sense that it was not only multi-layered but also complex. The seeming inferiority of each layer of identity combines to form a very powerful self-identity.

(20) In Canada my interest in literature pushed me further into exploring other course offerings such as the one titled "Sexual Colonialism". I recall that colonialism in this context was used as a metaphor for domination, control, restriction and oppression especially with regard to the subjection of the less privileged persons to permanent servitude. Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African farm* were some the texts chosen to demonstrate the oppression of the female protagonists and ways of freeing themselves for sexual oppression. One of the crucial issues in this course was the female characters' recognition of the achievement of education as an emancipatory force. In short, for these female characters education was a precondition for authentic female autonomy.

(21) While "Sexual colonialism" was the course from which I first heard whispers of feminism, I continued to be ignorant of the usefulness of feminism as an analytical tool. I now know that my study on Nadine Gordimer, especially, would have been richer, much deeper and more analytical than it was had my critical framework incorporated gender or feminist criticism. But because I was taught and socialized to acquire, accept and even perhaps reflect a male oriented perception of the world, this viewpoint impacted on my way of thinking and seeing. This lack of integration of gender issues in my previous study testifies to that.

(22) After my return to Botswana, my experiences especially during my stay in the department of English at the University of Botswana (UB) and during my subsequent interaction with the community outside of UB, reveal that many of the traditional structures which defined life in the past, still constrict/constrain us today. For example, I recall one departmental board meeting I attended as UB's lecturer. It was that time of the year when students' performance was being discussed, and the Head of Department who was a man would describe the low performers (both male and female) as getting "ladylike scores". From that moment on it became quite obvious to me that even in academic circles, where we have both male and female PhDs, and we would thus expect equal recognition, women are not regarded so highly after all. They continue to be associated with non-performance. I immediately resolved in my mind that if a man sitting on the department chair thinks he is there because he is any better than a female colleague, then I should de-stabilize what he thinks is a fixed position. I hoped to show him that he is in that position simply because we cannot all be Head at the same time; that he is chair not because the rest of the staff, especially women, are incapable. My resolve was to unseat him; to show him that leadership is not about asserting the inferiority of others, thereby asserting one's own superiority. My goal was to begin to work towards being the next chair as a way of changing the stereotypical beliefs so rife even in academic circles. And of course when the time came, I gladly took over as the next and first woman chair in that department. The roles had been reversed. I was in control. And what did I discover in that ivory tower? I found out that power is in one's mind. One simply feels it only if one thinks it. It is indeed, like any fleeting thought, fluid, not fixed.

(23) Another incident I recall occurred when I was the Head of the department. This time it was during a funeral I attended with the UB colleagues. In my culture, at funerals, women and men get different signals about what is expected of them. When there aren't enough chairs, and there is always a shortage, men sit on chairs, and women sit on the floor. So in that set up our male colleagues would be seated on chairs and us, women, would have to make ourselves comfortable on the floor. In all these roles women are expected to be cooperative, to ensure

the smooth running of the programme. Of course we were all dressed up, both men and women. After the funeral, a group of us women had come back from the cemetery earlier and grabbed a few chairs to sit on. When the men finally returned and looked for more chairs, the Master of Ceremonies announced that those women sitting on the chairs should be aware that the men do not have enough chairs and should do what is normal. We ignored him and he repeated himself until he inquired sarcastically, "What type of women are these? Where do they come from?" And almost as a chorus we replied "Beijing." When he heard this he quietly withdrew and left us. We hadn't been to Beijing but we knew it was associated with women's resistance and action. Beijing is the place at which women had organized themselves, internationally, to promote gender equality, human rights and development. This place, therefore, is usually associated with deviance or doing the "unthinkable."

(24) Beijing. This is the identity this group of Batswana women had assumed. This was indeed an indication of our underlying struggle for social change. It had become obvious to those few women that though we live in contemporary times, many of the traditional structures which defined life for ages still hamper our lives today; hence the women's hint at their struggle for gender equality. Having been part of this body of women connected by an invisible cord of common experience such as the one I have just referred to, I was more convinced than ever before that the female voice, individually or as part of a bigger collective, has to be heard and acknowledged.

(25) Incidentally when this little drama unfolded, I had been teaching 'Gender Issues in African Literature' at UB for some time. And I had thus begun to read, learn and absorb in a more intensive and extensive way the dynamics of patriarchal systems of which our Setswana culture is part. The practical dimensions of my feminist consciousness can be traced to the 1990's when I was a participant at the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU). At this conference focus was on sensitising female academics to the dire consequences of placing power, decision-making and control in the hands of male academics. I am forever grateful to the ACU and also glad that my subsequent teaching of 'Gender Issues' (though my interest in it came late in life), eventually forced me to incorporate gender/feminist criticism in my literary studies.

(26) The more I explored feminist theories the more my own political consciousness with regard to Botswana's patriarchal culture was raised. Teaching "Gender Issues" forced me first to confront my own history, my identity, my past/present way of thinking and seeing. In fact it guided me through the whole process of change as my identities were constantly shifting. It broadened not only my understanding of the world but also of myself. Having gone through the traditional approach to reading literature, and now being aware of its limitations, I now try to introduce literature differently to my students. I am, clearly, more convinced than ever before that culture places different behavioural expectations on men and women, and that those expectations affect individuals' reactions to issues of gender. That is why each year when I introduce the "Gender Issues" course I try to draw the students' attention to recognition of the real impact of gender in their own personal lives.

(27) To do so, they should first understand that it is culture that defines and constructs the roles for mother, father, wife, husband, daughter, son, working woman, working man, female

leader, male leader. Quite often students come to the classroom already socialized to believe that inequality of the sexes is natural and therefore unchallengeable. Such students easily buy into theories, which legitimise male domination over females. Exposing these same students, however, to other opposing views, which make a distinction between "nature" and "nurture", sensitises them to the differences between the biologically determined and the culturally constructed. This approach effectively helps students make a distinction between sex as a biological determination and gender as a social or cultural construct.

(28) It is also important that students themselves assess their own culture rather than let the lecturer do it for them, just so the lecturer is not accused of imposing his/her own ideological and political beliefs on 'innocent minds.' I insist on this type of approach because we learn from our own mistakes and we also learn from the student's own feedback regarding the course. I remember one student having commented on my teaching of gender issues as "Brainwashing." I immediately guessed that because I often feel very passionate about 'gender injustice,' I probably did not give students a chance to participate equally in this construction of knowledge. This experience, as I have said, became a learning curve for me, and I have since that time insisted on 'collective construction of knowledge' in order to break free from the monopoly of 'knowledge production' held in my hands as the lecturer.

(29) Interestingly, those who stubbornly cling to the belief that the roles women and men perform is biologically determined are quick to adopt a different position when parallels between racism/ colonialism and sexism are drawn. Their knowledge of the history of the 'superior' races (i.e. racism) helps them appreciate the mechanisms of domination at different levels. They begin to understand that just as colonialism is lopsided in favour of the colonial 'masters' so is patriarchy slanted in favour of men. Sensitizing students to these parallels and distinctions between the dominant and the subordinate, the powerful and the powerless, the superior and the inferior, the major and the minor which set apart categories of people in any societies becomes crucial in any course syllabus that mainstreams gender.

(30) As a further example of a parallel, one could also cite the use of the English language versus that of the Setswana language in a multilingual class a case in point. In the case of the University of Botswana for example, African Literature written in English and African literature written either written in Setswana or other indigenous languages are all taught in English as *the* language while other indigenous languages are subordinated. It is this situation that shows that English, the colonizer's language, has become the dominant language in Botswana. It seems this historically dominant culture with its language has long determined its own status and marginalized the status of other indigenous cultures to the extent that English in Botswana is the official language while Setswana remains the national language. The fact that English continues to be the language of international trade, international relations, science and technology and also used in formal sectors such as government, education and private companies shows that Setswana has been accorded secondary status. " Setswana as a language of wider communication within the country is used largely as a symbol of nationhood while other languages, spoken in Botswana, such as Kalanga and Seyeyi, etc. do not have their role "appropriately defined in the country's national policy". The unequal and different roles that these two 'major' languages play in the country shows that multilingualism "is more symbolic than functional.

(31) If multilingual teaching implies recognition of other languages through teaching in those languages, then multilingual teaching in Botswana is still a dream. If recognition of other languages implies embracing multiculturalism, then cultural "integration in the curriculum is [more of] a window dressing than an objective developmental process through which culture is nurtured, fostered and prescribed".

(32) My teaching of 'Gender Issues in African Literature' especially from a feminist perspective, has not only been a consciousness-raising exercise for my students but has also been, for me, a continuous process of intellectual growth. The fact that this approach embraces not only questions of class but also of race and gender further makes one critical of the extent to which power is constructed and constituted even in language. I suppose what I have said so far indirectly addresses the questions: 'what theories/ theorists influenced my thinking about feminism and multilingual teaching and learning?' and 'What impact did feminism have on my view of myself and how has this affected my conceptualization of multilingual teaching?' In simple terms these questions ask me to explain how I came to know what I know, to believe what I believe, and even to perceive things the way I do. Yet like socialization acquisition of knowledge itself is a process, as one acquires knowledge consciously and unconsciously through both formal and informal means. And as a result of the interplay of both processes, I would rather say I am indebted to all those formal and informal 'teachers' whose philosophies touched my life in various ways, and to all those theorists who in their consideration of gender relations explore the 'nature/nurture controversy' especially as a crucial issue upon which most debates on sex and gender rest.

(33) For me, the two opposing camps - those who conflate sex and gender (or nature and nurture) and those who distinguish between the two - have both contributed immensely, yet differently, in raising and sustaining my curiosity in feminist theoretical debates. I read and 'heard', for example, the first whispers of feminist and anti-feminist theories in the old traditions of the conservative and liberal philosophers of the age of Enlightenment such as Jean Jacques Rousseau, Ruskin and John Stuart Mill; and through the mid-twentieth century ideas of Virginia Woolf in her espousal of 'androgeny' and then Simone de Beauvoir through her concept of the 'Other'; then to where we now are - the post colonial era of Gayatri Spivak's theorising of the 'subaltern,' bell hooks' pushing of the boundaries from 'margin to center'; Alice Walker's 'womanism' and Amina Mama's thoughts on African feminisms, just to cite a few, - where issues of epistemology, pedagogy and hegemony are high on the feminist research agenda, and which in many ways are a fight against exclusion, 'othering' and essentialism.

(34) The impact of these influences on my life therefore is not particularly gendered; it comes from the degree of connectedness of my personal life and intellectual work to political and historical experience of cultural and sexual marginalization. My journey through life has shown me how political, social and economic feminism is. Though we live in contemporary times, many of the traditional structures, which defined life for ages, still constrict life today. As revelation after revelation has taken place, I see the constant self-regulation, self-censorship and self-sanctioning that has come with the legacy of living in a world that attempts to silence the female voice.

(35) Indeed, feminism has had a fundamental change on my self-perception. I see myself as a multiplicity of identities - of being an individual, a female, a wife, a mother, an intellectual and an educator. But I also have a sense of being part of a bigger collective, part of a body of both women and men connected by an invisible umbilical cord of humanity. These multiple identities feed on each other constantly and their synergy pushes me towards a stronger sense of self. Much of feminism is about self-acceptance, and this has spilled to other aspects of my life.

(36) As a bilingual woman, for example, I realize that expression in Setswana language is important, despite the fact that colonial misconceptions about the value of African language often counters that. By accepting truths about self, one also embraces one's means of expressing those truths. It is sometimes false to express knowledge in an unnatural, evasive manner. When we neglect or subdue our languages and their nuances, we are expressing half-truths because we lose the essence of emotion that comes with that language.

(37) My role then as an educator, and born in a tradition of teaching, would be to take this reality to the next level of recognizing the apparent paradox. We claim, for example, our identities and values through multiculturalism and multilingual teaching while the whole world is embracing globalization which itself is a move "towards monolingual and a monocultural world."

Partial Demographic Profile of Students in the Gender Issues in African Literature Course

The following table contains a summary of student demographics of the course: *Gender Issues in African Literature.* The students filled in the questionnaire during my 3-day visit to the University of Botswana. Thembi requested that I change the category 'Race' to 'Nationality' as it was likely to be interpreted as requesting information of one's ethnic identity in the context of the University of Botswana, which has a Black student majority.

Age	23(4), 24(6), 25(5)
Place of Birth Urban/Rural area	Rural: 7 Urban: 6 Non response 2
Nationality	2 no responses 13 Motswana
Sex	Female: 4 Male: 11
Religion	7 Christians (includes various denominations) 3 non responses 1 African Traditional Religion 4 none
Degree currently registered for	15 B.A
Majors taking towards degree	English 14; History 4; Setswana 1; Theology 3; Environmental Science 3; Agriculture 1; Sociology 1; French 1; African Languages and Literature 1
Year of study currently in	4TH year (15)
In what language did you receive your: 1.Primary school education? 2.Secondary School education?	 1.English & Setswana 8, English 4, Setswana 3 2.English 10, English & Setswana 5
How many languages do you speak?	2 Languages (8) (8 Setswana L1, 8 English L2) 3 Languages (5) 1 Kakanga L1, 4 Setswana L2, 2 English L2, 3 English L3, 1 Setswana L1, 1 French L3, 1Sekgalagadi L1, 1 Sibieies L1, 1 Kalanga L1 4 languages (1) Setswana L1, Ikalanga L2, English L3 5 languages (1) Kalanga L1, Setswana L2, English L3,

Reasons for studying English Honours

- Because it is marketable.
- I like the language and I want to speak and write it with fluency. I also want to teach it.
- I have developed an interest in English, which is globally spoken. This enhances or performs an international function and enables one to communicate beyond one's own country.
- I wanted to master the language because it's highly used as a media of communication worldwide and it's very essential for someone to know the language efficiently.
- My degree requires me to be a teacher; so learning English will enable me to communicate well with students.
- No response (2 respondents).
- I want to work as a freelance reporter, and it requires a good command of the language.
- Because it is a language that is widely used and I believe that it will help me in my future career in foreign affairs.
- I am very interested in Journalism.
- I opted for English particularly because of literature because it contains a lot of things from different fields and it requires a critical mind.
- To enhance my command in English.
- So that I could teach it.
- Because I wanted to improve on my 3rd language since it is an international way of communication.
- It is because English is the medium of instruction in almost all nations worldwide and also most subjects, except Setswana, are taught in English, so I believe one has to improve his/her vocabulary in order to cope with the situation.

When were you first exposed to/became conscious about feminist/gender/sexist issues?

- At the University of Botswana in 1998.
- At the University of Botswana.
- At secondary school where I began studying literature which actually exposed me to this issue.
- Last year, but I started knowing a lot since I started this course on gender issues.
- In 2001.
- When I was doing my second year of studies.
- In our Biblical Studies Course, Theology and Religious Studies in my third year.
- When I was at the university.
- I'm not sure but it is something that really interested me when I became aware of relations between the sexes.
- At the University of Botswana.
- I do not remember exactly, but it was sometime during my senior secondary school education.
- During my first year of tertiary education.
- When I started my 4th year.
- At University.
- Ever since I was a child up to the current stage.

Section 3: Overview of Course Taught, Classroom Activities and Reflections

This section summarises lecture content, classroom activities, interactions, and provides an overview of discussions that transpired in the lectures that I observed.

Gender Issues in African Literature

In October 2001, when Thembi invited me to attend her lectures, my observation was primarily on the *Gender Issues in African Literature*, a fourth year course that she was co- teaching with Molly a fellow woman academic.

I sat in on two separate days, and participated minimally in a three-hour lecture contact session titled: *Gender Issues in African Literature.* The lecture commenced with Thembi and team teacher, Molly, returning graded scripts to students on a biographic essay they had written about their experiences of gender relations within the social contexts of their homes, school, the university, church, etc. Both Thembi and Molly had planned the essay with the intention of pointing out to students that every one of us lives and functions within a gender-regulated society. The essay was also meant to be diagnostic, in that it would help ascertain students' knowledge about gender issues. This was part of a process of identifying student needs in order to guide them in using theoretical tools to critically analyse their own

texts (i.e. their biographical essays). The lecturers urged students to try to make a critical evaluation both of their own experiences, words, thoughts/expressions, and those of the theorists they were reading.

In addition, the lecturers drew students' attention to the organizational aspects, which were used as criteria in grading the essay. Of particular concern was the need for students to be cognizant of the structural form of essay writing, viz.:

- Content and organization (the need for an introduction and a conclusion).
- Responding specifically to the question, (since vague generalities detract from addressing salient issues and slide towards illogicality).
- Poised used of the English language.
- Developing an argument.

The second half of the lecture was devoted to analysing a passage from John Stuart Mill's essay: *The Subjection of Women.* This exercise served several purposes. First, it was intended to acquaint students with Mill's philosophy about gender issues, and about relationships between males and females. Second, being an exercise on Practical Criticism, it also served as an example on how to structure and develop an argument, and the devices Mill uses to do so. Third, it was intended to develop skills in the mechanics of reading comprehension and criticism. Thembi elucidated the importance of reading the text several times over, in order to place the writer's argument within context and to understand, and isolate the position of the theorist in the debate. She explained:

> John Stuart Mill takes a different position from Ruskin and from Rousseau. Mill is addressing an audience who claim that women are naturally what they are, or are naturally what society dictates they should be. He is taking up the nature/nurture controversy, and he is also addressing the binary opposites, which postulate that one is active, and the other passive; one is strong the other is weak. (Lecture Observation).

Using Mill's essay and the accompanying questions on the Practical Criticism worksheet, the lecturers attempted to expose students to theories of gender relations, as well as technical aspects of reading and writing in English.

Students did not however, passively accept the feminist views in these discussions, and the lecturers were quick to point out that the business of students of literature is to interrogate the status quo.

A constant refrain in the lectures I observed was the insistence on regular attendance and punctuality, which seemed to feature as an on-going problem. (Summary of Lecture Observations).

Reflections on Teaching Demographically Diverse Students

Thembi noted that the greatest challenge of teaching in a university with a diverse student population is how to deal with diversity. She maintains that being aware of the existence of differentiated student expectations is a starting point, because awareness sensitises her to the need to address and accommodate student diversity in terms of their different abilities, and interests. She believes that it is important to appreciate that these differences have their roots in students' different cultural orientation and socialisation. Thembi admits that she would have to create extra time outside of the class to try and address differentiated needs, but that would be contingent on whether or not she has the time. Teaching a course,

like *Issues in African Literature*, she is careful for students not to feel excluded. She is aware that if students conceive of the course as dealing with gender issues only they dismiss it as 'women's issues, and are likely to not elect enrolling for the course.

Thembi welcomes student request with regard to course content, but reports that invariably the course content depends on the lecturer's judgement because there is a perception among students that lecturers have a better sense of their needs, and therefore know what is good for them.

Although the course includes texts written by both male and female writers, they do not represent authors from the entire African continent. Using various critical and literary theories as analytical tools, students are encouraged to assess the authors' position in relation to issues of gender that is, whether or not authors challenge the stereotypes or endorse them? Thembi acknowledges that a textual analysis requires students to look at the roles that characters assume, with a view to examining the changing perceptions of the writers about their own societies, regarding gender relations and the attendant issues of domination, oppression, exploitation, etc. Underpinning these analyses is a sense that women are subjected to all sorts of indecencies. In stating the aims and objectives she endeavoured to achieve in this course, Thembi outlined her commitment to a twofold purpose. Firstly, she wanted to sensitise her students to what they read and to the world around them: to develop a critical consciousness about what they experience. Secondly, she encouraged students to examine dominant representations of gender in the African literature, and to consider how these could be subverted, and to examine the extent to which the authors themselves have interrogated or subverted these issues. (Summary of Interview).

Methodological Interlude: reflections on writing the essay

Notwithstanding the cautionary signals posted by the discourses of postmodernism about autobiographical writing, I tended to concur with Long's (1987), observation that:

> feminist scholarship … has made it clear that third person accounts and 'generic' sociology have not, in fact, told us anything about women's experiences. First person accounts are required to understand the subjectivity of a social group that is 'muted,' excised from history, 'invisible' in the official records of their culture.

This is compounded by Weiner's (1994:11), postulation that feminist narrative accounts aim to articulate women's identity as a process of historical construction, by offering a consciously political perspectives on their lives. This in turn helps us understand changes in historical perspective, and social conditions. This inspired in me a desire to draw on the autobiographical essay as a primary data production strategy. The voices of the prophets of doom and scepticism regarding the use of the autobiographical essay haunted me for much of the early stages of my research. Chief among the litany of scepticisms was the perceived unfairness of asking participants to write an autobiographical essay, which they

probably did not have the skills for. Therefore, it was most heartening to receive the following correspondence from my participants reporting that they had enjoyed the process of writing the autobiographical essay:

Thembi: You know that I was quite uncomfortable about it, because I thought you were talking about things outside my discipline and expertise, but the moment you explained to me that it has something to do, with writing an autobiographical essay … that got me excited and interested about it. As a person in literature, I do read - not only novels - but also non-fiction like autobiographies and biographies, but I've never ever thought that I had a story that was worth listening to. Never. I really found other stories that I read about other people good and interesting, but throughout I never imagined … I knew I had a story, because I was a human being that ever lived, but I never thought it was worth listening to. The moment I started to write, the self-reflective nature of that process was quite interesting and challenging. I discovered that I had, in fact, a lot more in my head than I ever imagined, to the extent that after writing what I've written so far I still feel I've left out so much. So that's how interesting it has become. But basically I think it was through your explanation of what your project was about – and I found it very, very interesting and quite unique. And your proposal was very, very unique – it was something that I'd never heard anybody say she or he was doing. If it's happening in education, in your field, definitely in my discipline, it's something that I haven't quite been exposed to. (Interview).

Carol: I thought it was a very interesting topic that I haven't seen anyone tackle before. From the point of view of one's vanity it's quite nice to be asked questions about what you really think about these things. Nobody really asks you most of the time. I thought it was a very interesting topic and it came at a good time for me because I very possibly will be leaving the profession and it enabled me to look back on it and reflect on why had I gone into English studies and how had I changed? And in a way what had my last 16 years at UWC meant to me. So it came at just the right time for me and was a very valuable cathartic thing really to write this piece …. (Interview).

Jennifer: There are some features of my life that I really take for granted like the political and historical context. They were really background. Also being White is another one. I don't take it for granted now, but I took it for granted then and I remember taking it for granted. In your childhood home you imbibe a lot of things unquestioningly, like I imbibed my father's multiracial, non-White friends. It was very unusual at the time, but I wasn't aware of that; and my mother's very critical attitude to the government, although she was an armchair liberal- not an activist. Writing the essay made me look back at those kinds of things. I've never done that before. It helped me to bring to critical focus aspects of my development that I hadn't at all questioned then. Looking at it as it were

> outside of myself, which is in essence part of yourself. It is something that structures you. (Interview).

Apart from the above extracts highlighting the enjoyment and pleasure the participants experienced in writing the autobiographical essay, in further examining the extracts, the following key issues emerged:

Uniqueness of the project

The majority of the participants commented on the uniqueness of the project. While receiving such positive feedback worked wonders in appealing to my own vanity, it also enhanced my confidence and impressed upon me the necessity to pursue this line of research enquiry. I read into these statements a confirmation of the scarcity of this type of research being conducted. This came through especially in Thembi's comment: *it was something that I'd never heard anybody say she or he was doing. If it's happening in education, in your field, definitely in my discipline, it's something that I haven't quite been exposed to.* Furthermore, it reinstantiated both Long (1987), and Weiner's (1994), observation regarding the need to re-distribute the narrative field and to document the experiences of women in general, and women educators, in particular.

Engendering a sense of self-worth

Both Thembi and Carol's excerpts, point to the pleasant experience of writing the essay. Thembi, in particular, was drawn to participate in the project, primarily because of the interest she has in (auto)biographical writings. In addition, Thembi echoed a sentiment that corresponded with Buss's (1985), suggestion that attention be given to people who are literate and highly educated but whose experiences have remained obscured. At least twice in her excerpt, Thembi expresses the belief: *I never ever thought that I had a story that was worth listening to.* Implicit in Thembi's incredulity about the worthiness of her 'story' is the deeply entrenched inferior existential validity generally associated with female socialisation; the sense that their contributions, stories, experiences and opinions do not carry any significant import. While for Carol the writing of the autobiographical essay gave her a sense of pride and validation that her opinions and ideological perspectives were worthy of documentation, she expressed a similar view regarding the audience-worthiness of her story in her remark: *Nobody really asks you most of the time.* The significance of

what Thembi and Carol have to say about the narrative value of their lives, and the importance for them to speak it is poignantly captured in Cixous' (1976:50-51), exhortation:

> But first she would have to speak, start speaking, stop saying that she has nothing to say! Stop learning in school that women are created to listen, to believe, to make no discoveries. Dare to speak her piece about giving, the possibility of a giving that doesn't take away, but gives. Speak of her pleasure and, God knows, she has something to say about that …

A cathartic-self-reflective exercise

Thembi, Carol and Jennifer allude to the reflective nature of writing the autobiographical essay. For these participants the autobiographical essay afforded them the opportunity to step back and reflect critically on their personal, pedagogic and professional identities and trajectories. Carol's comment that the essay: *enabled me to look back on it and reflect on why had I gone into English studies and how had I changed? And in a way what had my last 16 years at UWC meant to me*, confirms the claim that the autobiography is necessarily a selective remembrance of the present self in relation to the self recalled at various stages of personal history. It also supports contemporary theories on identity that postulate the changing subjectivities of the social actor, where an assortment of subject positions surface within a cultural context indicating the possibility of change as subjects explore the trajectories of different social and ideological positions. The trajectory is often marked by diverse emotional and psychic ambivalences and contradictions. This is expressed in Carol's experience of the writing process as *cathartic*, which is a process of purging or purifying the emotions; of bringing repressed ideas or experiences into consciousness, thus relieving tensions.

Jennifer's critical self-reflection regarding her childhood upbringing and the deviances of her family in ignoring the racially segregated national status quo, also attests to the fact that as social actors, we are located within heterogeneous and unstable discursive practices, and that we inhabit multiple and changing identities. These identities are produced and reproduced within the fluid social relations of race, gender, ethnicity, able-bodiedness, class and sexuality and often only a conscious critical reflection brings these to the fore. Jennifer admits: *There are some features of my life that I really take for granted like … being White.*

Comparison between fiction and non-fiction.

In the following two excerpts both Jennifer and Phumzile highlight the propensity for the autobiographical essay to be read as a 'truth-script'. Coe (1984 in Roos 1994), defines standard autobiography as:

> … the writer's attempt to tell the story of her (sic) life in a manner as factually accurate, and yet as significant as possible; to reveal from the inside that personality and those motivations which her (sic) contemporaries hitherto have known ... from the outside.

The apparent authenticity of the autobiography is alluded to in the following extract from Jennifer's interview. In drawing a comparison between autobiography and fiction, Jennifer seems to hint that an autobiography has greater non-fictive qualities. Jennifer admits:

Jennifer: The only form of writing that I am interested in is autobiography because I don't have the imagination for fiction. I can't imagine the strange behaviour of somebody I've never met. I've always wanted to write an autobiography. It was interesting for me to write it. (Interview).

Phumzile offers a different view about the authenticity of autobiography. Admitting that she had to reveal more about herself than she would ordinarily do, Phumzile hints at the potentially deceptive nature of autobiography:

Phumzile: I don't like writing academic autobiographical essays. Some of my creative work is autobiographical … Some more than others and I'm fine with that … Because I've cheated a bit, it's creative and people read it differently ... And it means different things … I want to write about myself, but I don't want to be the primary text. So I'm fine referring to myself, referring to a specific experience, referring to things, but I don't want ... I often grapple, I struggle, with that being part of the central thread ... (Interview).

Phumzile's reflections on writing the autobiographical essay reiterate Maclure's (1993 in Measor & Sikes 1992), cautionary word regarding the nature of autobiographical writings. Maclure, warns that the autobiography cannot be accepted as revelations of the honest or unbiased self because the process of composition has the culpability to sometimes consciously or unconsciously emerge as fabrications, evasions, suppressions, selective remembrance or eradication. In commenting on other creative autobiographical narratives that she has written, Phumzile admits: *I've cheated a bit, it's creative and people read it differently.*

Ethical Considerations: non-unitariness of the social actor

Phumzile also draws attention to the ethical dilemma she had with writing the autobiographical essay. She says:

> **Phumzile:** … this essay has been harder because first of all I didn't decide - it was part of the parameters. It was kind of the format that was required, but also because I had to reveal so much about myself. It was not necessarily those things that I would ordinarily choose to reveal or ordinarily choose to talk about. So for instance, I could very comfortably talk about certain things about how I come to feel the way I do, how I come to have the policies that I have, but I wouldn't necessarily do that in the way that I have in this essay … the autobiographical narrative by definition … has involved more than me - more than my life. It has involved my family and so begins to say something about them too. I didn't ask their permission, and of course superficially if I said, 'Can I?' they'd say, 'Ja, don't be silly'. I think my discomfort stems a lot from … opening up other people's lives and I don't have that right to presume that that's okay. (Interview).

Phumzile's obvious discomfort is expressed in: *I often grapple, I struggle, with that being part of the central thread* '. Apart from her personal discomfort with being the 'primary text', she is sensitive to the inevitability that, by definition, autobiographical writing calls for the disclosure of the lives of others; and this subsequently is an infringement on their privacy. Her views contrast with Lejeune's (1989:4), view that the subject of the autobiography depicts the 'individual life', that it is the story of a personality. Unlike Lejeune's bourgeois individualism, Phumzile recognises that her story has a historical, social and class context. Her conception of autobiography parallels that of Ellen Kuzwayo's as depicted in the novel, *Call Me Woman* (1985), in which she writes:

> … this autobiography refuses to focus only on the author, for it draws on the unrecorded history of a whole people.

Stanley & Morgan (1993:2), also support the conceptualisation of autobiography as a sociological investigation when they write:

> autobiography means … rejecting any notion that a 'life' can be understood as a representation of a single life in isolation from the networks of interwoven biographies. In spite of the widespread assumption that autobiography is concerned with a single life, in practice it is a very rare autobiography that is not replete with the potted biographies of significant others in the subject's life.

In light of the above, Phumzile's concerns regarding the infringement on the rights of other social actors directly implicated in her life are not unfounded.

Authorial Voice, Representation and Interpretation

Phumzile highlights an important methodological issue related to the author's voice, its representation and interpretation.

> **Phumzile:** … But also because I'm an academic too and I know that there's a certain contradiction in how we treat texts, we privilege them and we have the utmost respect for them, but we also have this utmost disrespect for them. And that's fine, I don't mind my text, I don't care what you do with it ... But the thing is, once you set it out there it's not your business and I really don't think you put out other people's business. That's a very crude way of putting it, but that's basically what my quandary is. (Interview)

Repeating her concern and quandary over opening up for public consumption *other people's business*, Phumzile also draws attention to the possible tensions that may arise both for the correlation and consistency between the authorial voices, and the interpretation and representation of the data. Despite the nonchalant tone Phumzile takes in contemplating the fate of her published text, she echoes Measor & Sikes (1992:212), and Lieblich *et al's*. (1998), observations that the accuracy and consistency of the stories people tell, and the nature of the researcher's interpretation are two issues commonly addressed in discussions of qualitative research methodology. (See Chapter 7, section titled: *Talking Back to the Researcher* for further discussion on this issue).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented what I refer to as Insider and Outsider (Re)presentations. The chapter provided, in varying degrees of detail, the data that was produced for the study.

In the Preamble to this study, I noted that the body of available feminist and educational literature proliferates with the voices of Western feminist educators. The teaching and learning experiences of African feminist educators is conspicuous by its absence. In this chapter, as a redress measure, I have presented the full autobiographical

essays of the research participants as a way of making visible the lost narratives of African feminist educators, an un/under-represented voice in the feminist conversation.

In Part 2 of the thesis titled: *Exploring Webs of Personal and Professional feminist Identities*, I draw on the received theoretical and methodological insights developed in Chapters 1 and 2, as well as the empirical data (re)presented in Chapter 3, and engaging in a theory-data interplay subject the empirical evidence to critical analysis. The critical analysis is presented in Chapters 4, 5, & 6.