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## **Enacting Feminisms in Academia**

**Perumal, Juliet Christine**

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## Part 2

### Exploring Webs of Personal and Professional Feminist Identities

What's the matter with her?  
She's a Jew who likes goys  
a lesbian who likes men  
And she mixes with Blacks

Doesn't she know anything  
about loyalty to her own?  
(She's always been *dafke*)

How are we to trust her  
with our fears  
our secrets  
(our bigotry)?

She's merging too much  
Can't keep track of her  
or define her  
can't see where the hell she IS

She's stepping over the line  
you know  
stepping out of line  
getting dangerous  
OUT OF CONTROL

We can't let her be seen  
She'll poison our children's minds  
Destroy our foundations  
And sow seeds of discontent among us  
Among us  
AMONG US

*Seeds of Discontent*  
Hammar (in Kitson 1994).

Part 2 comprises four analytical chapters. It gleans from the theoretical insights developed in Chapter One to explore conceptions of feminist identity constructions. The analytical chapters draw discursively from the autobiographical essays, semi-structured interviews, and lecture observations to explore the questions: Who is the feminist teacher, how her affiliation to feminist sensibilities influence and impact her pedagogic and educative practices, and the status of her academic citizenship.

Presented in two sections, Chapter 4 titled: *The Personal as Political and Potentially Pedagogical: Exploring Public Collective Identities* combines a cursory analysis of each participant's public collective narratives. Focussing on family influences, and experiences from childhood and early adulthood, Section 1 explores the influences nationality, culture, language, sexual orientation, religion, and politics have on individual participant's identity formation. Section 2 engages in a cross-analysis of nationality, culture, language, sexual orientation, religion, and political issues that surface among the participants' autobiographical reflections. It identifies similarities and variances among their processes of socialisation, and highlights themes that are of potential pedagogic significance.

Acknowledging the fluidity of identities and ideological affiliations, Chapter 5 titled: *Identity as Ideology: Trajectories of Feminist Identity Construction* examines three discernible movements in the participants' identification and espousal to feminist discourses. These include: Movement One: Introspective Gaze: sensing and experiencing the dailiness of patriarchy; Movement Two: Outward Gaze: naming patriarchy and coming to feminist consciousness; and Movement Three: Enacting a Transformed Identity: theorising and teaching emancipation. I take the view that coming to feminist consciousness is not a linear process. Thus, I employ the three movements, which share points of intersection, as a framework for examining the processes that invariably characterise assuming feminist identity. Discussions in this chapter also include an examination of two distinct patterns in feminist identity development, viz. *pattern of change: transformation of personal world*, which postulates that in identifying with feminist ideologies some participants move from traditional conceptions of gender and sexuality to a transformed personal and political worldview, and *pattern of continuity: discovery of fit*, which postulates that some women resist gender-based discrimination from an early age, and merely assume the label 'feminist' when they encounter the discourse and find a vocabulary to articulate what they have always felt. The chapter briefly explores the influences of people, places and publications that supported the participants' trajectories of coming to feminist consciousness. It argues that identification with feminist discourses contribute towards feminist identity formation. Further, it signals the need to differentiate between identity formation and ideological identification, as important distinctions to be made when considering the pedagogical agendas of the feminist teacher.

Chapter 6, titled: *Exploring the Complexities of Feminist Teacher Identity*, investigates the nuances of feminist teacher identity in relation to the themes of difference, dialogue, and epistemologies of experience, all of which invariably converge under the overarching theme of feminist teacher authority. Acknowledging the slippery terrain of both teacher and student identity calibrations, in this chapter I draw on Gore's (1993), differentiation of three ways in which authority is generally conceived of in feminist pedagogy, viz. *authority versus nurturance*, *authority as authorship*, and *authority as power*. I use these delineations as a framework to present the discussion in three sections. In Section 1, I address the *authority versus nurturance* delineation. I argue that the notion of woman is laden with the traditional functions of care-giver and nurturer, but when brought into the feminist classroom the politics of nurturance highlights the conflicting relation between authority and nurturance. While on the one hand, institutionalised authority requires women to assume authority in educational and social spaces, traditional conceptions of women, on the other hand, render notions of authority incompatible with the role of women as nurturers and care-givers in patriarchal society. The discussion provides a possible explanation for the conflation of female teacher with mother; the consequences of operationalizing the teacher as mother personae in academia; and technologies of refusing/distancing oneself from being cast in the role of mother/sister/friend (extended family member).

In Section 2, I address the *authority as authorship* delineation. Here, I draw on Pagano's (1990), suggestion that sharing teacher-student narratives amount to heeding the call for the validation of voice and personal experience as legitimate sources of knowledge in the feminist classroom. I argue that because pedagogy produces social relations as much as knowledge, there is a need to evaluate how this affects the balance of power in feminist teaching, and to consider two pertinent questions: viz. i) is there a shared assumption that the personal is good and the impersonal bad? and ii) given that other discourses of the personal are operating in the feminist classroom, exactly which personal are we referring to when we seek to validate the epistemology of experience? I argue that the pedagogic and educative worth of both teacher and students' personal disclosures need to be subject to critical, analytical, and productive reflection to assess their value as knowledge. The discussion concludes by considering strategies the participants employ when dealing with sensitive/personal issues in the classroom.

Finally, in Section 3, I examine the delineation teacher *authority as power*. I argue for an unmasking of the inevitable pedagogic power that the feminist teacher wields in the classroom. Critiquing enclaves of feminist pedagogical scholarship that suggest divesting the class of teacher authority as a way of rendering it more democratic, I draw on Gore's (2002), proposition that we develop a theory of pedagogy and power by acknowledging that feminist

teachers work within the political power structures of universities, and are contractually bound to fulfil pedagogic and educative obligations. These obligations define limits to the extent that feminist educators can create power-free classrooms. Thus, rather than deny the existence of power in the teaching/learning encounter, I argue that we heed Gore's proposition to develop a theory of power in pedagogy, by acknowledging that:

1. pedagogy is the enactment of power relations between teacher, student and other significant pedagogic partners. By taking the view that power is fluid, pervasive and cannot be possessed, rather than construe it negatively; it would be more productive to harness its positive and enabling elements to foster social emancipation through the enterprise of education;
2. bodies are the objects of pedagogical power relations, and in pedagogy, different differences matter. This proposition suggests viewing teachers and students' bodies as material and physical sites, that possess different capacities to enact power based on differences linked to race, gender, class, language, age, etc. These differences offer a basis for enacting power performances, which impact on student-teacher relations; and confirm that race, gender, age differentials produce asymmetrical power relations, which are inescapable in the feminist classroom. Discussion then returns for a more elaborate examination of women's gendered citizenship status in academia. It draws on Marshall's (1950), tripartite conceptualization of citizenship in macro society. Marshall differentiates among civic, political, and social citizenship. Using these three notions of citizenship, I adapt them to examine the status of the participants' gendered academic citizenship within the micro context of academia. The examination explores notions of citizenship and examines the barriers these women academics have to negotiate in relation to institutional political, social and civic rights, roles and responsibilities. The discussion then explores the ways participants negotiate the barriers impacting their institutional academic identities;
3. the kind of knowledge produced in pedagogy interacts with the institutional site and the techniques of power employed there. This refers to the educative and pedagogic authority of the university and the feminist teacher. First, the feminist teacher's pedagogic authority is manifest in the selection, sequencing and assessment of teaching material that she assembles for student engagement. This dimension of teacher labour, which often remains invisible, is not arbitrary, but entail premeditated considerations and planning on the part of the teacher, and points to the professional expert knowledge she possesses that equips her to choreograph meaningful teaching/learning events. Second, the educative authority of both the institution and the feminist teacher encompass the conceptual and ideological perspectives enshrined in the university's goals, aims, and mission, vision statements which shape the corpus of knowledge produced, and disseminated; and

4. pedagogy proceeds via a limited set of specific techniques of power. This relates to the pedagogical strategies/teaching methodologies educators employ in the teaching/learning situation. Here, I examine dialogic student-centred learning, a preferred pedagogical strategy in feminist and critical discourses, and argue that despite teachers gesturing towards rendering classrooms more egalitarian; they invariably resort to normalising pedagogic strategies and ideologies. While students generally succumb to normalising pedagogic strategies, their responses to normalising ideologies bring to the surface various postures of resistance, which may include, denying, discounting, expressing dismay and/or distancing themselves from feminist and radical ideologies. Notwithstanding this, through various technologies of normalisation, feminist teachers exercise pedagogic and educative authority.

Chapter 7, which concludes the study, revisits for the purposes of reflective synthesis, salient insights that emerged from the study. The chapter is presented in two sections. Section 1, titled: *Theoretical Reflective Synthesis: insights, hindsights, oversights* synthesises issues that emerged in relation to the key theoretical lines of argument that were identified for investigation. Section 2, titled: *Methodological Reflective Synthesis: talking back to the researcher* presents the participants' comments from the respondent validation process. It also presents their reflections on the personal and professional value participation in the study had for them.

**Chapter Four**  
**The Personal as Political and Potentially Pedagogical:**  
**Exploring Public Collective Identities**

*To say 'I am not what I was' and I was not what I am locates identity on the move.  
Identity acts. It acts in relation to skin, to blood, and to heart, and the process of finding this  
relationship is itself an act of identity. But it is not final.  
The identity network, figured through the body as 'skin blood heart'  
offers a dynamic model of self-representation.  
How do I know myself and how am I known by others?  
By skin? By blood? Do I know myself by heart?*

Gilmore (1994:238).

**Introduction**

The importance of exploring teachers' biographical backgrounds emanates from the observation that teacher identity is too often treated as an unproblematic and unitary monolith (See Castells 1997). It is usually naturalized in some *a priori* way as a consequence of pedagogical skills acquired through experience. This static model of teacher representation depersonalizes the teacher as a social actor and masks the complex processes of ideological becoming that characterize the ongoing project of identity formation. As indicated in Chapter Two of this study, narrative studies into the lives of teachers have become an important research genre for exploring the rich nuances of teacher identity formation. In summarizing distinguishing principles that emerge from narrative studies of teachers' lives, Goodson (1997), highlights inter alia: acknowledging that a narrative approach ensures that teachers' backgrounds and experiences count as important in understanding their personal and pedagogic philosophies; who teaches what, why and how are significant in understanding the relationship between teachers' latent identities and cultures; and a biographical approach also sensitizes us to the relationships between the everyday realities of teaching in relation to teachers' ages, generation, social status, family backgrounds, etc.

Castells (1997:10), argues that from a sociological perspective all identities are constructed. The real issue is how, from what, by whom, and for what? He posits that the construction of identities uses building materials from history, geography, biology, productive and reproductive institutions, collective memory and personal fantasies, from power apparatuses and religious revelations. Somers & Gibson (1994), concur that public narratives, however local or grand, micro or macro, are attached to cultural and institutional

formations larger than the single individual, and include narratives of one's family, workplace, church, government, nation, etc. Individuals, social groups, and societies process all these materials, and rearrange their meaning according to social determinations and cultural projects that are rooted in their social structure, and in their space/time framework. Since narratives embed identities in time and spatial relationships this means that temporal and spatial frameworks affect activities, consciousness and belief, and are in turn, affected by them.

Calhoun (1994:28), contends that identities are often personal and political projects in which we participate, empowered to greater or lesser extents by resources of experience and ability, culture and social organisations. It is within these socio-cultural networks that we are able to identify permutations of Castells' (1997), delineation of *legitimising identity/centripetal identity* (which tends toward the authoritative norm), *resistance identity/centrifugal identity* (which may emerge through a process of conscientization in reaction against the authoritative norm), and *project identity*, which attempts transforming social structures based on personal convictions and beliefs. (See Chapter 1 for more elaborate discussion on legitimising, resistance and project identities).

In the following discussion I examine the collective public narratives of the five participants in my study. Given that Chapters 5 and 6 probe more substantially their feminist, feminist teacher, and gendered academic identities, in this chapter, I do not entertain expansive coverage of either their feminist teacher or academic identities, instead, I focus on their collective public identities in relation to the contiguous variables of family background, nationality, religion, linguistic, political, race, class and gender identity markers as a way of gaining some perspective on contextual, historical, and ideological influences that have impacted their lives. Notably, the women accord varying levels of importance to different categories of their identities, for example, for some the issue of national identity assumes more prominence than their sexual identity, and vice versa; for others their racial identity serves as the focal marker around which their autobiographical reflections pivot. Hence, in their essays they devote more attention to delineating and deconstructing the dynamics of negotiating what they deem as important identity markers. The uneven-ness in my critical commentary owes directly to the uneven-ness in their engagement with different issues.

The discussion in this chapter is presented in two sections. In Section 1: *Mini Portraits of Participants' Public Collective Identities*, I combine a cursory summary with a descriptive analysis of each participant's public narratives, identifying and commenting on issues that the participants themselves portray as being of more significance than others. Section 2: *Cross-analysis of Public Collective Identities*, presents a comparative cross-analysis of salient issues that emerge among the participants' reflections of their public

narratives, and highlights themes that are likely to carry pedagogical import in their English language classrooms that are shaped by feminist sensibilities. The individual mini-portraits and cross-analysis organically illustrate that rather than essentialise or stereotype the experiences and expectations of the women in the study in relation to sex, gender, race, religion, age, etc, their autobiographical accounts, do indeed, resist *a priori* descriptions.

## Section 1: Mini Portraits of Participants' Public Collective Identities

### *Carol's Public Collective Identities<sup>1</sup>*

From Carol's account of her early socialization there emerges a strong preoccupation with a diasporic identity. Born in South Africa to a South African mother and an English father the patriarchal supremacy of her father and forefathers was valorised, and her matrilineal heritage only received legitimation through her father's English national identity. Thus, although living in South Africa her family's ideological umbilical cord to England remained strong. A romantic nostalgia for England and Englishness produced in young Carol a fractured diasporic identity. This resulted in an almost inevitable Mind/Body split, in that while physically occupying a South African geographical spatiality, Carol's ideologies, attitudes and value system were shaped by a stereotypical prior script that portrayed the English as paragons of wholesome goodness. Entwined in this emplotment of the English was the image of a nation predisposed to romantic heroism, bravery and supremacy. Carol was taught demeaning over-generalizations and negative stereotyping of other European nations' values (or lack thereof), as is evident in her autobiographical reflection: *More solid satisfaction lay, ... 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.* The devaluing of people and phenomena perceived un-English fuelled the sovereignty and supremacy of Carol's 'English national' identity, through what Scheff (1994:280-281), calls the reification of cultural attributes in the form of 'myths, memories, symbols and values', which were also accorded features of permanence. Inheriting the script of the English as being a moral, good and supreme nation from her grandmother, mother and the print literature that was imported to South Africa on the Union-Castle liners, Carol's early socialisation gave her a sense of identity that resonates with what Gilmore (1994:67), describes as a privileged autobiographical I. A privileged autobiographical 'I obtains its

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<sup>1</sup> See Perumal (2003), *Enacting Feminisms in Multilingual Classrooms: exploring shifting versions of the autobiographical I*, for an earlier paper on identity politics.

authority by virtue of membership to social groups and through participation in their hegemonic traditions, rituals and myths.

Cox (2000), observes that, no race can develop colour prejudice merely by wishing to do so, because colour prejudice is more than ethnocentric; race prejudice must be actually backed up by a show of racial excellence, secured by military might.' Thus, for young Carol, while it was easier to claim superiority over Black South Africans whose skin colour immediately set them apart as *backward*, the real conquests that bolstered the grandeur and goodness of the English was reflected when pitted against other European nations, especially Nazi Germany, whom the English had vanquished in World War 2. Inevitably, ethnocentrism produced in Carol a belief that she was English, and filled her with a *sense of a special destiny*.

Inextricable to her sense of special identity was the *chauvinistic pride* she developed about the English language. Apart from attempting to model 'correct' BBC English, a prestigious linguistic speaking register, her denigration and devaluation of things 'un-English' is evident in the contempt she displayed towards Afrikaans, a language she describes as *guttural* and *ugly*. Carol's negative sentiments towards Afrikaans may be traced to the Anglo-Boer rivalry that shaped South African history. The tug-of-war between the English and Afrikaner settlers for political and language supremacy was marked by English/Afrikaans dominance from 1795-1948 during which time the British ruled South Africa; followed by Afrikaans/English bilingualism from 1948-1994 when the Afrikaners had the reins of government (Kamwangamalu 1998). This would explain Carol's anti-Afrikaner sentiment in the light of the idealisation of English ethnocentrism that prevailed in her home.

Carol writes: *the printed form of English affected my imagination and sense of identity even more than the oral forms of home and radio*. The storybooks on war, which fortified her belief that the English were a brave and noble nation given to winning conquests, also provided a template of the social expectations for gendered behaviour. The active man/passive woman binary is clearly evident in Carol's depiction of the bravery and heroism of English manhood, in contrast to English womanhood, which *was modest, noble, restrained, did not assert itself but waited for its true virtue to be discovered and rewarded, by marriage to an Englishman*. However, what is masked by the romantic chemistry of heterosexual relations, as portrayed in this formula, is Carol's ambivalence about the nature of female sexuality in relation to Christian theology. Imbibing the Dominican nuns' Catholic theology that women's bodies bore the seeds of shame and corruption, Carol recalls the self-doubt and shame she suffered at school due to the nagging suspicion that as a female she belonged to a lineage (dis)credited for the precipitation of Original Sin and Man's subsequent fall from divine grace. According to the nuns, her redemption lay in female career options

such as becoming a secretary, wife, mother or a nun. Against the backdrop of such a model on which to experience and theorise her destiny, it is not surprising that Carol reproduces the typical landscape of a good woman, and opted for the secretary, marriage and child bearing and rearing plot, which after a while left her feeling unfulfilled and in search of more challenging life experiences.

Over the years, however, her conceptions of her own identity, as well as that of others has been re-constructed, and she has turned a transgressive back on what may best be described as an auto-mythographical (rather than an autobiographical self). Her automythographical self existed in relation to others and their perceptions and expectations of her. Carol's initial dis-identification with her South African identity, and her attachment to English nationhood, can be seen through Scheff's (1994:280), distinction between love and infatuation. In this regard, he writes:

To understand the treatment of attachment of members to an imagined community, it is necessary to make the distinction between two kinds of attachment, love and infatuation. These affects appear similar only on the surface. On close examination, they are quite distinct. Infatuation rejects actual knowledge of the loved ones; it is based instead on *idealisation*. Love, on the other hand, requires actual knowledge of the other, who is loved for both her or his good and bad traits. It might appear paradoxical that the objects for all these nationalist attachments are 'imagined'- anonymous, faceless fellow tagalongs. ... infatuation is usually a crucial signal of pathologies in relationships and emotional expression. It signals a kind of alienation, called engulfment that is, giving up important parts of the self to remain loyal to the relationship or group.

The diasporic fragmentation that Carol experienced is partly the manifestation of her struggle to identify with the constructed realities of others, which she had identified as her own. In this regard, Miller (1985:491), postulates that: '... to resist the very form that separates self from self, as well as self from other is to participate in action that is critical and transforming in nature'. This is especially true for Carol. Her exposure to academic discourse and her mounting frustration at the limitations of her experience and expectations exposed her to new notions of citizenship and she had to reconsider her self-definition and identity formulation. Hence, in her twenties she comes to the realization that: ... *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'*. Her transgressive/ converted self accepts her classificatory status as South African. This partially resolves her boundary/borderland identity, which experienced the strains of ontological in-between-ness by virtue of being a second generation, diasporic subject in South Africa. Her modified

consciousness prompted her to review not only her conceptions of citizenship, but also of womanhood, and the linguistic purity, pride and arrogance engendered by the English language.

As a teacher of English, Carol also underwent an important ideological change in her relationship to the English language. From boasting a *chauvinistic pride* and preoccupation with 'correct' English, she was alerted to criticisms that challenged 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. comprised part of the oppressive paraphernalia of British imperialism*. Teaching at UWC, a previously disadvantaged tertiary institution that comprises predominantly non-English, disprivileged Black students sensitizes her to varieties of Englishes, as well as sexualities (masculinities, femininities) that arise from different cultural and religious affiliations.

In examining the tensions and contradictions that Carol describes experiencing in her childhood and early adulthood, she appears to have had to negotiate a Mind/Body fracture in at least three distinct ways, as it applied to her national, gender and social class identities. The first tier of Mind/Body split resulted from her political, social and ideological dislocation. This comes through in her recollection that as a child she was forbidden to play with Coloured and native children. The second fracture is related to her female sexuality. Her Body learned to react adversely to any proximity to Blacks. Grappling with the shame and guilt that the Dominican nuns ingrained in her about the essential corruptness of human nature and the association of the female body with sexual sin provided a counterbalance to the superiority and special destiny engendered by the notion of English nationhood. This Mind/Body tension is a clear explication of a fragmented and contradictory self, one that privileged, authorised and legitimated Carol's national identity while simultaneously, deauthorising, disprivileging and devaluing her gendered subjectivity. It highlights the incongruence between her internal and external psychosocial landscape.

The third fracture that undermined her sense of special destiny was her working class economic status, which carried the shame and embarrassment associated with a lack of material wealth, eliticism and sophistication. This was also deeply engrained in her psyche to the extent that years later as a first generation university student she doubted her ability to socialize and succeed in an academic domain she believed comprised *a superior species of human beings*, who possessed superior verbal skills, were more articulate, and whose gestures and poise were associated with more prestigious social capital.

For most of Carol's early socialisation we see her displaying features consonant with Castells' description of a legitimising identity, which succumbs to the authoritative norm prevalent in her home in regards to conceptions of her national, racial, gender and religious

identities. The first hints of a resistance identity become apparent when she befriends Jenny, a feminist. In her autobiographical essay, Carol foregrounds thematic emplotments that foreground her English second-generation diasporic identity. Solidly linked to this emplotment are the meta-narratives of racial, cultural and linguistic supremacy, which existed in contrast to her socially disprivileged economic and gender identity categories.

### *Vijay's Public Collective Identities*

In her autobiographical essay, Vijay foregrounds the various social influences that impacted her third-generation, South African, diasporic identity. She reflects at length on the rich role of story telling in her upbringing. There is a clear sense of it being a family practice, and she attributes her language development to the various inputs from her extended family. Of particular significance, as with the other participants in the study, was the insistence on correct and clear language usage, evident in her recollection: *Mum corrected our language with great clarity and patience*. She surmises that her positive attitude towards multilingualism may be traced to the story, *Mafutha and the Lion*, which her dad narrated with much animation, and which contained isiZulu words and choruses. Living in mixed race Seaview also exposed her to language diversity at an early age.

As a third generation South African Vijay confirms Chisanga & Kamwangamalu's (1997), and Chick & Wade's (1997), studies which report that English in South Africa enjoys a special status as a first language for some younger generation South African Indians.<sup>2</sup> Hailing from an English medium home, as with her attitude towards religious rituals in Hinduism, there is no hint of linguistic sentimentality or the need for concerted efforts to preserve her fading mother tongue, Telugu. As an adolescent, rather than heed her mother's injunctions to learn Telugu (a variant of Indian vernacular languages), Vijay saw greater utility in learning isiZulu, the predominant regional language in KwaZulu Natal. At university she studied French in order to give her access into African literature produced in Francophone Africa.

In her reflections on Indian cultural phenomena, Vijay pays homage to her grandfather who was a carpenter and the only grandparent that spoke English. His public cultural contribution included advancing his knowledge of Telegu Sanskrit and various religious texts, in the margins of which he wrote extensive commentaries. He was also involved in the founding of the Andra Maha Sabha to propagate the Telegu language and Hindu culture. While acknowledging the richness of Indian spiritual literature, yoga and

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<sup>2</sup> According to these writers, this is also the case with a segment of the White population (and is a non-native language for others, e.g. the Black population).

meditation, it seems that Vijay, like her grandfather and parents, is/was not shackled to a 'Root' mentality, which she observes, often prevails among diasporic peoples. She is thus, critical of Indian ethnocentrism, which in her estimation *is often tied up in clock bound observances and rituals*, and which she diagnoses as symptomatic of cultural and ethnocentric insecurities that diasporic peoples suffer. Vijay regards cultural rituals and observances as superficialities, especially when they are subscribed to or practiced in an uncritical and uninformed way. Her critique supports at least two significant debates informing discourses on critical multiculturalism. The first, relates to the tendency for ethnicist discourses to impose stereotypical notions of 'common cultural need' upon ethnic groups despite their diverse social aspirations and interests. Such discourses often fail to address the relationship between difference and the social relations in which they may be inscribed. This means that a group, like South African Indians, who constitute a numeric minority, who are ethnically and culturally different are assumed to be internally homogeneous. This is patently not the case, as is evident in Vijay's life experiences and choices. Secondly, there is a tendency within certain enclaves of multicultural discourses to romanticise culture in an uncritical and unproblematic way. Vijay distances herself from such discourses, by adopting a stance that acknowledges the perceived merits and demerits of Indian cultural capital. Instead, we read in Vijay's essay her decision to foreground and celebrate her national identity as opposed to her ethnic identity. She chooses to identify herself as Black, instead of South African Indian. In commenting on the potential for national identity to trump all other identities, Calhoun (1994:323), observes that nationalism often emerges as the primary form of identity and the basic medium through which people express their aspirations for a better life. Within the context of Apartheid South Africa, the use of the category 'Black', was and continues to be determined not so much by the nature of the referent, as by its semiotic function within different discourses. Thus, the 'Black' in Black Power ideology refers specifically to the historical experience of disenfranchised South Africans, and was designed to create a positive political and cultural identity amongst Blacks (African, Coloured and Indian). It is employed in a political sense when discussing issues of racism. Rassool (1995:38), confirms that:

Blackness thus, features as a signifier of social 'otherness' rather than as a racially descriptive term; it represents a diversity of social experiences within the margins of society. The term 'black' demarcates those who are not white and who do not belong socially; it describes the position of those looking in on the real world of power within metropolitan society-and those who are allowed to participate only with permission.

As many demonstrations and campaigns show, the concept of Black was mobilised as part of a set of constitutive ideas and principles to promote collective action. This is what Hall (2000:148-149), calls *imaginary political re-identification*, and *re-territorialization*, without which it is difficult to construct a counter-politics. Hall admits to not knowing of any group or category of people of the margins, who have not mobilised themselves, socially, culturally, economically, and/or politically in the last 20-25 years in order to resist their exclusion, and their marginalisation. Thus, Vijay's political re-identification illustrates a response to calls for principled and strategic coalitions. Arguing for strategic essentialism in identities, Brah (2000: 444-445), writes:

In their need to create new political identities, dominated groups will often appeal to bonds of common [political and], cultural experience in order to mobilise their constituency. In so doing they may assert a seemingly essentialist difference. ... the 'risk' of essentialism may be worth taking if framed from the vantage point of a dominated subject position. This will remain problematic if a challenge to one form of oppression leads to the reinforcement of another. It may be over-ambitious, but it is imperative that we do not compartmentalise oppressions, but instead formulate strategies for challenging all oppressions on the basis of an understanding of how they interconnect and articulate.

While acknowledging the value in risking strategic essentialism and coalitions, it is important to remember that Black activism as a social movement aimed to generate solidarity; thus it is necessary not to assume that all members of the coalition are internally homogeneous. This means that the whole social being of South African Blacks, for example are not constituted only by the experience of racism, they have many other identifications based on, for example, religion, language, and political affiliation, and importantly socio-economic distinctions. Thus, a significant distinction to be made in Vijay's identification as Black South African is her access to various socio-economic privileges that the vast majority of Black South Africans did not/still do not enjoy. Brah (ibid.), highlights the distribution of resources as an important area of contention which reconfigures the boundaries of a 'community' that mobilizes around political identities. The substance of this distinction and contention becomes evident when Vijay's political consciousness is seen within the matrix of her development of race and class-consciousness.

Vijay's development of race and class-consciousness is inextricably linked to the political climate prevalent in Apartheid South Africa. Like most people disenfranchised by the Apartheid regime, her left-wing political slant illustrates the confluence of time and place on identity narratives. Her political consciousness and left-wing leanings are attributed to issues that emerge from spatial/geographical issues. Her racial consciousness grew directly out of experiencing the effects of, for example, The Group Areas Act, Forced Land Evictions, and

Land Resettlements, all of which constituted artillery the Apartheid regime deployed to racially divide and rule South Africans. It also served to engender fear, suspicion and remorse among the different race groups. This is captured in Vijay's recollection of her mum's *impassioned resentment and fear* of the Group Areas inspectors. Despite the racial segregation, she was exposed early in life to racial integration and interaction in mixed-race Seaview, and her parents insisted that they treat everyone with respect. This shaped her political attitudes which she articulated in speeches she delivered at school regarding the politics of informal settlements, (such as Tin Town), and also when she argued for the inclusion of African literature in the curriculum.

Enmeshed in the dynamics that shaped her political consciousness is the issue of socio-economic class. Her parents constantly reminded them about the middle class privileges they enjoyed in comparison to their immediate and extended families that were working class. This value system which was encapsulated in the refrain, *You kids must be grateful for the food/clothes/books you get, how many children in this country are so lucky*, together with witnessing the poverty that her primary school classmates endured, accentuated her sensitivity to class-consciousness. While often it is race and gender that serve as more overt markers of identity positionality, Vijay was able to read class deprivation from the material want of her classmates who arrived at school without sandwiches or shoes. In the same way that she admits to lacking a vocabulary to articulate her mum's gender discrimination toward her, she also only acquired a vocabulary regarding race and class discrimination later, at university. Here, she was able to relate the lessons her parents taught her about material inequity to the theoretical insights forwarded in the banned literature by theorists such as Marx, Merleau-Ponty, and Bourdieu. This theoretical framing of her class-consciousness may be compared to the trajectory discernible in the development of her feminist consciousness: a move from personal to broader social consciousness. (See Chapter 5: *Identity as Ideology: Trajectories of Feminist Identity Construction*).

Vijay recalls feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable about being middle class. In what Mennell (1994:182), refers to as *group shame and group charisma*, Vijay reflects on the ambivalences she felt regarding her middle class upbringing. She expresses what Mennell (ibid), refers to as *group shame* because schoolteachers meted out preferential treatment to children from middle class homes. This engendered in her a critical attitude about *middle class privileges, power, arrogance, and stupidity*. Although Vijay is critical of her middle class status, she is, however, aware of the benefits and *group charisma* she enjoyed as it related to accessing reading material, and the expectation of a university education.

She talks at length about the centrality of work in her life, and attributes it to the ethic,

and respect for hard work that prevailed in her immediate and extended family. In tracing the nature of female labour in her family we note that her great granny arrived from India as an indentured labourer to work the sugar cane fields, and later became involved in midwifery. Her granny did not pursue a career, but had a full-time job. Vijay's mum was the first female in her family to attend high school, and to eventually graduate from college as a qualified teacher. In understanding the centrality of work in the lives of immigrant populations, Mirza's (1995), study highlights three features. First, it reports that the respect and ethic for hard work is grounded in a fundamental belief among immigrant populations that no matter who you are, if you work hard and well at school you should be rewarded in the world of work. Thus, like the second-generation Caribbean women in Mirza's study, Vijay and her mum imbibed a strong work ethic by showing a deep commitment to education, and the meritocratic ideal of achieving through hard work.

Second, Mirza points out that it is ironic that the desire for personal academic achievement and fulfilment is an educational motivation Black females pursue within educational structures that oppress them. However, instead of being demotivated and demoralised they use it strategically to aspire to academic excellence. In this regard, Vijay admits that her twelve years of schooling seemed like a prison term she endured with great patience. Even her university education did not adequately redress social inequalities; however, despite the inequality of educational opportunities and facilities in Apartheid South Africa, her career success is a reflection of her motivation and educational achievements.

Finally, as with the young women in Mirza's study (ibid.), who did not deem their male relationships, whether within or outside the institution of marriage as inhibiting to their right to work, there is also no hint that Vijay had to negotiate the disapproval of the men in her family regarding her decision to work outside the home. Vijay's motivation for educational pursuit is expressed in her expectation to work just as her mother, aunts and grandmothers had done for generations before. However, despite the respect that she feels about the industry of the women in her family, in the following extract she admits:

**Vijay:** ... the struggles of great granny, mum and other working women 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. (Autobiographical Essay: paragraph 6).

A significant theme emerging from the above extract relates to sexuality, intellectuality, and gendered role fulfilment. In the first instance, Vijay's assessment of the consequences of pursuing two careers: one in the private sphere of the home, and the other in the public arena, is summed in her association of such a lifestyle with the words: *struggles*, *stress*, and *violence*. Rather than voluntarily subject herself to being torn between these two work sites she succumbs to her passion for intellectual stimulation in resistance to patriarchal logic and expectations which extol as pinnacle women's destiny to wifedom and mothering. Within this logic the perceived incompatibility between women's intellectuality and sexuality, which eventuates in the Mind/Body dichotomy, essentialises women's association with the body and biological reproduction. Vijay's extract raises several tensions that have assailed women as they wrestle with the ambiguities that surround conceptions of femininity, feminine domesticity and intellectuality. First, this resonates with themes that Middleton (1993), explored in her study in which she discussed the tension women feel about pursuing educational meritocracy at the risk of being perceived asexual. In deciding not to manage a family, but pursue a career outside the home, Vijay risks inviting aspersions that generally accompany deviations from social prescriptions and expectations regarding gender, sexuality and femininity.

Second, in pursuing her *passion for independent thinking, reading, writing, teaching and problem solving*, which she describes as *immensely satisfying*, has meant that she has had to negotiate other racial/ethnic stereotypes. This is evident in an incident that Vijay experienced at an academic conference. She recalls:

**Vijay:** ... 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. (Autobiographical Essay: paragraph 10).

Indulging her passion for independent thinking, we get a glimpse of the possible reaction it elicits from *aggressive professors*, among others, who hold the stereotypical image of 'Asian' women as 'submissive, subservient, ready-to-please and easy-to-get along with,' which according to Rassool (1995:24), perhaps still remains the most captivating and enduring image of 'Oriental' femininity. In standing her ideological and interpretative ground Vijay

subverts the stereotypical construction of a *misguided Indian woman*, by not acquiescing to the forceful arguments of the professor.

An overview of Vijay's essay, suggests that there are early indications of her displaying characteristics consistent with a resistance identity that reacts against the authoritative norm. There are several incidents in her socialisation that see her questioning and defying scripted cultural and political expectations. These include her refusal as a teenager to learn her fading mother tongue, Telegu; her non-participation in Hindu religious rituals and observances; her alignment and identification with her father and 'male-oriented' social activities. In addition, her resistance identity is coupled with a strong dis-identification from racial and ethnic expectations, and operates antagonistically against the identity and identifications set up in dominant social scripts.

### *Jennifer's Collective Public Identities*

In Jennifer's reflection of the influences that shaped her early socialisation, she accords a significant amount of attention to her language development and the psycho-social dynamics of speaking more than one language. Her narrative provides insights into her sexual orientation, her family's working class status, her response to religious influences and her political stance, which was shaped in Apartheid South Africa.

Jennifer's bilingual (English/Afrikaans), language development, which followed the structure of her parents' home languages convinced her of the value and scope language diversity plays in cognitive development, flexibility and freedom of expression, with monolingualism producing an opposite effect. It is interesting, however, that she only makes reference to English and Afrikaans; no mention is made of her father's Celtic language influence. This is perhaps because in South Africa, the Celtic language does not enjoy widespread use, and has for the most part fallen into disuse.<sup>3</sup> Having inherited a love for literature, an interest in the physical world, and mathematics, Jennifer credits her father for her intellectual development. She also acknowledges his role in her language learning and his preoccupation with correct pronunciation. Jennifer describes in emotive tones her relationship to the English language when she writes: *I love my own language (English) with a deep and abiding passion*. Words like, *love*, *abiding passion*, coupled with the phrase, *my own language* not only point to a personal possessive relationship, but also to a deep connection to the English language. Her love and abiding passion for the English language foregrounds the difference between having an intrinsic motivation to acquiring a language as opposed to having an extrinsic motivation for acquiring and using a language. This carries

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<sup>3</sup> This has implications for other non-South African languages within the current liberal South African language landscape.

pedagogical import in the light of the overwhelming student responses indicating the instrumental motivation that directs their decision to study English. (See Chapter 3: *Profile of Research Participants*). Jennifer attributes the success in the globalisation of English to its flexibility in accommodating words from other languages, for example, French, Latin, Afrikaans, etc. In addition, it has the most erratic spelling and pronunciations of Englishes that exist (for example, British English, American English, South African English), all pointing to the existence of a variety of Englishes, thus rendering purist notions of Standard English as poorly conceived.

Her acquisition of French, at university allowed her *an entry point into a European mindset*, confirming that language as a social construct transmits the cultural and social capital of a country and its people by acting as a conduit for its 'mindset', values, and norms. While acknowledging the cognitive and creative value of being conversant in a repertoire of languages, Jennifer comments that the lack of linguistic fluency and deviation in pronunciation by non-native speakers of a language is often conflated with cognitive deficiency, which invariably breeds psycho-linguistic inferiority in speakers. This is evident in her acknowledgement:

**Jennifer:** 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. (Autobiographical Essay: paragraph 5).

Her use of the word, *battle* captures the struggle and added effort she needs to make in order to communicate in a language that she is not a native speaker of. This again, suggests the need for pedagogic sensitivity in teaching demographically diverse classes. As a voracious reader, she has a love for all kinds of literature, and dismisses the distinction in English literature between high culture and low culture. She is, however, particularly critical of the formative narratives she was weaned on, which portray distressed fairy princesses in need of rescue by charming princes. Apart from critiquing the myth that a woman's well-being can only be guaranteed by a man, the privileged socio-economic depiction of fairytale princesses was at odds with the harsh reality of her own working-class upbringing.

She describes her childhood household as operating along conventional gendered division of labour; with her mother associated with traditional women's activities of nurturing and maintenance, and her father with intellectual and economic concerns. As a way of introducing her critique of compulsory heteronormativity, Jennifer specifies that she was

raised by two parents comprising one of each sex. By drawing attention to this 'standard model' of marriage coupling, parenting, family structure, gender role and status, she critiques the taken-for-granted normalcy of heterosexual relations, expressing hope that this model of the family is losing its grip. This is significant in the light of her coming to terms with her own lesbian sexual orientation later in life. In critiquing the heteronormativity of marriage coupling, and the belief that procreation within such a union guarantees heterosexual children, Stein (1997:170), points out that:

Freud's notion that the family provides the bedrock upon which all individual desire is patterned is no longer applicable, if it ever was; a complex, diffuse array of sexual discourses shape individual subjectivity and sexual identity.

Grappling with the dynamics of *aetiology*, which is the study of the explanation or causes of something, Jennifer is uncertain about what in her socialisation and personal relationships would have influenced her lesbian sexual orientation/predilection to lesbianism. The absence of an explanation for the cause and effect does not, however, detract from the denial, secrecy, and discomfort she endured during the many decades that she deferred an understanding and acceptance of her sexual orientation. According to Sedgwick (1990 in Stein 1997:167), such secrecy constitutes a medium of domination that is not reducible to other forms, because it remained largely, until recently in social history, in denial and obfuscation. Providing some insight into the private pain her sexual orientation wrought upon her as an adolescent girl, Jennifer describes her *utter bewilderment* and discomfort with boys when she writes:

**Jennifer:** 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. (Autobiographical Essay: paragraph 10).

In this extract, Jennifer critiques the bigotry of her school education and social practices that, on the one hand, pressured girls to dress in sexually provocative attire, while simultaneously expecting chastity of them. The rituals girls subject themselves to in order to be considered attractive and desirable to boys, when coupled with the *social understanding that entailed girls being ordered* for Saturday night intimacy with boys, reduced to a transactional nature the social engineering of intimate heterosexual relations. Thus, girls became tantamount to consumable commodities. Jennifer's discomfort with this practice is further accentuated in the phrases *thrown together in a darkened room* and *seemed utterly barbaric to me*, which draws attention to her struggle to conform to compulsory heterosexuality. She describes herself as being *shy* and feeling *uncomfortable under the scrutiny of her age-mates of the opposite sex*, and this testifies to her sense of not belonging to this contrived heterosexual community. Given that homosexuality ran counter to the norms and morés of the conventional Christian social circle that she belonged to, forced her into assimilation in the same way as she was forced into participating in the Saturday night heterosexual social circle. Her sense of belonging within these social enclaves can best be described as the Outsider within. Jennifer's identification with Tibetan Buddhism may be attributed to the fact that it is consistent with central principles in feminist discourses, which are also concerned with non-discriminatory gender relations, promotion of human equality and respect for different lifestyles.

In addition, society's intolerance for sexual deviation, and the subsequent punishment and ostracization that is meted out to those who dare to defy social norms, are captured in the story she tells of her classmate who was expelled from school for engaging in a lesbian relationship. Jennifer confides that such denials and judgements do immeasurable harm to emerging gender identities, and gives credence to Lemert's (1994:111), description of what it means to belong to the weak-we position, which is of necessity overtly political. As in Jennifer's case, experiences of the weak-we are formed in a series of prohibitions, punishments, taboos, and penalties. In explicating the absence of the socially mandated positionality of the weak-we, Lemert (ibid.), contends that:

The Self is presumed to be a moral zero-signifier- that one type of individual who is least consciously responsible for her identity. Zero-signifiers cannot be openly political. They must, therefore, forget who they are. ... founded on a code of silence which entails a double prohibition: first against recognition of one's own complexity and second, against the public legitimacy of any weak-we identity.

Apart from young Jennifer feeling conflicted about the secrecy of her lesbian sexual orientation, she also had to negotiate her lower-middle class status and the sense of

economic inferiority her mother, in particular, felt in relation to the affluent Pietermaritzburg society in which they lived. Their disprivileged financial status meant that she was unable to dress in the height of adolescent fashion. Jennifer elaborates on the geographical and symbolic significance of the metaphor: *our home was always on the wrong side of the tracks*. The literal railroad that ran through the town served as a geographical boundary marker that divided the affluent areas of Pietermaritzburg from the poorer areas (a kind of class-based Apartheid among White South Africans). Symbolically, the railroad also denoted the differences between the liberal political views of her parents, and that of conservative Pietermaritzburg.

The 1960's and 1970's were significant political times in South Africa and marked the height of Apartheid oppression for Blacks. It was also a period of banned, and covert political activism against the country's divisive racial laws. Jennifer projects her family as non-affluent liberals who were disrespectful of Apartheid. It may also be assumed that her Irish-born father's sensitivity and vehemence towards racial oppression, emanated from the similarities between the political and economic plight of the Irish. Brah (2000:436), draws parallels between the social experience of Irish and Black groups in Britain. She does, however, point out that even though the two groups may share a similar class location, as White Europeans, the great majority of Irish people are placed in a dominant position *vis-a-vis* Black people in and through the discourses of anti-Black racism.

Jennifer reflects on the political liberalism of her parents that saw her befriending and respecting those from different race groups-something that was uncommon in the political and geographical space that she grew up in. While Apartheid was designed to alienate Blacks from Whites, Jennifer describes herself as also feeling alienated because of her identification with oppressed Blacks. In this regard, Scheff (1994:278), ponders:

... why it is that one might feel more in common with people that one doesn't actually know than with one's neighbours, that is with persons one does know. ... under what conditions does one feel closer to unknown than known persons? ... what is the nature of community, and what are its variant manifestations? ... what type of real community might lead some of its members to choose identification with a different community over the one in which they actually live? What types of social relationships would we expect to find in each?

The questions that Scheff poses are significant not only in relation to belonging to residential communities, but also in relation to membership in ideological communities. In assessing her family's alignment with ideologically and politically liberal communities, Jennifer distinguishes between an espoused political activism (which operates at a theoretical level) versus a practiced, enacted political activism that confronts and challenges the discriminatory status

quo. The depiction of her parents as *armchair liberals*, coupled with her own sense of not doing enough to eradicate the disenfranchisement of the racially oppressed, seem to suggest that in Jennifer's conceptualisation there existed hierarchies in the form and nature of activism against Apartheid. There is a sense that 'active protest' probably in the form of political marches, and toyi-toying, signified a more visible protest, and a hierarchically more potent/important onslaught against Apartheid. Despite her parents defying the prevailing social norms by associating with Blacks, this in Jennifer's estimation did not constitute significant political protest, and she seems to accord less importance to it. Even her own involvement in the production of a radical activist student newspaper is conferred marginal status within her hierarchy of protest activities. The fact that she *belonged* to activist student groups indicates her sense of community and solidarity with the racially oppressed, this however, does not eradicate the sense of collective guilt that she felt. Instead, she confides feeling hamstrung and silenced. While it can be argued that her involvement in the production of radical student newspapers may be seen as a channel that broke the silence and voiced her vision for social justice, evidently Jennifer feels that her non-participation in 'active protest' diluted her contribution to the Apartheid struggle.

From Jennifer's account there emerges a discernible sense that she experienced a double social removal, one linked to compulsory heterosexuality, and the other against Apartheid policies that were meant to privilege her. Her experience suggests that in South Africa, the struggle against racial oppression took on greater social and personal agency in comparison to gender and sexual oppression. Jennifer had the courage to react subversively to racial oppression much earlier than she confronted the grip of heteronormativity on her life. Thus, features of a legitimatising identity that are more consistent with the authoritative norm are discernible in her early enactment of her sexual script, whereas features of a resistance identity characterise her response to South African politics.

### *Phumzile's Collective Public Identities*

In her autobiographical essay, Phumzile devotes much attention to the geographical and historical contexts that she occupied at different times in her life. She commences her essay by providing an impulse of the significance of Alice, a town in the Eastern Cape, and more specifically the University of Fort Hare, which she describes as being *imbued with a history of educating some of Africa's most perceptive leaders of the post-independent moment*, and more significantly, producing Black intellectuals who were instrumental in agitating for an end to Apartheid. It is within the geographical space of the University of Fort Hare, where her

father taught that she was exposed to childhood experiences that both connected and disconnected her from that of the majority of Blacks living under the Apartheid regime. Her disconnection from the experiences of the majority of Black South Africans, came in the form of the 'legal' possibility of living among neighbours who were *at different times Sibanyoni, Khoali, Naidoo and Cloete*. These surnames signify the multiracial demographics of academic and administrative staff that lived together on the University of Fort Hare campus. In the light of the Group Areas Act, which segregated South Africans on the basis of 'racial' difference, this was an unusual arrangement, which elsewhere in the country was outlawed at the time. This demographic diversity meant that Phumzile was surrounded by differences in language, cultures, race, etc. Her connection to other Blacks in South Africa came in the form of the ongoing political activisms on the campus, an experience that would have been similar to the realities of Blacks in the wider South African context. Her connection to the political activism assumed both symbolic, and real manifestations: the symbolic emerged in the form of the visuals of *Black fists painted on the ... two male residences on Fort Hare's east campus*; the real through the auditory as in the *shouts of Black power*, and the *adult conversations* [which] *addressed the apartheid policies of the day*; and the tactile through the: *stinging sensation of teargas* which was often used in police raids. This political climate of fear and intimidation for the Apartheid police and their unwanted and unwelcome presence on the campus also connected Phumzile to the Apartheid atrocities and realities that those opposed to the regime experienced elsewhere in the country. It was against this political backdrop that Phumzile learnt the differentiation between voiced and willed silence; between that which should/could be verbalised and that which needed to remain silent. The palpable political energy that marked her childhood is perhaps best reflected in her recollection that one of the first English phrases she learnt as a child was the revolutionary slogan: *Black Power*.

Having lived in a demographically diverse environment meant that she was exposed early in life to multilingualism and multiculturalism. While pointing out that such difference and diversity was a taken-for-granted reality during her childhood, she only became aware of the tensions that surround it as an unproblematic category later in life. She is thus, critical of multicultural proponents who advance theories of colour blindness because in purporting to be blind to race, they misrecognise that social identity is a complex configuration of gender, class, sexuality, etc. (See Vally & Dalamba 1999).

In reflecting on her religious identity, Phumzile mentions that although she never attended Catholic school, her family were Catholic several generations on both sides. When she did attend Catholic mass, which was conducted in English, it was the use of language that alerted to patriarchal bias, as it manifested itself in the prominent and predominant roles

men occupied in Christian theology. Thus, it was religious discourse that alerted her to the role of languages in servicing patriarchy.

In commenting on the dialectics of nationality, race, and class Phumzile points out: *my privilege was never of the sort that I was sheltered from the realities which accompanied being born Black in apartheid South Africa ... 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.* Here she makes a clear distinction between socio-economic privilege that does not necessarily redeem or protect one from political disenfranchisement. In describing her socio-economic status, Phumzile draws attention to the heterogeneity that characterises all races, Blacks included. There are several instances throughout her essay when she refers to the socio-economic privileges she enjoyed. These include: *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.* The difference as regards her socialisation is a rare and privileged experience of being Black, and is attributed to the fact that her family was middle-class with both her parents being professional. This conferred upon her a socio-economic privilege not consistent with the cultural, economic, social and symbolic capital most South African Blacks experienced. It thus, challenges the essentialist Black identity portrayed in much art and culture which stereotypically depict, as universal, urban working-class township experience.

In defiance of Apartheid educational policy which stipulated Black children should only commence school at the age of eight, Phumzile recalls that she started school at the age of five. Opting for an earlier than usual start to her schooling was met with pride and enthusiasm by her parents who actively encouraged and supported her education. Her father marvelled at her pronunciation of English words as she read to him from the Sunday newspaper, and her mother engendered in her a love for reading by buying her books from the Lovedale Press and College bookstore. As with the other participants in the study, her socio economic status endowed upon her the privilege of education, however, unlike the other participants, Phumzile's recollections of her schooling is saturated with descriptors that highlight the benefits and esteem that accrued from her privileged socio-economic positionality. For example, she writes:

**Phumzile:** I went to Inanda Seminary, a prestigious Black girls' private school. Inanda had history, prestige, authority and education of the highest quality. The tradition was that 'Inanda girls shine': upon leaving the school Inanda girls were to excel in all fields. On Inanda day old girls ... 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.

... and [it was] the same at All Saints where the fees were exceptionally high.  
(Autobiographical Essay: paragraphs 12 & 15).

The socio-economic privilege and pursuit of academic excellence that Phumzile testifies about is indeed a rare distinction, especially in the context of Apartheid South Africa where political agendas aimed to keep Blacks in servitude and confine them to being hewers of wood and bearers of water. However, despite the prestige and privilege that characterised her schooling she did not escape curricula that reproduced discriminatory gender and sexual stereotyping. First, curricula options that differentiated subjects according to gender meant that boys were offered 'masculine' specific subjects like, gardening and girls were confined to 'feminine' specific subjects, like sewing. Second, there emerged suggestions that elevated boys' mental prowess over the girls, this in the face that the overachievers comprised mixed genders. Third, the social prescriptions that endorsed compulsory heterosexuality rendered ambivalent and complex sexual relations between males and females as is evident in Phumzile's recollection: *Inanda doctrine was also extremely moralistic and we were warned ad nauseam about boys as the enemy out to get us intoxicated and pregnant*. Phumzile critiques the variant of femininity that she as a Black South African teenager was expected to pattern her life upon. She writes: ... *I am hesitant to romanticise my time there especially given the Victorian morals which dominated notions of gender decorum*. In a footnote Phumzile gestures to the possible origins of the Victorian morals that the school modelled itself upon. She refers to historical fragments attesting that Inanda Seminary was apparently founded by a Victorian pioneer, with the aim of providing suitably educated wives for *outstanding Black men that Adams and Ohlange Colleges would produce in colonial times*. The sense emerging from this social educational arrangement suggests that the decision to educate/prepare females to qualify as suitable wives to educated Black men was a decision not made by the school girls themselves, but by the school management. This is in contrast to Middleton's (1993), research in which the 'girls' in her study report to voluntarily pursuing educational meritocracy in the face of ideological climates that associated intellectuality with asexuality. Unlike the girls at Inanda Seminary, Middleton's participants risked being caricatured as asexual in the hope that educational meritocracy would render them attractive and viable candidates as wives to brilliant professional men.

An allied issue emerging from the pursuit of academic excellence is related to the ambivalences and contradictions this engendered in relation to conceptions of female gender appropriate behaviour. Phumzile reflects on this in the following extracts:

**Phumzile:** ... 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.

... [Inanda Seminary] was regimented in [the] establishment's effort to turn 'unruly' teenagers into ladies.

... When I left Inanda for good ... I no longer wanted any connection to a school I was experiencing as suffocating. Some of the aspects I deal with ... were undoubtedly patriarchal. (Autobiographical Essay: paragraphs 13, 12 & 14).

Phumzile praises Inanda Seminary for inculcating in her the quest for academic excellence and independent thinking, however, as is supported in Unterhalter's (1999), study she alludes to the stark tension between developing intellectual astuteness and independence among girls, while simultaneously circumscribing codes of feminine/ladylike behaviour that conform to patriarchal docility and subservience. It is this contradiction that Phumzile describes as *suffocating*. Of equal importance is that despite the patriarchal climate that pervaded the school, it produced many of the most outspoken public feminists in South Africa. This foregrounds the distinction between school socialisation theories of reproduction, and production (See Weiler 1988). Reproduction theories posit a determinate correspondence between what schools teach and what students learn, and production theories credit teachers and students with agentic capacities to challenge, change, and produce new knowledges. By not reproducing school education, which taught them to conform to patriarchy, these Inanda graduates have come to identify with feminist/woman struggles, and in doing so confirm that knowledge is contested ground open to active resistance.

The expectation of female subservience is an experience that Phumzile encountered when as a university student her coalition with fellow progressive Black male *comrades* against social discriminations, left her feeling betrayed at their hostile reaction against a publication of sexual harassment policy. Reflecting on this experience, Phumzile writes:

**Phumzile:** The message communicated to me, was, they do want you to be political, to be active, to be everything, but they still need a complement of women who are subservient. 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. (Autobiographical Essay: paragraph 20).

Supporting the caution that in celebrating culture one needs to beware of its patriarchal bias, the above extract also signals that the hostile response of Phumzile's Black male comrades is similar to the experiences of women who had rallied with men in the Civil Rights Movement in the US. Her Black male comrades welcomed the support of their female comrades, but offered resistance and non-support when women's issues needed to be championed. This

confirms Brah's (2000:443), observation that Black women have been dominated patriarchally in different ways by men of different 'colours'.

Phumzile devotes a substantial part of her essay to reflections on the different sites of her education, and the ideologies and epistemological impulses that characterized them. In reflecting on her undergraduate degree she identifies a few courses in which she got glimpses of marginalized social experiences. For the most part, she critiques her undergraduate studies for the lies it propagated about her. She was sometimes angered by its omissions and brevity on issues of race, history and gender. As an academic who currently teaches English, this is particularly important as she endeavours to redistribute the narrative field by including in her literature teaching non-canonical texts. Her teaching against the canonical literary grain is illustrative of the general tide of resistance that has characterized her identity formation. Phumzile's essay is peppered with words like *rebelled*, *resisted*, *illegal*, *secret*, and point to a strong resistance identity. Her identity formation was framed in resistance to Apartheid policies, which saw her legally defying residential laws, school age admission policy stipulations, engaging discussion on politically banned topics, and harbouring political insurgents in her family home.

#### *Thembi's Collective Public Identities*

Thembi was born in rural Botswana in the 1940s. Her parents, who were both teachers by profession, encouraged the intellectual development of their children and placed a high premium on their formal and informal education. This was at odds in a community predisposed to cattle rearing, where greater value was attributed to physical labour. Thembi alludes to the Mind/Body distinction that prevailed in such societies, when she writes: *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.* Herein, lies an interesting inversion of the Mind/Body split. It appears that whereas in most western capitalist societies greater value is endowed upon the Mind (and its association with the book), in a rural context, such as the one Thembi describes, it would have been associated with laziness, while manual labour as in *running after cattle* held greater value.

Early in her language development, Thembi became aware of the distinctions between 'standard English' pronunciation and prescriptive language conventions and the possibility of first language interference in learning English, the target language. Thembi recalls that her parents were insistent on teaching them the distinctions of proper Setswana and English grammatical forms. She writes: *These lessons were very important because*

*living in what was then rural Botswana 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. Hence, her father painstakingly taught the 'correct' pronunciation, for example: father not fada, mother not mada, power not pawa, zebra not sebra.*

In addressing the issue of social class, Thembi describes their positionality as *undeniably privileged*. She admits that her privileged economic status attracted prominent people to her home, but this did not distance them from the less privileged in her community. Rather it gave them a platform from which to reach out to the economically disadvantaged. She highlights the social and symbolic capital that accrued from being economically privileged, when she writes: *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.* The spin-offs from their economic privilege resonate with Bourdieu's (1986), conceptualisation of the link between class statuses, social and symbolic capital. Social capital relates to resources gained via relationships and/or connections with significant others, which in turn accrues *symbolic* capital, which translates as the prestige, and honour that is associated with the acquisition of other forms of capital recognised as legitimate by others.

The portrayal of her parents suggests a strong Mind/Heart synergy. The strength of Mind comes through in her descriptions of her father, who despite his frail health boasted a strong and creative mind, and excelled as a writer and editor. His contribution to cultural and intellectual phenomena is reflected in Thembi's adult recognition of his distinguished career as author of the first monolingual Setswana Dictionary. The descriptions of her mother combine a blend of essentialist attributes that have come to frame stereotypes about women, while simultaneously defying them. The essentialist woman stereotype is reflected in her mother's benevolence, and kind-heartedness towards *the economically disadvantaged*. Her 'womanly virtue' is further captured in such phrases that illuminate: *Her forthrightness, frankness and incredibly big heart, sense of truth and integrity*, and her being *a rock to lean on*. These descriptors echo the refrains associated with images of the bounteous, nurturing, self-sacrificing mother. In the same breath, her mother is also credited for having an entrepreneurial spirit in running the village shop, a rare distinction for a Black woman, who according to Thembi: *... 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 21<sup>st</sup> century ...

The sense emerging from Thembi's essay is that in spite of the awe and admiration she has for her mother's entrepreneurial acumen, indomitable spirit, and benevolent disposition, she is however, more fascinated by her father and husband's accomplishments. This is reflected in the following two extracts, which draw a comparison among her father, mother, her husband and herself:

**Thembi:** I was indeed my father's child. I had obviously internalized his interests and values ... I hungered for increased knowledge and I resigned from the Bank to enroll for a BA ... My ... majors ... were English and African languages (my father's majors as well).

.....

I could immediately discern parallels if not similarities: ... 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 ... (Autobiographical Essay: paragraphs 10 & 14). (Emphasis added).

The extracts highlight her strong identification with her father, and it may be assumed with her husband, whom she describes as sharing *parallels if not similarities* with her father. In the essay descriptions of her father's life and times receive her commendation, as is evident in such excerpts as: *the enormity of his contribution; a distinguished career*, and she proceeds to write: *I am awed by the presence I had around me*. Twice in the above extract Thembi uses the word *mere* in relation to her and her mother's accomplishments. This may be read as Thembi's attempt to highlight the prevailing discriminatory social practices that invariably diminished women's accomplishments. Thus, for example her mother's unpublished compilation of a cookbook, which provided samples of 'Daily Menu', seems not to carry the same social status as that of her father's publications. A possible explanation for the devaluing of female gendering may be traced to the limited scope scripted in the life expectations and aspirations of young girls, in patriarchal society: their life expectations and aspirations being solidly tied to femininity, and heterosexuality, and consummated within the marriage union. Hence, upon completion of Form V, Thembi admits: *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*.

For Botswana born Thembi, the follies of Apartheid did not impact her directly. Belonging to a dominant ethnic majority sheltered her from experiencing the discrimination

generally associated with racial and/or ethnic otherness. Exuding an aura of self-confidence, and heightened esteem in relation to her individual and collective categorical identities of gender, nationality, generation, and family background, Thembi writes: *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.* From within this cocooned psycho-social space, she learned from her father how to resist the debilitating impact of colonial domination on Botswana. Boasting pride in her nationality and traditional culture, she illustrates Calhoun's (1994:321), contention that nationalisms are shaped in different international contexts and from different domestic experiences, with many emerging in response to histories of direct colonialism, which may absorb an entire culture, claiming everything from language and literature through political practices. In the following extract, Thembi points to the agenda of colonialism in Botswana to engender self-hatred and self-doubt among Batswana nationals by undermining their physical, cognitive and spiritual constitution. She writes: *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.*

As a counterpose to such a brand of colonialism, Thembi recalled the need to take pride in one's country and honour its culture and traditions. This is an expected response in the face of external domination that threatens to annihilate the essence of a people. However, more recent debates emerging in the area of critical multiculturalism (See Kincheloe *et al.* 1998), argue that whilst the empowering aspects of culture need to be affirmed and validated, it is equally important to examine how culture is also a terrain on which women's oppression is produced and reproduced. Brah (2000:437), argues that:

... instead of sifting out the specificities of particular oppressions, identifying their similarities or connections with other oppressions, and building a politics of solidarity, some women are beginning to differentiate these specificities into hierarchies of oppression.

In this regard, not just colonialism, but the oppressive features of patriarchal Setswana culture also needs to be interrogated within the continuum of dominations. Hence, Thembi mentions that although in her younger days she was sensitive to colonial *domination, control, restriction, and oppression with regard to the subjection of the less privileged persons to permanent servitude*, it was only much later that she was able to draw parallels between national colonialism and sexual colonialism.

Her early encounters with 'foreigners' presented Thembi with a fascination of Otherness outside the boundaries of Botswana. Intrigued by expatriates returning to

Botswana and her acquaintance with foreign friends and relatives inspired in her a desire to experience life in a broader context. Her early fascination and romanticisation of multiculturalism is reflected in the following extract:

**Thembi:** Botswana was opening its doors to expatriates and I formed friendships with individuals from all over the African continent and overseas. 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. (Autobiographical Essay: paragraph 13).

There are several critical points that emerge from Thembi's initial fascination, and subsequent first-hand experiences with the exotic *Other*.

First, a small number of expatriates to Botswana would have returned from countries and cultures (notably Britain), which was in fact the coloniser, and in some cases, African countries that were the colonised. If indeed, the imposition of the coloniser's political, economic and cultural domination drove them out of Botswana, it would be strange that they returned as expatriates from colonising/and other colonised countries with alluring tales of colonial culture. While it is prudent to remain cautious about over generalising the experiences of all immigrant/exiled Batswana to foreign countries, this is an important point from which to deconstruct the contradictions that emerge from Thembi's fascination with the *Other*, and to examine them in relation to her experiences of racism in Canada and South Africa.

Second, Thembi's description of feeling free to experience other people's cultures *without the clouds of stigma and prejudice looming over one's head*, serves as a stark reminder that many African countries (South Africa being a classic example) had also experienced the grip of colonialism. In addition, the sixties to the eighties marked a period of severe Apartheid oppression during which time Black South Africans were also *denied* their *ability, intellect, beauty*, and were also *instilled with a lack of pride in their traditional culture(s)*.

Third, as a Botswana national, Thembi belonged to an ethnic majority, for whom being Black did not signify deficit stigmatisation. That her race was in fact 'offensive', 'a *plague*' and 'less than' only became a reality when she visited (foreign lands like) Apartheid South Africa, and later when she took up a Masters scholarship in Canada. She recalls that

in Canada, being the only Black female in the English literature class, at a predominantly White institution immediately marked her as deficit *Other*, and her confidence and self esteem dissipated. She felt *alone*, became *silent* and *withdrawn* and grew intolerant of herself for confirming the *misconceptions about the inferiority and incapability of Blacks*. When Thembi did psyche herself out of her self-effacing response to being in a predominantly White university, rather than become complicit in her own silencing and marginalisation she began to remedy the misconception about Black cognitive deficit. By working hard to prove her *worth*, she topped her class. Her professor's response to her essay on Shakespeare's *King Lear* is equally interesting as it is amusing. Thembi recalls: *My white professor said (as an aside) that he had scrutinized my paper. He had read and re-read it over and over again. First, he did so out of disbelief and several times thereafter, out of sheer enjoyment*. The disbelief her professor expressed brings to mind the experience of one of the participants in Mirza's (1995), study titled: *Black Women in Higher Education: Defining a Space/Finding a Place*, in which a participant reports that: 'her new school in Brixton was visibly shocked when she passed the entrance test with ease. In fact they made her sit the test twice to make sure that she was not cheating'. Both Thembi's experience, and Mirza's study confirm Mennell's (1994:182), observation that:

The process of stigmatisation is a very common element in domination within ... highly unequal power balances, and it is remarkable how across many varied cases the content of the stigmatisation remains the same. The outsiders are always dirty, morally unreliable, lazy, [intellectually deficit], among other things.

Thembi's racial experiences provide an insightful indication of the complex life histories and the multi-leveled interaction of hegemonic discourses through which racialised and gendered subjectivities are structured within societies. It confirms that 'racialized ethnic' meanings vary within different social contexts; that is while her race and skin colour did not signify deficit in her home country, Botswana, the hierarchical racial structures in Canada and South Africa conferred upon her skin colour and cognitive abilities a diminished value. According to Rassool (1995:29), racial stereotypes change depending on the socio-historical and geographical contexts in which people are situated which, in turn, influences their social experience in terms of the relative value and meanings attached to particular social groups within that society. In this regard, Brah (2000:437), suggests that we need to analyze the processes, which construct us as 'white female', 'black female', 'white male', 'black male', etc. We need to examine how and why the meanings of these words change from plain descriptions to hierarchically organized categories under different economic, political and social circumstances.

In reviewing the thematic plotlines of Thembi's autobiographical reflections, we note that she, like Carol, displayed a tendency to abiding by the prescriptions of the authoritative norm. Opting in the first instance for the legitimising identity scripts of marriage, and mothering it was only later that out of a sense of frustration that Thembi's resistance identity surfaces in relation to the socio-cultural norms.

## **Section 2: Cross-analysis of Public Collective Identities and Pedagogic Potentialities**

In Section 1, I provided a descriptive commentary of select aspects of the participants' collective public identities as they developed in accordance with or in defiance to family, education and broader social influences. This descriptive commentary highlighted that each participant's narrative references generalities and specificities contingent on conditions prevailing within the matrix of broader social circumstances. In this section, I focus on a cross-analysis of the five participants' family influences, educational experiences, and nuclear episodes that shed light on the formation and conceptions of their national, ethnic, cultural, religious, language, and class identities. I identify salient issues that emerged between and among the essays, in accordance with the degree of importance participants attached to them. The differences and similarities in the participants' recollections are analyzed to illustrate that despite belonging to the category 'woman', their varying experiences confirm the non-essentiality of the category, and by extension no claims are made that any individual identity marker, be it race, class, ethnicity, etc. is internally homogeneous. The cross-analysis of the participants' public collective narratives confirms the significance of Somers & Gibson's (1994), claim that narratives embed identities in time and space frameworks. It also finds support in Keith's (2000:521), contention that place based identities provide organizing themes for particular narratives. The relevance of Keith's contention becomes apparent when viewed in relation to the political transition from Apartheid to democracy in South Africa, and confirms the political and contextual contingency of all identities. The impact of political and contextual situatedness is reflected in the personal experiences of the participants in this study, and serves as useful tropes for epistemological and pedagogical engagement. In addition, a retrospective gaze at the participants' formative conceptions of their nationality, cultures, language, sexualities, etc. gesture towards, first how they frame interpersonal relations with students and colleagues, and, second the educative issues of nationality and citizenship; multiculturalism and multilingualism; gender and sexualities they could potentially probe with their students.

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A cross-analysis of participants' engagement with their national, political, racial, ethnic and cultural identities, suggests that notwithstanding the age and provincial geographical differences among them, the South African participants' autobiographical reflections are framed largely within the political, socio-economic, and ideological climate that shaped Apartheid South Africa. Although, not directly affected by the indecencies of Apartheid, Botswana born Thembi is familiar with its effects from her visits to South Africa, as she is with the equally debilitating effects of colonialism, remnants of which also flourished in Apartheid South Africa.

In their autobiographical essays, Phumzile and Jennifer do not problematise their national identities, but Carol, Vijay and Thembi reflect on their national identities. Carol and Vijay, in particular, single out for discussion their diasporic identity. Each, however, attaches different significances to the importance it plays in their national identification. Carol's early socialisation shows a clear romanticisation and idealisation with an English 'root' identity. Born in South Africa in 1944, she recalls that her home was *charged with stories of English heroism and sacrifice*. Thus, while basking in the glow of English supremacy which had entrenched itself from 1795-1948, the political reality during the time of Carol's growing up, was that: *The Afrikaner ... a crude, poorly educated people [who] had cheated their way into power in 1948*, and whose language she despised, held the reins of political power in South Africa. For much of Carol's life, she, like many diasporic English lived under Afrikaner Apartheid rule. It would certainly have been bruising to her English root ego to identify herself as South African while living under Afrikaner White domination. Instead, holding on dearly to the cultural appendages and paraphernalia of Englishdom, it was more comforting and dignified to grow up in the belief that she was not South African, but English. By disassociating herself from the *crude, poorly educated cheats* that were ruling South Africa, the option was for her to identify with her Englishness. It was only in her early twenties that Carol embraced, and subsequently accepted her South African national identity. Reflecting on the experience, Carol writes: *... 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"*. Thus, while Carol initially refused her classificatory South African citizenship, a privilege, which accrued automatically to her by virtue of being a White minority, it was upon being conscientised to the disenfranchisement of the majority of 'native' South Africans, and the need to mobilise against Apartheid that she was brought to the acceptance of her South African identity. It was also much later, that as a teacher of English she was able to see the similarities

between the oppressiveness of Apartheid and English linguistic and cultural colonialism, and began to actively distance herself from it by becoming more attentive to cultural scripts concerned with African and marginalized diasporic realities.

In contrast, Vijay denounced her Indian 'root' identity at an early age, and embraced a South African Black identity. While acknowledging the value of the spiritual literary works, Vijay recalls being intolerant of an Indocentrism reified by diasporic peoples, who out of a fear of cultural erosion tend to romanticise socio-cultural practices and rituals, which ostensibly fragment (South African) national unity. Vijay's strong embrace of her South African identity is clarified more poignantly when in her interview she points out: *I find the signifier upon an Indian in this country narrowing and diminishing, and in many ways does not carry the strengths that I think are part of identity. It's minority. It is less than. It's insular, separate.* Vijay confirms that the numeric minority of the Indian population in South Africa has played a significant part in defining their minority status in the country. Thus, for Vijay, defining her national identity from this weak political bargaining platform, all in the name of ethnic loyalty, would have been tantamount to supporting the divisive policies on which Afrikaner nationalism was founded. Loyalty to culture, tradition, and race group cohesion was exactly what Apartheid policies appealed to as a way of entrenching insular, separatist and factionalising values. Vijay's strong identification with her South African identity was a direct challenge to the political disenfranchisement South African Indians, and other Blacks experienced, when in the 1970s-1980s *it was an article of faith for [her] to be South African.* In comparing Carol and Vijay's responses and engagement with their diasporic identities, and their embracing of South African identities, two distinctly differently pictures emerge. With her root identity grounded in power and prestige, Carol to whom citizenship would have accrued automatically, spurned a South African nationality associated with Afrikaner crudity and native African *backwardness*. On the other hand, hailing from a colonised India, Vijay's grandparents, who had been lured to South Africa with the promise of a better life, found themselves politically disenfranchised in their adopted land, and had to fight to be recognised as human and South African. Through identification with the struggle of people, like Vijay, Carol sees the need to mobilise against dismantling Apartheid, and embraces her South African national identity. However, after the shedding of much blood, sweat and tears, which heralded the advent of democracy that secured full citizenship to all South Africans, both Carol and Vijay define themselves not only in relation to South Africa, but as part of the global community. Carol writes: *the basis of my identity became linked to South African, indeed global phenomena and experiences.* Vijay writes: *... 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.* Currently, Carol, and Vijay tend towards defining themselves as global citizens.

For Thembi, belonging to a race and ethnic majority in Botswana, the signification of her national identity developed in response to British colonial domination, which served as an impetus for her to value what the colonisers devalued. This engendered in her a sense of national pride. The sense of pride and belonging that Thembi refers to is discernible earlier in Vijay's socialisation, and later for Carol upon her acceptance and identification as a South African national.

In commenting on the nature of national identification, Rex (1996), observes that sharing a way of life with other members of one's nation serves to make attachment to the nation an emotional, moral and sacred matter. To some extent the emotional, moral and sacred attachment to nation building is evident in appeals for reconciliation, which have come to constitute an important educative objective in a newly democratised South Africa, and postcolonial Botswana. Despite the different circumstances under which Carol, Vijay and Thembi embraced their national identities, their experiences give credence to Bailey's (1984), suggestion that education must lead students beyond the present and the particular by providing skills of analysis, which make them not just critical but also comfortable with their own national identities. It should also equip them with the ability to transcend 'incestuous ties of clan and soil' to see themselves as citizens of the global community. Furthermore, education carries the burden of impressing upon students that understanding and accepting one's national citizenship is not linked just to rights that accrue from being citizens, but also to the responsibility of ensuring the preservation of democratic citizenship.

Arguably, the notion of national identity encompasses the dialectics of one's political leanings, which by extension impacts a wide range of identity variables, including race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, class, etc. The four South African participants, in the first instance, invariably frame their political identities and experiences around their racial identities. In the light of the legacy of race-based Apartheid in South Africa, this is not unusual. Goldberg (2000), observes that South Africans:

... do define themselves, in the first instance, as members of a population group; and ... that population group/race/nationality are first order interpretations, categorisations or characteristics in terms of which one is perceived. These assumptions are so deeply entrenched in South African state ideology as to be unquestioned.

Confirming Goldberg's observation, Carol, Vijay, Jennifer, and Phumzile devote substantial attention to the dynamics of race, racialisation and racism in their essays. A cornerstone of Apartheid was the segregation of people on the basis of skin colour, thus they reflect upon

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experiences of living in mixed raced communities prior to segregationist legislation being enforced, and subsequently living in racially segregated communities. In Carol's case, raised in an environment that prided itself on its English nationality and race identity, she was subject to explicit injunctions to disassociate from the Black and Coloured children in her neighbourhood, and this reinforced prejudiced and negative stereotyping of Black South Africans. Her association with and befriending of Blacks came much later. In spite of racial segregationist policies, Jennifer, Phumzile and Vijay report either living or associating with multiracial and multilingual friends or neighbours. In addition, for all three, the policy of racial segregation evoked a common reference to the Apartheid police and Group Area inspectors, who became synonymous with brutality, fear and dislike among those ideologically opposed to Apartheid. Jennifer's critique of her parents' and her personal response to Apartheid, provides an interesting typology of the hierarchies of political protest and activism. Her account suggests a distinction between espoused political activism, in the form of, for example, *armchair liberalism*, and active, manifest political activism. Jennifer's involvement in the publication of radical student newspapers, Vijay speeches that critiqued informal settlements, and her motivation for the inclusion of African literature in the curriculum; Phumzile's family harbouring political activists in their home, and her defying Apartheid educational policy by attending school at an earlier age than that legislated for Black children, apart from signaling features of resistance identities, also signify the different forms that (active/manifest) political activism assumed in South Africa. Furthermore, they raise interesting points for debates around consciousness-raising, ideological identification, principled solidarity, coalition building and identity formation. (For more discussion on this issue see section titled: *Conceptions of Identity* in Chapter One; and section titled: *Movement Two: outward gaze: naming of patriarchy and coming to feminist consciousness*, in Chapter 5).

The discussion around Apartheid and race politics flags two points of pedagogic importance. First, the temporal and spatial dynamics of race need to be taken into consideration, since variation in time and space contingencies frame racial experiences quite differently. As Thembi's different experiences of race in Botswana, South Africa, and Canada show, the developments of concepts such as the process of racialisation and responses to race are defined by contextual and political specificities. Exploring the concept of race in relation to skin colour, we note that in Botswana, as an ethnic majority her black skin was not marked as deficit or offensive, it was only in Apartheid South Africa, and upon attending a predominantly White university in Canada that it set her apart for prejudicial treatment. That her race was received differently in Botswana in comparison to South Africa and Canada, illustrates the inherent contradictions and contextual dynamics on race, as lines of inclusion and exclusion are continually drawn and redrawn around skin colour. Thembi's

racial experiences in Botswana, South Africa and Canada confirm that racial conceptions can change over time and space and is not a transhistorical essence. In this regard, Frankenberg (2000:454), notes that race is a complexly constructed product of local, regional, and global relations of past and present, in addition to variables such as region, class, generation, ethnicity which subdivide the terrain of experiences of race formation, interracial relations, and responses to race. Thus, the possible ways of experiencing race in a particular time and place is delimited by the relations of racism prevailing at that moment and in that place.

The second point relates to the Apartheid policy of racial segregation that was aimed at engendering suspicion, fear and stereotyping among race groups. With democratization and attempts at racial desegregation, student demographics at South African universities are rendering classes racially more diverse. Thus, confronting racial stereotypes is something that both Black and White educators and students have to negotiate. For example, Phumzile, a young, Black female educator who teaches at a predominantly White institution, consciously chooses teaching methodologies that emphasise her pedagogic authority so as not to re-enact servant-master relations in her class. Given that in South Africa, servitude was/is the common station of Black women in White households, through epistemological and methodological choices, Phumzile actively disassociates herself from being framed by her White students as their servant. On the other hand, Carol, a White older woman, teaching at a predominantly Black institution downplays her 'teacherly' authority so as not to be construed by her students as prudish, arrogant and overbearing. Vijay, a young 'Indian,' female who exalts her Black South African identity, teaching predominantly Black and Indian students finds herself having to counter perceptions of paying more attention to the Black students, and neglecting her Indian students. The overarching point that emerges is that teaching to racially integrated classes requires sensitivity that acknowledges and addresses the misconceptions, fears, racial expectations that have been propagated by Apartheid. This is an issue that I discuss in Chapter 6, under the heading: *Bodies are the objects/instruments of pedagogical power relations*, in which I explore some of the power dynamics that emerge when educators teach students who are racially different to them.

Attention must also be given to the way contradictions, and boundaries of inclusion and exclusion emerge around other signifiers such as socio-economic class. In reflecting on their class positionality, we note participants experiencing what may be regarded as a combination of group charisma and/or group shame. Thembi, Vijay and Phumzile, the three Black participants in the study, admit to enjoying middle class privileges, which was not necessarily the norm for other Blacks. The group charisma that emanated from middle class privilege is particularly evident in their expectation of further education. Thembi and Phumzile reflect on the social and symbolic capital that extended from their possessing

economic capital. However, for Vijay, while acknowledging the privileges of her middle class background, she felt ashamed that her middle class positionality engendered a class-based Apartheid. Jennifer and Carol, the two White participants in the study, reflect on the embarrassment and shame they felt about belonging to socio-economic disprivileged backgrounds. Carol confides that her otherwise superior race and idealized 'English national' status was only diminished by those economically more privileged than her. Jennifer describes her family as belonging to the wrong side of the tracks by virtue of their working-class status. Neither Jennifer nor Carol comment on how their class positionality impacted on their material educational provisioning, but both reflect on their class status in relation to their purchasing of clothes (Carol and her siblings grew up on hand-me-downs, and Jennifer was unable to dress in the height of adolescent fashion). Carol however, does reflect on the social and intellectual inferiority that she felt by virtue of perceiving those who belonged to more privileged class status as belonging to a superior species of human beings.

In this study, there is a distinct variation in the socio-economic statuses between the Black and the White participants, with the Black participants reporting economic privilege and the White participants reporting economic disadvantage. While this is not representative of the wider socio-economic realities that prevailed in Apartheid South Africa, the privileges of middle class Blacks must be understood in relative terms. The middle class status of the Black participants in comparison to the disprivilege of working class Whites did not emanate from a similar economic base. This was especially so in a racially differentiated labour market characterized by job reservation policies. It does, however confirm Connolly's (1997), observation that it is reductive to pathologise all racially marginalized groups as being economically disadvantaged, and vice versa. Writing specifically about the perceived universalized privileges of Whiteness, he advises:

An important point to remember is that all white individuals do not have absolute privilege any more than all male individuals have absolute privilege. Rather, individuals whose ascribed characteristics include whiteness (or maleness) will find the benefits of that ascription accruing to them.

Connolly's advice suggests that class positionality is complicated by ascribed status membership, specified by gender, race and ethnicity. The important points for pedagogic consideration regarding class status, relate first to the fact that class positionality, unlike race, is not immediately noticeable so the discursive salience of class is almost minimal, and can go by largely unattended in classroom relations. The main divisions of social class has typically been associated with the possession of financial capital, which generally sees people becoming members of social entities/groupness, thereby accruing social capital that

impacts their lifestyles, value-commitments, norms, attitudes and political behavioural linkages. In understanding class dynamics educators need to be cognisant of the variances between their own economic and cultural capitals, and that of their students. In this regard several important points of pedagogic significance need to be considered. Irrespective of the diverse socio-economic backgrounds the participants in my study emanated from, Lawn & Ozga (1988), argue that educators occupy middle-class positionalities. First, given that the enterprise of education is largely based on middle-class values, students from lower and working class backgrounds have to negotiate entrance into an educational space that they are not entirely familiar with. Corroborating this view, for example, Carol in her essay reflects on the fears associated with her class positionality that she had to overcome. She writes:

**Carol:** 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. (Autobiographical Essay: paragraph 8).

The class related fears of inadequacy and self-doubt that students may have about their ability to succeed, is linked to the fact that education is a middle class enterprise. As such education, invariably socialises students into middle class norms, and part of the teacher's project is to develop ways of teaching students to analyse these norms in relation to their own position in society by, for example, alerting them to the way class privileges creates hierarchical social relations, and privileges certain value systems, while denigrating disprivileging and oppressing others (Carol refers to her belief that those who attended university were of a *superior species of human being*). Second, given the middle class norms that prevail in educational institutions, students who come equipped with middle class cultural capital are likely to be advantaged, and those who do not are disadvantaged by virtue of their unfamiliarity with the cultural codes of middle class education (which is essentially why Carol feared that she would not meet the standards and fail in her studies). In this regard Briskin (2002), notes that when students are expected to be critical learners, participate fully in discussions, be responsible for their learning, those who already come equipped with the power culture of the classroom, are advantaged, and those who do not are disadvantaged. When teachers make the naive assumption that they can share power, they reproduce the hierarchy of the classroom rather than challenge it because power is shared

with those who can already claim power for themselves. It can only engage with them. Third, certain students who by virtue of emanating from disadvantaged backgrounds believe that they literally cannot 'afford' to fail in their academic studies, and subscribe to a culture of entitlement without meeting the demands that higher education entails. Finally, Carol highlights another important class related issue regarding the critique levelled against feminism for being preoccupied with the concerns of middle-class women. She contends that this distortion of feminist history needs to be explored with students, so that they can be educated to the involvement of feminist activism, *alongside the working class ... especially women's groups who have often worked along with the trade union movements*. While being sensitive to these variances, predominantly middle-class educator positionalities have to be negotiated. It is also an issue that Vijay refers to in relation to her teaching of, especially Black male students. She says:

**Vijay:** Teaching men, (especially Black men-either African or Indian or Coloured) about feminism and teaching feminism to a class which included them, made me question the construction of masculinity, and how men are oppressed by that within patriarchy. It became evident to me in a very real way that in class I couldn't just stand there as a powerful middle-class feminist and go on against men who have suffered much more than I have. (Interview).

Although in the above extract Vijay refers specifically to being sensitive to the symbolic violence men have been subject to by virtue of their race, it is however, her powerful middle-class status that causes her to temper her engagement with men in the feminist class. Taking into consideration her own privileged class identity; she is aware that Black male students may be sceptical about the relevance of feminism to their lives. Their scepticism emanating from the dissonance between their socio-economic class, and cultural realities in relation to their middle class, female educator.

The cross-analysis of the participants' public collective identities, highlight that all participants in the study testify to the support and encouragement they received from either their families, or friends in regard to their education. Support came in the form of parents, and in some cases extended family members, who played an active role in teaching them to read or socialising them into different forms of oral and print literacies. In the case of Phumzile, Vijay and Thembi their parents' professional backgrounds socialised them into academic work, and provided role models for their own pursuit of intellectual activities. From their accounts we see the transference/inheritance of positive influences and support for learning in their home environments. While Jennifer does not single out family or friends who would have supported her academic pursuits, Carol recalls: *Through the influence of my new*

*friend ... I would extend the boundaries ... 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.*

In addition, to the moral support they received from family and/or friends, the participants refer to their personal commitment and pursuit of educational excellence through hard work. The significance of this emerges when seen in the current context of the massification of higher education, which has opened its doors to many students who are first generation university entrants. Many students enrolling to study English at university come from home contexts where literacy levels among parents are low or non-existent, and where they may receive neither moral nor financial support from their families towards their education. Carol, in her essay, refers specifically to the additional emotional and pedagogic labour that she, as female faculty, has to render to her students, many of whom hail from disadvantaged backgrounds. The participants also refer to the tendency for students to recreate familial or friendship relations with their female university teachers. This is a theme that I track in Chapter 6 in a section titled: *Authority versus Nurture*. In this section, I examine the tendency for female teachers to be cast into roles of mother/sister/extended family.

Another significant motif that emerged from the cross-analysis is that all the participants foregrounded the prominence of male influence in their personal lives, as well as in broader society. Jennifer, Vijay and Thembi highlight and afford greater importance to the roles their fathers played in their intellectual development; hence their strong identification with their fathers' worlds. In Carol's socialisation the language and culture of her father's English lineage received much celebration. Patriarchal initiative and influence on broader society is evident in Thembi's recollection that as a way of resisting colonial endeavours to deny the intellect and beauty of her people, her father fought hard to promote Setswana culture, and authored the first monolingual Setswana dictionary. Vijay also credits her grandfather for being involved in the propagation of Hindu languages and religious phenomena. Importantly, it is the men who are associated with either the symbolic or functional guardianship and custody of cultural (re)generation. Critical points arising from the participants' conceptions of culture highlight two issues. First, there emerges the importance of acknowledging and making visible cultures that have been marginalized from mainstream discourses, which is what Thembi's father and Vijay's grandfather attempted to do in promoting their marginalized cultures. The necessity to do so is attested to by Phumzile and Vijay, in particular, who are critical of their school and university education for the permutations of silence, misrepresentation, and under-representation of Black and *Other* marginalized literary and cultural realities. The experiences of marginalized *Other*, for the

most part remained an evaded curriculum, and both argued for the redistribution of the narrative field to include subjugated knowledges and vernacular theories. Phumzile comments on the gaps in the curriculum, which meant that she had to personally take the initiative, in her own time, to expose herself to these marginalized, non-canonical literatures. Vijay delivered speeches at school agitating for the inclusion of African literature in the curriculum.

The important points for pedagogic consideration emerging from the discussion of cultural regeneration is the delicate balance of recognising multicultural diversity, while simultaneously being critical of patriarchal bias in, for example cultural phenomena, like prescribed texts. While the democratic Constitutions of South Africa and Botswana are respectful of multiculturalism, the participants' personal critique and scepticism about cultural phenomena suggest that pedagogic engagement with it should be matched with equal scepticism. The inclusion of non-dominant cultures needs to be examined for its inherent discriminatory practices, such as androcentrism and ethnocentrism. In addition, the inclusion of marginalized texts, need not be at the expense of Western or canonical texts. The inclusion of Western and canonical texts is actually useful for comparative analyses and allows for the reconceptualisation and re-examination of their status, content, and formation. Thus, pedagogical engagement with multicultural phenomena and texts should attempt to de-romanticise all cultures so as not to risk reifying, valorising or romanticising some, while discounting and dehistoricising others.

An allied issue is the need to interrogate cultural ideologies that are encapsulated in language, particularly ideologies related to logocentrism and linguistic imperialism. With Vijay, Phumzile, Thembi and Jennifer growing up in either bilingual or multilingual environments they are cognisant of the value linguistic diversity has on cognitive flexibility and creative expression. Interestingly though the participants recall being painstakingly taught the conventions of 'correct' English grammar and pronunciations. While not discounting the importance of having grammatical competence, as teachers of English in multilingual classrooms they are, however, aware of the psycho-social challenges that have to be negotiated in terms of teaching English to students whose first language is not English, and who elect to study the language for instrumental purposes. Jennifer identifies these challenges as, for example: *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*. In addition, Vijay points to the fact that speakers of indigenous South African languages have been alienated from their mother-tongues and have developed inferior complexes about their languages and about themselves in relation to the linguistic dominance and imperialism of English. In this regard, Carol who teaches students at a predominantly multilingual university also recognises the psychological

stigma students endure by being non-native speakers of a language. In her interview, Carol commented on the challenges linguistic diversity presents for the teaching situation: ... *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.* It is against the backdrop of linguistic diversity that educators need to take into consideration the personal, cultural, and political implications of language teaching. In a multilingual society educators need to be sensitive to the differences in students' worldview, learning styles, in verbal and non-verbal communication, and language repertoires in order to ensure that English as a target language is learnt in a way that alleviates situational anxiety and is sensitive to students' psycho-linguistic dispositions. Carol argues for accepting the existence of varieties of Englishes, which includes accommodating interlanguage interferences (for example, when grammatical conventions from one's first language interferes with English grammatical conventions; variations in pronunciation, accents, idiomatic expressions, etc.). (This is an issue I address in Chapter 5, in a section titled: *Movement Three: theorising and teaching emancipation*).

Finally, all the participants in the study reflect on the social engineering of gendered, and sexual identities fashioned either in their home environments or within the broader social structures of the school and/or religious organisations. As a model of patriarchal structuring, all participants describe their households as operating along gendered lines where for the most part their fathers were associated with economic and intellectual matters and their mothers with nurturance, domesticity or woman oriented careers. Irrespective of whether the scripts for gender, sexuality and femininity were reproduced in their homes, schools or in religious institutions, the participants report in varying degrees of their socialisation into normative female sex and gender behaviours. Carol and Thembi reflect on their aspirations towards wifehood and mothering. Vijay recalls the preferential treatment her brothers received from her mother and her mother's attempts at engendering a sense of inferiority in her by virtue of her being female. Phumzile reports on the gendering of school subjects and untruths that were circulated purporting that boys outperformed girls at school. In addition, both Carol and Phumzile report on attempts to educate them into particular modes of femininity. Phumzile describes this as schooling in Victorian morals, which Carol describes as womanhood characterised by *modesty, unassertiveness, passivity, and sexual morality*. Jennifer critiques the restrictive script of heteronormativity that left her feeling isolated and alienated. Both Carol and Jennifer attribute their formative conceptions of sexuality as propagated via Christian theology. As children both Carol and Jennifer were exposed to, and

to some extent participated in religious practices, however, they became critical of religious conceptions of gender and sexuality. Carol reflects on the guilt and crippling doubt that the Dominican nuns engrained in her about female sexuality, and its association with Man's fall from grace. Jennifer, in particular, points out that sexuality is often a very controversial and contested subject because most religions are based primarily on heteronormative expressions of sexuality. Whether discussions about gender, sex and sexuality emerge directly out of religious beliefs or other cultural ideologies it remains a critical theme when interrogating language and gender issues. Carol refers to this in the following extract:

**Carol:** 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. (Autobiographical Essay: paragraph 17).

Acknowledging the ardent religious climate that prevails in South Africa, Carol points to the challenge of critiquing religious teachings in relation to feminist studies. However, rather than steer clear of engaging the dialectics of feminism and religion, the significance for pedagogic consideration is that it has to be dealt with sensitively so as to provoke students to critical engagement with theological teachings on sexuality and gender relations. A feminist critique of religion needs to proceed in a way that does not offend students, or make them feel as if their faith/religion is under attack.

Finally, Thembi and Jennifer highlight the androcentricity of their university education, and in varying degrees allude to the role schooling, and literary studies played through both visible and invisible pedagogies, in shaping conceptions of femininity, gender and sexuality. The shaping of femininity, gender and sexuality through visible pedagogies took the form of texts, theories, and course content that presented androcentric dominance, and female subordination. This was propagated through male-authored texts and theories, either in the total absence of the female voice, or in stereotypical (mis)representations of female passivity. For example, Thembi bemoans: *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.*

The shaping of femininity, gender and sexuality through invisible pedagogies, is clearly illustrated in Jennifer's description of her school's 'social' understanding with several boys' schools, in which a certain number of girls were 'ordered' for Saturday evenings. The girls were expected to dress attractively and provocatively; and were then thrown into a darkened room to engage in light sexual activity; this, in a school that espoused virginity, and did not teach sex education. In her recollection of this practice, Jennifer critiques the messages transmitted to the girls and boys (via hidden/invisible pedagogies) about female 'commodity value', and the double standards about upholding chastity, on the one hand, and encouraging sexual activity, on the other. Furthermore, much of the feminist critique of language pivots around explicit and implicit ways in which gender relations are transmitted through the regulation of women's behaviour, the naming and representation of women, and the silencing of women's voice. Differentiated life scripts that prescribe and sanction male dominance, activity and sexual virility, simultaneously define submissive, passive, and sexually pure roles for women. The pedagogic imperative remains educating students (both males and females) to the way gender-appropriate behaviour is restrictive and oppressive to healthy human relations.

Thus, whether acting in accordance or dissonance to cultural and institutional prescriptions and ascriptions, the participants attached various degrees of significance to issues of nationality and citizenship, culture, race, language, gender, sexuality, religion and education. These public collective identity markers highlight generic issues that carry potential pedagogic import in the English language classroom influenced by feminist sensibilities.

## Conclusion

The cross-analysis of the participants' collective public identities confirms Somers & Gibson's (1994), contention that people make sense of what has happened and is happening to them by attempting to assemble or integrate these happenings within one or more narratives; and that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from diverse social, public, and cultural narratives. Focussing more pointedly on projections, expectations and memories from their childhood up to their early adulthood, my discussion in this chapter attempted to identify episodes, experiences, and ideologies from the participants' backgrounds, which impacted and produced legitimising and/or resistance identities in them. The discussion also helped highlight that identity is more meaningfully understood when examined as a *conceptual narrativity* within the matrix of *time, space and relational* dimensionalities. A narrativist

understanding of social action and agency accepts that identity is temporal, relational, and cultural, as well as institutional, material and macro-structural. This supports Giddens' (in Castells 1997:10), contention that identity formation is not a distinctive trait possessed by the individual, but a reflexive project understood in terms of one's biography, and is attributable to both external and internal dynamics. The external dynamics of identity formation entail accepting that we belong to multiple communities because of our various groupings by age, gender, race, class, etc. Thus, defining oneself in terms of a single axis of identity is reductive and potentially factionalising. Rather, a sense of oneself as located within heterogeneous discursive practices shows not only that we inhabit multiple and changing identities, but that these identities are produced and reproduced within different social relations. While underscoring the interaction between fluid identities and often rigid social structures it also highlights the asymmetrical power relations they are likely to produce. The internal dynamics of identity formation affirm the 'otherness' within ourselves. By acknowledging our capacity for both internal conflictual and consensual dialogicality, it also provides some insight into our affiliations, affinities and desires.

By investigating aspects of the collective public narratives of the participants, this chapter attempted to show that personal identity is perhaps best understood as a project, as something always under construction, and that human subjects are not fixed embodiments of their cultures. Since all cultures are internally differentiated and never static, our subjectivities are formed incrementally within the range of heterogeneous discursive practices available to us. Hence, a variety of subject positions emerge within a single cultural context offering the possibility of political change as we move from one subject position to another. A shift in subject position may be accompanied by emotional and psychic ambivalences and contradictions. How and by whom different types of identities are constructed, and with what outcomes, urges the conceptualisation that identity must be contextualised socially, historically and ideologically.

In subsequent chapters, I draw from the insights gleaned in this chapter, in order to make connections between how the contiguous variables impacted the participants' coming to feminist consciousness, and their subsequent teaching of English from a feminist perspective. Each teacher's experiences and cultural background, as well as the backgrounds and experiences of students, are important for developing culturally relevant pedagogy. This follows Goodson's (1983), suggestion that we connect our studies of education with investigations of teachers' personal biography and historical backgrounds. This would help to reintegrate the situational with biographical and historical analysis, because who teaches what, to whom, and why are important political and pedagogic questions implicated in the statement that the personal as political is potentially pedagogical.

Equipped with more nuanced knowledge of the five participants, and imbibing the importance of the personal biographical and historical analysis of teachers' backgrounds in the following chapter, I take up for more in-depth investigation the five participants' trajectories of coming to feminist consciousness.