ABSTRACT

Title of Document: LIVING FEMINISM IN THE ACADEMY: SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN TELL THEIR STORIES

Carol Corneilse, Doctor of Philosophy, 2009

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Education Leadership, Higher Education, & International Education

Studies about North American and European women predominate the literature on gender issues in higher education, particularly research that focuses on female academics who are self-described feminists. The literature tells us that there are differences between the institutional experiences of feminist faculty, as opposed to female faculty in general. Most universities are male-dominated institutions and inequalities in status, rank, and salary persist, although the gaps have shrunk over time. Female faculty who self-identify as feminists are more likely to challenge discriminatory institutional practices, because feminism, by its nature, challenges the status quo. And they are more likely to be ostracized and ridiculed when they confront unequal treatment.

Yet the presence of feminists in the academy signals their belief in its value as an institution. Universities offer the intellectual space to theorize about women's position in society, to generate knowledge that brings about greater understanding of women's lives, and to develop strategies for change.

There is a small, but growing, body of literature documenting the experiences of female faculty in South Africa's higher education institutions. Few studies have focused on feminist faculty, however. In this qualitative study, six diverse women share their experiences of being feminist faculty in South African universities over a thirty-year period, beginning in the early 1970s. Their personal narratives begin in their formative childhood years when they first become aware of social injustice. The study documents their growing feminist consciousness, their initial encounters with feminist theories, their struggles as university and community activists, and as young faculty. The women recall pivotal events and experiences that have shaped them, and describe what it has been like to live out their feminist values on a daily basis in South Africa's universities.

LIVING FEMINISM IN THE ACADEMY:

SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN TELL THEIR STORIES


By


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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2009


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For Daddy, who taught me that learning could be fun,

and

For Mommy, who always believed that I would achieve more than I thought I could.

**Acknowledgements**

There are many people who have, supported, threatened, cajoled, and reassured me throughout this lengthy process.  I would not have finished the dissertation without them:

- Diana Williams generously made it possible me to travel to South Africa to do my fieldwork.  I am deeply grateful for her support throughout my trip.

- The participants in this study graciously gave me their time and shared their memories and experiences.  They continue to inspire me.

- Tina Barsby, Lisa Cooney, Sandee Pyne, and Crain Soudien patiently listened to my ideas, then kindly read drafts and gave me detailed, thoughtful feedback.

- Stephanie, Clarissa, Jeanie, and Tish greased the wheels of administration and made it all seem effortless.  Thank you for five happy years in EDPL.

- My work on this project and this document have benefited from the wisdom of my committee, Dr. Hanne Mawhinney, Dr. Claire Moses, Dr. Carol Anne Spreen, and Dr. Nelly Stromquist.

- Dr. Steve Klees, my friend and mentor, whose Yoda-like calm helped me keep it all together and whose enthusiasm for this project never wavered.  When I grow up I want to be a teacher like you.

- My IEP and EDPL friends, for being models of international co-operation.

- Andrea, Cassandra, Wendi, Elizabeth, and Sandee: it has been my privilege to walk with you on this journey.  Thank you for the gift of your friendship.

- Barbara, Anita, Illana and the other members of our dissertation support groups truly demonstrate the power of peers to keep one going in the most challenging times.

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"By writing your story, you revisit the past and transform the present."

Maxine Hong Kingston.

**Chapter 1: Introduction**


Universities are often accused of being ivory towers, out of touch with the real

world. The term suggests that academics view themselves as being above the fray of

everyday life and that they choose to withdraw from society in order to engage in

academic pursuits. Yet universities are very much products of their national and social

contexts. Cultural and social attitudes existing in the wider society find their way onto

university campuses. So it should not be surprising that, in patriarchal societies,

universities have been dominated by men. And in racist societies, oppressed groups have

been denied access to higher education.

Until very recently, racism was institutionalized in South Africa, a former British

and Dutch colony. Legislation maintained white supremacy and privilege within a deeply

patriarchal society until the first democratic South African government was elected in

1994. Fifteen years later, the country is trying hard to eradicate the legacy of apartheid in

many spheres. Education, a site of violent contestation between the state and the

disenfranchised on several occasions, is seen as a critical vehicle for economic, social,

and cultural transformation. Higher education, in particular, has undergone a structural

overhaul to redraw its apartheid landscape and to rectify historically uneven patterns of

resourcing. As a result, the post-secondary education system in South Africa today looks

radically different from its fragmented, racialized predecessor.

Yet, while legislative and structural changes can influence patterns of behavior,

they are not an indication that values have undergone fundamental transformation. On

the contrary, higher education's core values have changed little over time. As Chliwniak

notes, "The academy has comfortably reproduced itself for several centuries and a male-dominated, patriarchal culture has been solidly established" (Chliwniak, 1997, p. 131). Today's universities value the Enlightenment ideals of objectivity and detachment and claim to be meritocracies. Yet, the attitudes and practices associated with these values, which are embedded in higher education institutions, are actually anti-female despite appearing to be gender-neutral at face value (Kettle, 1996). This is true also for universities in Africa. The majority has roots in the colonial era and bears little resemblance to the venerable institutions that once existed at Timbuktu and Alexandria (Barnes, 2005). Regardless of where they are located on the continent, institutional culture in African universities is strongly masculine and women are reminded in countless ways—overt and covert—that they do not belong.

Women in higher education

*International patterns.* This study focuses on the institutional experiences of South African feminist faculty. I have chosen to focus on faculty who describe themselves as feminist because research on North American and British women has shown that their experiences of patriarchal institutions are different from other female faculty (Currie & Kazi, 1987; Morley, 1999). Membership of the faculty is not without its challenges for women: they are constantly reminded that the academy is not ready to bestow on them the rights that accompany full membership (Bagilhole, 1994; Brooks, 1997; Morley & Walsh, 1995a). Despite the existence of many thriving women's studies departments in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, for example, the field does not enjoy unconditional acceptance as a legitimate academic discipline (Morley, 1999). Kolodny (1998), a former dean at the University of Arizona, found that

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courses on feminist theory were not recognized as constituting advanced work for senior undergraduates; feminist scholarship was dismissed as inferior to "traditional" scholarship generated by scholars who conform to mainstream norms and values and, consequently, funding was hard to come by.

*South African female faculty.* There is a small, but growing, body of literature documenting the experiences of female faculty in South Africa's higher education institutions. In many respects they have much in common with their academic sisters in other countries. Mabokela's (2002) research on black female faculty reported an absence of formal mechanisms for inducting them into the academic profession; only men were given access to the more informal ways of 'learning the ropes'. The women she interviewed observed that male faculty brought their sexist cultural attitudes into the workplace: they infantilized women yet expected them to do most of the hard work.

Few women hold leadership positions in either administration or among the faculty. Rather, they are the majority in the lower ranks. The racial breakdown of women reflects South Africa's segregated past: there are more White women than colored women in the middle and upper ranks of faculty and administration and both outnumber African women, whose participation in higher education has been most adversely affected by the inequities of the past. Women continue to experience marginalization and there are many ways in which men undermine their authority, albeit (supposedly) while not intending to do so.

In a brief but cogent analysis of institutional culture, South African anthropologist Pamela Reynolds describes the university as "another country" in which women have no voice and "it is difficult to find a script, a narrative, a story to live by" (Reynolds, 1994,

p. 147).  What is required, she argues, "is an ethnographic study of women's positions within the institution … situated in the context of South Africa with its history of colonialism and fascism [that] would describe the images of self that women bring with them to the university, and their experiences within it … Women need to describe their own and each other's position within institutional culture (Reynolds, 1994, pp. 151-153).

Two elements of such a study are critical, namely, women's voices and the South African context.  Walker asserts that women's personal histories represent an alternative to the male norm in academia in that they provide

> a more nuanced understanding of how women are marginalized in
> universities, how this experience unfolds differently, with different
> emphases and shades of meaning, so that we construct inclusive accounts
> and new possibilities for what it might mean to be 'Black' or 'White',
> 'female' and 'academic' (M. Walker, 1998, p. 353).

As a South African feminist committed to social justice, I feel compelled to document women's experiences in academia.

## Research Questions

My research questions are rooted in the epistemological approach which informs my understanding of everyday phenomena: I am strongly influenced by feminist thinking that takes into account the intersection of race, class, gender, and ethnicity and its effect on an individual's life experiences and worldview.  Like other feminist researchers, I apply a gender lens to a given situation or context in order to illuminate "the various aspects that constitute the totality" of women's experiences (Stromquist 1999).  For the purposes of this study the context is higher education—specifically South African

universities.  I was interested in learning how South African feminist faculty describe and make sense of their everyday experiences within the institutions that they negotiate every day of their professional lives.  My major research question arose directly from the philosophical and theoretical frameworks that inform my thinking:

How do South African feminist faculty describe their institutional experiences over the course of their professional lives?

My secondary research questions were:

- How do race and class shape the feminist consciousness of South African women faculty?

- What structural inequalities in higher education with respect to gender do South African feminist faculty identify?

- What are the institutional and professional consequences for women who openly challenge gender discrimination?

## Significance

Few studies of feminist faculty have focused on women outside of Western Europe and North America (Bracamontes Ayon, 2003).  Existing research on women in South African higher education has focused on the development of feminist consciousness among teachers (Perumal, 2004); constructions of academic identity (M. Walker, 1998); career trajectories (De la Rey, 1999); experiences of black female faculty; the impact of race, gender, and culture (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004).  Missing from the literature, however, are studies that focus on feminist faculty in South Africa and that examine their experiences in higher education institutions.  As Barnes notes, "the subject

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of gender and institutional culture in African higher education remains largely unmapped - and a fruitful target of enquiry" (2005, p. 1).

This study will examine, from the perspective of female faculty, what is it like to be a feminist in a South African university. Beginning with an investigation into their formative years and the roots of their feminist consciousness, this study will determine how feminism has shaped the pedagogical practices of South African women faculty, their relationships with students and colleagues, and their encounters with institutional practices and processes.

Situating Myself

I was born in apartheid South Africa where I was classified as colored and that meant "having to choose between blackness and whiteness" (Erasmus 2001, 13). I grew up in the Western Cape, a part of South Africa with a "political culture distinctive from that characterizing the rest of the country … distinctive for its combativeness, its intellectual assertiveness, and its critical disposition" (Chisholm, 1994, p. 241). The combination of my high school education and the Soweto uprising of 1976 shaped my political and social consciousness. My public high school teachers were members of the Western Cape's political intelligentsia who actively challenged the values of apartheid South Africa in the classroom. They set high educational standards for their students. They openly rejected apartheid ideology and created in the school a culture of disciplined critical opposition to the state. At the same time they "placed a heavy emphasis on the subversive and liberating capacities of education" (Chisholm, 1994, p. 242).

The school had a rich cultural life. We were exposed to a wide variety of films, literature and music, particularly works that spoke of social injustice or produced by

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artists living in oppressive conditions. Our library was filled with a wide selection of books. The school had an active student government, as well as Drama, Debating and Film Societies. Few schools had such an academically and culturally affirming ethos.

With this political and educational background, I left South Africa two years after graduating from high school. I had been offered a full scholarship to Wellesley College, a four-year undergraduate institution for women in the northeastern United States. At Wellesley I experienced an educational environment designed to nurture women intellectually and that validated their academic talents. My undergraduate years further extended my intellectual development and profoundly shaped my feminist consciousness. The feminist faculty I encountered as an undergraduate (one, in particular) had a deep impact on my intellectual and personal development, and my career trajectory after I left college.

My national background and personal history were very different from most of my undergraduate peers, who tended to be from upper middle-class white American families. Although I grew up middle-class, for most of my life my parents were not homeowners and my mother struggled to make ends meet after her marriage to my father foundered. My fellow undergraduates and I had distinctly different worldviews. But, in one of my professors, I found a kindred spirit. Both of us had come from black families who valued education as a way out of economic deprivation. Our connection marked a critical turning point in my undergraduate experience. Up until that point I felt that I didn't fit in and my performance was negatively affected. From then on my grades improved as my confidence in my ideas grew. All it had taken was someone nodding in agreement while they listened to me, telling me that she understood what I was saying,

that my interpretation of the world around me made sense to her as well. I learned from that experience what a powerfully positive effect a like-minded educator could have on student learning and development.

My professor was more than a supportive, affirming educator. She was like many of my high school teachers, committed to social justice for the disenfranchised. To me, she was a model of empowering feminist pedagogy. Also, by encouraging me to share my story with my peers, she was adding to our collective knowledge of women's lives. Together we were learning about each other in a context which, beyond the classroom, was also supportive and affirming.

As I began to formulate the proposal for this study, I thought about feminist educators that might not be so fortunate to work in an affirming environment. How would female faculty committed to social justice make their voices heard when they were in the minority? What were their options for introducing a feminist perspective in the classroom and living as a feminist academic when the broader context was hostile and resistant to expanding the realm of human experience considered worthy of advanced study?

South Africa is a patriarchal society that continues to struggle with the legacy of colonialism and four decades of institutionalized racism. I understand how this legacy has shaped its higher education institutions because I worked in a university for fifteen years: men (mainly white) dominate the upper levels of management structures; male faculty outnumber women, who are clustered in the lower ranks: white women outnumber black men and women, who are also grouped mainly at the bottom of the academic hierarchy.

Universities play a huge role in shaping societal norms. Yet I know from my own experience that, even in repressive societies, educational institutions can be sites for producing knowledge that challenges orthodox thought and can produce individuals that go on to act as agents for social change in the broader community.  In fact, one such individual participated in this study. I would like to bring the combination of my knowledge of the higher education environment and my critical feminist sensibility to this topic. My life experiences have given me a unique range of skills that I can utilize in my exploration of the institutional lives of South African feminist faculty.

<div align="center">South African Higher Education</div>

*Diverse origins/diverse cultures.* In 1994, the year in which South Africa held its first democratic elections, there were thirty-six institutions in the tertiary sector: twenty-one universities and fifteen technikons (universities that offer career and applied education in the sciences and technology).  These institutions were all "government-aided, semi-autonomous … except for a measure of financial control" (Dreijmanis, 1988, p. 17) and, in their characteristics, they reflected apartheid policy.  Beginning in 1916, when the first universities were established by an act of Parliament, South Africa's higher education institutions developed in large part to serve the needs of its white majority, which comprised two major language groups: English and Afrikaans (Dreijmanis, 1988; Moodie, 1994).  Although all universities were originally modeled on British institutions, culturally there were vast differences between English- and Afrikaans-language universities, and between these institutions and others that were later created for South Africa's disenfranchised majority: coloreds, Indians, and Africans.

Four institutions served English-speaking whites: the University of Cape Town, Rhodes University, the University of Natal, and the University of the Witwatersrand. These universities were not always exclusively white: beginning in 1936 they admitted black students, although their numbers would remain small until the 1980s. Britain's influence in the English-medium universities was strong: in the early years of their existence many faculty were British citizens and the majority of South African faculty took their first degrees in British universities. By 1960, this began to change (Moodie, 1994). However, institutional culture was Eurocentric and this shaped the curriculum and research well into the latter part of the twentieth century. Traces of Europe's influence can still be found in the original English-medium universities. What is important to remember about these institutions, however, is that they considered themselves to be 'open' universities in the sense that they were "open communities of scholars dedicated to the search for truth" (Dreijmanis, 1988, p. 17). In the mid-1980s, they would emphasize this openness, evidenced in policies to dramatically increase black enrollment, to distinguish themselves from Afrikaans-language institutions which were, literally and figuratively, closed to black South Africans.

White Afrikaans-speaking South Africans pursued post-secondary education at the Universities of Potchefstroom, Pretoria, Stellenbosch, Rand Afrikaans University, and the University of the Orange Free State. These institutions were expected to play an important role in the development of Afrikaner ideology (that is, intellectual basis of apartheid) and in nurturing and preserving Afrikaner cultural identity. Yet, even within this group there was diversity, some institutions were politically conservative (the University of Pretoria and the University of the Orange Free State) while Stellenbosch

University was more liberal. Potchefstroom was a university for Christian Higher Education and so its institutional culture was profoundly influenced by the white Dutch Reformed Church. Rand Afrikaans University was an urban institution established in 1966 after pressure on the state from conservative Afrikaners who wished to counter the influence of the English-medium University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa's most populous metropole (Moodie, 1994).

The University of Fort Hare was originally the South African Native College, established for Africans in 1916 by missionaries. The South African Native College achieved full university status in 1952 and was renamed Fort Hare at that time. Despite its intended purpose, the university did not serve Africans exclusively, but enrolled coloreds and Indians as well. Furthermore, Fort Hare attracted students from other sub-Saharan African countries, many of whom went on to feature prominently in pro-independence movements. Robert Mugabe, currently President of Zimbabwe, is one example. When the South African government decided, in 1960, that only Xhosa-speaking students would henceforth be enrolled, there was strong opposition on the grounds that "its international character would be undermined" (Dreijmanis, 1988, p. 33).

Apart from Fort Hare, institutions set aside for black South Africans fell into two categories: ethnic universities in major cities and universities to serve ethnic groups inside the 'self-governing' territories or homelands. The impetus to establish separate institutions for different 'population groups' arose out of the apartheid government's concern that increasing numbers of black school-leavers were aspiring to higher education and that, if they were admitted to white institutions, eventually they would outnumber whites (Moodie, 1994). In terms of apartheid ideology, it was unacceptable

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for whites and black to study side by side.  In 1959, the state promulgated the Extension of University Education Act, which simultaneously legalized the exclusion of blacks from white universities and laid the legislative basis for establishing separate universities for black South Africans.  Subsequently, blacks would have to seek the permission of the Minister of Education in order to study at white universities and they were only permitted to do so if they intended to study courses or programs that were not offered at any of the institutions set aside for them.

Beginning in 1959, the apartheid government created the University of the Western Cape on the outskirts of Cape Town for coloreds, the University College for Indians in Durban (later renamed Durban-Westville), and the University of Zululand for Zulu-speakers.  The University of the North at Turfloop was established to cater for Sotho, Tsonga, Venda, and Tswana ethnic groups.  Once the apartheid state decided to grant "independence" for territories set aside for Africans, universities were established in the Transkei (1977), Bophutatswana (1979), and Venda (1981).  The Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA) was created to serve only students of African descent.  It is important to point out that all ethnic universities, with the exception of the Universities of the Western Cape and Durban-Westville, were built far from urban centers in order to keep Africans out of the major cities.  Other institutions that were part of the higher education system when South African became a democracy in 1994 were the non-residential University of South Africa (UNISA), Vista University and the dual-medium University of Port Elizabeth.  UNISA was one of the original three universities created by an act of the South African parliament in 1916.  It has never been a residential university with full-time student enrolment.  Originally it was an examining institution; it

later offered distance education. UNISA remains the largest provider of distance education in South Africa. Vista University was a non-residential institution for Africans established in 1981.  It was also the only institution for Africans situated in a major urban area (of course, it *was* non-residential) (Dreijmanis, 1988).

It is clear from the categories of institutions described above that there was no "system" of higher education in South Africa at the time of the country's first democratic elections in 1994.  Institutional cultures were simultaneously diverse and distinctive because of each university's historical origins and development during the apartheid years.  Universities were not insulated from the upheavals in other sectors of South African society, particularly because education was always a contested terrain.  However, conservative Afrikaner campuses were hardly touched by student protest.  Ethnic institutions, on the other hand, endured periods of protest and sometimes campuses had to be closed because of student disruptions.  There were also protests from time to time at the 'open' universities.

*The Current Context*.  Early in his Presidency, Nelson Mandela issued a proclamation calling for the establishment of a National Commission of Higher Education to develop policy proposals for restructuring higher education that, in particular, "should address the inequalities and inefficiencies inherited from the apartheid era, as well as respond to the social, cultural and economic demands of a globalising world" (Cloete & Muller, 1998, p. 5).  The commission's work culminated in the Higher Education Act of 1997 which became the basis of a policy framework to facilitate change on multiple levels in South African higher education.

At the system level, a Council on Higher Education was created in 1998 to advise the Minister of Education on HE issues "on request or proactively"

(Council on Higher Education, 2009).  A Higher Education Quality Committee is responsible for managing a quality assurance regime that includes accreditation of academic programs, monitoring, evaluation, and institutional audits.  The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was introduced in 1998 with the aim of moving towards a single framework of outcomes-based learning programs that would recognize prior learning and make it possible for individuals to move between the workplace and educational institutions as they acquired qualifications.  The work entailed in implementing the NQF has been complex, burdensome and its quality dubious.  A lengthy report on its implementation was commission by the Departments of Education and Labor, who are jointly responsible for the NQF.  The authors reported that "the architecture of the NQF, embracing policies, regulations, procedures, structures, and language, is experienced as unduly complex, confusing, time consuming and unsustainable" (Department of Education & Department of Labour, 2002, p. i).

Finally, also at the macro level, the government announced the National Plan for Higher Education in 2002, which contained far-reaching proposals for public institutions. Several institutions were to be merged in order to achieve economies of scale; new technical universities and post-secondary institutes would be created (Institute of Education, 2003).  The proposals, ultimately adopted by Parliament after significant revisions, were equal in scope to the 1959 legislation establishing apartheid universities in terms of the long-term impact they would have on South African higher education (Nash, 2006).

The private sector in higher education is also growing. The adoption of the Higher Education Act in 1997, and the regulatory framework that has emerged since then, has been conducive to growth of the number of private higher education institutions. Until the

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mid-1990s, these institutions were only allowed to offer certificate programs and they offered instruction in the areas of finance and human resource management. When the National Qualifications Framework was introduced, it became possible for many of these institutions to offer degree programs, and they moved to do so aggressively (Fehnel, 2002). Originally this served the needs of the state, which looked to private providers to increase access to higher education and thereby to produce the highly skilled graduates which the country needed if it was to be competitive in the global economy (Council on Higher Education, 2003; Fehnel, 2002). However, an investigation into private higher education providers has revealed that there is reason to be concerned about first, the quality of education provision in these institutions and second, whether they offer programs appropriate to the country's needs for highly-skilled workers in particular sectors of the economy (Council on Higher Education, 2003).

Within public higher education institutions, the policy changes of the last decade have placed faculty and staff under a lot of stress. The reporting needs of the quality assurance regime are extensive as each institution has had to create an internal system to meet system requirements. Thus monitoring and evaluation occurs within institutions as well as within the broader higher education system. This is nothing new as there were always internal and external mechanisms to evaluate the quality of student performance. However, the scale of evaluation is much broader now. Then institutions are required to submit three-year rolling plans to the Department of Education and to update these plans every year. Earlier in this section I have referred to institutional obligations to the National Qualifications Framework.

The workload generated by the mergers process includes continual meetings to rationalize institutional structures. Faculty and staff wait anxiously to see whether their positions will be declared redundant. Institutions with widely divergent internal cultures will be merged. For example, the predominantly white, religious Potchefstroom University and the historically black University of the Northwest (formerly Bophutatswana) will become one institution (Institute of Education, 2003). All in all, this is a trying time to be on the faculty of a public South African university.

Definition of terms

In this study, South Africans will be classified according to historical (*apartheid*) convention, which continues today for the purposes of tracking transformation in many spheres, namely, "white," "colored," "Indian," and "African." In South Africa, "black" refers to all South Africans previously classified as colored, Indian, and African.

Terminology used in South African universities reflect the country's colonial heritage in that many of the terms are also used in British higher education. So, for example, the president is a *Vice-Chancellor* and a deputy president a *Deputy Vice-Chancellor*. A dean is the head of a *faculty,* not a school, as in the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities or Health Sciences/Medicine. Faculty is either referred to as *academics* or *academic staff,* which distinguishes them from administrative staff. Faculty rankings are: Professor, Associate Professor, Senior Lecturer, Lecturer, and Junior Lecturer.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Introduction

Given that the national context for my proposed study is South Africa, several issues informed the selection of materials and the scope of this literature review. Firstly, South African female faculty are not a homogenous group of women:

- They are overwhelmingly white, but also include women who were classified as Coloured, Indian, and African[1] under the *apartheid* regime;

- The women differ with respect to class position and sexual orientation;

- Some are self-described feminists, although their political views run the gamut from liberal to radical feminism.

The dissertation will focus on women who have taught at South African universities over roughly a thirty-year period, that is, from the late 1970s to the early years of the twenty-first century. This means that some women would have begun their academic careers during the apartheid period (and are still in the universities), while others have only joined academia in post-apartheid, democratic South Africa. Tremendous changes have taken place in South African universities since the mid-1980s culminating in the establishment of a single higher education system in 1997 when Parliament passed the Higher Education Act. Although some institutions have escaped mergers and the upheaval they entail, those that were untouched had nevertheless initiated institutional transformation several years before Nelson Mandela's release in 1990 signaled the imminent demise of legalized racial discrimination in South Africa.

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[1] Women in these categories will be referred to collectively as *black*, unless it is necessary to refer to a particular group for purposes of analysis.

Given these factors and the South African context, the core literature that I reviewed included the experiences of women who felt additionally marginalized because of group identity, class and/or national origin.  Also included were studies that analyze women's experiences from a critical feminist perspective, which is the theoretical framework guiding this study.  Although there is a fairly small amount of literature about the experiences of women *in* South African universities *by* South African women, the studies that exist are vital to this project (De la Rey, 1999; Mabokela, 2002; Mabokela & Mawila, 2004; Maurtin-Cairncross, 2003, p. 41; Perumal, 2004; M. Walker, 1997a, 1997b, p. 42; 1998).

## The Search

I gathered materials for this project by focusing on the writings of a group of women whose names I had encountered frequently since I began reading several years ago about gender issues in education (and higher education in particular).  These writer's ideas had resonated with me because:

- They were concerned about issues of social justice (Arnot & Dillabough, 1999; Brooks, 1998; J. Currie, Harris, & Thiele, 2000)

- They highlighted the silence on gender within the literature on globalization and higher education policy (Blackmore, 2000; Stromquist, 1999);

- They focused on the implications of higher education restructuring and transformation for marginalized groups within the academy, particularly women (Brooks, 1998; Kolodny, 1998; Barnett as cited in Morley & Walsh, 1996, p. 4; Ropers-Huilman & Shackelford, 2003);

- Their analytical approach was grounded in critical feminist educational theories (Safarik, 2002; D. Smith, 1975; M. Walker, 1998);

- They were among the few studies about the experiences of female faculty in South African higher education (Mabokela, 2002; Mabokela & Mawila, 2004; M. Walker, 1997a, 1997b, 1998)

Using electronic databases I identified relevant studies by these authors. I then proceeded to locate other studies about women in higher education to supplement the 'core' literature I had assembled. The vast majority of studies written in English have been produced by researchers in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. But I also sought out studies conducted in countries like Australia and New Zealand that I thought might address issues of race and ethnicity (in addition to gender). I focused on Australia and New Zealand because, as former British colonies, they would be similar to South African universities in historical development as well as institutional culture.

My searches did not reveal studies conducted in English-speaking West African countries. It is quite possible that the texts are not available electronically. However, a very interesting compilation of essays about the experiences of African women in North American universities turned up in one of my searches (Oyewumi, 2003). I found an unpublished dissertation about the institutional experiences of feminist faculty in Mexican universities (Bracamontes Ayon, 2003). Also, in my quest for general studies on women in higher education, I found an English text about women in Scandinavia and the former Soviet Union (Christensen, Halsaa, & Saarinen, 2004).

I concluded the search by selecting a few works on feminist theories in education. I used search terms such as "higher education" and "education" along with

"feminism(s)," "feminist thought," and "feminist theory." Given that there will be differences amongst the participants in my study "in relation to race, culture, age … language backgrounds [as well as] strands of feminist thinking," (Perumal, 2004, p. 251), this literature review includes relevant writings by African, North American, Australasian, and European (predominantly British) feminist educational theorists, whose analytical frameworks range from liberal to critical.

Broad themes in the research

Overall the literature shows that, thirty years after the first United Nations Convention on the Rights of Women, female faculty continue to face impediments to fulfilling professional lives even though policies designed to address gender discrimination in higher education have been in place for at least two decades. Inequalities in status, rank, and salary persist between the vast majority of male and female faculty, although the gaps have shrunk over time. Universities and colleges are still "alien terrains," particularly for women academics self-identified as feminists (Morley, 1999). Changes in the higher education landscape have not eradicated certain forms of discrimination against female faculty. So, to take one example, issues related to parenting and childcare have not been satisfactorily resolved for women with families (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Brooks, 1997; David, 2003). Scholars of gender equity in higher education continue to investigate the tenacious persistence of certain forms of gender discrimination.

The studies that make up this review approached female faculty's experiences in higher education from a variety of perspectives. Authors chose different ways to present their findings. Some scholars focused on the structure of higher education institutions

and its formal practices which they identified as being gendered. Others drew attention to the differences in women's and men's life patterns and the implications of these differences for women's careers in the academy (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Heward, 1996). Certain scholars identified and analyzed the informal (and often hidden) practices which made women feel that the academy was hostile to their presence (Kettle, 1996; Morley, 1999; D. Smith, 1975; M. Walker, 1997b).

The scholars who focused on women's experiences as individuals tended not to theorize about the reasons for a "chilly" campus climate (Glazer-Raymo, 1999). Some of these works were autobiographical and mainly empirical studies. Works that theorized about the position of women in the academy pointed to the links between struggles against patriarchal practices in higher education and broader struggles for social justice (Morley & Walsh, 1995b). Women of color, and a few white researchers, showed how the intersection of race and ethnicity added extra dimensions to their marginalization within the academy and complicated their relationships with their female peers as well as the communities they belonged to (Butler, 2000; Chua, 2000; Mabokela & Mawila, 2004).

Finally, it was interesting to find common elements in the studies of women from certain geographic locations. For example Middleton (1993), who is a white feminist researcher from New Zealand, drew attention to issues of race and ethnicity as they impacted on her identity as a feminist academic. Walker (1997a, 1997b, 1998), an English-speaking white South African, also discussed the politics of race and ethnicity in the historically black institution where she was employed, noting its impact on relationships between female colleagues from different "population groups." Researchers

from the United Kingdom often included a discussion of the role of class in shaping

women's behavior and experiences in the academy (David, 2003; Morley, 1999).  Yet,

studies produced in the United States tended to divide on racial lines: white researchers

did not necessarily ignore race, but it was seldom fully integrated into their analysis

(Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Kolodny, 1998).

I am not suggesting that this was always the case in the literature included in this

review.  Rather, these were broad trends that I noticed because I was particularly

sensitive to how researchers dealt with race, ethnicity and class, and its intersection with

gender so I noticed when there was little or no discussion of these categories.  It is

important to make the point that the lines between different approaches are permeable

and constantly shifting.  Overlap exists: certain issues arise constantly whether

researchers focus on different aspects of women's experiences in academia studies or are

located in different countries.  I found in the literature that Arnot was correct when she

observed that there is a "specificity and similarity of feminist concerns internationally"

(1993, p. 1).

Finally, a brief note on terminology: many of the works I consulted do not focus

solely on feminist faculty but are concerned, more broadly, with all women faculty in

higher education.  In my discussion of the literature, I will distinguish between 'female

academics' and/or 'women faculty' and 'feminist academics' and/or 'feminist faculty'

where appropriate.

## Institutional issues

More than one writer has remarked on the paradox of studying gender

discrimination within an institution that "claims to be in the business of promoting

understanding, critical reflection and reflexive social inquiry" (Brooks, 1998; Butler, 2000; Barnett as cited in Morley & Walsh, 1996, p. 4).  Universities value the Enlightenment ideals of objectivity and detachment and claim to be meritocracies.  Yet, the attitudes and practices associated with these values, which are embedded in higher education institutions, are actually anti-female despite appearing to be gender-neutral at face value (Kettle, 1996).  The studies consulted for this review confirm Chliwniak's observation, "The academy has comfortably reproduced itself for several centuries and a male-dominated, patriarchal culture has been solidly established" (1997, p. 13).

This is particularly evident when one looks at faculty composition: the proportion of female academics employed in higher education institutions lags behind women's enrollment at the undergraduate level as well as the output of female doctorates (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Kettle, 1996).  Studies show that women with Ph.D.s are not being appointed to faculty positions despite sufficient graduates in the applicant pool, particularly in education, psychology, sociology, and anthropology.  Glazer-Raymo (1999) has gathered figures that show how more women than men are appointed to adjunct positions; that the greater number of tenured male faculty means that tenure committees are overwhelmingly male and that less women than men are likely to earn tenure.

Glazer-Raymo's research on women faculty in the United States shows us that legal reforms and anti-discrimination legislation do not translate into women's greater access to, and mobility within, the academy (Glazer-Raymo, 1999).  While the existence of equal opportunity policies can signal an institution's commitment to employment equity, it can also make people complacent about change because they can delude

themselves into believing that something is being done (to address discrimination against women) (Kettle, 1996).  Brooks (1997) found that most of the female faculty she interviewed thought that equal opportunity policies were important in order to effect transformation, but some were concerned about the gap between policy and practice, and that discriminatory practices would be concealed behind policy.  Sexist attitudes and practices do not disappear because equity policies are in place.  On the contrary, they stubbornly resist change and, in fact, end up undermining equity policy so that higher education institutions remain hostile environments for women.

Researchers who have analyzed institutional gender equity policies from a feminist perspective provide us with important insights into the nature of male resistance to women's increased presence in the academy.   Morley, for example, looked at the gap between policy text and policy implementation and the role played by "micropolitics, … a subtext of organisational life," that occurs informally—outside of structures, but between individuals (1999, p. 4).  Because this happens in a 'space' that cannot be regulated and has to do with individual attitudes, changes to organizational structure in order to achieve equity can be undermined because the individuals that occupy positions of power use the interstices to resist change.

Walker, in her analysis of "the making and implementation of gender equity policy in a historically black South African University," pays particular attention to how men, white and black, exercise power in order to subvert the policy implementation process (1997a, p. 41).  While Morley's incredibly useful description of micropolitics takes us behind formal structures and helps us understand how informal and unregulated practices thwart the objectives of equity policy, Walker's nuanced discussion of the role

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played by the combination of gender, ethnicity, and race adds a new dimension to Morley's analysis. Walker asserts, correctly, that the South African higher education context cannot be understood without recognizing the role of race in determining women's life chances and their position within the academy. Her contribution to the discussion about the intersection of race, gender and power and its impact on institutional culture is critically important. As she notes, patterns of power have implications for gender equity policy in that power and gender complicate policy implementation.

At Walker's institution black men were opposed to gender advocacy work on campus and firmly against hiring more female faculty—particularly white females. The response of black male faculty was simultaneously a manifestation of their sexism as well as the legacy of apartheid, when they had fewer employment opportunities in higher education than white women. The most sobering aspect of Walker's experience is that it took place within an institution designated "the intellectual home of the left" by the then president who had deep roots in anti-apartheid politics. Small wonder then that Morley's interviewees—at universities less overtly committed to gender equity in both Greece and the United Kingdom—tended to be skeptical about the ability of such policies to transform the academy into an institution more hospitable to women.

New forms of institutional governance have brought no relief to women faculty. In the United Kingdom, Kettle (1996) found that structural change, that is, moving from a collegial to a managerial style of governance, appeared to have little effect on attitudes. The women she interviewed remarked that centers of power had merely shifted, not altered. This led her to conclude that discrimination against women was part of institutional culture as opposed to being a feature of institutional operation and structure.

Yet, as Kolodny (1998) contends, institutions fail to see discrimination as *a pattern of behavior* (my emphasis). So a provost will not make the connection between vandalized posters announcing a program of speakers on women's studies and a feminist scholar's tenure denial by an overwhelmingly white, male, Appointments, Promotions, and Tenure Committee that has no understanding or appreciation of her research. Conversely, there have been several high profile cases in which female faculty *have* been recommended for tenure with the enthusiastic support of their departments, only to have the recommendations rejected by senior administrators (AAUW, 2004).

Reflecting on five years as an academic dean at the University of Arizona, Kolodny (1998) recounted several instances in which feminist scholars were victimized for their views. Some were denied tenure while others who were already tenured found that when they took a principled feminist stand, their institutions failed to support them. Although blatant acts of sexism are in decline, resistance to feminist scholarship has taken on different (often insidious) forms: defacement of posters announcing events about women's issues; anonymous distribution of negative reviews of the work of feminist scholars. Because higher education leadership is resistant to the idea that the backlash against women faculty is part of a larger pattern, institutional policy has not changed to combat discrimination. For example, institutions have not embarked on a complete overhaul of hiring practices. Rather, heads of departments and deans "quietly reassure recruitment committees that once they've hired one woman, they need seek no others, thus encouraging a revolving door of tokenism" (Kolodny, 1998, p. 99).

"Playing at being academic"

Bagilhole (1994) has remarked on the 'double deviance' of being a female academic: one works in a male-dominated world and expects to receive equal pay for equal work. A female academic she interviewed remarked, "Women are only seen as playing at being academic, not a real academic" (1994, p. 22). Walker notes that all women faculty experience feelings of marginalization: they are always "the Other academics" (1998, p. 42). The women that Bagilhole interviewed also reported that they had feelings of alienation, a sense that they did not belong in academia. This is because the academy is still 'a man's world' and its masculine character is maintained in many ways (Morley & Walsh, 1995b). Participating in her first meeting as a senior staff member, Walker remembers that she decided not to ride three floors in "the cramped [elevator] with male colleagues" but to walk to the top floor of the building in which the meeting was to be held (1997b, p. 370). Once inside the committee room, she noted that even the furnishings were dark and forbidding.

The literature contains many descriptions of the particular challenges for women with parenting responsibilities (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2003). One woman reported that her classes were scheduled in the early morning, despite asking to be assigned later sessions so that she could breastfeed her child before coming to work (Bagilhole, 1994). Packer's (1995) study of gender equity policy at universities in the United States shows how deeply-entrenched in male faculty's psyches is their view of a mother's role. She provides several examples of women denied tenure because their male colleagues believe that either they should be at home with their children or their child-rearing responsibilities will interfere with their professional duties.

It should be no surprise to us that cultural and social attitudes existing in the wider society find their way onto university campuses; universities are not ivory towers after all, but very much products of their national and social contexts. As a social institution, the university also has a central role in social reproduction, particularly the production of elites. The women who teach in the university are also an elite and privileged group. Yet, the literature on women in British universities tells us that they are reminded in overt and covert ways that the academy is not ready to bestow on them the rights that accompany full membership (Bagilhole, 1994; Brooks, 1997; Morley & Walsh, 1995a).

Feminists and Feminism in the Academy

The life of a feminist academic is filled with contradiction, and this is an ongoing debate (D. Currie & Kazi, 1987; Morley, 1999; Morley & Walsh, 1995b; Ropers-Huilman & Shackelford, 2003). The activist feminist community accuses academic feminists of "selling out [their] commitment to everyday praxis," while they are 'make believe' faculty to their anti-feminist male colleagues (Bagilhole, 1994; Morley & Walsh, 1995a, p. 1). Despite the existence of many thriving women's studies departments, the field does not enjoy unconditional acceptance as a legitimate academic discipline (Morley, 1999). Kolodny (1998) found that courses on feminist theory were not recognized as constituting advanced work for senior undergraduates; feminist scholarship was dismissed as inferior to "traditional" scholarship that had been generated by scholars who conform to mainstream norms and values and that, consequently, funding was hard to come by.

The contradictory nature of a feminist academic's position in higher education stems, in the first instance, from the basic principle that underpins feminism, namely, that

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it " is by definition radical because it challenges the status quo rather than supports it" (D. Currie & Kazi, 1987, p. 78). Feminist scholars are acutely aware that, "on the one hand our continued presence in the university shows that we still believe in the value of that institution, but, on the other hand, as feminists trying to create new ideas and alternatives, we are opposed to the university as it currently exists" (D. Currie & Kazi, 1987, p. 77). Currie and Kazi wonder whether the de-radicalization of feminist faculty is inevitable because they theorize about feminism from a privileged position; their location in the academy creates a distance between them and the women they theorize about: they are removed from the vast majority of women's everyday struggles. Smith concurs: academic feminism's detachment from activism outside the academy is a consequence of its professionalization, that is, the process of becoming a field of study "fully embedded in the academy" (1999, p. 21).

Another source of tension between feminists which is played out *within* the academy has to do with generational differences: the earlier generations of academic feminists were products of organizations and structures focused on achieving social justice for women. Younger faculty, however, have come to feminist consciousness mainly through their study of women's position in society. Theirs is, literally, a more academic approach to feminism, as opposed to one rooted in women's struggles. Given this tension, feminist faculty are concerned about whether it is possible for feminism to retain its radical transformative nature inside the academy and wonder how their scholarly work can be used in the broader fight against gender oppression, thereby contributing to the improvement of *all* women's lives (Morley, 1999). Smith (1999) acknowledges the institutional and disciplinary pressures that difficulty of overcoming

the tendency towards insularity, she urges feminist faculty to take on the project of establishing substantive links with activists outside the academy in order to engage in a dialogue which is mutually supportive and beneficial.

Blackmore and Kenway (1993) believe that the complex nature of struggles between academic feminists and within the feminist movement, like politics in general, make it impossible to predict what will happen. But Currie and Kazi (1987) observe that the work of feminists in the academy is not necessarily in conflict with the activists engaged in daily struggles on behalf of women. Feminist faculty are motivated by the desire to use their intellectual skills to increase awareness of gender oppression and to show how discrimination against women diminishes the quality of life for all members of society (Morley, 1999). The academy constitutes an intellectual space in which to theorize about women's position in society and to utilize such theory to achieve greater understanding. Research which brings about greater understanding of gender oppression can then inform strategies for change. Theory and praxis are not in conflict but have a symbiotic relationship. Currie and Kazi argue that feminist theory and research methodology are necessary to extend and take forward the struggle for gender equality.

Regarding their primary functions within academia, namely, teaching, research, and service, Morley found that feminist faculty tended to take on too much responsibility and that institutions took advantage of their willingness to 'go the extra mile' (Morley, 1999). The women she interviewed had difficulty with boundary setting: they felt personally responsible for ensuring that their students were coping with their studies. This left them emotionally depleted and negatively affected their research output.

Consciously behaving in ways that are antithetical to the academy's norms—not

remaining detached—had emotional and professional consequences for women.

Career Paths of Feminist Faculty

For several reasons there are fundamental differences between the career

trajectories of men and women in the academy. Few feminist faculty have followed a

linear, unbroken career path. Heward (1996) found that many women were acutely

aware that, if they planned to have children, they would have to balance work and family.

They understood, implicitly, that parenting could impact negatively on an academic

career. The women Morley (1999) interviewed talked about feeling hurt, frustrated, and

disappointed when she asked them about career development: some were afraid that they

had missed opportunities for advancement because they entered the academy when they

were older—they had not 'arrived' when they were expected to have done so. Others

were talented scholars passed over for promotion in favor of male colleagues who were

mediocre scholars and sometimes underqualified.

But even those without family responsibilities have not been taken up within the

academy, despite increased numbers of women doctorates in recent years and an aging,

predominantly white male faculty. In a study that examined the impact of public policy

on part-time work for female faculty, Glazer-Raymo (2003) found that women are still

less likely to achieve tenure than men. This is because higher education institutions have

not been immune to the cultural and economic shifts in the wider society. The erosion of

public and political support for higher education has implications for women's work

within the academy. Faced with shrinking budgets, universities and colleges are

downsizing and tenure is under attack. The combination of these two factors means that

there are fewer tenure-track positions (with the accompanying benefits) available for the rising number of female doctoral graduates interested in joining the professoriate. Thus, not only do women in higher education institutions constitute the majority in lower academic ranks (assistant professor, instructor, lecturer) and earn less than their male counterparts, but they are also the largest group of adjunct and part-time faculty (Glazer-Raymo, 2003).

Part-time employment for female faculty was originally seen as a way to increase women's representation and recognize their need for flexibility particularly if they were parents, that is, it was seen as a strategy within broader affirmative action policy (Glazer-Raymo, 2003). But their part-time status was not meant to be permanent, nor could it preclude the possibility of part-time tenure. Part-time faculty were also supposed to have certain basic needs met such as, for example, access to an office. The reality in colleges and universities, however, is a burgeoning, mainly female, part-time and adjunct work force who have no benefits and, most of the time, no office in which to consult with students or carry out other teaching-related responsibilities (Glazer-Raymo, 2003).

Triple Jeopardy: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender

Any review of the literature about women in higher education would be incomplete without studies that have raised our awareness of how race and ethnicity shape the experiences of a significant number of feminist faculty. In the last fifteen to twenty years, women of color, and women who identify with minority ethnic groups have documented their experiences and, in doing so, have demonstrated that generalizations about the position of women in academia offer only a partial picture. The findings of studies about white female faculty, their research shows, are not representative of all

women.  Other contributors to the literature included in this study are feminist faculty from privileged populations in countries with white minorities, who are conscious of the impact race and ethnicity have on their interactions with other women in their institutions.

This review includes works by scholars of African origin (Mabokela, 2002; Mabokela & Mawila, 2004) who focus on women in South African higher education as well as African women who have worked in North American universities (Nzegwu, 2003).  Walker (1997a; 1997b; 1998) is an English-speaking privileged white South African woman on the faculty of an institution originally established for people designated colored under apartheid and writes from a critical feminist perspective.  Chua, an Asian-American professor of English literature, has experienced the racism of her white colleagues as well as the prejudice of American-born Chinese towards new Chinese immigrants, which was rife in the 1960s and 1970s (Chua, 2000).  Gray and Ryan capture the dilemma of being Irish graduate students and scholars in an English university (Gray & Ryan, 1996).  I have selected these sources because they convey the complexities and nuances of race, ethnicity, and gender as they intersect in the lives of feminist faculty.

Rogers asserts that generalizations about the position of women are problematic because women do not occupy a constant position in relation to either men or women in any one country or in any one place (as cited in Thin, 1995).  On the contrary, the aspect of a woman's identity which is foregrounded depends on the context and the time in her life.  Over the course of a day, a woman has to call into play the relevant features of her identity—mother, spouse, academic, sister, teacher—as and when appropriate.  Consequently, it is important to explore and understand the multi-faceted identity of the

broad category 'woman' as the knowledge we gain has implications for policy and practice.

Mabokela and Mawila (2004) focus mainly on the status of black (i.e., Indian, African and colored) women in the South African academy even though some white female faculty and administrators were interviewed. Their study describes how race, gender, and culture have shaped South African higher education institutions and what impact this has on the black women who pursue academic and administrative careers within them. Two bodies of research inform the authors' theoretical framework, namely, women's increasing marginalization within the academy globally, and higher education organizations as gendered institutions. The authors conducted 20 open-ended interviews with women at four institutions with combinations of each of the following distinctive characteristics: rural, urban, historically black, historically white, a comprehensive, and a technical university.

Historically black institutions (HBIs) were established by the South African government at the end of the 1950s, to serve people classified as black, Indian, and colored. These institutions were never meant to be fully-fledged universities, so, for example, faculty were not required to have a doctorate or to be enrolled in a doctoral program in order to be employed. As a result they never developed robust research cultures. However, one of the reforms that followed the establishment of a democratic government in 1994 was the creation of a higher education system that falls under the national Department of Education. The universities are subject to legislation issued by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) which sets guidelines for, and monitors, all aspects of institutional quality. Important indicators of research quality are

the number of faculty with doctorates and research output.  Female faculty in HBIs face particular obstacles to meeting SAQA's requirements for advanced degrees and publication.

In response to queries about mentorship, women at the HBI reported that they got no assistance from male faculty when they asked for help with preparing papers for conferences and/or publication (Mabokela, 2002; Mabokela & Mawila, 2004).  The women surmised, correctly, that the men were *unable* to help because they themselves had little research experience. Women also reported feeling completely at sea when it came to 'negotiating' the institution.  They were left to find their own way—literally and figuratively.  There were no formal mechanisms for inducting them into the academic profession and only men were given access to the more informal ways of 'learning the ropes.'  Male faculty brought their sexist cultural attitudes into the workplace: they infantilized women yet expected them to do most of the hard work.  Like the women in Brooks' (1997) study, black women were not rewarded for taking on administrative tasks that no-one else wanted to do.

Executive meetings filled the South African female heads of department with dread.  If there was any forum in which they felt under particular pressure to perform, it was when meeting with their male peers.  Women explained to Mabokela (2002) that they took extra care to ensure that they read every report in their committee papers so that they would be thoroughly prepared for meetings.  Walker (1997b) recalled that she and her female colleagues would apologize for speaking or for speaking more than once. When they spoke they would do so hesitantly and they would condense their remarks in order to be as brief as possible.  In contrast their male colleagues contributed to the

deliberations at length and in an assertive and commanding tone of voice. There were times when a statement that a woman had made appeared to go unnoticed but when repeated by a man was immediately taken up by the rest of the committee. Walker felt inadequate and reluctant to participate because meeting discourse was unfamiliar to her.

The authors found tensions between black women and other groups. African women reported being discriminated against by women of Indian descent (even when the Indians occupied positions with lower status within the organizational hierarchy). They reported being aware of the unsubstantiated belief among Indian staff that African women were less qualified and that their presence on the faculty lowered the institution's prestige (Mabokela, 2002). Walker also found that, even though she was one of only three women who sat on the Executive Committee of the Senate, she could not assume that, by virtue of being female, they would share a sense of camaraderie. She was white; they were a diverse group, so "gender alliances had to be built" (M. Walker, 1997b, p. 370).

Walker does not take female solidarity for granted because she is sensitive to her black colleagues' feelings of mistrust which has historically characterized the relationship between black and white women. During the apartheid years "a difficult methodological line was repeatedly crossed" by a few white female researchers engaged in what they thought was "meaningful scholarship" relevant to the lives of the oppressed majority (Barnes, 2002, p. 248). This group included white women who engaged in political activity at great personal risk and who were punished by the state when their activities ran foul of legislation designed to crush anti-apartheid protest. However, at the first women's studies conference held in the country in 1991, black academic feminists

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accused them of paternalism and of conducting research that disempowered their research subjects. Tensions that had been building up for decades bubbled over. Barnes writes that many of the white researchers were reluctant to acknowledge their complicity (albeit unintentional) in perpetuating racist research practices. Stung by what they considered to be unjustified criticism, they drew attention to the hurdles they had faced in putting together the first academic conference in South Africa that focused on women's issues, and essentially told their critics to arrange their own conference. Black women subsequently gathered by themselves in Cape Town later that year and, in contrast, "the dreaded racial feminist dynamic" (between black and white scholars) was noticeably absent (Barnes, 2002, p. 250).

The acrimony of the South African conference can be heard in Nzegwu's (2003) searing accusation of racism which she directs at white North American academic feminists. As an art historian she takes issue with women who use interpreters instead of learning the language of people they study and who are thus ignorant of nuances that are lost in translation. Even while they assert their sensitivity to the experiences of African women, Nzegwu states angrily that white feminist faculty make generalizations about women's experiences and fail to recognize critical differences between their lives and African women's lives. They appropriate the role of expert and refuse to see why this is problematic. Nzegwu rejects the notion that *her* anger is the problem. On the contrary, she asserts that the problem is white academic women's refusal to reflect critically on their own racist behavior and attitudes.

This is a hostile, unforgiving critique that makes me uncomfortable even though I agree with some of Nzegwu's observations. Clearly she intends to evoke feelings of

discomfort and even shame. However, I am unconvinced that white academic women, as a group, discriminate against their colleagues of color intentionally and that it is their strategy for operating in academia. Walker's statement (1997a, p. 42) that "we are all complicit, consciously or otherwise, in sustaining the idea of race" holds true for the United States as well as South Africa. But this is not the same as claiming there is an orchestrated campaign by white North American feminists against their African colleagues. Nevertheless, Nzegwu reminds us of the uncomfortable truth that white women in the academy have more power than women of color and that this power imbalance can have the effect of silencing more trenchant critiques of academic imperialism.

Nzegwu's conceptualization of racism as an 'us vs. them' dichotomy is limited as it fails to account for ethnicity. Gray and Ryan (1996), on the other hand, detail the paradoxes and contradictions of their position as members of a less visible ethnic minority. Although they are Irish, they are fair-skinned like white English citizens and they speak the same language. Their constant dilemma is whether they should remain silent and ignore discriminatory remarks and actions or dispute them even though "[c]hallenging invisibility can be a lonely and isolating experience" (Gray & Ryan, 1996, p. 113). They experience subtle and overt discrimination and, if they choose silence, they would be complicit in racist behavior. They are treated as English when their actions suggest that they are part of the dominant group, but they are also associated with negative Irish stereotypes. So they are rewarded when they conform, but punished for being different. Gray and Ryan do not wish to be assimilated into English society because "assimilation [means] a denial of difference, tokenism and disempowerment"

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(1996, p. 123). Instead they propose the initiation of a dialogue between women that does not privilege one group over the other but that facilitates a joint exploration the nature of inequality. They believe that heightening the visibility of Irish women in English higher education can enrich English feminisms as well as contribute to discussions about colonialism, patriarchy and forms of 'whiteness'.

The experiences of women in South Africa, North America, and England illustrate that race and ethnicity cannot be ignored in discussions about women's experiences in higher education. Female faculty can choose either to ignore the divisions that exist between them or they can confront their differences and talk about the silencing effect of racist behavior. Dialogue about difference can identify and address the causes of hostility between academic feminists and move women toward opportunities for collaboration and alliance in order to advance gender equity in the academy.

Surviving the Academy

This review has largely focused on the nature of discrimination against women in higher education. Gender discrimination in the academy is responsible for frustrating working conditions and acts as a brake on many women's career aspirations. The academy is not gender-blind; its meritocratic values do not take into account any differences between the lived experiences of men and women that might result in the latter's underperformance. Female faculty know this, and this knowledge often determines whether and when they choose to have children, for example. Yet women in higher education, particularly feminist faculty, have persisted in their determination to have scholarly careers. This section of the review discusses the coping mechanisms that women adopt to survive in higher education's "chilly climate" (Sandler, 1999).

Two Canadian studies focused on women's lived experiences and how their daily lives are shaped by its gendered expectations (Acker & Armenti, 2004). Feminist critical policy analysis (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997) framed the studies. Central to this framework is "the social construction of gender" (Acker & Armenti, 2004, p. 4). In the context of higher education, we use this framework to establish whether there are differences between men's and women's roles within their families and what are the implications of their respective roles for their performance as faculty.

Acker was principal investigator for the study of men and women at several Canadian universities, whereas Armenti interviewed women at a single university for her dissertation. All the women interviewed worked in faculties of education. In the course of the interviews, information about sleeping patterns emerged, even though neither researcher asked about it specifically. Some of the women mentioned that, in an effort to fulfill their obligations in a trying professional environment and maintain a personal life, they slept less.

The women also raised several issues related to childcare: timing pregnancy around tenure or a grant application; the difficulties of arranging childcare when a partner was out of town; taking care of sick children; having babysitting arrangements unravel just as they were leaving for campus; either working after their children went to bed or sleeping for a few hours and getting up in the middle of the night. Some women reported being advised against having children. Even older women who had grown children could remember vividly the stress they experienced as new faculty with young ones to care for. It was apparent from the interviews that the women felt quite overwhelmed. Yet they knew that they could not expect any accommodations from their institutions, so they just

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worked harder (and slept fewer hours at night) to give the impression that they were coping.

The tendency among academic women to work harder than their male colleagues also arose in a study conducted in the United Kingdom (Bagilhole, 1994). The majority of women felt that they would only be successful if they surpassed men in research productivity and performance as teachers. They feared that any weakness on their part would be perceived as inability to do their jobs and could jeopardize their careers.

Other women chose to distance themselves from female colleagues in women's studies and/or who were known to be feminists (Middleton, 1993; Morley, 1999). Such women were not interested in networking with other women or in being part of a supportive female community. Even while she conceded that there was no 'script' for a female academic, one woman described how difficult it was for her to walk the line between displaying feminine traits and being too assertive. Being female was a liability, she explained, particularly if one had children (Bagilhole, 1994). So in order to be taken seriously by her male colleagues, she made a concerted effort to project the image of an intelligent, childless woman, who was not overtly feminine, and was unlikely to challenge the status quo. Even if one were to disregard women who opted out of community with their female colleagues, research in the United Kingdom revealed that academic women did not share their instances of discrimination with each other (Brooks, 1997). Consequently, women felt isolated, as if no-one else was having these experiences.

Morley (1999) found that obstacles to community building among women could be a combination of class status and personal circumstances or lack of support from other

women. So, for example, a working-class woman who was a single parent might feel disinclined to approach her colleagues and probably had very little free time. Morley (1999, p. 168) contends that "feminism is compromised by its entry into [the] segmented, boundaried disciplinary structures of the academy. It is hard for sisterhood and collectivity to flourish." Walker (1997a) and Middleton (1993), writing in the South African and New Zealand contexts respectively, cite race and ethnicity as additional barriers between women.

Conclusion: Implications for a study of South African feminist faculty

This review has demonstrated that there are remarkable similarities in the experiences of academic women across several countries. The overall picture appears to be rather bleak: universities and colleges are still hostile environments for most women. This is despite the enormous strides that have been made in the last thirty years. The number of women entering the academy has risen consistently. Female and feminist scholars have made significant achievements: many campuses have Women's Studies departments; scholarship by and about women is diverse and plentiful; disciplines, particularly in the humanities, arts, and social sciences, have been irrevocably transformed by the production of knowledge from alternative women-centered perspectives (D. E. Smith, 1999).

However, the literature about women in academia provides ample evidence that gender discrimination continues to stymie women's movement into academia and through the academic ranks to positions of authority and greater influence. Researchers agree that discrimination against women is part of a pattern; that it has persisted because practices and procedures in higher education institutions are not gender-blind. The life-

cycle of a white, privileged, male is the norm, despite the existence of Affirmative Action in the United States as well as gender equity policies elsewhere. Policies designed to achieve gender equity are undermined by patriarchal values that are deeply ingrained in higher education institutions and are still pervasive in many countries, despite improvements in women's status in the last thirty years. Employment equity policies achieve few of their goals when institutional hierarchies remain unchallenged. The studies show that merely adding women to the academy has not transformed universities and colleges into inclusive egalitarian institutions that embrace diversity.

We have also learned from the literature that women's experiences within the academy are diverse and are mediated by class, race, ethnicity, marital status, parenting responsibilities, academic status; and these factors in turn shape their response to the academy. At one end of the spectrum there are women who will assert that they have never been discriminated against by their male colleagues and/or that they have never experienced sexism in the institution. Sadly, when these women ascend to leadership positions they sometimes become complicit in perpetuating discrimination against the women who constitute the rank and file of the organization. They seem to display no sense of solidarity with other women and sometimes will actually hinder the professional development and advancement of female colleagues. These women have chosen conformity over resistance (Morley, 1999).

Feminist faculty, however, bring their commitment to social justice into the universities and colleges that employ them. These are women who have chosen academic careers because they want to use their intellectual skills to expose, analyze, and explain the nature of gender oppression. Feminist faculty have left their mark on their

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institutions and disciplines.  To report on their institutional experiences without

remarking on their impact on higher education would only be a partial telling of the story.

Their scholarship has contributed to our understanding of gender oppression in society

and has reshaped our thinking about gender issues.  Their teaching practices tend to be

innovative and non-hierarchical (Ropers-Huilman & Shackelford, 2003).  Academic

feminists are motivated by the "desire for authenticity and connection with their interests,

emotions and creativity … while also believing this could be disadvantageous for their

careers" (Morley, 1999, p. 173).  This is one of several dilemmas that confront academic

feminists.

First, some scholars are concerned that the 'institutionalization' of feminism in

higher education will actually thwart its radical potential.  They believe that the location

of feminists within the academy has removed them from women's everyday struggles for

social justice and has led to a divide between feminist theory and praxis.  Second,

feminist faculty are aware of their contradictory position—being of the academy but

fundamentally opposed to its patriarchal and elitist values and, in fact, committed to

institutional transformation.  Third, they are conscious of the problematic relationship

between women's experience, on the one hand, and feminist theory and methodology on

the other.  The tension between activist and academic feminists and the dilemmas that

feminist faculty experience will continue to be the subjects of ongoing discussion about

their respective roles in the struggle for social justice for women in the wider society.

This review has focused on scholarship that documents the experiences of women

in higher education in several countries.  Although most of the scholars are white

feminists, they have approached the subject by placing gender at the centre of their

analysis.  By doing so, they have exposed the gendered nature of institutional culture in higher education.  These studies have largely taken a critical approach, looking at how power is used by people in positions of authority (mainly white men) to maintain the *status quo.*  Some of the research has gone further, looking beyond structures at inter- and intra-personal relations to discover how academic feminists experience behavior and attitudes that make them feel that they don't belong.  Several scholars have included race and class in their analysis.

Finally, the studies of South African women in higher education have been helpful in capturing the complex interplay of race, ethnicity, and gender as it is manifested in the institutional experiences of female faculty.  Yet there is room for studies that can give us a fuller picture—and that allow the women themselves to provide the details.  South African anthropologist Pamela Reynolds proposes a study that comprises seven dimensions and that includes the perspective of "the observers … they, too, must account for their histories and examine the constraints on their vision" (1994, pp. 151-152).  Two elements of such a study are critical, namely, women's voices and the South African context.  Walker asserts that women's personal histories represent an alternative to the male norm in academia in that they provide

> A more nuanced understanding of how women are marginalized in
> universities, how this experience unfolds differently, with different
> emphases and shades of meaning, so that we construct inclusive accounts
> and new possibilities for what it might mean to be 'Black' or 'White',
> 'female' and 'academic' (1998, p. 353).

This study tells the stories of a few feminist faculty in South African universities. This observer's history is a small part of the overall project, which adds to the body of knowledge about the institutional experiences of feminist faculty in higher education and broadens the scope of what is currently known to include the voices of women outside of North American and Europe—a group that has been neglected for too long.

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

Introduction

Schram (2003) states succintly that "[m]ethodology refers to the theory and analysis of how inquiry does or should proceed" (2003, p. 27). Any description of the methodology for a proposed study would need to include "careful examination of the issues, principles, and procedures associated with a particular approach to inquiry" (p.31). This study focuses on the institutional experiences of a group of feminist faculty who are working, or have worked, in South African universities. In order to understand how the women developed feminist consciousness, it was necessary to explore their family backgrounds, education, and important life events leading up to their decisions to pursue careers as academics. The women were asked to describe their experiences in South African higher education over the course of their professional lives. Because they are feminist faculty, I asked them to elaborate on the feminist theory (or theories) that informs their teaching practice and research.

The participants in this study are a diverse group of women. Under apartheid, they were classified as colored, Indian, and white. The women range in age from late thirties to sixty. Since I intended to study the women in their natural professional setting (in this case, the university) in order to establish how they make sense of their day-to-day experiences as faculty (Creswell, 1998), I chose a qualitative research approach. In addition I approached the study from a feminist perspective, that is, utilizing a feminist lens to illuminate "the various aspects that constitute the totality" of women's experience (Stromquist, 1999, p. 181).

Why a qualitative study?

Qualitative research is often described as naturalistic inquiry in that the setting is not an artificial environment created for the purposes of experimentation, but the context in which an event or experience occurs. This study focuses on the institutional experiences of feminist faculty, hence the need to describe the natural setting in which faculty operate—the university (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). A qualitative research project aims to discover and describe how individuals understand and interpret their experiences as well as the context in which those experiences are located. Key terms are "interpretation" and "meaning making" which the researcher arrives at through "*exploration*, *discovery*, and *inductive logic* (emphasis in the original) (Mertens, 1998). Another dimension to this naturalistic inquiry is my work experience in higher education: I spent fifteen years as an administrator in a South African university; higher education institutional culture is deeply familiar to me. Universities are as much the natural setting for my informants as for this researcher.

Mertens (1998) observes that the decision to utilize qualitative methods is influenced by the researcher's worldview as well as the motivation for undertaking a particular research project. My worldview has been informed by my educational history which begins in high school where I was taught teachers committed to social justice for the disenfranchised. They impressed on me the importance of critical thinking. I went on to study at an all-female undergraduate institution dedicated to educating women to take their place in the world as the intellectual equals of men. My teachers were feminist faculty who made a huge impact on my intellectual and personal development. During my undergraduate years I had many opportunities to explore feminist theories: this was a

formative period in the development of my feminist ideas and ideals. Subsequent

personal and professional experiences, followed by systematic study of feminist theories

have further shaped my ideas, leading me to a worldview grounded in critical feminism

and deepening my commitment to social justice for women.

Theoretical Framework: The Feminist Lens

This study is framed by standpoint theories that take into account race, ethnicity,

and class, as well as geographical location as important factors in shaping women's

experiences. The fundamental impetus for feminist research is that studies of human

experience are incomplete if the focus is only on one group, namely men, and exclude

approximately fifty percent of society. The corollary to this assertion is the idea that

human experience is gendered: men and women have very different experiences within

the same context because of cultural and social values and expectations regarding their

respective roles in society (Personal Narratives Group 1989b). Thus training a feminist

lens on a given situation means that inquiry proceeds from the perspective of the women

located in that context. This is a simple, yet radical, idea which has fundamentally

transformed our understanding of human experience in the last four decades.

Feminism's Second Wave began in the late 1950s/early 1960s. (The First Wave

has its origins in the reformist movements of the nineteenth century and culminated in

several countries granting women the right to vote in the first half of the twentieth

century (Tobias, 1997).) The early theorists emphasized the distinctiveness of women's

experiences, which they attributed to a combination of sex and socialization

(de Beauvoir, 1997; Firestone, 1997). Their theories were taken further by theorists such

as Chodorow and Gilligan who focused intensely on the differences between the

worldviews of women and men (Nicholson, 1997). The problematic element of such

theories, however, lay in the tendency to assume that *all* women exhibited specific

behaviors and shared certain experiences *because* they were women.

These universalized notions of women's oppression have receded in the face of

"historical shifts" in feminist theory (Naples, 2003). Women of color in the United States

and other parts of the world have posited theories that recognize women's experiences as

complex and shaped by multiple factors, namely, race, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity,

geographical location (Mohanty, 1992; 2003; Mtintso, 2003). They have highlighted the

limitations of essentialist feminist theories, arguing that they obscure the distinctive ways

in which women in different contexts experience social, political and economic exclusion

(Mohanty, 1992).

The South African higher education context cannot be understood without

recognizing the role of race in determining women's life chances and their position within

the academy (M. Walker, 1997a). Race, ethnicity, and class are the major categories that

have shaped their lives and *have* to be taken into account in any analysis of their

experiences (Ginwala, 1991). South African women are divided along racial, ethnic, and

class lines: sisterhood is not a given (M. Walker, 1997a).

In the 1990s feminist theorists have become more concerned with how groups of

women construct identity and how they understand diversity. This strand of scholarship

is particularly useful for capturing the complexity of the South African context and the

dilemmas it poses for academic feminists. Writing about the Untied States, Mohanty, for

example, applauds the acknowledgement of diversity but cautions that race could be lost

as a category that shapes the individual (1992). Bazilli, in her discussion of the "deep

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divisions based on race and class" between South African women that are "deeply

entrenched within a patriarchal structure," reminds us that women's location in society

ultimately determines how they experience oppression (Bazilli, 1992, p. 6). Therefore,

she adds, "South African feminism needs to develop a historical-contextual approach

with emphasis on the different kinds of gender oppression in the country" (ibid.).

Also useful is Collins's analysis of the dilemmas African-American women

confront in their desire to oppose gender oppression; this applies in South Africa as well

(Collins, 1998). By virtue of their membership in oppressed groups both South African

and African-American women have always been reminded that to raise the gender issue

would dilute the struggle to overcome racism. It is no accident that Collins and Mohanty

are women of color and that both respond critically to an essentialist conception of

feminism. Both occupy what Collins calls the position of "outsider-within" and from that

vantage point, which is simultaneously at the margins of the dominant group and in an

unequal relationship in terms of power, each of them are able to see the omissions in

essentialist feminist theories. While holding this admittedly contradictory position,

Mohanty and Collins provide us with feminist theories that can operate in situations of

complexity, diversity and contradiction.

<div align="center">Telling women's life stories</div>

This study fits into the broad category of research described as biographical (Cole

& Knowles, 2001b). However, given the range of methods that fall under the umbrella of

biography, my project is more specifically "life narrative or life story" (Cole & Knowles,

2001b, p. 18). Elsewhere it has been described as "personal narrative"

(Personal Narratives Group 1989a).

Life history or personal narrative as a research methodology appeals to me for many reasons. I have always been interested in other people's lives—biography is one of my favorite literary genres. As a South African feminist of color who has spent most of her adult life in universities, I am acutely aware of the gaps in our knowledge of women's experiences in higher education. These women's stories have only been told in part. Women's personal narratives break the silence surrounding their lives. Hearing from women directly gives us access to the context and texture of their experiences. By drawing on the personal narratives of a few women, I believe we can gain insight into the working conditions and the daily lives of women faculty in South African higher education more broadly (Cole & Knowles, 2001b). More importantly, this knowledge constitutes the key issues identified by the women themselves, making what we learn an essential point of departure for policy development and formulation (Sangster, 1998).

In order to draw meaning from the experiences of the individuals who share information about their experiences, it is important to explain the context in which their experiences are located and how it shapes their behavior. Sangster (1998) observes, for example, that it is important for feminist oral histories to illuminate the construction of gender and class as well as the ideological context that influences women's lives. In the case of South African feminist faculty, it is necessary to explain the national and institutional contexts in which they operate, as well as the theoretical basis of their approach to teaching and research.

National context goes a long way to explain the particular form of institutions like universities in particular countries. Yet institutions (as opposed to nations) have more power in the day-to-day experiences of those who choose to spend their lives in

academia. Institutions are powerful in people's lives in two ways. Firstly, authority

figures in organizations have power by virtue of their position in the institutional

hierarchy and because they can use their status to exert power over subordinates and/or

marginalized groups. Secondly, institutional culture is powerful and can constitute a

hostile environment for individuals who reject its assumptions and expectations about

how they ought to behave (Cole & Knowles, 2001b). Finally, one of the most important

aspects of this study is the ideological context, namely, how these women characterize

and practice their feminist principles in their professional lives. Personal narratives are

meaningless without context.

Life history research or personal narrative can be a potent medium for the voices

of marginalized groups, giving us access to "lives which are lived privately and without

public accomplishment" (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 10). The focus is on the individual:

how the person experiences society and how the person is socialized into a particular

group—in this case, feminist faculty (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). By studying the

individual's experience over time we gain insight into how change has occurred and we

can compare experiences in different time periods, for example what it was like to be a

feminist in the university under apartheid as opposed to post-apartheid. Life histories

present a direct challenge to abstract theory, master narratives, and knowledge generated

by empirical or positivist studies. This, in fact, is its appeal: the researcher is able to

explore and reveal the multi-dimensional complexity of human experience over time.

Some scholars have remarked on the differences in the way in which men and

women recall incidents in their lives (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Sangster, 1998). Women

are more likely to downplay their achievements or their roles in significant events. They

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are uncomfortable talking about decisions they have taken about their lives as exercises in personal power. Although their actions suggest that they are women who have claimed the right to autonomy, they are unlikely to frame their lives in those terms. Heilbrun has observed that "[w]omen need to learn how publicly to declare their right to public power" (1988, p. 18). Yet women are constrained by the residue of cultural attitudes—more pronounced in some contexts than others—that disapprove of ambitious women with explicit career aspirations. Consequently, the researcher has to be especially vigilant for silences and omissions in women's stories. In the interview process one can draw on interpersonal skills such as "relationality; mutuality; empathy; care, sensitivity, and respect" and explore issues as they arise in the course of discussion (Cole & Knowles, 2001b, p. 25). I have known four of the women I interviewed for many years. I used my connection with them as the basis of a shared exploration that yielded rich material to add to our knowledge and understanding of diverse women's experiences in South African higher education.

In a qualitative study, data gathering is not a passive process in which the researcher receives information from the interviewee. The researcher does not distance her/himself from the informant in order to produce an impartial and detached description of the subject's life experiences. This approach is neither "objective" nor has "objectivity" as its goal. On the contrary, both are engaged in constructing the informant's historical memory: "the researcher and the informant create the source together" (Sangster, 1998, p. 88).

The meanings of the women's experiences are explored during the interviews in a dialectical process between researcher and informant as well as, subsequently, by

reflection and analysis (on the part of the researcher). Reflexivity is critical. The researcher has to reflect on the dialectical nature of her relationship with the informant. Researcher and informant have different perspectives on the process of memory construction. The researcher's awareness of these differences is what makes her "sensitive and responsive" to her informants (Cole & Knowles, 2001a, p. 31). The quality of the researcher's connection with the informant and establishing a relationship of trust is "integral to knowledge development" (Cole & Knowles, p. 27; Goodson & Sikes, 2001). The researcher has to establish an intimate relationship with the informant. Within the research context such a relationship includes

> Qualities of mutual care and friendship; revelation of respect for personal
> vulnerabilities; and attention to issues of relationship reflexivity, relational
> ethics, power-in-relation, and the temporary nature of understandings,
> especially as influenced by the evolution of the research relationship (Cole
> & Knowles, p. 27)

Researchers using life history or personal narrative have to ensure that they do not present women's experiences as unproblematic (Middleton, 1993). Personal narratives are not necessarily 'pure' knowledge because they come directly from women (Sangster, 1998). Academic feminists are doubly marginalized—by men as well as by other women. The contradictions inherent in this position cannot be ignored.

Furthermore, the researcher also has to confront the contradictions in her position. Even though she has established an intimate and trusting relationship with the informant, she cannot relinquish her responsibility to reflect critically on the product of her research. Her interpretation could bring her into conflict with the very women whose stories she

feels compelled to bring out into the open. The challenge for the researcher is to be sensitive to the potential for exploitation within a trusting relationship, while reserving the right to express a critical opinion. The alternative to thoughtful analysis from a critical feminist perspective would be a romantic retelling of women's lives that is only part of the story. This would, in fact, be a reversion to a time when women's biographies were sanitized because they omitted painful experiences and made women's struggles invisible (Heilbrun, 1988).

<div align="center">Site and Sample Selection</div>

The six informants are all South African citizens or legal residents selected because they are, or have been, employed as faculty by comprehensive public universities in South Africa (private universities have only been established in the last ten to fifteen years and are not comprehensive institutions). The women self-identify as feminists and their feminist ideals are expressed in their teaching, research and service. They were actively involved in women's community organizations as activists. With one exception, all the informants have undergraduate degrees from South African universities. Three women have done postgraduate work in Europe and the United States of America. Two women do not have doctoral degrees. Two have doctorates from southern African universities. Four women joined the faculty during the apartheid years; two women were appointed to faculty positions after 1994.

I chose not to interview women faculty at universities of technology. These are institutions that were previously called technikons. During the apartheid years, the South African government created the term to distinguish technikons from technical colleges on the one hand, and universities on the other hand. Technikons were described as being

philosophically oriented to the *application* of knowledge, as opposed to universities, which were institutions that *generated* and studied knowledge for its own sake (Bunting, 2002). Although the rigid divide between the functions of higher education institutions has been abolished in recent years and technikons have been renamed universities of technology, there are still fundamental differences between their cultures, particularly with regard to the importance of teaching and research. Universities of technology do not tend to have a strong research culture, which dates back to the years when they were technikons. I wanted to focus on women whose institutional experiences were similar because of the expectations for, and requirements of, faculty in a comprehensive research university.

But while the women all come from universities, the four institutions in which they are located have very different histories. Three are historically white institutions (HWIs): two are originally Afrikaans-medium and offer instruction in English and Afrikaans; one is an English-medium university. The predominantly white Afrikaans-medium institutions began to integrate slowly in the late 1980s by taking in Afrikaans-speaking colored students. Although in recent years the student bodies are diversifying more quickly and many African students are now enrolled. The English-medium university embarked on an aggressive campaign to integrate its campus in the early 1980s and is now more than fifty percent black. The fourth institution is an apartheid creation established in 1959 to cater to South Africans who were classified as coloreds. However, the university currently enrolls almost equal numbers of colored and African students and a small percentage of whites. The faculty of all four institutions is integrated, but still predominantly white and male at the three historically white universities.

Data Gathering

In March and April 2007, I traveled to South Africa to interview the study participants. Five of the women were interviewed during my stay in South Africa. I met with three of the women in their offices for at least two hours. The fourth interview had to be rescheduled because, shortly before I arrived at her office, my informant was told by the department secretary that she had to teach two classes that day for her department chair, who had left for Europe the night before to attend a conference without notifying the rest of her colleagues. She was also recovering from the 'flu. We met a few days later at a local coffee shop for one hour and then at the same place a second time to complete the interview.

The sixth woman was not able to see me in South Africa, but let me know that she would be in Washington, D.C. before the end of the summer and that she would be happy to be interviewed at that time. A few months later I interviewed her for two to three hours. I recorded each of the interviews on a digital recorder and took notes at the same time. After the interviews I downloaded the audio files onto a laptop and flash drive. Then I spent about an hour writing up post-interview reflections.

I used the opportunity of being in South Africa to collect secondary data that were deposited in university libraries and resource centers but not available electronically. The data were important for constructing a coherent picture of the national and institutional contexts of South African higher education and for additional background on the women's experiences in the university as workplace. The documents were unpublished theses and dissertations only available in hardcopy and relevant reports by national

organizations such as The Centre for Higher Education Transformation and higher education consortia.

<div align="center">Analysis</div>

I began data analysis during data collection, making notes on differences and commonalities that began to emerge after the first few interviews. I used NVIVO, a software package for managing and analyzing qualitative data. On my return to the United States, I transcribed all the interviews and field notes and saved them as NVIVO files. At that time I removed all identifying information to protect the anonymity of my informants and I changed their names.

Data analysis took place in several phases. I used my research question and the sub-questions to generate broad categories. Next I compared the interview data with themes identified in the literature. Throughout this process I was guided by Bazeley's observation that one needs "both distance and closeness to secure a rounded perspective on your data" (2007, p. 60). Bazeley explains that the researcher should simultaneously have a sense of broad issues and be cognizant of the detail that enriches the big picture. By working in this way I was able to identify patterns in the data, isolate contradictory evidence, and refine categories.

This was an extensive iterative process as I considered my options for arranging the data. I was very concerned with giving the reader a sense of how the women had grown into the people I met in the interviews. One issue for women faculty in higher education is that they are expected to model their careers on the male life cycle. At the most basic level this is problematic for women who choose to be parents as they would have to interrupt their careers for childrearing. Yet, in this instance, the best way to

convey the trajectory of women's lives and to highlight pivotal events would be to present their stories chronologically prior to describing their current experiences. I decided to map the data onto phases in the women's lives and that is how the first part of Chapter 4 is structured.  The second part of Chapter 4 is devoted to issues that are not bound to certain times in the individual's life cycle (such as what happened in high school, or at university), but that transcend linear narrative.  Examples of this are their reflections on problems with childcare or their interactions with students and colleagues.

Validity

The validity of a quantitative research study hinges on whether the results can be generalized, that is, whether the use of the same methods and procedures in another context would produce the same results.  Qualitative researchers, however, are more concerned with "meaning making" and "interpretation" of particular experiences or events, and caution against inferring that findings or conclusions can be generalized. Hence, it may be more appropriate to talk about the credibility or the authenticity of qualitative research (Mertens, 1998).

Two threats to the credibility of this study are researcher bias and reactivity. There are several strategies that can be used to guarantee authenticity of the research findings, namely, respondent validation (or member checks), peer debriefing, triangulation, and rich data (also referred to as thick description) (Maxwell, 2005; Mertens, 1998).

It is impossible for me to escape researcher bias given that I am a self-described South African feminist.  Furthermore, I spent fifteen years in university administration and, on countless occasions, either witnessed, or was at the receiving end of, sexist and

racist behavior. The literature I consulted provides ample evidence of discrimination against female faculty in general and feminist faculty in particular. I did not embark on this study without preconceptions about what I was likely to find. I made no attempt to put aside my beliefs and intellectual lens: my goal was not 'objectivity.' On the contrary, I have been explicit in this project about my personal background, my intellectual history, and my beliefs. All these elements informed my work and made me uniquely qualified to conduct this research.

The other problem presented by data collection in this study is reactivity, that is, the extent to which I could influence the interview situation. The researcher's influence is unavoidable. I used the combination of my interpersonal skills, my friendship with particular individuals and my knowledge of the context to my advantage so that I could establish a connection with each of my informants. They were relaxed and candid in our discussions and as a result my interviews yielded rich material for this study. I shared the interview transcripts with my informants prior to coding and they were satisfied that I had captured their stories accurately.

The term "triangulation" is used by some researchers to show that they have used multiple sources to confirm the validity of their evidence and to provide a fuller explanation of phenomena (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) argue that the term can be confusing and suggest instead that the researcher describe the range of sources that have been utilized to confirm the validity of her/his findings and state whether these are documents or other individuals. Mertens (1998) observes that triangulation is only relevant in case studies that try to show causal relationships. In this study, the findings are confirmed by each of the cases and in the literature.

Throughout this study, from the proposal development stage to data analysis, I have been engaged in ongoing discussion about my project with two South African colleagues. One is a feminist from my home town and she is currently a graduate student at the University of Maryland. Prior to beginning a doctoral degree, she was on the faculty of one of the universities represented by two women who participated in this study. The second person is a senior member of the administration at a South African university. He is a friend of long standing and has extensive knowledge of the higher education context in South Africa. He has activist roots in the Western Cape, the province that I come from, and his understanding of the region's political, social, and cultural milieu is thoughtful and nuanced. The feedback and insights I have received from each of them have been invaluable to my work.

Finally, I have included thick description constructed from my field notes and from my personal knowledge of the context. I have been careful to ensure that the women's voices will not only be mediated by my analysis, but will be heard in verbatim quotes, allowing them to "speak" directly to the reader.

**Chapter 4:  Feminist Faculty Tell Their Stories**

Introduction

This chapter focuses exclusively on the interviews with feminist faculty.  My data has given me insight into how each of these women developed into the person I met—a person still engaged in a struggle for social justice in South Africa—a struggle that takes place daily on several South African university campuses.  The women told me about their activist and feminist origins.  They described what they learned about women's roles from their families.  I heard about their earliest memories of apartheid.  They told me about first encounters with feminist theory, what a revelation it was at the time and how energized they were, armed with this newly acquired knowledge.   Using what the women shared with me, I was able to identify the characteristics of feminist scholars in South Africa.  The largest portion of each interview, however, covered their experiences as feminist faculty in South Africa's universities.   I learned how they live out their worldview in their working environment, and what challenges these women face daily in the academic workplace.  I have grouped the data as follows:

1.  Roots of feminist activism;

2.  Feminist influences;

3.  Attributes of the feminist scholar;

4.  Living feminism in the academy;

5.  Institutional interactions.

6.  Reflections on academic life.

The data is arranged chronologically so that we follow each of these women from their apartheid childhood, through their school years, university activism, to their professional

lives.  By telling the women's stories in this way, I show how they are shaped by their world at various points in their lives and also how they shape the world around them. These women have exercised agency within structures that constrain their desire to effect change.

South Africa has a small academic community.  People tend to know each other. In order to protect the anonymity of the women I interviewed, I am providing the bare minimum of biographical information, but enough to contextualize their personal journeys and the issues that arose in the interviews.  As their stories unfold, other personal information is added when necessary.

At the time of the interviews, all but one of the women were full-time members of the faculty at four South African universities.  Karen, the non-faculty person, had spent most of her professional life as an academic, but she left the university when she was asked to take up a senior position in a government agency.  Currently she works for an NGO.  Under apartheid, Rihana would have been classified as Indian; Karen, Sylvia, and Wendy—colored; Lesley and Stella—white.   Lesley is ethnically Jewish, while Stella comes from an Afrikaner background.  Sylvia was raised in a small town in the interior; Karen has lived in a large coastal city for most of her life.  Lesley and Wendy come from families in which one or both parents were faculty.  I have quoted the women extensively, so that they speak to the reader in their own voices.  These are their stories.

### 1. Roots of Feminist Activism

*Growing up.*  I was interested in what had led each woman to feminism.  What were the roots of her feminist activism?  What conditions had given rise to an interest in, and concern with, women's issues?  In the South African context it is difficult to separate

political activism more generally from feminist activism specifically. Their earliest memories reveal that feminist consciousness was stimulated in multiple ways and, because of their family backgrounds, was often preceded by awareness of injustice and discrimination against black, colored, and Indian South Africans. Lesley stated, for example,

> I grew up in a feminist household. I can't say I was particularly interested in women's issues, but it was part and parcel of my life and, if anything, I would say to you that I formed a view on that early in life.

Karen, who was the only daughter until her sister was born in her teens, observed, "My father believed that I was equal to the boys." Her mother was "quite traditional," she said, but "she was a feminist in her own right in that she believed that her sons must learn to iron and cook. So there never was talk in the house that the girls do this and the boys do that."

On the other hand, Stella came from a conservative, strongly patriarchal family. She was keenly aware of her mother's subservience to her father. In addition, the family moved around because her father worked for a bank. She was always the outsider, she remarked, which heightened her awareness of injustice and discrimination. Although she was an excellent student, when she finished high school her father announced, "I'm not going to pay for a woman to go to university," so she had to fund her undergraduate and Masters degrees with scholarships and loans. Her father paid for her brother to attend university, but he "never finished his degree and failed every year."

Awareness of injustice and discrimination was also present in participants' early memories. Those who were classified colored could easily recall when they first felt the

impact of apartheid on their lives. Sylvia remembered "accompanying my parents to the airport to see off countless priests and bishops who were put out of the country because they spoke out. And, you know, listening to sermons from a pulpit against oppression, against injustice." Karen said,

> The Group Areas Act (1966) had a profound effect on my life. Deeply profound, because I remember, when I was 7 years old, … the park where I used to play every day suddenly had a "Whites Only" board up. And I remember how pained my mother was to explain to me why I couldn't [play there]. So that was my first really deep political experience.

The family later found out that a local Nationalist Party Member of Parliament had noticed her brothers playing soccer with white children in that same park. Within days her parents received a notice telling them that they were being moved out of the neighborhood because it had been set aside for whites. This happened at the same time as colored people were being moved from the centre of Cape Town out to the desolation of the sandy Cape Flats. Her entire extended family and her father's parish, along with the rest of the community, were forcibly evicted. She told me, "I think that was my first political experience where I asked, 'But why? Why on the basis of people's skin color?'" For Rihana, who came from a family that was politically active ,"there was no question about being involved in a political organization. It was just your life." She recalled being "blacklisted" at school for making her first political speech at the age of 11. Her speeches, which "were usually about converting people to communism," were "helluva (sic.) radical at the time."

Karen's high school years were pivotal in her political and intellectual development. The teachers at her school blended politics and education, exposing their students to a curriculum that was simultaneously rigorous academically and overtly political. Karen's teachers taught their students to see themselves as inferior to no-one, regardless of what the government told them. These were teachers who were committed to giving their students an education that would enable them to rise above the limitations imposed on them by apartheid and to reject the roles prescribed by a racist state (Wieder, 2008). Karen was a bright student and soon learned what her teachers expected of her: she would go to university, but not an institution that had been specifically created for colored people, because that legitimized the philosophical basis of separate development. These institutions were called 'bush' colleges because they were usually built in barely accessible locations—literally, the bush.

*University-based activism.* Despite her teachers' profound disdain for the 'bush' colleges, Karen ended up there. She had wanted to study physical therapy, but was put off by the predominantly white university's request for each applicant to submit a full-length photograph of themselves in a bathing suit. Karen determined that "these were sideways tricks … to keep people out." Ironically, at the 'bush' college, Karen found her place. She described her undergraduate years as "the most wonderful experience." Her university, she said, gave her "voice … That's the irony: [those at predominantly white universities] might have had a better education, but we became politically aware—more than our peers who went to the 'Ivy Leagues.'"

Sylvia loved science in high school, but decided to study the social sciences at university because "science didn't help me understand my social context in such a clear

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manner as, let's say, sociological theories about stratification, about inequality." Unlike

Karen, she was enrolled at a predominantly white institution. This was the early 1980s.

As part of her program, she went on field trips to the homelands, parts of the country that

had been established as ethnic reserves for South African blacks (i.e., people classified as

African). The Bantustans, as they were called, had been created in order to strip Africans

of urban citizenship rights and control their movement into the cities. More importantly,

the establishment of the homelands was the state's response to widespread political

activity and protest among urban blacks during the 1950s. Each of these areas was

allowed limited self-government but was not permitted to become economically viable.

Consequently they were kept in a state of underdevelopment and people (overwhelmingly

women) confined to those areas lived in impoverished conditions (Worden, 2000).

Visits to the Bantustans had a profound effect on Sylvia.

Sylvia's academic program also took her to the Pass Law courts in African

townships, which were always filled with people who had stayed longer than the 72 hours

they were permitted in urban areas. Again, these were mostly women who had been

visiting their husbands who worked in the cities. The Pass Law courts meted out

punishment for this "crime" and other violations of the pass system, which stipulated

that, at all times, Africans had to carry documentation indicating whether they had

permission to move between urban and rural areas (Worden, 2000). This was, Sylvia

notes, "the bureaucratic machinery of the system." She was particularly disturbed by

"women being sent to prison with babies on their backs." Pass law violators often

received material and legal assistance from the Black Sash, an organization of liberal

white women that had participated in anti-pass activities with other anti-apartheid

women's organizations (C. Walker, 1982). Sylvia was also affected by the information she found in the Black Sash files which documented "how black people struggle[d] to remain in urban areas."

At the university Sylvia joined a group of progressive Christian student activists and met conscientious objectors who were doing work in urban squatter communities, such as establishing clinics, for example. As students, they witnessed instances of state repression such as the destruction of squatter camps to drive Africans back to the homelands, where there were no opportunities for employment. She also came in contact with fundamentalist Christians, but was troubled by their attitudes to what was happening around them because "people acquiesced in the social injustices of the day. Didn't stand up, didn't speak out." Sylvia's life experiences, however, evoked an altogether different response to her environment.

The apartheid state went to great lengths to silence those who *did* speak out. In order to preserve white supremacy, legislation was enacted that defined anti-government activity so broadly that it took very little to attract the attention of the security apparatus, and one was particularly vulnerable if one's parents were known to be activists. Lesley was a young assistant professor when she became a victim of state repression: she was banned. Banned South Africans faced a variety of restrictions. They were usually confined to their homes between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. They could not meet with more than five people in a social setting. Travel beyond a certain distance from their residences was prohibited (say ten miles). Those who had passports had to surrender them to the police. Lesley was not banned for a lengthy period and, once the order was lifted, she continued to keep, as she put it, "my bottom line promise to myself

… there would be no student to pass through my hands who wouldn't know the truth about South Africa."

During the 1980s, "the truth about South Africa," was evident on university campuses. The struggle for liberation was intensifying and state reaction was brutal (Terreblanche, 2002). Stella was a young assistant professor at a predominantly Black institution. These campuses bore the brunt of state repression because the government was careful to minimize the exposure of whites to instances of police brutality. As conflict between the state and communities escalated, the South African Defense Force was deployed to black townships, schools, and colleges. In fact, the army established a base right on the campus where Stella taught. Every morning, armed soldiers greeted students and staff at the entrance to campus. Remembering that period, Stella said,

> I couldn't deal with it. And then what they did was to take the students out of the class and whip them outside because they suspected them of being involved in activism. What the students would do was, in the night they would write graffiti on the wall and in the day they'd clean it off. They would whip them until they would bleed. And if we interfered, we also got whipped.

## 2. Feminist Influences

As we have seen up to now, the women in this study had developed sensitivity to social injustice in the broader South African society due to family circumstances and events in their lives. At the same time, there was awareness that society treated men and women differently. Although they had dissimilar trajectories of gender consciousness, as they grew older, they were faced with many situations which further deepened their concern about women's issues. Instances of patronizing behavior on the part of male

colleagues, contradictions in phenomena they were studying, or gender inequality in students' relationships, all prompted reflection on the nature of discrimination against women. Reflection tended to lead to exploration of feminist writings and theories which further solidified the women's identification with feminism. Women's organizations also provided the women with opportunities to act on their growing gender consciousness and, at the same time, educated them about the concerns of a broader range of South African women, particularly women in the townships. Both the campus and the community influenced the feminist beliefs of the women in this study.

*Feminist influences on campus.* Sylvia traced her awareness back to a field trip in her fourth year at the university.

> We were living in Qwa Qwa which is the old … Basotho homeland near Lesotho. We were interviewing people about migrant work and migrant labourer's experiences but it was led by a male anthropologist… and I was in a group [with] two men … and one older white woman ... And I was struck by the contradictions: we were interviewing *women* about men's experiences, but these were women experiencing the hardships of the Bantustans. So, that was the time when I started asking questions about gender and about women.

Sylvia returned to campus eager to embark on an honors thesis that looked at gender issues, but there was no-one in her department to supervise her. There was a professor in another department teaching gender issues, but university regulations prevented her from supervising Sylvia's thesis. In the absence of formal academic guidance, Sylvia said she would

Sit in the library and read what was available, which was mainly African

American women's writings: bell hooks and—this was the '80s, '82/'83—you

know, Angela Davis. The African American women's writings were what caught

me as well as socialist feminisms. So that was the year I started thinking about

women and gender studies.

Sylvia went on to explore feminist theories more systematically as a graduate student in

the United States. She believes that she was awarded a scholarship because she argued

persuasively that South Africa's academic libraries lacked adequate materials to support

her research on feminism, none of the universities in the country offered courses on

women and gender studies, and there were no senior faculty who could supervise her

graduate work. She refers to the feminist faculty who were her graduate professors as

"inspirational."

Lesley's journey to a heightened awareness of gender issues had interesting

diversions. Although her parents were activists, she recalled with some amusement that,

I was quite fascinated by women who stayed at home. So [as a child] I spent a lot

of time in the house of my best friend whose mother played bridge every

morning, went dancing on a Saturday night and certainly when I lived with a man

for the first time, I tried to be both the perfect academic and 'Miss *Fair Lady*[2]'

herself in terms of three courses an evening, fresh menu planning as if I was in a

French household. So I would leave the office at about 5:30 and get to the

butcher in time for 6:00 and go down to the little store and pick up the vegetables

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[2] *Fair Lady* is a local women's magazine and would likely have carried articles with advice about how to take care of the home and be a perfect female partner.

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and decide what was [for dinner] … [p]ut his clothes out … did every possible thing that my mother would never have dreamt of doing.

As a young academic, however, she traveled out of the country in the early 1970s and encountered South African women in exile who were beginning to look at gender issues. She was struck by the "palpable difference" between the activist community abroad and local activists with respect to the way in which gender issues were beginning to be addressed. There was a discussion group which included foreign nationals from Europe, other parts of Africa, and Australia. She explained,

So I was in a very diverse cultural space, and engaged with women's issues. I don't remember that there was *reading*, per sé, it was—maybe there was literature. But … it felt very real and very organic. And obviously, they were very trusting of each other.

Lesley said she felt incredibly privileged about being invited to join the group. This was the beginning of a series of events that deepened her understanding of women's issues.

Back in South Africa, Lesley came across several interesting books that a friend had brought back with him from England including Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* and Germaine Greer's, *The Female Eunuch,* which she read. They were "an eye-opener." Then there were the gender dynamics in her classes (and here she is speaking of white students):

Did I come across these amazing bright women students? They would never talk in class and I would call them in and say, "I don't understand this." And they would say to me—I'll never forget, one actually left university to get married— "They don't date you if you do too well [in school]."

She began to question her white male students about their families: how many family members were there? Did their mothers work? What was the nature of gender relations in their families? Her questioning led her to conclude that the men were interested in marrying not because they desired an educated and intelligent wife, but instead so that they could enjoy the lifestyle that would come with two incomes. Hence, for many white women, the university in the early 1970s was a "'finishing school' where you met the right kind of person" to marry. But there *were* women on campus who were beginning to speak out about gender issues. The university had a space in which students could speak their minds on the issues of the day which was modeled on "Speaker's Corner" in London's Hyde Park and women used this forum to talk about feminism.

Stella also traces her increasing sensitivity to women's issues to her years as a young academic. She was teaching at one of the ethnic universities and she observed the gender inequality in the relationships between her male and female students. In addition, the fact that she was white did not shield her from being patronized, particularly by her white male colleagues, and so she felt "a disgruntledness with gender. At that point I couldn't put it in words, but I already had consciousness."

Consciousness became understanding when Stella left South Africa in the mid-1980s to pursue doctoral studies. She took courses in Gender Studies and "all of a sudden, the world made a lot of sense … [b]ecause I could then understand things from a theoretical perspective." Under the mentorship of her supervisor, a professor of Political Science and Women's Studies, Stella read Mary Daly, Catharine McKinnon, Andrea Dworkin, and Nancy Hartsock. Works by these scholars had a dual effect: they helped Stella "understand [her] world and defined and consolidated [her] feelings" in contrast to

patriarchal theories which excluded women's experiences and thereby rendered them invisible. She explained, "I had studied a lot of theory up to that point. But it never explained my world to me." This was an exciting time for Stella, as she was a young scholar at the beginning of her career as an academic. Up until then, she had not experienced the kind of intellectual stimulation generated by the material she was reading in her doctoral program.

Karen's feminist influences came from several sources. First, she was very active in local women's organizations, which is discussed more fully later in this section. Second, she traveled to continental Europe during a sabbatical and embarked on a Masters with a focus in Women's Studies. It was a rigorous academic program in which she was exposed to "[a]ll the schools of thought: liberal, radical, American feminism, the whole—German feminism, Russian feminism—gamut." The effect on her thinking was revolutionary: Karen found that she "made all these connections." She returned to South Africa intellectually energized and rejuvenated and immediately offered a course which incorporated much of what she had learned. Karen views what she did as a radical act that profoundly affected many of her students and activist colleagues. In fact, some people chose to come out of the closet as a result of their encounters with the material. Third, in the early 1990s, Karen hosted a visiting American feminist. She admits to being extremely irritated "by this earnest radical lesbian feminist. I didn't like her feminism." Nevertheless, her houseguest often accompanied her to meetings of the women's community groups. At the time, Karen struggled with her writing. Her houseguest told her that her problem was the unreasonably high standard she set for herself. Instead of

trying to "sound sophisticated, [w]rite it like [you speak]," she suggested. Karen explained:

> [She] didn't teach me to write in the sense that she sat me down and taught me. She said, "Just as you have articulated [what you think] write it down and I will read it." So I started writing. And that for me was very liberating because I put down on paper how I felt about issues.

> Wendy, on the other hand, had neither been really interested in women's issues nor had she taken any gender studies courses as an undergraduate. After graduation she moved to another country and spent a few years teaching high school English and History, which she enjoyed very much. Then the country in which she was teaching, a former British colony, began to revise the history that was being taught in schools. Around this time, Wendy began to contemplate graduate study. Given that she came from a family of faculty, there was always the assumption that not too many years would pass before she went on to graduate school. She was not a history major in college, but teaching the subject had stimulated her interest so she decided to do her graduate work in the discipline. Wendy was struck by the silence on women in the university's library materials so she decided that she wanted to challenge history that excluded women and produced a doctoral dissertation on women freedom fighters in southern Africa. However, she pointed out that, at that point, she did not see her work as gender studies, merely "women's history." Later she spent a post-doctoral year at a research institute in the United States that focused on "the teaching and study of women" where she immersed herself in feminist theory. She recalls,

To do my research—I read all kinds of feminist history, but I hadn't ever been

around an academic institute with other feminist scholars.  [I]t was a wonderful

experience but, for the first three or four months, I'll say, I was quite sure I was

going to die.  I had never—I mean there were all these really smart people who

knew about psychoanalytic theory, who were studying feminism and the passages

of time.  I was *so* lost.  Oh my goodness, I was lost.  …  It wasn't painful in any

other way than I just had all this reading to do, which I was quite sure was going

to kill me.  But it didn't.

*Feminist influences in the community.*  For several of the women I interviewed,

their feminism led them to become involved in women's organizations and their activism

shaped their feminism: it was an interactive process.  Karen, who had participated in

student politics as an undergraduate, moved on to community organizations as a young

academic.  She was often critical of the sexual politics within the anti-apartheid activist

community.  In her view, male activists were guilty of manipulating women.  Her

willingness to challenge the men openly made her somewhat of a controversial figure.

She was also critical of female activists who had liaisons with married men.  She felt that

she had to take principled stands on certain issues.  Karen made a point of providing

moral support to the partners and families of male activists who were affected by their

extra-marital affairs.

Rihana gravitated towards women's organizations because she believed that one

could not "speak of political liberation without speaking of women's liberation."  She

was also involved in broader political organizations, despite "the fights, the battles for

power, and the male-dominated nature of those organizations."  Rihana made a point of

distancing herself from many of the women in those organizations who, in her view, tended to associate with politically powerful men.  She was not prepared to use her connections with male activists to further her own political career.  She felt more comfortable in women's organizations where she could focus on issues that her fellow activists, who were mainly African women from both urban and rural areas, had identified as important to them.  This experience profoundly shaped Rihana's feminist beliefs, which I will discuss more fully later.  Then, when many exiles returned to South Africa after organizations were unbanned, Rihana withdrew completely from organized political activity because of "the political power battles … between the external groups and the internal people."

Lesley has always believed that it was important for both men and women to address gender imbalances within relationships.  As a young academic she had challenged women on campus to look at how men were socialized to believe that they were superior to women.  At the time she asked them,

> What do we understand by the fact that women raise men?  It seemed to me that [women] wanted to take no responsibility.  Now look, I understand these things very differently now.  But it just seemed to me that there was too much victim stuff.  And I hated that.

Some time after this conversation, when she met South African female activists in exile, they emphasized to her the importance of working with their male counterparts to impress on them the consequences of their sexist behavior and attitudes.  She confessed, however, that it was only many years later that

I realized the complexity of this issue that—in a sense, my position about men having to be part of the group—that, actually, that was a long way—for some people to travel. And that, for women to be involved in politics caused all kinds of political, sorry, domestic repercussions … Certainly, political leaders had to go to talk to the husbands who sometimes were beating up activist wives because of their political activity. Women paid a price in South Africa… to join a political organization. Never mind the state, but [there was a backlash from] their husbands or partners.

### 3. Attributes of a Feminist Scholar

Given the life experiences of the group of women in my research and their encounters with feminist theories, what kind of feminist scholar has emerged? How have they combined theory and praxis? In hindsight, asking the women to define feminism was, at best, misguided, at worst, naïve. All of the women are committed to eradicating patriarchy and achieving social justice for women. But, they act on this commitment in many different ways. In this section, I describe their feminist influences and beliefs in order to show that these women practice a form of feminism that is dynamic: deeply rooted in the South African context, their personal histories, and informed by a wide range of theories.

*Theory.* The feminist beliefs of the women in this study have been shaped by a range of theorists, which is a function of both their disciplinary backgrounds and their life experiences. Early on they had many 'aha!' moments: the theory explained reality and helped them make sense of their experiences. Three of the women remarked on their ability to "make connections" as a result of reading feminist theory. Karen went so far as

to say that she was "revolutionized" by European and North American feminist writings that spanned the political spectrum from liberal to radical.  Later, Karen was also influenced by Diana Russell, a radical American feminist born in South Africa, whose scholarship has focused on sexual violence.

Lesley, as I noted in an earlier part of this chapter, had discovered Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* and Germaine Greer's, *The Female Eunuch,* shortly after they were published in the mid-1970s.  Around this time she also read theorists such as Juliet Mitchell, who had visited the university to talk about her recently published book, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, which was radical on several levels.  Mitchell challenged the idea that Sigmund Freud's work was antithetical to feminism, arguing instead that, by understanding psychoanalysis, women could gain insights into the nature of patriarchy and gender oppression.

Sylvia was initially influenced by the works of African-American theorists Angela Davis and bell hooks although she felt that some of their ideas might not transfer easily to the South African context.  She was also inspired by the work of American scholars Barbara Thomas-Slayter and Cynthia Enloe.  Thomas-Slayter has written extensively about gender and development in Africa and has focused on class and ethnicity in development.  Enloe's scholarship concentrates on militarization and its impact on women in the United States as well as in other countries, particularly where the United States has military bases.  She is also widely known in the international development community for her work on gender and development from a radical feminist perspective.

Stella remembers that Mary Daly's works were some of the earliest radical feminist scholarship to which she was exposed. Radical feminism made the most sense to her at that time. She also read legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon, Andrea Dworkin, as well as standpoint theorist Nancy Hartsock. In our interview, Stella remarked on how sad she felt when she heard that Andrea Dworkin had died. Berenice Carroll, the feminist scholar in political science and women's studies, played an important role in Stella's development as a young academic.

Wendy, on the other hand, could not point to a particular feminist theorist or a group of theorists whose writings had influenced her. In fact, her scholarship is not so much theory-based as empirical, but she chooses to focus on women's experiences within South African higher education institutions.

Rihana was the only interviewee who offered an explanation of the type of feminism that informed her everyday life. First, however, she expressed her distaste for classifications, because they "are very contextually driven." She had never formulated a definition. Instead, she explained that she focused on gender-sensitive goals that she worked to achieve with other women. While she challenged the notion of 'sisterhood' on the grounds that it was "a romanticized myth," she spoke of developing solidarity among women that was based on a political vision. Rihana also rejected 'womanism,' a term created by US novelist Alice Walker to describe the perspective and experiences of women of color. Rihana said womanism obscured patriarchy and she could not subscribe to any form of feminism that did not recognize the role of patriarchy in women's oppression. However, Rihana liked Arundhati Roy's idea of a feminism that gave one freedom of choice, that is, one could choose to be feminine. Rihana explained, "I'm not a

feminist who's anti-feminine.  I like being female.  I like my strengths … I wouldn't want to give it up for masculinity."

*Praxis.*  During the period when all these women delved into feminist scholarship and theories in a systematic way, they found ideas that resonated with their life experiences. They saw themselves in the theory, which was both affirming and liberating. As Stella said, "I discovered these feminist theories and everything just made a lot of sense to me.  I had studied a lot of theory up to that point.  But it never explained my world to me."  Equipped with this new and exciting knowledge, they immersed themselves in teaching and research.  Karen explained,

> When I came back I taught this seven-week course on feminism: Marxist, radical, liberal—the whole toot—socialist feminism—the whole thing I did.  So there was this black woman teaching all this radical stuff.  All the women who were in the struggle with us came out of the closet.  Women were crying and I was just doing straightforward [teaching], you know.  It was because the [African National Congress] was homophobic; the [United Democratic Front] was homophobic. Many of these women were involved in the struggle and they [couldn't] believe that a straight woman like me [would be talking about gay issues].  That was quite wonderful.

More importantly, however, they carried their ideas into women's organizations where their new knowledge informed their activism.  Sylvia, for example, was profoundly influenced by Barbara Slayter-Thomas' work on women in Kenya as well as the scholarship of Cynthia Enloe.  Both these scholars addressed development issues from a radical feminist perspective and this informed Sylvia's subsequent study of

informal female traders in the townships of the Western Cape. At the same time Sylvia was active in women's organizations. Later she began teaching women's studies courses with a small group of female colleagues. Her activism and teaching continued up until she left the university to pursue a Ph.D. as a full-time student.

Now, as a member of the faculty on the tenure track, Sylvia is passionate about her commitment to "black women's education and access to higher education" in South Africa, hence her decision not to seek work as an academic in the United States (or the global North), which is "a *very* attractive prospect." Rather, Sylvia says, "I want to be at home. I want to be part of this nation-building exercise." She draws her strength from women in other parts of the world who have also struggled against oppressive regimes. In our interview, she talked about the autobiography of Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi[3], as an example of a life history that resonated with her.

Sylvia asserts that "the principle of [her] politics is one of inclusion rather than exclusion." While she is aware of the "fractures" within the feminist community, and that "all women are not necessarily [her] sisters," Sylvia nevertheless "will not discount [female colleagues]." She believes that she owes her presence in the academy to the struggles of women who came before her. She seeks to find common ground with her female colleagues (particularly across disciplines) in an effort to "break boundaries very consciously because the department is a very small department." At the same time she works at creating opportunities to teach, particularly graduate courses, by

> [saying] to Anthropology, 'I can teach your Gender and Sexuality course at
> postgraduate level.' And then another colleague and I have consciously started

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[3] Ebadi is an Iranian lawyer who has served as a judge and has campaigned on behalf of Iranian women and children. She was imprisoned by the Iranian government because of her activism.

teaching a course in Geography on Gender, Sexuality and Space.  So, we're

having to create our own spaces and claim that and not sit and wait.

In this way she is promoting feminism as an analytical category within her institution and

providing opportunities for students to use a feminist approach in their studies.  On

occasion, Sylvia has also taken the time to engage with colleagues who dismiss feminism

to offer an alternative view to "stereotypical disparaging" perspectives.

Stella is committed to feminism as a transformative project.  To this end she has

established forums on campus in which women could come together, share experiences,

and develop strategies for changing institutional practices that discriminate against

women and people of color.  By virtue of her membership on senior university

committees, she has been in a position to challenge colleagues who persistently obstruct

institutional transformation by engineering the elimination of black and female

candidates for appointment to faculty positions.  This has made her a pariah among

several of her conservative white colleagues who, Stella knows, would like to be able to

dismiss her as "a failed academic."  But she is an extremely productive scholar with

several books to her name.  It is the only way, she says, "you can be a change agent.  So

they can't point a finger at you."  Stella also reaches out to women in the wider

community through a column about feminist issues in a local newspaper.

Lesley's earliest feminist readings and her life experiences at the time "became

political issues for me and I struggled around these issues of *power* and, let's call it,

*balance* and how were you going to get it."  At this stage of her life, near retirement, she

sees feminism as "the ultimate emancipatory project" because she believes that true

feminism should be concerned about "class emancipation… racial emancipation, [and]

national emancipation." This is consistent with her belief that men have to be brought into the project of women's liberation from sexism" "they [have] to become partners in the process." Her insistence on including men would not make her a radical feminist. She also does not subscribe to liberal feminism because "they duck out on the class issues." The description of herself that she arrives at is that she is a feminist who is also a humanist.

Wendy's flippant response to my question 'What is a feminist academic?' was that "feminist academics find spaces for students to redo their [terrible] essays." More seriously, though, she explained that she saw her role as giving students opportunities to improve their papers before she awarded the final grade for an assignment. In her scholarship, Wendy has been working on a project with women from other parts of Africa in "an effort to talk about African universities and different aspects of the way gender is reproduced and manifests itself in university culture/institutional culture." This project has produced several publications, which are all important additions to the body of knowledge about African women in higher education.

Karen has left academia but, while she was a faculty member, she played an active role in women's and community organizations. On the campus, along with other female colleagues, she actively challenged university policies and practices that discriminated against women. They produced reports showing how men benefited disproportionately from the allocation of research funds. Male colleagues could not argue against evidence that was freely available in university records. Instances of female staff being deprived of career opportunities by male managers were publicized.

The institution "very much paid lip service to gender equality," Karen said. She was determined to expose practices that disadvantaged women.

In summary, feminist faculty display several attributes. They are activist faculty—on campus and in the community. Within their institutions, in a range of forums, they challenge policies and practices that impede the development of female faculty, staff, and students. They reach out to colleagues for opportunities to broaden the use of feminism as an analytical category across disciplines. They work collaboratively with colleagues beyond South Africa's borders to generate and distribute knowledge about issues confronting women in higher education. The women in this study are committed to, and engaged with, their students. Their feminist beliefs inform their professional and civic activities.

## 4. Living Feminism in the Academy

Because there is a fifteen-year age range among the women in this study, it was possible to learn about the issues that feminist faculty had to deal with during the apartheid years and to compare those experiences with life in the university since the election of a democratic government. South Africa has a constitution the guarantees equal rights for all its citizens regardless of race, sex, ability, and sexual orientation and an affirmative national legislative environment for women. I was curious as to whether the higher education institutional context for feminist faculty had dramatically improved. As we will see in this section, the answer is not a simple "yes" or "no." On the contrary, what comes to mind is a popular pan-Africanist and anti-apartheid slogan: *a luta continua*—the struggle continues.

*The apartheid university.* Universities during the apartheid years were the sites of varying levels of anti-government activism on the part of students and/or faculty. Protest on English-language campuses was sporadic, while the historically white Afrikaans-medium institutions were the most conservative and, therefore, the most stable campuses well into the 1990s. Reflecting on institutional culture in the early 1970s, when she began her academic career at a predominantly white English-language university, Lesley described it broadly as a training ground for women "for marriage to appropriate men." Even though the university was considered one of South Africa's leading higher education institutions, it "was still very much a kind of 'finishing off' (sic.) school where, you know, you got to know the right kind of person." Male students, "depending on whether you were a WASP or Jewish," sought degrees in "architecture, engineering, medicine and law." The majority of female students capped their undergraduate degrees with a diploma in education, which qualified them for teaching in secondary schools. Lesley was one of the few women teaching law courses. In one of her classes at the time was a lone female student enrolled in a joint business and law program who is now a senior member of South Africa's judiciary.

Interestingly, in this part of our conversation, Lesley recalled the experiences of some of her white male students who were from working-class backgrounds. The father of one person was a political activist in exile at the time; the other student has gone on to a successful academic career and is known internationally in his field.

> [Both these students] were really quite extraordinary in drawing the parallels to
> the feelings women had, and the experience of working-class men in this

institution.  They don't get heard.   [Other male students would say] "Your

accent's wrong, your sense of masculinity is out"—all of those things.

English-speaking white universities asserted their ideological independence from

the state and tried hard to resist the government's persistent attempts to prescribe

institutional policy and practice.  But, as publicly-funded entities, they were not always

successful at maintaining academic autonomy.  In fact, some faculty even colluded with

the state, although the number of collaborators was small compared to the broad

intellectual and professional support that Afrikaans-speaking institutions gave to the

apartheid government.  Wendy reminded me, in our interview, that health professionals

had been guilty "of really glaring human rights abuses"[4] and that all historically white

universities with medical schools complied with the law stipulating "that black students

couldn't watch autopsies on white bodies."  At the time there were only three medical

schools training black doctors.

*Activism on campus.*  Protests on English-language campuses during the 1960s

and 1970s tended to be sporadic, but there was always a small group of politically active

students (predominantly white) who took up campaigns via student government.  In

addition, these campuses were home to a core group of white faculty who were politically

progressive.  This was certainly the case on Lesley's campus.  She counted herself among

them and vowed that "no student to pass through my hands wouldn't know the truth

about South Africa.  That was it.  And I think I've honored that pledge and kept that

pledge."  She spoke wistfully of her early years at the university,

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[4] For example, the doctors who attended to Steve Biko were disciplined by the South African Medical and Dental Council after Biko died. The SAMDC found that they had violated the Hippocratic Oath because, despite Biko's extensive injuries when they examined him, they did not admit him to a hospital and they did not prevent the police from taking him on a cross-country ride in the back of a police truck without adequate clothing, an act that ultimately led to his death.

If you think about the colleagues I was with, the *progressiveness*.  There was a

sense that you were engaging with these issues in your classroom, these were

issues of a national need.  And you could perhaps argue about, to what extent this

was polemical or were people being taught analysis or all kinds of things like that.

Karen, who became a member of the faculty at her alma mater in the early 1980s,

was one of a group of women who were fed up with sexist practices on campus.  They

confronted the president and Karen said he realized that "we were a force to be reckoned

with," so he suggested that they create a formal structure to advocate on their behalf.

With his support, women on campus proceeded to

Set up a six-person commission, consisting of *all* the constituencies—even the

white women—because at that time you must remember [there was a] Black Staff

Association, a *Staff* Association, which was white.  The right wing … we enlisted

them into this commission.  It was the first time that those conservative women

realized that they had a lot in common with other women.  In fact, those right-

wing women became my staunchest allies.

This was a powerful combination: a group of women united around a single purpose

supported by an administrative structure to generate the information that could shape

policy.

What we did is, we drew up a dossier of all the discriminatory practices on

campus: the lack of maternity benefits, the lack of a housing subsidy for women[5],

lack of research money for women.  Sexual harassment became a big issue.  Each

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[5] Civil servants, who are full-time employees of national and local government and entitled to full benefits, receive a small monetary contribution towards their mortgage repayments.  Previously only men were entitled to this benefit.  Most universities have changed their policies: women who are the primary breadwinners in their households or who have partners who do not have access to a housing subsidy are entitled to receive the benefit.

issue was tackled piecemeal—one by one. Once we won maternity benefits, the next thing was the sexual harassment. We did a *lot* of work around sexual violence. Those issues became a sore point for us as women because the biggest perpetrators of violence against women were the student leaders.

Sylvia also recalls that women "often dealt with issues of sexism with our own black colleagues—sexual harassment that our supposed comrades were practicing." She added that female faculty who "raised issues related to sexism … ran the risk of being labeled as being complicit with the state." This accusation came not only from male colleagues but from other black women on campus who were also community activists. Male student leaders harassed members of the women's commission and distributed pamphlets disparaging their activities as the work of "bourgeois liberal feminist[s]"—a grave insult among radical black activists. Karen said the backlash escalated when women

> Began arguing that the abolition of apartheid did not mean black male domination. … [T]here was a boycott called [by the male student leadership]. Students rampaged through the library, beat up women, broke their noses, and there was a rape. [The president] said he would not call in the apartheid police for this … [He would] for *murder.* Yes, that's different, but not a rape. It was at that time that we formulated the sexual harassment policy.

Clearly this group of women was not easily intimidated. On the contrary, the existence of a formal body which they could utilize to advance their interests

> *Did* give women voice and it transmogrified from the Women's Commission into an entity that inserted itself in everywhere. It … it was like an octopus, its

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tentacles were everywhere: the Human Resource Committee, we were on the

Residence Committee, we were on the Senate Committee, we were on Council—

everywhere.  And I think none of the other universities had [that].

*Individual experiences.*  The women's individual experiences in apartheid

universities differed vastly and were also contradictory.  Sylvia was a young faculty

member "just making [her] way into the hierarchy of the academy" at a historically black

institution when she exposed

Another black woman feminist colleague who had mismanaged funds.  … [T]he

assumption was that I was blowing the whistle and claiming fraudulent practices

because I was jealous [of her position].  … I was put through such a grilling

process that it left a really bitter taste in my mouth.  There was no option for me

but to leave.  … [A]t the time, I felt very alone.

On the other hand, Lesley remembers an affirming environment in which she felt

connected to others.

There was a time when [one of my colleagues and I] would sit down and we

would reflect on work and teaching.  He would insist that we review each year

into the graduate year and you'd review it every year in terms of what worked,

what didn't work and what do we have to make a change and we would take two

days over it.

But Lesley was the only woman in her department and at other times she felt quite

isolated.  Then, after restructuring within the school, she moved to another department,

this time one chaired by a woman—a rarity in 1970s South Africa.  Lesley described the

department as "a very egalitarian environment" and the chair insisted on certain rituals to

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promote cohesiveness: "[s]he *kept* us in the tea-room, she *made* us come for tea twice a day. There was leadership there. In a way, no-one else has delivered that [since]." In later years, Lesley observed "the way secretaries were chosen by men, not on the basis of competencies, but on the basis of their looks etc. [Some graduate students and colleagues had] affairs with students. I had problems with my tutors starting affairs with students. I'd keep a wide berth."

Also, Lesley did not join her male colleagues for drinks on a Friday afternoon because she "was never a person who [drank] in pubs," even though "we knew that, in the seventies, as women, that that failure to meet with the members of the department at the end of Friday was a problem." She also had a reputation for "trouble-making and [being] 'difficult'" as opposed to another female colleague who was called "hysterical." But, she added,

> At least I met with them socially at parties. And there were parties that were held. There were dinners and you brought food along. And, even if I didn't have intimate relationships with my immediate department colleagues, I was part of a campus community.

And as part of that broader community, Lesley was often invited to social events at the president's residence—a practice that continued until 1999 when the university appointed a new president who did not have the same deep connection to the city as his predecessors and who had not come through the ranks of the institution; hence he knew few members of the faculty and they did not know him very well either.

Stella's colleagues were not supportive at all.  In fact, one was positively hostile.

On her return to the university after completing her Ph.D., she expressed a wish to teach a

course about gender issues.  One male scornfully dismissed her request, stating

> "Then I will teach a course on green men from Mars because that's the same thing
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> on an ontological level."  I remember the incredible anger that I felt.  I wanted to
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> strangle him, but I didn't (*she laughed*). But that was the level of sophistication
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> that we had to deal with.  So, in the end, I persisted and I taught a course.

Stella also remembered that, when she first began teaching,

> I was always the one to make the tea.  There were only two women in this
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> department and it was me or the other one.  And I had to make the tea and kept
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> the minutes. And I really couldn't understand that because I thought of myself as
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> being an equal partner in the department.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, resistance to apartheid within South Africa was

growing and, in many colored and black townships, the schools were in crisis mode—

disrupted alternately by student protests and police harassment of activists.  Instances of

campus protest at some English-medium historically white universities became more

frequent.  These institutions were more critical of state repression than the Afrikaans-

medium universities and began to assert themselves as "open" universities, that is, open

to all who qualified for admission.  They rejected government constraints on admissions

and began to enroll more black students.  Many of these new black students came from

the townships that were virtually under police occupation.  Community-based protest was

violently suppressed.  On campus, black students joined up with fellow-activists who

were white and colored and they allied themselves with the broader South African Mass

Democratic Movement, through organizations such as the United Democratic Front. Progressive faculty supported student activists by attending their meetings and joining their marches.

The "open" universities attracted the attention of foundations in the United States that were eager to provide the material support for institutions that had a commitment to changing the composition of their students, staff, and faculty to reflect South Africa's demographic profile. Support came in the form of scholarships for their students and funding for staff and faculty development programs. Slowly women and black people began to move up the faculty and staff hierarchy. This process, initiated over twenty years ago, is ongoing. Although this development might have been inevitable, given the upheaval in South African society more broadly, Lesley believes,

> The issue of women being in the upper echelons: I realize that we wouldn't have got anywhere if it wasn't for the Americans coming in to assist with fundraising and giving donations, because without them, the university would not have changed its profile. My view is that, whatever changes we were able to win in the '80s, really were directly related to the pressure that came in from the States. That's not to say that [the then president] wasn't a good person, but I don't think [he and other senior administrators] were really serious.

*The post-apartheid university: institutional culture.* The post-apartheid South African university has continued to present feminist faculty with daily challenges. The women I interviewed described a gendered institutional culture that is hostile, alienating, and indifferent to their concerns. Forms of discrimination have become more sophisticated over time, but have stubbornly persisted. Institutions have only partially

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succeeded at achieving employment equity and eradicating discriminatory practices and procedures.  As the experiences of feminist faculty show, much work remains to be done.

If, as Shakespeare says, "what's past is prologue," then the culture within each of the institutions represented by this study's participants is distinctive because of its origins and history.  Karen observed that she had seen

The evolution of institutional culture both as a student and as an academic.  As a student the institution I came to had the Broederbond[6] strict culture.  White staff spied on students.  We changed the culture on the campus. We turned the place upside down and made [it] into what we wanted it to be: from a hyper-reactionary, controlled environment to an anarchic zone.

At that same institution, thirty years have passed since Karen's student days and Wendy is now a member of the faculty. She says the institution has settled down after the tumultuous 1970s and 1980s and now has "a very stable academic body partly because they haven't had enough money to hire new people in twenty years."  The institution's dominant culture, she says, is "complex and … murky in a lot of ways."  In the past, as a faculty representative on the Council[7], she said

I learned a lot more about higher education and the university.  Those were the days when [the university] was always in the red, always living on overdraft, *and* it was just after that very traumatic period of having 32 academics fired because of budgetary constraints, after the [president] had promised that no-one would

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[6] The Afrikaner Broederbond (brotherhood) was an all-male secret organization dedicated to advancing Afrikaner power and interests.  Its members dominated administrative and faculty positions at the ethnic universities in the early years of their existence and had a profound influence on institutional culture.

[7] In South African universities, the Council is an institution's highest governing body and its composition is determined by the Higher Education Act.  Several constituencies are represented on Council: alumni/ae; students, faculty, and staff ; no more than five people appointed by the Minister of Education; the provincial governor's appointee; up to two representatives of local government; the university's senior administration—president and his deputies.

lose their jobs.  And then they got letters at home on a Saturday saying [that they

had been fired].  I mean: it was really traumatic.  In a way it's marked the

institution ever since … people really turned their energies away from

engagement with the university and its structures and they decided: fine, I'll just

teach.

The demise of a faculty union was a casualty of disengagement from the campus

community.  Wendy had used her position as president of the union to advocate for

women.  But "it died a natural death," she said, "because of a lack of willingness of

colleagues to attend meetings and to get involved and [to] do things."  Faculty

withdrawal from active participation in campus structures has also been detrimental to the

institution's academic culture.  As Wendy says,

People do their teaching.  People do their marking, but there isn't a vibrant

academic community … anymore.  There isn't a lot of academic debate, issues

that you find people cross-faculties getting involved in.  It's very fragmented.

Part of that is decentralization, which in some ways is good.  But it means that

people don't really meet each other across boundaries.

Finally, "there's the old class divides between the [administrative] staff and the academic

staff, which is strong and intact to this day."

There are also ethnic divides.  Wendy lamented the resignation of a black

colleague who had left the department and joined South Africa's Foreign Service.  This

person was often mistaken for a student because of his youthful appearance and, as a

result, was treated with disrespect by the administrative staff, which is overwhelmingly

colored.  They were uncooperative and sometimes prevented him from taking materials

out of the library.  The situation became intolerable and he decided to leave.  Wendy was dismayed:

> He's been a huge loss to our department in terms of someone whose door was always open, where students felt comfortable, very engaging.  He *liked* doing the [department's] Open Day[8].  I *hate* Open Day!  Oh, I *hate* it!  He *liked* doing all those things.  So it's been a huge loss to the department.

It hurts the institution as well—in the short term certainly and, possibly, in the long term: his experience could discourage other black South Africans from seeking academic positions there.

Finally, Wendy remarked on the inflexibility of institutional culture.  Reflecting on historically white institutions during our discussion, she wondered how one explained "the innate conservatism of a university like [that]?  It can do a lot of things and it can go in a lot of directions, but there's this institutional rigidity about the place that comes from a tradition of its own mainstream culture."  She had witnessed that rigidity on her own campus, which was struggling to rise above its apartheid origins.  For instance, a senior administrative post has been filled on an acting basis for several years.

> They won't hire someone with a different perspective.  Diversity's not supported in those ways.  Diversity is not even on the agenda.  True diversity means that you have people who bring different ideas and different perspectives and different voices to the table and all of those people—that there are a thousand flowers blooming.  *That's* what diversity means.

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[8] Open Day is when high school students from the surrounding communities visit the department to learn how history is taught at the university level.

Faculty at some of South Africa's more conservative universities strongly resist efforts to integrate their ranks. When Stella became a full professor, there were only two other women in the university senate. These days the senate is comprised of thirty female professors out of a total of two hundred and thirty but still Stella has found that she can do little to effect change in university practices. For example, when it comes to appointing selection committees for senior posts, and the senate has to vote on the nominations, "there will be names of white men, white women, black women, [and] black men. They first vote out the black people, then they vote out the women, and they always end up with white men on selection committees." Also,

> In this institution it's very hard to get through that glass ceiling because women are still—they start at the lower ranks. They get a lot of teaching. They don't get research done and what is rewarded really is research.

As for institutional culture, Stella told me,

> it took 10 years to get a sexual harassment policy institutionalized against incredible odds … you have to understand one thing about this university; it's extremely Afrikaans and it's extremely patriarchal. You have to fight against a lot of resistance … we've spent fourteen years trying to get a [day care facility]. We still don't have it.

The struggle to secure institutional support for on-site day care has been particularly painful because, in the end, and at the highest level, Stella had the door firmly closed in her face by someone she had considered an ally. An important underlying principle of the proposal to establish on-site day care was that low-earning staff, not only faculty, would be able to make use of the facility. To this end, the

university would have to subsidize the costs of service delivery. More importantly, the president's support for the proposal would guarantee its ultimate implementation. Stella explained,

> We had a project team, we had tenders … and the only way we could make it work was if the university agreed to subsidize salaries—otherwise it would not be possible… So we went to the [president] who was seen as a very progressive man and in many ways *was* a very progressive man. He looked at us and said, "This is not core business at this university. If you want a service, you pay for it." And then we said to him, "And what are you going to say to your support staff, who are all coloured people?" This is not only a gender issue; it's also a racial issue. And he said, "You obviously did not hear me. If you want the service, you pay for it."

Stella was devastated,

> That was the first time in my life I walked out of a meeting crying because I could not accept it. I felt that it was a terrible betrayal. I had worked with him on many committees, I was one of his confidants supporting him through the process of transformation and here he was, saying it to my face, you know. I said to him, "So you don't value actually the contribution women make to this university."

Like Stella, Rihana works in a historically white Afrikaans-medium institution which was one of the pillars of tertiary level Christian National Education. The student body is growing increasingly diverse, but the composition of the faculty has changed very little in the past few years. Rihana describes the university as

Probably one of *the* most patriarchal institutions you've *ever* come across. But it's also extremely racist. You never quite know whether you're dealing with racism or sexism, but I'm sure it's a good mixture of both. But also my attitude to both has been, "Up yours." If you're going to deal with me in this way, then I'm not going to deal with you at all. I can be pretty aggressive about it. I don't give it the attention that people think it should have. But also I've learnt to be conscious of [being a female and being black]. I wasn't conscious of being a female in that sense that it's limiting or of being black.

She adds,

Interestingly, one thing I became very conscious of at this institution, is of not being Christian. Because it's a real in-your-face thing as well and I've never been a person who's promoting religion or been a religious Hindu. But I decided there to stake my claim against religion simply because I refused to buy into [Christianity as it's practiced on the campus].

*Choosing your battles.* Rihana has taken a strategic decision to avoid confrontation with her head of department and to use her scholarship as an outlet for her feminism: "I [will] be as provocative as I can be and want to be in my writing and my publications. But I don't want to engage with my immediate boss, I tell him that." In department meetings she has drawn attention to the fact that the college of education hired only one black person during a period when the university had professed its commitment to transforming the faculty. Because she feels very strongly about this issue, "I will be very verbal about it; I wouldn't *not* be verbal." She is quick to add, "At the same time, I'm going to choose my battles."

Yet, even campuses with equity policies and procedures that pre-date democratic South Africa do not necessarily succeed in creating a welcoming environment. Sylvia, writing about her own (historically white) institution has argued for the need "to move beyond bureaucratizing equity committees and looking at statistics and we actually have to consciously address the day-to-day culture of the institution that makes the place so alien for the very people you want to address." Although she has tried "to negotiate this 'shite' diplomatically," Sylvia faced a backlash from her colleagues when she challenged them in a meeting of her college senate. In the heat of the moment she lost her temper she said, and "it's like [breaking wind] in a lift. You just get ignored. You get a label for being that crazy, ranting, raving [female]. It conforms to their stereotype."

Stella has found herself in the same position at her institution because she is usually the only person who raises the gender issue. Initially she was the only woman on the university's academic appointments committee; now there are two of them. She says that, at meetings,

> I regularly have to make interventions. They will take two CVs and they will say,
> "Ah, this woman [has] less publications than this man." Then we'll say, maybe
> there are reasons for that. Have you considered this, that, and the other? But
> there's always that intervention that need[s] to be made. It's not as though the
> men there think, you know, "Can *I* make an intervention?" or "Maybe there's
> something *I* would like to say." It becomes—you become the voice of gender. I
> don't know—it's very disheartening.

I got a strong sense from my interviewees that they were weary of constantly being in battle mode because they feel compelled to raise women's issues in institutions

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that are blind to gendered procedures.  Nevertheless, they are sustained by like-minded

colleagues, on- and off-campus.  More importantly, they are driven by the belief that

> The thing about being a feminist academic in the post-apartheid era is that one can
>
> have a more accessible vision of reaching the heights of one's career than [one]
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> otherwise would not have had—that's just at the most obvious level.

### 5. Institutional Interactions

A critical aspect of the women's daily lives is their interactions with others on

campus.  In this section, I share what the women revealed about their relationships with

superiors, peers, and students, respectively.

*Superiors.*  For each of the women I interviewed, the nature of their interactions

with superiors is determined by a combination of factors: gender (naturally), status in the

academic hierarchy, institutional culture, race, and ethnicity.  The interviews reveal that it

is difficult to fathom why some factors are more salient than others in a given situation.

Earlier in this chapter I showed what happened when Stella, who is white and a full

professor, led a delegation to the president (a white male) to ask him to back their

proposal for in-house day-care.  He turned them down and Stella was distraught.  An

individual with no knowledge of Stella's prior dealings with the president could be

forgiven for thinking that they were complete strangers to each other.  Yet, the opposite

was true, which is why Stella was so shocked by his cold indifference that she was

reduced to tears.

Rihana has had both supportive and adversarial relationships with her superiors.

Originally, she had joined the university as a doctoral student because she wanted to

study with the dean, then a black man who was extremely supportive of women and black

students.  At the time, he gave Rihana some of the same privileges as faculty; for example, she had her own office and a computer.  But, despite the institution's espoused commitment to transformation, his attempts to effect change within his college were constantly thwarted.  Because of his expertise, the national Department of Education frequently called on him for input into issues that either affected other higher education institutions or which impacted on the system as a whole.  Eventually the university leadership forced him to choose between his institutional and his national commitment to educational change.  He chose the latter and left the institution.

Now that he has gone, Rihana feels extremely isolated.  She has been forced to reflect on how she will negotiate the workplace.

I don't see myself being able to change that environment for a number of reasons.  One is that, since my time as an activist, I've done that.  I want to be able to be an activist in an intellectual kind of way now.  I don't want to fight battles about political power.  And I think the university bureaucracy is not something you take on in single-handedly.  [The former Dean] is a living example of what happens.

As for his successor, Rihana has decided that she

Is not someone I wish to engage with in battles because I know it's a pointless exercise.  I just pretend she doesn't exist and I just do my own thing.  And I think my challenge lies in that I don't play by the rules.  I will write exactly what I want to write.  I will mentor my students the way I choose to do it.  And, as far as rules are concerned, I don't really care much about [them].

Nevertheless, Rihana asserts that she has elected to be provocative through her scholarship.  Although she has reminded her colleagues in faculty meetings that the

school only appointed one black man in seven years when it purported to be engaged in transformation, she has decided to choose her battles.

Sylvia has challenged the dean and her department chair on several occasions. For example, two years ago she "raised hell" about not being promoted. In retaliation, "I got punished. I mean, I got the promotion, but I've been punished over the last year or so, by being actively cold-shouldered." My first interview with Sylvia had to be postponed because, thirty minutes before I was due to arrive at her office for a 10:30 a.m. appointment, she had been told that she had to teach two classes that day (at 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.) because the department Chair, who was responsible for those courses, had left for an international conference a day earlier. No arrangements had been made to give students work in advance of the trip, which Sylvia speculated might not have been approved by the Dean. The students expected to have classes on that day, and Sylvia was the only faculty member available to fill in.

When I got to her office, Sylvia was both angry and distraught, frantically searching for materials to help her prepare for the two lessons. It didn't help that she was recovering from a bad bout of the 'flu. A few days later we met in a coffee shop near the campus and spoke about the incident. I wanted to know whether this had happened before and whether she intended to take up the issue with the department Chair. Her superior has taken advantage of her in the past, she explained, and

> What it *has* meant is that I've had to find the courage now to address. Not to fear
> but to confront. And I have started doing that and I will continue to do that
> because I think that, if this institution and its organizational culture means so

much to me, then I have to then be courageous and speak out against these abuses.

I've made that personal decision and that means growing a tough skin.

Sylvia's experience brought to mind another informant, who also has a tricky relationship with her Chair, which clearly illustrates some of the tensions between academic feminists. Because she was a junior member of the faculty, she said,

> I struggle with that Queen Bee syndrome. Because the assumption was that, as a less renowned feminist, one's got to now pour one's energy into [her] career, and I'm not prepared to do that. I'm not prepared to do that without also reaping the benefits, so I find myself in a very ambiguous, almost contradictory, place …
> [b]ecause, at the same time, I'm trying to encourage my students to work collaboratively. One of the problems is: can one call attention to bullying, oppressive mechanisms of highly professional empowered black women academics without being told that now you're trying to steamroll the diversity project of the institution? So there's that finer politics that one always seems to fall foul of.

*Peers and colleagues.* Relationships with peers and colleagues are, simultaneously, challenging and rewarding for feminist faculty. Sources of frustration for the women are: the apathy of their female colleagues who refuse to take an active role in advocating for themselves; constantly having to explain themselves to peers who misunderstand feminism and feminist scholarship; ridicule from male colleagues who oppose what they stand for. Yet the women know who their allies are and who they can go to for support when resistance leaves them emotionally depleted. There are a few like-minded male and female colleagues who strengthen their resolve to continue the

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fight for gender equity in the academy.  The complexities of, and contradictions in, these relationships are detailed below.

Stella has worked hard to draw attention to women's issues on her campus and to mobilize female faculty and staff to advocate on their own behalf.  It took a long time:

> Fourteen years after the fact, after I started at this process, before the birth of my first child, we started a Women's Forum.  We did try to do a lot of transformation but the women on this campus are completely apathetic.  They will groan and moan and they will not make any active contributions.  So we've tried to do transformation work and, in the end, the only thing that they are concerned about, really, is their salaries.

Stella has also tried to establish a Gender Studies program.

> It lasted for 6 years, but it had to close down last year because of lack of institutional support.  … there's no undergraduate feeder program.  You have five students and the first time they get to know gender issues [is at the graduate level].  And they think it's a soft option so they give it very little attention.  And [there's] a lack of commitment on the part of academics.

But her toughest battles are with white male peers in the faculty senate, who thwart all attempts to have some diversity on selection committees.

> Whenever there's an important selection committee and Senate has to vote.  There will be names of white men, white women, black women, black men. They first vote out the black people, then they vote out the women, and they always end up with white men on selection committees.

Two years ago, a white woman was only added to the selection committee for the new president after Stella intervened. There is resistance to change among faculty who are determined to maintain the status quo.

> There are a couple of people in the Law Faculty. They've managed, twice, to interfere with the process of appointing a Dean. They have, twice, managed to get rid of a black candidate then get the white guy they want. I've been—in the last round I was on the Appointments Committee. I got up in [the] Senate and said, "This process is so contaminated, I'm not prepared to be part of it. We should start the process over." And there were people who wanted to crucify me. Why am I not supporting this wonderful white person? I have no problem with the wonderful white person. But the process was so rigged.

She accepts that "there are people who dislike this immensely: that I am always raising this issue. Then there are people who admire me, but I have to accept that I have a label." The problem, Stella says, is that although

> There are women on this campus who would call themselves feminists, … we are small in number. We do talk about issues but that will be more, sort of, as women at this university … the woman who have (sic) been driving this crèche initiative—she's not a feminist. But her heart's in the right place. But there's no collective action and, I mean, this Women's Forum was—the idea was to create that for collective action.

Nevertheless, one has the sense that Stella is part of a small community of people sensitive to gender issues. She has "colleagues in the Law Faculty that have … been supportive, and other colleagues in other faculties who are outspoken feminists but who

also decided, it's not worth the time and the effort. I know, in time of crisis I would be able to draw on them"

Rihana, on the other hand, has found that being an academic at her institution is as frustrating as being a female graduate student of color. She is the chair of her department's doctoral proposal defense committee, an experience which she says

Is highly intellectually frustrating. And my colleague and I have often thought of resigning, because the culture at the university has been: you don't fail a student. You don't tell them to come and revise their work. You don't tell them that, actually your proposal doesn't have a literature review.

She confesses that, "One of the things that I need to learn is to very nicely tell somebody they're talking nonsense. I don't have that ability." Colleagues have accused her of being obstructive. Yet, she notes,

In 2005, only one student was failed. The majority of [students] had their proposals accepted with changes—with recommended changes. And then there were some who required major changes. For me the real issue there is not about preventing Ph.D.s from being accepted, but the fact that full professors feel: Who are we to question how their students write their proposals? People who have been professors since 1970 on, they feel that our recommendations are effrontery. We are more critical than other professors. Even their other colleagues have no intellectual faith in them. They also can't believe that a person of color can answer back. All the years of tenure haven't taught them, how they should deal with that. They know that black people behave in a certain way and it's very much in a capacity as servant. To equate intellectual work with black people is

odd. The Bible never said it. The church never said it either. So it's a very difficult thing for them to be able to transcend.

Rihana's colleagues have also taken issue with her teaching—not *how* she does it, but *what* she does. The cause of their irritation is

The fact that I'm teaching globalization and critical theory. It's a module that people have been trying, certainly the old guard, have been trying to get rid of because it's a compulsory module for Masters students. According to them, it's making lots of students [unhappy]. My argument is: how do you do a Masters degree with *no* understanding of social theory, and how do you prepare those students for taking on a Ph.D. This used to be [the Dean's] module—he taught it. Then, when I finished my Ph.D.—I co-taught with him for a year and then he handed it over to me. Now I've done it for two years. Of course I know if I leave, there is going to be nobody there to teach it. It will get wiped off the map.

Given the level of hostility that Rihana has had to deal with, even when the previous Dean was still at the institution, it is remarkable that she is still there. She shared with me an incident that took place shortly after she entered the doctoral program. She was having a problem with her computer and, in response to a request for technical support, a white male graduate assistant appeared at the door of her office. Before he looked at her computer,

He asked me for my staff number. I said I was a student, and then he launched into a tirade about how I'm not entitled to an office. What a cheek! He said he would take it to the Dean. So I said, let's go to the Dean. I'll walk down with you. On the way down, everybody comes out of their offices. When we got to the

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Dean's office he said, "She's been really rude and abusive. I'm so ashamed to say what she said." So I said to [the Dean], "He's ashamed to tell you what I said. I'll tell you what I said," because I had no qualms about telling my side of the story. Nobody walks into my office and speaks to me that way.

Part of the problem, Rihana explained, was that, "the thinking at the university is that a student is an 18 year old and that's who they are; you don't go beyond [where you're supposed to be in the hierarchy]."

People have assumptions about where an individual is located in the hierarchy.

As a woman of color, Sylvia has had to contend with being

Reduced, by a very dear colleague, to—the assumption is that I'm an administrator. You know, you try to read it in a generous way [but] there are days when I get angry about it because most of administrators at the university happen to be either Coloured or, now increasingly so, Black. But a colleague who knows. She knows. She works with me on a daily basis. And, you know, I've published internationally. I deliberately went and got a Ph.D. in [another country]. You know the cost of doing a Ph.D. [overseas]. But I told myself, in order to be taken seriously, I have to have this degree from a good, internationally renowned institution and come back here. And people try to box you in again.

Sylvia also recalls the questions she faced as she neared the completion of her dissertation:

Why do you want a Ph.D? You've studied, you know, the Masters is good enough. [They] look at you quizzically because you know for a fact, as a woman and as a black woman, you have to work doubly as hard. *That* is the reality.

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The reality is also that diplomacy does not always win one friends. For Sylvia, the institution

> [Is] a very lonely place, because there aren't very many people[like me]. And
> then, even … within our grouping of 'feminists' there are all the little fractures. I
> mean I'm now having to face accusations from lesbian friends who are saying,
> who the hell are you as a heterosexual woman doing research about lesbian and
> gay people's lives? Well, how many people do you know doing this kind of
> work? Number 1. Number 2: we need to be writing about this anyway.

Sylvia seeks solace from the women who she worked with in community organizations. They are off-campus, removed from its tensions. With them, "you don't have to explain. You don't have to have the double consciousness all the time. You don't have to ask questions about assumptions, about who you are before you can reply."

> For Lesley, like Sylvia, the campus is a lonely place. She pointed out that, before every faculty member had a personal computer, there was more contact with the department secretaries, for example. She has bought her own printer

> So I don't have to get into a queue to get stuff printed and where everybody's
> questioning me about how much money am I spending. I buy my own paper; I
> buy my own ink, so I can *take* to my students … a diagram or something like this
> without a turf war over [it].

But her teaching is not an entirely solitary enterprise. She still shares responsibility for a course with a colleague who she has worked with since her early days as an academic, although the two of them no longer sit down together and plan the semester. They split the work and teach their respective sections independently. A colleague who has joined

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the department more recently collaborates with her on another course, "But [he] and I go through a rigorous process: what do we want to do? Where are we going? And what are we each doing?"

Personal (non-teaching) relationships with individuals have been more complicated. An experience in the early nineties has made Lesley wary of reaching out to new colleagues. She had offered to assist a new female member of staff with settling into the department. She also tried to help this person understand institutional dynamics. Lesley's colleague, a woman of color, was convinced "that it was all about race here. I would try and get her to understand that it was a heady mixture [with] gender as a predominant thing, I think. Race is a secondary thing [with] class somewhere tacked into that mess too. She wasn't having it." Then, Lesley was appalled to discover that her colleague

> Was telling my black students that I would try to take over their lives and do this
> and that. I think I retreated. Subsequently, she got into trouble. She came to ask
> me for advice and I was pleasant. I think [after that] I decided to stay away from
> staff—academic staff. I think that sense of me being perceived as a white woman
> who is appropriating the success of black women—I think those were the words
> she used—really harsh words [was very hurtful]. There was only one young
> student brave enough to come and tell me—a Masters student of mine. I think
> that was about '97/'98. I packed up on that front after that.

This experience has made Lesley somewhat cynical about relationships between white and black colleagues.

I mean, this is the fallacy of white liberals, isn't it? That when you are in power and you're friendly and, as you say, in a space of integrity, you *think* you're having friendships with black people. And when the power relations change in the wider society, if you like, then one's not certain anymore what the hell's going on, and particularly when those friendships just fall away.

Lesley experience with her colleague is an example of the "dreaded racial feminist dynamic," which first surfaced at a conference on Women and Gender held in Durban in 1991. It was the first of its kind held in South Africa. The organizers and most of the presenters were white faculty and they were presenting papers that "turned out to be an examination of some aspect of the lives of black women" (Barnes, 2002, p. 249). Many of the black women who were present were disturbed by the "nonparticipatory, disempowering" way in which the research was conducted and presented (Barnes, 2002). Tensions that had been building up for decades bubbled over. Barnes (2002) reports that many of the white researchers were reluctant to acknowledge their complicity (albeit unintentional) in perpetuating racist research practices. Stung by what they considered to be unjustified criticism, they drew attention to the hurdles they had faced in putting together the first academic conference in South Africa that focused on women's issues. Most of the researchers could not appreciate that, despite their good intentions, to their audience their presentations were clumsy and often patronizing.

I do not wish to go into a long discussion about this incident and subsequent occasions when tensions erupted because race relations between South African feminists is not the focus of this study. But these tensions are very much a part of their daily experiences and are in their consciousness. White scholars have to be mindful of the

sensibilities of the black women whose lives they subject to scrutiny and analysis. On the other hand, this study has shown that black women scholars do not automatically have identical experiences of the academy by virtue of their "blackness". Nevertheless, the development of non-exploitative scholarship about black South African women has to be a goal for any scholar who wants to make a difference.

Not all of the women have difficult relationships with their colleagues. Talking about her department, Wendy reported,

> I think that I am fortunate in that I have been in, and located in, quite a collegial department. [Our] department has been pretty stable since I've been here. We have certainly had our spats about what should be in the … curriculum and stuff. But, on the whole, this isn't one of those departments where people are tearing each other's eyes out and backstabbing and all that kind of thing.

Finally, some connections formed during the years of struggle in community organizations have survived, and continue to sustain women long after the end of apartheid. Sylvia says she is strengthened by

> Those networks, and the knowledge that those people are out there; that I can still call on them. I mean, my relationships with some people, for example, my relationship with [a former colleague] was very fraught at one point. But the mere fact that we share that common history; we still have that history. She's still *very* inspirational, *still* takes an interest in my career, will still ask after me, and I really appreciate that because those kinds of interest, that kind of sharing of common memory, of common struggle to put women's studies on the map, are *much* more meaningful to me.

*Students.* Not all of the women I interviewed talked at length about teaching, but those who did shared with me their teaching philosophy, which was grounded in their political and feminist activism and shaped their relationships with students.

Earlier in this chapter, Lesley stated her commitment to telling her students the truth about South African society, that is, what apartheid meant for those who were classified African, Indian, and Colored—those citizens who did not enjoy the privileges and rights of white South Africans. This was a courageous undertaking in the apartheid university, when she first entered academia. These days, Lesley finds that

> Students have changed quite a lot. The introduction of fees per course has made
> them feel that you owe them all the time. And, I mean, I keep on threatening …
> to get a breakdown from the university. Actually that four thousand rand[9] that
> they pay: what am I getting? What is the university taking? Kind of start with a
> pie chart of it, so that they know that this is what it's costing them a minute.
> Rather than the assumption that they take that four thousand rand and they
> literally divide by 12 weeks and that's the calculation that they make.

In addition, attendance tends to dwindle as the semester progresses, so she began taking attendance and the number of students in class increased. When we met, she told me,

> This week I said, okay, I think you're adult enough now for me not to have a class
> register. What are we down to? 25. I'll re-introduce it after vacation. I have
> never, never in my history of teaching—26½ years—have I ever kept a class
> register. Now, in my 27th year …

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[9] Approximately four hundred dollars.

But, when it comes to graduate students, Lesley takes a completely different approach to teaching. Remembering her days as an undergraduate when, "even though we were second-year students only, we were taken seriously," she says,

I measure my development in training students and sending them out to NGOs. They come back and they develop project proposals. I can assist, through my intervention with the students. Then they write—like this guy doing the Gateway[10]—they write their Masters on it. In that way that academic activism, which is a characteristic of mine, continues. It's theoretized (sic). I can pull apart their stuff and say, these are the voices that need to be present in this thesis.

At this stage of her career, Lesley says,

I've got a wider depth of knowledge. I do now what I probably never did [in the early years]. It's line by line. I started doing that when I was banned actually. That banning period really allowed me to understand what good supervision was. Line by line, discuss it, send it off. I mean tell them to go off and write the next chapter properly. [When they] start their Masters with me, I put them in a group: four of them and I get them to work, you know. Bring their writing and share their writing, so that it accelerates the process.

She also makes a point of seeking out black students.

I think there *is* a vague recognition that I—if you go and look at who I'm supervising—that I'm picking up most of the black students to supervise. They get distinctions for their work. One of the external examiners said when she picked up a thesis that she got—she said, "One thing I know when I read one of

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[10] The N2 Gateway Project has a budget of several millions and aims to provide housing for people living in informal settlements along the N2, one of South Africa's major national highways which originates in Cape Town.

your students is that there's going to be theoretizing (sic). I don't get that elsewhere." That may be or may not be.

Lesley's female students are also important to her—undergraduates and graduates. Referring to her relationships with female colleagues, I observed that the connections were tenuous. She replied, "But who I connect with are my women students. I launch them."

Sylvia works hard to recruit graduate students, even though they are not taking graduate-level courses, but doing Masters degrees by dissertation only. As she told me, "there is currently no space for me to teach postgraduate courses." Without funding, there would be no students either, so she raises funds for fellowships and tries "to encourage my students to work collaboratively. So now, with any research, we co-write articles and you switch first/second author."

Like Lesley, Sylvia finds that teaching undergraduates is a challenge. She believes that their attitudes are rooted in

> The Northern notion of the academy. You know how the university as a product of consumption—that consumerist framework has now demanded greater mentoring, greater service to students. In fact, even if you're looking at it from a market-related point of view of the academy, American professors are rated on students' perceptions of their courses. You fall foul of a student and they know they can throw a spanner into your career.

In fact, many students in Sylvia's undergraduate classes are at the university on exchange from US institutions. These students are very capable academically (compared to some black South African students) and Sylvia says that they have an excellent work ethic, but

"they are emotional hard work" because she has found that they expect a high level of engagement with their teachers. Also, US students are unfamiliar with the grading scheme in most South African universities which is modeled on the British system and this causes a great deal of distress among US students—hence the "emotional hard work."

> Black students tend to hone in on one as a sympathetic ear or voice. But, at the same time, you're also reluctant to move into the stereotype of being the 'mammy figure.' So there's those kinds of issues. But you know that they themselves are struggling with finding their own intellectual voice, their own voice in writing, in arguing and articulating themselves, often in a language that is their third language or … you know.

Despite the challenges, none of the women said that they disliked teaching or that their interactions with students were onerous. Wendy told me,

> I really like teaching. I have a very light teaching load at the moment. In a way, I wish I had more classes. I like teaching; I enjoy it. So that's part of my role as a scholar. I think of myself as someone who works hard to be an engaging teacher who brings students into the topic, into the subject matter.

Her scholarship includes work on the nature of academic culture, which can be

> About cut and thrust and attack and slicing and dicing and, you know, destroying other people's arguments. If they can stand up to all that then they've won and they've learned and they get their degree or their mark. If they can't slice and dice back and be like a boxing ring, then they fail. I think that's a masculinist (sic) view of education.

Wendy believes that students should be allowed to rewrite bad papers to improve their grades.

> Education is about learning, learning is about doing so, if you want to redo your [terrible] essay and try and get a passing mark, I think that that's something that I, as a feminist academic, have to find space for.

In the classroom, she says, "I like to conduct my classes more as conversations. I *try* very hard, as opposed to: I'm-the-one-with-all-the-knowledge. I think that's a part of feminist praxis. But it's also part of good teaching. I'm far from being the first person to have thought of this."

## 6. Reflections on Academic Life

In concluding Chapter 4, I focus on the women's reflections on their lives as feminists in the post-apartheid South African university. As opposed to descriptions of what has happened to them—in other words, their external world—their reflections give us insight into their inner lives: their thoughts and feelings about being a feminist academic, about their institutions in particular and academia in general, and about post-apartheid South Africa.

*The "F" word.* Lesley was the only one of the women I interviewed who refused to identify herself as a feminist to her students, even though she has no qualms about being called a feminist among colleagues and in the community beyond the university. Here she expresses her view on the matter, which is somewhat contradictory.

> So for me it's not a dirty—I know it is a dirty word. I wouldn't dare even—I wouldn't want to be labeled, if you like, today as that in a classroom, because I know that 99% of my students would just switch off. So I have to talk about

those issues—it almost feels like people talking about introducing Marxism into the university without ever using the word "Marx" in the sixties and seventies in South Africa. I think I make that sense of irony all the time: "I may sound like a Marxist now. I could be sounding like a 'this.'" So I'm, in a sense, constantly labeling and I pre-empt it.

Rihana was more forthcoming. She observed, "Because I've no problems saying I'm a feminist, I think it can be particularly intimidating for both men and women." But her full answer was a little more complicated.

Perhaps the first thing I'd like to say is [about] the consciousness of being a female academic. I'm not sure I'm as conscious of that. I'm conscious of being an academic. I'm conscious of being female as well, up to a point. But I'm *more* conscious of not being bound by rules and regulations. I hate institutional regulations, whether it applies to females or not, I still find it difficult to deal with.

Sylvia also has no qualms about labeling herself. But she also sees the need to clarify for colleagues what constitutes being a feminist academic, because there are misconceptions about feminist scholarship.

I'm actually very surprised at the under-developed critical gender consciousness among many women academics. People want to shy away from the term 'feminist' as though it's a cuss word. People do not claim the label. They claim it very reluctantly. I mean, you know *I* even find myself sometimes saying I'm a feminist anthropologist, you know—sort of juxtaposing the two. And the other day I had to catch myself. I was talking to a woman sociologist. I was asking her to co-supervise a Ph.D. with me on HIV/AIDS and gender. Immediately she said

something that got my defenses up again about being feminist because her implication was that, if you claim to be a feminist, you are an uncritical ideologue. And I had to say to her, I'm a feminist *scholar*. I'm not an *ideologue*; I'm not an unthinking *ideologue*. I had to clarify it, and I was *very* surprised.

*Isolation and disconnection.* Lesley talked at length about how unhappy she had been for several years. She traced her unhappiness to changing political and personal dynamics (they are entwined) within the activist community in the wake of South Africa's birth as a democratic nation. Speaking from the perspective of an activist who chose not to move into a position of power and influence in the new government, Lesley observed,

> From 1994 onwards I'm a has-been. I mean, that's all I can say to you. Because people for whom political influence is important, let's put it that way, are making their connections to people in power. It raises things about your value. What was your value about? And was your value … I don't know. It's so complicated. And something about looking eyes. And I don't want to sound paranoid. But you actually know when you are being seen and when you're not being seen. That would have been impossible for me to do [take time off from teaching]; maybe post-1990. I don't think it's a conversation that I could have had pre-1990 because my sense of obligation and responsibility was too great. It's not for nothing that I traveled to the States post-1994.

At the same time, Lesley felt that she was not valued by the institution and she had become isolated from her colleagues. Yet, when she spoke to me, she said,

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I don't feel isolated because I've got lots of students. I mean, it's collegially isolated, yes. … I was miserable up to two years ago: all this isolation; sense of disconnection; a sense of not being valued. And then I took a decision—I think it was two years ago—I had five/six years left [before retirement] and I'd better enjoy every day. So you could say it was like a little 'I am awakening' moment; something like that. I decided I was in charge of my life actually. I think it is quite taxing. I mean, I get tired, you know, at the end of the day because I'm generating the stuff for myself all the time, in a way. As long as you don't think I feel—I feel much happier than I've felt for a long time. It's my decision to make every day a good day for myself here. I think that taking that time off really made me a much more exciting academic for the last few years. Before that I was really whipped.

While Lesley has come to terms with her place in the institution—namely, on the margins—Stella is somewhat conflicted about being in that space. Years of challenging the "extremely Afrikaans and … patriarchal" culture have led her to "[contemplate] disengagement because sometimes I get so angry and fed up." She has been a member of the faculty for more than two decades "and I still don't feel comfortable on this campus. I still feel I'm an outsider. It's because I don't have the same values as most of my colleagues; the same traditions. It's not what I want. Well, I don't want to be part of the culture really." There are some women who "make it and they're good academics but they become like the men [because] they are in this competitive environment." But Stella has chosen not to be one of those women: "I think you have to have this ability to distance yourself otherwise you can't survive. I know that it's not about me, but about

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what I stand for and that's not going to change." She also believes that her activism has brought about change, however small.

I just think that—I *know*—that I have made a difference even if it's for one or two people. And I have a very public face, I think. I told you about a space in [a daily newspaper] and I write about feminist issues. I think, in a sense, *that* is gratifying and I think also what makes it gratifying [is that] I end up in a place where I am the only white person. And I think about this, and I think—and I never think of myself in terms of my colour—but here I am an Afrikaner and I'm here because people value what I have to offer … even if it's an uphill battle.

*Patriarchy and the perils of parenting.* Rihana describes South African higher education as "still very much a patriarchal enclave." In fact, she believes that the institution in which she works is "one of *the* most patriarchal institutions you've *ever* come across. But it's also extremely racist. You never quite know whether you're dealing with racism or sexism, but I'm sure it's a good mixture of both." This view is shared by Stella, who has depicted her institution as being "extremely Afrikaans and … extremely patriarchal." Both women work at historically advantaged Afrikaans-medium universities. Lesley, at an English-language institution, suggests that gender discrimination is more powerful than discrimination on the basis of race. But, perhaps Sylvia's observation is more to the point.

The work environment's always Neanderthal-like in relation to theory. And it's quite shocking every time one comes up against those reminders. … when you're teaching theory, you assume that it's already a lived reality in your life, and every

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time you come up against an experience that actually tells you it's actually very far from a lived reality."

Clearly there are times when sexist attitudes surprise and wound.  But Stella sees the beginnings of change.

I think blatant sexism is no longer tolerated.  It was more evident when I came here.  You know, I had a colleague who used to touch his women students.  He could not understand, for the life of himself, why this was a problem.  So, that type of thing, because the committee I worked on raised consciousness around this—sexual harassment and its forms [happens less often].  One year we actually sent the brochure to every member of staff with their name on it, so they couldn't claim they've never heard of it.

Rihana pays no attention to discrimination directed towards her, although she concedes that,"sometimes it's so 'in your face,' it's difficult to ignore."  Instead, she has focused her energies on thinking through how women in higher education should break out of the intellectual strictures imposed by academic patriarchy.  This is what she says,

Women need to talk about intellectual liberation.  We have lots of laws now, but it's about being able to liberate yourself from the boundaries of patriarchal thinking and of determining 'what is knowledge,' because what is knowledge is very much a male dominated driver.  You know, it's like understanding what constitutes erudite and subjugated knowledges (as in Foucault).  What women know is very much a subjugated knowledge … [We need] to be able to take motherhood and make it an erudite knowledge and to embed it into intellectual labour, because it's *profoundly* a part of who we are.  And what we do is, we

leave it outside our intellectual world.  It's almost like you're a mother in a private

non-intellectual capacity and you keep the two sides of your life very separate.

And for me, it's about challenging *those* boundaries.  And that every woman can

do.

Sylvia offers a slightly different perspective on how motherhood shapes the

institutional lives of female faculty.  For herself and among her female colleagues, she

sees the very concrete ways in which institutional practices place great strain on women

who have children.  Sylvia's husband is a supportive co-parent "who understand the

rigors [of a young academic's life] and being affirmed in that way is enormously helpful.

But that doesn't mean that there aren't stresses."   Being a parent, she explains, makes the

disjuncture between feminist theory and one's lived existence

Enormously real.  Having been through graduate school as a parent and now,

having had a baby much later on—I was 42 when [she] was born.  So having to

balance time and work.  …  And I see a lot of my women colleagues you know

just [struggling], where they are parents, because you *have* to go to international

conferences, you *have* to be seen to be writing and publishing, otherwise you get

caught up in the rut of teaching, rather than writing and publishing.  It's a surreal

fantasy … with devastating consequences because people navigate the realities of

their lives in, through, and around the academy and, I mean, just take this last

week [it was Easter vacation for primary and high schools].  If you look at women

academics who happened to be parents on campus and you measure that up

against the days they apply for leave.  It would coincide.  So this is the way

people cope with child management.  Or other women have chosen to remain

childless, or single.  I mean, that's just like a soft issue, the issue of child care.

*Scholarship.*  Some women talked more in depth about their scholarship than

others, notably Wendy and Sylvia, who have taken different routes to cross-disciplinary

work.  Wendy describes herself as a "multi-faceted" scholar, a situation that has come

about as a result of her forays into a wide variety of research projects over the years.  She

has strayed from her original discipline, she says, "jumping into the deep end" of several

topics that interested her even while she knew very little at the outset.  She has done this

so often that she has come to the conclusion that

> Maybe what keeps me from drowning when I do this jumping stuff is that I think
>
> that I am a fairly competent researcher and, given the time and the support, clearly
>
> a fairly competent researcher can bring herself up to speed more or less in about a
>
> year.

Crossing boundaries has led her to the nexus of three strands of scholarship which she

says give her a unique perspective on the position of women in South African higher

education.  Currently she is "in this field, in a way, that I've made for myself [but] … Not

entirely by myself, fortunately, because that's not nice."  As a caveat, Wendy adds

> I guess I can say I'm eclectic theoretically.  … I've never been one of those
>
> people who could quote chapter and verse from theoretician X or theoretician Y
>
> and tell you the development of the thought of Judith Butler through blah-blah
>
> and blah-blah-blah.  Some things make sense to me and some things don't.  If I've
>
> retained anything theoretically—which I think I do—it's not really chapter and
>
> verse about who said what, but it's more I get an abiding suspicion when things

aren't there, things are left out. Then I go and I find the things that I need to fill in gaps. I think that's the kind of theoretician I am. I could be very self-critical and say I don't know enough theory. On the other hand, theory is a guide. There was a moment in South African political science where everybody was trying to figure out could they fit their data or whatever they were doing into Transition Theory. To me that's a waste of time. I think there are enough people like me so that some of what we do, you can call it action research or this and that. Theory is not really my strong point.

Sylvia, on the other hand, feels the need to "break boundaries very consciously because the department is very small." So she has offered to co-teach courses on gender in other departments and co-supervise projects, an approach "that has got its strengths but its downsides as well, because then you become seen as someone who's a dilettante, and you're dipping in and out, rather than [being focused]." In addition, Sylvia recognizes the need to "be careful who you choose because they also have to have some sense of the seriousness of gender." Despite these concerns Sylvia perseveres, driven by the desire to create academic spaces in which "one can raise questions around gender, sexuality, and how those intersect with race and class [because there] are so few on this campus." Early in her academic career, at another institution, she helped launch a gender studies program which was begun "as a labour of love. People didn't get extra funding or remuneration. We took on extra teaching and now it's a fully formed, institutionalized … program." Sylvia believes that such academic units provide

> A safe space, both for women who are breaking boundaries as well as for men and
> women who don't want to be boxed into the categories of heterosexual

masculinity or femininity or who don't meet the criteria in that way. One takes these spaces for granted but actually they're very few and far between and they are critical.

Karen has a different view on scholarship and being a feminist scholar. She asserts, "I never thought of myself as a scholar. To me, scholarship was a luxury. It was peripheral to my pursuits." Karen saw herself as being primarily an activist—in the academy and the community. On the other hand, she acknowledges the value of certain opportunities available to faculty which she utilized, such as traveling on sabbatical: "the wonderful thing about going abroad was that I could put a name to my experiences. For me it clarified the mess of liberation." Karen continues her activism these days on the board of trustees at one of South Africa's public universities: "I'm playing the same role I used to play [challenging discriminatory policies and practices]. But the result is that I've been marginalized from committees. I still feel that I have an important role to play but I need to assert myself."

*Negotiating the academy.* The academy can be an unforgiving environment and sometimes the most talented women fall by the wayside. In our interview, Sylvia spoke about "one of the country's best historians [who] is not in the academy any longer— Helen Bradford—and I'd like to know why. I've seen [her] institution make her *fierce*. She's one of the *fiercest* people I have encountered. She is brilliant." Taking her cue from Bradford, Sylvia says she too has learned that

> You have to grow a tough skin and you have to become very fierce. A lot of my
> women colleagues are fierce and I'm having to learn very quickly from them that
> one's got to be fierce in order to get one's point across. And that means also

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playing with the aesthetics of the body.  So you've got to be very careful around

dress codes.  You don't [want to] look too feminine.

Herein lies one of the contradictions of being a feminist academic: one cannot be too

feminine if one wants to be taken seriously and if one wants to advance the position of

marginalized groups in the university.  As Sylvia points out,

> You become … because there are so few black—whether male or female—
>
> members on Appointment Committees, for example, by default people look to
>
> you as the, sort of, employment equity rep or the 'are-you-taking-gender-
>
> seriously' kind of issue.  You know, I've consciously chosen this as a career so if
>
> that's what I have to do, that is what I have to do.  But, at the same time, you also
>
> know that that kind of—you're playing with essentialist body politics but you
>
> know that it's a necessary strategy.  Because having the female body and the
>
> black bodies on campus, don't necessarily imply progressive thinking in many
>
> ways.

Furthermore, Sylvia acknowledges "fractures" among feminists and observes that the

nature of academic work, namely its isolation, leads to "an issue of competitiveness" that

is distressing.  Rihana has also observed that "if you don't have a community in which to

develop ideas, it becomes a very frustrating environment."  So Sylvia "would like to see

more collaboration."  In addition, she is particularly concerned about black women whose

female status is compounded by race, hence the

> Need to form a support network for black academic women at the university …
>
> because I'm always astounded at how basic information around procedural issues,
>
> like applications for funding, applications for research, issues around promotion,

that people aren't mentored. … They started one at Rhodes University among younger academic women. That was quite a nice model to work on.

*Commitment to the cause.* There were contrary and ambivalent views about their commitment to advancing women's position in higher education among my interviewees. Rihana confessed

> I think the one thing is that I have to find a way to write—which is what I absolutely love to do—and, at the same time, manage that environment. I don't see myself being able to change that environment for a number of reasons. One is that, since my time as an activist, I've done that. I want to be able to be an activist in an intellectual kind of way now. I don't want to fight battles about political power. And I think the university bureaucracy is not something you take on in single-handedly. [The former Dean] is a living example of what happens. And he had power which I don't have.

As I remarked earlier in this section, Stella was sometimes so despondent that she thought of withdrawing from the forums in which she drew attention to racism and sexism. Years of challenging discrimination in the institution had made her weary. Yet she was hopeful that the person who had been appointed recently to manage the university's diversity initiatives would be more effective than his predecessors. He had renamed and reconstituted an old committee charged with attending to diversity issues. For many years Stella had refused to participate in a committee that she felt was dedicated to diversity in name only. The new equity officer had persuaded her to sit on the reconstituted forum with responsibility for equity. She told me, "We've had our first meeting and we've got the right people on it at least." Lesley, on the other hand, no

longer sits on university committees that directly address equity or diversity issues. As she approaches retirement, she is less inclined to take on all comers: "I'm acting out less, if you like, and I'm doing my work—where? I do my work within the context of how I give advice [to my students]."

Finally, there is Sylvia, who is determined to play an active role in confronting her institution's discriminatory practices. She had just completed a paper in which she argued that

The institution's got to move beyond bureaucratizing equity committees and looking at statistics and we actually have to consciously address the day-to-day culture of the institution that makes the place so alien for the very people you want to address.

As for her part in this, she observed that

Studying and working in the United States is a *very* attractive prospect; but I poured so much energy into transformation at [the institution where I began my academic career] and in the broader anti-apartheid struggle. I want to be at home. I want to be part of this nation-building exercise. And you can criticize me of an almost blinding nationalism. But also, I feel very strongly about women's, and specifically black women's, access to education and to higher education. And I *do* want other younger women to understand that they can *do* this [become an academic].

Wendy was fortunate in that she had a good relationship with the chair of her department. However, in the broader campus community, she explained that,

I think of myself as somebody who has repeatedly sided with the people in the [gender equity office] in a long fight to get the administration to realize that they're not doing enough for the students, through some research projects. I think that the administration and management, I should say, are very—have been, *very* reluctant to look at issues of gender-based violence on campus, to really think about the fact that most [of our] students are women, and in what way do their needs need to be met.

At the same time, Wendy says,

I've come, through my academic study, to understand this idea of 'a chilly atmosphere'—*that* I've experienced. I have learned when to say things and when not to say some other things and there have been times when I have felt unsure enough of myself not to speak up and say things that I thought needed to be said because I was made to feel unsure of myself as a woman speaking up in this chamber or in that meeting, and so on. I've become more cautious as I've gotten older.

## Conclusion

By telling their stories, the extraordinary women who have participated in this study have taken us on a journey through the family circumstances and significant events that have shaped them. Their stories have revealed the incidents and experiences that gave rise to their feminist consciousness. They have communicated the thrill of their first encounters with feminist theories; how it felt to discover their experiences and feelings explained by women theorizing women's lives. We have learned about the choices they made and the consequences of those choices. Mostly we have seen them grapple with the

contradictions and constraints of their status as feminist faculty in universities that are tainted by their apartheid past and that are still deeply patriarchal. The schisms generated by apartheid mixed with institutional and gender politics bedevil interpersonal relationships leaving these individuals isolated and adrift.

This study is also about my journey as a feminist scholar-in-training. My interest in women's lives and my approach to the project has been shaped by my life experiences growing up female in South Africa, the understanding I gained later as an undergraduate at a women's college, and my years as a university administrator. In the next chapter, I reflect on the issues that emerged from my interviews with the study's participants and refer to my own story, when appropriate.

**Chapter 5:  Summary And Conclusions**

This study focused on the institutional experiences of feminist faculty in South

African universities.  I was interested in academic feminists as a sub-group because the

literature on women in higher education revealed that their experiences of the academy

were different from that of female faculty.  I chose to focus on women in South Africa

because I am a South African citizen and a feminist.  My interest in higher education

stems from the fact that I worked in a public South African university for fifteen years

before I decided to pursue doctoral studies in education.  I had been a feminist

*administrator* in a university; I was curious about the experiences of feminist faculty.

Finally, as a South African feminist of color committed to social justice, I wanted

to tell the stories of women I knew, who continue the struggle to eradicate racism and

patriarchy within the university.  I see this study as contributing to the body of knowledge

about women's experiences in higher education in the global South thereby broadening

our understanding of the diverse lives of feminist faculty in higher education.

<div align="center">Women in higher education</div>

My aim in this study was to describe the institutional experiences of feminist

faculty in South African universities.  I chose to focus on feminist faculty for several

reasons.  First, I was intrigued by the findings of scholars from Australia, Great Britain,

and the United States of America (D. Currie & Kazi, 1987; Morley, 1999; Morley &

Walsh, 1995a), namely that feminists had different institutional experiences from female

faculty in general.  I was interested in whether this observation was also true for South

African feminist faculty. Second, I wished to know about the experiences of individuals

who challenged institutional practices and procedures that they felt constrained women's

ability to thrive intellectually and professionally.  Third, I was interested in how South

African feminist faculty describe and make sense of their everyday experiences within

the institutions that they negotiate every day of their professional lives.  My interest

rested on the assumption that feminist faculty were the group most likely to challenge the

status quo within the academy because feminism, by definition, critiques and challenges

patriarchy with the aim of achieving social transformation.  Above all, my goal was to

add the South African experience to the research about academic feminists and thereby,

to broaden our understanding of the lives of feminist faculty worldwide.

There is a substantial body of literature about the experiences of women in

academia that was helpful in painting a broad picture of this subject.  The vast majority of

studies focus on women in Canada, the United States of America, and Europe, but there

is a growing body of research about female faculty in South Africa and on the African

continent.  Studies of women in Australia and New Zealand were also helpful.  Given my

particular approach to this study, I drew on research that highlighted the following:

feminism and feminists in higher education; social justice; the absence of gender as a

category in certain areas of research, namely, globalization and higher education; and the

impact of higher education restructuring on women.

I focused on scholars that analyzed women's experiences from a critical feminist

perspective.  I paid attention to how the intersection of race, class, ethnicity, and gender

was dealt with in the literature.  I refined my theoretical framework by utilizing feminist

theories in education.  Black and third world feminist theories and feminist standpoint

theory were also analytical tools that were helpful in the South African context, which is

characterized by complexity, diversity, and contradiction.

Review of the methodology

Given that I was interested in describing what had happened to the women in this study over time, it was necessary to select a research methodology that would help me to formulate the kinds of questions that would generate the data that was required to tell these women's stories. I chose to do a qualitative study. Qualitative research methods are particularly useful when the researcher's intent is to uncover how individuals interpret and make meaning of significant life events as well as everyday experiences. On the one hand I was interested in how, as individuals, they had been shaped by South African society. On the other hand, the focus of the study was on their lives within the university. As I considered how I could achieve these two objectives, I concluded that the best approach would be to use a biographical methodology. So the methodology I chose was life history—also often referred to as personal narrative.

Life history or personal narrative as a methodological approach gives the researcher direct access to the lives of her informants and to the context and texture of their experiences. It also helps the researcher establish "how things got to be the way they are" (Mertens, 1998, p. 196). I majored in history as an undergraduate, so I am always interested in what has happened to lead up to phenomenon I am examining.

In order to excavate the data in the course of an interview, the researcher has to utilize a range of skills, for example, sensitivity, respect, empathy, and care (Cole & Knowles, 2001a). I had to draw on these skills in order to connect with Stella, who I had never met before, and with Rihana, who I met for the second time. My other informants were comfortable with me because of our personal friendship and, over the course of a two- hour interview, they shared relevant aspects of their lives with me. The data

allowed me to identify similarities and differences in the women's childhood experiences. For example, with the exception of Stella, the women in this study had parents who encouraged independence in their daughters and who expected them to pursue education beyond high school. Lesley and Rihana came from families that were active in anti-apartheid organizations; the other women did not.

Review of, and Reflections on, Major Findings

In this section I review the study's major findings, which covers four areas: *Formative Experiences; Student Years; Finding Feminist Theory; and The Life of a Feminist Academic.* In the process of reviewing the major findings, I also found myself reflecting on my own childhood experiences and my high school years: how I first became aware of apartheid, how my political activism was nurtured, and what gave rise to my feminist consciousness. I was intrigued by how much I had in common with the women in this study. For that reason, I have woven my story into the narrative where I believe it is appropriate to make the connection between me and my informants.

*Formative Experiences.* Formative experiences can trigger the development of a concern for social justice and, later, of feminist consciousness. The women in this study were profoundly influenced by their families, their communities, and certain events that happened to them as children. Karen and Sylvia could both cite specific incidents in their childhood when they first became aware of living under apartheid.

> When I was 7 years old, … the park where I used to play every day suddenly had a "Whites Only" board up. And I remember how pained my mother was to explain to me why I couldn't [play there]. So that was my first really deep political experience. (Karen)

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In Sylvia's church, the priests spoke out against injustice from the pulpit. Sylvia's parents took her to the airport to support clergy who were forced to leave the country because of their opposition to apartheid. My father took me to my first political meeting at the age of twelve. It was 1972. A series of strikes in other parts of the country had reignited anti-apartheid protest, which had been dormant since the early sixties when Nelson Mandela and the other treason trialists had been banished to Robben Island.

Listening to Karen took me back to the first time I became aware of apartheid. She remembers the "Whites Only" sign in the park near her house and her mother explaining that she was no longer allowed to play there with other children because she was colored. Like her, I was about seven or eight. I had to ride the bus by myself. The first seat at the front of the bus near the driver was meant for one person, so that's where I sat. A man (I later understood that he was white) got into the bus after me and smiled as he sat down behind me. When I got off at my stop and told my mother about the ride and where I sat she told me, "Next time you should take a seat towards the back. That's where we're supposed to sit." I remember feeling deflated because I was so proud of myself for riding the bus alone and all she focused on was that I had sat in the wrong seat. She was teaching me to know my place and I didn't like it.

Karen also had vivid memories of forced removals. The family lived in a suburb a few miles from the center of Cape Town which the government declared was reserved for whites. The eviction notice arrived a few days after a white member of parliament had spotted her brothers playing soccer in the park with white children. Karen recalled how her mother was affected by having to move.

I think it devastated my mother very much because she liked living in Mowbray. Simultaneously we saw all our family being evicted from District 6. Both my grandmothers lived there. All my aunts and uncles lived there and then my father's entire parish so, from 1969 onwards, we saw the whole of District 6, which included our maternal and paternal families, forcibly removed. And I think that was my first political experience where I asked, "But why? Why on the basis of people's skin colour?" I was very angry.

Karen explained that her parents were conservative. Her father was a preacher and neither of her parents was involved in political activity. Nevertheless, she told me,

I'll never forget, when South Africa became a republic [in 1961] we all were given flags—little South African flags and a gold coin. We were just children and we went home very proudly with these flags and coins and my father tore up the flag and threw away the coins. So that was my first awareness that my father was quite politicized even though conservative.

Like Karen, my political education began in high school. She was several years ahead of me and we went to different schools. But we were educated by teachers who belonged to the same political and professional organizations and who ensured that their schools were "serious about the mission of educating and politicizing students under an oppressive and racist regime" and were imbued with "a[n] ethos … that stressed hard work and standards along with political education and analysis" (Wieder, 2008, p. 77). While I do not recall a feminist component to our education per sé, I *do* remember that there were equal numbers of men and women at political meetings and women contributed to the discussion. Furthermore, in the classroom, we were told,

The government in this country wants the boys in the class here to go and work on

the farms.  My job is to keep them off the farms.  They want the girls to go and

work in the farmer's wife's kitchen.  I want to keep them out of the kitchen.  I

think that you're worth far more and you've got a contribution to make.  You've

got to be new people in the new South Africa. …  You've mastered mathematics

and you know science so that you know what's going on in the world.  I used to

tell the girls as well … I want you to study … I don't care what they have

prescribed for you outside … we don't do what they prescribe.  We do the things

that we are supposed to.  (Dudley quoted in (Wieder, 2008, p. 75)

Lesley and Rihana were raised in politically active families.  Although I did not

grow up in a feminist household like Lesley, I certainly grew up in a home where my

father did most of the cooking and participated fully in child-rearing, which he was able

to do because our house was attached to his hairdressing business.  He introduced my

sister and I to books, read to us, told us stories and recited poems from memory, and

helped us with schoolwork.  In Rihana's family, political activism was a given. These are

all experiences that give one a sense that the world is not as it should be and become

fertile ground, primed for explanations that would make sense, many years later.

Ironically, this was not the message that Stella got in her family.  There she was:

white, Afrikaner, a member of South Africa's privileged class, but her father refused to

pay for her college education because he did not believe that a high school diploma was

good enough for a girl.  Although she would only name it many years later, Stella had

come into direct conflict with patriarchy in her family.  In the South African context,

however, patriarchy is color-blind.  Writing about the experiences of female faculty at the

University of the Western Cape in the early 1990s, Walker observed that black men were the most vocal group opposed to gender advocacy work on the university campus and to hiring more women (M. Walker, 1997a).  At the time selection committees were mostly white and male.

The other participants in this study came from families that expected them to pursue higher education either because their parents had degrees or because it would give them better life chances than their parents had.  My mother wanted me to become a teacher.  Although she was a seamstress in a clothing factory with an $8^{th}$ grade education, she had been an amateur actress in Cape Town in the 1950s and a member of the Peninsula Dramatic Society (PDS).  Several PDS members were teachers and they traveled to Europe during their sabbaticals.  My mother believed that teaching would give me the opportunity to travel the world.  When I was accepted into Wellesley on a full scholarship, she was thrilled.  At the time I was the family breadwinner and my sister still had four months of high school before she would graduate and go out to look for work.  If my mother let me go, the family would be without my income, but we never discussed the possibility of deferring my entry into Wellesley by one year.  It was my time and I had to go.  With the exception of Stella, as young girls these women got messages from their families that higher education for girls was desirable.  As did I.

In her study of feminist faculty in Mexican universities, Bracamontes Ayon (2003) identified several commonalities shared by the women she interviewed and which I found among my informants too.  The South African women grew up in families and communities that believed in the importance of education.  Like Stella, they were

bothered by the unequal relationship they observed between their parents and later, in the workplace, they were irritated by male colleagues who expected women to make the tea.

*Student years: The Paradox of Apartheid Education.* The experiences of two interviewees are examples of how apartheid university education had unintended consequences. Sylvia and Karen attended two different institutions at different times, yet they were exposed to situations that sowed the seeds of activism.

Karen's teachers discouraged her from attending an institution set aside for colored people because they believed that it would legitimize the creation of separate universities. These institutions were built on the outskirts of urban areas—literally in the 'bush'—hence the nickname 'bush colleges.' The apartheid government appointed loyal Afrikaners to faculty and administrative positions. Curricula were modeled on white Afrikaans-language institutions although academic programs were inadequately funded. There is no question that they were academically inferior (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Nevertheless, the black students who attended these institutions challenged conservative Afrikaners on their campuses. As Karen explained,

> You had to choose sides and if choosing a side wasn't an issue, we were all
> students who were anti the *Broederbond* who taught us. We were anti the
> dominance of the Afrikaans language. We were anti the fact that [our campus]
> was the labor bureau for white academics who couldn't make it elsewhere. And,
> from my first year on, I imbibed the politics of the day. No ideological base, just
> from the point of view that apartheid was wrong, that repressive legislation was
> wrong. … There was the big 1973 March. There were the 1975 uprisings and
> [the] students saw themselves as the vanguard of the struggle.

Student protest often resulted in campuses being closed and the expulsion of student leadership. Thus these institutions became sites for student radicalization and mobilization around political issues (Anderson, 2002; Dreijmanis, 1988).

Sylvia, on the other hand, attended a liberal predominantly white university. As an undergraduate, she visited the Pass Courts. She noticed that most of the people being prosecuted were women who were supposed to have returned to the country after they had been in town for 72 hours. These were women who came into the city to be with their husbands. They brought their children with them so that their families could be together. Their determination to keep their families intact despite the consequences if they were caught violating the Pass laws made a deep impression on Sylvia. At the same time she was repulsed by the brutality of a system that would imprison women with babies. Both Sylvia and Karen, located in contrasting university contexts, were politicized within those environments.

*Finding Feminist Theory.* As Chapter 4 shows, the discovery of feminist theory was a significant life event for all these women. They recognized themselves in the elucidation of phenomena from women's perspectives and that validated what Stella called her "disgruntledness with gender." But theory immediately had to contend with South African political realities as Lesley's and Karen's experiences demonstrate.

As a young academic in the early 1970s, Lesley read Kate Millet, Germaine Greer, and Juliet Mitchell. Not long after she read these authors, Lesley went on a foreign visit and met Black South African women in exile with whom she discussed her ideas on gender issues. While she leaned towards working with other women and excluding men from discussions of women's concerns, exiled female activists told her

that men *and* women had to work together to achieve equality for the sexes. They said, "The political consciousness-raising has to be done amongst men as much as it has to be done amongst women." Lesley understood that "Men had to be organized; they had to become *partners* in the process. That was a wake-up call for me." She returned to South Africa, approached an existing women's group and said "I'd be really happy to be part of a women's group that included men." Looking back, Lesley realizes that the group lost some members and

> I may have caused a division. I don't know. But in the end there was a group and we met throughout seventy-five and in seventy-six before I was banned. I think about 15/20 people. We used to meet in my lounge always. I think it was closer to 15. We used to have reading, and also talking, because I kept very much that thing that we needed to talk from our place and our space. And there were 3 or 4 men in the group—very gentle men, I remember—really sensitive.

It is important to point out that the group she joined was all white and they were not necessarily raising gender issues in the context of political activity. This would happen later, when Lesley joined a women's group that included black women from the townships.

In the mid- to late-1970s, the anti-apartheid movement within South Africa was just beginning to reconstitute itself after the repressive 1960s. There was a resurgence of trade union activity among black workers and in the townships civic organizations began to mobilize people. Many women became politically active, initially around issues directly affecting their communities: the cost of housing, the absence of municipal services, and corruption in local government, for example (Hassim, 2006). However,

some women found that their husbands and partners were opposed to their activism. The backlash was sometimes violent. Lesley remembers instances of community members having to intervene when women were prevented from leaving the house to attend meetings. Hassim observes that "women began to make connections between their exploitation in the workplace and their subordination within the home" (2006, p. 51). They created women-only forums in which they could raise gender issues as they related to politics and it was one of these organizations that Lesley joined in the early 1980s.

As I mentioned in Chapter 4, black women in exile and black women within South Africa had divergent approaches when it came to men and gender issues. Because of her involvement with women in the townships, Lesley began to change her mind about including men. Within organizations that were mainly comprised of working class colored and African women, "mothers were concerned that their daughters were refusing to get married." Younger female activists thought that "men were drunkards, were violent, weren't working … and they caused problems. And they didn't want them in their households." Their mothers saw this as a rejection of family life, which must have been extremely painful for them, as they had endured incredible hardships in order to keep their families together. These generational struggles became political issues for Lesley and caused her to "[struggle] around these issues of *power* and … *balance* and how were you going to get it."

Karen describes her encounter with feminist theories as having a 'revolutionary' impact on her thinking. She was on sabbatical in Europe in the mid-eighties when she was first exposed to theorists from a broad range of perspectives. Like Lesley, the first thing she did on her return to South Africa was to share what she had learned with fellow

female activists.  Discovering theory was particularly liberating for gay activists, who felt

that it was finally safe to come out of the closet.  It was an emotional release—"women

were crying," Karen said—after the homophobia they had experienced in community

organizations.  Here it is important to note that Karen is talking about white and black

women.  By the mid-1980s women were mobilizing across color lines.

Both Stella and Sylvia found that feminist theory explained much of what they

had come to understand about women's oppression experientially.  Stella makes the point

that women were invisible in all the theory she had read up until she discovered Mary

Daly, for example.  Daly, a self-described "radical elemental feminist" with doctoral

degrees in philosophy, theology and religion, has "committed her every waking breath to

a single purpose: seeing, naming and dissecting the structures of patriarchy in order to

liberate women's minds, bodies and spirits from its oppression" (Bridle, 1999; Daly,

2009).  Daly was one of the first feminist scholars that Stella read in the late 1980s as a

doctoral student.  Sylvia first read black American writers bell hooks and Angela Davis

as an undergraduate.  She calls the work of these writers "very powerful stuff" and she

still teaches bell hooks to her students.  Her only caveat was that, as United States

citizens, their analysis was "very much context specific."

Discovering theory was a critical part of the intellectual development of the

study's participants because the theory affirmed and validated their life experiences.

They saw aspects of their lives in the theory and they experienced the thrill of

recognition.  The theory helped them understand their condition and helped them explain

gender power relations to others.  Between the five participants who could point to

specific writers whose work resonated with them (everyone except Wendy), there was a

range of interpretations of women's experiences. They were reading feminist analyses from white and black perspectives. My point is not that white women could only relate to white theorists and black women could only relate to black theorists, because later, like Karen, the participants in this study would be reading white and black, European and American writers. But it *is* interesting that the participants' earliest memories of the works that impacted on them the most were theorists whose work spoke to their particular standpoints—standpoints that were informed by ethnicity.

Armed with feminist theory, women like Karen felt that they could effect change within their own lives and for others as well. Beginning in the mid-eighties, Karen began to mobilize the women in her institution and they were able to make substantial gains. By exposing the ways in which existing practices disempowered women ("with all their liberal speak about women, the men dominated academic study leave and research money") the institution could take steps to rectify the situation. They fought for, and won, improved maternity benefits for women and paternity leave for men.

> The other victory was, whenever we had senior management appointments, the person was always talked about as 'he'. We drew up a policy on sexist language. I then sent it to everybody, every department, and I called a meeting. Supposedly progressive men said, "Is this Big Sister watching over us?" We had a whole lot of 'anti' responses, but also a whole lot of 'pro.' What I did was, people who made recommendations and positive suggestions, I inserted that into the document. The negative ones I also wrote up. I said, 'the document was circulated and these are the responses we received.' Then I sent it back to

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everybody. People didn't think I would do that. But, we're a democracy, an open

society. It was a completely democratic process.

By doing cost-benefit analyses, women could back up their demands with evidence.

Karen said,

What we learned was to beat the men at their own game. I wanted the male

professors to know that I knew what was going on. I pretended that I was

exposing to them the disparities in the system, but I actually wanted them all to

know that I knew that they promoted their own.

As she said above, "supposedly progressive men" were not at all happy about having

their privileged position exposed, because it revealed the contradiction between the

reality of their sexist behavior and their espoused political beliefs. Karen might have had

the support of the president, but male faculty were less enthusiastic about what the

women on their campus were doing.

*The Life of a Feminist Academic under apartheid.* For Karen, Sylvia and Lesley,

the apartheid campus was a site of heightened activity around gender issues: they

identified and challenged sexist procedures and policies and introduced women's studies

courses. These battles were being fought at the same time as the broader community took

up various political campaigns. Women who raised gender issues in that period fought

on two fronts. First, they struggled alongside the community supporting protests in the

schools and on campuses. There were campaigns against corrupt township councilors

who had been appointed by the government. People fought for better housing and there

were rent boycotts because of the lack of services in the townships. But second, they

were engaged in a struggle with comrades who held the view that raising gender issues

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was divisive because everyone's energies had to be focused on the elimination of racial oppression. Often the male activists were in positions of power and could use their authority to undermine the women's credibility, by accusing them of being 'bourgeois,' for example. Sylvia also remembered,

> The other thing about life as a feminist academic under apartheid was that we often dealt with issues of sexism with our own black colleagues at the risk of being labeled as being complicit with the state, when in fact we were raising issues that related to sexism, sexual harassment that our supposed comrades were practicing.

In addition, there were schisms between women in community organizations and on campus. Both Karen and Rihana spoke scathingly about women who allied themselves with powerful men and used that reflected power to sanction women who were raising gender issues. When Sylvia exposed a female colleague who had mishandled funds at her previous place of employment, she was accused of being motivated by envy. She told me that, "I was put through such a grilling process that it left a really bitter taste in my mouth. There was no option for me but to leave [the university]." At the time she was a young academic and she felt extremely vulnerable.

Yet Karen recalled that women were able to mobilize across ethnic groups, faculty/staff divides, and political lines. So it was a period in which people felt a sense of purpose about their activism and could see tangible achievements: housing subsidies were extended to women, women were able to take longer maternity leave on full pay, men could take paternity leave, and university documents and publications were stripped

of sexist language  Women challenged individual instances of discrimination directly and exposed managers who attempted to deny women opportunities for career advancement.

*Post-apartheid: the struggle continues.*  Sylvia aptly sums up the day-to-day experiences of feminist faculty: "The work environment is always so Neanderthal-like in relation to theory.  And it's quite shocking every time one comes up against those reminders."  Walker's observation, made more than ten years ago, still applies: all South African universities are

> Deeply imbued with the norms and values of a society structured through
>
> difference and hierarchies of gender, race, ethnicity and class, so that
>
> institutional cultures are marked by cumulative customs, rituals, symbols
>
> and practices, established over time by the dominant white male social
>
> group. (1997a, p. 41)

Within universities still so marked by their apartheid past, Sylvia has found herself in the position of having to explain feminism to colleagues with preconceived ideas of what it entails.

> I was talking to a woman sociologist.  I was asking her to co-supervise a Ph.D.
>
> with me on HIV/AIDS and gender.  Immediately she said something that got my
>
> defenses up again about being feminist because her implication was that, if you
>
> claim to be a feminist, you are an uncritical ideologue.  And I had to say to her,
>
> I'm a feminist *scholar*.  I'm not an *ideologue*; I'm not an unthinking *ideologue.*

But while Sylvia has no qualms about calling herself a feminist, she concedes that other women are reluctant to accept the label and "shy away from the term … as though it's a cuss word."  She attributes this to an "under-developed critical gender consciousness

among many women academics." But this is not necessarily true. Lesley feels that her students would stop listening to her if they knew she was a feminist,

> So I have to talk about those issues—it almost feels like people talking about introducing Marxism into the university without ever using the word "Marx" in the sixties and seventies in South Africa. I think I make that sense of irony all the time: "I may sound like a Marxist now. I could be sounding like a 'this.'" So I'm, in a sense, constantly labeling and I pre-empt it.

> The struggle to overcome apathy was mentioned by Stella and Wendy. Stella is extremely frustrated:

> The women on this campus are completely apathetic. They will groan and moan and they will not make any active contributions. So we've tried to do transformation work and, in the end, the only thing that they are concerned about, really, is their salaries.

She attributes this attitude to institutional culture. A historically white, Afrikaans university, Stella's campus never experienced any form of student protest under apartheid or since 1994.

> Other students will protest and have sit-ins and do things but there won't be even a ripple of dissent. I mean this language policy's being driven from outside the university by the alumni, most of them [are] over the age of 60.[11] It's not what the students want, if I talk to the students in my class. I mean, they just want to get on with things. They don't want it to be an Afrikaans university as long as there's a language in which they can do their work. There are some who want

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[11] There is a strong push for the institution to remain an Afrikaans- medium university. Currently students have a variety of options: classes are taught in English and Afrikaans; English only; or Afrikaans only.

Afrikaans but I think that they are in the minority.  But there's never been a

protest.  There's never been a meeting.  There's never been a—just a debate.

There's just nothing. Not one petition. And I find this very strange.  And I have

been finding this very strange for twenty years and I really think that students who

come from class, from wealthy families.  They are—since 1994, they've even

become *more* apathetic in the sense that they take 'the exit option.'  They just

want to party and when they've graduated they want to leave the country.

On Wendy's campus, apathy led to the demise of the faculty union.  She bemoans the fact

that "there isn't a vibrant academic community at [this university] anymore.  There isn't a

lot of academic debate, issues that you find people cross-faculties getting involved in.

It's very fragmented."

For each of the women in this study, the struggle is not only against

fragmentation, it is also against institutional cultures that tenaciously resist change.

Conservative elements in their universities, fine many ways to thwart efforts aimed at

institutional transformation.  In Chapter 4, Wendy remarked on her university's inability

to fill a senior level management position because of a reluctance to appoint an individual

whose perspective might differ from widely-held views on campus.  Stella's white male

colleagues find ways to keep women and black people off selection committees and to

keep potential hires out of the university.

At the same institution, women spend more time on the lower rungs of the

academic hierarchy because they are assigned heavy teaching loads that leave little time

for research.  Hence they take longer to build up the kind of publication record that would

facilitate career advancement at the same rate as their male colleagues.  Wendy's black

male colleague leaves the university in frustration, tired of being treated like a student by colored staff. These incidents are examples of what Morley calls "micropolitics, … a subtext of organisational life" (1999, p. 4). It is that which occurs informally—outside of structures, but between individuals. It is here that institutional aspirations fall short because interpersonal relationships cannot be regulated. In these spaces between people the quality of one's professional life is determined.

The women in this study suffer varying levels of isolation, loneliness, alienation, and frustration. Their experiences show that it is a challenge to live out one's feminist principles and to fight for social justice in the academy and that the struggle comes with steep costs for the individual. When I was in South Africa doing this research, someone asked me, "Why are you focusing on gender issues? It's not a problem anymore. We've made so much progress." The answer to that question is these women's stories.

Stella experiences frustration and the pain of rejection when the president refuses to support the establishment of a day-care center on the campus and to subsidize the fees for low-income workers. Sylvia is angry and frustrated because her head of department leaves for a conference without making arrangements for someone to teach her classes and the work is dumped on her. Isolation and loneliness arise when one is the only person who feels compelled, time and again, to raise the issue of gender when selection committees are created or when appointments are made. When, like Stella, one is known and ridiculed for constantly drawing attention to processes or procedures that disadvantage women. Sylvia is frozen out by the Dean and her department chair because she challenged being denied promotion.

Rihana experiences isolation on multiple levels. She is Hindu in a predominantly white, Christian, Afrikaner institution. She is younger than her colleagues, many of whom are older white men. She teaches a course on globalization from a critical perspective—a holdover from the previous dean who tried his best to effect fundamental transformation in his college. Rihana interrogates masters and doctoral proposals, and does not treat their submission as a formality on the way to approval. This incenses her colleagues who fear that she will turn down vast numbers of proposals. In fact, she has not; she just believes that they need a critical eye before they are approved.

In these circumstances, the women adopt a variety of coping strategies. Lesley has decided to focus on her students. She accepts that she has few meaningful relationships with other faculty. After feeling undervalued by the institution for years, she no longer looks to the institution for affirmation. Rihana will choose her battles. She is extremely conscious of her inability to effect change given her gender, religion, ethnicity, and status within the institution. For her the intellectual environment is barren, but she likes being a scholar and her current position gives her the opportunity to live a scholar's life. Stella will turn to sympathetic colleagues when she is depleted by the struggle. She will be energized by her work in community organizations, where her contributions are valued. Sylvia prepares to be "fierce" because that's what she needs in order to challenge those who would tell her to wait her turn.

> I will continue to do that because I think that, if this institution and its organizational culture mean so much to me, then I have to then be courageous and speak out against these abuses. I've made that personal decision and that means growing a tough skin.

She also reaches outside the academy for support.

> I come from the old women's organizations context.  In fact, I had to speak at a
>
> friend's 60th birthday… two Saturdays ago.  And there were all these women and
>
> it was like falling into butter—comfort zone stuff.  And the knowledge that those
>
> people are out there, on the email, a telephone call away is enormously important.
>
> I value it.

In the presence of her comrades the need for double consciousness falls away.

The multiplicity of strategies designed to mitigate the challenges of negotiating institutions still marked by racism and patriarchy is a function of this diverse group of women.  They have followed diverse paths to the academy and, in the course of their professional lives, have learned to do what is necessary to live to fight another day.  For them being a feminist is about utilizing the theory to make the academy a more hospitable environment for all its citizens. The theory helps them articulate their condition and helps them explain gender power relations to others.  At the same time, they are constantly learning and changing, adapting strategies appropriate for the issues they have to deal with on a daily basis.  These women are deeply aware of, and sensitive to, the way in which higher education institutions constrain not only the aspirations of women, but of anyone who is marginalized and therefore disempowered.  While South Africa has become a democracy, for them the struggle has not ended, but has taken on a new form in a different location.

## Moving Forward

Sylvia has had a long relationship with the institution that currently employs her. She entered the university as an undergraduate more than twenty years ago.  Because she

remembers what it was like to be a student in the early 1980s, she is determined that it will be different for this generation of women and the ones still to come:

> I *do* want to embody for these other young women the fact that they too can do it because I'll never forget the alienation of being on this campus. Just trying to cope with being with white students in one classroom, let alone expanding my own vision of possibly sitting as a professor in this institution one day.  And that is a possibility now.

The future has still to be written.  What can we hope for?  We cannot be too prescriptive about the future.  Just as there is diversity of experience for feminist faculty in present day South African higher education, there is no consensus about the future. Sylvia says she can imagine a future she could not have imagined during the apartheid years.  Karen believes that black women had more freedom of speech under apartheid. Which one of them is wrong?  Neither.  They are both right.  This is how I interpret those two assertions: as women we *can* imagine different futures than those prescribed for us under apartheid.  However, we have to continue to fight for and hold on to spaces in which we can make our voices heard.  In this study, I have captured some of those voices. The struggle continues.

# Appendix: Interview Schedule

The interview schedule below indicates questions that were asked of each informant.

*Personal Background:*
- What kind of environment did you grow up in and how did you become interested in women's issues?
- What made you decide to seek a career in academia?

*Feminism*
- How do you define feminism?
- Which branches/streams of feminism do you identify with? Why?

*Professional Life:*
- Tell me about your work environment. What is it like to be a feminist in your department and in the university?
- How would you define yourself in terms of your role as a scholar?
- What are your academic responsibilities apart from teaching and research?
- Do you serve on any departmental/faculty/university committees? If *yes*, please specify.
- How is membership of university committees decided?
- Describe some of your experiences on university committees?

*Employment Equity Policy:*
- What is your opinion of the university's Employment Equity Policy?
- Would you say that the existence of an Employment Equity Policy affects academic relationships? If *no*, why? If *yes*, please explain.

*Discrimination:*
- What would you regard as issues of discrimination in a higher education context?
- Have you experienced discrimination? If *yes*, could you explain?
- Are you aware of instances of sexual harassment in your institution?
- Are there institutional policies/procedures governing discrimination and/or sexual harassment?

*Networks:*
- Do you connect with other feminists on campus?
- Do you connect with female colleagues who do *not* profess to be feminists?
- Are these connections personal or professional or both? Please explain.

*The South African context*
- How has institutional culture changed over the course of your tenure at the university?
- What impact has the national/regional context had on institutional culture?

- How would you compare the current situation with life as a feminist academic under *apartheid*? What are the similarities? What are the differences?

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