Losing, using, refusing, cruising: first generation South African women academics narrate the complexity of marginality

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Abstract
A wide research literature documents the gross underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions in the academy. It has been argued that intertwined sexist, patriarchal and phallocentric knowledges and practices in academic institutions produce various forms of discrimination, inequality, oppression and marginalization. Academic women report feeling invisible and retreating to the margins so as to avoid victimization and discrimination. Others have pointed to the tension between the ‘tenure clock’ and the ‘biological clock’ as a source of anxiety among academic women. However, experiences of academic women are not identical. In the context of studies showing the importance of existing personal and social resources, prior experience and having mentors and role models in the negotiation of inequality and discrimination, in this project we document the narratives of senior women academics who are the first in their families to graduate with a university degree—first generation academic women—and who therefore are least likely to have access to the social and cultural resources and prior experiences that can render the academic space more hospitable. Employing Spivak’s deconstruction of the concept of marginalisation as our primary interpretive lens we explore here the way in which, in their narratives, first-generation academic women negotiate marginality. In negotiating the terrain of the academy these narratives depict a marginality that might be described, following Spivak, as ‘outside/in’: an understanding of marginality as complex and involving moments of accommodation and resistance, losses and gains, pain and pride.

Key Words: women; academia; university; marginality; narrative; South Africa
Introduction

The marginalization of women in universities has been the subject of a wide research literature which documents the challenges faced by women in these institutions (Gaskell and Mullen, 2006; Acker and Feuerverger, 1996; Reay, 2000; Bagilhole, 2002; Walker, 1998, 2010; Acker, 1980; Skelton, 2005a, b; Dillabough, 1999; Baca Zinn et al., 1988; Alfred, 2001; Rassool, 1995; Walsh, 1995). Internationally research on women in academia reveals the gross underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions in the academy (Mama, 2003:115; Shackelton, 2007:24). In South Africa, although the number of women entering the top echelons of the university has increased, women remain a minority particularly in some disciplines (De La Rey, 2005; Mazibuko, 2006). Since 1994, there has been a significant improvement: in 1994, women comprised 31 per cent of academic staffs. By 2009 this figure had increased to 44.2 per cent. However women are still concentrated in the lower ranks of academia: as at 2007, just 24 per cent were professors and associate professors, 40 per cent were senior lecturers. 48 per cent were lecturers and only four of the 23 universities in South Africa had a woman as their vice-chancellor (Higher Education South Africa, 2011; Higher Education Monitor, 2009:78, 79). According to the Education White Paper of 1997, "this problem of underrepresentation of Blacks and women especially in senior positions goes beyond the legacies of apartheid to deeply embedded sexist ideologies that cut across race and class (White Paper 3, 1997).

Existing literature (see for instance Mazibuko, 2006:111) on the underrepresentation of women in the senior levels of South African academia has argued that the centres of power in South African universities are dominated and influenced by men and masculinised cultures that make it difficult for women to enter and succeed at these levels. As Acker and Webber point out (2006:486), this is not merely a problem of numbers. There is often a wide gap between the point of view and experiences of women academics and the structures, cultures, day to day interactions, and entrenched practices at every level of universities (see also Walker, 2010). In this context the academic woman finds herself in the debilitating position of constantly having to negotiate her credibility and identity with her male counterparts and sometimes with other women in senior positions.

The literature (see for instance Acker and Webber, 2006; Reay, 2000; Bagilhole, 2002; Skelton, 2005; Walker, 2010; Morley, 2013; Alfred, 2001, 59) on the experiences of women in the academy has focused on issues of teacher professionalism, tokenism, recruitment, the silencing of women's voices and viewpoints, the home/work, health/stress divides, the othering of the feminine in intellectual work and gendered evaluation systems, the structures of power and the gendered nature of relations among men and women in academia. Much of this work recognises the intersectionality of women's experiences of marginality. In South Africa, the academy is shaped by its apartheid past, and South African women are structurally disadvantaged in differing ways depending on their location in relation to gender, race, class, ethnicity and sexuality. Walker for instance (1998:346), emphasised the effects of race on the availability of opportunities for advancement by black women in South African academia (see also Mabokela, 2003:138). Other work has related to subtle forms of silencing of women in the academy as a result of (often hidden) underlying practices, expectations and prejudices (Reay, 2000:18; Bagilhole, 2002:28; Skelton, 2005b:329; Walker, 2010:372; Alfred, 2001:62). In the context of what Elizabeth Grosz (in Luke and Gore 1992:192) calls 'sexist, patriarchal and phallocentric knowledge systems academic, women report feeling invisible and retreating to the margins so as to avoid victimization and discrimination.

Importantly, the experiences of women in the academy are not identical. Luke (1994:220) refers to the 'hierarchization of oppression': women experience marginality in the academy in different ways and to differing degrees. Women may, moreover, silence each other. Women in senior positions can use the power they have to ensure the development of their own careers while marginalising other women (Skelton, 2005b:319, 326). Older women may emphasize their authority over younger women (Baca Zinn et al., 1988:134). Hierarchies of power may exist between permanent and contract staff (Dillabough, 1999:384). Different generations of academic women may have different perceptions of the academy (Walker, 1998).

Taking this research as its starting point, the focus of the present project is on the experiences of women academics who are the first in their families to enter the academy – first generation academic women. In the context of studies showing the importance for women academics, in the negotiation of inequality and discrimination, of existing personal and social resources, prior experience and having mentors and role models (Bagilhole, 1993a:271; Acker and Armenti, 2004:17; Morley, 2013:124, 125; Fries-Brit and Kelly, 2005:240; Jameron, 2001), the present research is interested in how first generation women academics are able to negotiate marginality in the academy when they have little access to these prior resources or experiences. While there is a considerable body of research, as has been indicated, which attempts to
describe the discriminatory effects on women of the gendered environment that they encounter in academia, little work focuses specifically on women who are the first in their families to enter this environment (Jackson and Mazzezi, 2012). Sandra Jones’ (2004) research on first generation women found that women in this category saw education as ‘a way out’ of the traditional gender roles and class oppression; they saw the academy as a place where they could pursue their educational desires and develop their academic identities. We aim to take this work further to examine the complex relation of those who occupy positions on the margins to their perceived and enacted marginality as new entrants into the academy.

The Study

We took ‘first generation academic women’ to be those women academics who are the first in their families to graduate and who now occupy academic positions. The participants were drawn from one historically white and one historically black South African university. The sample was purposively constructed to include a diversity of participants based on background, class, ethnicity, discipline, ‘race’ and sexuality. We conducted 15 in-depth narrative interviews that lasted between one and two hours each. As Barbe et al (1989) have stated ‘women’s stories illustrate the construction of gendered identities in a specific social context and the interplay of individual agency and social dynamics in the shaping of identities’. Narratives can be seen as a mechanism for arranging the events in people’s lives, offering insight into how meaning is made from experiences and how identities are constructed – as well as providing insight into the social and cultural setting within which those experiences arise (Riessman, 2008; Elliot, 2005:4; Clandinin and Connelly, 1990:2; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Linde, 1993:3; Atkinson, 1998:1; Seidman, 2008:4).

Participants were asked to relate their life experiences, their background, the events that brought them into academia, their experience of academia, and how they understood these experiences. In many instances the process of telling led to new realisations on the part of the participants themselves and evoked strong emotions. It was evident that negotiating the academic terrain was often tied up with deep personal struggles for these women.

The data was analysed using a directed thematic narrative analysis. The interviews were coded for themes guided by the core theoretical construct of ‘marginality’ which was in turn operationalized in terms of four main components or sub-themes:

1. losing (ways in which marginality has meant being on the losing end of power relations);
2. using (ways in which it has been possible for marginality to be used as a resource);
3. refusing (ways in which the expected behaviours of the marginal subject are refused);
4. cruising (claims about marginality having been overcome or superseded).

We were interested in how these women narrated, interpreted and understood themselves as marginalised in the academy and how they were able to negotiate their marginality. Husu (2001) directs our attention to ways in which those constructed as marginal do not simply adopt this as their own subject experience but also resist, challenge and reformulate the terms of domination. Our interest is in precisely these moments of resistance and challenge (see for instance Alfred, 2001:64; Bagilhole, 1993b; 2002) but also accommodation, adaptation and the deployment of marginalisation as a resource both for one’s own advancement and for the advancement of others. Often all four responses – losing, using, refusing and cruising -- were present in a single narrative. As Spivak points out, the relationship between the centre and the margin ‘is never clear cut, one bleeds into the other at all times’ (1993, 31). Marginality thus names a complex and constantly shifting set of subject positions rather than a single, unitary space or form of occupation.

Losing


Marginality has most often been understood as a category of oppression, representing loss of status, of income, of efficacy and of agency. Our participants certainly narrated the many ways in which to be marginalised is to lose out. To occupy a position on the margin is to experience great stress and some respond by simply ‘staying out’ of the business of looking for promotion and status.
So I think there's huge pressure on one here and it's not a relaxing atmosphere to work in, there is expectations from you all the time and I think because of my age and because I'm not really interested in promotion anymore, I am past that stage in my life, other things have become more important to me, because I can take a step back, I think I'm able to calm down a little bit. Because what I am also finding is that you've got layers of politics, you've got certain things being said in meetings by people, this is what the university stands for, but, underneath, is different, so there is layers of politics and as a newcomer, you only hear what is being said, you don't know the complex layers of the politics and after a while you start realising it, that you are not quite in on all that kind of information that people who have been here for a long time, and that's typical of any institution. Yeah and it is stressful especially if you are looking for promotion. For me personally it doesn't bother me, if I can stay away from the politics of the university I will be happy because it gets ugly, I don't think students probably see that side of academia, but academic politics can be very vicious.

I have been able to stay away so far, if you are ambitious and you want to climb the ladder, and become the dean of the faulty, you've got to be involved in the politics, and that's where it becomes ugly, academics generally, not all but generally and I include myself here, we tend to have very fragile egos and yeah, it can get quite ugly when people start fighting each other for higher positions, so I will try and stay out of it (Emily).

Sometimes women who take this approach are interpreted as simply lacking ambition. But as Emily’s narrative describes, it is not that the ambition was not there in the first place but rather that a conscious decision is made to ‘tone down’ ambition.

I suppose I have just toned down my ambitions, I think when I was studying my doctorate I probably was planning to go for a full professorship at some stage but to do that you have got to publish a lot and I just realised I don’t want to play that game, so ideally, its affected my ambition in the sense of. I think when you get older, you also start questioning what you are doing with your life and to spend my energy and time pushing out publications which I don’t believe in, I don’t want to spend another 5 or 10 years doing that, my time has become too precious to me, so it’s not worth it (Emily).

Emily grapples with trying to explain what it feels like to have an identity that simply does not fit well with expectations – to literally feel that one is expected to lose something about one’s essential nature in order to be regarded as acceptable. So what happens is you tend to get split up into parts, so I guess it’s a case of, I think there is a beautiful analogy by somebody who says, you know we not all bunny rabbits, some of us are snakes, some of us are dogs, some of us are fish, some of us are birds and those who are bunnies can make really good bunnies, those who are snakes are wonderful snakes, but when you try and make a snake do a thing that birds do, you try and make a bird do things that a cat does, you’re not getting good work and here, what I feel is been happening is they have been trying to make me and I happen to be a snake, trying to make me do bunny things and cat things and dog things and fish things and birds things as well and they are expecting me to be good at it as well as being excellent at being a snake but I'm not being able to be excellent at being a snake because I am spending a lot of time trying to be a bird and a fish and a whatever, that's a long way of telling you (Emily).

Side by side with the narration of profound layers of loss occasioned by marginality though, were counter narratives, contradictory impulses and modes of both resistance and accommodation. We call these ‘using’, ‘refusing’ and ‘cruising’.

- Using marginality as a resource

Even while shedding tears – often to their own surprise – as they narrated sagas of loss, for many participants their marginalisation was something which they turned into a resource not only for their own survival but in the service of others in whom they found their own experiences and identities mirrored in some way. This offered them a sense of agency and self-efficacy.

I do see myself really as a leader …. I think I have inspired my sister to study as an adult learner, I have certainly inspired my niece to study, I certainly inspired eventually my
daughter to study, once she got over the experience of having a mother who was studying and so I think that’s in my broader family context, I have been the leader, I have been the first one in the family to go to university to get the degree and I think the way in which I did it by working full-time, studying at night … has been an inspiration for my immediate family members (Chloe).

While for some refusing marginality is an overt act of resistance, for others refusal involves more covert forms which Lesidi describes as manipulation ‘in a nice way’. She describes drawing on expectations of women as distracted by family responsibilities to avoid tasks and deadlines when it suits her. Sometimes you can say your rights in a subtle way, … to manipulate your way if you don’t want to do something, rather than speaking out, you know in the sense that being rude or arrogant, there are other subtle ways of trying to do it, you can say you know what my family, my children are really a mess, can you just assist me, as much as I would want really to do this report, at the moment things at home I just, I am in trouble managing that man and those children, can you help me out? You say that to your boss, you say that to your colleague nicely and you find your way around rather than saying I will not do this (Lesidi).

For the most part however marginality was resource in these women’s lives not for their own survival alone but for the survival of others.

Yeah, that’s one of the outstanding things of being a lecture you see that growth and I’ve got another student, she was a little bit older than the other students but she was a good student but again to see the growth in her, the confidence [crying], actually as I am talking to you now, I begin to realize something, you know as a young woman I was not very confident and I think for me what so important, is to help other young women become confident, that’s what probably driving me, so they don’t have to battle like I did, because I think, if I think of all my students that I am proud of, its only young women. Interesting! (Emily)

I sometimes tell students the story, not the details of my life but what it was like being an adult learner, having not studied for 15 years, being a single parent, having an eight hour job and still trying to study and quality and I think it has perhaps provided some inspiration to students who were struggling to encourage them to work harder and to encourage them not to give up and just to carry on with their studies and if they failed once, the can come back and really have a go at it again (Chloe).

Occupying a position on margins but at the same time having some access to power by virtue of being academics provides the ability to ‘see’ those who are in a similar position to where the participants once were, and to be a resource for those people. The participants were selective in this, using their discretion and thereby exercising forms of agency that in turn left them feeling empowered and fulfilled.

Refusing

When it comes to allocation of duties, of roles sometimes you notice that things are just pushed you know to you, that is where usually a speak out and say no, each one is supposed to be doing their work, for instance allocation of classes, sometimes you are the one giving usually the first years, the big classes … bigger workload and all that but I speak for myself, I refuse that.

A slightly different form of resistance to the ‘marginality-as-loss’ appellation was articulated in the form of an outright refusal of the status of marginal by some participants. Tawanga speaks of her insistence on her deep personal sense of an academic identity being recognised and acknowledged by others. She refuses to accept that her devalued status will inevitably result in her losing out in the academic game which involves ‘pushing more’ to displace the masculinised ideal norm of the successful academic and to replace it with an image of herself as a legitimate and equal participant. Tawanga insists on an identity that incorporates both that of the ‘academic’ and that of the decried traditional accoutrements of femininity – fashion, home, family – which
arouses in those she encounters a sense of dissonance, of the academy as a world in which children, make-up and laundry somehow do not belong. Tawanga refuses to allow this, insisting on making her experience as a woman a visible and legitimate part of her academic identity.

... like I said not all people will accept females playing that role of an academic,... you see I want to publish many papers as well, I want to get this promotion and things like that, that's affected me certainly because it's like you have to push more, you try to convince people, I am serious, I may just be female but I just want the same thing that you want, I want to also study hard, I also enjoy reading, I also enjoy studying somehow they don't accept it as easily coming from a female, as it is coming from a male, from a male, those are the things that they expect but from females no, she should want fashion and yes of course I love fashion but there are more important things that I think, family and my career, all those things are part of me .... So gender has affected my experience, the expectations from other people but, I don't always meet their expectation.... They expect women to behave in a certain way because some have this notion that, they would mostly be thinking about looking good and gossip and things like that well, I had to convince colleagues that no I'm just as normal as they are, .... I also like to be amongst other females like they would like to be amongst other males, so nothing really extra, but they shouldn't expect me to follow stereotypes, .... I like working late, I usually shut down all lights here, I'm usually the last person in this department, you see preconceived idea was that I would be out of here and go and do make-up or whatever, come on, I like that but the picture is this is what I enjoy doing and then I fit in those other things and extras, my family first, because my children are grown up, I do my laundry (Tawanga).

Tawanga realises too (and refuses to go along with) the perniciousness of being constructed as not needing to meet the same standards of those who are regarded as more capable because they fit the expectations more readily.

I referred to people saying it's was okay, you should, you can teach with your masters, but the guys no, they demanded PhDs from guys. I didn't like that because I thought okay, they need PhD's, I don't need the PhD, why, yet I will still get the same load as everybody else, it's as if I shouldn't aspire towards that highest whatever, that I found quite shocking because what is good for the goose is good for the gander, they wanted me back here and before I came back they promised that I will go back for a PhD but now they're telling me no no no no, so I have to do it for myself .... (Tawanga).

Refusing marginality though, requires a kind of double-think involving seeing that it will require being exceptional in order to overcome marginality. To be marginal means working ‘three times harder’, being ‘pig headed’, pushing yourself more, ‘rebelling’ against the construction of oneself as incapable.

I think the discipline that I’m in is a very male dominated world .... So I think I’ve always been a bit of a rebel and I think it was my destiny to move into a field where women were still experimenting. One of the things that I have learnt the hard way is, you mustn’t sit back and think other people are going to think how wonderful you are and push you ... if you are ambitious you got to push yourself, ... push yourself hard and you've got to take the opportunities ... and you've got to learn especially if you are a woman (Emily).

I remember going to the first meeting where ... I was the highest qualified but because I was the only female they asked me to take the minutes, which I refused .... I had to work maybe three times harder than the other scientists that were male but looking back it has made me better, I think it's definitely contributed to where I am now.... I think maybe I am very pig-headed. Whenever a person tells me I can’t do it or they don’t respect me, I will do certain things to earn that respect (Evelyn).

What saps energy at the margins is the extent to which the reconstruction of the institution as a place where women are equally respected and where non-sexist practices are seen as de rigueur rather than avant-garde is often the assumed responsibility of the marginalised. Part of refusing marginality then, is refusing this responsibility which is what Sophie has done.

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And sometimes with the male students......because I insist on things like using gender sensitive language in essays I have had usually white male students who feel like they to want to have a big meaningful discussion about sexist language with me for an hour and a half which is fine but with this assumption that their opinions are right and I have to justify mine as opposed to maybe we should go and read and come back and have a discussion. So that happened twice and I was like actually why am I doing this? I am not making them have to account for their thinking so why am I feeling like I have to justify myself? So my new response is, there’s a reading list, do the readings come back, we can talk about it then. I don’t have to justify this position (Sophie).

Inga explains how diverse markers often stand in for race, class and ethnicity to provide legitimise differential treatment. To refuse marginality is also to refuse to afford those markers the authority to delimit one’s capabilities and rightful place in the academy. Marginality is a construction as Spivak has pointed out of, and in relation to, a particular centre, defined in a particular way. Refusing marginality involves the reconstruction of what is to be unproblematically regarded as ‘normal’ and to make strange the vantage point of normality from which the marginal subject is viewed.

English can be spoken in so many accents within England and so many accents around the world and then you have a problem with Indian English. Don’t give me that crap. If if your accent is so different to mine, I’m also making an effort to listen and understand, so if mine is different from yours, you make that effort to understand. But it took me lot many years to come to that point. Because initially it’s was always a matter of I’m not good enough, my English is not good enough, my accent is not good enough, my grammar is not good enough .... I’ve been employed for a different set of criteria, not for my grammar and English speaking abilities (Inga).

Cruising

I will not get upset ... you know sometimes as women we become stronger that way. I have decided nothing will affect me.

For Spivak as the centre defines the marginal, it welcomes in selected inhabitants of the margin in order to better exclude the margin (Spivak, 1998:107; Spivak, 1990a:221). These inhabitants are able to cruise perhaps not always recognising that this requires their exceptional ability to manage conflicting responsibilities while at the same time meeting the highest standards of their profession – and never being seen to require special treatment. Rosaline experiences acceptance and no discrimination while at the same time recognising the impossibility of being both ‘a good scientist’ and ‘a good mother’. Highlighting the conflicting demands of what Skelton (2005b:325) has referred to as two ‘greedy institutions' research (see for instance Morley, 2013:122; Bagilhole, 2002:20) has pointed to the tension between the ‘tenure clock’ and the ‘biological clock’ as a source of anxiety among academic women, who must struggle to balance primary responsibility for childcare with anxiety about career advancement and appraisal and evaluation. Rees (2007:15) finds that women in searching for solutions to this dilemma adopt a more masculinised attitude to their academic careers and private lives which may win them success at one level but may also, at another level, serve to confirm the devaluation of the feminine in the academic space and resulting in constant feelings of inner tension.

But like many other professional women Rosaline constructs her circumstances as peculiar to her individual life rather than connected to a public world in which the organisation of work and family life is gendered. For Rosaline non-discrimination means being treated the same as everyone else with no special pleading, even though the demands on her as a mother of young children were exceptional.

In my field and had a lot of acceptance from male colleagues, on the international scale I have had many colleagues both male and female and I don’t feel that there is any discrimination against me as a female, nor is there any particular desire to help me because I’m a female, they are not going to make any excuses, oh shame she hasn’t had the same opportunities, I have to be an equal and that’s fine, I am happy with that. So … I did see that for a period when our children were young I actually could not be a productive scientist and be a good mother, and I don’t think anyone really took account of that. I
managed to publish enough papers and so on so to be well-recognized but I don’t actually feel that I have to be the top academic in my field in the world, it’s fine and happy where I am, to be recognized with what I do, to feel I can make a useful contribution to society with my work and so on, obviously one strives to do better (Rosaline).

In the end there is a painful undertone of compromise in her account which suggests that in order to ‘cruise’ in academy women must not be seen to be demanding too much both in terms of their own expectations of what they might achieve and in terms of the expectations that they have of how their particular needs and situated experiences might be accommodated in order to make it possible for them to thrive rather than merely to survive. Inga’s and Tawanga’s narratives takes a similar turn.

I’ve gone through all these phases and now am at a very comfortable position to say, this is my accent. I’m not going to change that, this is my identity as well and I’m not going to change my identity as well. I’m the only one who will walk around with Indian clothes in this town and I have, because initially I tried to fit in … and then I thought, why the hell, why the hell should I keep pulling my shirt down (laughs) to fit in. So I buy what I buy and I wear what I wear, … that’s me, take it or leave it, it’s not my problem (Inga).

So I’ll just to do work that they are doing, maybe even better, that way they leave you alone because there’s nothing they can do, and students will keep on graduating, that’s the only way you can speak back, that’s the only way just to do my work and show them, I am enjoying myself, my students are enjoying themselves, so in the end they give up and then concentrate on something else and in the end I become a colleague, in the end I become somebody … acceptability comes after a long time (Tawanga).

Often in complex and contradictory ways several participants articulated a sense of themselves in a position of comfort and ease despite elements of the same narrative articulating great pain and loss. This sense of ‘cruising’ in academia in spite of, as well as because of, one’s marginality articulates most clearly Spivak’s notion of ‘outside/in’ – the sense in which the ‘marginalised’ academic is never wholly or uniformly at the margin but occupies rather a shifting position, between the margin and the centre, between agency and abjection, power and powerlessness. As Spivak argues ‘our explanations make our actions and ideas possible, our role is to produce and we are reproduced by these explanations in terms of the powers that guide the society we live in (Spivak, 1998:108).

Conclusion

The marginal position occupied by women in the academy has been described by Particia Hill Collins (1986, 14) as ‘outsiders within’, meaning that those women who are inside the university are, through deeply embedded discriminatory practices and processes, constantly situated or positioned outside the structures and inner workings of the university system. This notion of ‘outsiders within’ is similar to Spivak’s concept of ‘outside in’ (1998). While Collins focuses on the effect of this outsider within status on the experiences and views of the academic woman, Spivak uses it as a way of deconstructing the concept of marginalization itself. For her the marginal is always on the margins in relation to the centre, hence the marginalised individual is never really outside of the centre but always in some sense also ‘of’ the centre.

Taking up this work on the concept of ‘marginality’ in this paper we try to show the complex relationship with marginality that our participants have. They are involved with defining the centre while at the very same time being defined by it. Sometimes they evince powerful forms of agency, using marginality as a resource both in their own interests and for the selective advancement of others which they see as somehow like themselves. At other times the brute impact of disadvantage and loss in all its guises echoes through their narratives. Their involvement with moments of resistance and capitulation are often voiced in a single narrative. While we try here to trouble the idea of marginality as simple disadvantage, we try to show also the cogency of what Spivak refers to the as the ‘impossible no’. The marginalised subject inhabits a particular structure even while resisting it, refusing it. These very subject positions are made possible by the structure which one inhabits and must inhabit. That structure foretells too the price of refusal and the benefits of compromise. It is this ‘impossible no’ that we hear echoing through our participants’ narratives.
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