

**TELLING TALES OF IDENTITY:
AN INTEPRETATION OF WOMEN'S NARRATIVES**

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Identity

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Dis/empowerment

Voice

Emotion

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Abstract

This paper examines selected discourses found in the journals kept by 21 working-class women during a training course for domestic workers in South Africa. The principal aim of the paper is to examine how emotion, voice and agency are expressed through literacy practices such as writing. With critical discourse analysis, the existing literacy levels of these women are revealed as well as the way in which women express identity, agency and emotion through the act of writing and reflecting on their experiences. A secondary aim is to uncover those recurrent discourses and attitudes that either empower or disempower these women. This is done to showcase how women's perception of themselves and their opportunities help them become active or inactive agents in their communities and families. Contributions are made to the study of women's language and literacy practices, with particular investigation of how their identities are shaped and moulded by language use. Critical discourse analysis and narrative analysis are the main analytical tools used in the study, highlighting aspects like agency, voice and ideology. These aspects are examined through the lens of women's experiences.

Declaration

I declare that *Telling tales of Identity: An interpretation of women's narratives* is my own work, that has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other University, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

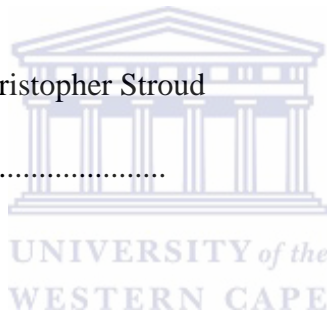
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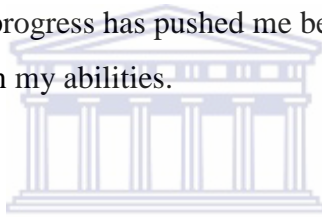
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

Poverty can be defined as “that process which deprives people, particularly women, of the basic means of attaining sustainable livelihoods, and that undermines their physical, cultural, and spiritual well-being” (Steady, 1993:18). Poverty extends to all aspects of individual life including physical weakness and sickness, lack of access to most essential services, lack of information and limited control over resources. Other contributing factors include the impact of subordination and exploitation by higher social and economic powers, extreme vulnerability to sudden stress, insecurity in the face of changing circumstances, erosion of human dignity and self-respect, and social and economic marginalization. The quality of life of large numbers of women and their prospects for the future are increasingly threatened by economic, political, and social hardship and compromised by poverty, marginalization, ill health, and powerlessness.

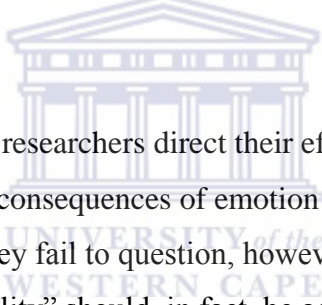
A number of factors lead to the majority of women facing and struggling against discrimination from a position of powerlessness. These factors include economic and social inequities and the tendency of most policies to be insensitive in terms of gender. Those in the lowest social strata experience economic and social hardship, injustice, and isolation and are usually among the first victims of poverty and environmental degradation. According to Steady (1993) it is now being recognized that women often bear the heaviest burden resulting from faulty and oppressive global economic policies. While a global economic system produces economic growth, the level of poverty in women increases at unprecedented rates.

Most of the poor cannot read or write. Steady (1993:20) also suggests therefore that “women constitute six hundred million of the eight hundred million people of the world who are illiterate”. Many women lack access to health care services, adequate nutrition, education and employment. Studies show that initial increases in employment opportunities for women are soon lost when their wages rise and when they are inevitably replaced. Cities should provide facilities and infrastructural support such as health care, educational, and social services. However, while most developing countries promote urban development, they do not provide employment or better facilities. So what happens when structural adjustment programs and developmental programs are reinforced? Do unemployed, women have a different outlook on their lives after being offered a chance to change their circumstances with the hope of becoming employable? The jury may still be deliberating on these questions. However, this set of questions is the context of the present study. This thesis is based on analysis of the journals kept by a group of unemployed women from a peripheral Cape Town township who attended a training course aimed at helping them to find employment as qualified domestic workers.

Having research data as personal as journals demands particular ethical and interpretive stance and positionality on behalf of the investigator. Storytelling is what we do with research and according to Riessman (2000: 3) “storytelling promotes empathy across different social locations and has counteracted excessive abstraction, bridging policy discourse and the language of women’s life worlds”. The ‘troubles’ that participants represent in their narratives tell us a great deal about social and historical processes – contemporary beliefs and pressures. The researcher’s duty is not to exploit these worlds but promote them. The approach does not assume objectivity but instead, privileges positionality and subjectivity.

A key factor in interpreting women’s narratives is the legitimisation given to subjective knowledge, and the space allowed for complexities and contradictions (Madge et al, 1997). However, recognition that women have been systematically silenced in social research is also important and is the responsibility of the female researcher to make public and validate women’s own experiences. Through

personal narratives people create representations of the self within socialised contexts, it is important, therefore, to note that women's own experiences could be used as a starting point to theorise broader social relations. Women's narratives illuminate the relationship between the individual and society. Bloom (1998: 62), however, warns against privileging personal narratives as a form of liberating women from cultural silences. According to Bloom when women create narratives they unconsciously reproduce the 'master scripts' of patriarchal ideologies. We should be aware that women's narratives may also attempt to unconsciously maintain gendered social relations. Bloom is just one theorist who believes that the links between women's experiences and their gender status in society may shift and change and although she believes that women's narratives cannot liberate women from cultural silences, this research paper aims at investigating how women's narratives indicate a continual negotiation and development of female identity.



In conventional research, researchers direct their efforts toward identifying the components, causes, and consequences of emotion in the hope of revealing emotion's true nature. They fail to question, however, whether concepts such as "emotion" and "emotionality" should, in fact, be accorded a special status. The naturalizing of emotion has consequences for how gender and gender relations are construed in the course of daily life. Because concepts of emotion and emotionality are differently applied to women and men, the gendered emotion scheme inevitably connects systems of power. Feminist ethnographies reveal the intersection of emotion and gender as a critical locus for revealing how a culture incorporates emotion into its system of social organisation. According to Shields (2002: 9) "Emotion is essentially private and internal and highlights the stereotypic equation drawn between emotion and femaleness which devalues both". The women's narratives express emotion. Emotion language comprises a feature of the women's journals. My aim is to move away from the question: "Who is more emotional, women or men?" But instead, with a critical investigation of narrative texts, I aim to explore the many ways emotion contributes to the mediation of personal as well as social identities.

According to Moran (2009: 8) “Language is at the centre of national unity”. Not only was language at the heart of apartheid – for racism always uses words, language, designations, epithets, scenarios, alibis, and of course narratives – the question of language shapes the figuration of so-called coloured and black individuals. The current thesis introduces current research on women’s experiences. Drawing on contemporary theoretical works on women’s narratives, it explores the way in which women learn to reflect on and express their feelings and aspirations and how this may reflect a developing agency, voice and ultimately a new lease of opportunity. Issues discussed include fear of physical and sexual violence, spatial restrictions and constraints, motivations, opportunities and changing attitudes to both gendered and global inequalities. Part of this article seeks to examine the changing identities of women as they become empowered and employable, and adds to the ongoing debates on gendered and racial power relations.

In the past decade autobiographic narratives have become a popular means of data collection. Victor Barnouw (cited in Langlotz, 2003) once remarked that from a scholarly perspective the main difficulty with life stories, as fascinating as they are, is knowing what to do with them. However In this thesis; writing is seen as a practice, a contextualised practice that is firmly locked. Texts no longer have an isolated existence. They are now firmly locked into a wider complex of human contextualised activities. A text is always connected to the practice of its production, circulation, uptake, re-use and so forth. Journal entries will thus be looked at, who produced them, for what purpose and how.

1.2 South African context and rationale

Social transformation in South Africa is encountering massive changes in all areas of life. Gendered, sexual, racial and linguistic identities are undergoing refiguration as society opens up new potentials and new definitions of self. This thesis focuses on two groups of women namely one is traditionally but contentiously called coloured and black. In South Africa during the apartheid era,

the population was classified into four main racial groups: Black, White, Asian (mostly Indian) and Coloured. The term black people is used to describe humans of a dark skin phenotype relative to other racial groups. Among the members of this group, dark skin is most often accompanied by the expression of natural 'afro-hair texture'. The coloured group includes people of mixed Bantu, Khoisan and European descent. The Coloured definition, however, remains contentious and occupying an intermediary position between the Black and White definitions in South Africa.

Although so-called Black and Coloured women come from different cultural backgrounds, they nevertheless face problems which partly diverge. Oppression and marginalization of women is a world-wide phenomenon but Black women in addition, are subdued by the impact of former colonialism which enlarges their burden namely race, which prejudices Black women as 'less valuable' compared to white European women. Although culture in South Africa is diverse, the majority of Black and Coloured women share some fundamental historical and traditional experiences. These include the trauma of colonial past and Apartheid's aftermath, lack of education and vast poverty, and the deliberating facts of traditional customs. Weiss (2004) believes that identities are not given or reducible to our origins, skin colour, or material locations, but rather a product of struggle, which represent an achieved, not ascribed trait. One context of struggle has been language.

In South Africa, a question of language is closely connected with politics of gender and racial class which in turn is closely connected with each other. After nearly half a century of apartheid rule in which only English and Afrikaans were official languages, the Republic of South Africa adopted a new democratic constitution that provides for eleven official languages. Now, more than six years after the drafting of the Constitution, the question arises as to the success of the eleven languages policy. When the Afrikaans-oriented National Party (NP) won the South African elections of 1948, the party introduced measures designed to leapfrog Afrikaans speakers over others in the country in the employment and

business sector. The NP's decision to teach black children in Afrikaans during Apartheid was an unpopular one and was the main reason for the Soweto uprising in 1976 (a series of student-lead riots in the streets of Soweto, South Africa). The regime and simultaneous promotion of the language forged a link between the language and the political system that remains to this day. Despite attempts to keep the language as one of only two official languages after 1994, the constitutional Assembly in the newly democratised South African republic chose to downgrade Afrikaans to only one of eleven official languages, its protected status a thing of the past.

Women's previous limited access to literacy in South Africa can be traced back to discriminatory colonial education and language policies that excluded women from schooling and denied them access to many resources. The value and prestige given to Western languages taught in schools and the devaluation of native languages and culture placed women at the fringes of important social institutions in their societies. According to Pavlenko & Blackledge (2004) there is compelling research support for the view that gender inequity in access to literacy continues to be one of the major causes of women's marginal status in South Africa.

1.3 Overview of Wesbank and context

The data for this study was taken from a programme which was run by the Iilwimi Centre for Multilingualism at the University of the Western Cape and the Bergzicht Training Centre, Stellenbosch. The participants, who were women, came from a peripheral township on the outskirts of Cape Town. Each day, the women were transported out of their peripheral township to the very pleasant surroundings of the Bergzicht Training Centre. The women were trained in domestic services and placed with suitable employers and be regularly monitored. The following skills were taught by the Bergzicht Training Centre: life skills, cleaning skills, laundry skills, and kitchen skills. In conjunction with these skills, the following skills were taught by the Iilwimi Sentrum: literacy skills and numeracy skills. Part of their training was a course aimed at improving their

written and oral communication skills. This included keeping a journal of their daily experiences as participants in the three week training programme. The Black African women, who were mostly Xhosa-first-language- speakers, were asked to write their journals in English while the so-called ‘coloured’ women were allowed to write these journals in their mother tongue, Afrikaans. The women gave their written permission during the course for the use of their journals as research tools, provided their names and personal details were not revealed.

The community of Wesbank is situated on the west bank of Kuils River in the Oostenberg section of Cape Town, east of the R300 highway near Delft South. It emerged as the first racially mixed community in 1999 in accordance with the plan of South African government to produce low-cost housing to the poor as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Wesbank has a population of approximately 25000 people. The community developed from a squatter community which, consisted of former farmworkers, poor people from low-income areas in the Western Cape and a smaller Xhosa migrant community who had moved to the Western Cape from the Eastern Cape in 1990’s. The Xhosa community constitutes approximately 25% of the population and inhabits one section of Wesbank, called ‘E-block’. The majority of the population is classified as ‘Coloured’ (mixed race).

The Xhosa and Coloured communities co-exist peacefully, and have gradually become accustomed to one another’s cultures. However, race has become a topic of contention which can be explained by the fact that Wesbank did not emerge naturally but as the government’s post-apartheid political initiative for integration, and many of its inhabitants feel that they have been forced to become neighbours (*Cape Argus*, February 2, 2004:2).

Despite the provision of housing and basic services, the community is characterised by poverty, deprivation, gangsterism, drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse and many other social ills. The unemployment rate of Wesbank stands at 60%. Research shows that the main causal factors can be attributed to low-incomes for those who have work, huge skills deficits that stem from the low

levels of education and a lack of opportunities for those who are unemployed but are seeking work.

1.4 Research aims and objectives

The focus will remain on how the women express emotion, voice, and agency through the act of the writing and reflection on their experiences during the training course. The involvement of literacy (writing) in their lives allows them to express their thoughts on a broader spectrum. This becomes clear and exemplified in the analysis chapters further on this paper. The overarching objective of this work is to ascertain whether and how self-reflection and self expression, through the production of textual/narrative analysis, help women to better their situation. It's more precise focus is on women's educational and occupational aspirations for themselves, their perceptions of their priorities and needs, as victims of socio-economic setbacks and their aspirations towards self-actualization and self-worth. In other words the focus is on how identity is constructed, interpreted, and represented. This will be analysed using a theoretical framework of narrative analysis, based on data particularly consisting of personal narratives. Ultimately, the thesis aims to contribute to an understanding of the relationship between language, agency and identity by looking at how these texts show how women construct themselves as victims or agents through the narratives they tell and how literacy allows them to do this. I also look at how they narrate themselves as overcoming hardship by examining the different types of social discourses represented in the their texts. The journal texts will thus allow us to begin to explore how literacy, the learning of and exercising of literacy skills opens up new ways of approaching experience and constructing self.

1.5 Research methodology

Twenty-one unemployed women, mostly married mothers, participated in this study. The participants were selected by staff of the Iilwimi Sentrum, organisers of a community upliftment project in a Wesbank Township, using purposive

sampling. A few semi-structured interviews as well as the training classes were conducted in a place away from the homes and daily routines of these women, to a place where they would feel safe and free from any stressful daily demands. The interviews were transcribed and analysed within a qualitative framework, which aims to gather and in-depth understanding of human behaviour and reasons that govern such behaviour. A qualitative framework was therefore best suited to this study as the focus was on explaining how the provision of a space for women to voice and share experience on a day-to-day basis impacted on their perception and construct of selves. This end a semantic analysis was conducted to reveal the social discourses that underlay how women structure their narratives and a narrative analysis was conducted to study how women's sense of self was inserted into space and time and transformed. The women continuously victimise themselves by referring to themselves as less-fortunate, as struggling individuals and unable to achieve certain goals and dreams. This immediately moulds understanding of how people's lives can be changed by simple empowering tasks such as educational activities. An important aim of this thesis, therefore, is to understand how women construct their identities with social and cultural contexts. Whether they realise it or not, by victimising themselves they are actively involved in constructing and constituting their lives and experiences.

1.6 Outline of chapters

Chapter one describes the research problem, the socio-historical context of Wesbank, the aims of the research and my motivation for doing it. Chapter two provides a critical review of the work of theorists and researchers in the field of discourse analysis in narratives. Chapter three provides thematic structures including that of identity and its many facets. I analyse these theories, and show in what ways they formed the basis for my research, nourished and directed my project. In chapter four I give a full account of the research design, the research instruments and methodology I used to collect the data, and explain why certain tools were chosen. The chapter describes the actual procedures of data collection and analysis that were used, as well as possible limitations of the research.

Chapter five contains the overview of general genres that is presented in the journals. Chapters six and seven show the results of my methodology and analyses of findings. I analyse the data within the frameworks of narrative and thematic analysis each dedicated chapter respectively. And lastly, chapter eight contains the summary of my experience, the conclusions I drew from the results of my research, and a number of salient recommendations to those who plan to do future research on women and their literacy practices.



Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

There is a considerable amount of approaches to discourse analysis. However, modern Linguistics has introduced a concept of text that includes every type utterance (including writing journals). When analysing discourse, researchers are not only concerned with 'purely' linguistic facts, they pay equal or more attention to language use in relation to social, political and cultural aspects, as investigated in this research paper. Discourse Analysis then becomes known as the study of language in use and we should take into account both text and context as parts of discourse.

Discourse analysts investigate the use of language in context, thus they are interested in what speakers/writers do and not so much in the formal relationships among sentences or propositions. Discourse analysis, then has a social dimension and for many analysts it is a method for studying how language enacts with social activities and social identities. This is investigated within the course of this research paper.

Language is often a key indicator of identity and there are significant differences between knowing and speaking a language and actually writing it or perceiving it. Scollon and Scollon (1981:14) remark on ways women communicate and provide a perception and image of themselves to the receiver and say that

[t]his presentation of self is done in many ways. It is reflected in our choice of words, in our tone of voice, in the attitudes we display and in the topics about which we talk. In talking each participant presents a particular view of the world and the self. (Scollon and Scollon, 1981:14)

With telling stories, even more so, the author is constructing a biography of transient, temporally, spatially, localised self. In the journals that are in focus here the women explore aspects of their identities and imaginings of themselves. This

chapter introduces identity as a gendered, socially constructed, linguistically mediated phenomenon. It reviews literacy on how identity is constantly constructed through social practices. Emotion, which is associated with a gendered discourse, is also examined and put in context with its social meaning. . Firstly, though, we look at the term identity, and three of its counterparts which are gender, emotion, race and space.

According to Biber (1988), genres are collections of communicative purposes which can vary in their prototypicality. These communicative purposes are determined by the discourse community which produces and reads texts (such as those written by the women in this study) belonging to a genre and based on similarities and common themes in the texts. But how can we extract such communicative purposes from the text at hand? We need to define the genres we want to detect. This includes identity and its many sub-genres listed below.

2.2 Identity

According to Benwell & Stokoe (2006) the concept of identity was unthinkable before the sixteenth century but today, it is a heavily theorised, academic concept that is a paradigmatic product of its historical conditions, formulated and reformulated in strategic ways by the period or movement under which it arises and the preoccupations of its theorists. Early formulations of identity were the rarefied preserve of philosophers; more recently the topic has made unprecedented strides into the popular realm, permeating everyday talk and practices, from self-help literature to the therapy of television talk shows. At the time of writing in 2005, an Internet search on ‘identity’ reveals a preoccupation with ‘identity fraud’, ‘identity cards’ and ‘identity theft’, all of which point to a common-sense use of the term as something that people own; a personal possession that can be authenticated or falsified. My study surveys developments in identity theorising. I explore some themes, and chart shifts in identity accounts. I move from the early theory that identity is a self-fashioning, agentic, internal project of the self, through more recent understandings of social and collective identity, to postmodern accounts which treat identity as fluid, fragmentary, contingent and, crucially, constituted in discourse. I propose that discursive approaches may

reconcile some of the most contradicting factors characterising identity research. They are, for example, able to explicate the processes by which people orient to consistency in their accounts of themselves and other people (underpinning the view of identity as ‘fixed’) whilst simultaneously showing that identity is contingent on the local conditions of the interactional context. Similarly identity may be a matter of being ‘subject’ to, or taking up positions within discourse, but also an active process of discursive ‘work’ in relation to other speakers.

A large amount of studies on identity reveals a profound commitment to the notion that identity is an issue of agency and self-determination: that the individual is a self-interpreting subject. The notion of identity as a ‘project of the self’ has a long pedigree consisting of notions of self-fulfilment and improvement. It appears then, that the notion of identity as a unified, internal phenomenon has its roots in the world, and the everyday meaning has not changed much since its first use.

According to Benwell & Stokoe (2006) external factors such as the social world prevents consciousness from being entirely free or autonomous, but requires an imagining of and sometimes submission to another being. The recognition process, which is crucial to identity, therefore arises through participation in social life: an individual’s self-consciousness never exists in isolation; it always exists in relationship to an ‘other’ or ‘others’ who serve to validate its existence. The formulation of identity as a social location paved the way for theories, particularly in sociology and sociolinguistics, in which the self is defined primarily by virtue of its membership of, or identification with a particular group or groups. In the second half of the twentieth century, sociological accounts of identity were characterised by concern with collective identities. Group labels such as ‘adolescent’, ‘black’, ‘working-class’ were assumed to be identity formations, often serving as social variables against which forms of social behaviour or linguistic usage could be measured. A commitment to one or more of these ‘labels’ is invariably the most common response to the question, ‘Who am I?’ However, whilst single labels persist, they are increasingly acknowledged to

intersect in multi-dimensional ways. They are often prompted by politically motivated identity work, such as coalitions between marginalised groups.

An important paradigm of sociological and cultural studies is intersectionality. According to Benwell & Stokoe (2006) intersectionality theorises notions which seek to examine how various socially and culturally constructed categories such as gender, race, class, disability and other axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, contributing to systematic social inequality. An example of this theory might be the view that women experience oppression in varying configurations and in varying degrees of intensity. Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated, but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society. Examples of this include race, gender, class and ethnicity. Nevertheless, despite the complications to 'group identity' that intersectionality brings, identity is still being theorised as pre-discursive, unified and essential.

A key theory of group identity is 'social identity theory'. Social identity is defined by individual identification with a group: a process constituted firstly by a reflexive knowledge of group membership, and secondly by an emotional attachment or specific disposition to this belonging. Benwell and Stokoe emphasise the social-cognitive processes of membership and the way that 'belonging' is both initiated and sustained in the form of collectivities.

Social identity theory explores the phenomenon of the 'ingroup' and 'outgroup', and is based on the view that identities are constituted through a process of difference defined in a relative or flexible way dependent upon the activities in which one is engaged. Put simply, the 'ingroup' is the one to which an individual 'belongs' and the 'outgroup' is seen as 'outside' and different from this group. People strive to maintain a positive social identity, partly by making favourable comparisons between the ingroups and outgroup. This process of social categorisation is achieved cognitively by such operations as attribution and the application of existing schemas relating to the group, and sees its operation serving particular social and psychological goals, such as boosting self-esteem. Another central idea is that outgroups are more easily and reductively

characterised than ingroups, such that ingroup identification often leads to stronger stereotyping and prejudice towards outgroups. Identity is something that lies dormant, ready to be 'switched on' in the presence of other people. Social identity memberships therefore have something of a causal relationship to actions and behaviour. Identity is also a response to the activities of others. Human selves and their identities are not substances prior to people's relationships with one another, but are constituted as properties only in and through the forms of human subjectivity that arise from and inform that participation and those relationships. Individuals are continually formed through conversation or imagined conversation: 'I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors, a self exists only within what I call webs of interlocution' (Taylor, 1989: 36).

There are a number of debates about the different approaches to interaction analysis. These debates can be partitioned along two broad lines both to do with particular understandings of language, what the analysis of discourse and interaction can and should be, and what might be, metaphorically speaking, 'beyond', 'beneath' or inaccessible in discourse. These concerns attend to what some see as an over-reliance on discourse and the immediate context as the site for identity analysis, which produces an impoverished analysis that fails to deal adequately with subjectivity, experience and the unconscious. Relatedly it is argued that discourse approaches to identity neglect the material reality of the body and its relevance to social action. . In a historical summary of identity accounts, two particular models predominate: sovereign subject fashioning of one's own identity, and the individual psychological subject battling unconscious forces, cognitive mechanisms and schemas. Towards the end of the twentieth century a strong trend emerged to reconfigure the subject as something sociocultural and sociohistorical: an unfinished product of discourse. A discursive view of identity can be realised in two ways: as a discursive performance or construction of identity in interaction, or as a historical set of structures with regulatory power upon identity. This section represents, then, the 'other side of the story': the structured self, produced via a set of identifications in discourse, where identities are regarded as the product of dominant discourses that are tied to social arrangements and practices. Here, the focus shifts away from the process of

identification to the actual discourses presumed to form the basis of subjectivity. The implications of this model for the operation of power are immediately apparent. If our identities are inscribed in available discourses, then these processes may operate to produce social inequalities, what is termed the 'ideological constitution of the self'. In this regard, the development of the individual becomes a process of acquiring a particular ideological version of the world, liable to serve hegemonic ends and preserve the status quo. Identity then becomes a force, shaping and directing the individual. This notion implies that identity is not situated within the self, but in a series of representations mediated by semiotic systems such as language. For some researchers, there is nothing beyond the text: reality is always representation, and therefore it is language that constitutes the 'I' of the subject and brings it into being through the process of signification. Some also argue that social space as a whole must be treated as discursive. In both theories, the self is no longer an essence, but a description. In turn, this challenges the status of identity as essential and unified and has led to its reconfiguration as constructed and fragmentary.

Benwell and Stokoe offer a formal account of the construction of subject positions within discourse, they reveal little about why it is that certain individuals occupy some subject positions rather than others. The term 'identification' embraces both discursive and psychoanalytic realms: the subject is not merely hailed in a purely passive sense, but reflexively recognises and invests in the position.

Because of these concerns, many analysts include something other than what discourse itself tells them about the identities being constructed within it. The 'something other' goes in one of two directions. Some analysts claim to 'look through' language and into the 'interior' world of the unconscious mind to 'the divided psychosocial subject of unconscious conflict; a subject located in social realities mediated not only by social discourses but by psychic defences.

Alternatively, as with 'macro' analytic approaches such as critical discursive psychology, narrative analysis, positioning theory and crucial discourse analysis, analysts look to the discourses and ideologies that seem to be echoed in the immediate discourse context, using their cultural knowledge and theoretical-

political concerns as interpretative resources. Both of these positions result in identity analysis that contrasts with 'micro' analytic approaches of conversation analytic and discursive psychological approaches, in which 'going beyond the data' is to engage in theoretical imperialism.

A commitment to an empirical and discourse-based understanding of identity enables us to explore the way in which dominant cultural understandings of identity categories are maintained, reproduced and normalised in everyday texts and practices of interaction. It enables us to put some 'flesh' on the bones of an abstract, theorised notion of 'identity', in ways that are empirically rich, methodologically grounded and compatible with some of the most exciting and critical theoretical ideas to emerge at the turn of the twenty-first century.

2.2.1 Gender

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003: 10) states that gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but something we do, something we perform. According to Bradley (2007: 25), the concept of gender has a grip over our behaviour and life chances, whether it is acknowledged or not. Without us even knowing, gender is a social arrangement where every individual's gender is built into the social order. Gender consists in a pattern of relations that develops over time, simultaneously structuring and regulating people's relation to society. Gender is also embedded in experience in all settings. Thus we also have to be aware of variations of gender, especially in terms of how gender processes are affected by differences of class, ethnicity, religion and nation. The interaction of gender and class is of particular concern. Although there is a great variability of rules of gender and every society has different codes and rules for both men and women, structures of gender nevertheless have remarkable similarities across the globe especially in terms of the domestic division of labour.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) also says that in accordance with social rules and moral codes, the separation of work and home has effects on the construction of gender identities. Women have traditionally been defined as domestic beings, naturally suited for duties in the home and with children; while men have been

associated with the public sphere, the world of business and politics. A man, who has a comfortable suburban home with a dependent woman, is seen to have great material success and social position. The home is 'domesticated' as are the women located in this space. Masculinity and femininity are defined in relation to their different activities (the public and the private).

According to Nead (1988: 28) a woman is defined through her identity as wife, mother and daughter and the categorization is reinforced through the dedication to each of these roles. Nead (1988) also believes that respectability means different things for men and women. For women it is defined in terms of their location within domestic duties and is organized around a set of practices and representations which are defined as appropriate and acceptable modes of behaviour, language and appearance. These social rules and moral codes work together to regulate both gender and identities. Gender identities, therefore, are organized around the ideology of separate spaces and roles.

Nead (1988) also says that women are socially constructed as more emotionally expressive and verbal beings and with the exception of anger, experience emotions more intensely than men. Women are very aware of their emotions and report complex emotional experiences. On average women report a great willingness to express their emotions openly and show strong tendencies to regulate them to adapt to changing social circumstances. Positive emotions serve the function of broadening people's mindsets, and allow for intentional resources to be directed from unrewarding goals to other desired and more meaningful opportunities. For example, positive emotions can aid human beings in their quest to satisfy the fundamental need to be accepted by other people. Women tend to receive great social support from peers. Kashdan, Mishra, Breen & Froh (2009) suggest that women are also more likely to be grateful to God. One reason is that women tend to possess a greater tendency to recognize acts of goodwill by others, express their appreciation, and reinforce the likelihood that these acts will be repeated. In other words, gratitude strengthens social bonds and friendships by building people's skills for caring and acts of appreciation. Over time gratitude, similar to other positive emotions, contributes to the growth of skills, relationships

and resilience. Thus women might be at an advantage to experience growth emotionally and psychologically.

In many cultures women are expected to express certain emotions. Women are also expected to engage in more caretaking roles and are therefore constructed as more nurturing and caring beings. Women perceive social communication, interdependence, and the development, maintenance, and repair of relationships to be more important than any material object. This study aimed at viewing how women's identity is constructed in this sense. Kashdan, Mishra, Breen & Froh (2009) also discuss how gender differences are important in social contexts and how they are related.

To think practically about gender is to focus on processes of constructing gender categories and power relations. Gender becomes a dynamic verb. We speak of practices as 'gendered' where they enter in some important way into 'gendering' people and their relations. That is, gendered practices construct members of a community 'as' women or 'as' men. Looking locally, we see that the same community practices that help constitute her particular person as a woman may, for example, also help constitute her as 'African' and 'middle-class' and 'a mother' and 'a sister' and so on. There is no guarantee, however, that women in a particular community will in fact constitute themselves as a coherent social group with distinctive common interests. Even practices closely tied to reproductive biology (menstruation and PMS) are connected in complex ways to other social practices (class-related employment possibilities), thus making it problematic to speak of women's position or interest without reference to other factors. Language enters into the social practices that gender people and their activities and ideas in many ways, developing and using category labels like 'woman' being only a small part of the story. To understand precisely how language interacts with gender requires that we look locally, closely observing linguistic and gender practices in the context of a particular community's social practices as evident in the personal narratives written by the women in my study.

As with gender and other aspects of identity the reality of sex and sexuality does not pre-exist the language in which it is expressed; rather, language produces the categories through which we organize our sexuality, (Cameron and Kulick, 2003).

2.2.2 Emotion

According to Pavlenko (2005: 35) emotions remain undertheorised in the study of language and researchers also continue to frame the issue as the relationship between languages and emotions, leaving out languages of emotions. She believes, also, that people have distinct emotional attachments to their languages. Pavlenko also conducted a study to investigate whether or not autobiographic memories is indeed tied to language and if so, how and to what degree. Two paradigms are commonly used in bilingual autobiographic memory studies: cued recall and free recall. In the free recall procedure, participants are asked to recall meaningful personal events without a specific cue. If comparative analysis of narrative is performed, these memories are elicited twice, once in each language. They are examined qualitatively and quantitatively with regard to length, detail, linguistic organisation and emotional valence and intensity. In the more common cued recall procedure, each participant is given several cue words (30-50) and asked to associate each cue with a specific autobiographical event, writing down a few words about the event in question. The sessions are conducted first in one language and then in the other. The question asked with this study is whether memories cued by L1 words are earlier than those cued by L2 words and whether they are tied to different linguistic and cultural contexts. The results were typically analysed through the means of descriptive statistics. In both free and cued recall, language proficiency and dominance was assessed through language questionnaires and self-reports, independent ratings or other tests.

Cued recall studies conducted with bilingual immigrants who learnt their languages at different times and in distinct environments show that cues commonly activate memories of events in the country of origin and L2 cues activate memories for events that took place after immigration. These studies reveal a language specificity effect, whereby the language of encoding is a stable property for linguistic memories, even though a memory can be 'translated' into

another language. Some studies also point to the language congruity effect, whereby memories elicited in the language in which the event took place are more detailed and higher in emotional intensity. The authors also found that regardless of whether it was L1 or L2, the retelling in the language of the event evoked a higher number of idea units and a higher level of detail, imagery and emotional texture. Altogether, this research reveals that language, memory, and emotions interact in at least three ways in bilingual autobiographic memory: Language specificity effect suggests that linguistic memories are more likely to be elicited by the language in which the events took place. Language congruity effect suggests that memories are higher in detail and emotional intensity when told in the language in which they were encoded, while in translation they may lose some emotionality and richness of the account. The results of these studies confirm the intrinsic links between words and autobiographic memories. In interest of the present context, this is relevant because the journals in this study portray perceptions of daily events as opposed to actuality. This may or may not have been altered.

2.2.3 Gender and the social meaning of emotion

Who gets called emotional? The prevailing stereotype is that women are emotional and men are not. Shields (2002) draws on examples from everyday life to reveal how culturally shared beliefs about emotion shape our identities as women and men. Her exploration of gender and emotion allows for a clear and engaging structure for my journal analysis.

When gender is figured into a study of emotion, it usually is regarded in terms of sex-related differences, given the power and prevalence of prevailing stereotypes. It is not surprising, therefore, that a multifaceted social variable such as gender figures only peripherally in emotions research. Most research reflects an assumption that gender differences should be stable and reflect so-called essential qualities of each sex. Psychologists have tended to conclude that gender is not particularly important to explaining emotion.

According to Shields (2002:21)

[w]e are all experts on emotion and we are all experts on gender. From the day we were born we have been practicing and trying to perfect both. We are continually being reminded of the importance of getting emotion right *and* getting gender right, by friends, family, and the swarms of popular culture images that surround us daily.

In everyday life, especially in personal relationships, it occasionally seems as if women and men inhabit different emotional worlds. However, our experiences tell us that emotions of all sorts and all intensities are common to both sexes. As with so many other human behaviours and qualities, experience also tells us that differences among individuals of the same sex can be as great as or greater than any generalized “sex difference”. Shields (2002) believes that patterns of gender effects depend on what exactly it is about emotion that is measured: knowledge about emotion, facial expression of emotion, or how people name or talk about their experiences. Differences in women’s and men’s emotions tend to be not in what women and men know about emotion, but in how women and men apply their knowledge and understanding of what emotion is and how it works. In a study conducted by Muriel Egerton (1988), cited in Shields (2002), it was found that women tended to anchor their evaluations of anger in perceptions of costs and benefits to relationships, whereas men appeared to be more inclined to consider anger a “thing” on its own, separate from the relationships that define its causes and consequences.

One of the main research strategies that psychologists use to study the occurrence of emotion in people’s lives is to ask them direct questions about those experiences. The form of questioning may also be directed more to one’s understanding of a particular emotion episode or period of time, for example through keeping a diary and rating the intensity with which a set of emotions was experienced during those specific situations. Self-report may be an open-ended narrative. An early study by Ann Frodi (1978), cited in Shields (2002), observed how women and men verbalise their feelings. Amongst the participants who were asked to write down their thoughts, women tended to downplay anger and aggression in their writing, whereas men tended to preoccupy themselves with

thoughts of anger. The fact that gender differences in self-report are less likely to occur the closer to the actual occurrence of the emotion suggests that self-report conforms to gender stereotypes (i.e. women are emotional; men are not).

Self-report is an index of what people believe to be true about themselves, it measures beliefs about one's own behaviour and experience and is therefore a reconstruction of experience. Self-report can be based on research participants notions of what ought to be true and what is typically true as well as what actually occurred. The significance of self-report as a belief, rather than as a fact subject to validation, makes it a valuable tool in interpreting the reports that people provide about their own emotions. There is relatively little work that contrasts women's and men's production or judgment of vocal, gestural, or other expressive channels such as writing. Similarly few investigators have studied how producing and understanding expressions of emotion may be moderated by racial ethnicity within a culture. Shield's (2002) perspective on the many ways emotion is expressed through personal narratives is one of the underpinnings for this study.

2.2.4 Race

Moran (2009) says that race stands for historically specific forms of cultural connectedness and solidarity. Hereditary here involves cultural practices and self-identification. Moran goes on to say that if culture is defined in terms of language and practices, and vanishes then the people or race are extinct too, and vice versa. This section discusses the intersection of race and social class with respect to language and power. Kubota and Lin (2009) argue that the spread of English serves as a unifying tool for exploiting local realities regarding race/ethnicity, class, and power, thereby reinforcing the mythic norm of the White ideal English speaker. They establish two lines of argument here. First, hegemonic ideologies of language and of the relationships between language, race, and social class have played an important role in official constructions of difference. These differences then sustain White middle-class privilege and solidify material economy. Therefore, language represents capital and power and symbolises a kind of dividing rod of class and racial disparity. The second point that Kubota and Lin discuss is the crafting of English as economic and cultural commodity and that

this means that hegemonic constructions of identity around language often situate people of colour in competing, frequently hostile, positions relative to one another. Because the South African government accepts these racialised discourses around language and social worth, the evolving hegemonic notions of race and language continue to subjugate, marginalize, and oppress speakers of marginalised varieties of English and indigenous and heritage languages. The interrelated and complex workings of racism, classism, and language discrimination are revealed and reflected in the hegemony of traditional Western epistemology and political theory that perpetuate ideology and policy to maintain a certain kind of English as a status marker and basis for a new kind of social division in society. This is interesting work for examining the development of English usage by people of African heritage and traces the social and educational positioning of Africans with respect to language, literacy achievement, and power in the racialised United States of America.

Attitudes toward and treatment of African Americans, for example, who have been characterized as nonstandard, deficient speakers of English, are perpetuated because of their former slave status, racial segregation, economic discrimination, and the continuing poor-quality education afforded to many African American children. In the South African context similar dynamics are apparent in the racialised language apartheid reproduced by notions of the ideal English speaker/listener that accompanies the teaching of English in South Africa.

Kubota and Lin provide a widely accepted explanation of three theoretical perspectives that inform possible origins of the variety of English spoken by the descendants of African slaves living in the United States. Arriving in an American milieu in which English is dominant, the slaves learned English. A second view stresses the English origin of African American speech with little trace of their African languages remaining. A third view says that in acquiring English, African slaves ‘developed a pidgin language – a simplified fusion of English and African languages. African Americans have long understood the function of language and how it is uniquely used by people of African heritage. According to Baldwin (1985: 649) “people evolve a language in order to describe and thus control their

circumstances or in order not to be submerged by a situation that they cannot articulate”.

For newly arriving Africans, slave owners realized the potential threat that shared- heritage languages posed. In the brutal system of trans-Atlantic slavery, the ability of slaves to communicate in languages unknown to Europeans posed a dangerous uncertainty. Throughout U.S. history immigrants were able to continue speaking their ancestral language in ethnic communities. However, African slaves were not merely torn from their native communities and transported for thousands of kilometres, they also suffered linguistic isolation and silencing. During colonial times the very first language policies forbade, under threat of severe punishments, African peoples from using their native languages and from teaching those languages to their children. With the arrival of enslaved Africans, Whites imposed compulsory illiteracy laws: i.e., laws that outlawed the teaching of reading and writing to Africans. This meant that blacks learned English through pidginization and creolization rather than through a gradual bilingual transition to English, as did other immigrants. Later, as blacks were able to attend schools, it was done so within an atmosphere where language discrimination was functionally parallel to racial discrimination. As Africans learned English and later afforded an education, Whites quickly emphasized that the speech of Africans was different, nonstandard, less than the speech of Whites. The branding of black speech as underdeveloped, inferior, or lacking in formal properties led to calls for eradication of this underdeveloped version of English. Today images of the ideal English speaker are still more closely associated with Whites of European ancestry than people of colour. Slavery and segregation, unlike any other system, has had an enduring influence ensuring that blacks have less social, economic and cultural capital than all other immigrant groups.

Bonilla-Silva (2004) redefines the racial system as a system comprised of Whites, Honorary Whites, and the Collective Blacks who occupy various positions within the racialised system. Whites occupy the highest standing as Honorary Whites, who in turn have a higher position than members of the Collective Black in this hierarchy. Income, education, wealth, occupation, and social prestige, in addition

to skin colour order, determine the standing groups within the stratification order. Kubota and Lin (2009) then make it very clear that language, race, gender, power and social status are four different but interrelated themes and where language is analysed, one or all of the other themes are sure to make an appearance. In this paper multifaceted and unique interaction among women's perceptions of White, middle-class and elite groups, their discrimination of other racialised groups and the widespread, generalised belief that women of different races and different languages are generally different or inferior in other ways will be explored. Throughout the rest of the literature review, I offer perspectives that contribute to theory building around race, identity, and class in language and social practice. Throughout slavery, therefore, Whites established power and sustained domination. Similarly, during the apartheid era in South Africa the Afrikaans language has been made compulsory in most schools and even other public domains. This form of segregation may have caused many negative attitudes towards the Afrikaans language in South Africa and the English language in the United States and also towards the White authoritative figure in general.

2.2.5 Space and spacial identities

Another aspect of the research on discourse and identity is the links between place, space and identity construction. There are two interrelated themes: (1) place/space as produced in and as a topic of discourse, and (2) place/space as the location for discourse. In the following section, I will consider the links between space, social action and identity- particularly how space channels human activity along identity lines.

People order themselves according to a culture's rules and maxims. A study conducted by Dixon and Durrheim (2003) investigates patterns of informal segregation on post-apartheid South African beaches. They show how something as seemingly mundane as sitting on the beach can be crucial to understanding identity practices. The theoretical context for their study is the 'contact hypotheses' in social psychology. The argument is that intergroup conflict and racism, such as between white and black South Africans, can be reduced if members of the different groups interact with each other, under the right

conditions. However, as Dixon and Durrheim point out, intergroup contact does not often happen in everyday social interaction, making 'contact' a tricky thing to study outside of the social psychological laboratory. And despite segregation, they argue it remains a pervasive and adaptable system for ordering social life. These policies demonstrate how identity is linked to spatiality, constituted in the construction of 'separate spaces for races'.

Dixon and Durrheim also interviewed groups of 'white' South Africans who were sitting on the beachfront. Before the end of apartheid, South Africa's beaches were segregated such that the 'best' beaches were reserved for 'whites', with 'Indians', 'blacks' and 'coloureds' populating smaller and more remote ones. The interviews were designed to elicit the participants' opinions about changing beach relations, and how they made sense of the patterns of segregation. The data revealed that people interpreted the closeness of 'others' (racial others) as invading their space and rights to privacy. Overall, informal segregation was achieved in three main ways: at the 'micro-territorial' level of spread-out spaces, at the broader level of patterns of occupancy on the beach, in which racial groups distributed themselves in particular areas, and in terms of 'invasion succession' sequences in which the arrival of 'black' holiday-makers was accompanied by the withdrawal of 'white' beach occupants. Not only were South African beaches segregated but also other spaces: past marital laws were enforced (where one could not marry outside one's race). These types of laws were pervasive and particular policies were produced.

A concern with spatiality is also built into second-wave feminism, with its focus on the structural components that locate women within domestic spaces: in the private rather than public sphere, inside rather than outside, at home rather than at work. This means that women often live spatially restricted, geographically bounded lives, in a home, in a neighbourhood. In Walkowitz's (1992) study of gender and sexuality in late Victorian London, different places in the city were found to be differently used and represented by women and men. She argued that space is active in the constitution of social identities, through the *gendering of*

urban spaces. Women's respectability was often defined spatially, with women and men having access to different kinds of spaces.

Feminist theories have shown how physical environments maintain and regulate gender identities and relations. Women have traditionally occupied marginal positions within urban spaces, although these spaces can become the location of women's resistance to patriarchy. The use of space in everyday activities, such as childcare and housework, constitutes a significant part of the construction of gender. For some women, the home may be a site of power, but for others it may be a site of violence.

Place and space seem to be fundamental concepts – either implicitly or explicitly – in research about marginalisation of many groups: women, the homeless, immigrants, members of particular ethnic groups, prostitutes, young people, etc. Membership of these identity categories can affect our interaction in the world, and limit the kinds of places we can connect with. In many Western cities 'race' has spatial connotations in and through the construction of areas like 'Chinatowns', such that space becomes saturated with meanings, with ideas of 'otherness', that are perceived to be inherent in the groups concerned.

Space is therefore central to the production and maintenance of ingroups and outgroups in everyday life. Places can be sites of competition over the rights to use the space, 'particularly when ideologies regarding who 'belongs' where clash. Some may be treated as doing the wrong thing in the wrong place. Place and space are simultaneously unremarkable, yet deeply symbolic of how we define what is right and wrong. Thus a kind of 'place-grounded order' is often used to justify the inclusion and exclusion of particular categories of people, although space can also be the site of transgression and resistance, playing a central role in the reproduction of marginal or outsider identities and alternative moral orders. The above ideas show us something of the complex connections between the construction of space, place and identity. These relationships are often managed in discourse in particular ways.

Themes of spatiality can increasingly be found within contemporary narrative theory. The basic idea is that tellers/ narrators express who they are through stories about where they are. Some have suggested that the emphasis on time in narrative work has led to the sidelining of another defining feature of stories: their spatial component. According to de Certeau (1984: 115), ‘every story is a travel story – a spatial practice’. Descriptions of spatial organisation are even more crucial to narrative structure than temporality. For example, S. Taylor (2003: 193) writes:

The places where we live are more than the backgrounds to our lives. In the telling of a life story, talk about place and relationships to place will be integral to the discursive work through which the speaker constructs a personal identity. Positioning of someone can be connected to the multiple meanings and identities of that place. This can work as a claim to an identity as, for example, the kind of person who belongs there.

Understanding ‘place identity’ requires an analysis of its ‘emplotment’, through which selves are narratively configured by bringing together different temporal and spatial elements, including physical and metaphorical settings.

As people tell stories about places, they can imply or explicitly provide a multiplicity of meanings and associations, deriving for instance from its history and from the various ways it can be categorized. People can also tell different stories about places, giving them many potential and contingent identities, depending on how they construct the boundaries around them. Crucially, the way a place is described carries implications, in other words, to be the kind of person who belongs there or the kind who does not.

Participants in the study function to construct ‘good’ places, locating themselves within them, while at the same time constructing ‘bad’ places and their defining characteristics. Stories of place, therefore, become stories of morality. Places do not have fixed identities that exist separately from the language practices that produce them. Rather, in this study, people flexibly construct places as good or bad, depending on the context in which the account is produced. For example, the

women's 'good' places are spaces where they are happy, strong, employed and out of poverty. The 'bad' places to them are the spaces that they have been in before the course was concluded – hopeless, unemployed, a statistic. They constructed bad spaces as desolate, isolated and distant (from the elite and successful groups in society) and the good spaces as fortune and success.

2.3 Voice and voicelessness

Issues of identity and position lead to the notion of voice. Hymes (1996) views voice as the capacity to make oneself understood in one's own terms, to produce meanings under conditions of empowerment. Many groups such as 'people of colour', working-class women and other minorities frequently appear to be the victim of the negative stereotyping of part of their repertoire, the dismissal of their ways of speaking as illegitimate, irrational, narrative rather than factual. Some people's texts are not taken into account; they are struck from the record or dismissed as nonsense, curious or funny. Hymes (1996) therefore, observes that 'making sense' in actual fact is about 'making sense in particular ways', using very specific linguistic, stylistic and generic resources even when they are perfectly valid in view of the particular functions to be realised. Here, difference is quickly converted into inequality. How is it that latent and potential equivalence of languages, in actual practice, converts into rigid language hierarchies?

Perhaps the most important discourse leading to the notion of dis/empowerment is 'myth of voicelessness'. Weiss (2004) verifies the hypothesis that women have indeed a voice even though women's writing is underrepresented. The assumption that they do not may arise from a failure to look for women's voices in 'women's spaces'. Weiss also suggests that we look for them in places such as kitchens, watering sites, kinship gatherings, women's political and commercial spaces where women speak, often in the absence of men. This points to the stereotype that a women's place is in the kitchen, submissive to men and perhaps afraid, in a sense, to speak in the presence of men. We've noted the importance of narratives for how identities are figured, contested and shared thus what this research paper aims to do is to show how voice is represented through the practice of writing.

Writing is usually seen as a record of something already existing. Writing is an ethnographic object, something which, because of its sheer complexity and context-dependence, can only be fully understood when the object is analysed in relation to its contexts. It is not enough to say that literacy is part of someone's repertoire; it matters which particular literacy resources there are. Becoming educated and getting access to middle-class jobs depends on being competent in particular forms of literacy such as computer literacy, and while keyboard writing was until recently a highly specialised professional skill, it is now a skill that defines a large middle-class educated cohort in societies.

While it is important to investigate the actual literacy practices surrounding reading and writing and to view how literacy practices have changed over the past few decades, for the purposes of this research paper I will concentrate primarily on an analysis of texts which are most closely linked to the personalities and attitudes of the women in my study. In this particular context, the texts will be represented by journals kept by each woman. Through such a close reading of these texts, we can discover some likely sources of identity construction through narratives.

The particular history and class of these women give rise to particular forms of literacy, what Blommaert calls *grassroots literacy*. According to Blommaert (2008: 5) "we find ourselves in a world where keyboard writing is all but absent and where people pride themselves on being able to produce hand-written texts in more or less stable orthography and language variety". Within these texts there are differently organised repertoires and these repertoires reflect wider societal divisions and inequalities.

Blommaert (2008:7) refers to grassroots literacy as "a wide variety of 'non-elite' forms of writing; writing performed by people who are not fully inserted into elite economies of information, language and literacy". Grassroots writing is also seen as a liberating practice of expression. Grassroots writing raises questions of mobility. Texts travel but may not necessarily travel well. In the transfer from one place to the next, they change from one regime to the next and their complex variety suggests that they are understood differently. Blommaert (2008) suggests

that self-reports enter an institutional space of literacy. Specifically, with the journals, even if their writing was procedurally prefaced by a clear affirmation that they ‘could write’, they obviously struggle with several very basic literacy requirements.

Blommaert (2008: 7) examines five ways in which grassroots literacy can be identified. These are as follows:

1. Hetero-graphy: The deployment of graphic symbols that is manifest in spelling difficulties. Words are spelled in different ways, and very often reflect ‘accent’, the way in which they are pronounced in spoken vernacular varieties. It is also evident in erratic punctuation and the use of upper and lower case. There may also be corrections and additions, often revealing uncertainty about linguistic rules. Lastly, texts may also contain sketches or drawings, which represent information, and construct a form of ‘visual aestheticisation’.
2. Vernacular language varieties: Some people write in non-standard varieties of language, they use code-switching, colloquialisms and other non-standard varieties of language.
3. Distant genres: People write in genres that they have only been marginally exposed to and these genres often suggest distant sources the texts.
4. Partial insertion in knowledge economies: People often construct texts on the basis of locally available knowledge resources such as the things they can find out by asking or listening rather than searching.

These four characteristics combined lead to a fifth one:

5. Constrained mobility: Texts are often only locally meaningful and valuable. As soon as they move to other geographical and social spaces, they lose ‘voice’.

Blommaert (2008:9) suggests that some texts and documents are so packed with features that defy our expectations of ‘full’ literacy that we stop reading them and

treat them as things that require reconstruction. Seeing that our texts are material and visual objects, we always face an object that intentionally conveys meaning. The literacy that will be observed may be described as grassroots, peripheral, but it is literacy nevertheless- a cultural product that shapes cultural subjects. There is also always a trace of spoken language in written language: everyone ‘writes with an accent’ but when we encounter such accents in writing we usually call it ‘style’.

This case study of women’s literacy argues that literacy can be both a catalyst for social change and a result of numerous other types of social transformation. This study will remind us that literacy is not a neutral, unidimensional technology, but rather a set of lived experiences that will differ from community to community.

How do conceptions of agency, gender, fate, and development shape and reflect new literacy practices? What new ‘structures of feeling’ emerge with these practices? Kulick and Stroud (1990, 1993) note that literacy itself does not have an agentive force to change societies. It is humans who are active in any transformational processes accompanying the introduction of literacy. Schieffelin (2000: 293) writes, “How a community ‘takes up’ literacy, how it develops, how it is understood and deployed depends very much on the ideology and context of those to whom it is being introduced.” My approach, therefore, is to situate emergent literacy practices socially, historically, and especially for my purposes here, intertextually. In 1980s and 1990s female literacy was facilitated by a number of dramatic economic, social, and political changes, and in turn these changes were deepened, challenged, or reconstituted in unexpected (and not always beneficial) ways by the women’s literacy practices- results that could not be predicted by any simplistic universal statement about ‘the power writing may endow upon various elements in a particular society. I aim to view how women conceive of their own ability to act and how they attribute responsibility for events in order to gain a deeper understanding of the social effects of literacy. These female literacy practices reinforce certain gender ideologies and undercut some avenues to social power.

2.4 Gendered literacy practices

With regard to language and literacy, gender, as a constructed notion, calls for moving away from global generalizations and stereotyped conclusions. Every speaker has a wide range of linguistic forms available in any setting and at any time. Both men and women make linguistic choices continuously. Although most of these choices are subconscious, or rather they constitute the ultimate effect of a long process of gender role socialization; these choices are never made all at once. One of the salient features of linguistic choices is the fact that they are always gendered. This is also the case for literacy practices.

What Pawelczyk (2002) calls doing gender (or performing gender) is presenting ourselves to others as gendered beings. As a result, there is no single way of being a woman or a single way of being a man at the linguistic level. Both men and women perform differently in various settings such as work, home, etc. The change of a role or a function in a particular setting also entails a linguistic adjustment to a role in order to fulfil the concept of a whole woman or, may I add the concept, of a whole man. Different settings enable men and women a wide range of doing femininity, masculinity or alternative femininity and alternative masculinity. By the modifier alternative I mean the language choices and discourse strategies that have been stereotypically subscribed to one sex only but which in the framework of the social constructionism of gender may be employed by both sexes. Different discourses provide us with an access to different femininities and /or different masculinities. More mainline discourses position women/men in more conventional ways, while more radical ones offer alternative ways of doing femininity and masculinity. As Pawelczyk maintains, discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or constitute them, different discourses constitute key entities in different ways. However, the question remains how particular language features come to be viewed as male or female.

Language is used to symbolize our different social identities and, as a result, in any interaction we draw on the symbolic power to construct a particular identity.

The process of creating a gendered identity draws on the participants' familiarity with the social significance of particular choices. The participants draw on established sociolinguistic norms. Thus, the symbolic power in construction of a gendered identity has to be supported by the interlocutors' common assumptions about the event they participate in and the possible alignment roles (all types of social relationships) the participants will index. Here the concept of reciprocal expectations should be introduced. A gendered identity, whether feminine or masculine, is not the property of an individual but rather the construction of an individual only. The constructions are bound together by sets of reciprocal expectations of the participants in a particular interaction. The participants should approach an interaction with the presupposition about what to do (or rather what is appropriate), how and when to do it. As a result, who we are is sustained by our ongoing interaction with others and the way we position ourselves in relation to those others.

I have now viewed gender and literacy and its relation to identity. As noted in the introduction, the present study throws light on how disadvantaged women use journal writing to help transform their understandings of self. In the next chapter I will sketch a theoretical framework with which to approach the concrete analysis of journal texts of narrative identity.

Chapter 3

Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

Qualitative research aims at providing an in-depth description and understanding of the meaning individuals provide for their behaviour, in a specific context and from the individual's point of view. Although this study is concerned with exploring and understanding individual experiences of women, the meanings attached to these experiences and how it impacts on the lives of unemployed, (married) mothers, it is also aimed to understand the ways in which these women participated in the construction of identity. Consequently, an examination of how these experiences originate from and are transmitted back into the societal and cultural narratives is also undertaken. Thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis. One of the benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility. Qualitative analytic methods can be roughly divided into two sections. Within the first, there are those tied to, or stemming from, a particular theoretical position. Second, there are methods that are essentially independent of theory and can be applied across a range of approaches. Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data. I will now describe the term thematic analysis.

This research paper aims at understanding voice and the reasons why voice is an instrument of power with potential to include as well as to exclude. It becomes a critical ethnographic and sociolinguistic programme that offers a way into the concrete linguistic shape of sociocultural inequality in and across societies. This paper also looks at how linguistic and literacy resources can be used as means of empowerment in relation to all the societal structures (family, community, local government, etc) people need to negotiate in order to become more powerful agents of their own transformation into full participatory citizenship, as described by Stroud (2007). Identity is strongly influenced here and narrative analysis also

features as a one of the core investigative tools in this study. I therefore have two main research design structures. In what follows I will explore the core notions of narrative analysis and thematic analysis. My theoretical framework is located in the following key terms and concepts and I will approach each one thematically:

- Grassroots
- Literacy and Literacy resources
- Thematic analysis
- Voice
- Narrative analysis

3.2 Narrative analysis

Given my reliance on an analysis of the various discourses of the women in this study (obtained through interviews, focus group discussions, an analysis of personal journals and observation), I drew on the theoretical lens developed by Blommaert (2008) to look at multilingual literacy practices with regards to personal narratives. The key principles underpinning this socio-cultural approach to literacy are as follows:

- A recognition that culture and cognition create each other – researchers aim to uncover the language and literacy knowledge and practices as well as ways of learning held by people in their communities;
- An acknowledgement that writing is constructed formed and shaped by both the author and the reader and is influenced by knowledge of a particular language, perception and competence thereof;
- Giving a voice to those whose voices would otherwise not have been heard.

According to Mason-Schrock (1996) the study of self-narratives has sought to discern the internal structures of the stories people tell to give meaning to themselves. The approach, however, neglects the fact that self-narratives are

constructed. By the women writing about events that are somewhat empowering or have lead to empowering opportunities, one can observe the interactive processes through which stories can be used to construct a new self. Based on personal narratives such as journals, interviews and an analysis of written material, the present study shows how identity is constructed through the act of writing as argued by Mason-Schrock (1996).

Narrative analysis cannot be easily defined, as there are many different versions that have developed in different academic disciplines with different theoretical roots. Broadly speaking, narrative analysts argue that we live in a story-telling society through which we make sense of our lives and the events that happen in it. It is in narrative telling that we construct identities: selves are made coherent and meaningful through the narrative or 'biographical' work that they do. Selves and identities are therefore constituted in talk, and in narrative as 'storied selves'. Through story-telling narrators can produce 'edited' descriptions and evaluations of themselves and others, making identity aspects more salient at certain points in the story than others. Narrative researchers examine the kinds of stories narrators place themselves within, the identities that are performed and strategically claimed, why narratives are developed in particular ways and told in particular orders. Additionally, many narrative researchers examine the link between the immediate context of storytelling and the wider narratives, or cultural story lines of which the local story is a part.

If selves and identities are constituted in discourse, they are necessarily constructed in stories. Through storytelling, narrators can produce 'edited' descriptions and evaluations of themselves and others, making identity aspects more salient at certain points in the story than others. Narrative researchers ascribe a particular ontological character to people, as storied selves, and this notion provides the basis for understanding people's lives. For instance:

Through life stories individuals and groups make sense of themselves; they tell what they are or what they wish to be, as they tell so they come, they are their stories. (Cortazzi 2001: 388)

We speak our identities. (Mishler 1999: 19)

We become the stories through which our lives. . . Telling stories configure the 'self-that-I-might-be'. (Riessman 2003: 7)

The practice of narration involves the 'doing' of identity, and because we can tell different stories we can construct different versions of self. Narrative theorists argue that the idea of storytelling adds something crucial to discourse-based theories of identity construction: the notion of temporality. Narration produces a sense of identity coherence by incorporating notions of connectedness and temporal unity. Polkinghorne (1991: 141) uses the label 'emplotment' to describe how selves are narratively configured by bringing together different temporal elements and 'directing them towards a conclusion or sequence of disconnected events into a unified story with a point or theme. Another distinguishing feature of narrative identity theories is the notion that the local stories we tell about ourselves are connected in some way to wider cultural stories.

The link between narrative and identity has been explored in texts derived from public materials such as published biographies and autobiographies, newspapers, magazines, television and radio programmes, films, fiction, fairytales, myths and legends, cultural texts and songs, film, dance, and poetry. However the majority of narrative research records, transcribes and analyses narratives obtained in interviews and personal narrative texts such as journals.

Narrative identities comprise what some call "the new tradition biographical methods". Some have even argued that standard semi-structured written or verbal interviews do not produce good narrative data, because the questions have a determining effect on what participants say or write, often treating their stories as irrelevancies or diversions. The aim of narrative- or 'life history', 'biographic' – interviews is to elicit extended narrative accounts of a person's life. For instance, in McAdam's (1993) method, participants are asked to think about their lives as a series of chapters in a book, and to give each chapter a title and outline. They are then asked to identify and tell stories about a series of key events in their lives, including peak, low and turning point events, earliest memory, important

childhood memory, important adolescent memory, important adult memory and one more important memory. Next came a question designed to elicit narratives about significant people in the participant's life, followed by a question about their future script and stories-to-come in plans and ambitions for the future. The subsequent question focused on narrative accounts of stresses, problems, conflicts and unresolved issues, and their possible solutions. The most important question dealt with personal ideology, defined broadly to encompass the participant's fundamental religious and/or political orientations. Finally the participant was asked to consider his defining or central life theme.

There are many different versions of narrative analysis. There are structuralist approaches which map different structures and ways of telling directly and unproblematically onto sociolinguistic variables such as ethnicity, class and gender. Some versions claim to be accessing minds and worlds beyond the interview context and behind the narrative discourse data: the phenomenological realm of 'real' experience or the psychodynamic realm of the unconscious. Some of these versions adopt a strange hybrid of constructionist and referential understandings of language, in which language is a window on the mind/experience and the site of identity construction. Others adopt a more thoroughgoing constructionist approach to narrative interview data as a situated, co-constructed interaction between interviewer and participant, and with identities as their product, or process. Others still treat the interview as an interaction in its own right, with the narratives told and identity work done within it, as tied to those narrative moments. Finally, there is the analysis of stories by conversation analysts and discursive psychologists, whereby the interest does not stem from 'narrative' but from the wider project of analysing everyday talk and texts.

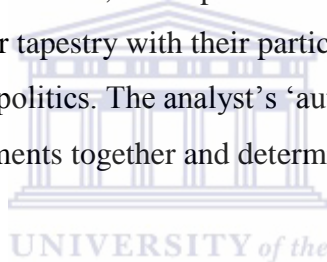
Most broadly, narrative analysis is an interpretative tool designed to examine people's lives holistically through the stories they tell. Narrative analysts ask questions like:

- Why was the narrative developed that way, and told in that order?
- In what kinds of stories does the narrator place him/herself?

- How does he/she strategically make preferred identity claims?
- What other identities are being performed or suggested?
- What was the response of the listener/ audience, and how did it influence the development of the narrative and interpretation of it?

Although there are numerous titles on narratives analysis and countless examples of empirical research, there is no agreed method for going about analysing narrative data. The literature remains largely silent about ways to approach long stretches of talk that take the form of narrative accounts.

One common element of narrative research is that the data, usually interview transcripts, are broken down into coded chunks of one kind or another, and interpreted by the researcher who, in the process of doing analysis, weaves the original story into a wider tapestry with their particular blend of relevant theory, cultural information and politics. The analyst's 'authorial voice and interpretive commentary knit the elements together and determine how readers are to understand experience.



Murray (2003) recommends collecting data for narrative analysis via a 'life story interview', which aims to facilitate the telling of an extended personal narrative. Murray argues that the social context of production is a key part of the analysis, in which the interviewer's turns actively shape the telling. Murray interviewed women with breast cancer, focusing on how they handled the 'disruption' of the disease, integrated it into their everyday life story, and how their stories connected to broader social and interpersonal contexts. Murray describes two phases of narrative analysis. In the first 'descriptive' phase, the researcher familiarises herself with the structure and content of each interview, summarising the stories in terms of beginnings, middles, ends, narrative linkages and subplots connected to the overall narrative. The second interpretative phase involves making connections with broader theoretical literatures used to interpret the participants' stories. The researcher therefore needs a simultaneous familiarity with their data's contents and relevant literature. One interpretative step is to ascribe a macro-

categorical label for the type of narrative being told. For example, accounts of personal crisis might be classified as ‘tragedy narratives’.

Murray’s method therefore begins by identifying commonalities in narrative structure across the different interview participants. He found that each participant’s narrative had a similar structure, starting with a ‘beginning’ as represented in the journal texts in my study. Different women emphasized different aspects of their lives, such as family or the community and some tried to identify possible links between their early experiences and the course. The most common feature, however, was the acknowledgement that the course was the beginning of something new and advantageous for them. The ‘middle’ of their narrative consisted of detailed descriptions of the course events and activities. Finally in the ‘end’, the women reflected on their narrative story and redefined their identities as mothers, hard-working and worth every bit of success and happiness that employment could bring to them.

Murray suggests that three different levels of analysis can be performed on such stories. At a ‘personal’ level, he discusses the way ‘the narrative reflects the different experiences of the women’ (p. 128). At the ‘interpersonal’ level, he focuses on how the story is produced for the interviewer, how it is organised, what comes first and what is emphasized. Finally at the ‘societal’ level, Murray makes connections with the broader context, suggesting that their narratives ‘mesh with the broader moral universes of the women’ (p. 129). Although Murray stresses the importance of treating the narratives as interactively produced between both interviewer and participant, he does not comment on the interviewer’s turns directly in his analysis. The important thing to note is that the role of the interviewer’s turns is crucially important in shaping the production of the narrative.

The second method I will discuss is Hollway and Jefferson’s (2000) ‘free association narrative interview’ approach. The interview operates on the basis that people’s narratives contain unconscious links between ideas, giving the researcher insight into the psychoanalytic meanings of their stories. Hollway and Jefferson (2004: 404) argue that research participants are ‘defined subjects’, whose defences

against anxiety ‘will potentially compromise interviewee’s ability to know the meaning of their actions, purposes and relations’. Only a researcher can access the identity implications of the stories research participants tell, whose discourse is a window to their unconscious, subjectively unknown mind.

A person’s identity is as a psychosocial subject, shaped by unconscious desires, defences and conflicts as well as societal discourses that render events meaningful. During analysis, the researcher uses their own feelings as data, following psychoanalytic principles of transference and counter transference, in order to identify their own emotional investments. The analyst therefore focuses particularly on moments of incoherence, contradiction, conflict, changes in ‘emotional tone’ and ‘avoidances’. Hollway and Jefferson criticise life story interview approaches for producing an unnatural coherence and rationality to narrative accounts, which is avoided in their free-associative eliciting.

Hollway and Jefferson move a long way from their researched data to produce their analysis: they claim to look beneath it, in a metaphorical sense, to the psyche of their participant, above it, to wider culturally circulating discourses, and to their own feelings about what is ‘really’ going on in the data. One reason for the first kind of analytic move is linked to a more general dissatisfaction among some narrative analysis with what they see as the inability of discursive approaches to deal with the inner psychological world of experience. There is more to the self than its multiple and shifting positioning in discourse, or language, its presentation in narrative. Although a turn to discourse resulted in a shift away from treating identity as a fixed, unitary product accessed through language, towards a postmodern understanding of identity as fluid, dynamic and contingently constructed in language, Hollway and Jefferson’s work is a good example of the retreat to using language to access the interior world of subjectivity.

Some have argued that the introduction of psychoanalytic theory into narrative analysis results in the kinds of individualistic psychopathologised bases for explaining why people say the things they do that prompted the ‘turn to discourse’ in the first place. Although it is clear that discourse is not all there is in the world,

nor is it the same thing as experience, feelings and so on, it is the primary work of language it make all those other phenomena accountable. That includes not only what participants say, but what theorists and analysts write about what participants say including what people think or feel. As it was noted, it is a common criticism that discourse-based approaches leave out the study of experience, the unconscious, subjectivity, and it is these things that writers like Hollway and Jefferson seek to rescue in their approach. Hollway and Jefferson's method, in addition to invoking the participant's 'psyche', makes a different kind of analytic move, invoking wider discourses that they claim might be performing or positioning their defended subject. This is clearly illustrated in the next example.

A study by Swan and Linehan (2000) analyses a magazine interview with a women called 'Rachel', in an article called, 'How I became a lesbian escort'. The aim for the researchers was to redescribe the narrative and highlight 'the subtle interplay between the use of cultural elements or discourses in a story and the individual's positioning of self in relation to such elements to create a unique and justifiable identity in that setting' (p. 406). Swan and Linehan predict that being a lesbian escort may produce difficulties for the storyteller, as this identity position does not sit easily within dominant narratives. They therefore investigate the 'range of narrative strategies that functions to position in a manner which renders cultural norms problematic, and in doing so validates her construction of self.

Swan and Linehan claim that their analysis shows how narrators may challenge master narratives through their positioning work: Rachel includes 'motherhood' and 'marriage' storylines but positions herself in such a way as to challenge the identity options they make available. Thus people are not determined by dominant narratives or the local discourse context, 'but rather a complex self emerges from the teller's relational positioning with respect to both' (p. 424). For Swan and Linehan, this kind of analysis captures the relational and socially constructed nature of identity.

Each life story selects, from an unlimited array, those moments that the narrator deems significant and arranges them in a coherent order. This represents much

more than chronology, however. A life story establishes what counts as the main line of the plot and, thereby, which incidents should be construed as making progress or as retreats or digressions. Similarly, life stories create narrative tension: How did a series of events build up into a significant problem, and how was it overcome? In these ways a story establishes what sort of life this has been. This sense making may be directed toward several audiences. First is the storyteller, who is simultaneously the narrator and subsequently the first audience of the tale. Most stories are also addressed to an interviewer and all the audiences this interviewer represents. In turn the response of the audience determines both the success of the story and the identity of the narrator. In sum, then, life stories are a way of fashioning identity.

There is, however, a potential downside. If life stories and the identities they justify depend, in part, on their reception, then a life story must be part of an individual's public life. The story must be told in some fashion but how often does this really happen? Most of our personal accounts that we analyse come our way in the course of research. We, therefore, have to explain how something like personal narration occurs in everyday life. Journal writing might be able to exemplify this point. With specific attention to the personal journals of the women in my study, as the researcher I might be able to show how narrative reconstruction honours these women's struggles and fight for a better future for themselves and their families by highlighting their desire to become employable. In this way instead of becoming victims of poverty and misfortune, these women are identified as conquerors and positive figures. This is ideally what is meant when we say that identities are formed by the public telling of life stories.

“Feminist interpretation shows how the stories women tell about their lives may be constrained by the narrative forms of living” says Lieblich & Josselson (1994: 116). In this way our understanding of individuals' stories clarifies the structure of their worlds, and this is what makes interpretation distinctly more than ideography. Plainly, the stories we tell about ourselves are shaped by our personalities and by the intersubjective codes of our communities. This is, however, one-sided. Is there a sense in which those personalities or communal

practices are, in turn, shaped by our stories? With this research paper I argue that individuals do not merely tell stories about their experiences; instead they live out their affairs in storied forms. This connection between stories and lives can be seen in three ways. Firstly, there appears to be structure to sequences of lived action that is similar to the structure of a traditional plot. This plot conventionally is a way of organising events into a rising crescendo of tension that reaches its peak in a climax and then resolves. Secondly, individuals appear to address these plotlike sequences of action to various audiences. In turn, the identity of the performer depends on the audience's response. It is in this sense that a life lived in the form of a story is part of individual's record. Thirdly, by virtue of how the plot turns out and how the audience responds, life performances justify the idealised images that narrators hold of themselves. Here, too, is a connection between living a life and telling a story or performing it.

Every Story presents a particular version of events and every version tries to persuade us that it alone is credible. It is in this sense that a story may be an argument: one version tries to overcome the voice of an oppressed alternative. Self-representations share this fundamental "doubleness", so do lives. This is another way in which the women's lives are represented as stories. It is not enough to say that the stories that these women act out in life serves the purpose of overcoming the misfortunes in life. They must persuade themselves by way of persuading others not merely that he can rise above those moments when they feel helpless and hopeless. This is one way of thinking about how a story "overcomes" a danger or misfortune in the world or in one's own character: not by facing the defeating a threat, but by exercising it from recognition. This is what is meant by saying that a story functions as an argument and is always open to multiple constructions.

What does this perspective allow us to say about lives and narratives? It reveals how people go about 'making something of themselves'. To 'make something of one's self' colloquially means to be successful. At the same time, a more literal meaning suggests the effort that goes into maintaining a positive self-image.

Narratives may also create identity at all levels of human social life and Loseke (2007) mentions and discusses these types of narrative identity, one of which being Cultural narrative identity which is particularly relevant to my study.

Cultural narrative identity is referred to as a social classification or representation of different types of actors. Such identities are associated with families, gender, age, religion and citizenship. The idea of a 'sexual identity' has also been recognized and proliferated. Narratives of cultural identity go by many other names including public narratives, cultural narratives, cultural stories, master narratives or schemata but Loseke says that "Although each of these terms is located within broader sets of theoretical understanding, all refer to narratives of typical actors engaging in typical behaviours within typical plots leading to expectable moral evaluations.

Essentially, a good narrative is one that makes sense given what audiences think they know, what they value, what they regard as appropriate and what they think fits into context. Cultural narratives make use of circulating symbolic codes. The term, symbolic codes, has many other names and an example of symbolic codes would be Christmas gift giving, even though it is superficial and discrete. Gender, race, ethnicity, family, capitalism, democracy, individualism, family values, love, romance, sympathy and violence are also among such symbolic codes woven throughout social life. Symbolic codes surround cultural narratives of identities as they contain images of rights, responsibilities and expectations of people that concern the 'norm'. Symbolic codes in the western world construct one main identity in contrast to another often as opposites, such as 'single-sex'/hermaphrodite as in the Caster Semenya scenario.

The study examines recounting about experiences as a potential mechanism by which people socially construct themselves and their worlds and the resulting implications for understanding adult development, particularly women. Pasupathi (2001) suggests that there are two principles regarding governing conversational recounting of events. They are construction (influences of speakers together with contexts of reconstructions of events) and consistency (the influence of reconstruction and memory). Operating together, the principles provide an

account of how autobiographical memory is socially constructed. In addition, the principles may illuminate how narrative texts can influence the development of identity.

We live in a world immersed in talk, providing others with stores of what happens to us and ideas about what we think our experiences mean. We may be less aware of more subtle influences of social context in our everyday talk about our experiences. The framework of this study is rooted in research on language and identity and narrative approaches to the study of personality. The model I present is based on the notion that much learning and development begins in social practices and gradually becomes represented internally, and I focus on the social practice of recounting events with written texts. Briefly stated, people tell events to their own insights and reactions to the retelling. Telling is a joint product of the speaker and the audience and thus influences the way we subsequently remember the told event. This means that the responses of the audiences have long-term implications for how tellers remember their experiences. Such implications include the idea that story-telling or narrating is one process by which people's social worlds influences their development in adulthood by shaping both what they remember and how they think of themselves.

The principle of construction is that any autobiographical recollection is the product of the speaker/ writer and the context. Qualities of the speaker/ writer and the listener influence the construction of events in conversation as well as texts. People choose to talk or write about certain types of events and interpret those events in ways consistent with their own character in order to achieve particular aims with respect to particular listeners. Speakers and writers influence the way events are recalled. Speakers and writers are part of the social context in which telling occurs and existing research gives them the primary role in shaping reconstructions. It is not surprising that there is ample evidence that speaker's characteristics are reflected in their constructions of experiences. Enduring qualities of speakers and writers, such as their personality characteristics, theories about development, gender and cultural background, clearly influence the way we they recall events. In interviews about autobiographies, agentic individuals tell

agentic stories, communal individuals tell interpersonally oriented stories and generative individuals tell characteristic type stories (McAdams, Diamond, de St. Aubin & Mansfield, 1997; McAdams, Hoffman, Mansfield, Day, 1996). Independent individuals find independent-related stories most memorable and individuals with high self-esteem recall experiences with their self views and motivations. People from collectivist cultures may recall experiences with less detail and elaboration than those from individualistic cultures and across many studies, women's memories have been found to be more elaborate and detailed than men's (P.J. Davis, 1999; Fivush, 1998; Ross & Holmberg, 1990).

3.3 Thematic analysis

One of the methods of analysis used in this study is thematic analysis. McMillan and Schumacher (1997: 533) describe thematic analysis as “the distinctive and recurring qualities, characteristics, subjects of discourse, or concerns expressed”. Thematic analysis is a rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method. It offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data. In this section I outline what thematic analysis is, locating it in relation to other qualitative analytic methods that search for themes or patterns, and in relation to different epistemological and ontological positions. Finally I outline the advantages and disadvantages of thematic analysis and conclude by advocating thematic analysis as a useful and flexible method for qualitative research. I also mention a step-by-step guide created by Aronson (1994) which helps us in analysing data thematically.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes data set in detail. Thematic analysis is widely used but there is no clear agreement *how* to go about using it. In this sense, it is often not explicitly claimed as the method of analysis, when in actuality, we argue that a lot of analysis is essentially thematic but is either claimed as something else or not identified as any particular method at all.

An account of themes emerging or being discovered is a passive account of the process of analysis, and it denies the active role the researcher always plays in

identifying themes/patterns, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them to the readers. But what constitute a theme? And how do we go about searching for it? These are two very important questions in the field of thematic analysis that Braun and Clarke (2006) and Aronson (1994) attempt to answer.

A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. An important question to address in terms of coding is: what counts as a pattern/ theme, or what size does a theme need to be? This is a question of prevalence, in terms of both space within each data item and of prevalence across the entire data set. Now that we know what to look for in terms of thematic analysis, the next logical step is to determine a method of analysing such data. Aronson explains this step by step.

The first obvious step is to collect the data. Researchers could make use of audiotapes and transcribed conversations could then be analysed and from that patterns of experiences can be listed. This could come from quotes or paraphrasing common ideas. The next step to thematic analysis is to identify all data that relate to the already classified patterns. The identified patterns are then expounded on. The next step is to combine and catalogue related patterns into sub-themes (patterns such as conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings or feelings as mentioned above). Themes that emerge from stories are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experience. The next and final step is to build a valid argument for choosing the themes. This is done by reading and referring back to the different literature. Once these themes have been collected and the literature has been studied, we are ready to formulate theme statements to develop a story line.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

The research aims and objectives are presented and followed by a clarification of the qualitative research framework in which this study is located. Details of the participants who were selected are depicted together with the account of the selection procedure. A description of the data collection technique and explanation of the method used follows. A reflection on my role in the research process which is an important consideration in qualitative research is provided and the chapter concludes with the ethical considerations that were applied to the study.

Pat Caplan's *African Voices, African Lives* (1997) is a study of the life of Mohammed, a small farmer from the Tanzanian coast. An important part of the material used by Caplan is a diary written by the man on her request. Seeing that this diary was transcribed, the original document is not the basis of the analysis as it is seriously edited and reorganised. Caplan then saw an immediate obstacle for documenting a life history: Mohammed did not write in chronological order. She also mentions, as a stylistic problem, the fact that Mohammed frequently utilised direct speech where reported speech would be expected and preferable. Here the factual report is projected onto the diary. Caplan's use of the text written by Mohammed illustrates some general problems. The grassroots written document does not fit the expected structural feature in writing and the analyst consequently 're-orders' the text. In doing so a range of features that uniquely represent the position from which the document has been written has been erased and much of what effectively is and represents is subjectively lost. The document, in other words, cannot speak with its own voice.

I have worked on texts, particularly handwritten 'historical' texts of working-class women. I have not met the authors of these documents, I have not been able to conduct interviews with them personally, to observe them while they were writing or talk to other members of their community. The data is also somewhat biased as the Xhosa-speaking women were asked to write the journals in English (not their

first language) and whereas the Afrikaans-speaking women were allowed to do the writing in their mother tongue. The voices of the Xhosa-women become softened in this sense. They are not able to express themselves fully. However, the fact that we don't know its authors, or its original function and audience- all of that does not mean that the text has no context. It means that we have to contextualise it, fill in these contextual blanks by means of ethnographic interpretation. I will try to perform the elementary task of discovering the relevant features of a language and its texts by looking at forms of text organisation. This approach is aimed at uncovering and reconstructing voice. The journal documents will be introduced in detail later and the question will be: how does the specific textuality of these documents- their textual architecture and make-up- explain issues of voice that emerged in their reception.

4.1 Research objectives

The main research question for this thesis is how identities are linguistically mediated through narratives, and what linguistic and social practices (such as writing and being trained in domestic and literacy skills with other women of different races, ages and stories) are employed in the mediation of identity. This larger question breaks down into the following;

How are discourses of identity such as gender and race manifested in the texts, how are they related, and how are they enlisted in the production of situated identities?

How do these texts show how women victimise themselves in certain contexts? Specifically, how do women construct themselves as victims in narratives? How do they narrate themselves as overcoming hardship?

What are the different types of social discourses (such as employment and membership in a social group) represented in women's literacy texts, specifically their journal writing?

4.2 Research setting

The setting for the study is the township of Wesbank, near Cape Town in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. This peripheral community is isolated from neighbouring areas and is part of the Oostenberg municipality. It was developed in response to a growing crisis in housing due to internal migrations from rural areas into the cities after the end of Apartheid.

The unemployment rate in Wesbank is very high, perpetuating the poverty which also characterised the population. One has to either start a business or leave the community to find a job and commuting out of Wesbank involves considerable travel expenses. Wesbank also has a very low average education rate with only 11% of the inhabitants finishing grades 11-12. Wesbank then results as a community where people stay not because of choice but because of necessity.

The group of women received intensive skills training from 27 June 2005 to 15 July 2005. The group was divided into two groups, one for Afrikaans-speakers and one for Xhosa-speaking women. The latter group was taught in English as there were no isiXhosa speaking trainers available and they were not proficient in Afrikaans. They were then taught in English as they could not speak Afrikaans. These two groups were taught in two shifts. The objective of this programme was to train these women in home management and communication skills with the intention of making them employable.

4.3 Research participants

A total of 35 women were considered for participation in a training skills program. 8 of the participants are speakers of either English, isiXhosa, Sesotho, Afrikaans or all 4 languages isiXhosa while the other 13 speak Afrikaans and very rarely English as well. The women are aged between 25 and 45 and are either married with children or single mothers. As shown in Appendix A and B, the previous schooling experiences of all the women in this study are very similar as most of them attended government-funded public schools and very few had completed the 12th grade. Needless to say none of these women have tertiary qualifications. The women in the study are all unemployed and most, if not all; of

the women have no or very little employment experience as evident in Column 5 in Appendix A and B.

These women live in poverty in the slums of the Western Cape. From what we read in the texts, they are dependent on what society offers them as they are economically struggling. This poor area in the Western Cape is a multilingual area where different languages and language varieties occur in layered patterns of use. As we see from Appendix A and B, these women have families and their family lives are certainly not trouble-free. They have to travel immense distances with the most elementary means of transport in order to find economic opportunities. They usually find solace and support among that most basic of support networks: people sharing the same religion.

4.4 Selection Procedure

After an interview with a random sample of women of the Wesbank community by staff from the Iilwimi Sentrum and Bergzicht Training Centre, a final selection of 24 was made, based on criteria such as a reasonable level of literacy, availability, level of education, enthusiasm and interest in developing skills in domestic work. However, only 21 women actually attended the course. All of these 21 journals were used in the present study and were selected based on the availability of them.

Ethnographic interviews and audiotapes are commonly used with thematic analysis. Once these are transcribed, the next step is to identify all data that relate to the already classified patterns such as conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings or common sayings. Themes are identified by bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which are often meaningless when viewed when alone.

The transcripts in this study were analysed for themes relating to meanings embedded within the lived experiences of the participants, underlying values and social and cultural conditions that shaped their lives, the construction of their

identity and the impact thereof on their lives. According to Parker (1995) identities are socially created and influenced by history, culture, gender, sexuality, class and the broader relations of power. It is clear, then, that identities are not fixed, but are always in the process of being created in relationships with others. It is, therefore, also suited that the data be investigated along the structural guidelines of social constructionism.

4.5 Data collection

The Iilwimi Sentrum and Bergzicht training centre have teamed up with a research team at the University of the Western Cape to produce research on ways women express emotion, voice, and agency through the act of writing. In addition to the initial research, a further study was created and the data was then handed over to me. This current study determined how the women voice and express themselves, and their selection of words and certain themes that are constantly repeated in the journals were examined to uncover the personal characteristics and sentiments of each individual as well as the general collective attitudes and ideologies of the group. The use of language and grammar, as well as the handwriting displayed in the written documents, were taken into consideration and looked at to identify their levels of literacy. The narrative analysis took stock of how single words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs contribute to the overall experience of reading these documents. These methods enabled me to extract the main themes evident in the journals.

4.6 Tools of analysis

My research uses a variety of methodological approaches, including intensive interviews (of a few of the subjects), ethnographic observations, and discourse analysis. I will also probe the many different discourses used in linguistically mediating identity. I will look at how women see themselves as individuals and how their views of themselves build upon, recycle, reconstruct, or contradict social discourses of womanhood (e.g. “mother” and “caregiver”).

The women were asked to maintain the use of a journal where they recorded daily events over a 3-week training course. They also recorded their feelings and thoughts on the validity of the course and those in charge, the inadequacies of the course and they were told to offer suggestions to improve them. The Xhosa-speaking women were told to write their journal entries in English whilst the Afrikaans-speaking women were allowed to write theirs in Afrikaans. These journals were collected with their permission by the Iilwimi Sentrum at the end of the course and provide the raw material for my research study. The journals were written in once a day and the length of each entry ranged from a paragraph to a page.

The journals have been looked at and analyzed and the similarities and differences shared between each journal will be specifically focused on. The main analysis is comprised of a narrative and thematic analysis of the discourses and language use found in the journals. Pavlenko (2007) suggests that narrative study differentiates between three interconnected types of information one might gather from life histories: subject reality (findings on how things or events were experienced), life reality (findings on how things are or were), and text reality (ways in which things or events are narrated by respondents). It is these three types of information that I hope to investigate in the journals. Therefore, it is Pavlenko's (2007) framework on analyzing narratives that I would like to adopt and apply to the analysis of women's literacy texts.

Interviews were also conducted after the 3-week training course. A total selection of 3 women was interviewed in a quiet surrounding area with as little noise as possible in order for the interviews to be recorded as clear as possible. The interviews may not have been extensively useful in this research paper but thought to be an interesting factor. In my current study I shall look at the transcribed interviews as a compliment to the analysis of the journals. These analyses will result in the notion of the construction of identity in a sense where the women not only encode their personal identity but also an identity 'constructed' by society, their community and perhaps some geographical, economic and historical setbacks.

The study will be contextualized in a larger framework of historical and background information such as living conditions of Wesbank, average family conditions and use statistical information to foreground some discourses found in women's literacy texts and to aid in the interpretation of this specific analyses.

4.7 Ethical considerations

The study has implemented the following ethical considerations: the training staff at the Iilwimi Sentrum and Bergzicht Training Centre has obtained informed consent from the participants, obtained permission from the participants to record the interviews and journals and informed them that the data will be handled responsibly. As their participation was voluntary, the participants were assured that they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any stage without being disadvantaged. In addition they were assured that their journals were only used for research purposes and their personal information would be kept confidential. According to Blommaert (2008) there is so much inequality inscribed in the analysis of journal texts. The main inequality is in the result- voice. The narrator or reader can produce a globalised voice, journal writers can't. The narrator can produce a prestige theme, where this is not accessible to the journal writers. The narrator can speak from a recognizable position and identity, they can't.

4.8 Limitations for research

There is an issue of concern at hand with the method of interviewing and analysing the interviews and journals. On the one hand, I wanted to understand the ways people constructed their life stories. On the other hand, I assumed that the women would not talk about certain issues or try to hide or distort them. Processes of distortion could have been influenced by what happened in their homes during the time of the course and also by their awareness of the audience and their expectations. For the women it was difficult to describe verbally or narratively what they experienced, especially the feelings that accomplished these experiences. One of the reasons for this could have been the language barrier for some of the women. As a researcher, my strong conceptual framework may

overshadow the fragile language structures that these women developed to describe those events.

As readers and researchers we constantly judge and interpret the appearance, words and actions of the people we encounter or research to give them meaning and to decide on how we should react to them. This process of judging is influenced by the circumstances in which we view them (context) and by the attitudes that we bring to bear upon them (perspective). We also tend to be selective. For various reasons we emphasize certain aspects of a person's appearance and personality, while ignoring other aspects. In this case, as the researcher, I might choose to highlight only certain aspects of the women's lives, while ignoring other aspects. In this way any description of identity seems to be made of gaps (what we choose to ignore) and selections (what we think is important).

The construction of life stories by the researchers reflects their normalisation strategies of facing the threatening past and future. Strategies allow people to smooth out corners in their stories, especially stories they find difficult to confront in the present. My analysis aims at opening up fresh possibilities that may be used for clarifying issues that previously have been silenced.

Chapter 5

Overview of narratives (as grassroots literacy)

This chapter represents an analysis of the participants' experiences of a thought-to-be empowering course and the impact thereof on the lives as conveyed through the journals they had written. The journals were analysed through thematic analysis. The themes have been discussed and interpreted with the aim of understanding how the women who participated constructed identity within their social and cultural contexts.

The texts enter an institutional space of literacy. These women obviously struggle with several very basic literacy requirements. Punctuation is erratic, and several corrections betray a struggle with the grammatical and narrative norms and this offers a glimpse of vernacular everyday (but non-standard) variety that they speak. They also manifestly fail to produce a narrative that can stand as their own account of the events. There is no sequential development of action, no plot, no storyline, and no argued conclusion. Their writing has failed to produce voice in the specific communicative environment in which it was produced and writing, here, silences their voices. Through their linguistic descriptions, the women in my study are actively involved in constructing and constituting their lives and experiences. Grammatical choices that social actors make construct a particular perspective on events and are also important social acts.

The following extracts all seem to portray the same types of discourses. To mention a few, they are discourses of religion or faith, discourses of family and the home, discourses of empowerment and pride (towards the end of the course these women have certainly been transformed and empowered.), discourses of education (looked at through handwriting and writing styles) and also discourses of hope. These are all sub-genres of discourses of identity and will be looked at more constructively with the analysis of the journals at a later stage. My argument remains that women are the more passive and yet expressive sex (both

linguistically and physically) and although their voices are somewhat suppressed in some cases, often what is not said or what is implied is what establishes many discourses surrounding those I have above-mentioned. The data will be analysed according to three different research methods. The First method will be structured around narrative analysis of data, the second around thematic analysis and the third and final research design will be focusing on Blommaert's (2008) grassroots literacy.

The storyline I have sketched in chapter 1 is a reconstruction made on the basis of a careful reading of the journals written by the 21 participants. The women in the study were given paper and pens/pencils to use for their journal writing. They were instructed to write a journal entry every morning before they would begin their training each day. They were asked to write about their feelings of the course and whatever else they felt comfortable writing about. According to Professor Charlyn Dyers, a facilitator and co-ordinator of the course conducted at Bergzicht Training centre, the study was not conducted for any linguistic purposes but just a general survey of what the course had accomplished. The women, through these journals, brought a certain 'voice' to the surface and many salient themes called for intensive study. None of the texts provide the full story and the following chapters will address this issue: these women construct a life while writing it. As a way of introducing that analysis, I need to draw attention to some particularly striking features of the texts. I will discuss five of them and the fact that writing, for them requires tremendous efforts.

1. The texts are certainly unique but almost similar copies. They were written on cheap paper, with mostly pencil and in some cases with blue pen.
2. The texts were written for a local audience and for very specific purposes even though, initially the journals were written for a way of monitoring the course.

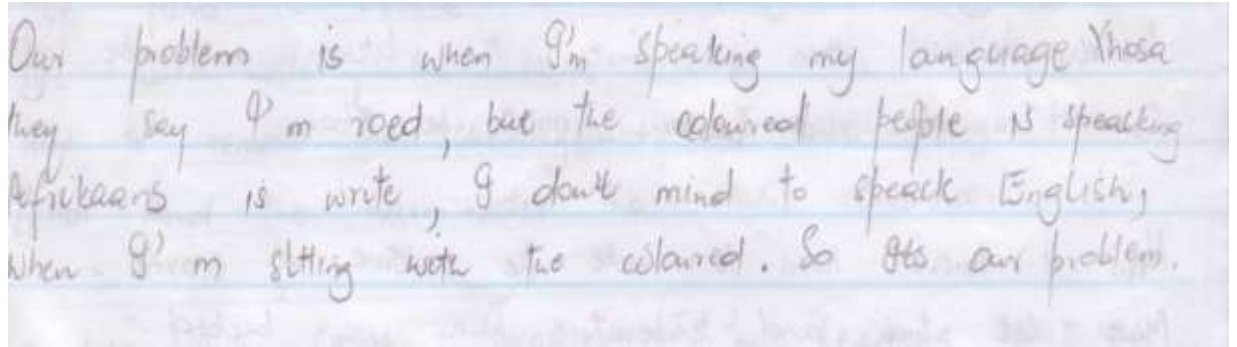
3. The texts are not stand-alones but clearly targeted documents. They are written for an audience.
4. The women write/ construct each journal entry in a chronological order; however, they skip a day or two at times.
5. The women generally structure their journals in the form of stories, with typical story-like features such as a 'beginning', 'middle' and 'ending'.

The participants that I focus on in this paper are particularly interesting for a number of reasons. First, in terms of self-identification, they all locate themselves within the discourses of South African females and mothers. There is an acknowledgement and acceptance that motherhood and being a South African female are factors in their self-identification processes. Second, for different reasons, they are all located along the periphery of their worlds. Some of these women struggle with discourses on language and ethnic identity within the public and private spaces of their lives. Third, they are all non-students, aged between 25 and 45, unemployed and have diverse linguistic, cultural and educational lifestyles.

In Chapter 2, I pointed towards the fact that the women's texts were monoglossic. In spite of widespread language mixing and shifting in the everyday use of language in the area where they live, they made a considerable effort to avoid language mixing and code-switching in their texts. This is, thus, a remarkable feature, in contrast between this particular act of communication and other patterns of communication. This is not the only special feature. Some of the texts are long while some are short and are divided into chapters (introduction, body and conclusion).

Ethnicity and language are the entry points in understanding the participants' identity narratives. These are the claims to identities, positions, and spaces within their worlds. In order to understand the connection to language as an avenue for identity performance, one must first understand the participants' views of

language and language practices. Language plays a salient role in the way these participants desire to be positioned and position themselves. For example in the following extract:



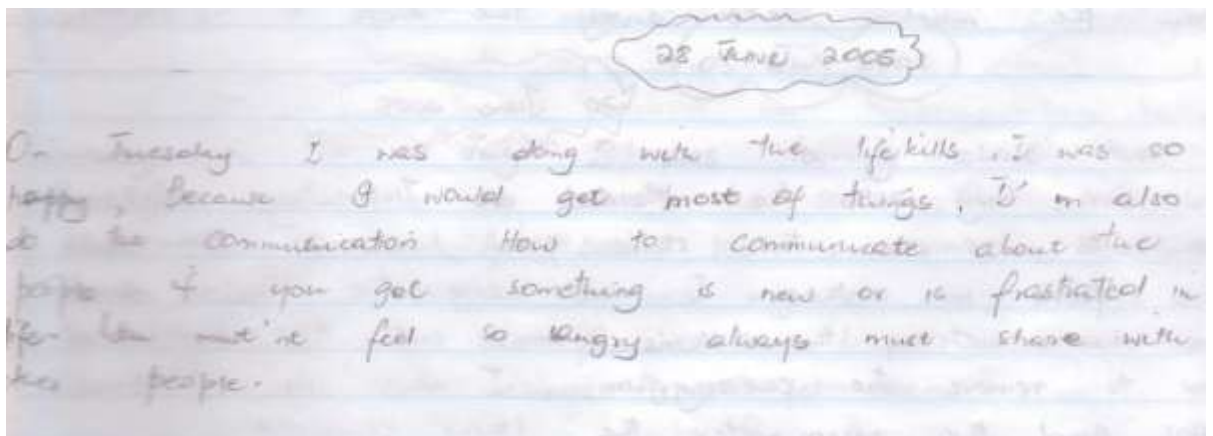
Written by P2 on 08/07/05

Transcription: *"Our problem is when I'm speaking my language Xhosa they say I'm roed (rude), but the coloured people is speaking Afrikaans is write, I don't mind to speak English, when I'm sitting with the coloured. So It's our problem."*

P2 is claiming a South African identity not only through ethnicity but also through her dominant language, Xhosa. In order to capture what she sees as defining aspects of this identity, she compares these aspects to that of the Coloured group. Language is also a vehicle through which P2 positions herself in the South African world. She speaks what she defines as Standard Xhosa but this language, however, functions precisely as a tool of exclusion from the other group of women. Here, language also marks respect and P2 makes it clear that both groups of women consider it indecent or disrespectful to respond to another individual in your dominant language when that individual is unable to understand the language. Note the sarcastic tone in her speech, also note how the phrases "our problem", "my language Xhosa" and the repeated "our problem" add character and tone to the sentence in anger. Here, she is again directly separating herself as a Xhosa-speaking woman from the Afrikaans-speaking women. Anger is also seen as heightening one's power. Depending on the situation or conversation, anger plays an important role in our lives. While it can cause distress and heartbreak, it can also be used as power for good when anger is directed at injustice, for example. Anger is wrongfully directed at the coloured women. The

issue here is not with difference in colour or attitude; the issue is with the fact that the Afrikaans speakers were asked to write in their L1 and the Xhosa speakers in their L2. When looking at the journals, one can easily pick up that the women become offensive and sensitive when speaking about race and cultural differences. In most cases anger then becomes a driving force behind speaking out about their feelings of inferiority and discrimination.

The women in the study were told to write their journals in two respective languages. The Xhosa-speaking women were advised to write their journals in English which is not their first language while the Afrikaans-speaking women were told to write their journals in their first language, Afrikaans. However, this had more linguistic effects than it is simply put. Some Xhosa-speaking women struggled with expressing some points; some struggled with spelling and grammatical errors while some written data was not legible. The Afrikaans-speaking women seemed to have more expressive and lengthier journal entries, most of which were neatly written and nicely laid out on paper. The following are examples of how different the Xhosa-speaking women and the Afrikaans-speaking women's journals are in possible relation to language "enforcement" and linguistic ability:

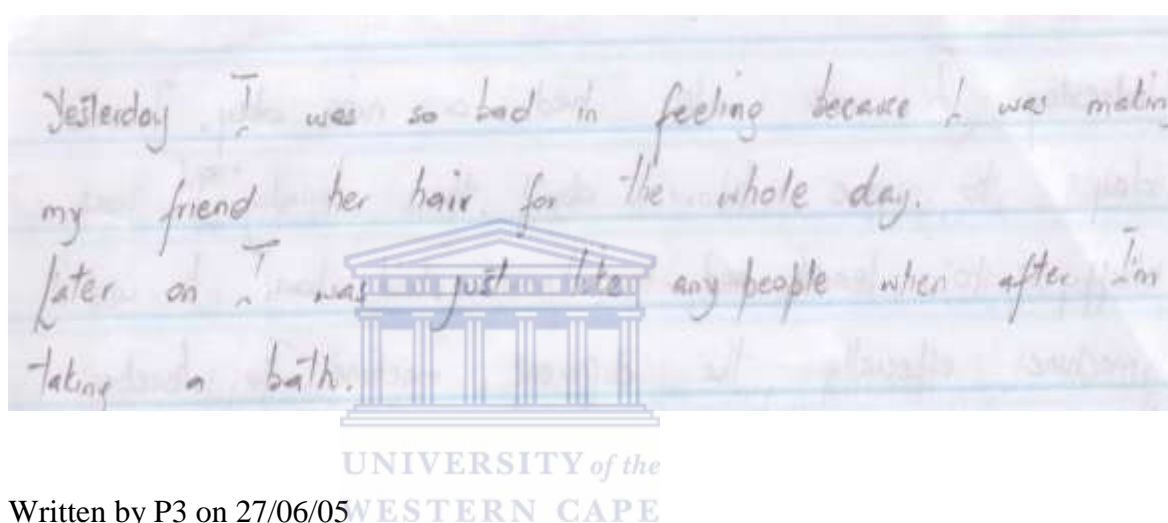


Written by P2 on 28/06/05

Translation: "On Tuesday I was doing with the lifeskills. I was so happy, Because I would get most of things. I'm also do the communication. How to communicate

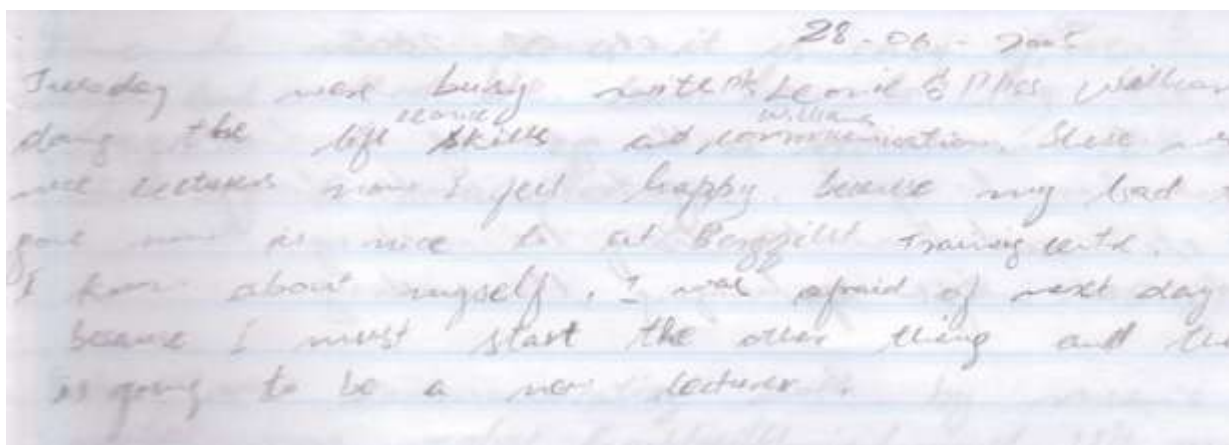
about the people if you get something is now or is frustrated in life. We mustn't feel so angry always must share with the people."

Here P2 shows no problem with spelling. However, her grammar is incorrect. Capital letters and punctuation marks are used in the incorrect positions ("I was happy, **B**ecause...") and certain words are unnecessarily placed in some sentences ("On Tuesday I was doing **with** the lifeskills" and "...Because I would get most **of** things" as opposed to "On Tuesday I was doing the lifeskills" and "...Because I would get most things").



Transcription: *"Yesterday I was so bad in feeling because I was making my friend her hair for the whole day. Later on I was just like any people who after I'm taking a bath."*

P3's grammar here is incorrect with certain words being placed in the incorrect order and she uses the present tense when referring to things she has previously done. Her spelling, however, seems to be correct.



Written by P8 on 28/06/05

Transcription: *"Tuesday were busy write Ms Leonie & Miss Williams doing the life skills and communication. Here with the lecturers I feel happy because my bad gave me is nice to at Bergzicht training centre. I know about myself. I was afraid of next day because I must start the other thing and there is going to be a new lecturer."*

Once again, spelling seems to be correct here but P8's handwriting is not the most legible. Grammatical errors also make it hard to understand what she is fully trying to say about how she feels. This could also lead to numerous interpretations of this entry.

When compared with the following:

Kursusverslag 14/07/2005

Ek het die kursus baie geniet. Almal was baie vriendelik. Die onderwyers was geduldig met ons almal. Ek het niks verkeerd gevind met die kursus of onderwyers nie. Elke dag was vir my 'n nuwe ervaring wat ek vreeslik geniet het. Ek hoop net dat ek nog 'n kursus kan doen hier by Bergzicht. Ek het 'n afspraak lizzet lotte gehad wat vir ons werk soek en toe besluit wanneer daar 'n plek vir my by Frail Care is wil ek eers dit doen voor ek vir 'n week gaan. Ek het nog nie sekerheid nie, maar vertrou om die kursus so gou as moontlik te kan doen. Ek gee alle voor = spoed vir die onderwyers en dat hul sal voortgaan met wat hul doen. Ek waardeer dit wat hul vir ons gedoen het. Met liefde en dank.

Written by P10 on 14/07/05

Translation: "I enjoyed the course very much. Everyone was very friendly. The teachers were patient with us all. I found nothing wrong with the course or teachers. Each day was something new that I enjoyed thoroughly. I just hope that I will be able to do another course at Bergzicht. I had an appointment with Lizzette Lotte, who is looking for work for us. She then discovered that there is a place for me at Frail Care which I want to do before I get a job. I am still unsure about things but I trust the course and would like to complete it as soon as possible. I hand everything over and trust that the teachers will do all that they are supposed to do. I appreciate what they are doing for us. With love and thanks."

13 07 005

Vanoggend het ek so moedeloos gevoel toe
 ek opgestaan het. Toe het ek maar eens
 net weer besef as jy nie bid nie dan sal
 die dag altyd skuiw loop. Maar toe vra ek
 die Here om my te help deur verloop van
 hierdie dag. Hy moet my help. Maar nou
 voel ek weer baie stukke beter, ek hou
 daarvan om te leer van almal. Vir my is
 dit vandag weer lekker hier in die klas. Ek waardeer
 elke een. Sy glimlag hier in die klas.
 Ek geniet net Rosemary se onderrig.
 Dit is baie lekker. Ek geniet dit so baie.
 Ek sien uit na elke dag se sesse.

Written by P11 on 13/07/05

Translation: "This morning I felt very despondent when I woke up. Then I realised that if you don't pray, the day will always turn out to be a bad one. Then I asked the Lord to help me through this day. He must help me but now I feel so much better. I enjoy learning about everyone. Today it is so lovely in the class. I appreciate everyone's joyfulness in the class. I actually enjoy Rosemary's experience. It is very nice. I enjoy it so much. I am looking forward to everyday's session."

alhoewel geskryf 13-07-05 moet ek jou in die staat
Vandag voel ek baie frustrerend, maar nie te min ek gaan aan.
My kop is nêre so vol pyn. Maar ek voel baie gelukkig.
Ek wil graag verder studeer maar geld is die probleem
maar ek vertrou op die Here dat hy vir my sal
deur kom. Dit is my bekommernis, maar ek weet
elke ding het sy bepaalde tyd en uur. Ek dink
ek wil maar net in tyd spandeer met my self. Ek
voel paar tye keer net dat in mens vir self uitval en
bederf. Ek wil graag in goeie inkons hê sodat ek
onafhanglik van my man kan wees in Mens wil baie
keer iets koop dan moet jy maar los, want jy moet
eers alles vra. Ek voel dit is baie keer onverstand-
baar, want hulle vra nie eens vir jou wat hulle wil
doen nie. Maar ek hoop en vertrou dat alles binne
kort gaan verander. Daarom vertrou ek die Here in
alles wat ek doen.

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WESTERN CAPE

Written by P14 on 13/07/05

Translation: "I am so frustrated today, nonetheless I will go on. My head is in so much pain again. But I still feel very lucky/ fortunate. I would like to study further but money is the problem but I trust that the lord will bring me through it. That is me concern, but I know every day has its time and purpose. I think I just want to spend some time with myself. I feel that sometimes you just have to take some time and spoil yourself. I would like to have a good income so that I don't have to be so dependent on my husband. There are many times that you want to buy something but you have to put it back because you have to ask for everything. I feel it is very unfair because they don't have to ask you about what they want to do. But I hope and trust that everything will change shortly. Therefore I trust the Lord in all I do."

One can take into account how much shorter the Xhosa-speaking women's journals are and the fact that the Afrikaans-speaking women's journals are much more legible and neater. Most of the Xhosa-speaking women's grammar and spelling is poorly written. P2 uses a phrase such as "*Because I would get most of things. I'm also do the communication*" and P3 such as "*I was bad in feeling because I was making my friend her hair*". These utterances are both difficult to understand. Similarly P8's handwriting and grammar is also not very legible. To a large extent what we are noticing is surely the effect of writing in a L2 which is inadequately mastered. Other factors such as education and space could also play major roles.

The women's lack of education is another strand of the so-called poverty epidemic. Their poor spelling and grammatical errors reflect their lack of access to normative English as their second language. Also interesting is that these women were not permitted or encouraged to write in their L1, Xhosa, a historically marginalized language. Some of the pages of the journals were stapled incorrectly, also suggesting minimal literacy skills. Some women even refer to the speakers of the course as lecturers and managers which, again, show lack of knowledge about titles and the addressing people which are considered common sense to most. Even though most, if not all, participants did not complete the 12th grade or they dropped out sometime during high school, they all seem to have a neat and tidy handwriting which resembles their neat and tidy nature and their "vertical slanted lettering could suggest self control and emotional repression" (Railey, 2009). The spacing of each journal entry is also fairly spread out with approximately and generally more than one journal entry on each page, on both sides. In most cases each sentence begins with a capital letter but punctuation marks (such as full stops and commas) are often omitted, particularly the journals of the African women.

Chronology, events and literacy

One indicator of processes of remembering in the sort of formal, literate and auto-historiographic generic context sketched above could be the way in which

chronology is handled in the ‘autobiography’. Historical narrative for the women involves chronological accuracy expressed by providing explicit chronological marking points: dates. Providing dates obviously mattered to them. Let us compare the dates mentioned in some of the journals.

Participant	Journal dates and striking events
P2	<p>27 June 2005, 28 June 2005, 29 June 2005, 30 June 2005, 01 July 2005, 04 July 2005, 05 July 2005 > consists of detailed descriptions of the day, their feelings, family, aspirations, etc.</p> <p>06/07/005, 07/07/005, 08/07/005, 11/05/005, 12/07/005, 13/07/005> consists of one to two lines of what seems to be the most eventful or interesting parts of the day (e.g. learning how to clean in a manner that saves time and energy)</p>
P4	<p>29/06/2005, 30/06/2005> consists of four to five lines related to how the course enabled her to work through family issues at home</p> <p>04 July 2005, 05 July 2005, 06 July 2005> roughly discusses what she has done at the training centre with no talk about her family or the other women involved in the course</p> <p>07/07/ 2005, 11/07/2005, 12/07/2005, 13 07, 14/07/05, 15/ 07/ 05> each entry consists of four to six lines with</p>

	details of the activities of the day
P7	<p>27-06-05> introduction, details on how she was selected</p> <p>28 June 2005, 30 June 05 > in both cases she relates the activities of the course to her relationships with other people and to society in general (e.g. she relates the lesson of the day to her role in the community and neighbourly love)</p> <p>29.06.05, 01 07 05, 04.07.05, 05-07-05, 06/07/05, 07.07, 11:07, 12: 07, 13: 07, 14: 07, 15/07/05> consists strictly of detailed descriptions of the activities of the day, no social relations included</p>

There is a considerable difference in the amount of chronology. P2 mentions 13 dates, P4 mentions 11 dates and P7 mentions 14 dates, usually day-month-year combinations. The day-month-year strings that are written with (/) symbols seem to consist mainly of a few lines describing the activities of the day. The day-month-year strings that are written to the fuller degree (29 June 2005), however, consists mainly of certain activities and how they relate to the relationships with family, friends and the community of the participants. The participants, therefore, have managed to accomplish a superior degree of chronological accuracy in their history of social relations and, and certain episodes of their lives and social relations are now documented in considerable detail. Subsequently, there is an increase of chronological accuracy but decrease in narrative detail as with the day-month-year strings written with the (/) symbol. In a sense, the writing transforms the remembering into something else, into facts or factors of someone's life story.

The more we see ‘genre features’ emerge in the writing, the less we see references to ‘remembering’ itself. Remembering itself is no longer a part of the story; it has been absorbed by textual genre features that represent the result of remembering.



Chapter 6

Narrative analysis

Self-authoring literacy practices can be understood as practices involving print and multimodal texts that have significantly influenced people's sense of identity, as well as their dis/engagement with particular discourses and communities. These are therefore practices that work both as lenses through which to see themselves and the world, and as agentive frameworks in the making of important decisions across their lifetimes. People appropriate practices and discourses to understand their lives and define themselves, without seeking to question power relationships at a social scale. This thesis may pay attention to identifying stories or references that might reveal unique paths of development and change, especially in the sense of agency and identity of each individual. Attention may also be given to the key events or learning experiences which contributed to shaping these paths. It is revealed that literacy development is inextricably linked to a person's sense of agency, which is in turn linked to their growing and changing sense of identity. Literacy, agency and identity are, thus, inseparable aspects in the study of individual development.

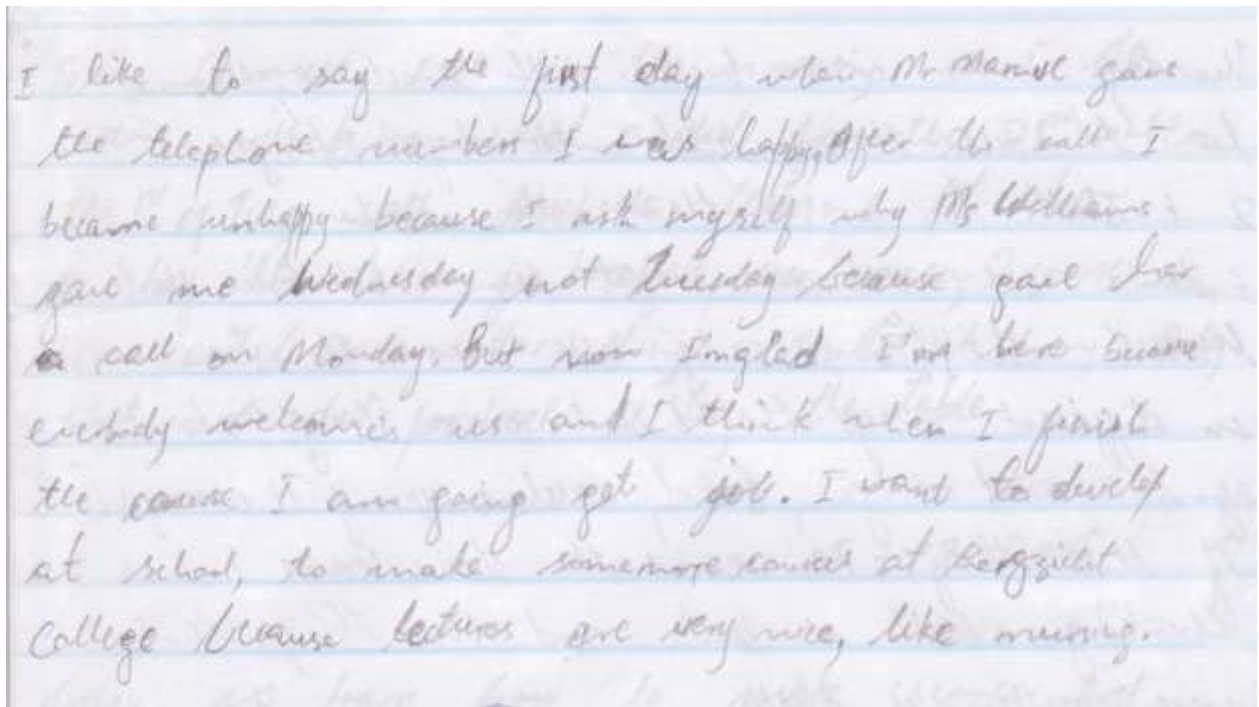
The key factor to all the women in my research study is that despite poor educational resources or little formal education, people (especially women) in these communities are able to learn and powerfully transform themselves into agents of their own lives.

According to Pasupathi (2001) people tell their events to their listeners in ways they hope will engage and interest them. Telling is a joint product of the speaker and the audience and thus influences the way we subsequently remember the told event. This means that the idea of the audience responses have long-term implications for how tellers remember their experiences. Such implications include the idea that conversational remembering is one process by which people's social worlds influences their development in adulthood by shaping both what they remember and how they think of themselves.

According to Martin and Rose (2007) “Ideation is concerned with how experience is construed in discourse. It focuses on sequences of activities, the people and things involved in them, and their associated places and qualities, and on how these elements are built up and related to each other as a text unfolds.” The model of human experience at the heart of ideational meaning, in all languages, is of processes involving people, things, places and qualities. Our most powerful impression of experience is that it consists of what is happening, doing, sensing, meaning, being and becoming. Each journal is narrated into the shape of a story with an ‘introduction’, introducing some background on how the participant was chosen for the course and/or background on her family. Secondly the journal consists of a ‘body’, consisting of detailed descriptions of tasks and exercises done during the course and finally a ‘conclusion’, made up of a course report which summarizes the events of the course and includes messages of gratitude to the organizers and facilitators.

The frameworks shown in chapter 3 show that the pervasiveness of narratives does not imply uniformity and that basic elements of narrative construct, including storytelling devices, and judgements as to which events are tellable, differ across speech communities. As a result, what is considered to be normative personal narrative or autobiography varies across speech communities, along several dimensions, including organisation, structure, and authorial voice. The analysis of this research is, therefore open for interpretation.

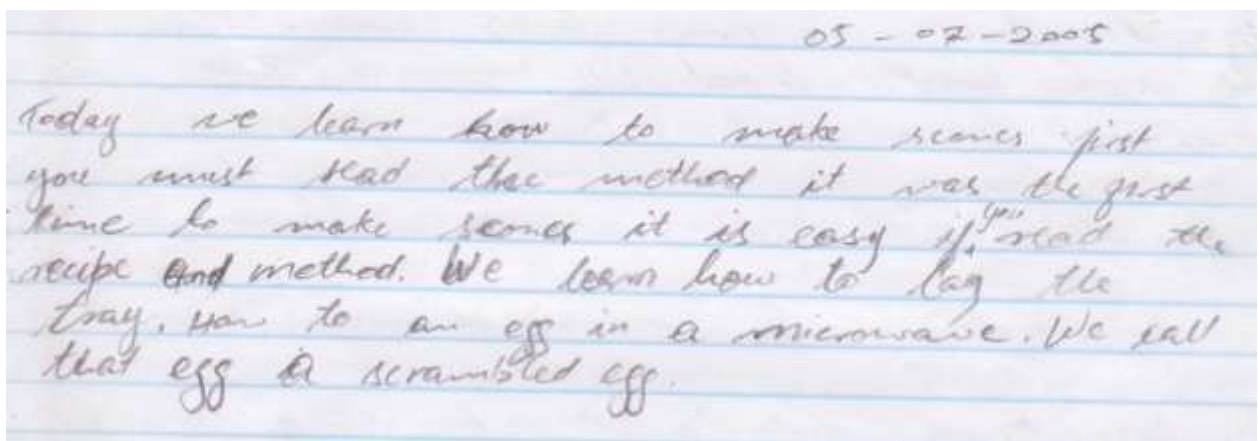
Here are examples of these ‘stories’ that are constantly being told:



I like to say the first day when Mr Mamre gave the telephone number I was happy, after the call I became unhappy because I ask myself why Ms Williams gave me Wednesday not Tuesday because gave her a call on Monday. But now I'm glad I'm here because everybody welcomes us and I think when I finish the course I am going to get job. I want to develop at school, to make someone courses at Bergzicht College because lecturers are very nice, like nursing.

Figure 1 (Introduction written by P8)

Transcription: "I like to say the first day when Mr Mamre gave the telephone numbers I was happy, after the call I became unhappy because I ask myself why Ms Williams gave me Wednesday not Tuesday because gave her a call on Monday. But now I'm glad I'm here because everyday welcomes us and I think when I finish the course I am going to get job. I want to develop at school, to make someone courses at Bergzicht College because lecturers are very nice, like nursing."



05-07-2005
Today we learn how to make scones first you must read the method it was the first time to make scones it is easy if you read the recipe and method. We learn how to lay the tray, how to an egg in a microwave. We call that egg a scrambled egg.

Figure 2 (body written by P8)

Transcription: "Today we learn to make scones first you must read the method it was the first time to make scones it is easy if you read the recipe and method. We

learn how to lay the tray. How to an egg in a microwave. We call that egg a scrambled.”

Note how the above extract almost represents a children’s story. Each sentence is factually written, to the point and straightforward. Each point made is educating the reader in some way. It also ends with *“We call that egg a scrambled egg”*. This reminds me of school lessons where teachers would say, for example, *“When water drops settle on leaves in the morning, we call this dew”* or *“There are things that grow on trees. We call this fruit.”*

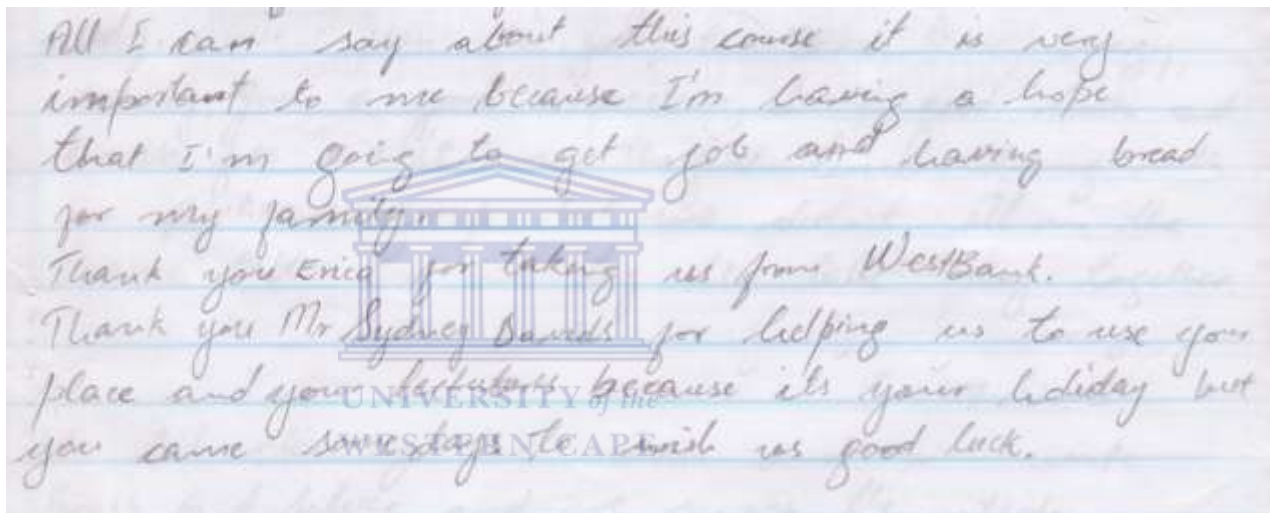


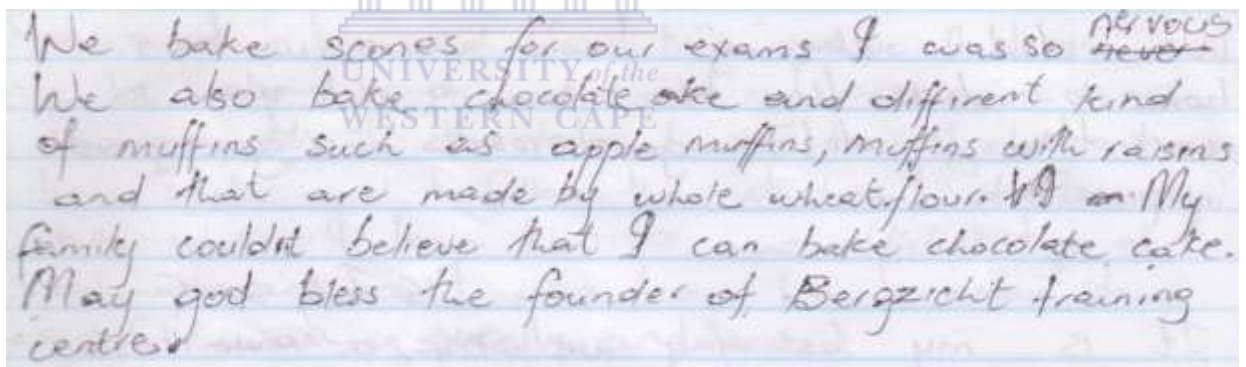
Figure 3(conclusion written by P8)

Transcription: *“All I can say about this course it is very important to me because I’m having a hope that I’m going to get job and having bread for my family. Thank you Erica for taking us from Wesbank. Thank you Mr. Sydney Davids for helping us to use your place and your lecturers because its your holiday but you came some days to wish us good luck.”*

In Figure 1 P8 introduces the course in a sense by discussing how she received a call from the organisers and she goes on to speak about how she feels about the opportunity. She also mentions her aspirations for the course and specifically mentions her goal career which is nursing. In Figure 2, straightforwardly, she discusses step-by-step what was done during the course and finally concludes, in Figure 3, by thanking the organisers and reminding the reader of her hope of

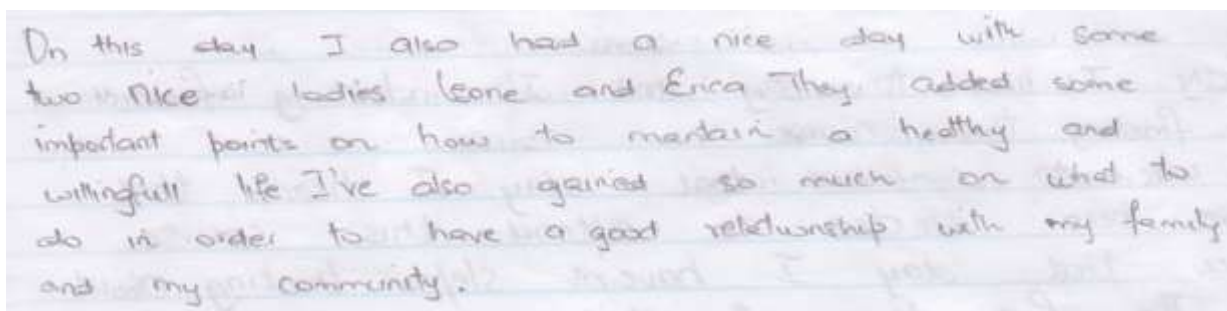
becoming employable. In this way P8 moulds the shape of her journal and constructs an identity of herself for the reader. She introduces the course, discusses what the course is made up of and gives the reader an idea of her hopes and aspirations which, in turn shapes the reader's idea of who she is.

Two other main genres that run its course throughout the data extracts are the various social relations the women attach to almost all activities and daily routines that are mentioned and the other is the dominant fear of failing, not succeeding and remaining unemployed. These two genres are somewhat related as the women continuously link themselves to others and are afraid of failing because they compare themselves to other, more elite groups of individuals, specifically women. This shows that they have accomplished personal pride. The social relations they attach to their life stories and their fear of failing is represented in the following examples:



Written by P6 on 08/07/05

Translation: *"We bake scones for our exams I was so nervous We also bake chocolate cake and different kind of muffins such as apple muffins, muffins with raisins and that are made by whole wheat flour. My family couldn't believe that I can bake chocolate cake. May god bless the founder of Bergzicht training centre."*



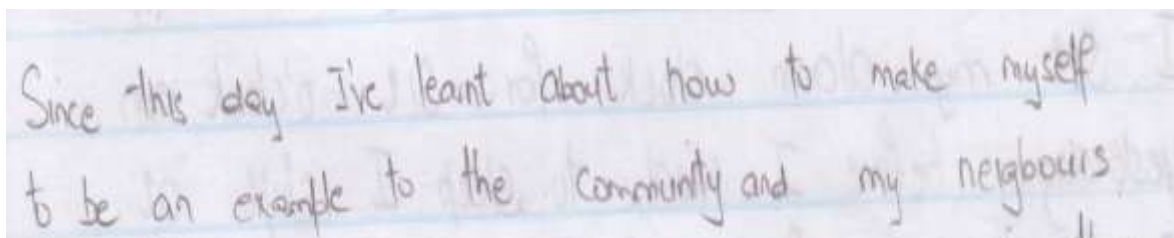
Written by P7 on 29/06/05

Transcription: *“On this day I also had a nice day with some two nice ladies Leone and Erica. They added some important points on how to maintain a healthy and willingfull life. I’ve also gained so much on what to do in order to have a good relationship with my family and my community.”*



Written by P7 on 01/07/05

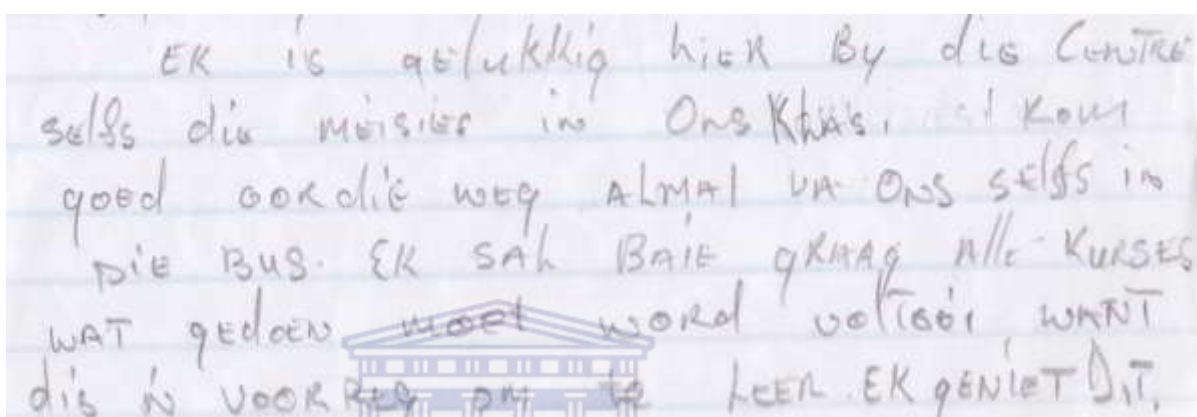
Transcription: *“Unitl this Friday I’ve gained so much I know myself and what I want. I know what I like and what to do in order to satisfy my needs. I also know what to do for my family and community.”*



Written by P7 on 30/06/05

Transcription: *“Since this day I’ve learnt about how to make myself to be an example to the community and my neighbours.”*

Note how P6 directly links her happiness and her family's joy to the course that she attended. Simultaneously P7 also links a 'good relationship' with her family and community to the success of this course and mentions this link in more than one extract. P7 also mentions two of the facilitators who have given them motivational seminars. Somehow their texts are always written about others in relation to themselves and once again their success in life is linked to other individuals in some way.



Written by P9 on 30/06/05

Translation: *"I am very lucky at the Centre. Even the women in our class are getting along well with the course and with each other on the bus. I would really like to continue with any future courses because it is a privilege and honour to learn. I enjoy it."*

As the women acquire basic literacy skills through the part-time literary classes in the three-week course mentioned in the study, they were encouraged to associate the acquisition of all kinds of skills with greater development, independence, and agency. Ahearn (2004: 311) says that 'Literacy as a socially defined phenomenon is constructed through a process of schooling'. The women in the study, however, see the classes as an opportunity; a way to a greater future regardless of its construction. P9, for example, sees the course as a privilege. She views education as a privilege and a great opportunity. What this tells me is that she might be scared such an opportunity may not pass her way again. She may fear the fact that without the course she will not become employable and successful.

Ek word baie lekker om elke dag by die
die opleiding te wees want as ek by die huis
is dink ek alle dinge. Ek wou een keer
my eie lewe nie so swaar dit
met my en my kind en ek gaan
na Marinda toe en ek vertel vir haar
hoe ek voel en sy se vir my
gaan in gebed en jy sal sien dinge
sal verander. ek wil nie so lewe
soos ek nou lewe nie ek wil
 baie groot in goeie ma vir my
seun wees maar sonder werk hoe
gaan ek dit reël.

Written by P21 on 28/06/05

Translation: “It feels great to do this course and to be here every day because when I am at home I think about all other things. For once I want my life to be different. I went to Marinda and told her how I feel and she prayed for me. She told me things would change. I don’t want to live like this. I really want to be a great mother for my son but without work how am I going to do that?”

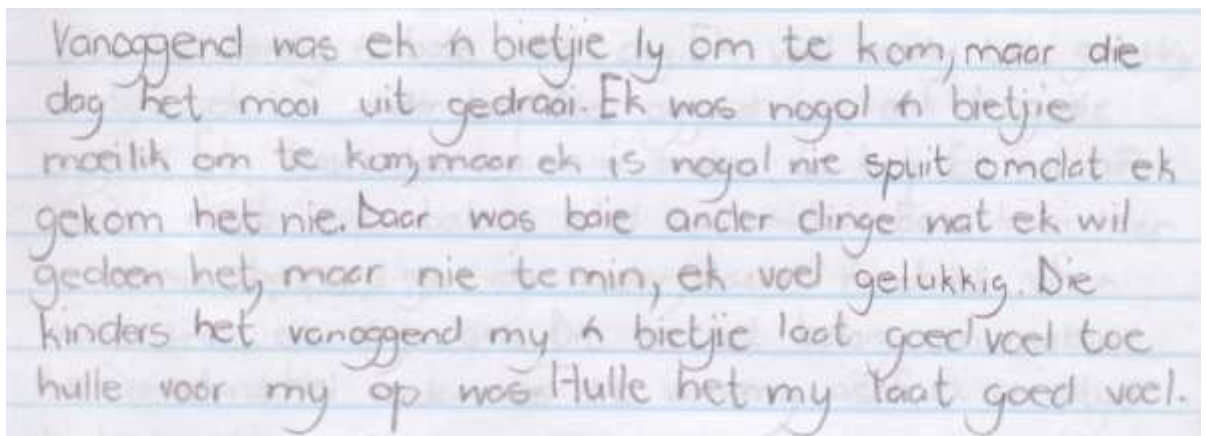
Here P21 also directly links success to the course and success to employment. She believes that taking care of her son requires being independent and employed, preferably living on her own as she mentions in her other journal extracts. Similarly in the following extract, P13 makes a link to the facilitators of the course and the opportunities that she comes across:

BAIE DANKIE VIR ROSEMARY ONS KOMBUIS
FASILITEERDER, SONDER GINWEEET EIK NIE
EKERHOOP DAAR SAL ALTYD SULKE PERSOONLIK-
HEDE OP MY PAD KOM. DIT KAN^N MENS
NET OPBOU. GOD SEEN BERGTZICHT & PERSONEEL
BAIE DANKIE ..

Written by P13 on 14/06/05

Translation: *“Thank you so much to our kitchen facilitator, Rosemary. Without you, I don’t know. I hope there will always be such personalities/ people crossing my path. That can only strengthen an individual. God bless Bergzicht and Personnel. Thank you very much.”*

There is very little reference to the self in these extracts as the women depend on others for their aspirations for success. As mentioned previously in the study, the women’s journals represent story-like structures with a ‘beginning’ with introductory facts, ‘body/ middle’ with detailed facts and an ending with aspiring facts. Apart from this story-like structure, the journals also portray a particular pattern. Each entry begins with a “negative” and ends with a “positive”. Also, the extract written by P21 above shows a story-like feature. It shows a clear beginning (a positive note, stating how great the course is), a clear middle section where she speaks about being hopeful and a clear ending which forms a closing sequence that brings about a certain voice (reported speech). Here she has a positive beginning, a negative middle and a positive ending. This is also exemplified with the following consecutive extract:

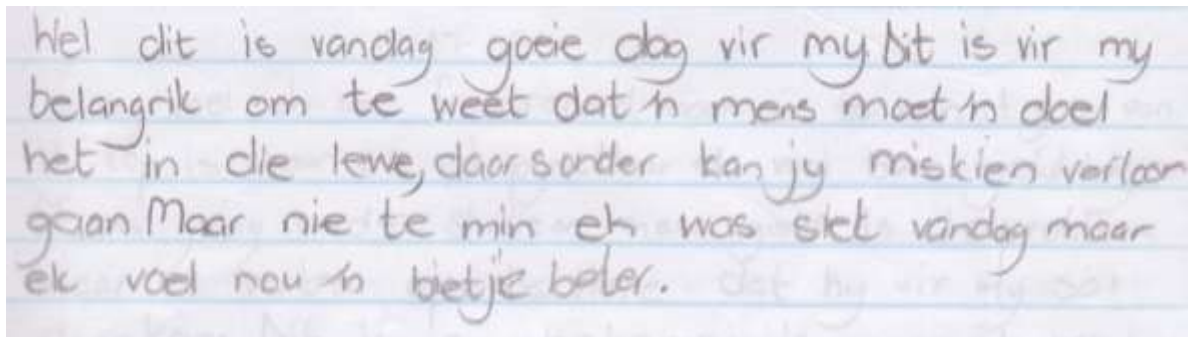


Vanoggend was ek n bietjie ly om te kom, maar die dag het mooi uit gedraai. Ek was nogal n bietjie moeilik om te kom, maar ek is nogal nie spuit omdat ek gekom het nie. Daar was baie ander dinge wat ek wil gedoen het, maar nie te min, ek voel gelukkig. Die kinders het vanoggend my n bietjie laat goed voel toe hulle voor my op was. Hulle het my laat goed voel.

Written by P14 on 29/06/05

Translation: *“This morning I was a bit lazy to go, but the day progressed nicely. I was actually a bit miserable/ unhappy to go but I am actually glad that I went. There were many other things I wanted to do but anyway, I feel lucky/happy. The*

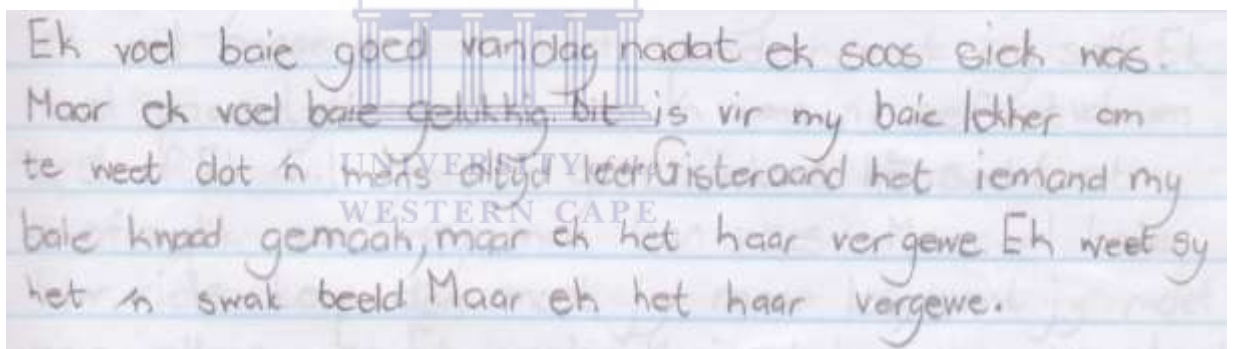
children made me feel good this morning when they woke up before me. They made me feel so good.”



Wel dit is vandag goeie dag vir my dit is vir my belangrik om te weet dat n mens moet n doel het in die lewe, daarsonder kan jy miskien verloor gaan Maar nie te min eh was siet vandag maar ek voel nou n bietjie beter.

Written by P14 on 04/07/05

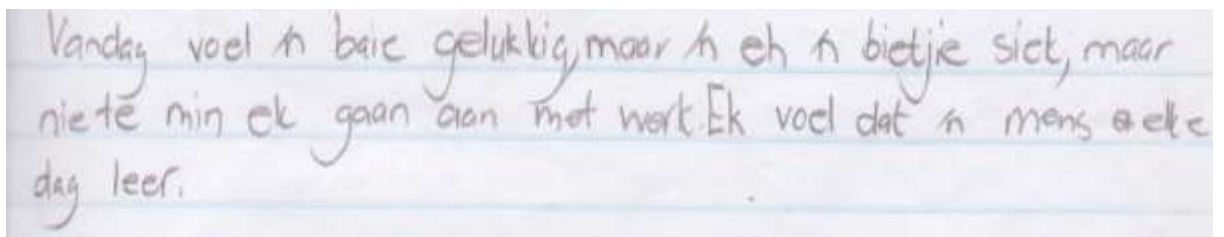
Translation: *“Well, today is a good day for me. It is important to me to know that we all have a purpose in life. Without knowing that, I would be lost. But nonetheless, I was sick today but I feel a bit better now.”*



Ek voel baie goed vandag nadat ek soos siet was. Maar ek voel baie gelukkig dit is vir my baie lekker om te weet dat n mens altyd leer. Gisteraand het iemand my baie knoop gemaak, maar ek het haar vergeewe. Eh weet sy het n swak beeld Maar eh het haar vergeewe.

Written by P14 on 06/07/05

Translation: *“I feel very good today after I was so sick. But I feel very lucky. It feels very good that I am always learning. Last night someone made me very angry but I forgave her. I know she had bad intentions but I forgave her.”*



Vandag voel n baie gelukkig, maar n eh n bietjie siet, maar nie te min ek gaan aan met werk. Ek voel dat n mens elke dag leer.

Written by P14 on 08/07/05

Translation: *“Today I feel lucky but a bit sick, but nonetheless I will go on with my work. I feel that we learn every day.”*

Similarly with all four of the above entries, P14 begins with some kind of negative activity of the day but ends with a positive outcome. For example P14 felt sick at some points but ended off the entries with the fact that she is still lucky to be learning something new and to be awarded such an opportunity. This resembles a pattern of a story with a “happily ever after” ending which usually begins with a pleasant beginning, sometimes continuing with an unpleasant middle and finally ending with a “happy ending”.



Chapter 7

Thematic Analysis of data

Ethnographic interviews and audiotapes are commonly used with thematic analysis. Once these are transcribed, the next step is to identify all data that relate to the already classified patterns such as conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings or common sayings. Themes are identified by bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which are often meaningless when viewed when alone.

The transcripts in this study were analysed for themes relating to meanings embedded within the lived experiences of the participants, underlying values and social and cultural conditions that shaped their lives, the construction of their identity and the impact thereof on their lives. According to Parker (1995) identities are socially created and influenced by history, culture, gender, sexuality, class and the broader relations of power. It is clear, then, that identities are not fixed, but are always in the process of being created in relationships with others. It is, therefore, also suited that the data be investigated along the structural guidelines of social constructionism.

7.1 Themes and sub-themes

The analysis of the journals revealed the following themes:

- Literacy
 - Identity construction through language use, linguistic methods and structuring

- Dis/Empowerment
 - ‘Social impotence’/ Innate hopelessness
 - Incompetence in language (spelling and grammatical errors), therefore causing an inability to express emotions, beliefs and aspirations
 - Voice or lack thereof (voicelessness)
 - Feeling less fortunate/ poor/ lower than others

- Feeling like they are powerless with their husbands and partners being in control of their households, giving them a sense of voicelessness
- They feel the role of being a mother and caregiver gives them a sense of empowerment
- Demographic and economic factors/setbacks
 - “poverty cycle”
 - Lack of employment, therefore lack of income and therefore lack of resources, particularly literacy resources
 - Poor living conditions
 - Relocation (forced displacement) of ‘minimum income’ families
- Hope/ Religion/ Faith
 - God as their source of hope and something to hold on to, to believe in
 - Hope in becoming employable and therefore having hope in fighting the “poverty cycle”
 - Language (or language barrier) as a role in expressing the hopes and dreams of women
- Identity
 - Role as mother, woman, citizen, etc
 - Race and ethnicity and inferiority/superiority in relation to this
 - Gender/ Sexuality
 - Diasporic identity (being forced to move or relocate)
 - Language as a role in identity construction

7.2 Self-representation

The texts contain quite a bit of material that points towards a clear image that the women wish to project. That is the image we can identify, and it is the only one. We cannot speak about their self-image in general terms, only in relational ones, on the basis of how they have presented themselves to others. We can assume that

such self-representations fitted the mother and carer role. Each woman invokes this frame of motherhood, as an opening plea for employment.

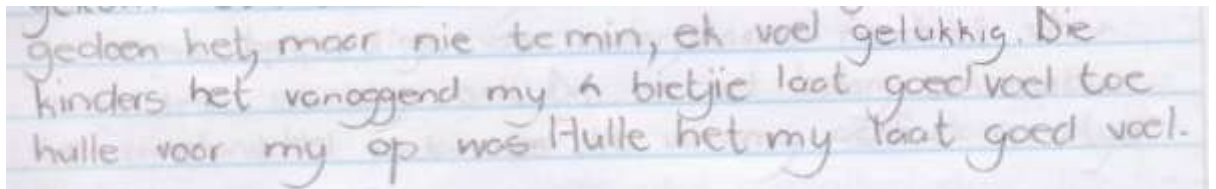


Figure (written by P14 on 29/06/05)

TRANSLATION: “This morning the children made me feel good when they woke up before me. They made me feel good.”



Figure (written by P13 on 14/06/05)

TRANSLATION: “Thank you Lord for my children who look up to me.”

Apart from the motherhood frame, what we see is a remarkably constant set of features of their character through the journal extracts. Four blocks of features can be distinguished:

1. The women put their children first on their list of priorities and take decisions based on what is best for them and their families in the given situation

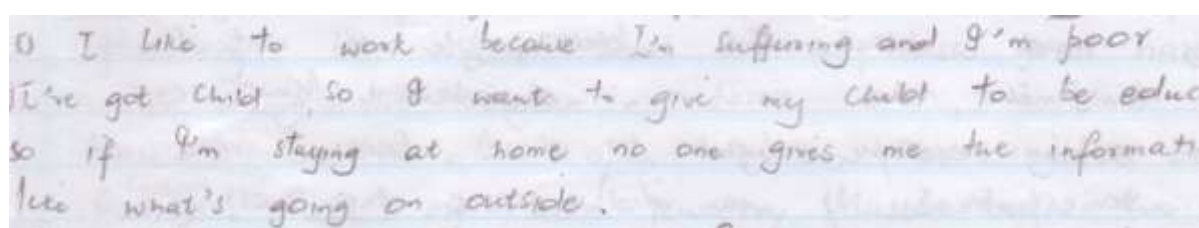
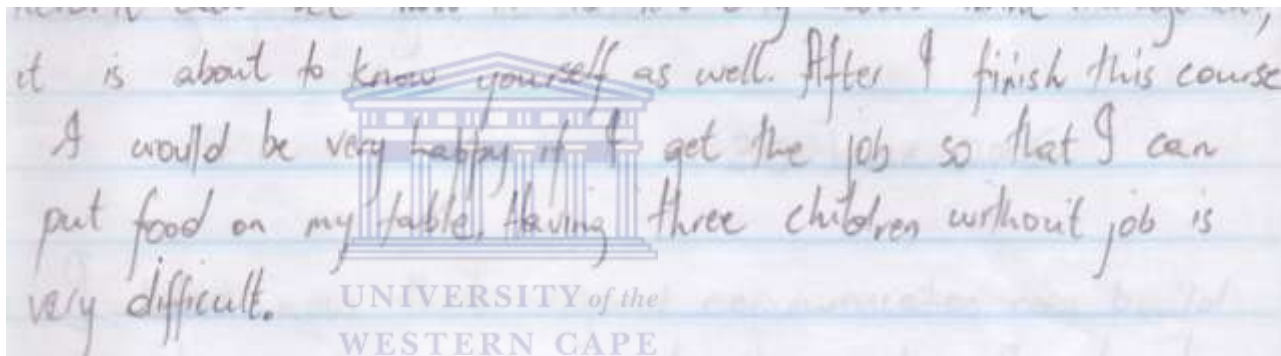


Figure (written by P2 on 27/06/05)

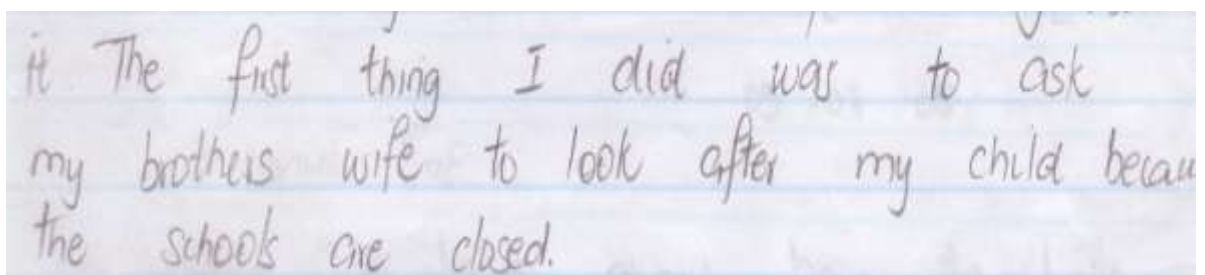
Transcription: *“I like to work because I’m suffering and I’m poor I’ve got child so I want to give my child to be educated so if I’m staying at home no one gives me the information like what’s going on outside.”*

The discourse of family importance arises in the women’s great desire to keep their family members happy and maintain a stable household. The women seem to show a sense of obligation to see to their family’s needs (putting food on the table, finding daycare for their children, making sure their families have what they need, etc.) This is, of course, part of the responsibilities of the role of the wife and/or mother. For example:



Written by P6 on 27/06/05

Transcription: *“it is about to know yourself as well. After I finish this course I would be very happy if I get the job so that I can put food on my table. Having three children without job is very difficult.”*



Written by P7 on 27/06/05

Transcription: *“The first thing I did was to ask my brothers wife to look after my child because the schools are closed.”*

These examples all show that these women’s families are important to them and their well-being is made first priority. These women desperately need employment in order to support their families financially.

The main and perhaps most important identity these women relate to is the role they play as a mother, wife and caregiver. This is evident in the priority given to each family represented by the participants. The women see that their children are taken care of during the day while they are at the course and they see that their families have a meal at the end of each day. As identities are constructed, as discussed by Loseke (2007), the women may feel that it is their duty to be the caregiver of the family and therefore they feel responsible for the family’s wellbeing. The women also reveal a close relationship to God and their faith and biblically the woman is seen as the caregiver and a passive individual of the household. Within any community, too, women are expected to play the role of the caregiver of the family. These viewpoints and stereotypes all play a part in the construction of identity. According to Loseke (2007), “this represents a sense of cultural identity which is a representation of family, religion and citizenship”.

2. The women describe themselves systematically as victims: of poverty and misfortune. They do this each time they qualify the course facilitators as ‘heroes’ and saviours, sometimes even directly or indirectly when they describe their gratitude or the opportunities offered through the course. And whenever they describe the negative attitudes of others (specifically the other members), they are implicitly contrasted to the normalcy, rationality, integrity and good sense of their own proceeding actions.

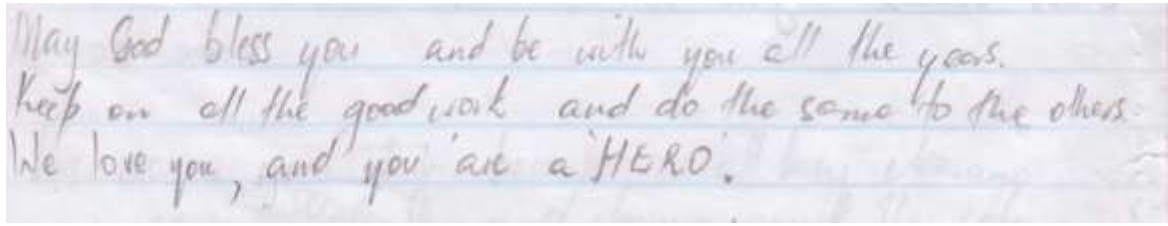


Figure (written by P1 on 15/07/05)

Transcription: “*May God bless you and be with you all the years. Keep on all the good work and do the same to the others. We love you, and you are a ‘HERO’.*”

They are often victims, they each implicitly signal that because they are *different from the rest*, they are more ambitious, better than the others and do things better and on grander scale than the rest. They also consider themselves to be “lucky” rather than “deserving” of great opportunities.

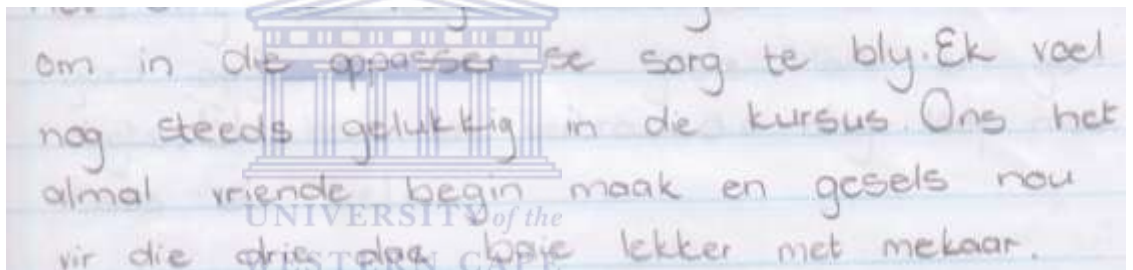
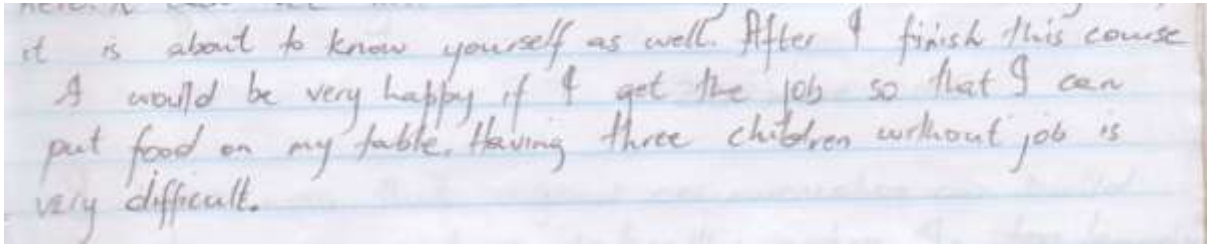


Figure (written by P10 on 29/06/05)

TRANSLATION: “*I still feel **lucky** in the course. We all made friends and had good conversations over the past three days... I am very glad that I got my husband’s support with this course.*”

3. The women also closely relate the hope of becoming employable to that of caring for the family. The words ‘happy’, ‘family/children’ and ‘job’ often appear in the same sentences. They clearly anticipate a better world if they were employed.

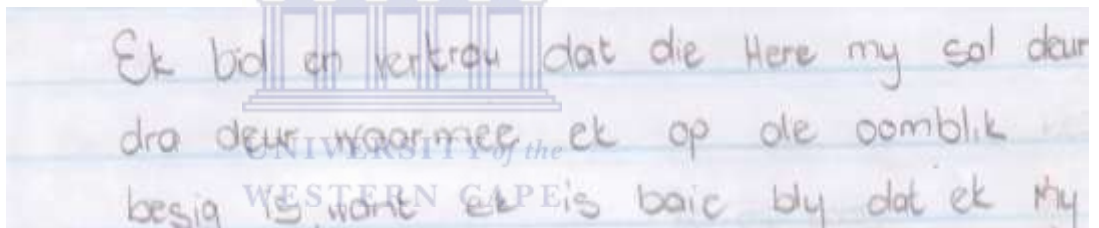


it is about to know yourself as well. After I finish this course
I would be very happy if I get the job so that I can
put food on my table. Having three children without job is
very difficult.

Written by P6 on 27/06/05

Transcription: *“it is about to know yourself as well. After I finish this course I would be very happy if I get the job so that I can put food on my table. Having three children without job is very difficult.”*

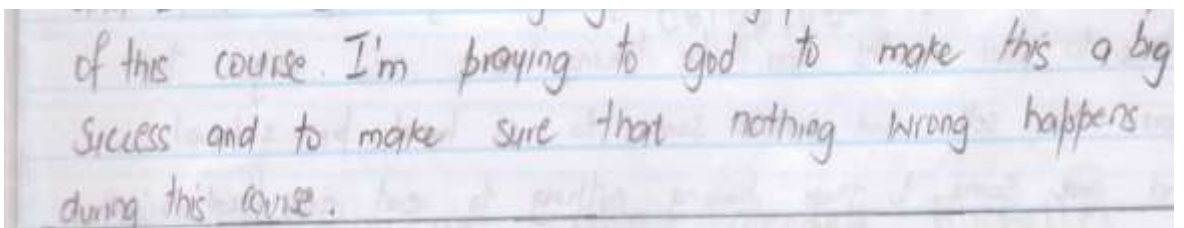
4. They describe themselves as women of faith and belief as Christians. They often mention prayer and their gratitude to God for the course, its organisers and facilitators, the different opportunities they have been exposed to and their families.



Ek bid en vertrou dat die Here my sal deur
dra deur waarmee ek op die oomblik
besig is want ekPE's baie by dat ek my

Written by P10 on 29/06/05

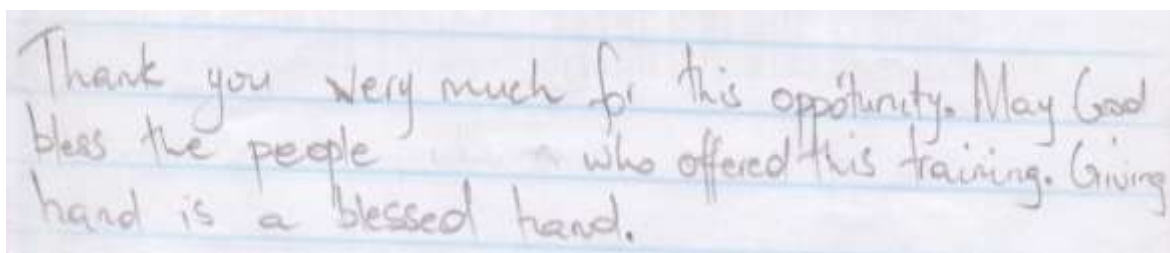
TRANSLATION: *“I pray and trust that the Lord will carry me through this.”*



of this course. I'm praying to god to make this a big
Success and to make sure that nothing wrong happens
during this course.

Written by P7 on 27/06/05

Transcription: *“I'm praying to god to make this a big success and to make sure that nothing wrong happens during this course.”*

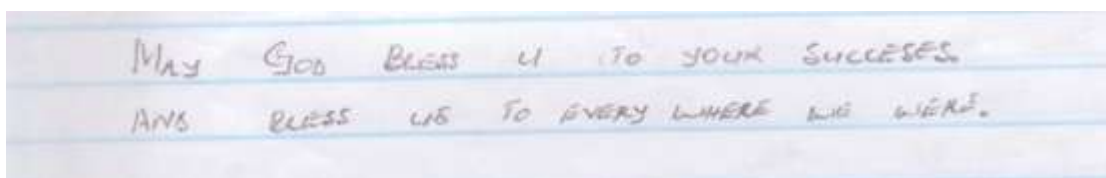


Written by P6 on 15/06/05

Transcription: *“Thank you very much for this opportunity. May God bless the people who offered this training. Giving hand is a blessed hand.”*

These women show great confidence and faith in God. In order for them to have hope and faith in the course itself, it is only inevitable that they would have hope and faith in God. They continuously thank God for the course, the organizers and their achievements within the course. This great faith in God and hope for the future accompanied by these women’s great respect and gratitude for the course and its organizers clearly shows their dedicated and warm personalities.

If we take these four blocks of features together, we see that the women present themselves as women who operate in a rational and moral universe, but with limited control over the course of their lives. They never refer to fate and fortune though. One of the main actors in their lives is, of course, the organisers and facilitators of the course, and they often make references to them into a religious frame, mentioning them in prayer and thanking the Lord for the opportunities they have created.



Written by P3 on 15/06/05

Transcription: *“May God bless u to your successes. And bless us to every where we were.”*

Written by P2 on 15/07/05

Transcription: *“I wish God gives us both the work, and also God bless MR DAVIS and your family. You must continue to help the other people. I wish you a longlife GOOD BYE”*

Written by P12 on 04/07/05

TRANSLATION: *“My day started off lovely. After praying I was really established (possibly implying that she felt refreshed or renewed) and strong. I learn something new everyday. The prayer in my heart is that the Lord will strengthen us and carry us through this.”*

These are examples of appraisal messages and seem to be shown often in the journals. It could be considered to be somewhat clichéd expressions (*“The prayer in my heart is that the Lord will strengthen us and carry us through this.”* - written by P12, above). In most of her daily entries, P12 never fails to mention how good God is and to thank Him for what He has done and is doing for her. She directly says that she believes that it is only right to start the day by praying and thanking God. God is then again noted as the source of hope and great power. Her belief

and trust in God creates a sense of empowerment and a sense of control on her life as she chooses to believe that she is going to become successful. Similarly, most of the women (as exemplified in the above extracts) rely on God and have great faith and trust that all things are made possible through Him.

These features define a kind of core, a stable cluster of self-defining characteristics that weave through the complex journal entry exercises they undertook. It is this characteristic that moves through time and space. Central in their lives is a stable subject: each of them believe that ‘someone’ cares about them, understands them and loves them enough to give them hope. This particular ‘someone’ (or people) is the organisers and facilitators and, of course, God.

7.3 Self-representation and empowerment

Most of the women in the study emphatically make mention of their families, how much the course means to them and how it benefits the well-being of their families. It was very clear to note how important family is to them and how much pride they exude with just the hope of becoming employable.

A method of analysing self-presentation in narratives is looking at agency. According to Ahearn (2001:306), “agency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act.” When defining agency, certain questions arise such as “must agency be conscious, intentional, or effective?” and also “what is the difference between an actor and an agent?” Karp (1986: 137) answers the latter question and suggests that an actor refers to a person whose action is rule-governed or rule-oriented, whereas an agent refers to a person engaged in the exercise of power in the sense of the ability to bring about effects and to constitute the world.

One of the most common tendencies in discussions of agency is the treatment of it as a synonym for free will. Action theorists, in an attempt to explain human agency, generally argue that agency requires some sort of concomitant mental state such as intention, presence of self, a rational point of view and a domain of intentional control or motivation, responsibility, and expectations of recognition

or reward. A particular goal for a narrative analysis is to comprehend how these women become actors and agents through the use of literacy.

The issue of the languages spoken in Wesbank as a particular space – Afrikaans, English and Xhosa - also needs to be taken into account in this study. “Apart from its symbolic value, the main function of a language is to provide individuals of a particular population sub-group with a mode of communication thus adding to a specific identity” (Van der Merwe and Van der Merwe, 2006: 1).

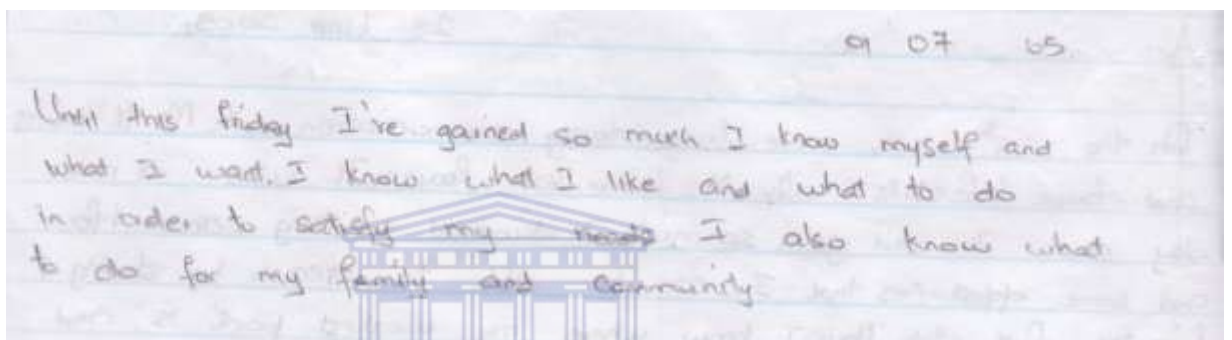


Figure (written by P7)

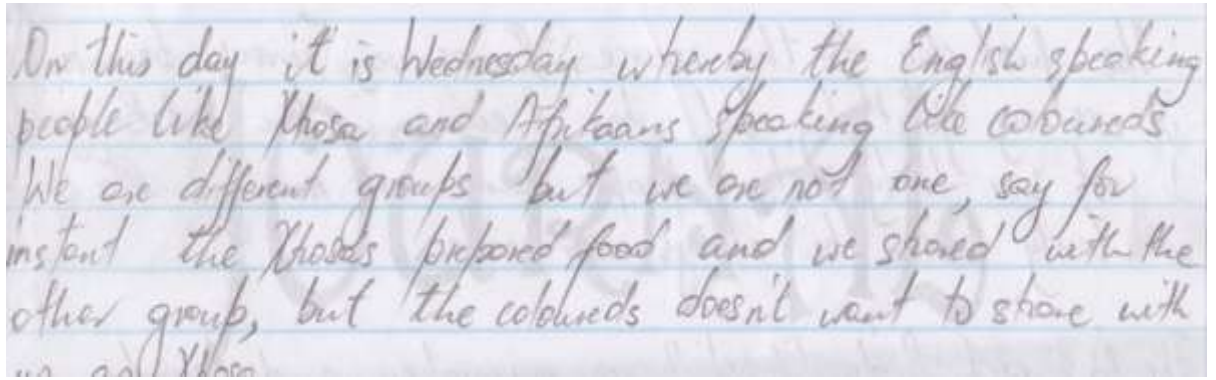
Transcription: “*Until this Friday I’ve gained so much I know myself and what I want. I know what I like and what to do in order to satisfy my needs. I also know what to do for my family and community.*”

Here Agency is present as P7 positions herself as a sole agent, indicated by words such as “*I’ve*”, “*I*” and “*my*” which these three sentences consist of substantially. She exudes a strong and empowered sense of self which is exemplified by the frequent use of “emotional verbs” (verbs not necessarily indicating physical action but indicating inward/cognitive notions of action. For example “*I’ve gained*”, “*I know*”, “*I like*” and “*I want*”). Family and community becomes an important factor, leading to the construction of the role of a woman (in her community) and that of a wife and/or mother. For example women feel a sense of belonging once they become a mother or recognized woman in the community. Some women may feel that their worth or power is determined by the work they do in or for their communities and family homes. The main themes in this extract are discourses of

identity, a sense of empowerment, sense of self (through agency in particular), the role of a mother and woman in the community and a sense of hope (in becoming employable).

The study explored the living conditions and life chances of women in Cape Town, South Africa, based on their own accounts. The study focused on identifying factors that impeded or facilitated access to literacy in two groups of women within the same setting. It explored the linkages and the empowerment of women, including how it affects recipients' sense of self and their perceptions of their 'place' in society. In essence, the study looked at how literacy, or lack of it, shapes identities. A major goal of this study was to find out what it is like to be literate within a rural setting in Cape Town, South Africa and how these literacy skills are often used. In other words, by using the views of the participants as primary data, the study sought to give voice to the women.

Much has been written about the marginal status of women in Southern Africa. As a consequence, one of the goals of the study was to find out women's views on the issue from their own perceptions. My findings show that a distinct dichotomy exists between attitudes toward both groups of women of the different races but towards the Coloured women by the African women. During my analysis, there was some evidence of attitudinal biases from the kind of language each group used to describe the other. While my intention here is not to conduct a formal discourse analysis, the use of certain words, particularly by the African women, did imply a subtle psychological and social distance between both groups of women. A distinction is immediately made between 'us' (Xhosa-speaking Africans) and 'them' (Afrikaans-speaking Coloureds). A definite separation is made with regards to both race and the languages that each racial group speaks. The phrases 'them' and 'these women' were often used by the African women in reference to their Coloured peers as exemplified in the following extract:

A photograph of a piece of lined paper with handwritten text in cursive. The text is written in dark ink and is somewhat blurry. It describes a social interaction between different groups of people, mentioning 'English speaking people like Xhosa and Afrikaans speaking like coloureds' and a shared meal.

Written by P1 on 13/07/05

Transcription: *“On this day it is Wednesday whereby the English speaking people like Xhosa and Afrikaans speaking like coloureds[.] We are different groups but we are not one, say for instant the Xhosas prepared food and we shared with the other group, but the coloureds doesn’t want to share with us as Xhosa.”*

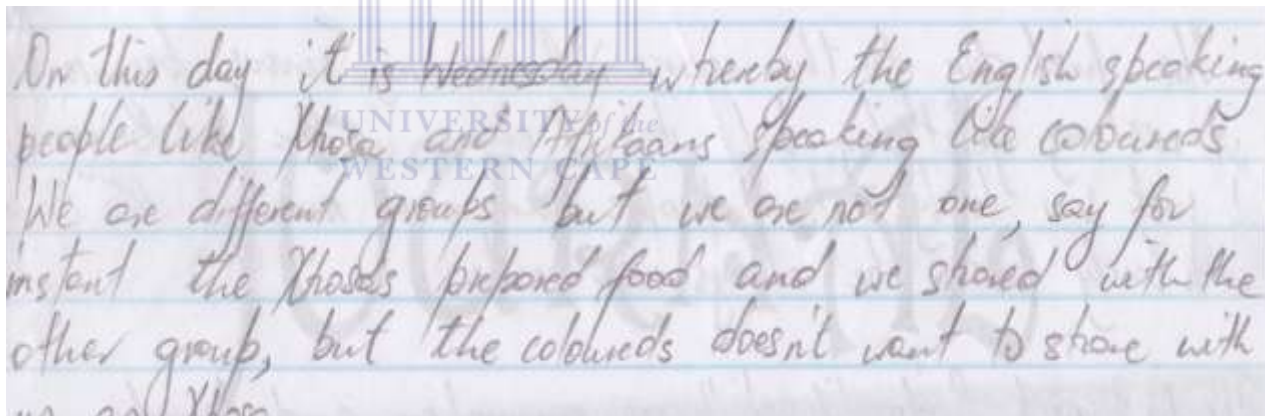
This attitude is perhaps the result of the differential social spaces both groups of women occupy within their community. For some of the women, the effect is a further erosion of their self-esteem as they consider themselves inadequate even among other women. One strategy adopted in this study was to find out from each group of women their perceptions of the living conditions and status of women in general. This revealed not only additional information about the participants’ perceptions of their own individual situations and identities, but also their views on the social condition and quality of life of the other group. Both groups of participants believe that employed women with good literacy skills and formal education have higher status because they constitute a visible ‘elite’ group, while unemployed women with no or little literacy skills or formal education are less visible and more prone to being discriminated against in important community gatherings.

A key stance adopted in this study is that literacy and employment can empower women in Southern Africa. Literacy and employment appears to be a necessary prerequisite for enabling women, through increases in their knowledge base which allow them to better understand their social, political, and material world, with a possibility of reconstructing their social identities. The account presented shows

that literacy and employment can indeed enable women to (re)negotiate their individual and social identities in empowering ways. My findings suggest that, while access to literacy may not completely eliminate deep-rooted ideologies and repressive and gendered cultural practices, it does neutralize or at least minimize the impact, thus bringing women closer to the centre from the margins.

7.4 Race and ethnicity as an identifying factor

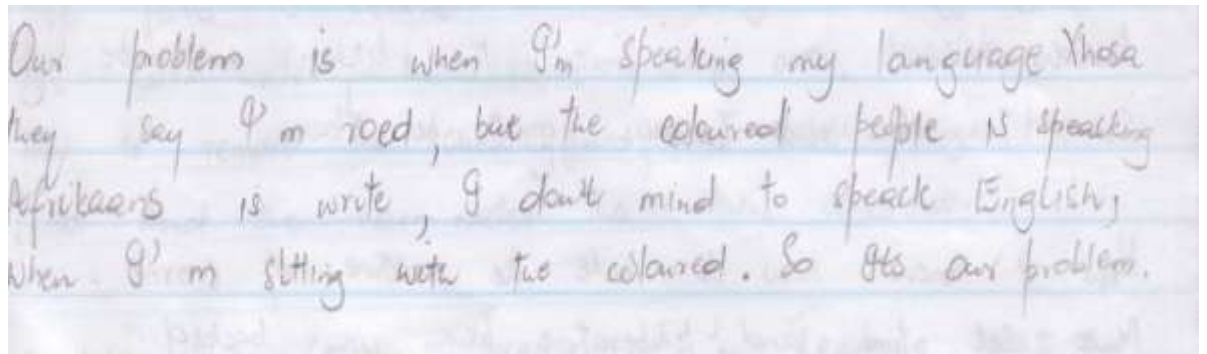
In a diverse and unique country such as ours, South Africa is faced with race and ethnic issues. Even after the Apartheid era, people still have predisposed mindsets where they, if not publicly, subconsciously note race and ethnicity and measure themselves according to their own race and ethnicity. The journals clearly indicate feelings of inferiority, when, for example, the women make reference to the coloured group not wanting to share food with them. The following are comments which exemplify this division of race:



Written by P1 on 13/07/05

Transcription: *"On this day it is Wednesday whereby the English speaking people like Xhosa and Afrikaans speaking like coloureds[.] We are different groups but we are not one, say for instant the Xhosas prepared food and we shared with the other group, but the coloureds doesn't want to share with us as Xhosa."*

Note how she refers to Africans as Xhosas but she refers to coloureds as coloureds and not as Afrikaans-speakers.



Written by P2 on 08/07/05

Transcription: *"Our problem is when I'm speaking my language Xhosa they say I'm roed, I don't mind to speak English, when I'm sitting with the coloured. So Its our problem."*

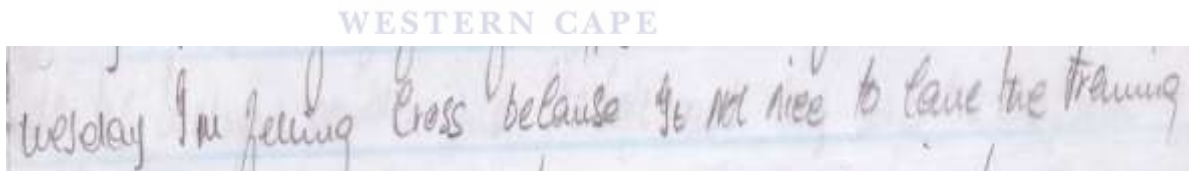
Note the sarcastic tone in her speech. In both examples the Xhosa speaking women resemble a sense of unity and classify the Afrikaans-speaking women as being less than unified and being almost arrogant. This could be the case but could also be a psychological trigger whereby these women (both races) divide themselves by race and language without even realizing it. The segregation that their ancestors experienced is perhaps imprinted in their minds and they now look at race through a democratic eye.

7.5 Voicelessness

As Wesbank became an area of relocation of 'minimum income' families, this process of forced displacement lead to marginalization of minorities and underprivileged groups. Baynham and De Fina (2005) look at stories that are ignored and silenced by public discourse and even individual discourse. This theory compliments the hypothesis by Weiss (2004) that "African women have a voice but these voices are silenced, suppressed, or not wanted to be used due to fear of isolation and ridicule. The voices of African women are looked at and

analyzed through the journals provided. As writing gives more insight into feelings and emotions than mere spoken words, these journals were ideal in looking at discourses surrounding the concept of voice and voicelessness. Stories are always a recapitulation of past experience.

The idea of voicelessness seems to be portrayed as a myth, something of the past but instead of shunning the idea of voicelessness, I use this concept against a backdrop of writings/ journals and uncover some things that perhaps my participants wish to say but are silenced in a way. The distinction between poor linguistic skills and voicelessness also needs to be made. These women, as mentioned before, were asked to write their journals in English, not their mother tongue. This may have caused for issues/ phrases to be omitted either because of poor spelling and grammatical errors or because they may not have known how to get certain points or ideas across in English. This ultimately contributes to the latter side of the omission of thoughts and feelings which, of course, could be brought out by the concept of voicelessness or 'silencing'. This needs to be taken into careful consideration and perhaps a psychological viewpoint needs to be constructed. An example would be the following quote:



Written by P5 on 28/06/05

Transcription: *“Wednesday Im feeling cross because It not nice to leave the training.”*

At this point one does not know why she did not attend the course on Wednesday, whether or not it was by choice, due to lack of transport or personal reasons.

Another comment she makes is:

A photograph of a handwritten note on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and reads: "Wesday Im feeling cross Im not feeling good to the training the bus is coming late in bus stop and in my House is a incommunication".

Written by P5 on 29/06/05

Transcription: *“Wesday Im feeling cross Im not feeling good to the training the bus is coming late in bus stop and in my House is a incommunication.”*

It is clear here that she is unhappy for some reason. There seems to be some kind of trouble at home. Perhaps she is having trouble communicating with her husband; perhaps her husband does not want her to attend the course and is not hearing her point of view. Once again this is unclear. The following comment also indicates some kind of relationship/domestic issues:

A photograph of a handwritten note on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and reads: "we did communication lesson and I learn that shouting does not solve anything. I know now that is I have a problem with my husband. I must talk to him in a polite way. In laundry I learn according". A watermark for the University of the Western Cape is visible in the background.

Written by P4 on 29/06/05

Transcription: *“we did communication lesson and I learn that shouting does not solve anything. I know now that is I have a problem with my husband. I must talk to him in a polite way. In laundry I learn according....”*

According to Blommaert (2005: 96) “the practice of writing a journal is clearly empowering, not simply as a means of practicing a literacy skill, but also because it provided the women with the opportunity to produce a lasting, consequential, thoughtful discourse artifact”. Even though voice and agency is a powerful factor

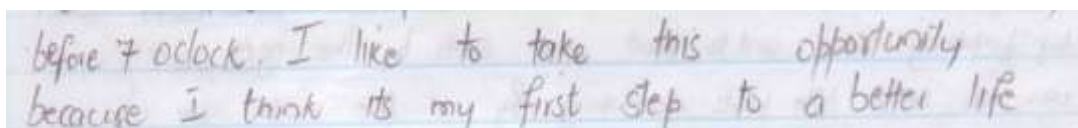
in the text here, the argument here remains that voice and agency in the Xhosa speakers texts is socio-structurally silenced even in a research circle such as this.

7.6 Space, language and identity

Van der Merwe and Van der Merwe (2006) say that “language attaches a community or sub-group to a specific identity”. If this is true, what type/s of identity do the women in my research population have? The Xhosa-speaking women were asked to write the journals in English, a language which is not their mother tongue, whereas the Afrikaans-speaking women were asked to write their journals in Afrikaans. How then are their identities challenged, infringed upon and how are other identities imposed on them? This is but one discourse found that relates to the concept of identity. Ultimately then, the concept of identity could be related to the process of displacement. Here the idea of “Diasporic identity” could be taken into account. Identities are often challenged and overpowered when individuals are forced to move out of their place of residence, a place they call home, a safe haven. What happens next? And what resources do they have? Surely a combination of ‘challenged identities’ and ‘social impotence’ cannot be emotionally healthy. The role of the mother is also questioned and related to the concept of identity. As Weiss (2004) looks at the ideology/ myth that ‘mother’ is the only category of women which is depicted in a favourable way. This is proven to be otherwise as I investigate that the women see themselves as powerful and important when associated with their community, church and the corporate world.

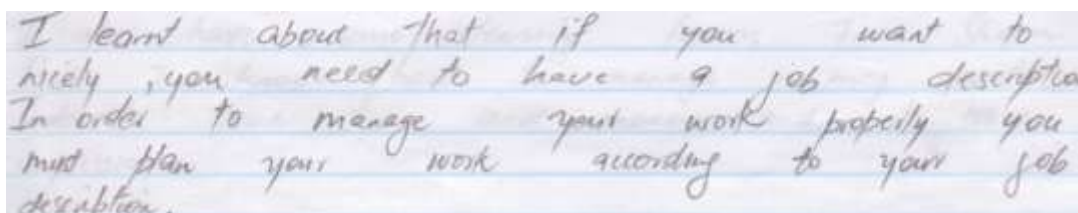
7.7 Personal identities

There was a sharp contrast between the accounts of both the Coloured and African groups of women with regard to how they perceive themselves and their social location within their communities. They seemed quite aware of the advantages of literacy and employment. They reported that Illiteracy and unemployment limited their potential, while employment means a better future and greater opportunities, as the participants point out in the following:



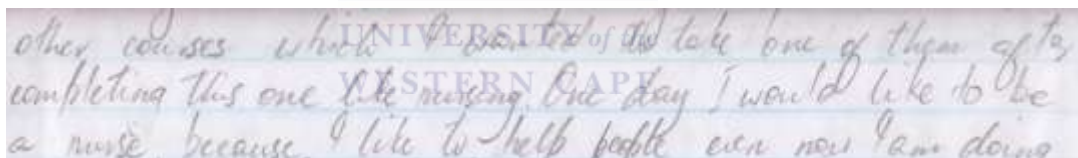
Written by P1 on 27/06/05

Transcription: *“before 7 o'clock[.] I like to take this opportunity because I think its my first step to a better life.”*



Written by P4 on 14/07/05

Transcription: *“I learnt about that if you want to nicely, you need to have a job description[.] In order to manage your work properly you must plan your work according to your job description.”*



Written by P1 on 27/06/05

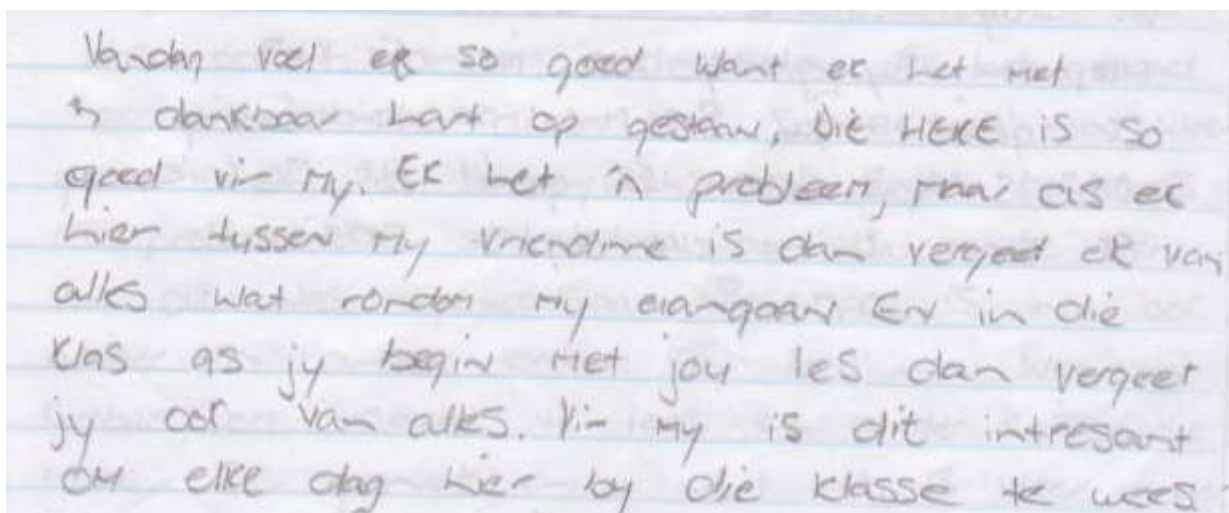
Transcription: *“other courses which I wanted to take one of them after completing this one like nursing. One day I would like to be a nurse because[.] I like to help people even now I am doing[.]”*

As with the above extracts it is clear that to these women the course means great opportunities to them, learning literacy skills and domestic skills clearly translate into hope of employment and a good future for them and their families. The participant's attitude is supported by Stromquist's (1997) assertion that literacy and employment increases an individual's sense of mobility and freedom. Conversely, lack of literacy and employment can be quite limiting particularly in contemporary contexts. There was also a perceived relationship between literacy,

employment and self-worth among virtually all the participants in the study. Perhaps as a direct consequence of the low valuation of their work, the women tended to see themselves as dependent on their husbands (those who were married) and the government for opportunities. For instance, despite the fact that they provide for a good part of the essential survival needs of their families, most had difficulty admitting this, opting rather to say that they played only ‘supportive roles’. According to them, the powerful position men occupy within their households means that women can only play subordinate roles. Women reported feeling empowered enough to control their own destinies within boundaries they set for themselves, even though such boundaries may coincide with prevailing societal norms. It would appear then, that when women who are more economically independent there is a tendency toward greater autonomy and power within households and communities regardless of the overall societal perceptions of women.

7.8 Personal identities in relation to the world around them

People’s talk can be used to identify other aspects of their lives as suggested by Parker (1999). He also suggests that many texts can be opened up and read using different methods. The journals of the women not only allow for considerable analysis of underlying aspects and issues but also give direct quotations which seem to lead to other important and investigative discourses. However, what are also important in textual discourse analysis are those things that are silent, omitted, or avoided in some cases. Most of the women’s family members such as parents and siblings are located outside of the country and the women themselves live with their husbands and partners. Although they relate their daily lives to many social relations such as their community and church, they often neglect to mention their partners in the journal texts. In fact they mention the family members that do not stay with them much more than they mention their partners, who in most cases do. This may or may not be done intentionally but what the women did deliberately is sometimes omit some minor details. The following examples may be able to show the above facts:

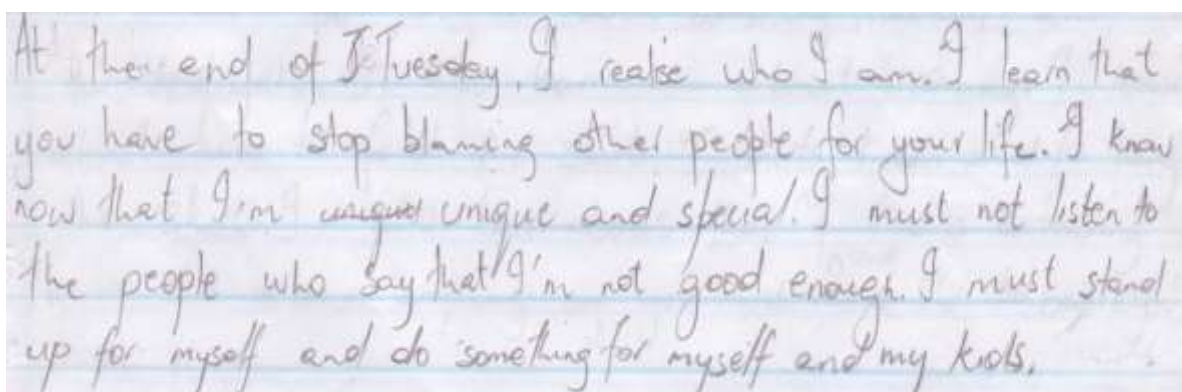


Vandag voel ek so goed want ek het met 'n dankbaar hart op gestaan, die HERE is so goed vir my. Ek het 'n probleem, maar as ek hier tussen my vriendinne is dan vergeet ek van alles wat rondom my aangaan. En in die klas as jy begin met jou les dan vergeet jy ook van alles. Vir my is dit interessant om elke dag hier by die klasse te wees.

Written by P11 on 12/07/05

Translation: "Today I feel great because I woke up with a thankful heart. The Lord is so good to me. I have a problem but when I am with my friends here at the course I forget about everything. It is interesting to be here at the class every day."

P11 mentions that she has a problem, probably at home, but she does not mention what the problem is or who it is with. All that seems to matter to her at this point is the course and the great relationships she has formed.



At the end of Tuesday, I realise who I am. I learn that you have to stop blaming other people for your life. I know now that I'm unique and special. I must not listen to the people who say that I'm not good enough. I must stand up for myself and do something for myself and my kids.

Written by P6 on 28/06/05

Transcription: "At the end of Tuesday, I realise who I am. I learn that you have to stop blaming other people for your life. I know now that I'm unique and special. I

must not listen to the people who say that I'm not good enough. I must stand up for myself and do something for myself and my kids."

It is pretty clear that P6 has been discouraged and told by others that she is not good enough for success. It is also clear that she has gone through some emotional bruising but she does not say from who or when this occurred. She also mentions how extremely important her children are to her but again, like P11, she does not mention any husband or father of the children. This also shows close association with important networks that have been observed in this study.

Conclusion

Feminist methodology has influenced the way in which we interpret the narratives of women's lived experiences. This research paper has explored the ways in which women construct, perform and negotiate their gendered identities through the event of narration as they recall their experiences. One way this was done was through identifying the different themes in each text being explored.

One of the recurring themes in this research paper is identity. Identities are socially created and influenced by history, culture, gender, class and relations of power. The women in the study project a clear image through their journals. These projections fit the mother and caregiver role. This is evident in the fact that their children remain first on their lists of priorities. The other identity they constantly make mention of is their role as victim of poverty and misfortune. They also present a strong sense of self and lastly they describe themselves as women of faith and belief as christians. This shows that women are therefore portrayed as living in a rational and moral universe.

Language is also a strong theme that comes through each journal. Language is related to a particular space with communication adding to a specific identity. Literacy and employment can ultimately empower women in South Africa. Although the term voicelessness is assumed to be a myth, women have indeed a voice but are often silenced due to isolation and ridicule or fear thereof.

It is also evident that a distinct dichotomy exists between attitudes towards different racial groups. My research implied a subtle psychological and social distance between groups of women ('coloured' and 'black'). This may be the result of different social spaces the groups of women are in.

Although they relate their lives to social relations and make continuous reference to family, they make little or no mention of their partners. This may be related to troubled households, absent fathers of their children, etc. This list of possibilities is endless. Overall identity, literacy and language, race and religion remain dominant and somewhat interrelated themes.



Chapter 8

8.1 Reflections and conclusions

It is now time to reflect on the different threads that ran through the analysis of the documents by the women. These documents have raised several rather fundamental issues. These issues have to do, in part, with they represent- what we read in them and how they are represented. I will firstly summarise some of the main points of my analysis:

1. The documents I examined were oriented towards particular genres. The genre that dominated the 21 journals was a serious, rational and formal genre in which events were organised chronologically. These women wrote history and this act of writing history assumes a particular generic shape. The texts were monoglossic and organised into textual units- 'chapters' by dating each day of the course- but they were also serious, factual and detailed.
2. We could see in many journals how the texts were conscious and deliberate and what a considerable effort it represented. The women knew that these journals would be read by others and they used the texts to create a plea for employment and other opportunities.
3. We could also see how writing was productive. The women produce themselves as specific to a special genre. They wrote 'their lives' where they started organising memories of events in a pattern. In this way, the women constructed an 'autobiographical' Self while writing their 'life story'.
4. The women also have to stretch their writing skills to the limit as they lack linguistic competence. We therefore get a glimpse of the structure of their repertoires and of the wider conditions under which texts are made. This is where we can start seeing grassroots literacy as systemic and as something which is organised in relation to economics of signs and meanings. The texts become grassroots because they have been lifted out of their local

‘grassroots’ environment and transferred to a different (‘non-grassroots’) environment.

According to Blommaert (2008: 187), “we are what others ascribe to us, and that ascriptions proceed on the basis of categories and criteria specific to the ones who do the ascription work”. Describing and interpreting someone else’s life, work and personality, therefore, can say more about the one who described than about the one who is described, and I know that my own descriptions and interpretations of the women cannot be exempt from that. There is always an autobiographical bias, one that is inflected by questions we want to answer for ourselves. The only way to handle this issue is by specifying the questions and sources of inspiration that guided me in my descriptions and interpretations. I was clearly dissatisfied with the way in which lives are described. What is often lacking is a solid theory in which individual things can be used to understand bigger, structural things. We can only understand ourselves if we see our Selves as set in the collective and enduring frames we often label with terms such as ‘culture’ and ‘society’.

The concept of a life is something that defines an individual. Lives are seen as self-evident givens, things that everyone possesses. What matters is whether you can discursively disclose ‘your life’ adequately or not. “If you do it well, you have an identity, if you don’t your identity is in doubt”, says Blommaert (2008: 189). Castells (1997: 10) also insists that ‘self-identity’ is not a distinctive trait possessed by the individual. It is the self as understood by the person in terms of her biography. This biography is there and the task of identity-formation is to find an adequate mapping of practices onto that biography. Biographies are themselves a highly specialised and complex practice. We exist as individuals and also have a systemic existence. The individual is in a social formation whose life is a matter of structural organisation and control, something which is literally produced and reproduced. I see writing as a mechanism to the production of Selves operating within specific conditions. Writing is productive: it offers a rich indexical terrain for others to judge and others rarely avoid these judgments. The way writing is conditioned, the particular forms of writing, the way writing is organised

culturally and socially as a mechanism for producing Selves and the particular functions of writing have to be examined as it cannot be taken for granted.

Societies are literate as soon as people write. It does not matter whether many or few people write: as soon as there are literate people, the sociolinguistic patterns of that society have been transformed, and people with limited linguistic skills can perform in intricate literacy practices, be it under certain conditions and in a restricted set of roles. Writing becomes part of the world of communicative resources, even for people who are barely literate but who can draw on the writing skills of others to communicate in writing or to read texts. We should, therefore see literacy in relation to the wider social conditions for communication and as a factor changing these conditions. In other words, we should specify the particular literacies or literacy resources that operate in a specific area.

Overall, through their stories the participants categorised themselves, other people, places and activities in different ways. The participants' storied accounts simultaneously served to constitute their activities as normal, ordinary, and hence credible social activities, while also setting themselves apart from the masses, as individuals, knowledgeable, and thus warranted in their narratives. This shows how links between places and persons get connected in narrative accounts, and is an example of how place/space is produced in, and is a topic of, discourse.

8.2 Literacy practices

The theme that comes through most clearly from these texts is that structures of feeling are constantly shifting and they reflect and shape changing notions of personhood, agency and social hierarchy. Each journal entry differs somewhat, yet there are interesting parallels. Some might argue that since these ladies are primarily using their literacy skills (whether good or bad) to conduct journal entries, perhaps journal texts should be brought into female literacy classrooms as texts. Despite the fact that these women would apply their partial literacy skills (they could read and write but were not trained in literacy formally; many spelling and grammatical errors of the journals are evidence of this) to tasks quite different

from just writing in their journals, they nevertheless perceived that there was prestige in becoming “fully” literate.

The journal documents give us an image of literacy reduced to its bare essentials. We see with the journals that the women’s writing proceeded in a context where no normative and standardised model of language and literacy was available to them. The only resource they really had was writing itself: the bare essentials of putting graphic signs on paper as a result of ‘thinking’. There are a few reasons for this. The first is that inquiries into literacy should never take too much for granted. Understanding what people actually do with literacy requires close attention to the local systemic conditions under which it occurs and is practised. It is then that we start to see the limits of what they can do with it. We sometimes have to delve into the soil of literacy and we need to look at practices and material conditions of writing, before we can make reasonable accurate statements about what writers communicate. Secondly, this then opens a wide spectrum of topics, related to the ways in which literacy is placed in the repertoires of its users. It is not hard to therefore to appreciate the value people give to literacy. Thirdly, in such linguistic practices, there are very intricate tensions between knowledge and capability. People may know what good writing is but may not be capable of performing it; they can be able to read something but not be able to write something similar, and so forth. The question, then, is “what exactly is literacy competence?” If we go back the examples of the journals, we see that the women had knowledge of the genre, however incomplete this knowledge may have been, and this knowledge directed their writing exercises. Genre became a knowledge format for organising the writing: if things are written in this way, they will convey particular kinds of knowledge. While writing, there will always be such forms of knowledge about writing practices. Some believe that their knowledge of writing skills warrants their writing competence. However, these orientations do not immediately convert to capability. The women delivered very ‘incomplete’ versions of the genre they oriented towards. Therefore, if we want to understand ‘competence’, we need to cover the different aspects of these processes. This is somewhat problematic because we need to understand what counts as literacy for

people, how it matters to them, how they project identities, function and authority onto particular forms of literacy, and so forth.

The findings of the study suggest that although literacy levels are somewhat low, the women do enjoy a comparatively enhanced quality of life, and have increased life options as well as some social influence. Based on their accounts and personal observations, literacy also appears to have given the women a sense of personal uniqueness and self-efficacy, it is also an effective tool for negotiating their identities within their households and larger community by increasing their employment opportunities and access to the means of production.

This paper offers us a view of what literacy can minimally mean for people. It reflects the most peripheral kind of insertion in economies of language and literacy resources, and it teaches us that even when literacy occurs as a very restrained and constrained set of practices, it functions locally.

8.3 History or no history?

The problem of evidence in texts is well known. Often the focus is, on 'truth', on the way in which distinctions can be made between 'facts' and 'non-facts' in documents, the way in which documents can disclose 'truthful accounts' of historical events. The distinction between what a document is and what it becomes is a central concern. Texts do not immediately become historical. Also, the issue of truth versus fiction or interpretation is obviously one that does not stand the test of critique. Rather than truth, voice should be central in the inquiry of documents. Blommaert (2008: 198) also suggests that we look at documents before they are even produced- pretextuality- and question the conditions of production, different patterns, and so forth. We also need to look at genre.

The texts written by the women were reluctant documents, documents which do not quickly surrender their historical meaningfulness to readers. They were not memorable texts but easily dismissed as bearers of historical information. The historical facts they reveal are very often a matter of the way in which authors displayed their linguistic resources. Perhaps the most telling bits of the documents emerged as we analysed not the 'content' but their form and shape. It is then

evident that authors position the documents historically: a constraining position makes them write certain things in certain ways and makes it impossible for them to write other things in other ways. Historical facts can only be written by particular, positioned 'voices' and many of these voices cannot be heard. The positioning of voices is in fact a highly informative historical fact.

A blank, linguistic or propositional reading of the text does not produce anything that comes to vindicating the document as a source for historical research. Only through the application of linguistics can texts become historical documents. If not, they are merely old. For it is voice, structure and its constraints that inform us about history, and we can make texts 'historical' as soon as we are able to identify the voice they articulate. This is tough work but it breaks the silence. It can be productively applied to subjects all over the world where regimes of language and literacy work in ways different from ours, and where knowledge, truth and historical experience consequently take on different shapes.

There is a tremendous amount of work to be done in helping to restore voice to those whose voices have been distorted or silenced. The huge and threatening problem such people are facing is one of inequality: their voices are systematically in danger of being misunderstood, dismissed or silenced, not because of choice but because of far more complex and difficult issues that have to do with the ways in which we work and live within relatively stable sets of expectations and norms with respect to meaning, truth and voice. Such issues are exacerbated by the processes of intensified flow and exposure we now call globalisation. Academically we must be ready to revise some of our established views of language and meaning. Academic work improves through confronting and challenging applications.

Most of social science is a story told in a more passive voice. Our theories lead us to frame questions and answers in terms of the forces that shape human behaviour. Not only are people the objects of social and psychological forces, they are also purposeful agents. Lives, like stories, are the way we fashion ourselves: encountering and temporarily surmounting to the projected demons that would diminish us. This is what a narrative perspective allows us to notice.

This paper has attempted to explore the process of 'being and becoming' through an understanding of the ways in which women negotiate their multiple identities from the periphery of their multiple worlds. The discourses of identity, language, and the representations they create play a defining role with regard to who is at the 'centre' and who is at the 'periphery' of these worlds. The participants' ability to move within and across them is dependent on the negotiability of their identities, and on their decisions to lean on different aspects of their identities in order to facilitate a shift in positioning. All participants have shown that, in different spaces and in different times, they challenge the undesirable imposed identities and attempt to reconfigure what is valued and what is legitimate. Speaking from the margins, these participants have found ways to re-articulate their identities within the multiple worlds and to redefine- at least for themselves- what it means to be a South African woman and a good mother.

Poverty is the biggest enemy where the black working class in South Africa is concerned. Keiffer (1984:16) suggests that there is not always much one can do to diminish social inequalities but could help others develop skills and resources needed for them to become independent individuals just as the Ilwimi Sentrum and Bergzicht Training Centre did for the many women of Wesbank. This notion of intervention encompasses both cognitive and behavioural change.

Many resources are needed to be implemented for a more positive societal change. Not only do individuals need to shift their mindset despite their living and other economic limitation but more resources need to be available to them such as the completion and/or continuation of schooling and tertiary education, childcare for the children of those women and especially safe, adequate and suitable living conditions. These women also need a college-going spirit and culture. They need to be educated and taught that their education may lead to their independence and stability. The women of Wesbank also need intensive social support systems which are more often than not disregarded and unestablished.

Identities can be imposed on individuals. Individuals can resist, subvert and react against the cultural and structural forces, which shape social identity. Individual

choice, therefore, plays a role in the way identities are constructed. One of the aims of this study is to show how discourses influence identities. There are many ways this can be done. Firstly, some girls are told the place of a woman is in the kitchen and that education will get you nowhere. Another example is evident in the school setting where labeling, bullying and name-calling adds to the low expectation of the individuals as well as teachers. The community, media and the system are also examples of how easily and often identities are influenced and imposed on. Similar and according to Ntete's (2008) findings and conclusions, "apart from individual discourses, this study also concludes that various other socio-economic factors form a basic foundation to an individual's discourses of disempowerment or empowerment. These factors include poverty (which includes scarcity of employment, poor living conditions), race and family backgrounds".

The notion of women being voiceless has been revealed to be a myth. It is more suited to suggest that deafness surrounds women due to circumstances such as restricted/poor education, self-doubt, poor self-image, geographical and economic constraints, disadvantaged backgrounds and historical setbacks. The fact that the rate of employment and poverty is increasing tremendously leaves women a limited scope of options which inevitably hampers their opportunities and resources. In addition African women are being given minimal representation. Organizations such as the Bergzicht Training Centre and the Ilwimi Sentrum in association with UWC offer a challenging platform for promoting women's empowerment and voices. By addressing these African women and analyzing various selected journals and interviews with careful consideration of their life stories and aspirations, the work done speaks volumes and suggests that "women indeed have a mouth". The notion of voicelessness as discussed by Weiss (2004) soon evolves and women are now known to have a voice indeed.

The aim of my study was not just to evaluate and compare the different themes present in women's literacies but to focus on a very special and often controversial theme. Women's voice-throwing, which is known as their airing of opinions, agonies, passions, etc, is a tangible one and manifested in their writing (journals). Women have to bring to surface what history has repressed in them.

Their voices unfold and grow by throwing their voices, by putting their voices on paper women make pain and sorrow into something material and comprehensible. This venture forms self-realization leading to self-empowerment. The venture also challenges and subverts master discourses, discourses which are confined to gender, race, class, ethnicity, religion and language. Voice-throwing is an empowerment that reaches beyond speaking which only represents thoughts and emotions. Voice-throwing represents the message that women, indeed have a voice- a voice which may express their conceptions and sentiments and a voice which reflects their intelligence and competence.

8.4 How identity changes

Good examples of how narrative in particular constitutes identity can be found in a number of extracts taken from my journal data. I found that women's narrative performance of identity achieved a transformation from passive, agentless selves who were afraid to dream and become successful to active, agentive selves who know what they want and have realised their true potential after the course. As Crossley (2003: 295) points out, 'when people talk or write about their experiences, they often characterise themselves as becoming a "totally different person" '. They become immersed in a world with no boundaries. They become flawless, where their greatest aspirations become well within their reach. They become hopeful, where hope was once frowned upon; they now feel empowered where they once felt weak and despondent before. These women prove to have changed identities, from weak to strong, from dependent to independent, from scared to courageous and from hopeless to hopeful.

Benwell & Stokoe (2006:69) suggest that 'people display identity in terms of ascribed membership of social categories'. The women in the study not only feel a sense of empowerment after becoming knowledgeable about literacy and domesticity, they feel a sense of belonging and importance when related to their families, social groups and friendships. What does this say about identity? This says that identity is formed and/or changed through certain practices whether autonomously or with the influence of other identities.

Since it is generally believed that people, especially women, from disadvantaged and impoverished communities are illiterate or very poorly educated (though most of the women in this study could read, write and understand more languages than just their mother-tongue), journal writing provided the women in this study with a way to maintain their feelings of adequacy and linguistic abilities. Journal writing not only empowered the women emotionally, but equipped them with tools to realize their potential, to learn more about themselves and others. This would ultimately create a future made brighter through literacy practices and life success.

8.5 Possibilities for future research

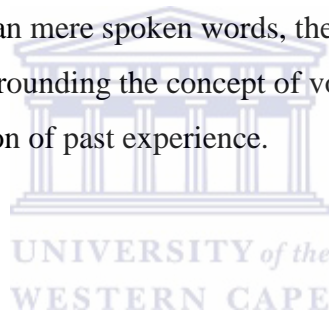
Educational settings and availabilities could be improved. Under the right circumstances and with the essential ingredients this could be done. Because the poor are said to trust in the government to do right by them, the officials are urged to hold themselves accountable for certain situations. South Africa, at the moment, is trying to achieve equitable practices which focus not just on equality of both opportunity and outcomes. This reinforces the idea that South African government should continue giving those with less the same.

Another idea that needs to be implemented is the fact that we need to take a hard look at present day South Africa. We, as a country, face many challenges. These challenges include shack dwellings that continue to catch fire on a regular basis and tax-payers having to contribute towards a fresh start. Desperate young people deliberately get themselves infected with the HI virus with the hope of getting a government grant. The youth also continue to produce offspring in an attempt to secure more child grants. This in turn exposes them to the HI-virus as well and they then will qualify for both the AIDS and child grants. Even though these scenarios are just as sad as it is true, people grow more and more dependent on a government that cannot meet their needs resulting in violence and Mayhem reigning supreme.

The process of empowerment also needs to be implemented. The findings of this study are conveyed to those who may benefit from them (working class women of

Wesbank, their future employers, the families of the women as well as the community as a whole). Empowerment efforts are to be combined with technical assistance, translation services, child care, etc (from the community). The community plays a huge role in the lives of many.

As Wesbank became an area of relocation of 'minimum income' families, this process of forced displacement lead to marginalization of minorities and underprivileged groups. Baynham and De Fina (2005) look at stories that are ignored and silenced by public discourse and even individual discourse. This theory compliments the hypothesis by Weiss (2004) that "African women have a voice but these voices are silenced, suppressed, or not wanted to be used due to fear of isolation and ridicule. The voices of African women are looked at and analyzed through the journals provided. As writing gives more insight into feelings and emotions than mere spoken words, these journals were ideal in looking at discourses surrounding the concept of voice and voicelessness. Stories are always a recapitulation of past experience.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Table of characteristics of the African women

Name of participant	Children	Married/ with partner	Education	Previous or current employment	Family support/ contact with them	Journal/ page layout
Xoliswa Beauty Mbiba (P1)	Two or more	single	Night school, learned life skills and self development	Neighbourhood watch community worker	In contact with mother	15 entries. Each week (Monday to Friday) consisting of 5 entries, one per day, each entry consistently long. The journal concludes with a summary of the course
Thandiswa Shollinah Gaca (P2)	No mention of any children	No mention of any husband or partner	No mention of any schooling	No mention of employment	In contact, possibly living with her brother	15 entries. Each week (Monday to Friday) consisting of 5 entries, one per day, each entry consistently long for the first two weeks. During the third week, the entries become shorter. The journal concludes with a summary of the course
Magqaza Andiswa Alison Ally (P3)	one	No mention of partner or husband	No mention of any schooling	No mention of employment	Mother, sister and nephew	15 entries. Each week (Monday to Friday) consisting of 5 entries, one per day and neatly spaced. The journal concludes with a summary of the course
Noxolo Tshaka (P4)	No mention of any children	married	No mention of any schooling	No mention of employment	No mention of family contact	Cover page missing, 11 out of 15 entries written, evenly

						spaced with each paragraph consisting of approximately five lines each.
Sbongile Goodness Mlobeli (P5)	No mention of any children	No mention of any husband or partner	No mention of any schooling and her linguistic incompetence implies that she has no or little formal education	Unemployed	No mention of family contact	15 entries. Each week (Monday to Friday) consisting of 5 entries, one per day, each entry consistently long. The journal concludes with a summary of the course. No cover page and pages are attached back-to-front
Vuyokazi Goniwe (P6)	Three children	No mention of any husband or partner	No mention of any schooling	unemployed	No mention of family contact	15 entries. Each week (Monday to Friday) consisting of 5 entries, one per day, each entry consistently long and neatly written out and spaced. The journal concludes with a summary of the course
Ntombizilungile Matama (P7)	One child	No mention of any husband or partner	No mention of any schooling	No mention of employment	In contact with brother, sister-law	15 entries. Each week (Monday to Friday) consisting of 5 entries, one per day and neatly spaced. The journal concludes with a summary of the course
Nomatomsanqa Sipamla(P8)	Two or more children	No mention of any husband or partner	No mention of any schooling	No mention of employment	No mention of family contact	15 entries. Each week (Monday to Friday) consisting of 5 entries, one per day. There are a few blank pages in the middle of the second week. The journal concludes with a summary of the course

Appendix B: Table of characteristics of the ‘Coloured’ women

Name of participant	Children	Married/ with partner	Educated (High School)	Previous or current employment	Family support/ contact with them	Journal/ page layout
Marind Le Roux (P9)	No mention of any children	No mention of any husband or partner	No mention of Schooling	No mention of employment	No mention of family contact	4 out of 15 entries written during the first week of the course, consistently lengthy paragraphs
Jolene Saaiman (P10)	Two year old child	married	No mention of Schooling	No mention of employment	No mention of family contact	15 entries with summary of course on the first page, neatly and evenly spaced
Maria Samuels (P11)	No mention of any children	No mention of any husband or partner	No mention of Schooling	No mention of employment	No mention of family contact	15 entries but dates are not in chronological order, journal concludes with a summary
Anna Plaatjies (P12)	Two or more children	No mention of any husband or partner	Attended high school	No mention of employment	No mention of family contact	13 entries out of 15 written, neatly written, journal concludes with summary
Sally Ann Jacobs (P13)	Two or more children	No mention of any husband or partner	No mention of Schooling	No mention of employment	Takes care of mother’s deceased sister’s children	No cover page, consists of two pages, one page per entry, each entry consisting 3-4 paragraphs
Leya Tanya (P14)	Two or more children	Married	Some form of high school completed	No mention of employment	No mention of family contact	8 out of the 15 entries written, neatly written but dates are not in chronological order. Journal concludes with a summary

Roeleen Basson (P15)	No mention of any children	No mention of any husband or partner	No mention of Schooling	No mention of employment	No mention of family contact	15 entries, neatly spread out and written. However, there are a few blank spaces here and there. Journal concludes with a summary
Melanie Haarhoff (P16)	Two or more children	Engaged to be married on 26 November 2005	No mention of Schooling	No mention of employment	In contact with and close to her mother	15 entries, neatly spread and journal concludes with a summary
Elizabeth Booysen (P17)	No mention of any children	Married	No mention of Schooling	No mention of employment	No mention of family contact	One page consisting of four entries, very poorly written and widely spread
Phillida Coetzee (P18)	Two or more children	married	No mention of Schooling	No mention of employment	In contact with mother and she takes care the children	Lengthy entries, dates jumbled up, each page neatly bordered and journal concludes with a summary
Sintella Juone Isaacs (P19)	No mention of any children	No mention of any husband or partner	No mention of Schooling	No mention of employment	No mention of family contact	First week, each day written in, once a day. Second week written in three days, more than once a day. Journal concludes with a summary
Anneline Van Ster (P20)	No mention of any children	No mention of any husband or partner	No mention of Schooling	No mention of employment	No mention of family contact	13 out of 15 entries (last two days omitted), each entry neatly written. Journal concludes with a summary
Johanna Fortuin (P21)	Three year old son	boyfriend	No mention of Schooling	No mention of employment	Family lives too far away for constant contact	6 out of 15 entries written, three per week for the first two weeks

