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“I am a queen”: (Re)fashioning African female
identities in everyday storytelling.

By

Ajohche Nkemngu Awungjia

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Supervisor: Professor Zannie Bock

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Abstract

This study aims to add to the rich body of work which explores our understanding of identity performances in narratives. It explores how a close knit group of five female friends use narrative structure and strategies to fashion alternative gender identities for themselves as black women who are agentive, and who actively push back against the stereotypes used to judge and evaluate their behavior. Using an interactional approach to narrative and identity (De Fina, 2003; De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008, 2012), this study explores how participants, in their everyday conversations, exploit story form and narrative strategies to orient to, constitute, legitimize or resist gender ideologies. Drawing on data which consist of twenty-one hours of naturally occurring casual conversation between the five friends, I identify and group the stories in their conversations, and propose generic structures to describe them: reports, hypothetical stories and projections. With a flexible approach to structure, I show how these stories create a space for the negotiation of difference or for constructing presentations of 'self' versus 'the other'. I argue that through structure and other evaluative devices, praise and blame are ascribed within stories, allowing participants to take certain positions in relation to the themes explored and relevant identity options. I also show the ways in which stories enable the participants to quite literally imagine possibilities for self and others within circumstances that have not and may never happen. This creates a space for the affirmation of dreams and ambitions, and an exploration of the type of women they see themselves becoming: successful, rich, famous, strong, and admired African women.

Keywords

Identities

Narrative

Discourse Analysis

Interactional approach

Positioning

Small stories

Reported speech

African

Women

Reports

Hypothetical stories

Projections



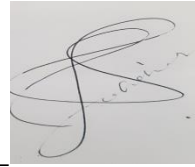
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis, *“I am a queen”*: (re)fashioning African female identities in everyday storytelling, is my own work. This study has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full name: Ajobche Nkemngu Awungjia

Signed: _____



Date: March 2019



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CHAPTER 1: Introduction and background

1.1. Introduction

This study seeks to add to the rich and growing body of work aimed at furthering our understanding of the relationship between narratives, social practices and identity. The study of narratives has often focused on the structural configurations of narratives (Labov and Waletzky, 1967; Eggins and Slade, 1997), their conversational turn by turn unfolding (Ochs and Capps 2001; Sacks, 1992; C. Goodwin, 1986) and autobiographical accounts (Linde, 1993). However, in the past two decades, there has been a turn to the study of the situatedness of storytelling and the ways in which stories are embedded in social life (Georgakopoulou, 2008; De Fina, 2008). These studies have revealed the complex relationships between narratives and the interactional social contexts within which they are told.

Researchers in multiple fields such as sociolinguistics, psychology, and anthropology have studied narratives that emerge in different contexts, such as family dinners, conversations among friends, therapeutic session and so on (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008; C. Goodwin, 1997). This work has contributed significantly to the understanding that narrative form and function are context dependent, and that storytelling is also a type of discourse practice (De Fina, 2003). These scholars also explore the connections that exist between the local contexts of storytelling and the wider sociocultural contexts, or “social roles and relationships which transcend the immediate concerns of the interactants” in the here and now (De Fina, 2008: 422). It is within the latter research framework that this present study is situated.

This study follows research that explores the way in which storytelling is negotiated interactionally among interlocutors in daily conversation. It explores how the form and function of narratives determine and are determined by their conversational contexts. It also explores the connection between ‘the here and now’ and wider social contexts, by examining how in constructing narratives, interactants simultaneously constitute themselves and the world around them. I look specifically at how a close knit group, consisting of five female friends, use narrative structure and evaluative strategies in interaction to fashion alternative female identities for themselves as fashionable African women who have agency, and are actively pushing back against stereotypes frequently used to judge them or evaluate their behavior, while aspiring to career success, fame and respectability. This study will use an interactional approach to narrative identities to show how participants, in their mundane

conversations, exploit story structure and narrative strategies to orient to, constitute, legitimise, resist and challenge gender ideologies.

1.2. Research context

This study consists of the collection and analysis of naturally occurring conversation among a group of five friends: Eve (myself), Bella, Thandi, Zinhle and Quinta. The participants in this study were based in Cape Town, South Africa at the time of the research, although none of them was born, nor raised there. Thandi and Zinhle are South African nationals who were born and raised in the Northern Cape and the Eastern Cape regions of the country respectively. Eve and Bella are from Cameroon, while Quinta is from Nigeria. Based on their stories, the participants come from relatively conservative homes in which they were socialized into traditional gender ideologies, where women are expected to play specific roles in society and at home, which, in turn, has an impact on their ideas of what is a ‘good or bad woman’. However, since coming to Cape Town to study and work, these young women have encountered a range of feminist ideas and ideologies which have played a major role in their lives. It is these experiences which are represented in the stories they tell.

The data used for this project were mainly collected in Bella’s Room. She shared her room with Eve and Thandi at the time of data collection, due to financial reasons. Zinhle lived in the same neighborhood and she used to stop by Bella’s place regularly after work. Bella, Thandi and Eve ran a YouTube channel called Girl Chat, with the fifth participant, Quinta, who lived in another suburb. The five friends met frequently for the purposes of filming, photoshoots and other activities for the channel.

Girl Chat was six months old at the start of data collection. The main objective of the channel, as laid out in the ‘about’ section of the page, is to empower African women through real, informative, educational and entertaining weekly conversations. Some of the topics of the weekly conversations on Girl Chat cover issues around taking a man’s surname, questioning the lobola (pride price) practice, street harassment, rape, sex, and many more. These topics were chosen because it is provocative/taboo for African women to discuss and challenge them publicly. Girl Chat aims to present an alternative (unconventional) point of view or ‘story’ to these issues which they experience as African women.

There has been a massive surge in the popularity of YouTube as a platform for young people who have creative ideas, but may not have the capital to start an offline business. These creatives continue to take to YouTube, which is a free platform, to showcase what they can

do. Many YouTubers have, since the launch of the platform, gone on to create successful careers and business for themselves. Hence, although the main driving force behind Girl Chat is its political message, the participants are also using this as a potential path to career success. The traffic on the channel at the time of data collection was poor and the team was always looking for ways in which they could increase the views of their videos and their subscription numbers, as this would attract potential sponsors and advertisers to their content.

African women are appropriating YouTube as platform to share their creativity and perspectives with the world, and to fashion alternative perspectives of what it means to be an African woman. Over 25 (Kenya), Lorissa Akua (Ghana), Luyendo Pure Estrogen (Zambia) Kangai Mwiti (Kenya), Nikki Perkins (South Sudan), Pap Culture (South Africa) and the A1 Channel (hosted by a Nigerian based in South Africa) are a few of the numerous channels run by African women that share content ranging from natural hair care, beauty tips for dark skinned women, to stories about moving back to Africa after having lived abroad, popular youth culture and celebrity news, amongst many other topics. The higher the subscription and views a channel gets, the more it attracts sponsors and advertisers, which is one of the main source of revenue for YouTube content creators.

The main strategy used by YouTubers to grow their following or online presence is through cross marketing from other social media platforms. That is, though the main content for the channel consists of a weekly 10 minute video, uploaded every Wednesday, they also have to run support pages on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. These platforms (except for Facebook) are more adapted for pictures and one-minute videos with brief captions, which they use to drive traffic to the main content on YouTube. Hence, regular photoshoots are part of the job of running a YouTube Channel (See Appendices 4 and 5 for pictures from their Instagram page and YouTube channel). Zinhle works on a few projects with the Girl Chat team too. Maintaining the channel thus ensured frequent interactions between the participants.

It should be noted that all participants, except Zinhle, knew each other fairly well before the start of the Girl Chat Channel. However, Girl Chat adds to the complexity of the relationships within the group. First, their interactions became more frequent. Although financial constraint was the main reason why Bella, Thandi and Eve shared a room, the decision to live together was also facilitated by Girl Chat, given that they had to be together often to create content. Living together reduced the cost for Thandi and Eve who often had to travel for photoshoots and filming every week. In addition, running the channel also had financial implications in the sense that they had to buy equipment (camera, lights for instance), and curate the looks for the

photoshoots, which required buying clothes and props and/or hiring a makeup artist and so on. Running the channel was putting a strain on the team financially, thus, the focus on how to improve their financial situation in the recorded conversations.

Collecting the data for this study was facilitated by my relationship with the participants, and my presence in the space as a participant and not as a researcher. We were close friends and were used to hanging out together and having conversations. Hence the rapport that is needed for success in any research effort was already present.

1.3. Research Aims and Questions

The aim of this research project is to explore how a group of five female friends exploit conversational storytelling in the refashioning of female African identities. It aims to show how these stories are used to construct a sense of self, other and the world around them through an analysis of the structure, evaluative devices and other discourse strategies, such as attribution and interactional processes. Using a narrative inquiry approach, it aims to see how these individuals make sense of their realities in stories about everyday or mundane events, and the type of identity positions that these stories enable them to take. These research aims are further broken down into the following research questions:

1. What are the main themes or social discourses found in the stories told by the group of friends? How do participants (co)construct their individual and group identities in relations to these themes?
2. How are these identity positions evidenced in and through narrative structure and narrative techniques? How may an exploration of embedded evaluations (Labov, 1972) within the stories, provide insight into the identity performances of the group?
3. What purposes do these stories fulfil in the here and now of conversation? What are the functions of these stories with regards to the relationship between the friends and the propositioned image of the group?

These are the aims and objectives that have guided this study. Below I provide an overview of the different chapters.

1.4. Chapter overview

This thesis is made up of 6 chapters: the first chapter consists of an introduction to the study. A background to the study and the participants has been given as the context within which the study was conducted. The theoretical frameworks underpinning the methodological choices

made and theoretical concepts utilized in analysis are also introduced, as well as the main research objectives and questions.

In Chapter 2, I explore existing literature. I examine the developments in the field of narratives and identity to map out what aspects of the field have received research attention and the outcomes of these research efforts. The theoretical frameworks guiding this study shall also be discussed to spell out the assumptions of the study, and how they have been applied to arguments made in this dissertation. The aim is to position this project within the larger scheme of research that has been done in the field of narratives and identities, to demonstrate the relevance of this study and the contributions it makes to the field. I mainly draw from the social interaction approach proposed by De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2008). However, work by Ochs and Capps (2001) on the dimensions of stories, Labov's seminal work on narratives (1972), and Eggins and Slade's (1997) work on conversational narratives are also instrumental for this study.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology. The methods of data collection and the data analysis techniques employed are examined here. The only tool for data collection is audio recordings of naturally occurring conversations to be analysed mainly using the social interaction approach (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008). I also present the ethical concerns of the study as well as the limitations of the methodology and how it may be improved in future studies of this nature.

Chapters 4 and 5 make up the two data analysis chapters. Chapter 4 summarises the findings in the study. It presents the three types of stories found in the data: *reports*, *projections* and *hypothetical stories*, as well as the common themes in the stories: *career aspiration*, *morality/respectability* and *awareness of the female body*. I do a close analysis of three *reports* to demonstrate how the structure and its reliance on constructed dialogue and other evaluative devices are used by the participants to construct difference. I also show how the allocation of praise and blame are negotiated in storytelling events. I further show how the uncertainty and fluidity of conversational stories becomes a tool in the co-construction of identities in interaction.

In Chapter 5 I explore the other two types of stories that participants tell: *hypothetical stories* and *projections*. I present how the hypothetical stories and projections found in the data are used, quite literally, to (re)imagine who this alternative African woman can be in circumstances that the participants have yet to experience or may never experience. I show

how these stories are used to negotiate and pass on group ideologies. I also explore how these stories are powerful tools in the performance of agency and the affirmation of dreams and ambition.

Chapter 6 is the last chapter and the conclusion. Here I recap the main issues raised by this thesis, summarize the findings of the project and outline ways in which future studies may improve on the findings of this study by looking at the role of social media in everyday storytelling.



CHAPTER 2: Literature review

2.1. Introduction

This study explores narrative identities by looking at the ways in which narrative structure and narrative devices are exploited by a group of friends, to consciously (re)fashion alternative female identities for themselves. Researchers have utilized an array of paradigms in the study of narrative identities. This chapter reviews a number of approaches that have informed the conceptualisation of narrative and identity in this study, as well as the methodological and analytical framework. Given the scope of this thesis, a comprehensive overview of the field is not possible. As such, this literature review is necessarily selective based on the relevance to this project.

I first look at approaches to narrative identities within the field of linguistics. I discuss the competing theoretical assumptions that have determined the ways in which researchers have collected and analysed stories, and thus, the types of conclusions that they have drawn in relation to narrative structure and narrative identities. These researchers may be divided into two broad categories: those that have studied identities as represented in stories that are collected in interview settings (or biographical approaches) (Labov and Weletzky, 1967; Labov, 1972; Linde, 1993; Tannen, 2008), and those that have collected their stories from naturally occurring conversation (conversational and interactional approaches) (Sacks, 1992; Eggins and Slade, 1997; Martin and Plum, 1997, De Fina, 2003; Georgakopoulou, 2008). These categories do not exist on two unrelated planes, considering that the paradigms used for the study of conversational narratives mainly grew out of the observed shortcomings of biographical approaches in dealing with conversational stories.

I subsequently look at the concept of identity specifically, and the ways in which it has been conceptualised in the social sciences in general and in the field of discourse analysis in particular (Bucholtz, 2003; Bucholtz and Hall, 1995, 2008; De Fina, 2010; Cameron, 2001, Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998). I discuss the shift from an essentialist view of identity as fixed and existing in the mind of the individual, to a social constructionist one in which identity is viewed as dynamic, constructed in interaction and locally occasioned. This particular project falls within the latter group of studies. It is interested in understanding the mutually constitutive nature of identities and narratives in interaction. This study explores the narrative forms that emerge in daily conversation and how these emergent forms determine

and are determined by the identity and positioning work being performed by participants, and larger social narratives.

2.2. Biographical approaches to identity

Within the biographical approach, narratives are a tool through which people make sense of themselves. In so doing, “(they) ‘become’ the stories through which (they) tell (their) lives” (Riessman, 2003: 7), or “(they) become the autobiographical narrative by which (they) tell about (their) lives” (Bruner, 1994: 53). Narratives are seen as a ‘true’ reflection or representation of the life of the teller. The interviews within which these stories are elicited are designed in such a way as to enable the production of coherent life stories (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012). A story that does not meet the structural requirement of temporal unity is considered evidence of a life that has not been fully appreciated, or as the result of poor interviewing (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012).

Researchers within this paradigm have analyzed a particular type of story namely, the life story, in which tellers give an account of their lives. Stories about landmark events which in a sense ‘disrupt’ one’s life story, such as illness, divorce and marriage have also been the subject of enquiry in relation to identity, but to a much lesser extent than the life story (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012). The narrated events are often set in the teller’s far past, so that there is enough distance between then and now to enable speakers to reflect on them. The aim is to gain insight into how narrators represent their experiences, and how they make sense of themselves in these representations. Narratives are seen as a means through which the ideologies influencing the teller’s representation of events and the self, may become observable and available for identity analysis.

Within Linguistics, Labov’s seminal work has been one of the most influential in the study of narrative identities. His framework focuses on the basic internal structure of stories, and on how the study of the structure of narratives can further the understanding of identity. In the next section I take a closer look at Labov’s framework.

2.2.1. Labov’s framework

Labov and Weletzky’s (1967) ground breaking research focused on narrative syntax, or the structural organisation of narratives. These scholars collected personal narratives on near death situations, elicited in interviews, and proceeded to analyse these stories for their basic internal structure. The stories in their data were generally narratives told by a single speaker, which summarised past, temporally ordered events, with a clear beginning, middle and end.

Their analysis sought to establish correlations between narrative structure, and the social group categories their tellers belonged to, such as race and ethnicity.

Labov (1972) defined narrative as a “method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events (it is inferred actually occurred)” (1972: 360). Clauses that describe the sequence of events or actions are called narrative clauses. Thus, a minimal narrative is two narrative clauses bound together by temporal juncture. These are clauses that stand in the place of events that are portrayed to have happened in a particular sequence. Hence, changing the order of the clauses would lead to an account that may not be a ‘true’ representation of the actual event. An example of one of Labov’s (1972: 361) minimal narrative clauses is as follows:

- a) I know a boy named Harry
- b) Another boy threw a bottle at him right in the head
- c) And he had to get seven stitches

The minimal narrative in the above example is found in b) and c) because placing c) before b) would make the story ‘untrue’ as this may not be the way the action actually unfolded.

Although narrative clauses describe the action in a story, a fully fledged narrative has several narrative clauses as well as free clauses which play different functions. For example, a) in the story above is an example of a free clause and moving it around does not necessarily change the sequence of events as it just adds information about the boy at whom a bottle was thrown.

Labov (1972) proposes a structure consisting of six stages which define both the narrative and free clauses found in the stories he collected. The six parts include: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda.

- *The abstract* is an optional stage which summarises the story and also tells the audience why the story is worth listening to.
- *The orientation* tells the *who*, the *where* and the *when*, of a story. It usually comes at the beginning, but can also be placed strategically at different points in the telling.
- *The complicating action* is a set of narrative clauses which answer the question “and then what happened?” These clauses describe the temporally and causally linked ‘actions’ that make up the narrative.
- *The evaluation* is what gives the narrative its significance. This is the part that answers the question ‘so what?’, and constitutes the soul of the narrative. Evaluation can be found at all parts of the story in the form of intensifying adjectives and repetition,

reported speech, expressive phonology, among others (Labov, 1972; Johnstone, 2001). However, the main evaluation section is that which suspends the action, before the resolution. A more detailed discussion of Labov's types of evaluations follows below.

- *The resolution* refers to what finally happens, how the crisis is finally resolved.
- *The coda* (an optional element too) ends the story and brings the interlocutors out of the world of the story and back to the present moment.

2.2.2. Evaluation

Labov considers evaluations to be “the most important element [in a story] in addition to the basic narrative clause” (Labov, 1972: 366). Evaluations express the point the narrator is “getting at” or the “raison d’être” of a narrative. He suggests four main types of evaluations: external evaluation, embedded evaluation, evaluative action and evaluation by suspension of action.

External evaluation refers to when the narrator suspends the action and goes outside the boundaries of the narrative, to explain to the listener the importance of parts of the story, instead of letting narrative ‘speak for itself’. Labov (1972) claims that this type of evaluation is common among middle class speakers as well as in therapeutic interviews, where the story itself is only a framework for the evaluations.

Embedded evaluation refers to when tellers embed their evaluations without pausing or interrupting the action. This often takes the form of quoted speech. The teller may quote how they felt at the time of the action (“I said, ‘oh God, here it is!’”), they may quote what they said to another character in the story, or they might attribute the evaluative comment to someone else in the story who evaluates the events for the narrator. Labov states that this type of evaluation is mostly common among highly skilled narrators, mainly from working class backgrounds. He further states that middle class narrators are more likely to use external evaluation instead of embedded evaluation.

Evaluative action is another dramatization technique which tells what characters in the story did, instead of what they said. An example from Labov's data is, “...I was shaking like a leaf”, which describes the tellers fear through his actions.

Evaluation by suspension of action is the main evaluation stage which suspends the action, by placing a series of free evaluative clauses that tell the point of the story just before the resolution. This increases suspense and drama, thereby making the resolution have more force when it comes.

2.2.3. Reported speech

The type of evaluation most relevant to this study is embedded evaluation, which consists mainly of reported speech. Reported speech has been shown to be an important strategy in the representation of self in narrative. Tellers often negotiate authorship and responsibility by incorporating other voices into the telling. This draws on Goffman's (1967) work where he differentiates between the author (or the person who selects the belief, opinion or the attitude being expressed in the utterance), the animator (the person who reports or reproduces the utterance) and the principal (the person responsible for the utterance). Tellers may assign authorship to different characters in their stories to assign blame or praise, mainly through quoted speech. By animating the author's utterances, the narrator (and consequently the listeners) goes back and forth between story world and the present interaction. This further heightens the double chronology concept where the teller is able to make multiple associations between themselves in the interaction and in the story world (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012).

In addition, reported speech is not a verbatim reproduction of the actual speech event, but a fictional construction by the teller to propel the point of their story. Hence, direct reported speech is often referred to as 'constructed dialogue' (Tannen, 2008). From here on out I shall be using the terms reported speech and constructed dialogue interchangeably. This is in line with Labov's (1972) work in which dialogue is one type of an embedded evaluative device which helps to create drama. The fictional quality of reported speech is even more visible in instances where the speech that is quoted, in reality, could not have been uttered, for instance, "and all the students said 'we are going to burn down the university'". The students could not have all said the same thing at the same time. Listeners may also construct parts of the dialogue even though they have no way of knowing exactly what was said. Again individuals report their own internal thought processes in the form of constructed dialogue: "I said to myself 'this is it'".

Constructed dialogue has also been associated with morality and agency. Ochs and Capps (2001) show how tellers often construct themselves as individuals who act ethically and portray themselves as having higher moral standards than the other characters within their stories. They have shown how tellers express their beliefs and values through dialogue within the story world, rather than explicitly discuss those beliefs. In relation to agency, tellers will downplay or heighten their own responsibility in the events being narrated in a way that best helps them save face, or emerge as the the ones with higher morals. Narratives in general, but

especially the use of constructed dialogue, allows tellers to take on the role of the animator, while assigning the role of author and principal to characters in the story in ways that reduce their own responsibility. This is evident in De Fina's (2003) work where she shows how illegal immigrants typically downplay their own role in their predicament by assigning greater speaking turns to characters while silencing themselves in their stories.

In addition to what is being reported, *who* is being reported also has implications on self representation. The voices animated by tellers may be indexical of power relations at play in the story. Georgakopoulou's (1997) study shows how people are quoted in stories based on whether the teller perceives the author to be a voice that legitimises the teller's point. The evaluative properties of constructed dialogue and, the movement between tale world and present interaction provide a powerful tool that interlocutors exploit for self representation and, to distance or align themselves with certain identity in storytelling events.

2.2.4. Criticisms of the biographical approach

Although biographical research such as Labov's has been very influential and continues to be used in numerous studies, it has been met with a number of criticisms which have contributed to the development of other narrative paradigms. The main concern of scholars is that stories used as data within these frameworks are extensive and monologic in nature. This is because the interviewer would ask a question to elicit a narrative from the participant, and once the narration began, the researcher would, for most of the telling, let the interviewee speak uninterrupted until the story was concluded. Researchers working with conversational data quickly found that conversational stories happened within highly interactive settings and they were usually not as lengthy. Thus they could not always fit into Labov's six stage model (Benwell and Stokoe, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2008).

The focus on temporal unity and cohesion in biographical approaches has also been contested because it ignores the plurality and fragmentation in identity, or the fact that people discursively construct themselves in different ways within different context. These different constructions of self are too complex to be captured within a single, unified life story.

In addition, the stories collected in this approach have been accepted as a true and unmediated reflection of the actual events narrated, rather than as versions that are occasioned by the social activities they are embedded in (Atkinson and Delamont, 2006; Shuman, 2005). Within interview contexts, the researcher's aims, the interview setting, institutional and larger societal norms are all at play, and determine how tellers frame their stories (De Fina, 2003, De

Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012). These factors are often not given much attention in work that prioritised finding the basic internal structure of narratives, or the ‘true’ self of the teller.

Moreover, stories in conversational settings were not always the ‘private property’ of the teller. In some cases, the events being narrated are known by some or all participants in the interaction, creating opportunities for co-tellership. This brings into question the ‘one teller one listener’ model of interview stories (Georgakopoulou, 2008). Despite the shortcomings of the biographical approach it has been extremely influential and many psychological studies in the USA still prioritize the approach. Below I look at alternative paradigms that seek to explore the interactional nature of narrative identities.

2.3. Conversational/interactional approaches to narrative identities

There has been a growing body of work dedicated to understanding how identities are construed in narratives-in-interaction. These approaches are commonly referred to as the interactional approaches to identities. These approaches take on a social constructionist view of identity as discursively constructed in every day interaction. Within interactional approaches, identity formation has a more complex relationship with language, whereby speech may explicitly refer to identity categories, and in most cases, may have a more indexical or more nuanced relationship to identity categories. Studies have shown that stories are locally occasioned and they are used by tellers to represent the self typically within a positive light, or to resist negative positions that they have been put into by others (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012). However, the teller’s success at doing this, according to Giddens (1991), depends on how they are able to construct themselves as characters within the story world, and how they are able to negotiate these self representations in interaction with other interlocutors, without explicitly talking about who they are.

Schiffrin (1996,) in her work on self-representation, has drawn on the play between the agentive versus the epistemic self (Bruner, 1990) as a way of understanding how tellers use stories to represent themselves in interaction. The *epistemic self* refers to instances when individuals talk, usually explicitly, about their beliefs through external evaluation and open conversations about beliefs. This epistemic self is shared with the interlocutors in the interaction. The *agentive self*, on the other hand, refers to instances where tellers describe actions they took that led to certain goals. The actions are often performed by the teller’s character in the story world. She shows that in addition to the epistemic and agentive self,

there is also the self that emerges within the interaction in the moment of conversation in relation to the other interlocutors through a process of positioning.

Positioning is a strategy used by tellers to make identity claims in narratives-in-interaction. Bamberg's (1997) theory on positioning is one of the most popular within interactional approaches to narrative identities. This framework suggests three levels of analysis: (1) the ways in which the characters within a story are positioned in relation to each other by the narrator; (2) the way in which the narrator positions him or herself and is positioned by the other participants in the interaction and; (3) the ways in which the narrator, the story and the interaction is influenced by the larger sociocultural context (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008). These three levels of analysis have become fertile grounds for analysing the emergence of identities in narratives, since through this process of positioning, various identities are assumed, negotiated or all together rejected by interlocutors.

Bamberg's framework has been critiqued for the fact that the boundaries between his levels of positioning are not always clear. It is also unclear how the researcher arrives at the conclusions at Level 3, without falling prey to the issue of imposing certain categories onto the interlocutors, prior to the interaction. However, the idea that position is related to the "double chronology" of narrative events, or the interplay between the present moment of interaction and the tale world, continues to be instrumental in the understanding of how identities emerge in storytelling (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012).

Although interactional approaches are interested in the interactional and discursive strategies used by tellers to construct identity positions, there is also an interest in the way in which narrative structures emerge and how they contribute to identity performances in conversation. Below I look at how structure has been studied in four interactional frameworks: Conversation Analysis, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Dimensional and Social Interaction Approach.

2.3.1. The Conversation Analysis (CA) approach

In an attempt to describe the more 'messy' nature of narrative in daily talk, conversation analysts have proposed a different approach. Sacks (1992) and Antaki and Widdicombe (1998), among others argue that stories belong in the sequentially ordered practice of conversation and cannot be studied outside their conversational contexts. Stories in conversation are preceded and followed by discourse and this surrounding talk ultimately occasions the narrative and determines the structure of the stories that are told. A view of

narrative structure as emergent and situated is thus the point of departure for conversation analysts. They urge that the study of narratives should aim to understand how narratives fit into the sequential order of daily conversation.

Conversation analysts move away from the ‘one teller one listener’ understanding of stories to that in which all participants contribute to the development of the story. The role of the audience, which is mostly ignored in Labovian studies, is brought into sharp focus as the act of storytelling requires certain actions from those participating. The interlocutors may ask questions or add details to the story in cases of shared stories, or engage in many other involvement strategies (Ochs and Capps, 2001).

Harvey Sacks (1992) is one of the main proponents of this framework. He shows how conversational stories, unlike interview stories are launched and told in multiple turns. He proposes a three part structure to illustrate this:

Teller: story preface (request to tell)

Recipient: request to hear the story (permission to tell)

Teller: story

The story preface is similar to Labov’s idea of the abstract in that it announces that there is a story worth telling. The preface also orients the audience to the story in a particular way. Sacks demonstrates this with his analysis of jokes. Laughter normally follows a joke. Thus announcing a story as ‘funny’ prepares the audience for a story that will make them laugh (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012). Now, whether they laugh or not is another matter all together, but the recipient’s reaction to the story is often along the lines of how it was prefaced or launched.

In addition, the preface also acts as a request to tell a story. Hence the participants may give permission or decline. This moves the analysis of stories from a teller-led perspective in which the teller dominates the dialogical space, to one in which the teller has to negotiate their stories into conversations, and negotiate to see them through to the end, with the other interlocutors.

M. Goodwin (1984; 1986) and C. Goodwin (1990; 1997) further show how stories are designed with the recipient in mind. That is, the way a story is told is also determined by who the teller perceives the story’s recipient to be. They look at how stories are told depending on if the story is known to the recipients as opposed to when it is unknown. Research that focuses on the role of recipients also shows how the launching of shared stories differs from

that of stories known only by the teller. Shared stories, in the work of De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2010), are launched with an abstract that highlights the fact that the story is shared by the teller and recipients, which is often also an invitation for its co-construction. In their work, De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2008) have shown that establishing mutual reference for a story is often spread across two adjacency pairs: the announcement of a shared story, followed by a request for clarity, if the recipient is not sure of the details of the story being referenced. The teller then offers additional details, usually a character in the story or a temporal element like “yesterday night”, which jogs the recipient’s memory. From there on, the narrative follows and is typically brief or just the skeleton of the actual narrative. Thus, simply referring to such interactions as an abstract or orientation greatly limits our understanding of the work that the participants are engaged in, which also limits the understanding of the meaning making processes they are mobilising.

CA has contributed significantly to our understanding of narrative structure and the ways in which they are co-constructed in conversations. However, the approach has also been criticized. The most common critique has been about its exaggerated focus on the local context of conversation. Little or no attention has been paid to the ways in which conversational discourses shape and are shaped by multiple layers of context that extend beyond the text or the local situation.

In addition to this, there is also the issue of how generalizable findings from such studies can be, especially since they are focused on only the local context. Stories that are told in one setting are often carried through to other settings and form the basis of other conversational and narrative activities. A narrow focus on the immediate context leads to a loss of the understanding that could emerge from acknowledging these intertextual links between narrative events (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012; Bucholtz and Hall, 2008).

Another major critique of this framework is the emphasis on the entry and exit strategies used by tellers and listeners. Although some scholars have done some work on the body of stories (Goodwin’s, 1990), little attention has been paid to the middle sections of conversational stories.

2.3.2. The Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach

Egins and Slade’s (1997) model of the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach looks at the launch and exit of stories, but also provides a framework for the analysis of the middle section, with a more systemic approach to the analysis of the interaction. They draw

on genre theories within the SFL tradition (such as Halliday and Hasan (1989)) in their study of narrative genres. Martin (2004) defines genre (and Eggins, (2004) agrees) as a “staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of a culture”. Eggins adds that genres are also social, given that these activities often involve other people. These scholars view narratives as social, goal oriented and staged practices, because stories fulfil certain conversational purposes for the interlocutors such as, joking or informing, and these purposes are often realized in multiple steps (stages).

Scholars like Eggins and Slade (1997) and Martin and Plum (1997) combine genre theories with a flexible application of Labov’s work for the purposes of studying conversational storytelling. The SFL approach has shown sensitivity to the role of context in determining the final unique form of each narrative. The generic blueprints they suggest in their work are mainly the ‘skeleton’ of the narrative genre and each narrative event ultimately fills in the gaps in its own unique way (Eggins and Slade, 1997).

Four narrative genres are identified by Eggins and Slade (1997): recounts, exemplums, anecdotes and narratives. These stories each have multiple stages which are labelled and defined using mainly Labovian terminology. They show that conversational stories, like the stories in Labov’s work typically begin with an optional abstract and orientation, and end with an optional coda. They agree that the evaluation is what sustains the narratives in conversational data and that it may be found in the different stages of the story. Given that the genres they describe are not all focused on problem solving, there is often no suspension of action. However, they extend Labov’s work when they explore the middle stages of conversational stories as seen in table 2.1 below.

	Beginning	Middle	End
Narrative	(Abstract) ^ Orientation	^ Complication ^ Evaluation	^ Resolution ^ (Coda)
Recount	(Abstract) ^ Orientation	^ Record of Events	^ Reorientation ^ (Coda)
Anecdote	(Abstract) ^ Orientation	^ Remarkable Event	^ Reaction ^ (Coda)
Exemplum	(Abstract) ^ Orientation	^ Incident	^ Interpretation ^ (Coda)

Table 2.1 SFL typology of conversational stories

Although the approach is generally more flexible than Labov's, the nature of conversational narratives makes attempting to find a fixed set of generic structures that can capture their complexity almost impossible. Within my data, for instance, the lines between the narrative types were not so clear cut: a story that could pass for a recount also had some features that were specified as unique to a different genre. Again, defining middle parts were sometimes missing entirely from some stories in my data, given that these narratives are usually quite small and may consist of only the orientation and evaluations. In an attempt to move away from finding this elusive structure, Ochs and Capps (2001) propose an approach consisting of five dimensions they argue will always be relevant to narrative texts regardless of their form or genre.

2.3.3. Dimensional approach

The dimensional approach proposed by Ochs and Capps (2001) suggests that narratives operate as a host genre that allows tellers to draw on several other discourse types such as, description and explanation in interview narratives, and questions, clarification, challenges and speculation in conversational storytelling (Ochs and Capps, 2001). Hence, defining a fixed set of structures for narratives is impossible given that these involvement strategies will give each narrative its own unique structure. Ochs and Capps (2001) thus propose that all narratives, regardless of their genres, display a set of dimensions to varying degrees, including: *tellership*, *tellability*, *embeddedness*, *linearity* and *moral stance*. *Tellership* deals with how many active tellers a story can have, which ranges from one teller to two or more active tellers. *Tellability* deals with how unusual the narrated events are. They could range from very unusual, as is the case with Labovian stories, or they could be about 'nothing'. *Embeddedness* refers to how embedded or detached the stories are in relation to the surrounding discourse. *Linearity* has to do with whether the temporal and causal order is closed, as with conventional stories, or open as in conversational stories. Last but not the least, *moral stance* is the dimension that deals with how certain or uncertain the teller is about the moral point of their story. They argue that these dimensions should be understood not as fixed features of narratives, but as a range of possibilities that allow for a more nuanced analysis of narrative structure.

2.3.4. Social Interactional Approach (SIA)

The SIA approach views narratives both as talk-in-interaction and as social practice (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008). It allows for the analysis of the intimate links between the interactional accomplishment of narratives in their local contexts and larger social processes. De Fina (2003) argues that keeping an eye on the larger social practices at play in interaction is a requirement for research that is socially minded.

In terms of narratives as talk-in-interaction, the SIA approach mainly adopts ideas from conversation analysis as discussed above. It maintains that narratives are embedded in conversation and thus cannot be detached from the contexts within which they emerge (Sacks 1974; Jefferson, 1978). They also follow that narratives unfold in the turn by turn organization of conversation and are shaped by the discourses that surround them.

Proponents of this approach are attuned to the shortcomings of a purely conversation analysis approach to talk-in-interaction given that these interactions take place within a social world with ideologies and unequal power relations at work, even at the local level of interaction (De Fina, 2003, 2006; Wetherell, 1998). Hence they propose that narrative, in addition to being seen as talk-in-interaction, also need to be seen as social practice.

Looking at narratives as social practice entails going beyond the here-and-now of conversation to find “articulations between the micro and the macro levels of social action and relationships” (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008: 382). They draw on notions of social practice, genre and communities of practice to illustrate the situatedness of narratives in various macro processes, such as, how knowledge is accumulated and shared, and how social groups are included and excluded in discourse. The goal of analysts in SIA is to uncover the intimate relationship between the emergent form of narratives and the ways in which local occasioning intersects with larger macro process and practices (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008).

To contextualize the narratives within their work, SIA scholars first link them to the social practice that they are part of. This entails looking at recurring situations, and looking at the habitual discourse practices associated with those situations. Drawing from genre theory, they look at the relatively stable and typical aspects as well as those that are emergent and fluid. Scholars like Labov (1972) and Eggins and Slade (1997) use genre theory to uncover generic structures for narratives, but in SIA, genre is used as a means to explore modes of action which entail “the routine and repeated ways of acting and expressing orders of knowledge and

experience” (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008: 383). Attention is paid to ways of telling stories that are shaped by daily social routines and larger sociocultural elements. In other words, narrative structure is seen as a fluid and evolving response to recurring situations, that tellers actively exploit, negotiate and reconstruct at micro levels of interaction.

Another major contribution of this approach is the fact that it makes room for other types of stories such as incomplete tellings, refusals to tell, stories about ‘nothing’ and one line references to shared stories and more. Georgakopoulou (2008) refers to these unconventional stories as “small stories”. *Small stories* are used as “an umbrella-term that covers a gamut of under-represented narrative activities, such as tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events, but also allusions to tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell” (Georgakopoulou, 2006a:122). These are stories that may not necessarily have a beginning, middle and end. These stories are also quite literally “smaller” or shorter than Labovian stories, also referred to as “big stories” (Georgakopoulou, 2005, 2008; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008). The rationale for the study of small stories is that the different levels of context may be determining how these smaller narratives emerge. This may point to their usefulness for interlocutors within specific interactions.

The connection between narrative practices and larger social variables is not new. Within the sociolinguistic paradigm, links are made between narratives and social variables such as gender, class or race. However, the SIA conceptualization of the link between the micro and macro shows that people belong to several social groups at the same time, which in turn influences their interactions. This raises questions around the idea of a homogenous speech community with generalized ways of speaking. The recent trend has seen researchers study smaller communities of practice, such as family units and friendship groups, where people share certain language and social norms due to regular interactions with one another. This has led to plurality and fragmentation, where within larger group categories such as race and gender, there are numerous smaller and more manageable configurations with different narrative norms. Within communities of practice, narratives form part of the shared culture and are instrumental in (re)defining cultural practices and group identities (Goodwin, 1990). However, they are also prone to contestation and they can be recontextualized and used in different settings for different purposes.

Above I have discussed different approaches to the study of narratives, all of which have influenced the theoretical underpinnings of this present study. In the next section I present an overview of developments in the field of identity and discourse, and some of the key concepts

that have emerged from these studies, which are important for this project, namely: indexicality, local occasioning, the relational principle and intersectionality.

2.4. Identity

Over the decades, there have been several shifts in perspective in the field of identity analysis. The biggest shift that has taken place has been the shift from the essentialist perspective, in which identity is understood as innate and relatively stable, to a social constructionist and interactionist view, in which identity is seen as an interactional accomplishment within social settings. The foregrounding of the social and interactional aspects of identity brings into sharp focus the important role of discourse practices in the formation of identity, given that all human interactions are mainly organized through some type of discourse. The complex relationship that exists between language and identity has been widely explored by scholars across disciplines within the social sciences (e.g. De Fina, 2010; Cameron, 2001; Bucholtz, 2003; Bucholtz and Hall, 1995, 2008). Again, the literature reviewed in this section is a selective overview of the field based on their relevance to this specific project.

2.4.1. The shift from essentialism

The essentialist view of identity refers to the understanding of identity as something that is unitary, exists in the mind of the individual and is stable over time. It originates from the rise of individualism in the western world between the Renaissance and the seventeenth century. The individual was understood to be a rational being who aimed for integrity, and was mostly detached from the group, even though the individual shared some essential traits such as race, gender and so on with others (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012). Work on identity within this framework thus seeks to identify the character traits that differentiate types of people, in order to be able to predict how they might act in a given situations.

The idea of the essential self, or a self detached from the social world, is heavily criticised by scholars working within postmodern frameworks who are concerned with the ways in which individuals develop a sense of self within the daily social activities that make up their lives (Butler, 1990; Speer, 2005; Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, 2008)). They make it apparent that a sense of self does not exist in the mind of the individual; rather, it emerges as they interact with others and the world around them, moment by moment.

2.4.2. Towards social constructionism

Scholars such as Bucholtz and Hall (2005), Cameron (2001), De Fina (2003), Bruner, (1990) and others, argue that reality does not exist outside of human interaction. Indeed it is human interaction within the social world that creates what we come to understand as reality. There are two main underlying principles within this approach: (1) social categories are ‘man made’ and are continually (re)negotiated as individuals communicate and interact with each other; (2) the individual and the social cannot be separated from each other and are not necessarily in opposition with each other.

Judith Butler’s (1990) ground breaking work introduced the concept of performativity which captures the fluidity of (gender) identities. She argues that identity is not something that someone has; rather, it is what they *perform* and recreate in social interactions. Butler’s (1990) work, and that of others who followed in her stead, move away from the idea of identity as *being*, towards a more performative view of identity as *doing*. Scholars such as Bucholtz and Hall, (2005) and De Fina (2012) further call for the view of identity as *process* rather than as a trait or a combination of traits. This focus on the process, performativity and de-essentialised views of identity makes room for an appreciation of the nuanced and complex ways in which individuals assume or resist identities, and how they assign these identities to others, within social practices.

One of the consequences of viewing identity as performative and emergent in interaction is that it has highlighted the centrality of discourse to the process of identity formation. If an individual’s sense of self cannot be detached from their social engagements, then discourse must be at the centre of the process of identity formation, given that human interaction is organised mainly through the use of discourse practices (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). In the next section I discuss discourse-centred approaches to the study of identity.

2.4.3. Discourse, interaction and identity

Discourse refers to language beyond the sentence, language in use, or language as we use it in our daily lives to construct ourselves, others and the societies in which we live (Cameron, 2001; Bucholtz, 2003; Bucholtz and Hall, 1995, 2008). Discourse-centred approaches have followed broadly two different strands: on one hand are those that have developed into Conversation Analysis (CA) informed mainly by Garfinkel’s (1974) ethnomethodology; on the other hand, are more critical approaches such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), inspired by critical theory.

The CA side of the field is interested in the routine ways in which members produce their daily activities linguistically and through other modes. Proponents of this approach argue that social identity categories such as race, ethnicity and gender (among others), are not always relevant to every conversation (Speer, 2005; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008). They argue that researchers within the critical paradigms often impose certain concepts onto the data which may not be relevant to the participants. Conversation analysts thus limit context to the situational elements shaping a conversation. Unless a participant observably orients towards gender for instance, gender is not considered relevant (Schegloff, 1992; Atkinson and Heritage, 1984). They maintain that when individuals converse, they are often *doing* things with the words they speak. Therefore, imposing gender as omnirelevant might obscure some of the conversational work being done by interlocutors. Rather than the idea that people orient their practices in order to fit into the social order, conversation analysts argue that people actively construct the social order as they interact with each other in the turn by turn unfolding of conversation (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter, 2000). In other words, the social order does not exist prior to, but is co-constructed during the conversation.

The second broad strand of discourse oriented studies is a large body of critical discursive research that follows poststructuralism and critical theory. This takes a critical approach to language to examine the role of power and ideology in shaping how language is used (Blommaert, 2005; Speer, 2005). Proponents of these critical theories have criticised conversation analysis as unsuitable for the study of issues such as gender or race because of how it limits the consideration of the broader social context. These proponents argue that concepts like gender, ideology and power are hardly observably oriented to in conversation, but are often in the background shaping how the conversation evolves (Wodak, 2001; Wodak and Weiss, 2003). Hence, limiting context to the immediate surroundings of the conversation is to limit the understanding of the workings of power and oppressive ideologies in everyday interaction (Wodak, 2001; Whetherell, 1998). These scholars look at long stretches of text, either spoken or written, to try and uncover “global patterns in collective sense-making, broad meaning systems, practical ideologies, [or] psycho-discursive resources that emerge in discourse” (Speer, 2005: 14). CDA is an umbrella term for a variety of such critical approaches to discourse. CDA scholars aim to expose those texts that render oppressive ideologies commonsensical and naturalise unequal power distribution. They function with a political agenda to expose power abuse in order that practical steps may be taken to eliminate inequality in society (Van Dijk, 2005; Blommaert, 2005).

2.5. Key concepts

A few key concepts have proved indispensable to a social constructionist and interactional approach to identity and are important to this project namely: *indexicality*, *local occasioning* and the *relational principle*. In addition to these concepts is the notion of *intersectionality*. Below I examine each of these terms and how they impact social constructionist and interactional conceptualisations of identity.

2.5.1. Indexicality

Indexicality refers to the symbolic processes through which signs are or become associated with aspects external to them, such as social representations, or ideologies. Indexicality describes the subtle ways in which individuals construct a sense of self in interaction. Scholars such as Georgakopoulou (2008) argue that in as much as some aspects of identity may be explicitly discussed, the bulk of identity work is performed through the indexical cues that individuals use to create meaning in their daily interactions. Research has shown how ways of speaking or dressing can become associated with a group of people or an idea (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012). For instance, a person's accent may make one associate them with a certain region or nationality, or dreadlocks might index one's possible membership to the Rastafarian culture. The meanings we attach to what is said goes beyond the actual words that are spoken; that is, they include "sounds, words, expressions of a language, and styles that are continuously associated with qualities, ideas, situations, social representations, and entire ideological systems" (De Fina, 2010: 269). When symbols are recurrently associated with specific personas or ideas, they eventually become part of shared knowledge which is fluid enough to be renegotiated or contested in interaction.

An aspect of the process of indexicality worth noting is the ways in which the same linguistic resources can be used on different occasions to index very different meanings and identity claims. Bucholtz (2005), in her work among high schoolers in the US, demonstrates how a white student uses African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as a mechanism to distance himself from a black opponent, while in the same narrative, he uses the same AAVE as a marker of closeness to the black friends who came to his rescue. This shows that studying themes and explicit identity claims is not always enough to understand identity work that people do within their interactions, and that a closer focus on linguistic choices and indexicality can be insightful.

2.5.2. Local occasioning

Local occasioning is a concept borrowed from Conversation Analysis which refers to the idea that the identities constructed within conversation shape and are shaped by the context within which they emerge (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998), and thus have implications for succeeding conversation. Local occasioning also brings to light the idea that some identities or social roles may be more relevant in some contexts than in others. De Fina (2010) provides an example in which she describes herself as a member of the Italian department when introducing herself in an academic context, and as a mom when introducing herself at a children's birthday party. In both instances, she is both a mom and an academic, but the context determines which of these identity options is emphasized. In addition, the contingent nature of identities to their contexts makes it so that the very meaning of the category may change depending on how it is incorporated within the discourse.

2.5.3. Relational principle

Identity is also described as *relational*. This means that, in an attempt to self-name and characterize, we simultaneously name and characterize others. An individual's sense of self does not exist without an 'other' in relation to whom they perceive the self. Hence individuals would often construct a sense of self as similar to or different from others or in terms of who they are as opposed to who they are not.

One's behaviour, thoughts and emotions emerge within social practices in relation to the constant presence of an 'other'. Individuals often act in accordance with what they believe to be others' interpretation of their actions: they act according to social rules they believe they have in common with others, through which their actions would be interpreted. This further implies that the processes of acting or interpreting actions are often indexical and are tied to an understanding of the rules that guide social processes. Goffman's (1981) work on self-presentation is similar in the sense that human beings in social settings have to manage themselves or how they are perceived and, as a result, they take on roles which they (re)define in order to maintain a certain self image. The relational view of identity challenges the notion of the essential self as it takes the notion of identity away from the mind of the individual and places it firmly in the social world, without which the self cannot exist.

The relational principle (Bucholtz and Hall, 2008) is related to the concept of *positioning*. *Positioning* describes the ways in which individuals negotiate certain positions for themselves in relation to different identity options, others, and ideologies. Identity positions are highly

contingent on the immediate conversational task at hand and on the larger social discourses at play in the interaction which makes them dynamic and prone to morph as different contextual elements shift. Contrary to studies in which identity categories such as gender and class are studied independently of each other, individuals' abilities to take certain identity positions are often determined by multiple aspects of their identities at once. In other words, individuals are positioned and position themselves in relation to others, but the available positions are further influenced by the other identity categories they belong to. Thus, how a person perceives their gender identity is often influenced by their race, age, class and so on. Our identity options are therefore mutually constitutive, and they intersect at different levels of context to determine which identity positions emerge in interaction. The notion of intersectionality has become increasingly popular in identity studies as it forces the analyst to look beyond single axis identities, and to complicate their analysis by looking at how one axis determines and is determined by others.

2.5.4. Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the idea that individual's experiences are mutually constituted by the different social groups to which they belong. This came as critique to the "single axis" frameworks that dominated feminist and antiracist research and discourses. Intersectionality was foregrounded by the Black Feminist Movement, pioneered by Crenshaw (1991). They highlighted the fact that one dimensional approaches to studies of black women often had the effect of limiting or silencing black women, as the forms gender can take is often shaped in multiple ways, by other categories such as race, class, sexuality and so on (Crenshaw, 1991; Levon & Mendes, 2016).

Intersectionality is grounded on three main principles: (1) any human experience is always intersectional; (2) the ways in which social categories and systems intersect are constantly changing and; (3) these categories are not separate and distinct systems that intersect in the way say two streets might – instead, these categories mutually constitute each other. The third principle is the biggest contribution to the study of identity as it highlights the problems with looking at identity categories in isolation of each other. It exposes how focusing on a single category, such as gender, may limit a nuanced appreciation of how other categories may be affecting the experiences of people within the same gender category (Shields, 2008; Levon, 2015).

Crenshaw's framework has been critiqued due to the fact that its attempt to draw attention to the plight of black women has simultaneously reduced black women's experiences to class and race although there may be several more factors at play (Nash, 2008). The approach also pays little attention to the differences that exist among black women by presenting black women as a homogenous category. In addition, the framework does not have a clear methodological framework that is complex enough to observe and analyze how intersections manifest.

In the data sample collected for this study, the participants often tell gender-themed stories, but they draw on several aspects of their identities when they evaluate the events within their stories. As a result, the gender identities that emerge are determined by other identity categories they belong to, such as class, age, and race, as I shall show in Chapter 4 and 5. The framework of intersectionality thus provides a lens through which one may, at least at a theoretical and analytical level, gauge the complexity of the identity work that participants are doing at any one moment within storytelling events (Nash, 2008; Levon, 2015; Shields, 2008).

The approaches discussed above in no way capture all the work that has been done on discourse and identity. However, it gives a brief overview of the scholarship that has most significantly informed my thinking in this project.

2.6. Chapter summary

In the discussion above, I have shown some of the ways in which self-representation has been studied within biographical and interactional approaches to narrative identities. This particular study is grounded within a social constructionist approach to identity and narratives with a focus on the details of the interaction. I then showed the developments in the field of identity and how it has developed from an essentialist paradigm where identity is viewed as innate, stable and dwelling in the mind, to the point where identity is viewed as socially constructed, emergent and relational. Although there are still debates about exactly how conversational context relates with the larger social factors, paying attention to the ways in which resources, both linguistic and otherwise are used, and the details of how the conversational floor is managed, leads to a better understanding of the identity formation process at play within interactive storytelling.

In the next chapter I present the methodology adopted in this study, backed by the relevant theory that has informed these decisions.

CHAPTER 3: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction

The methodological and analytical frameworks guiding this study are based on the following assumptions: a) a sense of self emerges in and through the conversations that people engage in; b) these conversations are pervaded by stories, both big and small, and it is within these stories that people explore their past, present and future selves while *doing* identity in the here and now of the interaction; c) stories told in daily conversation are often not told for the sake of the story itself, but for conversational purposes, such as, to support or resist a conversational position that has become relevant; and d) local interactional contexts are embedded within larger socio-cultural contexts which they shape and are shaped by.

This chapter discusses the implications of these assumptions in terms of the methods of data collection and the data analysis techniques employed, which include audio recordings of naturally occurring conversations analysed mainly using the Social Interaction Approach (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008). I also present the ethical concerns of the study as well as the limitations of the research design and how it may be improved for future research purposes.

3.2. Qualitative versus quantitative research approaches

Qualitative methods were developed in the social sciences as means to gain in-depth understanding of social and cultural phenomena (Johnstone, 2001; Attride-Stirling, 2001; Sanghera, 2003). While quantitative research methods aim to gain insight through analysis of statistics and numbers, qualitative approaches seek to understand why things are as they are (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). That is, they seek to study phenomena in their natural settings, and to explore the meanings that people attach to these phenomena. Though qualitative data, collected from interviews or naturally occurring talk for instance, may be difficult to quantify, their value lies in their capacity to uncover nuanced perspectives and attitudes determining participants' behaviours in ways that a questionnaire with pre-determined answers may not be able to do.

In quantitative research the aim is often to reach generalizable conclusions. The capacity to study larger data samples, due to the limited questions and pre-set answer categories, makes it possible to reach these conclusions. In qualitative research, on the other hand, the aim is not to uncover a generalizable truth. Qualitative researchers are concerned with the in-depth understanding of phenomena from the perspective of those participating in its construction

(Bucholtz, 2005; Sanghera, 2003). They aim to uncover the ways in which individuals understand their reality and the meaning making processes determining this understanding. Qualitative research requires closeness between researchers and their participants that a questionnaire or other quantitative methods of data collection do not afford.

The long standing debate between which approach is better for understanding human experiences cannot be fully presented here. However, the capacity to gain in-depth knowledge of naturally occurring social phenomena as explained above is the reason why this study utilizes the tenets of qualitative research in making research design and methodological decisions for the study of narratives and identity performance.

A qualitative approach is appropriate for the concerns of this study, because tools of data collection prescribed within qualitative approaches, such as recording naturally occurring talk and interviews, are the main methods prescribed by researchers within the field of narrative inquiry (De Fina, (2008); Georgakopoulou, 2008; Tannen, 2008). They provide the researcher with the opportunity to access the participants' ideologies, and the ways of reasoning that influence how they construct narratives of self, other and the world.

3.3. Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is one type of qualitative approach which refers to a variety of methods used to study types of texts that have in common a storied form (Riessman, 2008). Different approaches to narrative texts have sets of assumptions about the relationship between storytelling and the construction of reality and therefore of self.

Within this study, I employ an interactional approach to narrative analysis. This means that I look at how stories are interactionally constituted by individuals engaged in everyday narrative events. I further explore how these stories are embedded within other social practices to uncover how narrative structure and techniques are used by a group of friends to construct their identities. Narrative researchers primarily collect their data from interviews in which narratives are elicited through questions that prompt the narration of a story (Labov, 1972; Tannen 2008). Although this is the most popular approach to collecting data, contemporary scholars such as De Fina (2008) and Georgakopoulou (2007) have directed their attention to narratives within natural settings. This has led to video and audio recordings being used to capture naturally occurring talk in everyday life.

3.4. Research Participants

There are five (5) participants in this study. The three main participants are Eve (myself), Bella and Thandi, who live and work together, and Quinta and Zinhle, with whom the main participants regularly interact during the time of data collection. I approached the four participants and explained what my study was all about and they agreed to have me record our conversations, if at least three of us found ourselves together at any time. Because Eve, Bella and Thandi lived together, their room became the primary site at which data were collected.

Having close relationships with all the participants facilitated their willingness to take part in the study. The fact that I was a member of the group may have facilitated the process as it meant that I existed in these spaces as a participant and not so much as a researcher. When recording was in process, I was not taking notes or trying to direct the conversation in any way. Many times, the other participants would switch on the recorder when they found themselves in conversation, in my absence, to assist with my data collection process. Hence, the trust and rapport which are fundamental to success in qualitative research had already been established.

Four of the participants (Thandi, Bella, Eve and Quinta) run a YouTube channel together, called Girl Chat. The channel was still in its first year at the time, and so the friends were often reflecting on how they could expand the channel's reach in terms of views and subscriptions. I will now provide a fuller description of each participant, and their relationship to the others, at the time of data collection, in 2017. I also briefly describe Girl Chat and the ways in which it affects the relationship between the participants. In line with standard ethical requirements, all names of participants, characters, entities (such as Girl Chat and The Dinning) and projects or programs (such as Music Night) in the data are pseudonyms.

Eve: Eve is the researcher and also one of the main participants in the study. She was a 25 year old Master's student at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) at the time of data collection. She and Bella have the longest standing relationship in the group. They met during their undergraduate studies at UWC. She is originally from Cameroon and speaks mainly English, though she can also speak Pidgin English, and has a fair understanding of French and her mother tongue, Nweh. Eve moved to Cape Town to pursue her studies and had been living in Cape Town for six years at the time of data collection.

Bella: Bella was a 27 year old Cameroonian female at the time of data collection, and had been living in Cape Town for six years. She and Eve had been friends since their studies at

UWC. At the time of this project, Bella was pursuing a second undergraduate degree from the University of South Africa. She speaks mainly English, but also speaks Pidgin English, French and has a fair understanding of her mother tongue, Bakweri.

Thandi: Thandi is a South African female originally from the Northern Cape. In 2017, she was 25 years old and a Master's student at UWC. She and Eve had met a year earlier in 2016 when they worked together on a project at the university. Thandi and Bella eventually met and also struck up a friendship. Thandi mainly speaks in English when in Cape Town though her home language is Afrikaans, with a limited understanding of isiXhosa and isiZulu.

Quinta: Quinta is Nigerian and she was 27 years old at the time of data collection. She was a Master's student at UWC. She and Thandi shared courses in their undergraduate studies and thus knew of each other, but only became friends through Eve years later. Eve met Quinta during their Honours studies at UWC where they majored in the same subject. Quinta speaks mainly English with the other girls, but also speaks Pidgin English and Ibibio, her mother tongue. In 2017, she had also been in Cape Town for six years, like Eve and Bella.

Zinhle: Zinhle was a 25 year old South African, originally from the Eastern Cape. The room Eve, Thandi and Bella shared was previously just Bella's. Bella shared this room with a different girl (not included in this study) who was a close friend to Zinhle. Zinhle soon struck up a relationship with Bella that lasted even after Bella's roommate had left. Zinhle soon met Thandi and Eve and they regularly hung out and worked together on different Girl Chat projects. At the time, Zinhle worked at an art shop as a sales assistant. Her first language is isiXhosa, however she mainly speaks English with the other girls who do not speak isiXhosa.

Girl Chat: Girl Chat is a YouTube channel run by Eve, Bella, Thandi and Quinta. The channel is aimed at "changing the narrative of the African woman through generative dialogue". The work they did on this channel required that the participants interact with each other regularly to film their videos or have meetings regarding the direction and growth of the channel. There were also other activities related to the channel, such as photoshoots and attending offline events and seminars. Girl Chat produced weekly filmed conversations that were uploaded on YouTube. 'Music Night' was one of Girl Chat's offline events that provided opportunities for aspiring musicians and poets to showcase their work. Zinhle, who writes poetry, participated in some of these nights. Girl Chat created other visual content such as photos depicting themselves as strong and liberated African women. Zinhle participated in

Girl Chat photoshoot activities by assisting with makeup, set designs and *doek* (head wrap) art.

As stated previously, the goal of qualitative research such as this one is not to find generalizable truths but to deepen our understanding of the experiences of the research subjects. Hence there are no rules guiding how many participants are acceptable within qualitative research. In fact, researchers within the qualitative framework of research argue that having too many participants may lead to superficial analysis instead of the depth and richness that qualitative research can contribute to our understanding of social phenomena.

3.5. The research site

The site of a study refers to the social environment or space in which narratives are told. The idea of space within narrative inquiry is not limited to the physical space, it extends to the idea that sites are not static and uniform (Bucholtz and Hall, 2008). Rather, they are heterogeneous and determine which choices individuals make in the interactions that happen within these spaces. As a result, sites provide a context from which to explore not just the present interaction, but also the tale worlds created by participants in their stories, and the larger social contexts invoked by these stories.

The main site is Bella's room where the main participants, Bella, Thandi and Zinhle, live together. All five participants had regular access to this site (Quinta to a lesser extent), and it is the site where over ninety percent of the data were collected. Some data were collected at Quinta's house and subsequently at Eve's room when she moved out of Bella's place. All the tapes used in this study came from recordings in Bella's room, with the exception of one tape that was recorded at Eve's room. These were usually conversations that took place during the participants' free time at home when they were not on campus or at work. The conversations were audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Below I discuss data collection procedures that were employed.

3.6. Data collection

The only tool of data collection for this study is the audio recording of naturally occurring talk. As I have explained previously, conversational stories are a growing focus of interest in narrative inquiry. Words, once spoken, are also gone, unless captured through a medium that gives them a more durable quality such as audio and video recording. Even the most detailed field notes cannot capture the details of a conversation as human senses and speed are not capable of noticing all aspects of a moment as it happens in real time (Cameron, 2000). Audio

recording is one of the only ways to capture conversation as it occurs, with the only other tool being video recording (De Fina, 2006; Tannen, 2007).

Although video recording has similar affordances (if not more) than audio recording, I decided not to use video recordings for my data collection. Video cameras are harder to ignore than audio recorders because they are significantly larger in size. They also often need to stand on a tripod which further draws attention. In addition, it would have required more than one camera to capture the room from different angles to ensure that participants are always visible on film. The site of this study was already quite a small spaces and fitting two cameras in there may have created an inconvenience for the participants, and may have negatively impacted the conversations or quality of data. In addition long hours of naturally occurring conversation need to be recorded to increase the chances of finding enough of any phenomena for study purposes. Hence, my limited storage capacity also facilitated the decision to use an audio recorder as video files are too heavy. The audio recorder I used was very small and easily disappeared among the other things that were usually placed on the table. Most times we forgot it was on entirely and would record five to six hours at a stretch.

I started collecting data in March 2017 and continued on and off till August 2017. A total of fifteen different recordings of between twelve minutes and five hours and 49 minutes in length were collected. This was because I could not predict when long stretches of conversation would take place. Due to the nature of the participants' individual schedules, it was difficult to predict when they would be together at the same time. Sometimes conversations happened when the recorder was not available, and sometimes when it was available, there would be long stretches of silence among the participants. It was thus necessary to collect a large quantity of data as the only way to guarantee the presence of stories in the data.

The fifteen audio recordings amounted to over 40 hours of recording. Five recordings were randomly selected to begin with. In the end these five proved to be sufficient for a Master's thesis, and became the only data used within this study. The five recordings amounted to a total of twenty-one hours of audio recorded conversation. The files were saved electronically and named according to when and where they were recorded, and who was involved in the conversation recorded. It looked something like: BR.all3.060417 (Bella's room, all thee main participants are present and the date) or BR.all3Z (Bella's Room, the three main participants plus Zinhle and the date). Table 3.1 below shows a list of all the recordings used for this study.

Recording code	Recording date	Length	Site	participants
BR.all3Z300617	30-06-2017	4:49:29	Bella's room	Bella, Thandi, Zinhle Eve, and
BR.all3.060417-	06-04-2017	2:13:23	Bella's room	Bella, Thandi Eve,
ER.all3.210717	21-07-2017	4:14:47	Eve's room	Thandi, Bella Eve,
BR.all3.300417	30-04-2017	4:18:32	Bella's room	Thandi, Bella Eve,
BR.all3.060417	06-04-2017	5:22:19	Bella's room	Thandi, Bella Eve,

Table 3.1 Recordings used for this study

3.7. Challenges of working with audio recording

It is common knowledge that working with naturally occurring data poses multiple challenges for the researcher (De Fina, 2006, Tannen, 2007). Firstly, the researcher has very little control over the interaction. This has severe implications in that this makes it difficult to find enough evidence of any given phenomena in small amounts of data. Even then, the quantity of evidence is still relatively small compared to other methods of data collection such as interviews. Interviews also have another advantage over naturally occurring talk in that the researcher has control over the way in which a conversation can flow as they choose the topic of the interview and they can direct the conversation, which is obviously not the case with collecting naturally occurring talk.

Audio recordings cannot capture non-verbal elements. As a result, other contextual cues that could have been relevant for the interpretation of a piece of talk are not taken into account in my analysis. The quality of the recordings was also affected by things that were out of my control such as noise from the TV or cars driving past.

3.8. Transcription

The transcription of the data was done on an online platform called Otranscribe.com. This is a platform created to facilitate the task of transcribing by making it possible to have the audio clip and the transcription document together in the same window. It also has keyboard commands that help to play, pause, rewind and forward the audio tape without taking one's hands off the keyboard. The site also allows one to place a time stamp on the transcription document so that specific parts of the tape may be revisited just by clicking on the time stamp. In addition, all audio files and transcripts are saved on one's browser and nowhere else online.

The time stamps became very useful in the first stage of analysis which involved listening critically to the tapes and highlighting parts in which narrative activity occurred. Once a story was identified, the exact place where it seemed to begin was time stamped. Next to this time stamp I indicated who told the story and the general topic of the story. Before I began listening to any tape, I would write the name of the tape which indicated to me where, and when the tape was recorded and who participated in the conversation.

The next step involved going back through each clip and transcribing the parts of the data that had been time stamped. Conversation analysts resist imposing features of written discourse onto spoken discourse during transcription. They also believe that no aspect of a conversation may be dismissed as irrelevant (Heritage, 1984). As a result, transcripts often look like caricature representations of the event. Critics argue that using phonetic transcriptions, or conventions that aim to capture the sounds and accents of the speech may lead to transcripts that are almost impossible to read by an untrained person, and may read as a parody on the recorded speech with a ridiculing effect on the speakers (Hepburn and Bolden, 2013). Other researchers, such as Ochs (1979) argue that transcription should necessarily be a selective process; transcripts should not be overloaded with information, but they should reflect the interests of the research. Edwards (2001) argues that transcripts should be easy to read, thus transcriptionists should make use of standard orthography as much as possible given that readers are used to information that is presented in that format. Edwards (2001) further argues that transcription should also necessarily be open-ended to allow room for fine-tuning the transcripts throughout the research process as the researcher's insights develop.

The guidelines above informed the steps that were taken in the transcription process for this study. Standard orthography was used in order to make the transcripts accessible. The timing of utterances was taken into account. Thus, latching, overlaps, gaps and pauses were noted. In

terms of speech delivery and intonation, stressed utterances as well as dramatic volume shifts were also represented in the transcript. Appendix 2 has the transcription key, which shows the features of speech that were included in the transcripts.

3.9. Data analysis

Next, I began looking at the structure of the stories I had transcribed. I first labeled story parts for all stories using Labovian terminology of abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda. Colour codes were assigned to different parts of story structure; e.g. all orientations were colour coded 'blue' and resolutions coded 'purple' and so on. This helped me see if Labov's framework would be useful at all with the stories in the data, and to get a general sense of the structure of the stories. However, as discussed in section 2.2, these six stages were limiting and often did not accurately describe what was going on in the narrative. When parts of stories emerged that did not fit into these six categories, new labels were established, building on categories suggested by other scholars who have also studied the structure of narratives in their work (such as 'story launcher' and 'interpretation').

I further looked at narrative techniques such as constructed dialogue (reported speech), recontextualisation and projection. I looked at who was reported to be saying what and how. I looked at how stories were recontextualized and how these recontextualisations helped participants achieve conversational and positioning goals. This focus on the different levels of context at play within any storytelling event helped to reveal how the group members defined themselves as individuals and as a group, by mobilizing several narrative resources during storytelling.

3.10. Ethical concerns

Research is a very intrusive affair. Hence, for research to be successful it must be conducted ethically to protect the integrity of those participating within the study as well as the integrity of the research project and its findings. For this project, data consist of conversations in an intimate setting, which often leads to the collection of personal data that may not have been accessible in other more formal settings. The participants were made fully aware of the purposes of the research process and their role in it. They were also informed that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time without having to give an explanation and without any negative consequences. They could also switch off the tape recorder whenever they felt it necessary to do so. Anonymity was also promised to participants as far as the

researcher could control. The participants were alerted to the fact that anyone who knew the researcher personally may be able to identify them in the data even though pseudonyms would be used for all participants, named characters in the stories analyzed, as well as other named entities such as the YouTube channel and places where the friends hung out. Participants were also informed that only the researcher, and appointed supervisors, may have access to the audio recordings and for research purposes only. These recordings and the transcripts thereof, will be saved in a secure location by the researcher, and may only be reused for further research purposes.

3.11. Limitations of the study

The main limitation of this study is the use of solely audio recorded conversation as a source of data. Although audio recorded naturally occurring talk is often the source of data for much narrative research, scholars such as Tannen (2008), De Fina (2008), Georgakopoulou (2008), and Goodwin (1984) have shown how having multiple sources of data (such as ethnographic field notes, interviews and video recordings) is helpful in gaining a better understanding of the interactional context of conversations as well as the strategies (verbal or non verbal) used by participants to co-construct meaning. It is however important to state that even with video recorded conversations and field notes, no transcript can fully capture or reflect a conversation exactly as it happened and so no transcript, no matter how detailed, is a perfect reflection of the event as it happened (Ochs, 2001). It is up to researchers working with these transcripts to be reflective about the transcription process, and the way in which these transcripts may be used in arriving at research conclusions.

3.12. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the factors that made qualitative research more favorable to this project than quantitative methods. I also showed how narrative inquiry, within which this study is grounded, is used as a method of study. I described the data collection procedures such as participant selection processes, sites, data collection instruments and the ways in which the data collected were organized, transcribed and analyzed. Ethical concerns were also explored to show how the participants' and research interests were protected. Finally, I indicated the limitations of the study. In the following chapter I present my findings.

CHAPTER 4: Negotiating identity positions through constructed dialogue.

4.1. Introduction

As previously discussed, this study is interested in the discursive identity performances of a group of female friends. It looks at the different types of stories (their structure and functions) that form part of their daily conversations, and how their identities emerge through storytelling. To do this, I audio recorded and transcribed their conversations and set out to explore patterns in the data in order to answer the following research questions:

- What are the main themes or social discourses found in the stories told by the group of friends? How do participants (co)construct their individual and group identities in relations to these themes?
- How are these identity positions evidenced in and through narrative structure and narrative techniques? How may an exploration of embedded evaluations (Labov, 1972) within the stories, provide insight into the identity performances of the group?
- What purposes do these stories fulfil in their conversations? What are the functions of these stories with regards to the relationship between the friends, and the propositioned image of the group?

In this chapter and Chapter 5, I discuss and illustrate my findings. These include a discussion of the three dominant themes found in the stories: *career aspiration*, *respectability/morality* and *awareness of the female body*. This is followed by a description of the types of stories found within the data: *reports*, *hypothetical stories* and *projections*. Hypothetical stories and projections will be the subject of Chapter 5, while in the rest of this chapter, I will explore the genre of reports, their general functions and structures, followed by a close analysis of three reports in relation to the group's identity co-construction.

I argue that reports, and their reliance on constructed dialogue, are a tool for the negotiation of difference. The dialogue enables participants to position themselves as similar to or different from the characters in their stories, and the other interlocutors in the interaction. I show how reports become a tool in the negotiation and assigning of praise and blame, and how they create a space for the friends to negotiate the values and ideologies of the women they are and aspire to become.

4.2. Themes

The stories within these data deal with three broad interrelated themes: **career aspiration**, **respectability/morality** and **awareness of the female body**. I use the word ‘theme’ to refer to the recurring issues and concerns that thread through their stories (Attride-Stirling, 2001). In other words, themes refer to the underlying issues that interlocutors orient to, and draw from, to make sense of stories. For instance, a story that is presented as being about watching “video hoes” on TV (topic) becomes a commentary on (their own) respectability and morality standards or career aspirations (theme). The theme may be seen as the connotative meaning of the stories that emerge in the unfolding of the telling. Below I discuss each of the three themes and the positions that interlocutors construct for themselves in relation to these themes.

- **Career aspiration:** Career aspiration is the most salient theme in the data. The participants construct themselves as women who aspire to career success (money) and fame. They position themselves as women who value an entrepreneurial spirit, hard work, focus and self-motivation. The work the participants are doing on Girl Chat, their YouTube channel, is driven by a desire for career growth. It is a platform that could potentially grow to something bigger, that could improve their financial standing and overall status. They believe that if they keep on working and adapting, sooner or later, they will gain the type of following that translates to success on social media platforms. In the process of constructing their career ambitions, they also construct themselves as “broke” women who are working hard to make ends meet.
- **Respectability/morality:** In terms of respectability/morality, the participants construct themselves as strong and agentive women who consciously push back against stereotypes about what an African woman should be. They also portray themselves as women who operate within their own moral standards, not the ones they have been socialized into. Stories about how they were raised from home are referenced to make commentary on their present lives and their perceptions of what is good or bad.
- **Female body awareness:** This theme broadly covers the group’s understanding of the politics of the female body in terms of what a woman may do with her body, and what is taboo. They position themselves as women who embrace their feminine bodies, and believe it is their right to do as they please with their bodies. However, they recognize the negative consequences that may arise with this awareness or body consciousness. This theme also covers the issue of beauty and fashion, where the group present

themselves as women who place high value on looking beautiful and on how they style themselves. The nature of their work on Girl Chat further requires this attention to physical aesthetics. They organize photoshoots for which clothes are curated to fit the image of the strong African queen they are constructing on their online platforms, and in their daily lives.

Although I have discussed these themes separately, any single story may touch on some or all of them. Narratives allow tellers to connect different aspects of their experiences at any point in time. For instance, sometimes moral standards are seen as the cause of the group's lack of career success, and in other stories, there is the recognition that to be successful you needed to first take care of the physical appearance and so on.

4.3. Types of stories

One of the first challenges I faced in the analysis phase of this study was deciding what was a story and what was not. Labov (1972: 360) defines narrative as the “recapitulation of past, temporally and sequentially linked events”, and suggests a six-part structure, that culminates in a crisis which is resolved by the protagonist. Another defining characteristic of stories within Labov's (1972) paradigm is that they have a clear beginning middle and end. This definition is limiting since the stories in my data do not fit this framework. The data fit better within the small stories paradigm (Georgakopoulou, 2008) (see section 2.3.4.). This paradigm makes room for shared stories, stories that are not always about past events, and are not always narrated from start to finish (Georgakopoulou, 2008; Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008). Following Ochs and Capps (2001), the stories found within my data are also highly interactive with multiple active (co)tellers. They have low tellability and are not easily detachable from surrounding talk. They are also open ended in terms of temporal or causal order, with an uncertain and fluid moral stance.

With the above in mind, a total of thirty-six (36) small stories were found in twenty-one hours of tape recorded conversations. These stories, after the initial stages of labelling the different story parts, were further grouped according to their structural properties, leading to the emergence of three main small story genres: *reports*, *hypothetical stories* and *projections*. Once the stories were grouped according to structure, I selected six of the stories for detailed analysis.

The types of stories I call *reports* pervaded the data. I named them *reports* because they mainly ‘report on conversations’ that the tellers have had with the other participants, and with

people outside of their immediate friendship group. *Hypothetical stories* deal with the narration of alternative or counterfactual courses of events from the ones that they are being compared to (Georgakopoulou, 2008; Carzanna, 1998). *Projections*, on the other hand, deal with imagined (near) future events that the friends are looking forward to (Georgakopoulou, 2008).

4.4. Reports

Reports make up over 60% of the stories within the data, and portray mainly events that take place in the recent past (“just now”, “yesterday”). The stories are told, not to demonstrate how a complication is resolved, but to *report* on a past conversation, often between the teller and one other character in the story. Reports are similar to Eggins and Slade’s recount. Recounts are stories about how events relate to each other, rather than how problems or crises are resolved. The stages of a recount include an optional abstract and orientation, followed by a record of events, a reorientation stage in which the narrator provides their appraisal of the record of events, and an optional coda. In reports, there is an optional abstract and orientation too, but the defining stage of the recount (the record of events) is replaced by a dialogue, or a record of a conversation. This dialogue is followed by an interpretation stage that is also similar to the reorientation in Eggins and Slade’s (1997) framework.

Within the data, reports are an important tool in the construction of difference. These stories are opportunities for the group to negotiate how similar or different their views and perspectives are as members of the group, but also, and more importantly, how similar or different they are from others. The constructed dialogue allows them to draw in other voices and perspectives into their conversations, creating a space for negotiating positions in relation to these perspectives and ideologies.

The participants are also just starting out in their careers, they are actively negotiating who the ideal career woman is, and what the ideal career looks like. They define their values, question norms, and challenge each other’s conflicting ideologies. Although the majority of reports deal mainly with the theme of career aspirations, they tackle different angles of the subject. The participants use reports to discuss the things they perceive to be holding them back or moving them forward. They discuss what needs to change to help them grow, what an acceptable work ethic is and they co-construct a sense of priorities. In this way they consciously craft a group ideology around what it means to be successful and the corresponding markers of success (such as fame and money).

Through reports, the participants further provide feedback on Girl Chat related work. These stories are a source of comfort, as they often form the basis of ‘pep talk’ for the group. This keeps them motivated to keep working on the channel despite its slow growth.

The tellings of reports are highly entertaining to the participants. These stories are used by participants to brag as well as tease and cheer each other up. These stories are small, but heavily evaluated by the audience and teller and this is often a source of laughter, and an opportunity to bond and solidify friendship ties.

Any given report may fulfil a combination of these functions simultaneously. A story that gives feedback on Girl Chat activities for instance, could also be used by the teller to brag, while also demonstrating how the teller is different from or similar to the other characters in the stories. The structure of reports, specifically the constructed dialogue, which is its defining feature, is instrumental in the identities that emerge. Below I take a closer look at the generic structure of reports

4.4.1. Structure

Through the process of colour coding and labeling the different parts of the story, using Labov’s work and that of other scholars, such as Sacks (1992) and Eggins and Slade (1997) as guides, I identified the following as typical stages or parts of a report as a narrative genre.

- **Story launcher:** ‘Story launcher’ is a term I use to refer to the conversational turn that marks the starting point of the story. It consists of a bid to tell the story (or an abstract), the characters in the story (orientation), and the first narrative clause(s). Within the story launcher, the abstract and orientation information may be provided, but it is, in many cases, impossible to separate the two stages within this turn as they are mostly fused together. In some cases, other orientation elements, such as the *where* and *when* of a story, are assumed to be already known from earlier conversations, and so tellers would dive straight into the dialogue or events within their story. In such cases, the story launcher mainly consists of the first narrative clause, which serves as a bid to tell the story, and also includes the other character involved in the dialogue.

Sacks (1992) shows that conversational narratives are told in several small turns and he presents a three-part canonical structure for how stories are introduced into conversation:

Preface

Request to hear the story

Story

The preface is a bid or a request to tell a story within conversation. The preface, as you can see above, is understood to be separate from the story, as the the story only starts by the third turn. Within my data however, while there might be a preface, the narrative is often launched without waiting for the ‘request to hear the story’. I would argue that this is a result of the nature of the relationship between the participants as close friends. Tellers ‘expect’ the other participants to indulge their story given that storytelling forms an important part in maintaining their relationship.

The way reports are launched in these data do not fit perfectly into a Labovian framework, where the abstract and orientation are two separate parts, neither does it fit into Sacks three-part structure. The story launcher is thus a term that makes room for flexibility in describing how these stories are introduced into conversation.

- **Constructed dialogue:** This is the defining stage in reports. It constitutes an action such as “she comes to me” followed by a piece of dialogue enabled by that action: “and she’s like, ‘you are fabulous...’”. The dialogues in the data all deal in some way with the three themes discussed in section 4.2. above. What the characters are constructed to have said about a particular topic, in a particular situation is more important than the sequential unfolding of actions. The stories are told to express how the teller perceives the other character(s) (and therefore how they perceive themselves) as a result of the conversation that is reported on. This explains why the main part of the story is constituted by clauses with verbal processes or verbs of saying, or at least, these are the clauses on which interlocutors focus their commentary and interpretations. Thus, the action is often scanty as the report has more to do with the need to appraise the conversation jointly, than to actually describe the step by step unfolding action. The first clause(s) of the dialogue may also be fused with the abstract and orientation elements within the story launcher.
- **Interpretation:** This section constitutes a coda in which the teller explicitly states what is already implied in the dialogue, followed by the joint exploration of the meaning of the narrative by the interlocutors. Here, the participants draw on ideologies embedded within the narrative, and/or other ideologies they may find relevant in making sense of the story. This is where the participants work out their positions in relation to the teller’s interpretation. The interlocutors may display solidarity with the teller’s views or reject it.
- **Evaluation:** As is often the case with conversational stories, the evaluation is mainly what sustains it. Embedded evaluations (Labov, 1972) are those that can be inserted into the

story without disrupting the flow of events, and reports mainly consist of dialogue which is a kind of embedded evaluation (see section 2.2.2).

In my data, the stories I have grouped as ‘reports’ vary in their overall structure because they are so deeply embedded in the conversational context. The point is not to have a structure that fits all narratives, but to use the structures, labels or theories flexibly to accommodate the highly complex and dynamic nature of conversational storytelling. In addition, the peculiarities of each telling are further indicative of the functions of the story within that particular interaction, and the ideologies that participants are drawing on to construct meaning and therefore themselves and the world.

Below I analyze three reports to show how their structure emerges in context. I look at the role of structure, specifically, the use of constructed dialogue to negotiate their identity positions in relation to others, and the three themes of career aspiration, respectability/morality and female body awareness.

4.5. Reports: negotiating difference and the assigning praise and blame

This section includes a close analysis of a report: ‘David’s girlfriend’, to show how reports are used to negotiate difference and to allocate praise and blame. I argue that the participants use reports to negotiate how similar or different they are as members of the group, and how similar or different they are from (women) people outside of the group. I argue that Bella, who tells this particular story, uses constructed dialogue or double voicing to position herself as different from her story world characters, to accept a compliment, and to dislodge herself from the responsibilities that come with accepting the compliment. I show how these positions are achieved interactionally and how the interlocutors contribute to the positioning work that emerges during the telling by challenging or aligning with Bella’s positions. I show that through this story and its interactional co-construction, the group constructs themselves as postmodern (black) African women who are entrepreneurial, resourceful, independent and career focused.

The story below is taken from a tape that was recorded on the 21st of July 2017 at 12:24PM (ERall3210717). This extract starts about four minutes into the recording as the participants prepare for a photoshoot for Girl Chat. Before this extract, Thandi, Bella and Eve are discussing the recent activity on their Girl Chat social media pages. At this time, the level of activity on their channel has been very low and they have been working on a campaign and a photoshoot for South Africa’s women’s month (August 2017) to increase the activity on their

social media pages. They are also planning a campus tour during which they will go to different university campuses, to hand out flyers and put up posters advertising their channel. Though engagement on their platforms is low, they are positive that this campaign and tour will change things, and make Girl Chat more visible online. Uche (pseudonym) is a cinematographer they have hired to film their women's month campaign. Thandi's mention of Uche and the feedback he has given about their projects triggers Bella's narration of her conversation with David (pseudonym) in turn 17. David is the manager of a venue that Girl Chat is looking to hire for their music event which is due to happen in that same month. The narrative event that ensues, and the identity positions that emerge are thus occasioned by the state of the channel, and their plans on how to improve it.

Extract 1: David's girlfriend

1. Bella: I'm just - I'm just believing that (.) something must come up after this women's day thing
2. Thandi: something will come up =
3. Eve: = if we get a lot of people [to subscribe to the page during [during the tour
4. Thandi: [something will
5. Bella: [to the s - during this - yeah
6. Eve: Then in women's [month we do those things
7. Bella: [that's true (.) that's true
8. Eve: then they'll be like "wow"=
9. Bella: ="wow this is what is [happening
10. Eve: ["let's share this [thing"
11. Bella: [let's do thing"
12. Eve: yeah
13. Bella: [Let's make - lets make sure that
14. Thandi: [A - Uche is already is already excited=
15. Bella: yeah
16. Thandi: like then it means that he has like crea[tive vision
17. →Bella: I sent the - I sent the whole thing to that eh (.) his name is David let me not call him 'the Dinning guy' his name is David
18. Eve: mhm
19. Bella: yoh he is like "wo::w you guys can think?" (laughs)
20. Thandi: yes motherfucker= (styling a black American accent)
21. Bella: =he said he wants his girlfriend to be like friends because he said the girlfriend is so::
22. Eve: (laughs)
23. Bella: yoh that guy is so stupid I don't know do you know what he said he said the only reason why he is still dating that girl [is because like
24. Eve: [laughs
25. Bella: he knows his children are going to have like a a very good mother (laughs)

26. Thandi: wow
27. Bella: I'm like "that's a very stu-" he's like "yes I know with the mindset that you have you'll be like 'that's a very stupid thing to say' but like that's the benefit which I can get from this girl" (all laugh)
28. Thandi: [yo:h babes
29. Bella: [the guy is so real man
30. Thandi: Yoh he - he has such focus imagine sitting with ev - someone everyday and you're like "yoh you're so stupid but you will be a good mother"
31. (Eve and Bella laugh)
32. Bella: he says he has tried to to put business like he has given that girl money he has opened the business like he's tried everything for this girl to do something he's just said that you know what this it's not working for this woman
33. Thandi: yoh [babes
34. Bella: so he has seen that the only thing which is good is that he knows that his kids
35. Eve: are sorted because
36. Bella: are sorted [(laughs)
37. Eve: since she can't go out of the house at least she will stay in the house with them
38. Bella: yes he's like (hiss) yoh I laughed I'm like – he's like "she needs to spend time with you guys because [I don't know
39. Eve: [Quinta is on her way
40. Bella: because I don't know like you guys (hiss) ah like yeah you need to think [like"
41. Thandi: yoh
42. Bella: (laughs)
43. Thandi: yoh babes yeah wow what a *wowment*
44. Bella: like everyone has their own reasons why they are dating this person

The story is launched in turn 17. The story launcher consists of the action that triggers the dialogue (sending the email). Turn 17 acts as a bid to tell a story as well. If Bella left the story at that point, the interlocutors might ask "and what did he say?" which would lead to a narration of the dialogue. The orientation is also fused within this turn as Bella names the other character in the story.

In turn 18, Eve signals to Bella that she is listening with 'mhm' and this functions as permission for Bella to carry on (request to hear the story (Sacks,1992)). Sending the email is also the action that triggers the conversation that is about to be reported, and thus signals the start of the 'constructed dialogue' stage of the report, which continues in turn 19.

The first turn of dialogue that Bella recounts in turn 19 portrays David as having said that the Girl Chat group can "think". As the narrative unfolds we learn that "think" here is used to describe someone with an entrepreneurial mind. The proposal that Bella had emailed to David contains an idea for a music show that Girl Chat came up with. The team has figured out a

plan to execute this idea, and they are in the process of approaching the people they need to pull off the event. This is what David is complimenting the team for. David is portrayed to have said “you guys and think”, in relation to other “guys” who cannot. Indeed, prolonging the “wo::w” the way Bella does in turn 19 highlights just how surprised David is by their rare resourcefulness. This is taken as a compliment by Bella, indicated by her laughter at the end of the utterance.

Thandi also orients to the talk as a compliment in turn 20, accepting it in a formulation that is voiced in a black American accent, and includes a swear word: “yes motherfucker”. The sassy register she uses shows her alignment to the compliment of being resourceful and ‘different’ from others. Her use of the swear word “motherfucker” may further construct her as ‘different’ in that she comfortably uses a speech style not typically associated with women and, I would argue, Africans in general. This further indexes her alignment to a modern identity within a globalized world. David’s complement is thus seen as an affirmation of the friends’ belief that they are on to something great with the activities they have planned for Girl Chat, as well as an affirmation of the type of women they aspire to become.

Bella proceeds in turn 21 to explain that David was so impressed that he wants his girlfriend to befriend the Girl Chat team. At the end of turn 21, Bella is about to share how David describes his girlfriend, but she stops and instead goes on to evaluate David in turn 23. However, Eve’s laughter in turn 22 suggests that Bella need not state what David said about his girlfriend. His desire for her to be friends with the Girl Chat team suggests that he wants her to learn how to “think”, thereby constructing her as less resourceful and clever compared to the Girl Chat team.

In turn 23, before Bella shares what David says about his girlfriend, she offers an evaluation of David as being “stupid”. This evaluative clause is followed by the question “do you know what he said”. The two clauses function to distance Bella from what David implies about his girlfriend. By describing him as “stupid”, she presents a challenge (albeit a weak one) to David’s views. David is reported to have said that the only reason why he is still dating his girlfriend is because she will make a good mother for his children (turn 25). This statement could easily be the basis of a conversation on Girl Chat regarding how African men are sexist, and would use women solely for reproductive and care giving purposes. However, these sexist views are the undertones of a compliment which Bella, Thandi and Eve are enjoying. Describing David as “stupid”, presenting his views as peculiar and unexpected, and the laughter that punctuates the telling, are all strategies that the interlocutors use, to negotiate a

position in which they may accept David's compliment, without being held accountable or responsible for the sexist undertones of the compliment.

In turn 26, Thandi expresses mild surprise: "wow", in line with how Bella has set up David's views as odd and surprising ("do you know what he said"). However, her tone remains stable and at the same volume as the surrounding talk and she does not try to add more to that. This makes her complicit in the positioning of themselves as better than David's girlfriend.

Bella continues, in turn 27, to construct a version of the dialogue that took place between her and David:

27. Bella: I'm like "that's a very stu-" he's like "yes I know with the mindset that you have you'll be like 'that's a very stupid thing to say' but like that's the benefit which I can get from this girl" (all laugh)

She begins to quote herself, but David (in the constructed dialogue) interrupts her, to state that he knows what she is going to say and why, but he maintains his position that "that's (a good mother) the benefits which (he) can get from this girl".

It is interesting, at this point, to look at the structure of the reported dialogue. This story is about a conversation between David and Bella, but Bella does not construct her side of the conversation. The only time she attempts to tell her side of the conversation (in turn 27), she interrupts herself and instead embeds what she 'would have' said into David's speech. This formulation has two effects. First, it shows that she did not just let David imply sexist things about another woman without trying to point out that he was wrong. Secondly, it constructs David as someone who is not merely ignorant, given that he is aware that alternative and aggravating interpretations of what he is saying exist, and that these interpretations are likely to position him in a negative light. By silencing herself in the dialogue, she suggests that David already knew what she had to say and she diffuses the potential implications of his ideas about his girlfriend. She also exonerates herself by showing that there was nothing to defend, since David demonstrates that he is indeed aware of a feminist perspective of his views. More evidence to support this analysis is in the rest of the telling as follows:

28. Thandi: [yo:h babes

29. Bella: [the guy is so real man

30. Thandi: Yoh he - he has such focus imagine sitting with ev - someone everyday and you're like "yoh you're so stupid but you will be a good mother"

31. (Eve and Bella laugh)

32. Bella: he says he has tried to to put business like he has given that girl money he has opened the business like he's tried everything for this girl to do something he's just said that you know what this it's not working for this woman
33. Thandi: yoh [babes
34. Bella: so he has seen that the only thing which is good is that he knows that his kids
35. Eve: are sorted because
36. Bella: are sorted [(laughs)
37. Eve: since she can't go out of the house at least she will stay in the house with them

In line 29, Bella provides the interpretation of her report: “the guy is so real man”. Her interpretation confirms the fact that the story is not about the girlfriend or his reply to the email, but is about how Bella perceived David as a result of what he said about his girlfriend. In other words, as a result of David’s compliment and how he explained himself, she perceived him as ‘real’. ‘Real’ is used colloquially to describe a person who ‘tells it as it is’ with no need for political correctness; it carries positive connotations. This may also explains why only his side of the dialogue is narrated/evaluated. Through the telling and her interpretation, Bella seems to be admiring his ‘realness’ while at the same time questioning his views on women.

As is the case with conversational storytelling, the participants then move on to jointly negotiate the meaning of the dialogue that has just been narrated (Goodwin,1984; Eggins and Slade, 1997). The participants in this stage articulate more clearly their support or challenge for the teller’s interpretation of the dialogue (which begins during the narration through their limited responses and laughter). In turn 30, Thandi sarcastically evaluates David as someone who is “focused” enough to be with a “stupid” woman as long as she can bear and care for his children. Thandi imagines David’s thoughts about his girlfriend in the form of dialogue “yoh you’re so stupid but you will be a good mother”. This brings to mind Tannen’s (2008) and Labov’s (1972) comments on constructed dialogue. They argue that quotes are not a direct or accurate reflection of the actual conversation. Tannen argues that just as writers give their characters a scripts which contributes to the point of the play or movie, story tellers also construct versions of the dialogue that actually took place to make the story more dramatic and entertaining, and to move the story towards its final point.

Thandi uses constructed dialogue as a device to challenge David’s views by calling him “focused”, only to distance herself from his views in the dialogue that follows (turn 30). When she says “*imagine* being with someone...” she is also saying she cannot relate to it, and that she is not that “focused” to stay with someone just because they will be a good mother.

She is also heard saying that she will not be with someone who cannot “think”, thus constructing David’s “focus” as something negative or something she does not align with.

In turn 32, Bella again uses indirect reporting to demonstrate what David claims to have done for his girlfriend. This additional information is significant in that it explains why Bella’s challenge of David’s view is not explicit or why she appreciates his “realness” more than she questions his views on his girlfriend and women in a more general sense. In turn 32 and turn 34 Bella constructs David as a man who has invested in his girlfriend, and though she has failed to live up to his expectations, he has come to accept her as she is, and has decided to “focus” on what he can gain from her, rather than on what she lacks. Indeed, he has not given up on her either, since his wish for her to be friends with the Girl Chat team is an indication that he still thinks his girlfriend can learn (and she may be better influenced by other women). Evidence to support this reading of the text comes in turn 36 when Eve says “at least” she will be home with the kids. This shows mitigating circumstances for David as the “least” he can expect is that she will be a good mother, as she has not been successful at any other venture she has tried. This may be why Bella does not seem explicitly troubled by his viewpoints since she knew more than she had shared in the beginning about David’s attempts to introduce his girlfriend to an entrepreneurial way of life.

38. Bella: yes he's like (hiss) yoh I laughed I'm like – he's like "she needs to spend time with you guys because [I don't know
39. Eve: [Quinta is on her way
40. Bella: because I don't know like you guys (hiss) ah like yeah you need to think [like”
41. Thandi: yoh
42. Bella: (laughs)
43. Thandi: yoh babes yeah wow what a *wowment*
44. Bella: like everyone has their own reasons why they are dating this person

In turn 38, Bella continues to evaluate the story. She does so through the use of repetition as she reconstructs the conversation she has already shared (line 38 and 40). Bella starts quoting herself, but like in the previous instance, she does not actually state what she says. Instead, she quotes David to have repeated that his girlfriend needs to spend time with Girl Chat, once again down playing her complicity in the way in which the girlfriend is constructed. Bella continues in turn 40 after Eve’s interruption in turn 39 to show how David insists that his girlfriend needs to learn how to “think”. In so doing she bring the conversation back to the point of David’s compliment which had led to the discussion about his girlfriend in the first place.

Eve interrupts in line 39 to inform the group that the last member of Girl Chat, Quinta, is on her way. This is an example of a situation in which the telling is interrupted to provide information that is unrelated to the story or conversation, but relevant to other aspects of their lives, given their multidimensional relationship as close friends (Goodwin, 1997).

Thandi's reaction in turn 41 and 43 are indications that the mitigating circumstances provided by Bella do not make her change her position in relation to David's views. Thandi continues to express her surprise and amazement at his view. "What a *wowment*", as used by Thandi in turn 43, is an expression that has taken on several meanings in the South African social media and popular culture scene, and it is usually articulated as 'what a wow'. However, this expression is often modified by speakers to fit their situation or preference at any particular moment such as Thandi's "*wowment*" or other popular variations such as '*warrowow*'. She is maintaining the distance she had created in turn 29 between her and David's view as this performance of surprise heightens the sense that she indeed cannot be with a "stupid" person or someone who cannot "think".

Bella then presents her final appraisal of the story in turn 44: "like everyone has their own reasons why they are dating this person". This reaffirms the argument that the story is less about David's girlfriend's failure at business, than it is about Bella's evaluation of David as someone who is real with himself about his reasons for dating his girlfriend. She is able to construct this position through the details she strategically adds throughout the telling, which present David's sexist views in a less negative light. In so doing she is able to accept the compliment that they are "thinking" women who are on the right track to success in their entrepreneurial journeys.

In addition, one of the purposes of this story is to motivate the participants on their work, rather than to comment on gender relations. The narration is occasioned by conversation which could count as 'pep talk'. They are building excitement for what is to come for Girl Chat even though, at that moment, the channel is not growing as fast as they had hoped. So Bella's story, which showed how impressed David is by their work, is meant to make them feel better. This context may be another reason why the focus is not on the potentially problematic (though seemingly justified) things David said, but on how real he is, and therefore, his compliments to the Girl Chat team too are to be seen in the same light; "real".

In the analysis above, I have shown how reports are used in the negotiation of difference as well as the allocation of praise. I have also explored the ways in which conflicting ideologies

and positions are voiced by interlocutors, through dialogue and through strategic ways of adding information throughout the telling. These discursive and narrative strategies are used to affirm the group's identity as women who are forging a new path for themselves as African women, one that is different from what is expected of them by their families and local communities. It also shows them to be women who are conscious of their position as women who seek to empower others both through their work on Girl Chat, and in the way Bella tactfully negotiates accepting David's compliment. The compliment is accepted by the group, but there is an awareness and resistance to the knowledge that though the compliment might be "real", another woman (whom they aim to empower and protect) is being negatively represented as a result. However, this is not explicitly condemned, which ironically makes them complicit in the way in which the girlfriend is, in a sense, 'put down' in order to elevate and celebrate themselves. Below I look at two more examples of reports. The first one explores how moral dilemmas intersect with career aspirations and issues of respectability, while the last one looks at a story that deviates significantly from the structure of reports, and deals with the entertainment quality of some reports and issues around beauty and fashion.

4.6. Reports: moral dilemmas and career aspirations

As previously mentioned, the themes described in 4.2 above often intersected in many of the stories. In this section I show how constructed dialogue is utilized to negotiate the dilemma that exists among the friends in relation to achieving success and doing so respectably. I look at how, through voicing, they are able to construct clashing ideologies that influence the (career) decisions they make. The participants reflect on the dark side of the careers they have chosen for themselves, the moral implications of this career, or at least, how they may be perceived as less respectable as a result of their career choices.

The story below is taken from a tape that was recorded on the 6th of April 2017 at 2:44PM (BRall3060417), and the extract starts forty-eight minutes into the recording. The conversation just before this extract involves a discussion of what one needs to do to become successful. During this conversation Thandi suddenly mentions Toke Makinwa, a Nigerian celebrity whose success came from the success of her YouTube channel. Toke is giving a talk at a university in the USA on personal branding, although she herself does not hold a university degree on the subject. There is a sense of restlessness and frustration among the participants as they see other people making progress in their careers and desire the same for themselves.

Extract 2: “Video hoes”

1. Thandi: Maybe I should – (whiney voice) Oh my god what do I wanna do with my life (.)
2. Eve: (laughs) [quarter life crisis
3. Bella: [people are getting – (laughs) people are getting famous
4. Eve: Yoh (.) that - those people are famous (2.0) to go and give a talk on what
5. Thandi: on what
6. Bella: hey Jesus branding how to build your personal brand [that’s the most that that she is going to talk about
7. Thandi: [you see that's the thing with people like Toke Makinwa and Bonang when they decide to do something they do it (.) do you understand
8. E: [that girl - Bonang and - Thandi sorry for cutting you but Bonang has 1.3 or 1.4million followers Toke has 1.4million followers now they are cross
9. Thandi: *pha*
10. Eve: cross popula[ting
11. Bella: [they are going to be like 5[million followers
12. Eve: YO::H [they have understood ma::n
13. Thandi: [which means *ti ti ti ti ti ti ti ti ti ti ti*
14. Bella: [*Pha*
15. Eve: this branding shit
16. Thandi: yoh
17. Bella: No wonder this people don't want to work with us they are like “how many followers do you have”
18. Thandi: what the fuck they are so [stupid what kind of question is that ((look at our)) followers are also going up
19. Eve: [I was looking at
20. Bella: [SERIOUSLY how many now
21. Thandi: 242 followers
22. Eve: mmmh
23. Bella: we are growing we are growing we are growing
24. →Eve: See I was looking at this uhm I was watching a music video just now and women were bouncing their booties do you understand like the way it's always right and then I'm thinking “[why would
25. Thandi: [guys we need to buy clothes tomorrow sorry
26. Eve: with what money
27. (laugh Thandi makes a screechy sound)
28. Bella: with - money if you want borrow me – if you're going to borrow me money I'll buy
29. Thandi: I'm going to buy jeans oh God I can't buy jeans I'm giving Eve a thousand rand oh that's over let's continue (laughs)
30. Eve: so in my mind I'm like "I'm sure you have a talent right" I'm thinking about the girls because I'm a judgmental bitch (laughter) that "I'm sure you have a talent right

and you can use it the ee- effort that you're putting into this (.) uhm video hoeing you can put in something else and still blow" but then I'm thinking "if every route lead to the same destination you can start out as a video hoe

31. Thandi: why are you even (.)
and do whatever the fuck
32. Eve: and then when you are famous you build your brand
33. Thandi: you see what my problem is my problem is I was raised in a fucking small town and so I have like things in my head that I'm just like "oh my God I have to do things
34. Bella: is that why you stood up
35. Thandi: like this and I have to do things like this it's fucking stupid (.) cuz look at me now I'm 25years old I got no money (claps hands) no money and no career well I have Girl Chat but no career other than that.
36. Bella: (laughing) I love – I swear I love the way we rant at Girl Chat (all laugh) we are (.)
37. Thandi: Bella this is my real life
38. Bella: we are our own like the way we judge ourselves at Girl Chat (laughter)
39. Thandi: [our own worst enemies
40. Eve: [we rant man
41. Thandi: and then we have conversations about 'society' (styling Girl Chat conversations in a caricature fashion) "society doesn't want us to go out of the house society doesn't want us to wear clothes society society" (Bella laughing in the background)
42. Bella: (still laughing) yoh yoh yoh
43. Eve: I'm telling you
44. Bella: I swear I wish I had a camera

In the first 23 turns, the friends share their restlessness and frustration with their current situation. In turn 1 Thandi is complaining about not knowing what to do with her life, Eve calls it a "quarter life crisis" (turn 2) and Bella exclaims "hey Jesus" (turn 6). All of them are, in their own ways, performing the sense of confusion and frustration they experience, regarding career success. Thandi, in turn 7, presents one way they can achieve success, by being like Toke and Bonang who do whatever they say they will do no matter the consequences. Before this extract, they also listed losing weight, having nice clothes, and taking pictures as some of the things they needed to do to gain popularity and success on social media.

Eve attempts to launch her story in turn 19, but is interrupted by Bella. She gets another chance in turn 24, and this time she is successful. The launch of this story is similar to that of the previous story in that it is occasioned by surrounding conversation. The launch of this story describes the action which sparks the dialogue: "I was looking at this uhm I was

watching a music video”, which is also similar to “I sent the whole thing to that guy...” in the previous story. The orientation is however more fully developed in this story. She describes a scene in which she is watching TV, specifically a music video with “video hoes” who are “bouncing their booties”. She also indicates the time when this happened: “just now”, and indicates that this is a conversation she is having with herself. Eve uses a similar sassy register to that which Thandi uses in David’s girlfriend’s story (“yes motherfucker”) when she says “video hoes” and “bouncing booties”. This is evidence for the performative aspect of storytelling. Eve is constructing herself and the group as people who keep up with trends in the entertainment industry by using the language that is typically associated with it. These expressions can be found in the lyrics of songs and in how people generally talk derogatorily about women in the entertainment industry. Using the words “video hoes” and “bouncing booties” in addition to the way she presents this video as something that is normal and common knowledge (“like the way it is always right”), is an index of a modern identity within a world that is becoming more and more globalized, as it becomes easier to come in contact with other cultures and language varieties and styles.

After the orientation, Eve begins with her dialogue. The dialogue is introduced using “I’m thinking” which highlights the fact that it is her thought process, or a conversation with herself she is about to share. However, before Eve can narrate this thought, Thandi interrupts in turn 25 to address something completely unrelated to the present conversation, but relevant enough to the interlocutors that they suspend the storytelling to address it – they need new clothes for the photoshoot even though they do not have the money.

There is a recognition from Thandi that she has interrupted the current activity (storytelling) at an inappropriate moment seeing that she apologizes: “sorry” (turn 25), and also signals that they may return to what had been interrupted: “let’s continue” (turn 29). This reinforces the conversation analysis idea that there is an order to the way conversation is sequentially organized, and more importantly that speakers understand this order well enough to know when they have deviated (Sacks, 1992; Godwin, 1997).

In turn 30, Eve takes the cue and returns to where she had been with the the story before she was interrupted by Thandi. Here the verb changes and takes a variation of a quotative (Buchstaller, 2001): “I’m like”. Eve uses two dialogue turns to represent two opposing views or ideologies, namely: the ideal scenario of doing work that is considered respectable and becoming successful, and the perceived reality in which one can do anything, even less respectable work (such as being a “video hoe” on television or being a YouTuber (Toke)), and

still end up in a respectable place (such as giving a lecture at a university abroad). Here however, rather than constructing difference between herself or the group and others, Eve is presenting clashing perspectives existing within herself. There is a dilemma between the desire to achieve success respectably, and the belief that achieving success respectably is difficult and overrated. The remaining turns are repeated here for ease of reference.

31. Thandi: why are you even (.) and do whatever the fuck
32. Eve: and then when you are famous you build your brand
33. Thandi: you see what my problem is my problem is I was raised in a fucking small town and so I have like things in my head that I'm just like "oh my God I have to do things
34. Bella: is that why you stood up
35. Thandi: like this and I have to do things like this it's fucking stupid (.) cuz look at me now I'm 25years old I got no money (claps hands) no money and no career well I have Girl Chat but no career other than that.
36. Bella: (laughing) I love – I swear I love the way we rant at Girl Chat (all laugh) we are (.)
37. Thandi: Bella this is my real life
38. Bella: we are our own like the way we judge ourselves at Girl Chat (laughter)
39. Thandi: [our own worst enemies
40. Eve: [we rant man
41. Thandi: and then we have conversations about 'society' (styling Girl Chat conversations in a caricature fashion) "society doesn't want us to go out of the house society doesn't want us to wear clothes society society" (Bella laughing in the background)
42. Bella: (still laughing) yoh yoh yoh
43. Eve: I'm telling you
44. Bella: I swear I wish I had a camera

In turn 31 Thandi seems to already know where the rest of the dialogue is headed. She takes over in turn 33 after Eve completes her utterance in turn 32, and begins to share her interpretation of what Eve has just said. From her previous turn 31, it is expected that what Thandi will share will support the point of Eve's story. She does so by constructing herself in turn 33 as having a similar conflict in which her upbringing in a small town has affected her view on what she can or cannot do to be successful. Socialization, respectability and morality intersect and mutually constitute each other in the sense that the participant's knowledge of what is 'good' or 'bad' and their understanding of what is respectable or not are associated with the way in which they were raised or socialized. She may be heard saying that the 'good'

way of being and chasing success is causing a conflict within her as it is not bringing the kind of success she wants, fast enough.

Thandi proceeds in turn 33 to construct a dialogue that depicts her own struggles: “I have things in my head that I’m just like ‘Oh my God I have to do things like this...and I have to do things like this’ it’s fucking stupid”. Thandi is saying that it is “stupid” to keep doing the things that have led her (them) to “no money and no career”, as opposed to the “video hoes” and Toke who have done less conventional work, regardless of the potential negative consequences on their respectability, and have somehow achieved success. Here we see the allocation of blame as Thandi attributes part of the blame for why she is not yet successful to the way she was raised, and also takes some of the responsibility when she acknowledges that what is truly limiting her is the voices in her head.

Being a “video hoe” could easily fall within the same category as other less respectable work, such as being a prostitute, a stripper or a porn star. These are professions that have to do with women using their bodies to earn a living which are sometimes, morally condemned and sometimes illegal. Hence the use of a derogatory term “hoe”, which is a colloquial expression for prostitute, slut or whore. In this particular story then, the linguistic choices made by Eve in the orientation stage (“video hoes” “bouncing booties”) further invoke meaning frames that are a source of anxiety to the Girl Chat team, who themselves work on an unconventional platform (YouTube). They contemplate the dark side of fame and success in which their chosen career paths may lead to them being viewed as immoral or less respectable. In fact, there was once a comment on one of their Girl Chat videos in which a viewer described them as ‘loose women’, due to their unconventional views on sex and relationships. Others have called them attention seekers who are on YouTube mainly for male attention.

The anxiety and restlessness is nonverbally demonstrated by Thandi actually getting up from her seat (turn 34) just so she can express herself. There is a conflict in the sense that although they believe they are liberated women who have reclaimed their bodies and power, they still feel trapped by the ideologies they have internalized regarding morality and respectability, and how they may be perceived by others as a result of what they do or talk about on the channel. This conflict is reflected in their reported dialogues.

Bella, who has been silent for most of the telling, speaks in turn 36. However, instead of sharing her position in relation to all that has been said, she evaluates the kind of speech activity they are involved in as a “rant”. A rant is a colloquial expression used mainly on

social media to refer to an empty verbal expression of frustration, with no action to match, which also seldom resolves any problems. She is, in a sense, saying that their conversation around these issues is not productive or useful, given that they already know that they are the ones limiting themselves (turn 36 – 40). Thandi later supports this in turn 41 when she styles Girl Chat conversations demonstrating how they tend to blame “society” when in fact they are their “own worst enemies”. This positions them as being aware of the reasons why they have not succeeded yet, though they continue to blame “society” for their problems or make excuses to justify where they currently find themselves.

In this story, the issues of career aspiration are complicated by issues of morality and respectability. The constructed dialogue and the way the story emerges in the interaction reveals the internal conflict that the interlocutors share. It reflects their complicity in perpetuating the dilemma, while at the same time feeling powerless in the face of the expectations or the stereotypes used to police their actions as women in an African society. Here we see the group taking responsibility for where they currently find themselves career wise. They admit that they could be as successful as Toke or even the “video hoes”, but only when they let go of the fear of being perceived as less respectable, and actually do whatever they want to do regardless of the consequences.

Below I take a look at the last story which resembles the stories above in the sense that the emphasis is on the verbal processes in the story. However, it differs considerably from the others in terms of structure and in terms of the type of engagement that the story receives from the listeners.

4.7. Reports: fluidity and uncertainty in narrative

This analysis explores fluidity and uncertainty in terms of the function and structure of narratives. I look at how a story may be contested and challenged by the listeners and the effect that this has on the final form of the narrative. I further explore how a story that seems to be about ‘nothing’, or an ordinary mundane activity such as what dessert to buy, may become a minefield for identity negotiation and for a deeper understanding of the ideologies and discourse practices that shape any given narrative or communicative event, and thus the identities that emerge from it.

The story in Extract 3 below comes from a tape recording from 30th of June 2017. The complete recording was four hours and 49 minutes long. Bella and Eve are alone at home at the beginning of this tape. Around forty-nine minutes into the recording, Thandi and Zinhle

walk into the room with bags of food from the grocery store. Their friends are excited about the food but, a few minutes later, they go back to having conversation mainly about the television program they are watching. The conversation eventually makes its way to talk of Zinhle's sister who is experiencing challenges picking a major at school. She has come to her older sister, Zinhle, for advice, which is why in turn 1, Zinhle feels being an older sister requires wisdom.

Extract 3: A dollop of whiteness

1. Zinhle: yoh (1) mmm ((big sister)) you have to be wise and shit
2. Thandi: you really don't
3. Zinhle: you do:: coz then these little people are looking up to you
4. Thandi: just live your life if you live your [life you'll be able to tell them something nice
5. Bella: [this is the thing (.) don't - yeah
6. Thandi: that they can actually think about
7. Bella: that's the thing you guys (.) this thing of - before you try to be a role model to other people make sure you are a role model to your[self first
8. Thandi: mhm
9. Bella: So stop being (3) I like - yoh my brother and my sister they shouldn't stress anything [that - go to your mother
10. Zinhle: [but what do I say to her (referring to Bella younger sister)
11. Bella: don't come and stress me here to be a role model I'm trying to fix my own life you trying to tell me about what
12. Zinhle: if her mother is the one that's fucking her up what do I say to her
13. →Thandi: I actually wanted to buy apple crumble and then that white lady said – she comes to me and she's like "woah you're fabulous" and I'm like "yes" (snaps fingers) (laughter)
14. Bella: you look SO GOOD= (Thandi still laughing but it's now a high pitched laughter).
15. Zinhle: right
16. Bella: why didn't you buy the apple thing=
17. Zinhle: =right
18. Thandi: and so and then she's like uh and then we talk we talk about my greatness and then I'm like
19. Zinhle: your gr[eatness WOW
20. Bella: [HA Thandi likes things like [tha::t oo:::h
21. Thandi: [NO like that that's literally like that's
22. Zinhle: ['we talked about my greatness'
23. Thandi: [summary of that conversation
24. Bella: your greatness
25. Thandi: me and my greatness (laughs)
26. Zinhle: ['talk about my greatness'

27. Bella: [I think that's - that's
28. Thandi: and then we were done speaking about [my greatness
29. Bella: [that's all you wanted us to know that you were talking about your greatness
30. Thandi: [no no no that's not
31. Bella: [FUCK THAT that's what you wanted us to know
32. Thandi: no that's not motherfucker let me finish my story and then I ask her oh and then I ask her like like like cuz I didn't know what kind of dessert I must buy like I didn't know so I was like "what do you suggest" and then she's like I must buy the apple crumble and just a "dollop of yoghurt" (all three laugh)
33. Zinhle: a DOLLO:P
34. (Bella laughs and starts coughing)
35. Bella: a dollop
36. Thandi: a dollop of yoghurt
37. Zinhle: wooh (coughs)
38. Thandi: "and grate some chocolate on top" and then I was like "yes that might sound delicious" but then I was like "yoh I have too many things to carry" *poop* I returned all of those things [and bought cake
39. Zinhle: [a dollop
40. Bella: you just want us to know about your greatness [(inaudible)
41. Zinhle: [you know
42. Thandi: but my greatness is my greatness and it's not like you guys didn't see it when I came=
43. Bella: =yeah we know we saw your great[ness
44. Thandi: [I know you saw it so [I don't have to remind you
45. Zinhle: [so you just rub it in our fa[ces (.) wow *femeli* [family]
46. Bella: [so why are you trying to rob your greatness into our faces
47. Thandi: I am just telling you guys and like about an account an actual account (Eve laughs) that I had
48. Bella: why are you trying to like - yeah we are - we - [we saw it
49. Zinhle: [right right
50. Thandi: [hate if you want
51. Bella: yeah let me just see what I am going to wear tomorrow
52. Thandi: hate if you want motherfuckers

The conversation from turn 1 continues on the topic of being a role model for one's siblings until Thandi suddenly launches her story in line 13. Because the data is only audio recorded conversation, it is difficult to say what may have triggered the narrative. It could be that one of the participants reached for the cake that was placed on the table, or that Thandi herself was about to have some. There is no pause in the surrounding conversation before Thandi's turn 13 and there's no silence that she may have been trying to fill. Actually, Zinhle had just asked a question that still needed to be answered (turn 12) when Thandi launches the story

and changes the topic of the conversation. Zinhle does not insist on getting an answer to her question and instead allows Thandi to carry on with what she wants to say. However, this story is still locally occasioned by the fact that the food had been purchased, and time was spent discussing the food when Thandi and Zinhle arrived. Without these preceding actions, this story may not have emerged the way that it did.

The story launcher (or the turn within which the story is introduced into the conversation) in turn 13 consists of an abstract: “I actually wanted to buy apple crumble” and the first narrative clauses. “I actually wanted to buy apple crumble pie” is a bid to tell a story as it could easily be followed by “and then what happened” which would lead into the action or in this case the dialogue. There is no orientation section as the context of the story is assumed to be known. Zinhle helped with the shopping and Eve and Bella saw them walk into the room with the bags of food, and they spent some time talking about how much food had been bought, the bags from the store were also branded with the store’s logo. The abstract thus has an orientation element embedded in it as it entails known details of the where and when and signals that Thandi is one of the participants in the story. The rest of the “who” is introduced within the first narrative clause: “and then that white lady said...”

Thandi is about to begin the dialogue in turn 13: but she stops to first provide the action that leads to the dialogue: “she comes to me”, before she continues with what was said. The white woman is reported to have complimented Thandi’s “look”. The compliment may be why Thandi felt she had to state that the woman came to her, and not the other way around. In other words, she did not go fishing for the compliment, it came to her. Her response to the woman’s compliment (“yes”) while snapping her fingers and laughing also constructs her as one who already knew she looked good. However, Thandi still thoroughly enjoys the compliment judging by her laughter at the end of the turn and through turn 14, as Bella and Zinhle affirm the compliment. Here Thandi constructs herself as confident in how she looks, highlighting beauty and fashion side of the theme of female body awareness, since the compliment only affirms something she already knows about herself. Bella and Zinhle in affirming the complement also contribute to the groups identity as ‘women who do not hold back their admiration and share praise openly and sincerely’, as evidenced by Bella’s emphasis on “SO GOOD”.

Thandi initially introduces the story as being about apple crumble, so after affirming that Thandi indeed looks good, Bella in turn 16 takes the story back to why apple crumble was not purchased. Instead of starting off from after the white woman’s compliments, Thandi repeats

the compliment by summarizing the conversation as being about her “greatness” (turn 18). At this point, Bella and Zinhle recognize what Thandi is doing as a form of bragging and immediately call her out on it. This time around, Thandi adds her own words to the white woman’s reported speech, when she chooses the word “greatness” to describe herself, and Bella and Zinhle recognize that Thandi is praising herself. From turn 19 onwards, Bella and Zinhle tease Thandi for bragging and for “lik[ing] things like that::t...”, while Thandi on the other hand tries to defend herself by claiming that her “greatness” was indeed the summary her conversation with the white woman (turn 23), and that she is merely stating the ‘facts’ and not overemphasizing the compliment.

In turn 28, Thandi tries to continue with the story, but the telling is suspended by Bella who continues to tease Thandi and states in turn 29 and 31, that Thandi’s “greatness” is all she wanted them to know about not the apple crumble story. If this is the case, it would mean that there is no need for Thandi to finish the story since her point is already known. In instances like this, the onus is on the teller to convince the audience to keep listening, or to give up on the telling (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012). Here, we see how Thandi does the former as she, in turn 30, and at the beginning of turn 32, insists that there is more to the story.

Bella and Zinhle finally let Thandi finish her story in the rest of turn 32. Thandi does not immediately provide the rest of the dialogue. She first provides information outside of the story world, to justify why the conversation with the white woman went beyond the compliment: she did not know what kind of desert to buy, which is why she asked the white woman for suggestions. It is at this point that the woman suggests apple crumble with a “dollop” of yoghurt. The white woman’s use of the word “dollop” is what Thandi highlights as unusual and worth sharing. Thandi changes the sound of her voice when she says “dollop of yoghurt” to mimic an ‘educated white middle class female accent’, signaling reported speech without any quotatives.

The woman’s use of the word “dollop”, I would argue is the reason why her “whiteness” was relevant to start with. It is constructed and evaluated as such ‘a white thing to say’. Whiteness in South Africa is also associated with the middle or upper class. It is thus a word that is not associated with ‘black’ and/or ‘working class’ people’s speech. The other participants react to the story with laughter and the repetition of the word “dollop” from turn 33 to 37, which indicates that they too find the word ‘white’, or at least, it is not a word that they associate with themselves (as black working class women).

The story is not over yet. The white woman's instructions on how to have the apple crumble continues in line 38. She uses the same educated, white middle class accent to voice the white woman's instructions: "and grate some chocolate on top", which indicates that she is still creating the dialogue. Interestingly, she responds to the white woman's suggestion "yes that might sound delicious" with the same accent she used to represent the white woman's speech, though this was now her side of the dialogue. She then reverts back to her regular voice or accent when she offers the resolution: "but then I was like 'yoh I have too many things to carry' *poop* I returned all of those things and bought cake". Here I would argue that the shift back to her regular voice when she says "Yoh I have too many things to carry..." is an indication that this is a thought to herself, not a continuation of the dialogue with the white woman. Hence, when she is speaking to the white woman, she speaks with the accent of a class she does not yet belong to. This highlights the aspirational element found in most of the stories in the data. By speaking like the white woman, in the same accent that she and the other participants have evaluated as 'not black' or 'not working class', which they have mocked or mimicked in the continuous repetition and laughter, Thandi is placed in a position where she finds the white woman's way of speaking laughable, while at the same time she aspires to belong to the class of people who speak like that. In turn 38, Thandi uses "poop" to describe the act of dropping everything she had selected to buy in favour of cake. This is an example of when narrators replace an action with a sound and it may also be an example of expressive phonology (Labov, 1972).

How the conversation with the white lady ends is not shared. Instead, dropping everything in favour of cake is provided as a resolution, or what finally happened, and why apple crumble was not purchased. In this way this story again deviates from the stories analyzed above in which there were no resolutions.

The story is then further evaluated by all participants. Zinhle repeats "a dollop" in turn 39, while in turn 40 Bella is not sold on the fact that the story had actually been about apple crumble or the "dollop of yoghurt". She maintains that the whole story had been about Thandi's brag about her "greatness". The rest of the talk on this story centers around the brag where Bella and Zinhle accuse Thandi of rubbing her greatness in their faces, which Thandi continues to reject by playfully accusing Bella and Zinhle of "hating" or of being jealous of her greatness.

This story is significantly different from the other stories that have been analyzed in this chapter. First, there is a problem or complication of sorts: not knowing what dessert to buy,

which is eventually resolved at the end of the story when Thandi buys cake. In addition, this story could also fit within Eggins and Slade's (1997) anecdote, due to the fact that the story is not as much about buying cake as much as it is about the reaction to the word "dollop". The burst of laughter after the "dollop of yoghurt" is a key feature in anecdotes. Anecdotes have an optional abstract and orientation, with the defining features being the narration of remarkable events, followed by a reaction. However, the incident in this story is not 'remarkable' when compared to the story of a girl who screamed and climbed on her chair during an exam in which people were not even allowed to cough or sneeze (Eggins and Slade, 1997). This story was thus analyzed as a report, first because its launch was typical of reports in the data, and secondly because the emphasis was on dialogue more than the actions. The evaluations focused on what the white woman said: the compliment and the "dollop of yoghurt" expression she used. The ordinariness of the events narrated thus strengthened the case for this story as a report. Nevertheless, this is a prime example that demonstrates the fluidity of narratives, and further strengthens the fact that stories cannot be studied outside of context of the conversation since the emergent story shapes and is shaped by the talk and social practices around it.

This story is also evidence of the open-endedness and uncertainty of conversational storytelling. Once a story is launched there is no way of knowing how it will go. Tellers have no way of predicting how the other interlocutors will respond to their story. The point of the story is not always certain, and there may be several points to the story which are co-constructed by all participants within the narrative event. In this case a story about apple crumble leads to a dialogue on Thandi's beauty and looks, and a story about the whiteness of "a dollop of yoghurt". This highlights the fact that events in one's life are hardly experienced from a single dimension or identity category. What makes an experience whole is the different elements that intersect at the different levels of context to make the experience meaningful to the people living through it. While this story serves the purpose of bragging, at least as far as Bella is concerned, it also serves the purpose of sharing something Thandi knows her audience will find entertaining. The laughter, mimicking and teasing are all evidence of the high entertainment value of the story. At a deeper level the story still highlights the main theme of (class or career) aspiration, and its intersection with issues around beauty and fashion.

The emergent form of the stories also has implications for the identities of the participants. Thandi is constructed as a woman who is confident, but enjoys being complimented and

admired for her looks and fashion sense. The participants also signal their societal aspiration through their interpretation and reaction to Thandi's experience as aspiring career women, who see themselves one day belonging to a middle class lifestyle.

4.8. Chapter summary

In this chapter I presented a summary of the overall findings of the study in terms of the themes and types of stories that were found in the data. I further looked closely at reports as the most popular genre in the data. I examined the structure and the multiple functions that these stories fill within any given narrative event. I argue that participating in storytelling events is a fundamental part of friendship maintenance practices. That is, in the same way that friends are expected to support each other when in need, friends are also expected to tell stories and listen to each other's stories. This understanding has a profound effect on the way that stories within these data are launched, without necessarily waiting for the 'request to hear the story' (Sacks 1992).

I further look closely at the most dominant feature in these stories: constructed dialogue, and the key role it plays in identity work done by participants within narrative events. When tellers construct dialogue, they bring in other voices and meaning frames that their audience will use to make sense of the story. Dialogue plays an important role in making these meaning frames relevant to the present activity. Dialogue also aides the construction of differences that the tellers and the other interlocutors perceive to have in relation to other people's ways of thinking about (African) women.

I show how dialogue becomes a tool in the negotiation of praise and blame as speakers assign words that they do not want to be responsible for, to the characters in their stories, hence creating distance between themselves and sometimes problematic positions. Lastly, I look at the uncertainty and fluidity in narrative form and in the kind of engagement that a story may receive from the audience. I show how a story about nothing (which reports often are) may indeed be a story about everything, based on the larger discourses indexed by the (co)tellers, and the different aspects of their lives that intersect through their experiences, in making sense of these mundane activities.

In the following chapter I look at the other two narrative genres found in the data: hypothetical stories and projections, and show how their own unique structures are exploited by participants to simultaneously construct themselves in the present conversation, as well as other possibilities for self-representation.

CHAPTER 5: (Re)imagining the self beyond the past and into the future

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which stories give us insight into the types of women that the group of friends see themselves becoming over the course of their lives. I look at how stories of imagined future events (projections) and alternative possibilities (hypothetical stories) become tools in the imagining of possibilities of self. I show how, through these stories, the participants are able to stretch and test their perceptions of themselves, their values, moral standards and ideologies. I also show how these stories allow them to affirm their dreams and aspirations. Reports (discussed in Chapter 4) bring the past into the same time-space frame of the now, and allow the individuals to reflect on past selves. Projections and hypothetical stories on the other hand, bring future and alternative times and spaces into the now, allowing tellers to reflect on selves that might be. This gives us insight into who the interlocutors see themselves becoming, as well as insight into the self that emerges within the storytelling interactions. These stories share common themes to those found in the reports, namely: *aspirations*, *respectability/morality* and last but not the least, *awareness of the female body*.

Below I will explore the basic structure of each genre in my data to demonstrate how their form emerges in interaction, and how the affordances of each are exploited by interlocutors to do conversational and identity work. I begin with a look at hypothetical stories as a powerful tool for the construction of agentive selves and the ideologies driving these selves. This is due to the ability to explore multiple parallel story lines through hypothetical stories, and to gauge how one may behave within different contexts. Thereafter, I look at projections and the role they play in the active constructions of future possibilities. I shall look at the structure and functions of each genre in general, then I shall do a close analysis of three stories. Given that the stories may have some similar features, each telling carries its own unique form relevant to the conversation in which it is occasioned, while serving multiple conversational purposes simultaneously.

5.2. Hypothetical stories

Hypothetical stories are stories in which the teller compares a course of events to a hypothetical and counterfactual one (Carannza, 1998, Georgakopoulou, 2008). That is, hypothetical stories allow tellers to explore alternatives in which events may have unfolded differently, leading to outcomes other than what actually happened, or what is expected to

happen. In this data set, hypothetical stories often occur within argumentative talk in which they are used to back up a certain position. Hence, the alternative scenarios constructed are used as justifications for the teller's actions in the 'real' story, and to support the teller's argument.

In my data, hypothetical stories were not as common as reports, but they were interesting in that they were texts that took on a storied form, but did not deal with lived past events. By narrating a counterfactual course of events, or by recontextualising the events in a story, the participants are able to reflect on alternative sets of events, and in so doing they simultaneously reflect and construct who they might be within these alternative scenarios. I argue that stories of hypothetical events thus become a powerful tool for the construction of agentive selves in that they enable the participants to actively decide who they might be, and how this might determine their actions within these recontextualised scenarios. Below I summarize the general structure of the hypothetical stories found in my data.

5.2.1. Structure

A total of 5 hypothetical stories were found within the data. All five stories were analyzed during the first part of the analysis where I labelled story parts and colour coded them. This is where I was able to identify the features that I present below as the defining parts of hypothetical stories.

- **The argument:** The main function of these stories is to prove the point of an argument which is stated at the beginning of the telling. Researchers have argued that using stories as an argumentative device is powerful in that it makes the listeners 'witnesses' to the experience, making it more difficult to dispute the argument it is meant to prove (De Fina, Georgakopoulou, 2012). In this way, they are similar to Eggins and Slade's (1997) exemplum, which are stories told to support a certain moral position or argument. The argument is thus first presented, and then it is followed by the story to illustrate and support the argument.
- **Hypothetical markers:** Once the argument is stated, the indication that there is a hypothetical story coming is found in the use of a combination of hypothetical markers such as, 'if' 'say' and 'for instance'.
- **Recontextualisation/hypothetical scenario:** Hypothetical stories can be understood as recontextualisations in that they enable the teller to change contextual elements (the orientation) of a story, such as the *who*, *when*, *where* and *what* of a story, in order to create

a hypothetical scenario. The recontextualisation is the heart of the hypothetical story as the contextual changes are used by tellers to trigger alternative, and shared interpretive frameworks, through which the teller may convince the audience of their argument. Within Labov's framework, narratives are recapitulations of lived past events. Hence, altering parts of the story, such as the orientation or the action, would change the story entirely or lead to a version of the story that is not 'true'. However, due to the fact that the nature of events in these stories is hypothetical or imagined, different aspects of the scenario may be changed, with implications on how the narrated events are made sense of. For instance, changing the *where* of a story from Bella's room to a hypothetical church invokes particular sets of social norms, makes certain identity positions relevant (or irrelevant) and activates church related meaning frames through which to interpret the events being narrated. The parts of the story that change, in relation to the point the teller is making, provides insight into the meaning frames they are drawing on and into the identity positions they are taking in relation to these frames.

- **Action:** The significance of hypothetical stories in these data lies more in the point the narrative is intending to prove, than on the actual unfolding actions. As a result, there is minimal action in these stories. Whatever actions are in the story tend to stay the same during the recontextualisations, but may be made sense of differently based on the contextual elements that have been changed in the recontextualisation or the reformulation (below) stages.
- **Coda:** The coda of the hypothetical narrative is often a repetition of the argument that led to its telling in the first place. This means that the coda of these stories bring the conversation out of the story world, back into the argument that necessitated the story. The coda is also often jointly constructed by the interlocutors since they are mostly imagined events. This allows participants to jointly construct ideologies and identity positions as they negotiate the meaning of the recontextualised events.
- **Reformulation:** Hypothetical stories in this data set have a unique component which allows for the interlocutors to recontextualise their stories as discussed above. The context of the story may be reformulated several times during the telling given the imagined nature of the hypothetical stories. The contextual elements may be reformulated if the first recontextualisation does not succeed to convince the audience of the teller's point. The possibility of these reformulations opens up the narrative and moves away from the idea

that a story should have a beginning, middle and end, as these scenarios may be reconstituted infinitely.

- **Evaluation:** Hypothetical stories, like constructed dialogue, have evaluations embedded in them. It is this embedded evaluation that sustains the narrative. In Labov's (1972) description of the different types of evaluations, he discusses *comparators* as evaluative devices through which one course of events may be compared to an alternative. He shows how tellers evaluate a story by suspending the telling, to explore alternative courses of events, which makes the argument in the first course of events seem logical. Hence the hypothetical story itself is an evaluative device.

5.3. Hypothetical stories: negotiating agency across recontextualised storylines

Below I examine how two hypothetical stories are used to demonstrate agency by showing how a character's actions or perspectives will remain the same even if the context was to change. I show how the participants exploit the affordances of the imagined quality of hypothetical stories to construct themselves as agentive women, and to take alternative positions in relation to respectability/morality norms and (gender) marriage norms. The first extract is a hypothetical story told by Thandi with Eve, Bella and Zinhle present. This story comes from the same recording as the "dollop of whiteness" story in Chapter 4 (BRall3Z300617). It comes earlier in the recording (1hr35mins into the recording) when Bella asks if Thandi went to the photographer as she had planned, and if she took pictures. This is how the conversation leads to a discussion on the results of Bella's nude photoshoot. Bella has just collected her pictures from the photographer and Zinhle and Thandi are complimenting Bella, since her pictures turned out beautifully. Thandi goes on to share how the photographer kept talking about Bella's pictures. Bella thinks it is "creepy" for him to keep talking about the pictures, or at least that Thandi has made it seem creepy. It is this conversation that leads to Zinhle expressing that she too would also like to take "nudity pictures" (turn 1) though she is undecided.

Extract 1: "Nudity pictures"

1. Zinhle: No I [wanna take nudes nudity pictures
2. Thandi: [I couldn't get my pictures it would have been so - so nice
3. Zinhle: I also wanna take nudity pictures
4. Thandi: who's stopping you
5. Zinhle: you guys (.) I'm joking
6. (Thandi chuckles)

7. Eve: I ((won't))
8. (Zinhle and Thandi laugh)
9. Thandi: (black American accent) Don't (.) blame me for your issues girl
10. Zinhle: Wow (inaudible) how much does he charge
11. Thandi: he doesn't
12. Zinhle: he doesn't (1.0) really? YO:H
13. Thandi: but also know you run the risk of him fucking out one day and releasing your nude pictures (.) huh
14. Zinhle: but doesn't he delete them once he's sent them to you
15. Thandi: really (sarcastic tone, laughing) do you think so?
16. Zinhle: but like what if he sits and home and *pervs* over your pictures
17. Thandi: other people also *perv* over my pictures on Instagram (laughing) so
18. Zinhle: but like let's say now Bella's pictures not with the white robe [that yellow thing
19. Thandi: [like naked like I
20. Zinhle: naked naked naked
21. →Thandi: If he beats then what what what must I do what must I – like hh - honestly what can I do because see even if I am walking in the street say for instance he never took my picture and then like I'm just walking on the street and then maybe in his mind he imagines me and then he beats to that it's the same shit people beat to each other everyday
22. Zinhle: you know actually it's not a bad thing if he releases one day he decides to fuck you over
23. Thandi: (chuckles) the release is a different story
24. Zinhle: why
25. Thandi: cuz like you didn't give permission (.) that would be annoying
26. Zinhle: right
27. Thandi: but anyway you won't [die

In turn 10, Zinhle proceeds to enquire about how much the photographer charges for a photoshoot. Thandi who has worked with the photographer tells Zinhle that he does not charge for the photos. Thandi however warns that the photographer may one day leak the pictures on the internet, and she does not believe he deletes the pictures after he has handed a copy to the client (turn 13). The pictures getting leaked onto the internet by the photographer is a concern because of social views which judge women who express themselves through nude photography as immoral, indecent or inadmissible. Nudity is associated with the pornographic industry which is highly policed on moral and ethical basis. On social media platforms for instance, female nipples and genitals must be censored or the account could be blocked. In spite of this, nudity, especially on social media, is growing more and more popular. Nude photos are posted for different reasons: some people find it sexy; some do it to show the progress they have made on their fitness journeys; for some it is more of a political

act or a type of activism aimed at reclaiming the (female) body, or a combination of different reasons. Although more people seem to be embracing nudity and nude photography, the moral and respectability issues that come with it remain, such as the way others might perceive you and treat you because you take and post nude photos. For people who desire to achieve success respectably and also want to be free to express themselves, this becomes a major concern.

The idea that the photographer does not delete the pictures raises yet another concern for Zinhle. What if the photographer uses the pictures inappropriately? (turn 16). “Pervs”, as Zinhle describes it, is slang derived from the word ‘pervert’, so she can be heard asking ‘what if he uses your pictures in a perverted way?’ Thandi, once again, offers a response by claiming that people might already be *perving* on the pictures she herself has uploaded onto Instagram, showing that she has little control over how people might use her photos (Turn 17). Her laugh at the end of the utterance further highlights that she is not bothered by how people use her pictures, as she finds it amusing.

Zinhle, who may have perceived Thandi’s laughter as a sign that she is not understanding the seriousness of what she (Zinhle) is asking, uses a set of Bella’s pictures in which she wears nothing but a yellow scarf falling over her breasts, as an example of the type of picture this photographer could be *perving* on: “naked naked naked”. This is because Zinhle knows the type of pictures that Thandi has on her Instagram page, and knows that Thandi is not as naked as Bella is, in any of her pictures. In this way, she suggests that nudity is considered acceptable to a certain degree, and Bella’s pictures are beyond the acceptable mark. The possibility of the photographer *perving* or masturbating (as we shall see below) to her “naked naked naked” pictures brings to mind the pornographic and immoral connotations attached to nude photos. This conversation also highlights the politics that exist around the body, especially from their position as African women. Thandi’s hypothetical story which follows (in turn 21) supports the argument that this conversation provides a space for the group to make sense of the social norms around the concept of nudity or the body in their society, while jointly constructing their group and individual positions in relation to these norms.

Thandi’s hypothetical story is meant to support the argument that she has no control over how people may use her pictures (both nude and otherwise), and thus could not be bothered either way: “if he beats what must I do”. The argument is followed by the hypothetical markers “if” and “say for instance” which often indicates that a hypothetical scenario or recontextualisation is about to be described. This recontextualisation is the heart of

hypothetical stories specifically at the point at which the new scenario deviates from the original one. Looking at what remains the same and what changes in the recontextualised version of events is telling of the meaning frames being invoked by the teller. The first scenario is constructed by Zinhle in the preceding conversation in which the photographer uses Thandi's photos inappropriately. The *who* in Thandi's recontextualised story remains the same as in the first scenario: Thandi and the photographer. The *where* changes; in the first scenario the image that is being misused is taken at the photographer's studio, and in the second story the misused image is obtained on the street. In the first scenario, Thandi books the appointment and takes the photos voluntarily and the photographer accepts to take the photos (for free). In the recontextualised scenario, Thandi is simply walking down the street unaware of the photographer's gaze.

The recontextualisation is followed by the action: "and then he *beats* to that". The context under which *images* of Thandi are perceived by the photographer changes (in the studio vs. on the street), but his actions after he gains access to these images does not: he "pervs" or "beats" to them. "Beats" is Thandi's interpretation of Zinhle's "*perv*". The action is the point where the two situations being compared intersect again. She finishes off the story with a coda that reaffirms the point she was defending in the first place "it's the same shit people beat to each other everyday".

The two scenarios: one in which the photographer uses her nude photographs inappropriately, and one in which he uses an imagined image of her inappropriately are presented as equivalent, though they are different. The first scenario is presented as intentional, with both Thandi and the photographer portrayed as having agency: Thandi chooses the photographer, books the photoshoot and voluntarily takes nude pictures, the photographer accepts to take the pictures without charging Thandi, and then proceeds to use these photos inappropriately. In the second scenario, the event is not intentional; the encounter on the street is shown to have happened by chance. Thandi has no agency in this situation as she is portrayed to be simply walking down the street unaware of the photographer's presence or actions. The photographer on the other hand has agency as he "imagines" her and then proceeds to "beat" to that image.

The recontextualisation shifts the story from a context in which she has control to one in which she has no control, and in both contexts, the result stays the same (the image still ends up being misused). This helps Thandi make the point that she, in any case, has no control over how others may react to her photos, and in so doing she constructs herself as one who will do as she wants regardless of how others may perceive her as a result of her actions. The fact that

Thandi and Bella are willing to risk the photographer misusing the pictures, and being judged as being immoral because of these pictures constructs them as strong women who go after what they want even when it could come at the cost of the respectability they desire. This is a performance of agency and the conscious crafting of their group and individual identities as women who subscribe to their own moral or respectability standards.

Zinhle in turn 22 does not evaluate the story, instead, she returns to Thandi's warning that the photographer might release the pictures onto the internet. In turn 23 Thandi refers to the release of the pictures as a "different story". This is important for two reasons: firstly, it shows that Thandi also orients to the hypothetical scenario she just narrated as a story, and secondly that an alternative sequence of events in which the photographer releases her pictures to the public is not the same as one in which he merely uses the images for his own *private*, perverted actions.

Here we see a kind of reformulation of the hypothetical scenario. Although the reformulated scenario is not explicitly spelt out, it is implied that another scenario in which the pictures are taken then released without consent as opposed to just used privately, albeit inappropriately, is being used to further the argument or conversation. The resolution to this alternative scenario comes in line 27 when Thandi says "but anyway you won't die". In the previous scenario, the point that was being defended was the lack of control over what someone could do with one's pictures in private. The point in the second formulation is that though releasing the pictures is more grievous than "perving", it is still not such a terrible outcome as Zinhle "will not die" from it. So in a way, Thandi is warning Zinhle about the possible repercussions of taking nude pictures, but she is also encouraging her to go ahead and do the photoshoot as no matter the outcome, Zinhle will live.

The analysis above shows that the quality of the hypothetical story that allows for reformulating the scenario is thus a powerful resource in the (re)fashioning of female identities within the group. It creates the space for group ideologies to be jointly formulated and shared or passed on to new members. Its main affordance lies in the fact that rather than relying on lived past events which can only unfold in a certain way, the hypothetical story, due to the imaginary element and option for multiple recontextualisations, provides a space for the construction of selves beyond the present moment of interaction and beyond lived experiences, into a space of possibilities that are yet to and/or may indeed never materialize.

In extract 2 below, I look at the second hypothetical story. This hypothetical story is found in the same recording as the story above (BRall3Z300617). It comes much later in the recording, after the story above, and after the “dollop of whiteness story from Chapter 4. This extract starts 3hr5mins into the recording. This story is also told by Thandi. Bella, Eve and Zinhle are present in this narrative event. The conversation prior to this story is minimal and involves mainly commentary on the show they are watching on TV. Bella then requests for a movie instead of the TV show they have been watching (in turn 1). Thandi responds because she is the one who selected the channel and thus the one most interested in what is currently playing. The request for a movie becomes an argument between the two over who can choose what TV program to watch given the circumstances. Thandi, on one hand, argues that since she has been away from the room for a while, and has paid her share of the rent, she gets to choose the channel. Bella, on the other hand, argues that Thandi has no such rights as she has had equal opportunity to watch these shows, since she has been “enjoying wi-fi” at Zinhle’s place. It is at this point that Thandi begins to tell a hypothetical story to support the argument that her life outside of their shared space (in this case access to Zinhle’s wi-fi) is not related to their arrangements in Bella’s room.

Extract 2: “His business is my business”

1. Bella: so there's not like movie that we can watch
2. Thandi: the thing is I haven't watched TV over how many days so=
3. Bella: =how is that my problem
4. Thandi: so now I must get in all that time that I've lost
5. Bella: how is that my problem
6. Thandi: (hiss) how is it not your problem fuck that
7. Bella: are you not enjoying free Wi-Fi
8. Thandi: everybody gets equal share of electricity so give me equal share
9. Bella: who
10. Thandi: eh
11. Bella: are you not enjoying Wi-Fi
12. Thandi: and so?
13. Bella: don't you get to see all this
14. →Thandi: what so like say for instance this is like a weird example to use but anyway say for instance if you - if you have a husband right
15. Bella: uhm
16. Thandi: and your husband has like a side bae right (Bella and Thandi chuckle) I just wanna understand if your husband is getting some extra things outside of you know outside of you and then also getting some things with you like how is it your business like the outside (Thandi, Zinhle and Bella laugh) it's not your business like you guys are here you're together

17. Bella: [I'm so
18. Zinhle: [you were right that is a weird example
19. Bella: I am so happy that you said it that it - if - if my husband (laughs) is that what you saying you should learn to choose your words you said my husband so like his business is my business
20. Thandi: listen (.) no his (all three laugh) yoh people people
21. Zinhle: yoh Bella you just turned that around hey (Bella laughs)
22. Thandi: okay let's say if you - is your husband's business your business
23. Bella: yeah
24. Zinhle: use your words
25. Thandi: okay let's not say husband
26. Bella: choose your words nicely
27. Thandi: is Bryan's business your business I mean is is your business Bryan's business
28. Bella: what now now
29. Zinhle: Bryan Bryan
30. Thandi: Bryan (sexy voice)
31. Bella: which Bryan
32. Thandi: your Bryan
33. Bella: like his business is my business
34. Thandi: is your business his business
35. Bella: yea - my business no (Bella laughs) my business is my business his business is my business
36. Thandi: ehein
37. Zinhle: YO::H YOH
38. Thandi: that's exactly what I am saying
39. Bella: his business is my business my business is my business
40. Thandi: wow you're fucked up (Bella laughs) but your marriage will work
41. Zinhle: Bella is fucked up (all three laugh) I concur (all laugh) I agree fully comrade (laughs) I support you
42. Bella: you guys need to know how to do these things

The narrative starts in turn 14. The argument is not stated at the beginning of this story, but it can be assumed that what she is about to share is aimed at enabling her to win control of the channel they will watch in the end. The story launcher here includes the hypothetical marker “say for instance”, an abstract that evaluates the story as a “weird example” and the start of the hypothetical scenario. The abstract may summarize, or as in this case, evaluate the story to increase the tellability of, or participants’ interest in the story (Labov, 1972).

The hypothetical scenario, which contains the orientation elements of the story follows from turn 14 to turn 16 signaled by “if”. The scenario features Bella and two hypothetical characters: Bella’s husband and his “side bae”. ‘Side bae’ is a variation of the expression ‘side

chick' used to refer to the mistress. The girlfriend is conversely dubbed the 'main chick'. In this story the hypothetical scenario is a recontextualisation of their current situation. The *who* changes from Bella, Thandi and Zinhle to Bella, a hypothetical husband (who replaces Thandi) and the "side bae" (who replaces Zinhle). There is thus a juxtaposition of their relationship as roommates and marriage. This juxtaposition makes it so that in deciding who gets to choose the channel, they have to apply their knowledge about marriage norms to their current living arrangements. In other words, Thandi is constructing their relationship as roommates as similar to marriage, thereby inviting the interlocutors to use their knowledge about the institution of marriage, in terms of the norms of the institution and the roles of those involved, in making sense of the current problem of deciding who gets the upper hand. Bella and Thandi chuckle at the comparison Thandi is making, but Bella does not say anything except "mhm", which implies that Thandi's story launch was successful and her audience is listening for her story.

The action in the story comes, like in the previous story, in the form of a question to Bella (in turn 16) after another evaluation, "I just wanna understand". Here the hypothetical husband gets "extra things" from the mistress *and then* gets "some things" from Bella as the wife. Although the order of these clauses can be reversed without changing the the story, I argue that it is structured in this way because the value of the story is not necessarily in the sequence of actions, but in the point the story is supposed to prove. The husband (Thandi) is getting "extra things" (free wi-fi) from "outside" or from the "side bae" (Zinhle). Thandi's question is thus, if this hypothetical scenario was the case, would it be Bella's business what her husband was doing with the mistress? Their shared laughter may indicate that they understand that Thandi is drawing from a traditional conceptualization of marriage in which the woman may not question her husband's activities, and one in which it is not uncommon for men to defend their infidelity as their male rights. If Bella conforms to this marriage ideology, and believes that her husband's business is not her business, then in the same vain, Thandi would have the right to choose what they watch given that her (Thandi's) enjoyment of wi-fi at Zinhle's place will not be a factor in the current situation.

Following this logic, Thandi provides her coda at the end of turn 16 which affirms the point she is trying to prove that "it is not [Bella's] business" what happens outside, which would give her the right to choose what they watch in that particular moment, since she deserves to catch up on the TV she has missed while staying at the "side bae's". Given that this is an argument, Thandi's technique is brilliant as she is drawing on their understanding of

traditional marriage and its norms to get the other interlocutors to come to the conclusion that she is the one with the right to choose what they watch not just because she says so, but because even in marriage, a more formal and respectable institution, it is so. In the turns after the story, the participants begin to explore the meanings of Thandi's hypothetical scenario, and their positions in relation to it.

Zinhle, in turn 18, agrees with Thandi's initial evaluation that comparing their living arrangements to a marriage is a "weird example". Bella, in turn 19, provides an alternative position which contradicts the conclusion that Thandi had drawn earlier in turn 16. Bella's position is that her husband's business *is* her business, which causes all the participants to laugh as Bella has "turned that around" back to her favour. Here, Bella provides an alternative coda in which her hypothetical husband's business *is* her business. Thandi understands that Bella's position implies, in relation to their current dilemma, that Bella still has a say in what channel they will watch. This would mean that Thandi's story has failed to win her control of the television, and as a result, she goes on to reformulate the scenario.

The hypothetical markers present in turn 22 is evidence that a reformulation or recontextualisation is about to follow. As Thandi tries to come up with a scenario, she is teased by Zinhle and Bella in turn 24 and 26 to choose her words wisely if she wants to win the argument. The conversation is no longer about gaining control of the TV, it is now a game of wit as they both try to outsmart each other by manipulating the relationship/marriage norms and values at their disposal.

In the reformulation, Thandi replaces the hypothetical husband with a person that Bella is actually dating in 'reality' named Bryan (turn 27). The context then shifts from a hypothetical marriage to a relationship. Within a traditional context, fidelity norms between a boyfriend and girlfriend are similar to that of a traditional marriage in that the boyfriend may still defend his infidelity on the basis of his masculinity. So in this sense, Thandi may be working with the hope that Bella's position might change because of the switch from a fictional character to someone she actually knows. Thandi first asks in turn 27 'is Bryan's business your business' then she changes it to "is your business Bryan's business". In the previous scenario "business" was used to refer to the affair between the hypothetical husband and the "side bae". It is assumed that within the reformulated scenario "business" may still refer to an affair, though the details are left out.

After Thandi and Zinhle joke around with Bryan's name and Thandi clarifies that she is referring to Bella's Bryan, Bella finally answers in turn 33 by stating that his business is her business, just like it was with the hypothetical husband. Thandi then asks again, "is your business his business", that is, if Bella had an affair, would it be Bryan's business? She reverses the scenario in the hope that the reciprocity (expecting what you give) that is one of the norms guiding intimate relationships would apply and Bella would be forced to say that her business is Bryans business too (judging from Thandi's reaction in turns 36 and 38). If this is the case, Thandi will still end up losing the argument as it will still imply that her use of the wi-fi at Zinhle place is indeed Bella's business, and so Bella would still have a say on who gets to choose what they watch.

Bella is about to say that her business is Bryans business too, then she stops herself and laughs as she finds that she is about to give the answer that Thandi is expecting. She rephrases her utterance by stating that her business is *her* business and his business is her business too. Thandi is so focused on the answer she believes will favour her argument that she misses Bella's point as evidenced in turns 36 and 38. How Thandi was going to use the answer she hoped Bella would give to support her argument is unknown as Zinhle's reaction in turn 37 makes Thandi realize that she has missed the point, and so she does not continue to state her argument in turn 38. Bella repeats her position again in turn 39 as Thandi realizes that Bella has outsmarted her once again. Thandi expresses this in turn 40: "you're fucked up but your marriage will work" signaling that she is giving up on the argument and will no longer suggest alternative scenarios.

Although it is unsure exactly how Thandi aimed to use the reformulation to her advantage as the answer she was expecting (that Bella's business is Bryans business too), would still have left her on the losing end in relation to their initial argument, the playful co-construction of these scenarios, reveals their positions in relation to (gender) norms of marriage and relationships. This is evidenced by Thandi's response in turn 40 where Bella's hypothetical marriage is evaluated and not their initial issue with the TV: "you're fucked up but your marriage will work". Bella challenges traditional norms first by stating that his business *is* her business and further by asserting that her business *is not* his business. The rules that apply to her partner do not apply to her. This is why Thandi thinks Bella's position is "fucked up" as it goes against the idea of reciprocity which should characterize such relationships.

Thandi's turn 40 is also an indication that she herself does not believe in the traditional scenario she had attempted to use to win the initial argument, as she claims that Bella's

approach, not the traditional approach, will lead to a successful marriage. This brings to mind the idea of local occasioning, given that Thandi is using a set of values or social norms to which she may not necessarily to her advantage in the current engagement. The stories, the way she formulates the different scenarios, and Bella and Zinhle's reactions, are thus occasioned by the local conversational task at hand; that of seeing who will win control of the TV.

Bella laughs as she knows she has won. Zinhle agrees with Thandi about Bella's double standards being "fucked up" in turn 41, given all that she herself has observed in the telling and her reactions throughout the story. Bella has the last say as the winner of the argument "you guys need to know how to do these things" which is appropriate as she outplayed Thandi in this argument.

In this section, I have shown how putting two or more scenarios in parallel frames, through a process of recontextualisation, gives a perspective of the norms that interlocutors are drawing on to make their case. Looking at the elements of the scenarios that stay the same and those that are altered (for instance, replacing the hypothetical character of the husband with Bryan a real life person) further highlights what meaning frames and ideologies the participants are drawing on to make their arguments, as well as the positions they are taking in that regard. In relation to the story discussed above, Thandi replaces the hypothetical character with Bella's real life partner to see if Bella's stance remains the same. By doing so, she also removes marriage as the institutional context given that Bella and Bryan are not married and were not planning to get married, and places the story within the context of heterosexual relationships more generally, in which Bella's stance remains the same. By changing some characters but maintaining the "affair" or the activities of one partner outside of the relationship across all the scenarios, attention is drawn not to the act of infidelity itself, but to the norms that govern how fidelity should be dealt with in such relationships. In this way the emergent form of the hypothetical story allows for such negotiations and configurations and consequently, the gender roles that emerge.

In the following section I explore the last story genre included in this analysis: projections. I propose a structure for projections based on the patterns within my data and I carry out a detailed analysis of one story to illustrate how these stories become a way for these women to co-construct future possibilities for future selves.

5.4. Projections

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, there are two types of stories: hypothetical stories and projections, which involve events that have not yet been lived or are imagined. In this section of the chapter I look at how the participants construct selves within future possible events and how these stories become a tool in the process of becoming and in the affirmation of dreams.

Georgakopoulou (2003) defines projections as stories about possible, (near) future events. These are narratives in the sense that they have temporal juncture, although they are set in the future and are therefore imagined by the tellers. Projections in these data dealt with similar themes as the other stories, but mainly with career aspiration and the desire for fame, success and recognition. They allow for future time and space to be reflected on in the now, providing insight into how the group perceives who they will become through the course of their lives, and the implications of these aspirations for the self in the here and now.

Below is the structure I propose for projections based on the stories in my data. I had five projections and all five were analyzed for the structural components. Two were selected for detailed analysis. After looking at the structure, I look specifically at one example to show how the structural qualities of projections aid the imagination and the affirmation of dreams.

5.4.1. Structure

Projections may take a variety of shapes with the main defining feature being the fact that they are set in the future. Within these data, projections resembled recounts (Eggins and Slade, 1997) and reports (analyzed in Chapter 4). They consist of the following parts:

- **Story launcher:** This is the turn in which the narrative is launched and may consist of an optional abstract and orientation, and the first narrative clause(s).
 - **Abstract:** The abstract within projections are similar to those of the report (discussed in Chapter 4) in that they do not necessarily summarize the story as much as they are a request for a turn or a bid to hold the floor for the duration of a narrative.
 - **Orientation:** The orientation is made of the *who*, *when* and *where* of the story and may also be optional depending on whether the teller perceives the information to be known to the interlocutors, or necessary for the understanding of their story.

- **Record of events/dialogue:** As noted previously, conversational stories are not necessarily about solving problems, as with Labovian stories. Hence, this part may consist of a record of related events, as is the case with recounts (Eggins and Slade, 1997), or they may consist of a dialogue similar to the stories in Chapter Four.
- **Coda:** The coda is also optional and may consist of the appraisal of the situation that has been narrated.
- **Evaluations:** Just like in the other genres, the evaluation runs throughout the telling and it is what keeps the tellers engaged and attentive.

Below I take a closer look at a projection told by Bella to show how the imagined quality of projections and the fact that they are set in the future are powerful tools in literally (re)imagining possibilities for future selves.

5.5. Projections: the affirmation of dreams and the politics of becoming

The story is an example of how stories create a space for the affirmation of the group's dreams to become rich, successful and famous African women. In the process of imagining selves that might be, the participants simultaneously construct a sense of self in the present moment as women who are confident and ambitious.

The transcript below is part of the first ten minutes of a three-hour long recording of conversation between Bella, Eve and Thandi in Bella's room. The conversation was recorded on the 25th of March 2017. The story starts after Eve's comments relating to the TV show called V-Entertainment that used to air every weekday at six o'clock on Vuzu, a TV station on DSTV. V-Entertainment reported on entertainment news such as celebrity gossip, the latest music videos and red carpet events, to name a few. Bella, Thandi and Eve routinely watched this show since Bella would always set a reminder for it on the DSTV channel guide. This was thus a typical evening where they watch TV, while having conversations that may or may not be related to what is happening on TV. Thandi and Eve are also usually on their laptops, doing school work, creating content for Girl Chat or watching movies or documentaries they have downloaded from the internet.

The conversation before this extract was about another conversation that was happening on their Girl Chat group on WhatsApp. Earlier that day, they had filmed a conversation for their channel. However, they were no longer happy with that work and were considering reshooting. Then they move on to making commentary about V-Entertainment, how the

presenters look, how they speak, what they are talking about, and so on. This extract begins when the show switches to a segment which looks like an entirely different show in terms of the set design, content and presenters and this prompts Eve to comment. The story is about how the Girl Chat team will look while hosting the red carpet event at the Cape Town fashion week for a designer they are working with.

Extract 3: “On fleek”

1. Eve: Is this Vuzu throwing shade at another show again ah
2. Thandi: what did they do?
3. Eve: they always look for that show=you see that time they brought the girl with the red hair=
4. Thandi: =mmh
5. Eve: on the fashion commentary (.) the other time they brought the two male models who who sat there with fruit juice and never sipped on it even once so now they are picking – one day Girl Chat will (laughing) appear
6. Bella: they are going to use us
(8.0)
7. →Bella: I just imagined something (.) you know when we do – for the Mercedes thing right?
8. Eve: uhmm
9. Bella: so we are going to do the red carpet for the Mercedes thing right?
10. Eve: uhmm
11. Bella: Then I just=
12. Thandi: =How can this girl still not – sorry go on
13. Bella: which one is your own? (this is an expression that may mean ‘*what is your problem*’)
14. Thandi: No no I’m talking to myself [[really
15. Bella: [[then I just imagined
that like after that episode (.) like right we are going to be – we are going to be looking on fleek we are going to be looking so beautiful
(Eve giggles) then all these beautiful == (laughs) are going to come after us
16. Eve: Is this your imagination
17. Bella: yes (laughs) then they will want to use us (Eve giggles) for things
18. Eve: Everybody has those dreams

Eve asks if Vuzu is “throwing shade” at another show in the first turn of this extract. Throwing shade is a colloquial way of saying that one is indirectly mocking or belittling someone or something else. V-Entertainment is a tongue-in-cheek take on entertainment industry news and its presenters are known for “throwing shade” at the individuals in the news stories they report on. Eve suspects that the segment that’s currently being aired is another instance of V-Entertainment being ‘shady’ towards another show. She ends turn 5 by

stating that one day Girl Chat may be the victim of V-Entertainment's "shade". Bella in turn 6 supports Eve by agreeing that they shall one day be "used". There is a pause in which they continue to watch the show before Bella begins her story.

The story launcher comes in turn 7, and it resembles the story launcher that I discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to reports. It is constituted by an abstract "I just imagined something", which functions as a bid to tell, or at least a bid for a turn, and an orientation in which they (the Girl Chat team) film red carpet moments at the Mercedes Benz fashion week which was happening on the 6th and 7th of April 2017 (ten days away from the date of this recording). The team had been working with a Ghanaian designer who was showing her collection at the event. The designer wanted the team to speak to some of the people who were going to be attending to find out what they were looking forward to in the show, as well as how they had experienced it afterwards. This is a common trend these days where social media content creators attend popular events in order to interview people and create content for their pages or channels.

In turn 7, there are ellipses in the information Bella is sharing which she later fills in turn 9. Eve's turns 8 and 10 are her requests to hear what Bella has to say or permission for Bella to keep going. Before Bella can launch into the first action in her story, Thandi interrupts her with a comment that is not related to the story (turn 14) which she claims is a comment to herself, and may also be an indication for Bella to continue with what she is saying.

The story resumes in turn 15 indicated by "then". The footage they were planning on recording on the red carpet was meant to be later uploaded as content on their Girl Chat channel, which is why Bella talks about "after that episode". They will be looking "on fleek", which is a social media expression (such as "throwing shade") meaning 'beautiful', in this context. As a result of how "on fleek" they will look, "beautiful" people or brands (I assume) will come for them and use them for "things". The rise of social media has led to the rise of brands using 'influencers', or people with large social media followings, that other young people aspire to, for marketing their products. For instance, Bonang Matheba, a public personality with a following of about 2.2 million followers, was the face of Revlon a beauty brand. Nomzamo Mbatha, another public figure with 1.8 million followers on Instagram, is brand ambassador for Puma, McDonalds, and Audi among others.

Here we see the aspirational element come into play where they are imagining a career path that looks like the ones of those they perceive as already successful. The desire to be

recognized and admired, to have more and be more is expressed here. The imaginary quality of this story, as in the case of hypothetical stories, creates an opportunity for dreams and possibilities to be explored and affirmed. Eve's comment in turn 18 is indeed an affirmation of not just the specific scenario being depicted in the story, but an affirmation of Bella's dreams and ambitions. Her comment is also a reaffirmation of her dreams. From another perspective, Bella's projection may be considered boastful, or she could be seen as one who thinks too highly of herself, which is not necessarily a good thing. Hence Eve's comment puts a positive attribute to Bella's story, by presenting Bella's ambition as 'normal'.

Although projecting into the future or constructing hypothetical scenarios involves an imagination of selves within situations that are yet to be lived, they also work to construct the self that emerges in interaction. By imagining how good they will look and how people will respond, they are constructing themselves as confident in the present, or as people who are confident enough to imagine other people appreciating them. Juxtaposing the time and space frame of the future and the present enables them to reflect on who they are in the process of becoming: successful, famous, beautiful women, and enables their identities as ambitious and confident women to emerge. It also creates room for the negotiation and validation of their dreams as they affirm and support each other's visioning of the future, whatever forms that might take.

5.6. Chapter summary

This chapter has looked at hypothetical stories and projections as stories that allow the participants to imagine themselves within parallel situations as well as within stories about possible future events. It has shown how these genres allow participants to test their ideologies and their perception of selves across scenarios they are able to imagine. It also allows them to construct and affirm their dreams and to reflect on the type of women they see themselves becoming over the course of their lives. I explore how the form of the stories is determined and determining of the type of identity work and claims that the participants make in the telling.

In the next chapter, I summarize the work that has been presented in this thesis, and the ways in which my study extends theoretical work on narrative identities. I present the research limitations and how future studies may extend the findings of this project.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

This study sought to add to the body of research that explores our understanding of the relationship between narratives, social practices and identity performances. To do so, I collected and analysed the casual conversations of a group of female friends, to uncover how stories are exploited in conversation to fulfil certain tasks within their local contexts, while simultaneously constructing a sense of self through the use of narrative and discursive devices. The specific questions I set out to answer are: what are the main themes or social discourses found in the stories told by the group of friends? How do participants (co)construct their individual and group identities in relations to these themes? How are these identity positions evidenced in and through narrative form and narrative techniques? How may an exploration of embedded evaluations (Labov, 1972) within the stories, provide insight into the identity formation processes of the group? What purposes do these stories fulfil in the here and now of conversation? What are the functions of these stories with regards to the relationship between the friends and the propositioned image of the group?

Before focusing on the data collected, I reviewed existing research that has contributed to the developments of the field of narrative identities. I explore how narratives are structured, and how identities are conceptualised in biographical approaches (Labov, 1972; Labov and Weletzky, 1967; Linde, 1993) and interactional approaches to narrative identities (Sacks, 1992; Eggins and Slade, 1997; Ochs and Capps, 2001; De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008). I also explore how identities have been studied in the social sciences in general, and the move away from essentialism, towards a social constructionist view of identities. I also discuss how discourse centred studies have contributed to our understanding of these concepts (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, 2008)

The 36 stories found in the data were analysed using mainly a social interaction approach (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008). I looked at genre not as a fixed set of defining structures, and more as modes of action which entail the “routine and repeated ways of acting and expressing orders of knowledge and experience” (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008: 383). Based on this and the work of Eggins and Slade (1997) on narrative genres in conversational stories I was able to identify the recurring elements of the narrative events within the group in relation to their social practices. I looked at the role of stories in helping the group take certain positions in relation to several themes, the main ones being: career aspiration, respectability/morality and awareness of the female body. I showed how these themes

intersected in different ways and at different levels to construct what emerged as the identity positions of the participants within their stories.

Based on my analysis of these 36 stories, I propose three distinct story types in my data, namely, *reports*, *hypothetical stories* and *projections*. Drawing on theoretical concepts in the literature, I outline the typical components of these genres, and then I analyse a sample in detail. I argue that reports, specifically the use of constructed dialogue within the genre of reports, are a tool for the negotiation of difference, through the ways in which the dialogue enables participants to position themselves in relation to the voices in their stories and the interlocutors in the here and now. I also showed how reports become a tool in the assigning of praise and blame, and create a space for the friends who are in the business of imagining a 'new' or 'alternative' African woman, to negotiate the values and ideologies of the women they are or aspired to be.

I further showed how hypothetical stories are used as a powerful tool for the construction of agentive selves as well as the ideologies driving these selves, due to the ability to recontextualise (multiple times) the events in a story in order to gauge how one may behave within different contexts, as well as take care of the local interactional business. Lastly, I looked at projections and showed that the affordance of allowing the teller to juxtapose the time-space frame of the now and future play a crucial role in allowing the group to imagine what type of women they saw themselves becoming. These stories capture the idea of re-fashioning and re-imagining African female identities as the participants jointly imagined themselves (literally) in the future as successful, famous, rich and respectable. These imagined stories and dreams further construct them as women who are ambitious and confident, and supportive of each other's dreams and aspirations. Stories thus play a role in the active constructions of future possibilities which gives us insight into who the participants see themselves becoming.

This study thus contributes to the body of work that aims to demonstrate the usefulness of story structure within interactional settings as a way of gaining insight to the identity formation processes that individuals may utilize. It shows that a flexible approach to narrative structure, which foregrounds the situatedness of narrative events within the local contexts of their construction and within a larger social context deepens and complicates the type of analysis and conclusions that researchers may arrive at in general, and in relation to identity studies in particular.

In terms of future research trajectories, the scope of this study did not allow for an exploration of how the stories in their daily conversations eventually made their way to YouTube or shared the same themes as those told on Girl Chat. It would be interesting to explore the resemiotisation and flow of stories from offline (private) platforms to online (public) platforms. It would be interesting to see if the dynamics of story telling among the group change once the platform changes. In addition, digital media is growing more and more popular as a tool that is exploited by young people to gain access to economic freedom today. The growing interest in computer mediated storytelling (Androutsopoulos, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2006b) combined with Appadurai's (2013: 1) idea of the "the politics of possibilities" where assets (digital platforms), dreams and stories become the strategies for the negotiation of alternative identity options for women on a global stage, will be the basis for future research projects.



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Appendix 1: Transcription key

=	latching
-	false starts, hesitations
(...)	inaudible utterances
[text	overlapping speech
(text)	non verbal aspects, researchers comments
((text))	guesses on unclear or inaudible utterances
(.), (2.0)	noticeable pause, duration of a pause
:	prolonged sound
CAPS	higher volume than surrounding talk
Underlined words	emphasis
<i>italics</i>	made up words, colloquial expressions or slang
?	raised intonation at the end of an utterance
[<i>italicized texts in square brackets</i>]	translation
→	Indicates the start of the narrative or story launcher

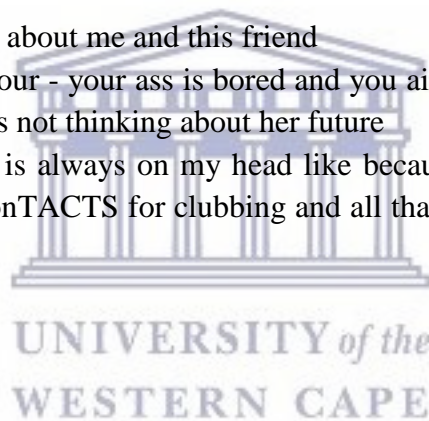
Appendix 2: Transcripts

Report – contracts vs. clubs

1. →Bella: I have this friend
Eve you know Nina
2. Eve: mhm
3. Bella: Nina that used to study together (.) she's like “do you know anybody who can take us to (.) em - who can take us to the club tonight” and I'm like "girl I'm thinking of the person who is going to give me the next contract (laughs)
4. Thandi: wow Bella what the fuck? (.) who said she's not thinking about that she's just wants to go to a club fuck you (hiss)
5. Bella: oh God I am here thinking - stressing on how to get my next
6. Thandi: That's fucked up Bella
I won't lie to you (3.0)
that's classist and egregious (8.0)
7. Bella: that's when you know you guys have the s - different perspective in life RE-O
8. Thandi: who?
9. Bella: huh I am talking about me and this friend
10. Thandi: Just because your - your ass is bored and you ain't got no plans and no money doesn't mean that girl is not thinking about her future
11. Bella: the thing is she is always on my head like because (2.0) that time we used to like - I used to have conTACTS for clubbing and all that she doesn't know that nigger has grown up yeah
12. Thandi: mmm

Report – Bella's R20 skirt

1. Bella: can I wear this one with this your jacket
2. Thandi: No
3. Bella: HAI okay yoh Thandi you too eh
4. Thandi: you cannot wear my jacket like
5. Bella: you t - you too shu the way you are keen on me not wearing this your jacket (Thandi laughs)
6. →Thandi: Bella bought a skirt (Bella laughs) (Thandi chuckles) for twenty rand in the street a beautiful beautiful skirt right I'm like "Bella can I wear this skirt" "No"
7. Zinhle: where's the skirt
8. Thandi: "can I wear the skirt" "no" "I just want to take pictures I'll upload them after ah uhm you wear your - you show yours on the internet" "no no no" "Bella can I trade this skirt for a hundred rand" imagine eighty rand plus
9. Zinhle: you know
10. Thandi: she she will get "no"
11. Bella: the thing is like=
12. Thandi: =and then she has the audacity (.) the audacity to open her mouth and ask for my jacket



13. Bella: yeah but I asked for the jacket (Thandi and Bella laugh) why why when=
14. Thandi: (both still laughing) =wow Bella stop that is fucked up
15. Bella: (both still laughing) but it won't change the fact that I asked for the jacket like
will it change the fact that I asked for the jacket
16. Thandi: no it wont but it's fucked up
17. Bella: yeah ok so let me ask you something again

Hypothetical story – Lindi

1. Eve: is she the one making the voice for v-entertainment
2. Bella: Ye://:S
3. Thandi: we finally found her=
4. Bella: = so we finally found you (10.0)
5. Bella: yoh Eve you need to talk to this your friend Lindi [she's so annoying
6. Eve: [what has she done again
7. Thandi:[(laughs)
8. Bella: I told her when she buys her uniforms she should let me know and I will book her on shifts now she saying she can't find a petite coat what must I do?
9. Eve: na wah (expression of surprise like 'wow')
10. →Bella: Imagine that – I have 20 staff plus clients imagine if I had to answer so many questions from each of them, then deal with the clients and run the events how will I survive?
11. Thandi: eish people are not responsible
12. Bella: I told her that she has the job the least she can do is get her uniform by herself (0.2) I honestly don't know if I want to work with her anymore

Projection – “Boss jacket”

1. Zinhle: Please put on your boss jacket let me see
2. Bella: my boss jacket =
3. Zinhle: =yes
4. Bella: I have to iron my boss jacket
5. Zinhle: You - you'll iron it la[ter just
6. Bella: [(sigh) I have to iron my jacket then I have to iron this small ties=
7. Z: =your boss jacket
8. Thandi: I'm telling you [manager
9. Bella: [(inaudible) Mbua (the tailor) I told him to cut the line at the back he didn't he didn't listen to me he didn't
10. Zinhle: YOH he didn't [listen to the boss he didn't listen to the boss
11. Thandi: [(laughing) "he didn't listen to me" today the uber driver was to me like "ma'am" I'm like "yes boy" (laughs) Zinhle
12. Zinhle: you should have told him this is your boss jacket then he would have listened=
13. Bella: =the thing is he knows I am a boss I don't need to tell him
14. Zinhle: ooooh neh shame
15. Thandi: let's see what happens if I put (probably talking to herself)

16. Bella: I wanted him to cut it like *piup* I'll go back it's just that [I have to go to work tomorrow so
17. Zinhle: [turn around (.) Yoh your cleavage is gonna be [yoh (inaudible)
18. Thandi: [are you wearing it to work tomorrow
19. Bella: yeah I'm a [boss don't talk shit
20. Zinhle: [no:: turn around let me see
21. Thandi: I am a boss bitch
22. Zinhle: front view side view
23. Bella: yeah I need to cut it here *piup*
24. Zinhle: why
25. Bella: I want - I just want this thing here
26. Zinhle: no:: then you're like a BEE ((some)) (chuckles) some tender shit going on (2.0) it's very nice
27. Thandi: you should start wearing heels
28. →Bella: yeah I'm gon - ch - like you don't know how swag this this (laughing) thing is gonna be you don't - Mark tomorrow is gonna be like (high pitched voice) "WHAT shu Bella
29. Zinhle: He never *esperret* it [he never expected it]
30. Bella: no okay he calls me Suzie (this is a pseudonym for Bella's other name) he's gonna be like (high pitched, sing song voice) "YUU Suz" you know with his - that his gay thing (Thandi chuckles) (in a high pitched, sing-song voice) "SU::Z" (laughs) "SU::Z"
31. Thandi: I don't know if the things you're saying are fucked up or like (Thandi and Bella laugh)
32. Bella: with that his gay tendency he's gonna be like (high pitched voice) "Oh Suz" yes then I will just gonna be like - he's gonna be like "I don't think I should be surprised because you always come up with something" okay let me look for my outfit for tomorrow

Appendix 3: Pictures from the Girl Chat YouTube channel



1,323 views 42 2 360 SHARE ...



2,621 views 25 1 360 SHARE ...



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Appendix 4: Pictures from Girl Chat Instagram page



BOSS TUESDAY

Following

Be bossy. Be brave. Be rough. Be sweet. Be enough -for you. Shout out to one of our queens; co-founder of and fitness enthusiast

32 likes

MARCH 26, 2017

Add a comment...



Following

"If you see yourself the way I see you, you will see a queen" - #beauty #queen #love #music #lyrics #vision #mirror #positive #postivethinking #queenmentality #queendom #queenery #greatness #glory #empowerment #flashbackfriday #fbf #backtothebeginning #lookingtothefuture #hustle #grind #motivation #fitness #fitnessmodel #fitminds #fitspirit #fitbody #photography

Such a beauty
thank you queen 🙌
Thanks for the shout out. King 🙌

59 likes

JULY 21, 2017

Add a comment...



Following

Her majesty. Your majesty.
You are majestic 🌹👑 #blackqueens
#queendom #blackgirl #blackgirlmagic
#blackmagic #photography #nude
#bodypositive #bodypaint #selflove
#MotivationalQuotes #africanwomen
#strongwomen #naturalhair #fashion #afro
#Afropunk #bantuknots #beauty #fitness
#bodybuilding #branding #loveyourbody
#blackmagic #BlackExcellence #blackgirls
#queenery #motivationmonday #motivation



37 likes

JULY 10, 2017

Add a comment...



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