

**THE EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE CYCLISTS  
PARTICIPATING IN A CYCLING CLUB AT A  
SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY**

by

LOUIS JAN VAN DER BERG

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## SUMMARY

The study focuses on the experiences of female cyclists who participate in the cycling club at a tertiary institution in South Africa. By qualitatively exploring these experiences an attempt was made to understand how female cyclists narrate themselves within a specific context.

In embarking on this research I have worked from a narrative position that focuses on experiences that people live on a daily basis. The way people tell about these experiences allows them to make sense of their lives. People's experiences are shaped by history and culture which allows them to tell their narratives differently as context and time differs.

The methodology employed is that of narrative analysis which entails attending, telling, transcribing, analysing and reading the text presented by the participants. Themes introduced by the participants were analysed and commented upon by the researcher in the final chapters.

## KEY TERMINOLOGY

Narratives, experiences, qualitative research, female, cycling, cycling club, university, tertiary institution, history, culture, patriarchal, gender, contrasts, self development, ineffectiveness, dependence, friendship, learning.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie fokus op die ervaring van vroulike fietsryers wat deelneem in 'n fietsryklub by 'n tersiêre akademiese instelling in Suid Afrika. Deur hierdie ervarings kwalitatief te ondersoek, word gepoog om te verstaan hoe vroulike fietsryers hulself in narratiewe uitdruk binne 'n spesifieke konteks.

Met die onderneming van hierdie navorsing werk ek vanuit 'n narratiewe posisie wat fokus op die ervarings waarmee mense op 'n daaglikse basis lewe. Die manier waarop mense hierdie ervarings vertel laat hulle toe om sin te maak van hulle lewe. Mense se ervarings word gevorm deur geskiedenis en kultuur wat hulle toelaat om narratiewe verskillend te vertel soos die konteks en tyd verskil.

Die metodologie wat toegepas is, is die van narratiewe analise wat 'n aandag aan vertelling van ervarings, transkribering, analisering en die lees van die teks wat deur die deelnemers voorgehou is, toelaat. Temas wat deur die deelnemers ingebring is, is deur die navorser geanaliseer en kommentaar word daarop gelewer in die laaste hoofstukke.

## SLEUTEL BEGRIPPE

Narratiewe, ervarings, kwalitatiewe navorsing, vroulik, fietsry, fietsryklub, universiteit, tersiêre intelling, geskiedenis, kultuur, patriargale, geslag, kontraste, selfontwikkeling, oneffektiwiteit, afhanklikheid, vriendskap, leer.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I shall focus on the research problem, questions and goals. I will also address the structure of the research report.

#### 1.1 Problem

Cycling has come a long way over time to be an international sport in which countries on every continent participate. South African cyclists had already won Olympic and World Championship medals in the early 1900's (Human, Phol, Roberts, and Van Velden, 1990), when cycling would have been a little more difficult, needing to overcome infrastructure and technological problems that may have existed, for example long travelling times by ship, little road infrastructure and very little technology in terms of bicycle equipment and accessories. Nowadays technology has come so far that the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), the world governing body of cycling, has imposed a weight limit on bicycles (Tait, 2006). Bicycles have become so technologically advanced at such a great speed that the rule makers cannot keep up with ensuring fairness and safety.

Cycling is more than a sport, it can be a saviour to poor countries. The bicycle has the ability to transform economies and societies completely. A bicycle is a cheap and low maintenance alternative transport, which means someone that cannot afford a motor vehicle can travel longer distances and faster than on foot, on even the most basic of road infrastructure. What is amazing about this invention is that it can be used to transport products or people, using only human power. In the East, bicycles are a common sight with millions of people travelling this way. In Africa, a motor vehicle will hopefully always share the road with bicycles, as cycling is by far the best way for a person to travel without having to pay a large percentage of his or her hard earned money on fuel and related costs, and then being able to use that money for a better life. Initiatives that fuel the drive to get people to experience cycling in their everyday lives are growing all over the world and in South Africa companies devote themselves to distributing bicycles



to people in underprivileged communities, teaching them how to use the bicycles, the safety aspects of using them and further assisting them to continue using these bicycles by providing tools for repairs (BEN, 2007).

Looking at the sport internationally, cycling is at its strongest in Europe (Human et al., 1990), where men and women compete on a daily basis in organised events. The female sporting scene, cycling included, is growing all around the world. A culture of female cycling exists in Europe, exceeded by the male cycling arena in terms of money, support and media coverage. This female cycling culture seems to be bigger and better than anywhere else in the world, and it is the same with male cycling in Europe. Most people know of the Tour de France, as this is one of the biggest and well-known sporting events held annually. Winning this race means instant fame all over the world, even in South Africa, where few people follow the sport of cycling. How many people know that a female Tour de France exists? It is certainly not well publicised. To gather information about female participation, results and races is a much more challenging task if compared with male cycling. In 2005 there were a total of 559 registered female cyclists with the South African Cycling Federation. Of these 433 were Road and Track cyclists, 89 Mountain Bike and 37 BMX (S. Dale, personal communication, 11 October 2006). These numbers are only those supplied by Cycling South Africa (CSA), which is the official governing body of cycling in South Africa. CSA is affiliated to the Union Cycliste Internationale, and in control of a governing body in each province. These Provincial bodies govern cycling clubs to a certain extent, organizing provincial championships, supplying races with officials to uphold the rules and regulations, and being the link between the cyclist and CSA. Every cyclist wishing to compete locally and internationally should register with a club, which is affiliated to the provincial body which, in turn, is governed by the national body adhering to international regulations and rules. This is to make sure that cycling can be participated in fairly by all the participants.

However, South Africa has a unique situation which is very different from other established cycling countries, especially those in Europe. In Europe the focus is on

competition. Cycling in South Africa has two parts, a competitive, rule-bound part where strict rules and sanctions apply, and a part where people can just ride and compete in races without being a member of a club or organisation. Race organisers cater for both because it is important financially to have large numbers of cyclists present at a race, and still have the Cycling South Africa registered riders compete. These two groups are split so that they do not race together. The statistics provide accounts only for Cycling South Africa registered cyclists, thus it is difficult to get an idea of how many cyclists are actively participating in cycling. South Africa hosts some of the biggest mass participation cycle races in the world, receiving entries from all over the world and, because of logistical problems, people are being turned away to compete in some events (Cape Epic, 2006). Organisers in South Africa started a mountain bike tour open to any rider, the Cape-Epic and the entries for 2005 were filled within a few hours, with 1000 cyclists entering (Cape Epic, 2006). This shows the enormity of the cycling scene in South Africa and, because cycling is so popular, I found it hard to believe that South Africa struggles with low numbers of competitive female cyclists in a university club.

In South Africa, we have a wide array of different cultures living together, working together and practising sport together. Cycling as a sport, not only in South Africa, but worldwide, is mainly participated in by white people. This assumption I made myself through competing in events all over South Africa, and rarely missing any media coverage of international events. Hargreaves (1997) states that “South African sport, specifically, reflected the extraordinary power and privilege of White men, but was also the site of inequalities between men and women in all groups”. Sport has not escaped South Africa’s political past, and many authors tell of the problems that people, especially females, faced if they wanted to participate in sport, (Chappell, 2005, Goslin, 2006, Hargreaves, 1997). Because of South Africa’s divided past, certain groups of the population lived in poverty, whilst probably the hardest hit was black females (Ginwala, [n.d.](#), Hargreaves, 1997). Without being able to provide basic day-to-day needs in order to stay alive, these people could not even begin to imagine participating in a sport like cycling. Cycling is known to be an expensive sport and it certainly appears to be a privileged sport in which developing countries fall behind the more Westernised

countries. In Africa, a cyclist is seen as a commuter, and not necessarily a sportsman or sportswoman. We see many cyclists from different racial groups on the roads, male and female, but few of the previously disadvantaged groups compete in any official way and this, in itself, poses a major obstacle for cycling in South Africa because of the massive potential for growth in the sport if the majority of the population would embrace it. Helping with this cause are organisations that promote the use of bicycles in everyday use and, by distributing bicycles to under-privileged communities, they are creating awareness of the possibilities that can be created (BEN, 2007). The reasons why black people, and black females in particular, have not been drawn into the sport of cycling may be so immense that it will need a lot of further research, and hopefully this study will assist in having a starting point to address issues regarding this topic. According to statistical data (Genderstats, 2007) women are the majority in South Africa, with a 52.2% share of the population. They are however, only 43% of the workforce, and more than 44% of those working earn less than R1 600 per month. If we compare this income with what is needed to compete in a sport like cycling, it is no wonder there are very little female cyclists around. In the female racing categories, there seem to be few or no development riders, while in the male categories only a few black and coloured riders have made their way into the better teams in South African cycling, and it seems as if this is a trend that is set to continue. It is unfortunately very difficult to obtain statistics to illustrate this point, mainly due to the quick-changing nature of the sport. An example would be the involvement of the gold mining companies with cycling in South Africa. A group of riders would get equipment and free time to participate, to compete with the regular professionals, but there never seemed to be a continuation by the riders, even though there were some riders with enough talent (J van der Berg, personal communication, 16 February, 2006).

From my own sporting experience as a cyclist, I will add that I knew that I was participating in a smaller sporting code, and this understanding of the sport came into being through a sort of institutional labelling, as this phrase seems to fit the experience. Early in my cycling career, I received an indication that I was participating in an inferior sporting code and that, if I were playing rugby or cricket I would gain the respect of my

peers and teachers at high school. Schools provided an excellent nursery for sports such as rugby and cricket in South Africa (Chappell, 2005), but this was mainly in white schools. Schools in underprivileged communities had very little access to facilities, and even though I attended a privileged school, only a few chosen sports were acknowledged and accepted. Cycling was not one of them.

It is interesting to note that, unlike many other sports where racial groups other than white people have made inroads into these sports, in cycling worldwide there seem to be very few athletes of colour. In South Africa where the national governing body started development teams and instituted other means of helping groups of colour into competitive cycling, we have seen very little progress made. According to Chappell (2005) structures like the Women and Sport South Africa (WASSA) were established to help the cause of females in sport, and the minister of sport even created more sporting bodies to ensure that the major sporting bodies, for example, the National Sports Congress and the National Olympic Committee of South Africa, could focus on their specific roles, and not compete over other aspects, such as the Commonwealth Games. This shows the massive undertaking that was needed in sport in South Africa to ensure that all people in South Africa had an equal chance of participating. Creating policy to assist in a viable structure to grow the sport is a big step in starting the process, and this is what Cycling South Africa has done with its Transformation Blueprint and Constitution (Cycling South Africa, 2007). This is to ensure that cycling in South Africa becomes a sport where people are all able to participate equally and with the proper assistance but, more importantly for the athlete, that they will feel welcome and accepted into the structures that govern the sport.

Cycling development takes place at school and mostly University level, which is why it is fitting to explore one of the country's best-known universities in this regard. The sport division at a tertiary institution is the main hub in the sport world of many students and professional athletes, and the organisation is so big that each sport is controlled by a managing system, called a club. These clubs sometimes have financial problems, and although some of them win one championship after another, it is not enough to justify

getting a higher priority status. For example, even a cycling club that has been the most successful cycling club in intervarsity cycling still remains relatively small and, even though the organisation gives them resources, the same as all the other clubs in similar positions, the club continues to seemingly struggle with logistical and financial constraints. It does not seem to be the numbers and talent of riders in a club that make it a success or failure, there appears to be a lot more needed behind the scenes.

Unfortunately, even at a big university such as the one participating in the research, the cycling club has very few females enrolled, and has no black female cyclists. The decision to undertake the research was ultimately influenced by availability of participants, more than any other factors, and it seemed that female cycling, on the whole, could not really be compared with male cycling anywhere in the world. The cycling club lost some of the riders that would have participated in this study constantly during the year, and this again showed the need for looking into the club a little deeper. Some reason must exist as to why the club loses riders in the middle of a season, as this phenomenon is not normal. Normally, in my experience, a person who enrolls in a club stays with the club at least to the end of the year, before making a decision to change clubs or to stay with the current one. This is mainly an organisational choice because of enrolment fees and licensing fees that are charged for a one year period. The question can then be posed: why have females not been so involved in cycling, especially at tertiary level?

In concluding the problem statement, I would like to briefly summarise what I have stated above. The background to the world of cycling, and it's place in South African culture has been explored and explained in this chapter and there seem to be obstacles to cycling in South Africa becoming a sport that is practised by all the different cultural denominations, and most of all, by both genders. Poverty, social and cultural life, and the importance accorded a particular sport at school and tertiary level all play its part. Cycling in South Africa cannot be directly compared to most other countries because of our big number of non-competitive cyclists, but this, in itself, gives this country a strong advantage because of a big pool to draw talent from to develop new cycling stars. This, I

believe, can be done at university level, where riders can be helped and coached to become competitive. There must be opinions as to why females are not represented in sport equally, and by doing a thorough search on past literature, I will attempt to address and answer the question that has arisen. I will introduce the research question and goals of the research next.

## 1.2 Question

The research question is: “How do female cyclists experience a cycling club at a tertiary institution in South Africa?”

## 1.3 Goals

### *1.3.1 General goal*

To try and understand how female cyclists experience a cycling club at a tertiary institution in South Africa.

### *1.3.2 Specific goals*

- To do a literature review
- To describe the research methodology
- To conduct the research project
- To write a research report

### 1.3.3 Structure

The structure of this research report is as follows:

- Chapter 1: introduction. In this chapter I introduce the reader to the world of cycling, and more specifically, females in cycling. I pose a problem that I want to explore through this mini-dissertation.
- Chapter 2: Literature study. By doing a Literature study I try to answer the research question and address the issues that arise in the first chapter.
- Chapter 3: Methodology. This chapter is where I explain what I did and how I did the research. This makes it possible for others to continue the research.
- Chapter 4: Findings. In this chapter, the voices of the participants narrate their experiences, and I try to interpret what they are saying and how they are saying it.
- Chapter 5: Conclusions. Concluding the study, I will integrate the literature of previous studies with the findings of this particular study, and make recommendations for further research on the topics that have surfaced.

Following on this chapter where I have described the research problem, questions and goals, the next chapter will focus on the literature in the field that may help in answering the research question.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE

In this literature study I aim to answer the research question from existing academic knowledge. By doing a comprehensive search on literature available throughout the University of Pretoria's Academic Information Service, using the SABINET, Sportdiscus and Psychinfo databases, I have attempted to find the most relevant work already done to answer the research question.

#### 2.1 Debate

In the literature, there is a debate around gender from three viewpoints: those who may question gender being socially constructed, who prefer to look at biological aspects of a person to classify them, those who believe gender is constructed by cultural and societal influences, and those who believe the concept, gender, is created by biology and culture. In the first group, I explore the biological aspects of sex and gender.

##### *2.1.1 Gender as Biology*

In some texts we see that the terms gender and sex are confused by popular readings, thus most authors writing on these topics clarify the difference first. Delamont (1980) wrote that sex should be referred to as the biological aspects of males and females. Sex differences should then be used to refer to physiology, anatomy, genetics, and hormones.

When a baby is born he/she is classified as either male or female, according to the genitalia and genetic composition of the baby. Males have an X and Y chromosome, whereas females have two X chromosomes. The more obvious difference, one that we can see when we look at the physical appearance of a person is that a male has a penis, and a female has internal genitalia. Here the location of the genitalia is the deciding factor. Not only the location of genitalia has been used as a criterion for deciding gender in sport. The International Olympic Committee decided to define people with an



intermediate pattern of chromosomes as men, not regarding physical appearance as a deciding factor (Connell in Woodward, 2004). If an organisation like the International Olympic Committee disregard societies' part in gender, and base their approval of athletes on physical appearance and biological aspects of people, it must be noted that there certainly are people who believe that you can judge maleness or femaleness on these aspects alone.

Biology seems to be, at the present time at least, to be a given, since we cannot choose what we will look like or what sex we will be. However saying gender is constructed wholly from biological aspects or appearances, is limiting. It does not collate with where the differences in, for instance, behaviour, fully come from. Thus, we need to explore further, taking culture into consideration.

### *2.1.2 Gender as Culture*

The second viewpoint, those that believe gender is socially constructed, is explored next. Explanation of how individuals acquire gender identities stems from the concept of socialization. Argument revolves around the family which is the primary agency of socialization, and which is a place where people internalize particular ways of behaving which correspond to social expectations for their sex (Hargreaves, 1994). Gender refers to a set of personal, social and economic relationships that enable men to have power over women. The politics of gender power structures filter through from larger structures in society to create inequality between men and women (Burnett, 2002).

Connell (in Hargreaves, 1994), says that masculinity and femininity are relative concepts that are socially and historically constructed. The concepts, *masculine* and *feminine*, are seen as social realities. Gender should be used in the correct manner to refer to all non-biological aspects of differences between males and females. This refers to clothing, interests, attitudes, behaviours, and aptitudes. These non-biological aspects separate masculine from feminine life. Socialisation by culture plays an important role, and

society treats people according to what their experiences and beliefs are at that time.

Krane (in Kimball & Freysinger, 2003) states:

Women have been socialized to act in a gender appropriate manner, a manner reproducing notions of hegemonic femininity (i.e., being pretty, graceful, non-aggressive), and that if women step outside of what society deems to be 'appropriate' behaviour for women they are often marginalized (p.5).

The author claims that gender is a concept that is socially constructed within the communities in which we live. Individuals living out gender roles are abiding by expectations set by society as to what it means to be feminine or masculine.

Because we live in societies where other people's ideas and experiences influence our own, we can agree that discourses are created by the very communities in which we live, using their history to inform them. Gender discourses should be historically and culturally located, and expressed by people who can understand sport in the lives of women within a paradigm of lived experiences and theoretical frameworks (Scraton, in Burnett, 2002). The distinction between male and female is a powerful cultural and institutional construct associated with men and women's sociological and political position in society (Ramphela & Boonzaier, in Burnett, 2002) and can lead to gender stereotyping.

Block (in Hook, Watts & Cockroft, 2002) talks about stages of gender stereotyping. A child starts out with an undifferentiated concept of gender roles. During preschool years the child conforms to rigid gender roles. During adolescence this becomes very important and, during adulthood, stronger androgyny emerges. However, not all children place a high value on the gender roles prescribed to them, so differences on gender stereotyping occur from person to person. Another theoretical theme, schematas, is the manner in which we arrange our knowledge about people and things, making us more likely to remember information that is consistent with our schema. Our own attitudes and knowledge influence how we think about things such as culture, for example (Liben &

Signorella, 1980). Thus one remembers things based on existing knowledge structures better. Gender is entrenched in societal discourses and practice, and internalised by children, after which the child is then predisposed to construct his or her identity in a manner that is congruent with this societal discourse. Social learning and environmental influences are also aspects of gender on which psychology has experimented, and it seems that punishment, reinforcement and observation all influence how a person can see and experience gender. When it comes to the role of parents, research has shown that the expectations of parents are based on socially gendered notions of the different sexes. Fathers tend to be rougher to children, and parents tend to buy masculine types of toys for boys, like guns and footballs, whereas girls are given tea sets, dolls and doll furniture (McCandless in Hook et al., 2002).

A major source for social inequality is the fact that we are informed by ideological, historical, religious, ethnic, cultural and economic forces (Moser & Peake, in Burnett, 2002). The above mentioned sources lead to the creation of gender schemata as frameworks for behavioural traits, socialization practices and value systems, creating belief systems of masculinity and femininity (Van der Zanden, in Burnett, 2002).

Supporting the third view we get those that say gender is explained by both biology and culture and not one apart from the other.

### *2.1.3 Gender as Biology and Culture*

Throughout history there has been a notion that females are special, or different, because of their child bearing capacity. This has led to the idea that females need protection by males. A female was seen as physically not able to protect herself because the need to bear children creates a physical difference in relation to a man (Harris, in Kerby, 1996). Many scientists prefer the term gender to describe difference, as it encompasses cultural and social aspects, and the bodies we inhabit (Gove & Watt in Woodward, 2004). They state “The use of the word gender suggests interconnections between culture and the

body, rather than asserting a distinct separation between sex and gender, which is difficult and unrealistic to sustain” (p.44).

Central to sport sociology is the influence of culture and cultural perceptions. In sociology, readers and viewers are not simply passive recipients of messages from, for example, the media creating gender stereotypes (Horne, Tomlinson & Whannel, 1999). According to Horne, Tomlinson & Whannel (1999), the physical body holds social meaning, and the body is part of culture. Physical sexual differences become cultural by means of being used, changed and reinforced as part of our cultural beliefs about real, and the ideal, attributes of men and women. Our ideas on gender difference are influenced by the images projected by culture. Woodward (2004) writes that “Identity is marked by difference. Categories, such as gender categories, can reflect an unequal relationship of us (those inside the category) and them (those outside, in a different category)” (p.51).

Looking into sporting fields, sport psychologist Gill (2001) states that biological sex is related to gender, but it does not adequately explain sport, and even more specifically, gendered sport. The author explains that everything is constructed in culture, beauty, power and status, among others. She writes that researchers have failed to analyse the powerful ways in which gender and race relations are socially and historically constructed while focussing on differences, biologically or socially.

I will position myself within this group of authors who see gender as attributed to biology and culture. I base this on the belief that I have acquired from my culture that a person should “act” his/her gender, for example, girls play with dolls and boys play outside, girls are vulnerable and boys should never hit girls. This means that I have been taught that the right thing to do for a boy (based on sexual differences to a girl in this case) is to treat a girl differently from how another boy can be treated. I had to identify the sex of a person, and then treat him or her according to what was socially constructed as appropriate for that person’s gender.

Having looked at the way society thinks about gender and sex, I will move on to explore how women are seen, or see themselves, in work. Because every person have different narratives about themselves in different contexts of their lives, I included literature on the work environment women find themselves in to try and answer the research question.

## 2.2 Women in Work

Literature on women in work would be incomplete if it did not incorporate the history of women to the present time. Bonvillian (1995) states that, by 1900, women in America worked in an industrial setting, already not adhering to the strict gender roles set out by the time. This was due to economic circumstances, and their living mainly in poor families. One out of five women was working, where 40 percent worked in domestic or personal service jobs (coherent with gender role tasks), 25 percent in textiles and garment manufacturing, 18 percent in farming, 10 percent in trade and only nine percent in professional jobs, primarily teaching. This shows the importance of gender roles and how society employs people within its structure. Females who were allowed to work, did mostly what was expected of a woman, namely domestic and caring tasks. It is my guess that sport would probably have been a profession that would not sit nicely with society's idea of a female. Ginwala (n.d.) says that women do not have equal opportunity in educational systems, professions or even parliament, even after laws have been implemented that are supposed to stop discrimination against women. She states that the subordinate status of women arises from the inbuilt oppression of a structure that we want to change, not from the discrimination in that structure. Accordingly she says that man-shaped institutions are the ones that discriminate and, if they become people-shaped, women will be able to function as equals within these institutions, and through this they will be able to bring their own experiences to these settings.

Women's education was only recently allowed, for example in Britain, where women were only accepted in tertiary education from the 1860's. In Australia, education for both sexes was introduced in 1866, but it took nearly twenty years for most universities to implement that decision (Bonvillian, 1995). In South Africa, 36% of females have no

schooling, where only 3% have a qualification higher than matric. This compared to 9% of males with higher than matric qualification (Butlender, 2003).

Education and professional employment for women was an attractive alternative to economic dependence on males, or even to marriage, as early as the twentieth century. By the outbreak of the Second World War, women were better equipped to take over the vacated posts left by men that went to fight. This opening of professions saw an acceptance that a single woman no longer had to be dependent on male relatives, showing her worth in the economic fields rather than the normal domestic tasks. Women contributed to the economies of countries involved in the War by doing domestic service, nursing, office work and then also in more male orientated jobs in manufacturing. Even muscular work was shown to be about organisation, co-operation and team spirit, rather than just pure muscle power. At the end of the war, when the men came back from the front, women were summarily dismissed to give the jobs back to the men. Most women accepted this and were glad to return to their homes, domestic jobs and families (Storkey, 2001).

Women rarely reached the highest levels in the working context, they seem to reach a glass ceiling and either leave the company or stay in middle management. Women in the corporate world seem to be very restricted, and however more prominent in business these days, still stay in lower positions than men. Internationally, in 1999 around 5% of top level executives were female (Gutek & Larwood, in Brannon, 2002). Statistics of women in management positions in South Africa tells the same tale, with only 13% of top management posts filled with women, and 20% of senior management positions filled by women (Mnganga, 2003).

On the subject of career development, little has been done over time to strengthen equality between the sexes, as Gutek & Larwood (in Brannon, 2002) puts it: “There was little reason to study the career development of women. It was easily summarised: there was none. Men had careers; women had temporary employment or jobs that took second place to family interest and obligations” (p.305). Although most people still prefer

gender-traditional occupations, some men and women violate expectations. It is still expected that women will put their careers second to their husbands' career. A wife will have to put her career on hold to look after children, or move with her husband when he gets another job or is relocated. Women also seem to have preference for part time employment, 62% of part time workers in the United States are women, and this naturally means lower salaries, and little opportunity for career advancement (Brannon, 2002). Statistics from a survey done in 2002 of income and expenditures of the head of a family in South Africa show that females' annual income is about half of that of males, averaging R27 000 in comparison to that of males, R56 000 (Butlender, 2003; Genderstats, 2007). In business, occupations are differentiated in terms of responsibility and authority. Many jobs had no advancement opportunity, for example typing, and men were discouraged from working in these positions due mainly to the lack of further career opportunities. Women were then recruited for these vacant posts (Brannon, 2002). Ginwala (1995) reports that there has always been an assumption in South Africa that women's domain was the home and family, the private domain, as she calls it, and men's domain the public and political life. The male was the breadwinner, and the female the homemaker. Many aspects of societies are shaped around these assumptions, especially educational employment structures. Men felt economically and personally threatened by women entering the workforce, although segregation of jobs helped to slow the influx of women into men's territory. Men started joining labour unions in the United States to protect them from this competition, as these unions solidified men's dominance in the workplace, discriminating against women or relegating their interests (Bonvillian, 1995).

Several factors emerge from studies on women's education and careers. Women sometimes acquired advanced educations, and some felt restricted by traditional domestic roles and pursued professional careers. These women tried professions that were acceptable with the stereotypes of women's nature, for example nursing, teaching and social work. Women gained prestige if they performed work consistent with social edicts concerning woman's morality and dedication to social service (Matthaei in Bonvillian, 1995).

Most women who had career plans after college or tertiary study also had family and child related expectations, compared with earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when women who studied had no intention of continuing with their careers after marriage (Phillips & Imhoff, in Brannon, 2002). Young women's career choices expanded to some areas traditionally male dominated. They had no problem mixing traditional female expectations with their new views on careers. As more women entered paid employment, competition between men and women intensified. Employers were still biased because of patriarchal prejudices, but they sometimes preferred hiring women because they were less demanding and more docile than men (Bonvillian, 1995).

Studies that Geber (2000) reports on in his article in the field of industrial psychology explore the careers of women and what happens when they take a break from their work to, among other things, have children. It was found that women who go on maternity leave sometimes re-enter the workplace at a lower level than before they leave, reaffirming a study done by Stoner & Hartmann (Geber, 2000). In the past, women, especially black women, were forced to stay in rural areas and perform the duties that were expected of them as stated earlier, while men were away working in the cities. Now, legislation has been written to ensure that women's rights are being enforced in South Africa (Albertyn, 2004), such as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, which protects the rights of pregnant women in the workplace. This is an attempt to make sure that females do not lose their jobs because of pregnancy (Department of Labour, 2007). Women who have studied also show a greater need to pursue their careers after giving birth, compared with women with lesser education. In South Africa, however, women seem to prefer not to leave their children and return to work before the children are old enough to attend school. Socio-economic pressures push them to go back to work, even though it is difficult to reintegrate because of organizational and social pressures (Geber, 2000). A South African study exploring dual-careers of women in the workplace found that an increase in work-salience leads to increased career importance. Women in dual careers tend to invest in their career development. While having a career as well as family interests, tensions, difficulties and challenges affecting the importance of these



roles and how they interact, surface. Roles need to be constructed, negotiated, and reconciled with spouses and employers in their daily lives (Burnett, 2002).

Kluka in Burnett (2002) states that the powerful people in society, both male and female, could collaborate to create a more equitable, humane and democratic society. Ideologies that represent various social ideas and practices should be challenged over time, as they will not have an immediate effect because they are imprinted into our social fibre. This is where legislation is very important. Without proper attention given to how people from different genders are treated in society, the workplace in particular, change from a patriarchal society will be impossible. South African women realised this early on and while the new constitution was being born, women's leaders applied pressure to include the rights of women as one of the more important issues on the agenda of the new democratic government (Albertyn, 2004). The relationship between power and culture, including sport, is based on the understanding of the methods a class uses to achieve leadership over the rest of society (Hargreaves in Keech, 2002). For instance, men's power in society has come from the way they oppress women, be it in the work context, private homes or cultural practices that are seen as tradition. A father giving his daughter as a bride to another man at a wedding ceremony seems to be one of those practices, which seems to tell the female that she is to be decided over.

Religion has always been part of cultural lives of human beings. Whether it has been part of an organised congregation, or that people have been secularised from their churches, somewhere during the past has religion influenced people's lives in very different ways. Swatos (in Woodhead, 2003) is quoted as saying:

I would be willing to offer the hypothesis that virtually the entire "decline" of "the churches" in American society can be "explained" by the entrance of women into the workforce, certainly more so than by anything like a "crisis of belief" (p.74).

Ideological, political, educational and religious practices reinforced women's inferior position. To survive in the context of chronic poverty, women were in need of access to resources and income, but men were in charge of such resources, and therefore women were relatively powerless to challenge their own positions of inferiority (Burnett, 2002).

The church has always been seen as a place where patriarchal values have been upheld. Ozorak (1996) states that many religions are patriarchal in their beliefs, images and practices. However, it is still females who are more likely to describe themselves as religious. Why, the writer asks, do women invest in a system that devaluates them? Gillian (in Ozorak, 1996) argues that women define themselves in the context of their relationships and evaluate themselves and others on the basis of caring for others, perhaps because of their social roles as caregivers. Men are socialised to value power and autonomy as well as abstract rules of fairness, thus the writer says that men and women develop different views of morality; women emphasises care and connection, men objectivity and independence. Such differences in moral imperatives might lead women to adopt a different view on God than men do. Women tend to narrate themselves as religious and to have a positive view on the church and God. This in itself creates a paradox, because women are not rewarded for their faith with comfort and a place to belong. Rayburn (in Ozorak, 1996) asserts that prejudice against women is “within the very fiber of the religious establishment” (p.17).

Deveaux (1994) critically explored power-relations that feminists dealt with, and turned to the work on Foucault, a thinker that was known for studying the problematics of power, as she calls it. She states that Foucault challenged our assumptions about power and where it is located, and he suggested we look at the productive character of power and the existence of multiple power relations, rather than top-down force. “He allowed us to move from a “state of subordination”, explanation of gender relations, to a more textured understanding of the role of power in the women’s lives” (Deveaux 1994, p231).

Power was, according to Foucault (in Marinetto, 2003), conceptualised as a purely repressive force used to unvoice, prohibit and ostracise oppressed minorities, of which I will add that females are part. Foucault believed that discourse was subject to regulation and control, and that power was conceived as a diverse force that penetrates subjective as well as structural aspects of social organisations, being constructive and elusive at the same time.

Authors refer to the term patriarchal society, meaning a society where males are dominant over females. When we talk about patriarchal society we have to answer a simple question. Is society this way physically, or is it the way we think that makes society patriarchal? Another question is whether we are still living in such a society at all? Freedman & Combs (2002) reflect on their view of gender in society from a narrative perspective, and call societies favouring men patriarchal. These patriarchal gender narratives (Freedman & Combs, 2002) interfere with relationships, and they support men in a position of power and privilege regarding women. What are patriarchal gender narratives? Freedman & Combs (1996) call them different sets of values and ways of being between women and men, and this through a difference in the levels of power and privilege. They believe that this gender story about patriarchalism is socially constructed, and that these narratives are prescribed and specified through generations of people in social interaction. Linking with authors that write on the traditional roles of men and women in South Africa and in America, a study done by authors in Nigeria, Eboiheyi, Bankhole and Eromonsele, (2006) described patriarchy in the following way:

One element of patriarchy that is significant for the understanding of rapidly increasing poverty of women is the division of labour by gender, an aspect of the pre-colonial lineage mode of production brought into the modern capitalist system. In this system, women are perceived primarily as mothers and the homemakers. As such, any productive functions performed in the economy are just mere extensions of these domestic roles. Thus, women are seen as targets for social assistance and men as targets for employment based on a male breadwinner model. Across most societies in the less developed regions, religion

and culture have operated hand in hand in perpetuating and sustaining poverty. The two often determines attitude to poverty and the willingness to change the situation (p.5).

Although women as a social category share relative powerlessness in their communities, some are more disadvantaged in terms of class-based indicators, such as educational level, employment, and access to resources. Women may be disadvantaged on the basis of gender, and may even face more discrimination when they are from a minority or different racial background (Scraton et al., in Burnett, 2002). Bohan (in Gill, 1995) suggests that most research done on women has been by women, and that men have made little contribution to the study. The author states that without women doing research because of personal and political issues in a male dominated field, the experiences and concerns of women would likely have received no attention. This allows a male researcher to enter the world of research on women, as it feels like an invitation to ensure that research will be more credible when more is done by men, in addition to the work females are doing.

The next part of the study will look at women in the sporting context, and at what researchers have written about the topic.

### 2.3 Women in Sport

Gender socialisation consists of many aspects, from media influence right through to how we are brought up by our parents and the physical education classes at school level. Sport seems to be paired with male sexuality and gender identity. For women it was seen as a choice between female identity and sports involvement, where sport participation seemed to be part of the package of the male identity (Horne, et al. 1999; Dyer, 1989). Sport in South Africa reflected the power and privilege of white men, and it was a symbol of superiority and masculinity (Hargreaves, 1997).

The media has a big role to play in the lives of human beings. How the media advertises is a good way of seeing how society identifies with certain ideas. People tend to look for a category which they feel comfortable with, or that represents them best, and identify with the ideas from that category. The word *identify* signifies that there is a relationship between the person and the representation, and there is an emotional quality, an empathy as well as a feeling of sameness (Gove & Watt in Woodward, 2004). In the media we get the impression that female sport participants are less able to generate interest in the public, thus they seem to get less recognition, less coverage, less money and support. In the United States and Europe studies have been done on the influence of the media, using television commercials, newspapers, television shows and so forth to try to determine the influence these have on informing the male dominant-female subservient theme, gender-roles and gender stereotypes. This research has unanimously shown that women get less coverage than their male counterparts when sport is involved, and when general television coverage is given, women are portrayed in their traditional domains, like mothering, housekeeping and caring, but men are shown as sports participants, masculine and strong (Archer & Lloyd, 2002; Bauer & Baltes, 2002; Blane & McElroy, 2002; Byrant, 2003; Eckes, 2002; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Horne et al., 1999; Hutson-Comeaux & Kelly, 1999; Kiovula, 1999; Knight & Giuliano, 2001; Levitt et al., 2003; Susskind, 2003; Vogel, et al., 2003). This helps create stereotypes that shape the way we perceive others, as well as the way we behave (Gove & Watt in Woodward, 2004). People develop and construct their own identities, and people can change themselves to fit their views of gender.

Messner in Kimball and Freysinger (2003) states that the perception of sports and differences between males and females are often highlighted as being biological, natural, and common sense, thus enabling patriarchal ideologies that exist, and the false belief that women are inferior to men. The media only started showing interest in women's sport when males saw muscular women as appealing. This is alarming in that it shows how a patriarchal society maintains control over gender stereotypes. Interest develops in women when men change their perception, creating the idea that women are not able to tell a different story about themselves, that it is all in the power of men.

Birrel and Cole (in Burnett, 2002), state that, through competitive sport participation, men and their dominance are reinforced with power and violence and, through this, weaker males and women are excluded. Sports that men participate in on a large scale and which are promoted by media and governments as national sports because of their nation building and identity formation capacities, are seen as mainstream sports. These create an arena where men continue to have persuasive ideological and structural dominance, which also incorporates political and socio-economic power (Sisjord, in Burnett, 2002). Because sport and sports development is visible to the general public, a context dominated by masculine values and representing a gender code of maleness, women are ideologically and structurally excluded from its ranks. This in turn makes it very difficult for a female to work in the sport domain (Burnett, 2002). South African sport is no different. Leadership positions are held by men at all levels, women are underrepresented in management roles, and their plans to be incorporated are usually circumvented by limited funds and little support from males in higher positions (Hargreaves, 1997).

Feminist sport psychologists give a rather critical evaluation of sport and gender, suggesting that women are being treated very unfairly and that male-dominant female-subservient themes are one of the biggest problems in society (Gill, 1995, 2001; Greenleaf & Collins, 2001; Whaley, 2001). Women's sport at any and all levels involves myths, inequities, stereotypes and sex discrimination (Dyer, 1989). Hargreaves (1994) states that we can only understand images of the female in sport in relation to that of a male. Competitive sports celebrate differences between same sex participants, but more profoundly, between males and females. Being a male participating in sport is seen as 'normal' and 'masculine', whereas a female participating in sport is also viewed as 'masculine'. This can be disconcerting to women, who, by participating in sport are going through bodily changes that could create a more masculine body type, which is in conflict with the societal stereotype of what women should do and how they should look

(Veri, in Kimball & Freysinger, 2003). Women competing in aggressive sports or 'masculine' stereotyped activities may often feel the need to display their femininity, working to consciously display their feminine side. They do this by keeping to societal prescriptions about feminine characteristics.

Most sports seem to fall into the category of masculinity because of the physical and contact aspects and because, in these sports, the body is used to physically dominate, overpower or intimidate others. Participating women are still stereotyped as unfeminine and having masculine characteristics (Kimball & Freysinger, 2003). Most male athletes are assumed to be heterosexual, while females are particularly exposed to homophobia, which acts as a strong deterrent for females to participate in sport. Women seem to be more easily labelled as lesbians, seeing that females are traditionally seen as petite and non aggressive. Sport participation influences the female body, thus resulting in changes of perception from society altogether (Kimball & Freysinger, 2003).

In a study done by McClung and Blinde (2002) the participation in intercollegiate sport by women athletes was explored, looking at their sensitivity to gender issues. During in-depth interviews, twenty athletes discussed gender issues in sport and society. Some factors were identified that influenced their sensitivity to gender issues, including lack of time, limited exposure, limited discussions with coaches and administrators, feminist stereotypes, and reluctance to become involved with issues not directly related to athletics. Athletes in this study viewed their position in sport as "not as high as the males" (McClung & Blinde 2002, p. 121). Most women noted that women's athletics is viewed as inferior to that of men, and that little importance is placed on women's sport. Various gender related stereotypes were brought forward by the participants, for example 'lesbians', 'tomboys', 'butch' and 'masculine'. The study reports on many inequalities existing between men and women's sport and society's perception of female athletes which tends to be negative. However, three-quarters of the participants felt that recognition was improving. Participation in sport seems to be challenging society's perceptions of women, saying that females can be taken seriously in sport.

Kimball and Freysinger's (2003) interpretive study examines stress, coping and leisure with student athletes, especially individuals' experiences of stress because of their participation in sport. Results indicate that sport is perceived to be both a buffer to and creator of stress in athletes participating on a level greater than school sport. Results also reveal that race and gender are important in shaping athletes' experiences of stress. Half of the respondents in this study were female, and participants were chosen from different race groups. Some of these females said that stereotyping made them experience more stress, mainly because of the inability to control people's perceptions of them as either 'unfeminine' or a 'lesbian'. A finding in this research shows that self-determination is under constant assault by external factors, like the structure of sport in learning institutions, race and gender.

A report written by Burnett (2002) focussed on the assessment of the impact of sports programmes concerning South Africa and Australia. She analysed data reflecting the position and involvement of women in these programmes and, against the reality of large numbers of women living in conditions of chronic poverty, in patriarchal societies, being ideologically stereotyped and marginalized, she states that women are absent and unrecognised in the sporting domain. She says sport is a severely gendered domain where male domination is lived out, and women in poor communities view sport access as non-essential in their struggle for survival. Hargreaves (1997) confirms the struggle for survival, and also adds that gender ideologies and male domination in African communities, stemming from patriarchal ideologies rooted in tradition and culture, force women to not take part in sport. But she says that women, in spite of this, are actively negotiating new relations of power, and are constructing their own sporting identities.

Looking at the teachers in the sporting context, a study focussing on physical education teachers and their views on gender inequality is of importance as it refers to the 'problem with girls'. A very low level of participation is seen as one of the biggest problems, and very little is known about how teachers influence, or address, this occurrence. The teachers were all young women who expressed a desire to develop the physical education of girls, wanting to teach and support equal opportunities. Unfortunately, according to



this study, the teaching resulted in differentiation by gender, which reproduced deeply embedded gendered inequalities. Their position was strongly influenced by prior gendered experiences and their experiences in physical education from their time as students. Also, these teachers brought complex histories, social positioning and so forth, which meant that a fit in any one discourse, which was a socially developed representation in order to create meaning about certain events, was unlikely (Rich, 2003). Teachers were awarded roles that ranked relatively low in the sports contexts of the schools. These teachers presented informal physical activities to younger children which meant that because of the young age of the children and the nature of physical activity that they presented, the teachers were given roles and employment ranked lower in status compared with the roles males got (Burnett, 2002).

Semerjian and Waldron (2001) wrote in a special edition dedicated to women and feminist research in the *Sport Psychologist* about the struggles of feminists in the field. They named two dilemmas of feminism in sport psychology, namely epistemology and praxis. The epistemology of feminist research stems from the social construction paradigm, where multiple truths exist simultaneously. Sport psychology is more grounded in a positivistic paradigm, where one truth is assumed (Hall, in Semerjian & Waldron (2001). Feminist researchers assume that groups in power historically generate, socially construct and culturally define sport. The other dilemma that feminist researchers face is that they publish in sport psychology journals alone, where, they need to present their findings to the psychological and other fields concerned that can benefit directly from their theories and findings. Thus it seems that although good work is being done, the next step, that is, to usefully apply these theories and knowledge, is not being taken.

In literature on sport and women, the structure and style of writing is different in that one gets a feeling that the female's position should be explained in terms of inadequacy. It seems most authors take this as a given for a female in sport, whereas the focus on male sport participation is on all the different factors influencing sport and how to improve or overcome obstacles. The researcher's own picture created from reading is that being a

female is the obstacle. From a feminist point of view, sport psychology scholars should recognise the limits of biologic and categorical models of research, and have to look more towards a relational model, because gender relations involve power, where males have a more dominant, privileged status in gender relations (Gill, 2001). Hargreaves (1997) writes that male power is directly related to structural organisations and the methods with which it is controlled. Gill (2001) states the following:

Sport psychology is explicitly context dependent, and the context encompasses diverse participants in all forms of physical activities in varied exercise and sport settings. Gender makes a difference, and we must consider people in a context to understand their behaviour. Biological sex is related to gender, but biology does not explain gendered sport. All the meanings, social roles, expectations, standards of appropriate behaviour, beauty, power and status are constructed in the sport culture (p.367).

Women are fast making inroads into sports traditionally seen as male sports. Mumford (2006) states that women's sport participation is decreasing and female student-athletes are participating in substantially disproportionate numbers to male athletes, whereas Hargreaves (1997) comments that in South Africa, females' participation is on the rise, especially in minority groups such as disabled females, but she confirms that little is being done to help this process along. Earlier, Hargreaves (1994) wrote that the historical struggle for opportunities had brought along changes that were unimaginable previously, women were indeed participating in more and more sports.

Disparities in sports organizations have been challenged to change the traditional under-representation of females in positions of power in sport. Shaw and Slack (2002) examined the expressions of multiple views that were expressed by people in sport organizations, presenting the data as discourses. Freedman and Combs (2002) explain discourse as meanings that have been put together to create a version of truth, which carries certain power to dominate other understandings. Language, practices and policies are used within the setting of sport organizations to create gender relations that favour masculinities over femininities. These discourses are problematic and are not changed or

challenged easily. Traditional practices are very influential, but may be changed by individuals' willingness to create alternative knowledge about gender power structures. Women seem to shy away from these powerful structures, according to McClung and Blinde, (2002):

Sport did not appear to be an effective context through which these women athletes were exposed to situations which encouraged a sensitivity to feminism. One theme that emerged, which was consistent with previous research, was the disassociation of women athletes from the feminism and gender issues (p.130).

Research done by Bennet et al., Kamen and Lenskyj in McClung and Blinde, (2002) showed consistency regarding the negative beliefs about feminism shown by athletes. This poses a very interesting question. Hargreaves (1994) stated that research on female sport is primarily being done by women, and most of these researchers work from a feminist viewpoint. It is strange for a male to read that female athletes disassociate themselves from feminism. Has the public view on feminism something to do with it? Patriarchal societies may see feminism as an uprising, or a revolution against them, thus excluding people who admit to being feminists. Sport at university level seems to be focussed on maleness and masculinity, as events that historically were about power and domination are still given preference by fans and athletes alike. This current tendency makes dominant male interests legitimate by reinforcing gender inequality (Bryson in McClung and Blinde, 2002). The negativism demonstrated by athletes regarding feminism and gender issues seems to keep them from challenging patriarchal structures of sport, and an awareness of gender in society is thus not developing as desired.

Hovden (in Burnett 2002) states that the women's position in sports is unsure and unstable, which can be seen in their non-involvement and the high rate of drop-outs among females. Many women dropout because they cannot afford the cost involved and cope with the change and pressure that comes with their participation in sport. Hargreaves (1997) is quoted as saying: "[women] used their own money on a regular basis to provide kit, food, and transport for those players who could not afford to

contribute” (p.195). The negatives mostly outweigh the benefits for most women. Thus, to identify and change inequalities is very difficult, seeing that structural and cultural conditions in organizations are often constructed and reconstructed for and by men. Women had to bring their cultural roles along when they were participating in sport, because there were a lack of money and obstacles like transportation problems as well as a lack of organisation from outside. Hargreaves (1997) writes that her participants said they had to function like a family, providing emotional as well as physical support to other females, and older women seemed to look after the younger and mostly poorer girls.

From feminist debate we see that women's access to equitable sport and recreational practice is, in a sense, a non-issue. We should interpret women's absence or involvement in other sectors of public life, as well as sport, exploring the history of socio-economic and political contexts. Given male domination in the field of competitive sport, it becomes a limit that sportswomen struggle to break through (Burnett, 2002). Women will only be able to break through in sport when they do it hand in hand with breakthroughs in other domains in life, such as religion, workplace and family, taking us back to issues discussed earlier, involving women in work.

It is also important to note another aspect of females working in sport psychology. Females that occupy positions as sport psychologists are hardly heard of and especially not given the credit they deserve. There is also a divide between female sport psychology researchers and females doing, or applying, sport psychology in the field. These females working in the sport psychology field have the ability to shape and direct practices and behaviours in their working contexts. Change in male-dominated sport domains can only proceed when theory and practice connect. The need for diversity amongst researchers and professionals in the field is however, acknowledged (Roper, 2002). Only when the research on females in sport reaches the field of practice, the cycle track or the soccer pitch, can females working as researchers and psychologists truly begin to help athletes narrate change in sport.

## 2.4 Summary

The debate surrounding sex and gender, and how it should be seen, was discussed and it was very interesting to note that there are certain instances in life today that still focus on the biological aspects of a person, rather than the culturally created notion of gender. It seems that problems and setbacks in society urge us to always fall back on certainties, like the biological aspects that we are born with and that we cannot choose. Problems that I refer to would be, for example, cheating in sport. The International Olympic Committee had to come up with an idea to even the competing field in which people participate, because of physical differences between the sexes (Connell in Woodward, 2004). The notion that gender is constructed by culture was also discussed and we saw that the family and society around us influence how we see ourselves, thus constructing our gender, or identity as male or female. Behaviours and interests are encouraged to be specific to a certain gender, and acting outside of these boundaries can make acceptance into a social group problematic. Then there are those with whom I concur, those that say we act according to societies' rules or prescriptions, but we also acknowledge that we believe that the biological aspects of a person are always taken into account when constructing our idea of gender.

Exploring women in work it was noted that discrimination against women is widespread and occurrences of discrimination take place in the society we live in, in religious structures, at work and at educational institutions. Women have always been neglected when it comes to rights and legislation, and slowly this seems to be changing. The pace at which this change is taking place, however, is not remotely fast enough. Although companies are now being challenged to incorporate women into positions that they are capable of handling, this is a slow process, and most research focussed on women's struggles regarding maternity, career importance, further education and powerlessness in the workplace. Another reason for the slowness of the process to ensure equality is past problems that women faced. Because of a past like that of South Africa, women were forced to fulfil roles in certain domains, for example, within the family, which excluded

them from being able to get an education or work experience. Thus most South African women are poor and uneducated, as the statistics mentioned earlier indicate.

Women's place in sport is a complex one, ranging from athletes, fans, administrators, managers, educators and psychologists. I explored studies undertaken by researchers in different countries, about people in different facets of sport, and they all confirmed the theme that women are being compared with men in an unfair way, and that, consequently, women do not have enough room to create their own sporting identities and develop to the full potential of what female sport can become. Women, especially in South Africa, had few opportunities to compete on equal footing to their male counterparts, and many reasons were stated, most of them because of the effects of a patriarchal society, lack of funds for development and a lack of support and understanding from their peers and the societies they live in. The media fuels the discriminatory system by not giving equal representation to female athletes, and women only become recognised when males change their perceptions about how a female is supposed to look and act. Sport participation in South Africa is on the rise, but difficulties like infighting between of the structures that house these sports still exist. Females are underrepresented in decision making structures and thus their voices are not heard. Women of all backgrounds are challenging domination of males in sport, and by doing this they can expect resistance from a system that has kept masculinity, maleness and the superiority of males in control, and the females as subservient to their cause. If sport can challenge and defeat patriarchy, it can be done in other parts of society too.

From my literature study I can conclude that a glimmer of hope is all that is needed to continue the brave struggle. In answering my research question, however, I must say that I have not found a complete answer to how females will experience being part of a cycling club at a tertiary institution, thus the study seems relevant after the literature review has been done. I can gather from the literature that these women might bring narratives about marginalisation, patriarchal structures and society, differences between males and females, and personal experiences about being treated differently in different contexts. The participants may tell narratives about how their cycling was influenced by

others and organisations involved in cycling. I have learned more about women's experiences of work and sport, and how they find being part of organisations and companies, with the resistance, for the lack of a better word, that accompanies them.

In the next chapter I will explain the methodology used to conduct the research.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I explore the research context, participants, position, method, quality and ethics concerning the study.

#### 3.1 Context

##### *3.1.1 Academic context*

The Psychology Department at the University of Pretoria (UP) forms part of the Faculty of Humanities, in the school of Social Sciences. This is the academic context from which this research will be conducted. The department runs pre- and postgraduate courses to develop Psychology as a science and enable people to make a contribution to the society they live in. With more than 20 permanent, full-time academic members, the Department is structured to deliver services from lecturing to supervising postgraduate students and research. The Department has several co-operative programs running, both national and international, and presents four Masters programmes and two Doctoral programmes at postgraduate level. The Department is also involved in community projects by way of integrated tuition and research involving Honours and Masters students (University of Pretoria, 2005, a).

To motivate the study of this topic even further we can look at the Vision and Mission of the University of Pretoria (University of Pretoria, 2005, b). In its *Vision*, the university strives to be, inter alia a university with an inclusive and enabling, value driven, organisational culture that provides an intellectual home for the rich diversity of South African academic talent. In the *Mission*, it states that the university wants to be an internationally recognised South African teaching and research university that encourages its students to participate in and excel in sport, cultural activities and the arts,



as well as being locally relevant through promotion of equity, access, equal opportunities, redress, transformation and diversity.

The academic context is the backdrop from where the research is done, and thus important to include, as is an explanation of the sporting context, because it is the more obvious context visible to the reader.

### *3.1.2 Sport Context*

Due to ethical considerations I am not able to name the sporting institution that is being used as a context for the research. However, this does not influence the reporting on the findings in any way. The sports division at this university has a proud history and caters for students and the general public alike. Around thirty sports codes are situated in the context and some of the most modern and innovative facilities are used, where national and international teams frequently visit for training and competition.

### 3.2 Participants

Two female cyclists participated in this study, both were full time students at the tertiary institution, and both actively involved in a tertiary cycling club, although at different levels of participation. These participants were willing to continue participating with the researcher after numerous attempts to organise focus group discussions failed. The researcher did attempt to gather more data from other possible participants, but was forced to gather and use data from only these two participants with the help of the co-researcher. The reason was simply because of availability of participants. The decision was made that participants that are willing will be incorporated. To ensure the quality of the research, the co-researcher had to be present to include the data in this study. This co-researcher is a female fellow psychology student in the same course, and she will be introduced shortly.

### *3.2.1 The Researcher*

As the researcher, I am a male student psychologist completing my master's studies, and have been involved in cycling in South Africa for about 18 years. I have been part of the university cycling club, among others, for more than six years, being part of the team management, club chairman and team captain of the men's team. I have been part of the sporting context since my first year as a student, and have come to know many of the people within the context. I have been studying full-time for a number of years and have thus experienced being a student at tertiary level and a sportsman in a sporting context at the same time. This motivated me to do my research at a tertiary institution asking students to participate.

I started studying in 1998 in the BCom faculty at UP, changing to the Faculty of Humanities, Psychology in particular, in 2000. I studied for a four-year BPsych degree, and am currently busy with my Masters degree in Counselling Psychology. The year 2005 was the first year I was not directly involved with cycling, as I wanted to focus on my research with as little influence as possible. I incorporated a fellow researcher to assist during the interviews, and I would like to introduce her in the next paragraph, and explain the reasons why she is participating.

### *3.2.2 Fellow Researcher*

During the data capturing sessions I asked a fellow masters psychology student to sit in with the participants and me to give feedback or reflection on the sessions. This person is a black female who herself plays competitive sport. She has been involved with the sport of tennis for a few years and has also been in America for expert coaching and studying. This sees her as duly qualified to be involved in the research. The reason why I asked her to participate is other than her ability to assist me. As I am a male researcher interviewing female cyclists I wanted a female to assist me to ensure that the participants' narratives are heard, and the fact that I am a male does not influence the narratives and

how they are being told. Also, the fellow researcher is from a different sport than I am, so she could be more open to narratives about cycling than I was, mainly because my history with the sport, and level of involvement, could easily have clouded my ability to create the space for the participants to tell their narratives in the way they would prefer (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

The choice of participants for the study was a very important part of the planning, and next I will introduce them.

### *3.2.3 Participant: Sue*

Sue (a pseudonym) is a young female cyclist and tri-athlete, between the ages of 20 and 25. She is originally from a smaller town in South Africa. She was in the process of finishing her studies at the time of the study and was, until very recently, very active in the cycling club. She performed various roles in the club over time, other than riding, and her experience of different aspects of the club is very valuable for this study.

### *3.2.4 Participant: Kate*

Kate (a pseudonym) is a female graduate of the university, and no longer part of the cycling club that we used as the context for this study. She is between the ages of 25 and 30 and participates in more than one discipline of cycling, namely road cycling, mountain biking and track cycling. Kate was involved with the club for a number of years in which a lot has happened for female cycling and her narratives are rich with these experiences.

## 3.3 Position

This research will be conducted from a narrative position. Narratives allow people to make sense of their experiences (Epston & White, 1998). People create a self by telling other people who they are by the way they narrate their experiences (White, 1995). I have divided this explanation of the position I work from into four sections with the

headings experience, experience and narrative, experience, narrative and history, and lastly experience, narrative, history and culture. The reason for this is because experiences happen in peoples lives every day of their lives, and narratives are what allows them to make sense of experiences. History shapes the way people narrate experiences and culture shapes how they narrate experiences in all the contexts in which they live (Epston & White, 1998, Freedman & Combs, 1996).

### *3.3.1 Experience*

As a researcher, it is not possible to represent the world of the storyteller, because the readers and I simply do not have direct access to other people's experiences. We only have access to ambiguous representations of others experiences, talk, interaction and interpretation. I will have different levels of representations during this study, namely attending, telling, transcribing, analyzing and reading. I will attend to certain features in the stream of consciousness, as Riessman (1993) calls it, reflecting, remembering, and recollecting. Thus, I will have to scan the transcriptions to find certain images, isolating them into meaningful experiences.

### *3.3.2 Experience and narrative*

According to White (1995) we live by the narratives that we have about our lives, and this entails our shaping by these narratives, which are the structures of our lives. People live their lives using various narratives to tell about their experiences. Thus by narratives creating meaning for the person telling the story, that person has to choose which meanings they are going to incorporate into their reality.

Language is constructive of reality, and is not merely a device that establishes meaning. Narratives are constructed, authored, rhetorical, and full of assumptions and interpretations. Narrative is well suited for the study of subjectivity and identity. We value personal narratives because of their subjectivity, their rootedness in time, place and personal experience, as well as their perspective-ridden character (Riessman, 1993).

Language is a tool that gives people the power to narrate their experiences, and language is interactive, which means that people who narrate their experiences bring realities to the fore that change with the language they use (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

We do not have direct access to the experience of other people - only the way people talk and write about those experiences (Epston & White, 1998; Riessman, 1993). To explain narrative in a more orderly way, Gergen in Sclater (2003) gives a summary of six characteristics of narrative: firstly, “a story has a point and the point is saturated in value” (p.321) meaning, to be a person, we need to exist in space defined by significance. Secondly, “an intelligible story is one in which events are selected to make the point more or less probable, accessible, important or vivid” (p.321). We choose certain events in our experiences to define who we are. In the third instance, the events are placed in order, fourthly, the characters in the story have identities continuous over time. Fifthly, “the ideal narrative is one that gives an explanation – it suggests or establishes causal linkages that form the basis of the plot” (p.321) and, finally, the narrative is framed, using conventions that signal a beginning and an end, giving direction and purpose to the experience.

Narrative investigates the story itself, as opposed to giving an objective description of forces in the world. The purpose of such research is to see how people order the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives (Riessman, 1993). According to Epston (1998) a narrative can be defined as a unit of meaning that provides a frame for lived experience, and we interpret the lived experience through these narratives. Narratives enable us to link the dimension of time with experience, which Bruner (in Epston, 1998) explains: “We create the units of experience and meaning from a continuity of life. Every telling is an arbitrary imposition of meaning on the flow of memory, in that we highlight some causes and discount others: that is, every telling is interpretive” (p.11). Sclater (2003) concludes her article by saying “[n]arrative becomes embodied practice – something that intentional, moral human agents routinely do every day of their lives – a way of simultaneously constructing and reconstructing both ‘the individual’ and ‘the social’” (p.328). This explains that people are always narrating their

experiences, on a daily basis, thus, in exploring how they tell of their experiences, we can get a glimpse of how they experience the world, and themselves in that world.

Narrative does not focus on the content, but rather it looks at the ways people tell about and of their experience. The teller decides what to include in the telling of the narrative, how this narrative is being told and what it should mean. Narrative psychology, as lived by certain authors and scholars in the field of psychology, fits in with the research through its outlook on life and how it is experienced, creates meaning and is a very useful tool in helping people understand themselves better, thus making it a powerful tool in therapy. Meaning is created by telling narratives of experiences, as this quote from Epston (1998) explains:

It is through the narratives or the stories that persons have about their own lives and the lives of others that they make sense of their experience. Not only do these stories determine the meaning that persons give to experience, it is argued, but these stories also largely determine which aspects of experience persons select for expression (p.123).

It is interesting to read that Epston (1998) also says that narratives provide the structure of life, they shape life and they have real effects on life.

Narratives are composed of dual landscapes (Bruner in Epston, 1998), which are the landscape of action and the landscape of consciousness. The landscape of action consists of events linked together, in a certain sequence, situated in time with a past, present and future, and has a plot. This landscape helps the reader of a text to put into perspective the unfolding of events over time. The landscape of consciousness features the meanings derived by characters in the narrative, and those of the reader who was invited into his/her consciousness by the writer (or teller). Meanings derived by characters and readers, by making use of reflection on events and plots as they unfold, are the feature in this landscape. Here we elaborate on desires, qualities, intentional states and beliefs by reading and re-reading the text. A narrative needs to be preserved by researchers, and we

must only analyse the person's way of constructing these meanings, and see how they accomplish this. We must not try to break these constructions apart, for our aim will not be accomplished if we disentangle the structure.

### 3.3.3 *Experience, Narrative and History*

Riessman (1993) states that people construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and to construct their lives. The person telling of his/her experience uses discourse and metaphors to help him, while history and future has an influence on how the narrative is told. The same narrative can be told in different ways, and the experience will differ from listener to listener because of this person's discourse, history, culture and own narratives and experiences. The public credibility of any narrative depends on the teller's deployment of the local rules of discourse that make tellers and audiences intelligible to each other. In turn, the response from the audience determines both the success of the narrative and the identity of the narrator. Telling about life narratives are, then, ways to construct identity (Ochberg, 1994).

History influences narratives by the experience that narratives are constructed with a past and future in mind (Human, 2004). To explain, I will use a cycling training metaphor. When I prepare for the SA Championships later in the season (the future), I will take into account where I am at this particular time. Fitness and mental toughness is not a permanent resident in my life, so I have to have had a recent history of training and racing to be relatively fit and at a place where I am able to adjust my training workload to be best prepared for the Championships. Thus my training is influenced by the previous training I have done, as well as the future races and goals I have, and the training I am doing now, will influence how I will train later, because this will become my base (history), the foundation for other racing and training.

Every reader of a text will interpret what he/she reads differently: "Even for the same reader, a work can provoke quite different readings in different historical contexts" (Bruner in Riessman, 1993, p. 14). It is interesting to note that Riessman (1993)

discusses the fact that there are no master narratives - all text and narratives or lived experiences give meaning, and this meaning differs for everybody. Truths are meaningful to specific interpretation in a limiting historical context. This is also described by Freedman and Combs (1996) where they say that there is no single narrative; many different narratives are created about experiences, even the same experience can elicit different narratives.

### 3.3.4 *Experience, Narrative and Culture*

Sclater (2003) states that narrative studies promise to help us think about a person who is socially situated, and culturally fashioned, with a unique individuality which makes this person extraordinary but also part of communities around him or her.

When I am training for the SA Championships, different things on how to train, for example what to do, inform me. I need to know what reason or event I am training for, for example, my method of preparation will be adapted differently for different aspects of the sport. For the Track Championships I will do a lot of speed work, and spend hours in the gym. It will be all about speed, power and bike handling skills. For the Road Championships I will focus on riding long distances and do specific mountain climbing training. It also depends on the route. It also makes a difference as to where the events will be held. Say, for instance, the event is a track event, will it be on a wooden track, which is 250m a lap, or will it be on an old cement, 500m track? Why the difference? Because there will be a difference in the equipment I will use, and I will prepare for a different riding style because centrifugal forces and speed differ so much between the two tracks.

Culture also influences experience. We, as narrators, need to know when the race will be, where it will be, and in what context or audience it will be played out. These influence how we will tell a narrative. How is the researcher influenced by culture? I am a male in a dominant male society, according to my narrative, and with that a white Afrikaans speaking male in a country where being a white male has a lot of political



implications. How will my upbringing, culture, religion and personal values and beliefs influence the narratives that the participants construct, and how will I interpret these using my own frame of reference, history and culture? As the researcher, I know that the female culture, the cycling culture, or the culture of a sports division at a tertiary institution, and a lot of other factors will influence my, the respondents, and the readers' understanding of the experience being told by the parties involved.

Next, I will introduce the method I used to work with the data that I gathered from the interviews with the participants.

### 3.4 Data

Riessman's (1993) narrative analysis method was used in exploring the data and working with it to gather the necessary information for use in this research. Her steps are outlined as follows.

#### *3.4.1. Attending to Experience*

One needs awareness to make information meaningful, and meaning can only be derived from thinking, from where reality is constructed. The researcher especially needs awareness of a certain phenomenon, even before data has been gathered and the thinking started, in order to successfully study experience in a research process. The ideas and thoughts about the phenomenon should evolve into questions that can be asked and maybe even answered in the research process. Thus the researcher's role is to identify meaningful phenomena that construct ideas and experience (Riessman, 1993). To attend to a certain experience and making those phenomena meaningful, one should avoid images of past experiences for that time, as past experience will influence how you experience the current phenomena you are exploring.

### *3.4.2 Telling about Experience*

As the researcher, I formulate my own awareness to help the reader by setting the scene in such a way for them so as to formulate their own narrative about the study. In telling others about experience, I am performing a personal narrative. The description of experience creates a setting, characters, and plot. By reacting to the experience being told, the listener contributes to creating a joint narrative. The telling involves both parties, creating an interactive process between persons and reality. Experience is being told in a certain way so that the listener can relive this experience as best as possible, even though there seems to be a gap between the lived experience and the language used to communicate. Experience would not be able to exist without words, and by using language we enable others to think about experience (Riessman, 1993).

Polkinghorne (1988) suggests we are responsible for creating the meaning of our lives. It is also important to remember that the perception that the teller has about the listener influences the way in which the narrative will be told. When I experience something and I want to tell someone else what I have experienced, I want them to understand why it is important to tell them about it. I have to use language, and even though Nietzsche (Riessman, 1993) called language a prison, without words there would be no experience to share. So, I will use words to tell this narrative to people, representing my experience, creating a self, how I want them to know me. These people to whom I tell my narrative ask questions that force me to confront various issues about my position and, through this telling, I am attempting to persuade myself and others that I am a certain person, how I want to be seen (Riessman, 1993).

When I interview a participant, she tells me of her experiences and my questions force her to attend to certain issues about her position. She will narrate her experiences in such a way that I will be able to understand her, and experience what she is telling me and, all the way, she will represent herself to me in a way that she wants to be seen.

The therapist working from a narrative position should notice patriarchal narratives and their influence, see that other narratives are possible and find collaborative, non-controlling ways of conversing about this topic (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Freedman and Combs (2002) wrote that dominant gender narratives restrain our imaginations and creativity. They specify roles for men and women which differ from each other. Everyone is constructed as abnormal who live outside these specifications, and these narratives make it very difficult to overcome life's problems. The challenge would be to deconstruct limiting narratives and listen to marginalised narratives, but this would be difficult because the patriarchal gender narratives influence our culture, history and experience as we live every day. We need to find ways that will enable conversation about gender that can act as deconstruction of patriarchy (Freedman & Combs, 2002).

Some of the questions I asked were helpful in opening up space for the narratives to be told, others helped create meaning and other questions helped me to keep the interview on the track of the purpose of the study. Freedman and Combs (1996) write about different types of questions, namely deconstruction, opening space, preference, narrative development and meaning questions. Of these, I used narrative development questions the most, mainly because of the great value they can hold for the process in helping the participants tell their narratives. They invite people to tell their narratives in relation to the process and detail of an experience. These questions also allow this experience to be connected to a particular context and to other people, thus making it embodied, situated in time and space and creating the opportunity to be re-experienced in a very detailed manner (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Epston (1998) refers to experience questions and what these can add to the research. They invite persons to express certain aspects that have been forgotten or neglected by the passage of time, and ask the person to engage their imagination in ways that are constitutive of different or alternative experiences of themselves (Epston, 1998).

When asking about process, the participants slow down the event and retrieve the sequence of important elements. Examples of such questions would be: "As you look

back at this experience, where do you think you began to realise what you are thinking/believing now?”, “How did you become part the club?”, “Were there particular things you thought to yourself that supported this idea”? (Freedman & Combs, 1996)

Questioning a person about details enables them to remember aspects of events that may have been forgotten. A full detailed description of an experience also creates an intensity that helps the participant to tell the narrative in a meaning creating ways to others. Questions would be: “What would an outsider have noticed in the meeting that would have informed him/her of what was happening?”, “What exactly did you feel when you heard...?”, “Can you tell us a bit more about your thoughts on this event?” (Freedman & Combs, 1996)

Time in questioning is important because of its significance in creating self-identity narratives (Freedman & Combs, 1996). The researcher asked questions such as “When in the past did you experience the same whilst being part of a group or team?”, “Has it always been difficult to speak out in strange or difficult situations?” Asking future orientating questions will give us a better understanding of what the participants learned from this experience, and how this experience will inform them in the future. Questions that contrast time (either past, present or future), emphasise the changes that happened in a narrative (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Examples are: “How is this different from what you experienced before?”, “What was it like when you were at another club?”

Asking questions about the context and people might open possibilities where a participant might look past the “obvious problem” or experience and might comment on a way to participate in the re-construction of a new and future narrative for the cycling club context at the sport institution. Even hypothetical event questions will assist in constructing unique narratives by adding time, details, process and so forth to the experience (Freedman & Combs, 1996). A question like: “If you were to be appointed manager of the club, what would you start off with?”, or “What would you imagine the club could look like if the cyclists themselves become actively involved with the management of the club at organisational level?” encouraged the participants to create

narratives of how they would like the club to be run in the future, stemming from their authored narratives and experiences in the sporting context.

Asking about meaning, e.g. “What do you mean by...?” or “What do you think they meant by...?” and questions like “Why does this new understanding of the process suit you better than your old view?” creates the environment to gather more detailed information on the beliefs and values of the participants, which influences experience and understanding (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

The next step was to transcribe the experience, which is discussed below.

### *3.4.3 Transcribing Experience*

Riessman (1993) remarks that writing narrative, or transcribing, is incomplete, partial and selective. When we use media like video and/or tape recordings we can recall from the recording almost all of the language, use of words, pauses and so forth. But when we try to transcribe this into a written account of the experience, we cannot expect to copy the lived and embodied experience as it was told. Every aspect of what we include and exclude, or how we write or approach the transcription, will influence the experience of the reader. It needs to be decided what to exclude, but the researcher should attempt to be as holistic as possible, and focus on telling as much of the experience to the reader as possible.

The use of audio and video recordings has got its positive and negative aspects. The closest thing to having the experience again when doing the transcribing is to use these tools, but also one has to keep in mind that there is a big difference in the lived experience and the retelling or transcription (Riessman, 1993). The video recorder gives more data for analysis, but also can be more intrusive (Macnaghten & Myers, 2004). Audio tapes are hard to understand, especially with disturbances (Bernard, 2000). Video recordings aid in the process of transcription by helping the person that does the transcribing and research to identify who is talking when, and when the audio is not clear

enough. In this way data can be better transcribed. We can easily, when we have the transcription as accurately as possible, turn off the image of the video recording, only listening and experiencing. This way the researcher can try to get the best quality possible for the research.

Transcription captures the rich data, and the researcher will use the richness from the transcription to gather, in the best detail or quality, the experiences shared by the group. One must be careful not to think that transcription replaces analysis of the data; transcription is only a way of preparing the data for analysis.

#### *3.4.4 Analyzing Experience*

Language is the vehicle of analysis, where plots (expressions of meaning) are uncovered, and meanings understood. Narrative uses the outcome that ensues to clearly explain significant events that led up to these outcomes (Polkinghorne, 1988). The researcher's analysis actually starts when listening and continues through the process of transcription, and this means to immerse oneself in the text and to read and re-read. I then create a meta-narrative about the experience by telling what the narratives signify and along the way edit and reshape it. Language makes experience real, and without words, how would it be possible for us to express our emotions, and how do we interpret the happenings around us? In telling about experience, a person creates a self, how he/she wants to be known by others (Riessman, 1993). Thus, if I want to be known as a good friend, I will narrate my experience in such a way so that the person listening will get to experience me as a "good friend". As stated in my position that history and culture inform our narratives, the analysis would focus on exploring how this happens and what significance I could gather from it. Analysis of the text is the means of working with the text where we are immersed in the narratives being told and how these narratives that are being told are shaped by our past and our societies that we live in, comes to the fore.

### *3.4.5 Reading Experience*

The same reader can understand the text differently in different historical and cultural contexts. A text has many voices, meaning that people reading the same text will attach different meanings to the experience being told by the writer (Riessman, 1993). The narrative will have a different meaning for every person it is told to, even if the teller tells the narrative to them at the same time. The meaning or experience they will acquire will be influenced by the history they lived and the culture they live in. So can a hero for one culture be the villain of another when reading the same tale.

Quality of research is very important to ensure that it can be built upon, commented on and adds to the existing work done by researchers and scholars in the field. In the next point I will address the issue of quality in this paper.

## 3.5 Quality

Lincoln (in Sparkes, 1998) elaborated on authenticity in research, instead of the usual validity, and the use of authenticity in relation to a narrative understanding of human experience. For the author, authenticity implies that the text is faithful to the narrative lines of the participants and could also convey, in a sense, the feelings of these narratives from the peoples' lives. This is experienced when the text can, if only for a short period, draw the reader to experience the life being described. Another criterion for evaluating narrative inquiry is fidelity. According to Blumenfeld-Jones (in Sparkes 1998) it is especially meaningful for practising and evaluating narrative inquiry that links social science and art. It is more important to explore the meaning of the teller, rather than searching for the truth. Thus it stays faithful, loyal and devoted to the narratives told by participants. Trustworthiness is also a key issue in quality of research, and it is difficult to ensure that research can be trusted. With so many issues to attend to there will always be criticism, but there are basic principles that can illustrate that the researcher took care to invite the element of trust to his/her work. This is to make sure that the participants are aware of the reasons for the research, the goal and methods used, to

ensure that the participants feel comfortable to participate, and to give them the option to withdraw at any time. By getting permission from a university ethical board to continue the research before the data was collected, also adds to the credibility and trustworthiness of this study.

But how can this study be all that it should be to make it authentic, believable, and meaningful? What measures must be taken to get the structures in place so that this research will be able to experience and tell and do everything else it must do, without having barriers that will prevent it from reaching its potential? Some of the tools used should include the choice of data gathering, among others.

By employing focus groups, I hoped to get a discussion going amongst the female cyclists on their place in cycling at a tertiary institution. It was however, not possible for me to organise a focus group where all would be present. Distance, prior commitments and other practicalities forced me to reconsider the data collection method. After months of negotiations and phone calls I decided to use interviews to gather the required data. The same thoughts applied to questioning during the interview that would have been appropriate during the focus group, adhering to the method and position in the study (Riessman, 1993). The difference is that the researcher would probably have had to ask fewer questions, because the group would have probably started a process of discussion. There was, however, the risk that some of the participants would be less active during the discussion in the group, as all methods have their own strengths and weaknesses.

Using high quality equipment for the recording of the data ensured that the researcher had access to all of the data and text needed to do a thorough transcription. Riessman (1993) quoted Millet (1971) as commenting on the tape recorder:

Without this device to preserve the very sound of language, we should have no idea of how people really talk: their pauses, inflections, emphases, unfinished sentences, short periods. All attempts to mimic spoken language seem terribly mannered, and one comes to respect [Gertrude] Stein still more, and to admire how carefully she must have listened (p.11-12).



The co-researcher's reflection assisted in the quality of the study by opening up possibilities for further questions, and comments on the process kept the quality of data as high as possible. This also assisted in ensuring that the theme was discussed, rather than topics not applicable to the study. Adding to the quality of this study was the input of my supervisor (Dr. Human), who has always been a guide and critic concerning this study, helping me to order my thoughts and methods, helping to improve the quality of the research, but still making sure that the work done was my own.

The real test of any research ultimately seems to lie in the reviews of peers, supervisors, readers and participants, no matter from which frame of reference or school of thought. If this report can generate critique, feedback and comments it has served one of the purposes for being an academic study. It would mean absolutely nothing if research cannot be built upon in new studies, explored and maybe even contrasted.

Trustworthiness of our interpretations is claimed through a process called validation. Trustworthiness does not assume an objective reality, but it moves the validation process into the social world (Riessman, 1993). She names four ways to approach validation in narrative, namely

- Persuasiveness – or plausibility means supporting theoretical claims with evidence from data.
- Correspondence – being able to take the interpretations and transcriptions back to the participants.
- Coherence – being able to change original hypotheses in the light of particular narratives being told, and
- Pragmatic use – to what extent this study can become the basis for other's future work.

When theoretical claims are supported with evidence from participant's narratives and when there is space given for alternative interpretations, we can say that the research can be persuasive, or plausible. Thus we can ask if the research is reasonable and convincing

(Riessman, 1993). I would answer both these questions in the affirmative. It was reasonable to conduct the research because it was seen from the problem statement and the literature study that there was enough reason to research the topic. The research, although not giving statistical backup of findings, could be seen as convincing, seeing that the narratives that were told confirmed the conclusions made by other authors in the field.

Kvale (1995) wrote about the “trinity of reliability, validity and generalisation” (p.20), and mentions that he thinks this has been the holy trinity of modern social science. He states that there are multiple ways of knowing and multiple truths, and that validity was sometimes seen as a firm boundary line between truth and non-truth. Validity should rather be accepted as the “possibility of specific local, personal, and community forms of truth, with a focus on daily life and local narrative” (p.21). Validity starts in the lived world and daily language, where reliability, such as a reliable source, or validity, such as a valid driver’s license, is part of social interaction.

This study did not use correspondence during the analysis phase. The analysis and recommendations could have benefited from sending the work in progress back to the participants. Asking the participants to comment on the final product would be beneficial and those comments may be included in future work or articles stemming from this original work.

Riessman (1993) stated that it is important to be flexible while you are working with the narrative acquired from the participants. A researcher should in his/her quest for validity always bear in mind that a narrative is not static, and meanings shift as consciousness changes. Thus we should be aware that we may have pre-set ideas about a participant, but for our work to be valid we should cohere what is being told. We should always keep the way open for ourselves to follow the participant’s narrative, and listen to what they are telling and how they are telling it. “Respondents (if not interrupted with standardized questions) will hold the floor for lengthy turns and sometimes organise replies into long stories” (Riessman, 1993, p.3). The analysis of this study hopes to show that the

participants were telling their narratives without much interference, and the researcher attempted to ensure that he only guided participants into telling of their experiences at the cycling club. The analysis was done on the narrative told by the participant, whatever was important for her to tell.

Pragmatic use of this study is “future oriented, collective, and assumes the socially constructed nature of science” (Riessman, 1993, p.68). Riessman (1993) adds that it is not easy to argue validity of narrative analysis, we can only provide information that will make it possible for readers to determine the trustworthiness of our work by describing how interpretations were produced, making the method on analysis clear and visible, specifying transformations by means of attending, telling, transcribing, analysing, and reading, further making our primary data available to other researchers. Making our data available to other researchers is often difficult because of ethical issues regarding identity and personal information, but is maybe a good idea if ethical steps can be taken to ensure that more quality information can be used from the narratives told by the respondents.

### 3.6 Ethics

I believe that all information used should be dealt with in a manner that is acceptable for all parties involved, and this should be the same consideration that drives research to be as ethical as possible when using information. Before participants can become part of a study, they should be properly informed about the goals and expectations of the study. They should be told why the information is needed, how it is going to be used, and how the information will be handled, in this regard confidentiality and privacy is of utmost importance (Smith, 2003). I have promised the participants that I will use a pseudonym when referring to them, and that I will handle the data gathered from them via video and tape recordings with great care to ensure that their privacy is protected. To explain my ethical position to the participants, I have used informational letters that I handed them stating ethical issues, only after I had personally contacted them and asked them to become part of the study. By personal approach and then by using written media I have tried to make sure that this study would be as ethically correct as possible. On the

information form, the goals of the research were outlined, and the participants also signed the forms so as to accept the invitation to participate, and to acknowledge that they had been informed of the process, and that they were satisfied with the ethical aspects of the study. This is to ensure that no deception has taken place, and I also explained that I needed to report on the research by means of a research report written here (Smith, 2003). Benatar (2002), states that ethical merit hold close the respect for the dignity of participants, the minimising of risk for the participants, and to ensure the confidentiality of the participants.

Because the researcher is male, a female co-facilitator assisted during the interviews, and we made full use of her experience and voice to construct meaning, making sure that male-informed discourse of the researcher's culture and history would be noted in the process, but kept to a minimum. By having the assistance of a female co-researcher present, the credibility, validity and quality of the research was addressed, and the participants may have felt more at ease talking about their experiences.

I furthermore informed the participants of their role in the study, and let them know that they may, at any time, cease their participation if they felt they needed to do so. They were also informed that the interviews would be video taped, the data transcribed and a research report written and published on the day that the interviews took place. The participants signed the forms (Appendix A and B) before the interviews started.

This chapter covered the methodological aspects of this study. Firstly the context from which the study was done was explained and I introduced myself and the other participants involved in the research. From the position it can be noted that a narrative position was used, and I explained how experience, which is what I am exploring, is influenced by narrative, history and culture. I incorporated the work of Riessman (1993) concerning narrative analysis to help me in exploring the data I gathered from the interviews. Two very important aspects of this study are the quality and ethical considerations. I explained what measures I used to make sure that the study was of a high quality and then I explained the measures I put in place to make sure that the

participants were fully informed, as can be seen in the appendix. I have discussed several of the formal aspects of the study in this chapter, and the next chapter will take the reader to the interaction stage with the participants.

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## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Sue's Narrative

Sue is a white Afrikaans female student and competes in competitive cycling and triathlons, aged between 20 and 25 years.

First letter

Sue,

I am writing this letter in response to your participation in an interview we had regarding being a female cyclist in a club at a tertiary institution in South Africa. I will try to share with you my interpretation of your narrative, and hopefully I have found a way to do it so that you feel comfortable that this is still your narrative.

Sue, you introduced running and cycling to me, telling of a dominant and alternative narrative. Running seems to be the dominant narrative, and cycling the alternative.

1 I have always been involved in a sporting environment never as much in cycling  
2 than running but I got to cycling when I started university, so coming from a  
3 running background basically.

You tell of a change that happened when you came to university, and you explain to me where you came from, namely a small town far from the city, and that it was very different to be there.

4 ... also coming from Bethlehem, which is a Free State town where you can cycle  
5 inside the town, actually train in the town, here in the middle of the city you had  
6 to be in a group to be able to go and train, to learn how, what, where also to learn  
7 about the routes, cycling races and so forth.

You use cycling as an example to explain to me how you experience the city in a different way, compared to the small town you came from. You tell how different training was in your home town to the city, and that you need other people here to do what is 'normal' for you, that is cycle. I get the idea that you wish to inform me that life in the city was in contrast with life in your home town, and that the new environment meant a lot of changes that you would need to get accustomed to.

Becoming part of the university seems to be a slow process. The rules, regulations and procedures at university can be a daunting task for any student to overcome or internalize. It seems as if the complexity of all these new aspects to cycling is challenging to you, and that you would prefer to cycle in your home town again, without the complications of the city.

8 It's been a learning curve. How things work, the procedures you have to go to  
9 being at the University there are a lot of procedures and a certain way that things  
10 needed to be done. You can't just go doing your own thing, so that's one thing  
11 that I learned.

In the academic world a student who does not adhere to all these rules and regulations can be 'expelled', and this could severely influence social status and self esteem, and could further keep a student from completing her course completely. I assume that being acceptable to the institution is very important to you, seeing that you came all the way to study and compete in your sport. You say that you learned that you need to keep to the

rules, but by saying that it's a 'learning curve' (line 8), it could mean that it took you a while to actually find out what you had to do, or how things really work. I wonder how long it normally takes a student to adapt to the university setting, and 'learn' the rules of this new life?

In the next part of your narrative you tell about students not being looked after because of another aspect of cycling that entered the cycling scene, namely a professional team.

12 I think the frustration just got to me, hmm, the club also started getting a pro  
13 team which was focusing on the professional cycling side, and, just negligence,  
14 of students totally, flew out of the picture, especially females flew out of the  
15 picture.

I wonder if it is necessary to replace the students of the club with the professional 'outsiders', or if they can still co-exist if maybe it was planned better? It feels as if you are saying "out with the old, in with the new" when you tell about what happened to the students, and I gather this from the words you used "flew out the picture" (line14). You are still using contrasts to tell of the experience, and now it seems as if you are trying to decide on which side you belong. It seems that females had no place in the professional team, and by saying that females flew out the picture I get the idea that females had no place in the building of professional cycling.

You go on to compare previous years, where the professional team was not part of the club, to now, and highlight the differences. A great example you use is the SASSU Tour (South African Student Sport Union), where a lot of planning and preparation is needed.



16 To take SASSU Tour for this year, previous year everything has been organised  
17 to scratch, hmm, people get together and know exactly what is happening. This  
18 year our team manager wasn't even at the meetings, hmm, ja he was late for  
19 races, so just small things that frustrated the students because so much effort is  
20 being put into the pro team that the core of the cycling club is a part of the  
21 students and they neglected it, they also feel like why are we actually here, why  
22 are, why do we join the cycling club, ja.

By telling about “our team manager” (line18) and “the students” (line19), I gather that you are telling that there were suddenly two parts to this narrative, opposing sides. It seems as if you want to confirm that you are part of the professional team at this stage, but that you would prefer to be on the side of the students because you experience the frustrations of students in the club. You seem to be sitting on the fence on this issue, maybe it can be interpreted that you were willing to try out the professional aspect of the club, but felt that what was happening to the students was not right, and the way you tell about this made me understand that you would not stand for this.

Sue, you tell of being neglected as a student in the cycling club, and the frustration that it brought into your life (lines16-22). You tell of part of the organization and structures that a person must adhere to in the university culture and society have been taken for granted and not used to their full advantage. For example, why I say that is because you said meetings were not attended by people selected by the club or structure (line 19), and I understand being present at gatherings like these is very important for the functionality of any organization. The students were not happy because they were not attended to, like in the previous year, which could be reminiscent of the culture of the student, getting support and guidance from the organization. I see that you believe that the students started questioning their role and importance in the club (lines 21-22), and to me this is worrying, mainly because from what I gathered from your narrative, I believe that the club is created with students in mind, and when these students start questioning their position and even the reason for their participation, it does not bode well for the club.

Later in your narrative you tell of a time when you were ready to quit, and it seems as if you were doing some introspection, trying to find a path to the future where you would be comfortable with what you are doing.

23 ...five months ago I would have said to you that I am finished with sports, I  
24 have put my bike away, I have put my Tekkies away, I was just, a feeling that I,  
25 I don't know where I want to go, maybe its not worth it, you know, focus on  
26 more key elements like work, getting into the structure of work and so forth.

You talk about changing your focus from sport to work, which seems very important by the words you use: “focus on more key elements like work” (line 26). I sense that at this stage in your life narrative, cycling was associated with negative feelings and emotions, struggles and maybe even hopelessness. I want to say that I feel frustration in what you told me, rather than sadness. Yet, I feel that sadness should be the ‘normal’ way to feel when one gives up on something that shaped you and has been such an important part of your life. Is it possible that the bad experience at a certain stage in you life, like at this club, could change your feelings about cycling so much that it is not even missed after you have stopped? This is frightening, because it means that instead of assisting in developing cyclists, this club can actually assist in chasing away future participants forever, adding to the problems the sport of cycling is experiencing in South Africa, and, for that matter, world wide.

I hope that you feel my letter holds true to your narrative, and in the next letter I will write to you to show just how influential life narratives are that have been shaped by history and culture over time!

Regards,

Louis

## Second Letter

Hi Sue,

I want to comment on your narrative even further, but I want to touch on a few aspects that stood out for me, and I will inform you as I go along. I want to give this letter a title, if I may, and I would like to call it your narrative about cycling, culture and learning.

Attending a tertiary institution a student seems to learn the rules of a different culture, that of being at university, where communication is quite different from society as a whole. I am talking about the way that you use communication methods few people would understand other than students, to make sure that I understand what you are trying to say to me.

1 ...in my first year just as a cyclist, hmm, student participation and so forth,  
2 hmm, in my second year I became actively involved in the club on the  
3 structured side, being part of the membership, got onto the committee, being  
4 secretary, my third year being secretary as well and in my fourth year I  
5 stepped down. That's a quick recap on what happened.

You seem to be using an academic discourse to tell of your progression in the club. In lines 1-5 you tell of your progression in terms of university years, for example, in my first year, in my second year, in my third year... The question that stuck with me was simple: I wonder if a businessman who has never studied before would understand your progression in the organization of the club in the same way I did? This may warrant another question: How would you have told your narrative differently if you were telling it to this businessman? If I may guess you would have used dates, for example in 2001 and then in 2002... I personally did not have to know what the date of the year was, because I have been through university myself, and I could understand what the first year and so on was like for me, thus I could situate your narrative in time so that I knew

exactly what period in your university career you were talking about. At this stage the narrative finds a different route from your personal involvement to club involvement.

You seem to make a point about the ineffectiveness of the club by telling me that there were structural and organizational problems. You refer to the structure not being used, people creating dependence and managers not knowing what their functions are. I get the feeling that you want to say that the institution or organization is not doing its part in making sure that everything runs effectively.

6 I think a proper guideline, or... you know a job description set down for,  
7 firstly I think the structure should be, is, ... there is so many structures in the  
8 cycling club itself, we need this, we need to go there, this is what we need,  
9 but no job description have been given for those portfolios and nothing has  
10 been done to get people involved in that portfolios.

11...the infrastructure there is a structure in the club, but I don't think the  
12 structure is lived to the full potential, hmm, I have experienced it during  
13 that day because there were a lot of gaps and everyone was dependant on  
14 one person and even the managers that we had in our first year were not  
15 from a cycling background but from other sporting codes, didn't know  
16 much about cycling, so there were a lot of roles to be filled but no one  
17 actually knew what they had to do and where to go, so there were no  
18 guidelines.

You give me four reasons to illustrate the ineffectiveness, namely:

- being dependant on a single person,
- people not from a cycling background,
- no one knew what to do and
- there were no guidelines.

Does this mean that you feel it is up to the people that govern the structure to “fix the problem”? If we go further we see talk about broken promises.

19 A lot of promises have been made, things that were going to be done, and  
20 that’s where I think the responsibility and the giving over never happened  
21 and you get to a point where you accept that the first time people says  
22 something is going to happen, you still wait for it, the second time, you  
23 like... its going to happen, then you realise its never going to happen.

In our culture (hoping that I can say this, because I assume this for I am also white and from an Afrikaans background) we seem to place a lot of value on a person that can keep his/her promises. For a student, a university is a place that holds a lot of promise for the future, the promise of further education, a better life, more life experience, support and maybe even safety. For you it seem that this trust that most students hold in an institution like this one has been shattered, that you could not believe what was happening, and never will again. The word promise is used as a tool to interact with your experience and what should have happened. It seems that you put a lot of value in the discourse of promise, and you go on to use time markers to show me how the promise was, and never will be fulfilled.

Sue, when reading your narrative I was struggling to keep up with you. It all seemed so chaotic and confusing. I was left with the idea that you were trying to tell me just how confused you were by creating confusion within me! I say this because the following excerpt is narrated differently, as if you were trying to find your words, or thoughts.

24 Also group communication, you are willing to help and you are willing,  
25 wanting to do something but some people are too protective over the work  
26 or guidance or protection that they didn't want to share what they know for  
27 interest of the club, where they like to protect... make everything dependent  
28 on them.

29 So that was quite a bad experience because the willingness was there, you  
30 know, and the ability, cause studying at the sport centre itself where the  
31 offices it is and, the group rides are from and so forth. It's such an easy  
32 path for me to do something simple everyday but, ja, there was a bit of a  
33 negativity on letting go and giving responsibilities to other people which  
34 was a bad experience.

I could not understand why it was so difficult for everything to come together. Everything seemed to be there, you were willing, the infrastructure was supposedly there, and yet still you feel that there was much room for improvement. You seem to create space where I can experience how being unable to take charge of the situation made you feel helpless, and that you believe it is because people put themselves in a place where they create the space for others to become dependent on them. I would like to say that I think the club structure might be based on dependency, meaning that the club seems dependent, on the bigger tertiary institution, and on the other side, the cyclists, which it needs to exist. However, it seems that the club takes the cyclists for granted, in a sense, by employing individuals to look after the structure, rather than bettering the club. Thus people are in place to keep office where change is needed, but avoided. You, being a female cyclist and student, have already broken a few gender-role rules along the way. Not long ago a female wasn't even allowed to get a tertiary education, let alone manage a cycling club<sup>1</sup>, and there is the matter of you being a female cyclist. Being a female cyclist means you are challenging the notion that sport is for males only, and that being a fit and competent female in sport is not a question of fit, it is your reality! Thus, being

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<sup>1</sup> See Storkey (2001)

stuck in an organization where change doesn't seem to happen for you, I can gather that it feels as if you are fighting a losing battle, and that if something was not suited to change, you would not be a part of it for long.

Lastly I want to comment on something that I experienced from your narrative that I can relate to. You talk about giving up on cycling, and exploring a different context, but then you make a u-turn and tell about a renewed you in cycling.

35 ...five months ago I would have said to you that I am finished with sports, I  
36 have put my bike away, I have put my Tekkies away, I was just, a feeling that I,  
37 I don't know where I want to go, maybe its not worth it, you know, focus on  
38 more key elements like work, getting into the structure of work and so forth.  
39 I wanted to live my sport, that came to me the same, and sport is in you, its  
40 either in you or its not, you can't avoid not doing it, its something you can't do,  
41 hmm, see myself, I am back in the path on rehabilitation, if I can put it like that.

I sense a narrative of determination, where you realized that your sport is about your own participation and passion for what you are doing. It seems that you came to the realization that the club is part of your sport but not the main part of it. This tells me that somewhere in your history you have made the decision as to why you are participating in sport, and even though you went through a bad experience that temporarily clouded your judgement, you came back to your life narrative of loving cycling and this seem to have prevailed. Thus showing how we are being shaped by our history and culture, and that what happens to us over time, shapes the way we tell these narratives to other people.

Yours truly,  
Louis

## 4.2 Kate's Narrative

Kate is a 25-30 year old white female cyclist, competing in a wide variety of disciplines within the sport, namely road cycling, track cycling and mountainbiking. She lived in the city prior to being a student at the university.

First letter

Dear Kate,

Thank you for sharing your narratives with me. I want to communicate my thoughts back to you and I wish to do so by writing you three letters, of which this is the first.

You tell of the social aspects of being a cyclist, and you started off with how you started cycling. There is a progression in your narrative, which seems to start as a social cyclist, and heads to where you were competing.

1 I wasn't doing any training since I was running, and I would just get on my  
2 bike to be with, to go out with my mother, and then, first year of varsity, I  
3 stopped running completely, I just couldn't be bothered any more, and hmm,  
4 started going to spin classes just to stay fit and they kept pushing me, ... no,  
5 you must ... and I started riding. Ja! What I always still remember, I know it  
6 was me, [names a few other cyclists], hmm, and two other ladies, we were  
7 the ladies in... Gauteng, yes, I wasn't very good when I started, but it was so  
8 nice, because it would always be the five of us, and we would always give  
9 each other a go, and we got to know each other quite well, that  
10 companionship was just something amazing.



You started out to be with your mother (line 2), then you started going to spinning classes, which is a very social place as it consists of stationary bicycles where you have a lot of contact with other cyclists (line 3), and then you were encouraged to start riding more seriously, and did this with a few other ladies (line 6). By the way you are telling me about your progression in cycling, you show me that certain things happened that influenced your participation levels, like in line 2 where you came to University and did not bother about running anymore, and later on when other people pushed you (line 4) to start riding more, and even later when your spinning instructor told you to become a competitive racer by registering (line 19). You seem to be situating your narrative over time by giving me an account of your history, maybe creating space for your narrative to be understood better by outsiders.

11 Everybody pushed me to keep on running seeing that I was good at it, but it  
12 was never a passion, it was just where I got involved with cycling was very  
13 social, it was with a lot of friends, not just family, just more the friends, all  
14 my friends were riding with me.

15 I think it's the first winter that I rode through winter, we used to get up at  
16 five o'clock every morning and be a group that kind of social... it just turns  
17 into passion.

18 When I started cycling the spinning instructor was [a Springbok cyclist],  
19 and he said I must license from the word go, and I actually, I licensed the  
20 first year that I was riding, and, the second year I tried and came in the top  
21 ten at SA`s, just because I had someone to teach me the ropes and get me,  
22 started, get me going somewhere... I am wanting to say the professional  
23 line, hmm, started riding socially, I ...

I feel that I may repeat the thought that your narrative here is about togetherness, friendship and social interaction. It seems you want me to experience how you experience friendships (lines 7-10) and where you are coming from to understand the rest of your narrative. It would seem that you want to explain how friendships influenced you

as a cyclist, before answering the research question. You may be creating a narrative about cycling which has friendships, partnerships, and respect for one another as lead characters of your narrative. Why do you need to elaborate on this point so much? What is this supposed to tell me about your experiences at the cycling club? Maybe you are comparing what initially brought you to cycling with the club, and it may be that you do not find exactly what you are looking for. It seems that your main narrative would be about enjoyment, friendship and progress, whereas at the club other narratives influenced your experiences, which I will write to you later.

24 I think it's the first winter that I rode through winter, we used to get up at  
25 five o'clock every morning and be a group that kind of social... it just turns  
26 into passion.

It seems evident that you use a social or cultural discourse to tell of the lengths you will go through to enjoy what you are doing. By telling that you get up at five o'clock in the morning to go out cycling with your friends, leaves the impression that you want to tell me that this behaviour is not normal in society, thus pronouncing your enjoyment for cycling. I wonder how difficult it would normally be for a student to get up at five o'clock in the morning, during winter especially. Even though I think friendships help to motivate you, I feel that you had to have a very strong desire and lots of motivation to act "abnormally"! I think that you feel by enjoying something anything is possible, and that whatever you enjoy, you will do, whatever society thinks, or even frowns upon. This may be wrongly assumed by looking at your dedication and spirit to exercise, but I feel that I needed to lay this thought on the table for you to think about.

Lastly I would want to comment on how you became a competitive cyclist. It seems that you took the advice from a more knowledgeable person in cycling, in the form of your spinning instructor and a Springbok cyclist, to move up a step in your cycling participation. This person is from your 'social cycling' background, but he also had a lot of knowledge that you could use. I wonder if it would have been different for you,

meaning the decisions you would make, if you were told to license by a representative of an institution that you had no previous ties with. I get the idea that you may still have been cycling with your friends, rather than competing at an advanced level, if it wasn't for someone from your 'social' background that guided you.

Until next time,

Louis

## Second letter

Hi Kate,

I would like to write to you about your narrative you shared with me regarding your experiences at the cycling club at the tertiary institution. It took you quite a while to reach this point during the interview, and that is very intriguing to me, seeing that you were competing in the club for a while.

Kate, you tend to incorporate other people when you tell about your experiences, and it seems as if you construct the majority of your narratives socially. I kept this in mind while looking at what information you gave me. You bring males into the telling, guiding and assisting you to make difficult decisions. I wonder if this is in a way what you expected from the cycling club. It seems that you need someone to help when you get involved in parts of the experience where friendship is not the driving force anymore. It can be that your relationship with your husband is of such a nature that you would discuss this with him, regardless of the theme. It is just important for me to notice that your narrative, up to this point, has mostly been about females.

1 ...and I discussed it with [My husband] last night, and I told him that I am  
2 not sure that I want the responsibilities put upon me without being given the  
3 support to actually achieve the expectations of the sponsors...

4 the guy that we asked to help us, he was also learning, just as fast and  
5 furiously as we were.

It may be that you are keeping to the social discourse that a woman needs protection and guidance, and the best place to get it from seems to be the discourse that was created over time and history about males in a patriarchal context that would protect females. I wonder if this fits with the idea that a tertiary institution would still be patriarchal. You then refer to a manager, evidently male (line 4), who did not know what to do! This

raises the question that I need to ask, because isn't a 'male' manager supposed to know what he is doing? You thus contrast the idea that I formed that you trust males to guide you when something becomes important to you. Now I feel as if you were maybe unsure of the 'knowledge' that males possess, and the timing that you brought males into your narrative, suggests to me that you may feel that males are part of the equation that makes cycling less fun. Every time you have changed, or evolved in cycling, not necessarily for the better, it seems that males were involved. Whenever you just enjoy what you are doing, it seems to be with females.

I wonder how the context of the university can influence one's narrative so drastically, from cycling being 'female' for you, if I may make such an assumption, to the institution being male. Would this be the part in the narrative where our history comes to the fore, where male domination was the way society was structured, and what a male said or decided was what would be done? I wonder if this may be something you are telling me about the way society, and the sport club is structured? Can it be that when things get organised, males are involved, that they govern or rule, and tell you what you must do, even if you are not sure if that is the best for you? It seems that you are adhering to society's standards that you should keep to the guidelines. Are you trying to abide by the rules of gender in society, but realise that these rules might make life miserable for you?

6 ...because it was the two of us [another female at the cycling club], we  
7 approached the other girls and we told them, listen, we wont be having  
8 anything, because (other sponsor) is riding as a team and it is so difficult to  
9 ride as an individual, we wont put a lot of strong individuals together, and  
10 even if we still need to pay for our own races, we just want to start riding  
11 together, that's where we started off, that was our main objective, was to get  
12 a bunch of strong girls to ride together.

Again, the social aspect of the narrative tells of maybe being vulnerable if you are alone. Maybe by standing together there is a chance of getting somewhere, rather than nowhere.

But your wording “a lot of strong individuals together” (line 7) suggests that maybe even if you do combine your powers, you might not be able to bond socially and work together as a team. You contrast the professional sponsor (line 6) riding “as a team” against a bunch of strong women riding together (line 7). This tells me that even you may have had little hope of this venture being successful, but you seemed willing to give it a try because you needed to do this to stay competitive in cycling.

Kate, you use a metaphor (line 10) to explain that something happened that was not supposed to. You add humour to your narrative by laughing, because this may highlight what happened (line 10), or it may show that what happened next was unbelievable, or even incomprehensible. You argue that nothing worked out well, the pressure was too much, the support was not there and the manager was not able to fulfil the role expected of him (lines 10-12).

10 ...and then the paw-paw hit the fan (Laughing...) I just, ... , then  
11 expectations were being placed upon us, we didn't have proper support, the  
12 guy that we asked to help us, he was also learning, just as fast and furiously  
13 as we were.

This seems to be a turning point in your narrative. I get the feeling that from here on your narrative may be turning into a negative one about experience at the club. What you did next was amazing for me, you incorporated me into your narrative!

14 Louis you know how you battled to try and get us all together to do..., now  
15 imagine to try to get us all together to decide on bikes, try to get us together,  
16 to...

Drawing on my experience of organising people to attend the focus groups I embarked on to gather narratives for this thesis, you explained to me how you struggled to organise the group of female cyclists. You then compared it with how I struggled to get the same group organised for the data capturing part of the study! I assume you used this technique because I would instantly compare my experience with yours, and I would find a link between the two, thus understanding your experience better!

In anticipation,

Louis

|

Third letter

Hi Kate,

I would like to continue where I ended off previously. You use an event from your history to create the scene for the following that shaped your experiences of being part of the cycling club.

Being part of the female team seems to be synonymous with being in the club for you, and by things that happened in the team you are telling how you experienced the whole cycling world within the club at the University.

1 ... I will never ever forget, Nylstroom is like one of my favourite races, I  
2 just, I don't know why, it's the first race I ever rode, and it will just always  
3 be one of my favourite races..., (tells what happened in the race in detail) but  
4 we didn't have that communication, and to ride in a team on the level that it  
5 had actually been done at that stage, and not being equipped was very  
6 negative experience.

You start off by explaining to me how pure and beautiful your first race was (normally the first race of the season, and situated in the Northern Province), and how much it meant to you. This is one of the races I assume shaped you as a cyclist, and maybe even as a person, the most. There seems to be a before and after element to this narrative. Before the cycling team you enjoyed your race, and the memory of it. After the cycling team you seem to remember the experience as negative (line 5). You may be telling me how the club functioned by referring to the race, where you did not have communication, where team work has never been done before, and that you did not have access to the right equipment. Does this refer to management, structure, guidelines that you needed, knowing where you are going, and falling back on previous experience? These are all



things that a person would expect to get from a club structure, if I understand what you are trying to tell me.

I got the idea that you would rather blame the individuals in the group than the club for things not working out as you expected it to. This gives me another idea on how you saw the club. The reason why I talk about this is because you told me about progression in cycling, getting better and better as time went on, and then you joined the club where the team was formed from.

7...I was picking up every year, like I said, in the beginning I just wanted to  
8 stay with the bunch, then I could sprint with the bunch, then I could attack  
9 the bunch, I was growing every year, I was a young cyclist, I was picking up  
10 on my skills and everything...

11 ...it would be unfair to say when I joined the club then everything went  
12 down the drain, because as soon as I joined it, the ladies team started being  
13 there, the racing became quite different, quite a different ... very different.  
14 Hmm... so...I am not saying me as an individual would have been able to  
15 still be picking up my performance, but it definitely, surely didn't happen in  
16 the team the way it was supposed to be happening. Hmm, we were all  
17 committed to ride for each other, between us there was never a question of  
18 ... hmm, I'm not riding for you, or ... what ever, because we were all  
19 basically on the same level, and then the rest and if you're in a break, then  
20 go for it.

You use the words “everything went down the drain” (lines 11-12), telling me in your own words that as soon as you joined the club things started going horribly wrong. When things go down the drain it would mean that is irreparable, impossible to undo or save. You create a space where you could have continued to improve, and should have, but in the club this did not happen. You seem to be careful of what you are saying, so as to not

be in trouble, but I get the feeling that you wanted to blame someone. Thus, by saying that all the riders were “committed” (line 17) to ride for each other, the impression is made that the club was to blame, and you conveyed your feelings to me without having to say so directly. Even by telling me that you think it is unfair to blame the club, you already sowed the seed for me to look for something you were going to tell me that showed their part in your negative experience.

Your social commitment to other people is once again highlighted with the words you used: “we were all committed to ride for each other” (line 17). This fits with your narrative about cycling and friendship, and even in the bad times, where your cycling experience was negative and undesirable to growth, you still had an underlying narrative that brought you to cycling in the first place!

<p>21 ...cycling was never actually being picked up, we were being blindfolded 22 and riding in the dark...</p>
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Becoming part of the club was to be your big step into the world of professional cycling, or team riding, and it may be translated into the fulfilment of a dream. As a competitive cyclist you wanted to improve, and as you said you did not during your time in the club. By becoming part of a team it certainly means a great deal to any cyclist wanting to reach the top. You may have had an expectation that when you join a team, you would improve even more, and more readily see personal results.

By using the metaphor of being blindfolded, Kate, you may attempt to use a culturally created expression to help us understand how you felt at that stage. Maybe you believed that I would understand what being blindfolded feels like. In the cultural background that we share, some childhood games incorporate being blindfolded and then have someone disorientate you where after you have to go looking for objects or people, or pin something on a target. The idea of being blindfolded gives the feeling of not only being

unable to see anything, thus a vital sense taken away, but being in danger of hurting yourself, as well as being disorientated with one's environment. This disorientation may be the worst because not being able to control your environment is the key to the success of being blindfolded in the game. There may be a link between this disorientation and how you felt while being part of the team at the club. In the same sentence it feels as if you are also creating space for the club to be disorientated towards its surrounding environment, and that by being disorientated too, it cannot help or support the cyclist to get to their feet. Here I think history might have played a big role in how the club was orientated towards its surroundings, and being part of the larger academic institution, historical background may have blindfolded the club into not "seeing" female cyclists in the club.

You were blindfolded into thinking that you would improve while being part of the team in the club. Doesn't society tell us that we have to join the biggest university, biggest club and biggest and strongest teams to succeed in life? When one goes to the biggest university, isn't it therefore actually more difficult to be noticed, to be outstanding, because of the sheer numbers and depth in talent, for example? I would think you are telling me that we get disorientated with information from society, we expect certain things to happen when in a team, when at university, when we get our degrees. But, that this may not be the case. There may be other influences, people or underlying currents that spin us around and make it harder to accomplish our goals, or growth for that matter. These underlying currents may be there for years, and it may take years to challenge and change, and it seems as if your narrative is heading towards a point where you are willing to say that you would rather go back to where cycling was fun and social, than staying in the club and being disorientated by the current.

Yours truly,

Louis

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusions regarding this Study

Through an analysis of the information gathered during the interviews, this study has attempted to look into the experiences of female cyclists at a cycling club in the context of a tertiary educational institution.

It is interesting to look back on this process of reporting on what was a journey that sometimes felt like being an actor in a movie, and sometimes a lost beggar looking for a place to find food and shelter. Such were the extremes during the process, that I believe that I was privileged to experience working on this project, mainly because it gave me a far better understanding of the people and context I was joining. During my interviews with Kate and Sue, I tried to say as little as possible, and was astounded by the way that they told their narratives, in such detail, and with so much effort. I could truly see why these women are top cyclists, their enthusiastic approach to the interviews probably mirrors their dedication towards their sport. This links with the literature study where women's involvement in sport seems to be growing, and women go to great lengths to participate in sport. Even though there were so many factors that informed these women not to compete, they have told narratives about success and determination to be the best, and not only to compete.

The structures of sport at university, in cycling and in society make it very difficult for a female to be successful in sport and work in society (Chappell, 2005, Ginwala, 1995, Hargreaves, 1994, 1997). Sue struggled with the domination of males that were not willing to give way from their position of maleness in the structures where these women were trying to give of themselves to transform and better the representation for women. Kate, who seemed to embrace the role of men in her decision-making process was disillusioned at times by the manner in which things happened that were the opposite of what she maybe expected.

In terms of getting the group together for the focus groups, the determination was not present amongst the cyclists as a group, in contrast with the two participants who narrated their determination to succeed in everything concerning cycling. My attempts to organise the group sessions were all in vain, and my failure to do so shows in similar experiences that Kate and Sue shared with me regarding the group at the cycling club. Both Kate and Sue indicated that they had great expectations for the club, and the hope that they would grow in their sport on an individual level. They seemed to have been disillusioned when they became part of the team, when they realised that they were not fulfilling their own expectations.

The participants narrated their experience using various tools, such as metaphors, humour and sometimes even drawing on my experiences to explain things in a way to make it understandable for me. Both of the participants seemed to create the space for themselves to be credible storytellers by telling their narratives so that they fitted into the academic world, and telling them in such a way that people would know they are part of some structure within this big institution. However, it was clear that neither Kate nor Sue wanted to point a finger at something specific that played a big part in their narratives, namely the problematic parts. They narrated such experiences in ways that made the reader realise that they wanted to explain what was wrong, but did not have the power or confidence to say so. Their experiences have a definitive link to the socialisation of women by society and the rules that have been in existence for hundreds of years. Women were not allowed to speak about what bothered them, they were not allowed in the public domain, this was the man's world (Ginwala, 1995). The author states that women will be able to function as equals in previously male-orientated institutions only when the institutions change from man-shaped to people-shaped. Women are being admitted into distorted systems that have been structured for and by males. Even today it seems wrong to give their thoughts a voice. One would have to wonder why this is the case. Could it be that they are cautious to say too much about the institution or its structures, or could it be they are culturally informed to not speak about what is wrong?

Looking at the chapter that covered the literature on this subject we can see narratives of females playing second fiddle to males on all grounds, be it sport or work.

Being blindfolded by history and culture, we have been informed that certain rules apply to only some people in our society, thus meaning that what is expected from person to person differs. Women have been placed in a certain position by society's patriarchal views, and because these views have succeeded for many years, it is difficult to break from these views. From the literature we saw that women had to rely on themselves to participate in sports (Hargreaves, 1997) and from the narratives of the two participants we can suggest that even though a male was the manager of the team for some time, it was still a female who had to do the organising for the female team, as the manager was preoccupied with the male professional team. There was also seemingly a lot of confusion created by the structure or hierarchy in the club, which caused the participants to narrate this as disorientation and ineffectiveness. It would seem that the structure was indeed not adequately set in place to develop and support females, as they narrate that they felt thrown away when the male professional team started, and that they were blindfolded and rendered helpless in this big environment.

As the context of any study is important, exploring and integrating the findings with the context I am working in is needed. In the case of students in the academic world, one is supposed to fulfil only specific roles, one of them to study hard to become active participants in the economy of the country, and another is not to question higher authority. This is a social discourse that stems from generations of indoctrination. I believe this narrative is being told by the participants, where they are keeping to themselves, and their attempts to engage the system were met with resistance. The students do seem to have more authority in the club structure, being able to fulfil the role of organisers, as Hargreaves (1997) said women normally found themselves doing, but the boundaries still exist between what may be said and done, and what not. I understand this narrative about the structure that houses the cycling club as a preventative measure, a sort of insurance against recklessness, youth and inability. The structures and their existence seem to be far more important than the manager of some club. For years this

structure has survived, and it strives to continue for many more. Thus it seems normal that change will be opposed, as in any other structure, by my guess, from imposing females or males trying to manipulate the system.

Creating narratives about ourselves so that other people can understand who we are, whether male or female, gets influenced by what happens in certain situations, such as when our willingness to contribute to the club or context we find ourselves in is not recognised. Kate and Sue seemed to struggle with a situation where willingness was not rewarded, where knowledge was not a requirement for management procedures, and where females are still seen as less important than males. It would seem as if structures are being put in place, slowly but surely, to help in the integration of not only gender issues that were problematic to society in the past, but also other deep rooted social problems in South Africa, like addressing poverty and unemployment, which according to authors reviewed in the chapter on literature has hit women in South Africa the hardest. Various policies and programs have been implemented in South Africa to address social change for females in everyday life, to name a few: the Reconstruction and Development Programme, the Women and Sport South Africa structure (WASSA), the National Advisory Council for Women and Sport, furthermore the Constitution of South Africa, and in cycling, the Transformation Blueprint and Constitution (Chappell, 2005, Cycling South Africa, 2007, Goslin, 2006). It is interesting to note that according to Chappell (2005) the WASSA is hardly functioning because the original members are not part of the structure anymore and the new replacements have not been helpful in the structure's cause. This is unfortunate because structures like these would need to be continued and supported to help the cause of females in sport.

This particular sports context, a tertiary institution, being at the forefront of sport in the country, is a good place to start, and by having the opportunity to tell of their experiences, women have once again shown that a female's place in society and culture is changing, from historically being discriminated against, to being better accommodated.

However, it is obvious to see from the data and analysis that the participants in this study did not feel they were being treated fairly, and that women were still being treated as less equal than their male counterparts. From both the participants we learned that they felt that the male managers appointed to help them did not have the ability to do so, but neither said that a female could have done a better job, once again linking to my thoughts of playing it safe and not saying something that could get one into trouble. Hargreaves (1997) is quoted as saying:

They [women] are also very aware of the problems of men controlling and coaching women's sports; that because men hold the top positions in almost all organizations, they do not only make major decisions which affects the ways in which women can function, but they can also filter information through to women's groups in the amount and form they prefer (p.201).

I keep on wondering why a male was always the manager of the team, as I would have expected a female to be better attuned to the needs of the female team. From the literature study we saw that females' roles in management were normally close to the athletes, namely managers, co-ordinators and officials, but rarely higher in the sporting structure Hargreaves (1997). Why was it different in this sporting environment? Was it because there has always been a bigger contingent of males in the club, that the managers were male by accident or because they were already involved with management within the structure? I would say after exploring the narratives of the participants that there was no choice of management. The managers were already part of the structure which the cycling club was part of, and the female cyclists did not at that stage have enough interest in the management of the club. This has been narrated by the respondents, one who had to compete and manage a part of the female cycling team, and the other who offered her services but whose help was not accepted. The females were seemingly left to organise themselves during the week, but race day they were placed in the 'care' of a male manager, who had other responsibilities, a professional men's team. We can understand from the narratives told that problems like these made it difficult for the women's team to form a bond, with Sue being the organiser and rider, the other rider's often blamed her for



things not working out (according to Kate). This in turn led to the team disbanding, or falling apart, during the season, which is very uncommon in cycling teams.

When a person goes to university, I would suppose that they expect that their new life experiences will have a changing effect on their lives. This might be visible when the participants tell narratives of being part of the cycling club before and then after they joined the club. This would show the readers that being part of the cycling club has had an effect on how they see themselves, as persons, as students and as cyclists. There being a definite difference between before and after their contact with the club, warrants this study to be meaningful, because we can see that exploring the experiences of people in this context alters their life narratives, and the way they tell them. In contrast to this we learned from the literature review that women were now supposedly receiving more freedom from the structures they reside in, but that little has changed in the course of time. Historically women were struggling for their place in sport, and even after changes in South Africa, political and social, very little seems to have changed. The expectation was narrated that life narratives would alter, but I would be cautious to say that the extent to which such narratives became what was hoped for was not achieved.

By following a method of analysis that has been used by numerous researchers in the field of narrative analysis, that of Riessman (1993), I have ensured that the method used is trustworthy and conforms to other research done meaning it is comparable to other research. To ensure that the study is authentic I did a literature review with the help of the Academic Information Service of the University of Pretoria, the internet and various private communications. The results were interpreted, again with the help of Riessman (1993), and I tried my very best to analyse the data or narratives in such a way that the participant who shared the experience with me could still say that the narrative was her own! This was very difficult because it is easy to impose on a narrative being told, and change it so that it fits my description of cycling in a club. However, by putting structures in place to assist me, like the use of a reliable method, employing a co-researcher and having a supervisor guide my analysis, I feel confident to say that the research was done in an acceptable and authentic manner.

Finally, I would like to remark on the different ways Kate and Sue approached this research. Sue's willingness to explore her experiences at the club might be due to various factors, some of which may be because she was part of the club in a variety of different roles, and that these roles influenced her life narrative so much that she had no problem in sharing these. Kate on the other hand spoke a lot more about her personal narrative of cycling and being a cyclist, and had to be given time to tell of her cycling club experiences. I have arrived at an idea that maybe Kate was not part of the structure long enough, or involved enough, to feel confident to tell her narratives in such a way. She felt confident to tell about her personal experience in cycling, and then to compare this with her cycling club experience, as this would in a way seemingly create space for her to speak with relative authority and knowledge.

## 5.2 Recommendations and limitations of this Study

It is recommended that this and other tertiary institutions will use this study to assist them in beginning to write a narrative about females in sport where their voices are heard, and their willingness to be part of the structure be accepted. The aim of the research was clearly not to seek answers to any problematic features, nor was its aim to show the good aspects of the institution and club to build upon. These must be looked at in the future, by doing a thorough investigation into the finer details, because incorporating these into future planning and discussion will have a major effect on how females at sporting clubs will narrate their experiences.

It was my aim from the start to gather data by means of focus groups, but unfortunately it was not possible, and narratives that surfaced from this study showed as to why this was so difficult to achieve. If I had the chance to do this study again I would definitely do all that is possible to gather data by means of focus groups, as I do think that the experiences would be narrated in such a different way that more themes would be aired, and that amazing narratives would be co-authored, adding to the quality of the research. I would

suggest a group of about four to six women that are contracted to be part of the research to the end.

I do think that having only two participants and only interviewing them once each did not do the study and topic justice. I would recommend that at least two interviews be held, with a discussion group, or reflection team with peers in between the session, so that the second session starts with feedback from the first session, done by the researcher. However, I would be cautious in drawing the process out for too long, for example a lot of interviews, as it seem to diminish the interest and receptivity of the athletes that give of their time for free. It would probably work better in a controlled environment, say a sports academy, where the athletes are contracted to participate in the research.

Another recommendation would certainly be that future research should incorporate data and analysis from other universities, also looking into the experiences of females. This would give an indication of whether certain aspects of sport clubs exist in different places and environments, or if they are specific to a certain club. In the same way, can clubs in any form be compared, explored and narrated. I would recommend having focus groups with females from different sports clubs at this university, for example the athletics club, the hockey club and the tennis club. From this, the researcher will get a better understanding of how the institution is experienced by female athletes, which could be helpful in future decision making and planning at club level.

It would be interesting to have a female researcher doing the study instead of a male, as it would probably also ensure that the narratives being told would be different. Although I incorporated a female intern psychologist to assist during the interviews, I believe that being male I had an influence on the process, although I would like to believe I took precautions to minimise the effect that I had on the process. Also adding that from literature in the field, it was suggested that most studies about females were done by females, thus getting more male researchers involved would make the academic literature about research on females more credible. I would add to the idea of male/female

researchers having more data to compare, as this would further enhance the quality of research and enable female athletes to have a voice.

By following up on this research later, the researcher will have the opportunity to compare narratives and analysis thereof. By exploring the narratives of these two participants in a different context, we can compare how their narratives are influenced and authored, keeping in mind that narratives change over time and in different contexts and situations.

Lastly, doing the research from a different epistemology, such as quantitative research, would probably make the study more acceptable to the sports and academic world, as it is still the preferred way of doing research in these fields, as it contains statistical data that can be easily understood and used. This would entail using more participants, making it possible for the study to be more generalised to the student population. Because the participants come from a sporting world, and this world has been built mainly on quantitative research, I do believe that every qualitative research project adds value, as it gives the academic body of knowledge that extra dimension to explore and work from.

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## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX A

#### LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE AS RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I, .....

Hereby acknowledge that I have been informed of the content and the procedure of the research being conducted by Louis Jan van der Berg, at the University of Pretoria. I understand that all information will be treated as confidential and that no data will be shared outside of the research context. The research context consists of the researcher, a co-facilitator, a supervising psychologist, an external evaluator and UP. I understand the goals of the research and have been informed that I will have access to the final product of this research, if I choose so. The researcher may publish for academic purposes.

I indemnify the University of Pretoria, as well as the researcher and others involved in the research process of all claims and injuries that may occur at any stage during the course of the research.

This document was signed on this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ at

\_\_\_\_\_.

ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX B

### **INFORMATIONAL LETTER ON RESEARCH BEING CONDUCTED BY LOUIS VAN DER BERG**

#### THE RESEARCH GOAL:

The research is interested to find out how female cyclists experience being part of a cycling club within a tertiary organisation.

#### RESEARCH METHOD:

Focus group research (Interviews) using narrative analysis methodology.

Estimated three (3) to five (5) focus groups of approx. one-and-a-half-hour each.

Data will be collected by means of video and audio recording, probably using a sound engineer from the department of Telematics, at the University of Pretoria.

#### RELEVANCE OF STUDY:

To gain insight into how people experience sport, organisations, others and themselves in a specific context, in order to get a better understanding of people and how they relate to their environment.

#### WHAT IS REQUIRED FROM THE PARTICIPANTS?

Open mindedness, willingness to have a group conversation about experience, and to be able to share your experiences with others.

I have read and understood the scope of the research, and have asked the researcher to explain any query that I may have that may influence my willingness to cooperate fully in this study.

I therefore acknowledge the receipt of the **informational letter on research**, and the **letter of acceptance as research participant**, that I understand them and have no objections to be involved with the research.

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_

On the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ at

\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature