

**The Influence of Socio-Cultural Expectations on the Construction of a Female
Afrikaner Teacher's Identity**

by

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Supervisor: Dr Yolandi Woest

JULY 2024

Declaration

I declare that the /thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree Philosophiae Doctor at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.



.....

Mické van der Westhuizen

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The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained the applicable research ethics approval for the research described in this work. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of Ethics for Researchers and the policy guidelines for responsible research.

Dedication

I dedicate this research to the Afrikaner women who have influenced who I am.

I am forever grateful for the love and support of Chrisna, Magda, Annemarie, Elaine, Hanneke, Carmen, and all the other remarkable women who have played a significant role in my life. I dedicate this academic journey to you. Your unwavering strength, determination, and resilience have inspired me to become the person I am today. Your teachings, guidance, and love have shaped my character and instilled in me a passion for learning.

Through your examples, you have shown me the importance of perseverance and the power of hard work. You have taught me to value my education, pursue my dreams, and never give up on myself. I carry your legacy with me and strive to make you proud every day.

Thank you for being my role models, confidants, and inspirations. This academic achievement is as much yours as it is mine.



*Dear Sir or Madam
Will you read my book?
It took me years to write,
Will you take a look?*

*~ Paperback Writer, recorded by The Beatles
(written by McCartney & Lennon, 1966)*

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Abstract

This autoethnographic study aimed to explore the influence of socio-cultural expectations on the identity construction of a female Afrikaner teacher. I share my personal experiences and challenges faced in pursuing higher education and career achievement as a woman in a society that often defines a woman's role by her role in the family. The conceptual framework in this study consisted of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), integrated with the social role theory (Eagly, 1997) and feminism as the metatheory.

I explored existing literature on socio-cultural expectations, the establishment of Afrikaner culture and identity, as well as female teachers. I also discussed the impact of gender norms and expectations on the emotional well-being of individuals in patriarchal societies. The challenges faced by Afrikaner women in terms of limited opportunities and family commitments are highlighted. The study also explored the intersection of gender and identity in the context of female teacher identity, noting that schools are often seen as feminised environments.

My autoethnography was in the form of a narrative and represented my personal lived experiences in a particular social and cultural context. This study narrated my experiences of Afrikaner socio-cultural expectations on my personal life and career aspirations, within the context of the female teacher identity. As this study was conducted using an autoethnographic approach, I was the primary participant in obtaining data for analysis. Data were gathered by writing my narrative vignettes, and the neologism of lyricvignette was introduced. The following methods were used to help guide my narrative: self-interview and memory work, critical conversations with others as co-constructors of knowledge (memory sharing with others) and consulting personal journal entries. The data gathered from my lyricvignettes (a neologism generated for this research study) were analysed using thematic data analysis.

The findings included the socio-cultural expectations of religion on my Afrikaner identity, as well as the socio-cultural expectations which I experienced as a female Afrikaner teacher. The insight gained from this study will be used to inform further research on female Afrikaner identities and female teacher identities and add to the literature on the socio-cultural expectations of female teachers.

Key Terms:

Socio-cultural expectations, Afrikaner identity, female Afrikaner, female teacher identity, lyric vignette.

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List of Abbreviations

AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission
CD	Compact disk
DJ	Disk Jockey
FET	Further Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
LP	Long-playing
NATU	National Teachers Union
NSC	National Senior Certificate
REQV	Relative Education Qualification Values
UNISA	University of South Africa

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CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH FOCUS



Well, hello, world
Hope you're listening
Forgive me if I'm young
For speaking out of turn

~ Come Home, recorded by OneRepublic
*(written by Tedder, 2008)*¹

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As a teacher, my favourite part of the day is when I sit in the staffroom before the school day begins. Many conversations between colleagues have occurred in these quiet moments – some superficial, some deep and meaningful. The “early coffee group”, as we refer to ourselves, consists of three ladies close to retirement, a middle-aged man, and a man approximately my age (in his thirties). We are all White, Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaners but the levels of our posts at the school are different. On one of these mornings the topic of family was discussed, and the following conversation transpired between me and an elderly female colleague:

Kollega:	Wanneer gaan jy nou kinders kry? Jy word nou oud, nè.
Ek:	Ek wil eers my PhD klaar maak en dan gaan ons met 'n familie begin.
Kollega:	Maar hoekom swot jy nog? Jy's net 'n onderwyser, jy weet jy gaan nie meer geld kry nie.
Ek:	Ek weet ... dis 'n persoonlike doelwit van my, 'n lewensdroom.
Kollega:	Jy's 'n vrou, jy moet na die huis omsien! As jy nie jou huishoudelike pligte na om en kinders kry nie, gaan jou man jou verwyte en los.
Ek:	...

¹ To allow a truly immersive understanding of my chosen songs that are part of my research study, I have created a playlist with the referenced songs as used in this research study (see Annexure A for the list of songs and details to access the playlist on the Spotify website or mobile application).

Translation:

Colleague:	When are you having children? You are getting old!
Me:	I first want to finish my PhD, then we'll start a family.
Colleague:	But why do you pursue further studies? You're just a teacher, you won't get more money.
Me:	I know ... it is a personal goal I wish to achieve.
Colleague:	You're a woman, you're supposed to take care of the house! Your husband will resent you if you don't take care of your household duties and give him children.
Me:	...

How does a person answer questions like these? From personal experience, I have discerned that detailed explanations of your future plans are expected, or the other person (in this case, an Afrikaner colleague) will look at you with either judgement, remorse, or awe. The past few years have shown me the extent to which people in my life – family, friends, colleagues – critically comment on my life choices where career and family are concerned. From these interactions, I have occasionally felt judged by others based on an understanding that my decisions about the future do not fit into their idealistic perspective of a perfect life. A select few have truly respected and admired my “guts” to follow my life’s blueprint.

People in general have preconceived notions about how things are (or should be) in the world, including social norms and expectations (Bicchieri, 2018). Certain social norms and expectations are aligned with the female gender and include the challenges of pursuing higher education and career achievement (Alabi et al., 2019). These perceptions of societal norms and expectations become problematic when you want to excel in your career as a teacher; for example, applying for educational leadership roles such as a head of department, deputy principal, or principal. Even though 40 per cent of the adult female population is employed in the workforce, the role of a woman is often defined by her role in the family, while the role of a man is usually seen as the protector and provider (Napikoski, 2020). According to this type of perceived socio-cultural expectation, I have experienced that, as a woman, you either work on building your career or building a family, and pursuing the latter option is more acceptable in Afrikaner culture.

Socio-cultural expectations are behavioural, and cognitive standards or expectations are based on common ideas within a certain culture or social group (Bicchieri, 2018). They also guide behaviour amongst members of the group (Cole, 2018). I was on the

receiving end of many opinions and perceived socio-cultural expectations during various stages of my life. My cultural and social group encompasses young, Afrikaner female teachers. To elaborate, I am 33 years of age, married, and have chosen to pursue my studies rather than start a family. This contradicts the shared beliefs in my culture and social group and has resulted in a bombardment of questions from colleagues, family, and peers over the last 10 years. Interrogation of my life choices has led me to wonder: Am I really *that* different from the norm? Who made up these “rules” to begin with, and why does society expect me to follow these rules religiously?

As Tedder (2008) wrote in the song “Come Home”, young people often feel that they must apologise for speaking out and sharing their realities. I would like to speak out and share my story now – without apologies or conditions. Hence, this study narrates my experiences of Afrikaner socio-cultural expectations on my personal life and career aspirations within the context of a female teacher identity.

Despite the autobiographical narrative of this study, it is tightly related to the society it inhabits, thus making it autoethnographic. Accordingly, following an autoethnographic approach, I elaborated on my lived experiences of perceived socio-cultural expectations using a narrative structure to convey my experiences within a specific social and cultural milieu (Mlangeni, 2020). Thus, during the course of my research, I endeavoured to comprehend the influence of socio-cultural expectations on the construction of the identity of a female Afrikaner teacher – me.

This chapter starts with the background and context of my study. It is followed by the focus and purpose and the research questions. Then I present the research design and research methodology. Finally, the trustworthiness and possible limitations are discussed.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

For many years, women’s and girls’ experiences and viewpoints were removed from social theory and the social sciences (Crossman, 2020). As a result, feminist philosophy has concentrated on women’s relationships and experiences in society (Crossman, 2020). In 2017, Hillary Clinton was quoted at a conference for professional businesswomen as saying, “Advancing the rights and opportunities of women and girls is the great unfinished business of the 21st century” (Abramson, 2017). For this

reason, I think it is imperative to share my experiences as an Afrikaner female teacher and the perceived roles that society expects me to fulfil.

To understand these experiences completely, I provide a brief background on the relevant concepts which informed my study. First, I outline the context for the socio-cultural structures and social norms that exist today and offer a few instances of social norms and interactions from my personal experience. Secondly, I provide a brief explanation of Afrikaner identity and certain social structures that pertain to the Afrikaner culture. Thirdly, I focus on identity construction by means of gendered identity formation and female teacher identity.

Different social structures can be found the world over. They can be defined as the way in which society is held together by organised social patterns and relationships (Crossman, 2019). Individuals comply with social structures because they feel that most people in their reference group either think they should conform to them (normative expectations) or act as a norm (empirical expectations) (Bicchieri, 2018). Therefore, a social structure is a product of, and directly determines, social interactions (Crossman, 2019).

Social structures are built and maintained by social norms. These can be small social interactions, like saying “bless you” when someone sneezes or shaking someone’s hand when you greet them. These structures include interactions that are seen as the norm in social settings. Social norms create social order, giving us the guidelines of behaviour that we most often follow (Raskoff, 2016). Thus, social order consists of social norms that build a certain society and its social structure.

Social norms refer to the implicit guidelines governing views, attitudes, and actions that are deemed socially acceptable within a certain social framework (Mcleod, 2023). Certain Afrikaner norms are linked to being a woman, such as always looking clean and presentable, crossing your legs when you sit, and making sure your household duties are completed. Other norms that are part of being an Afrikaner include the men braaiing the meat while the women make the side dishes, or always greeting an older person with the correct title – it is not uncommon to hear young Afrikaners call their elders oom (uncle) or tannie (aunt), even when they are unrelated to each other. I have experienced certain norms that are also directly linked to being a female teacher;

for example, disciplinary problems can only be handled by consulting a male colleague. For this study, Afrikaner refers to White, Afrikaans-speaking people (see 1.7 Concept clarification, p. 11).

The roots of Afrikaner identity lie in race, religion, and nationalism (Kotze, 2013). South Africa is still confronting many trials related to racial identity, relationships between persons of different races, class struggles, and gender inequality (Stander & Forster, 2019). The concept of “the Afrikaner” emerged during the first decades of the 20th century, originating from the interaction between White British colonialists and indigenous Black individuals (Van der Westhuizen, 2016). This dominant identity was associated with apartheid and emerged as a result of Afrikaner nationalism, which forced its constructed community known as “the volk” onto a nation-state defined by territorial boundaries (Van der Westhuizen, 2016). The establishment of the Afrikaner identity story and awareness occurred during the 1930s and 1940s, as noted by Viljoen (2021).

The emotional well-being of individuals in patriarchal countries such as South Africa is significantly influenced by gender norms (Boersema, 2013). Historically, many Afrikaner women were denied employment due to the prevailing conservative views on the role of women in society (Sekatane, 2018). During the patriarchy and hegemony of Afrikaner nationalism, masculinity played a predominant role (Boersema, 2013). Afrikaner women’s aspirations and opportunities were especially limited by banks’ policies that did not allow married women to obtain loans or open accounts without their husbands’ consent (Sekatane, 2018). While the empowerment of Afrikaner women has progressed since 1994, they still encounter limitations, including family commitments, that their male counterparts do not face (Sekatane, 2018).

The idea of women having to fill a certain identity is not unique to Afrikaner culture. In an article in *The Guardian* (a British newspaper), Sarah Marsh wrote, “For so long, I had fitted into everyone else’s idea of who I should be, and I was so afraid of breaking that image, but it was making me miserable” (Marsh, 2016, p. 4). I agree with Sarah on that note – to fulfil someone else’s idea of who you should be, only represses your own goals for your life. There are certain perceived expectations that society wants you to believe you should follow, especially when it comes to Afrikaner culture and more so if you are a female teacher.

The challenges pertaining to Afrikaner identity have been linked to problems around gender as well (Boersema, 2013). Identities and spaces are interrelated; people believe that they “belong” in certain spaces; for example, women belong in the kitchen and not in the workshop, and, consequently, female teachers are believed to belong in Foundation Phase teaching and academic-cultural roles rather than as disciplinarians (Jacklin, 2001). According to Boersema (2013), gender encompasses not only a collection of distinguishing attributes between men and women but also a repertoire of behaviours that individuals engage in to express their gender identities. The concept of gendered identity is characterised by individuals actively engaging in its construction and performance, rather than it being an inherent attribute (Ruan & Zheng, 2019).

Female teacher identity construction is similarly influenced by gender characteristics; it is based on actions rather than qualities. Schools have been commonly characterised as feminised environments (Ruan & Zheng, 2019). Thus, female teachers have generally identified themselves with certain feminine characteristics. Women, for example, are perceived as carers rather than commissioners, and identities are built at the level of both ideas and meaning (for instance, women hold lower places in the education hierarchy) and at the level of social practice (Jacklin, 2001).

1.3 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION

The effect of socio-cultural expectations on the construction of my female Afrikaner teacher identity is the purpose of this study. In this section, I discuss my rationale and motivation from personal, professional, intellectual, and scholarly perspectives.

1.3.1 Personal motivation

At the various schools where I have been employed, I have experienced the phenomenon of socio-cultural expectations. White female teachers were employed at these schools, where Afrikaans was the main language of learning and teaching.

Prior to joining a school, as a young student teacher in a long-term relationship, I received many questions about when I was going to get married. During those student years, a close colleague confronted my partner and stated, “Mické won’t wait forever

to get engaged,” even though she was aware of our plans. When we eventually married, the subsequent questions were about when we would be buying a house and starting a family. The first day after we returned from our honeymoon, a colleague questioned our family planning plans.

In my professional environment, this topic was brought up at least every few months – especially when another colleague became pregnant. Similarly, almost every family gathering would entertain a discussion about family planning. This became the annual Christmas theme. My father told me, “From next Christmas, you are only getting diapers as presents.” This was clearly meant as a light-hearted tease, but I cannot help but think that there was some hidden message behind the statement.

I was taught from a young age by my mother that the man must provide financial stability and the woman must take care of the household. What I have experienced is that the colleagues and family who questioned me most about my family planning were predominately married women who had husbands, who were the breadwinners – their interpretation of a “perfect life”. The realisation of this phenomenon was what personally motivated me to explore this topic.

My positionality in this research study was as a female in her young thirties, in a heterosexual marriage. Being born female and identifying as female in a heterosexual relationship frequently brings both societal benefits and disadvantages. While heterosexual privilege provides certain benefits, such as cultural acceptability and legal acknowledgement of the partnership (Herek, 2009), it also places women in historically subservient positions within patriarchal frameworks, limiting their autonomy and access to resources (Connell, 1987). Furthermore, gender norms and expectations in heterosexual partnerships might reinforce conventional roles and duties, thus restricting women's prospects for personal and professional development (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Thus, while heterosexual privilege may give certain benefits, it is critical to recognise and address the structural disadvantages that women, particularly heterosexual women, continue to experience.

1.3.2 Professional motivation

One profound experience I had was the day that I had five interviews for a teaching post, and, in every single interview, the interview panel questioned me about our family

planning. Of the five interview panels that I encountered, only two panels included a female teacher. When I answered that I was currently focusing on my studies, I could clearly see the relief on their faces. One deputy principal even laughed out loud and answered, “Thank goodness!”

I understand that family planning influences schools with regard to maternity leave – a woman is on leave for four months compared to a man’s seven days. This has an immense influence on strategic planning, especially in the teaching sector, as someone is physically needed in class and needs to be paid. For that reason, the question is more likely to be asked to women than men, and justifiably for said planning purposes. However, I felt that it should not have influenced whether I would be appointed. Should that question even be part of a first-round interview process? Is a female Afrikaner teacher expected to divulge her private family planning the first time she encounters potential employers?

From a professional standpoint, this study assisted me in understanding the construction of my female teaching identity and the influence of Afrikaner socio-cultural expectations on my identity construction. I engaged with this knowledge to understand myself better and I implemented the necessary changes to be an improved professional teacher.

Intrinsic motivation is seen as a significant phenomenon in education (Templeton, 2016) because it is linked with learning and accomplishment, resulting in high-quality learning and creativity. I was also intrinsically motivated to complete this research study to gain the necessary skills to conduct research, write, and produce scholarly articles. These skills may provide me with opportunities for different professional career paths in the future.

1.3.3 Conceptual motivation

My experiences have had a significant impact on the construction of my female teacher identity, that is, how I see myself as a female teacher. Identities are created from the different connotations that people attach to different genders, races, classes, and so on, as well as from their society’s organisation and expectations (Acadia, 2018). In a series of books written and published by Van der Merwe and Albertyn titled *Die Vrou* (1973), they elaborate on how to be the “perfect” Afrikaner woman. Some of

the chapters were penned by women, but the majority were written by male authors, with the editors, namely Van der Merwe and Albertyn, both being males. It was overwhelming to think that a book that was supposed to instruct me on how to be the perfect Afrikaner woman was written and published by men.

Discovering the books by Albertyn and Van der Merwe intertwined with my experiences as a female Afrikaner teacher motivated me to conceptually delve deeper into the phenomenon of Afrikaner social roles and the construction of female teacher identity. I wanted to examine my experiences, but also to associate them with literature from other female and Afrikaner scholars. By connecting my experiences with the existing literature, I was able to deduce whether this phenomenon had merit for further research and if sufficient relevant literature on the topic was available. There are many facets to the construction of a teacher's identity, especially to constructing a female Afrikaner teacher's identity, and this research adds to this conceptual phenomenon.

1.3.4 Scholarly motivation

My scholarly motivation was that this study could be used as part of a larger body of knowledge on teacher identity and, more specifically, female teacher identity. Also, I employed intersectionality integrated with social role theory and feminism as the metatheory, which, in turn, may add to the existing literature on these paradigmatic perspectives.

While there has been extensive research on intersectionality and social role theory separately, there is still room for further exploration of their integration, particularly in conjunction with a feminist metatheory (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Grezcko, 2022). Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), social role theory (Eagly, 1997), and feminism are all frameworks that have been used to understand social phenomena and inequality (Crossman, 2020). However, the integration of these frameworks in research is not yet widespread. This gap in the research presented me with an opportunity to explore how these frameworks could be used together to provide a more comprehensive understanding of socio-cultural expectations and their implications for the construction of a female Afrikaner teacher's identity.

A review of the literature provided research on Indian women (Arafat et al., 2021), African women (Alabi et al., 2019; Micklesfield et al., 2013; Posel & Rudwick, 2013), and socio-cultural expectations in an organisation (Singh & Dutch, 2014). Partial research was available on socio-cultural expectations specifically linked to the construction of a female Afrikaner teacher's identity (Alabi et al., 2019; Rauch, 2020; Stander & Forster, 2019), a concept which was at the centre of this study.

This study employed autoethnography as the research method. One way in which autoethnography can add to academic research is by providing a more nuanced understanding of a phenomenon, in this case the identity construction of a female Afrikaner teacher. Autoethnography can provide insight into the lived experiences of individuals from underrepresented communities that may not be captured through traditional research methods (Anderson, 2006). This can be particularly important for research that seeks to explore the intersection of multiple identities, such as race, gender, and class (Syed, 2010). In addition, research that employs autoethnography can contribute to the development of new theoretical frameworks that better capture the experiences of individuals from underrepresented communities (Ellis et al., 2011).

1.4 FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The focus of this autoethnographic study was to explore the influence of socio-cultural expectations on the construction of a female Afrikaner teacher's identity. This study was driven by the exploration of how the personal and professional contexts (being an Afrikaner and a teacher) influenced and constructed my composition of self (my female teaching identity), and how my personal life has responded and reacted to or resisted these contexts (Pourreau, 2014).

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to understand the identity construction of a female Afrikaner teacher's identity and the influence of socio-cultural expectations on her identity construction.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION

My research questions were informed by the rationale and motivation as well as the focus and purpose of my study. As my study focused on my experiences as a female Afrikaner teacher within certain socio-cultural expectations, I made the following research questions central to my research:

- How did I experience socio-cultural expectations as a female Afrikaner teacher?
- Why did I experience this in the way that I did?
- In which ways did my experiences influence the construction of my female teacher identity?

1.7 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

In this section, I introduce and clarify the key concepts that formed part of this study.

1.7.1 Socio-cultural expectations

Socio-cultural norms and expectations are the unique spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional regulations that define a society or social group (Singh & Dutch, 2014). Cole (2018) considers socio-cultural norms to be social facts and interactions that occur in society, independent of individuals, and shaping our thoughts and behaviour. Considering the focus of my study, I agree with Cole's view that socio-cultural expectations are social norms that are accepted as rules and facts in certain settings and that individuals act according to the set rules and facts (Cole, 2018). My positionality on why I agree that socio-cultural expectations are equal to social norms, are elaborated on in Chapter 2, section 2.1.

1.7.2 Afrikaner identity

According to Sonnekus (2020), an Afrikaner is a White South African whose native language is Afrikaans. For the purposes of this research study, I concur with this definition. Afrikaner identity is formed by consumption – by consuming Afrikaner culture, individuals become Afrikaners (Van der Westhuizen, 2016). Apartheid government policies depended on the manipulation of the understanding of identity and locality as well as by organising society and space within these understandings (Jacklin, 2001). In a comprehensive context, the Afrikaner may be seen as possessing

an identity that imbues its race, class, and gender with a distinctiveness derived from a malleable and politically influential categorisation of ethnicity (Van der Westhuizen, 2016).

1.7.3 Female teacher identity

The construction of teacher identities is contingent upon their position within a comprehensive framework of lifelong education and training (Jacklin, 2001). Female educators demonstrate their capacity to manage the balance between their professional responsibilities and personal lives, while also shaping their various identities, which encompass both their professional and gender identities, resulting in their identification as female instructors. This process is achieved via actively positioning themselves and engaging in dynamic interactions with their surroundings (Ruan & Zheng, 2019). Individuals utilise these identities to construct their self-perception within the framework of culturally ascribed feminine and masculine connotations associated with women and men, thereby influencing their thoughts and behaviours in alignment with these gendered facets of their identity (Rasmussen, 2019). As it pertains to this study, I support the position of Jacklin (2001) that a teacher's identity is constructed by their role in the school system. Furthermore, there is sustenance in Rasmussen's (2019) position that individuals' identities are also constructed by cultural meanings of gender; this clarification assists in linking socio-cultural expectations and identity for this study.

1.7.4 Autoethnography

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method where the researcher uses self-reflection and personal experience as primary data to explore cultural and social phenomena. This approach allows the researcher to examine their own life and context as a means to understand broader cultural themes, often blending autobiography with ethnographic methods (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). It aims to connect personal narratives with larger societal issues, offering a nuanced perspective on cultural practices and identities (Chang, 2008).

1.7.5 Lyricovignette

Lyricovignette, a neologism created from this research study's development, refers to the harmonious union of narrative depth and lyrical resonance, providing a versatile platform for artists to craft emotionally charged and immersive works that resonate with readers through both words and music. It is an emerging form of artistic expression, offering a fresh perspective on the synthesis of storytelling and songwriting. This neologism combines "lyric," referring to song lyrics, and "vignettes," which are brief, evocative narratives or descriptions. As this term is newly introduced in this research study, there are no existing references on this concept in current literature.

1.7.6 Whiteness

The concept of the White race has been shaped and established by individuals of a specific socioeconomic, ethnic, and geographical background, who have influenced the process of determining who is included or excluded from the category of whiteness (Steyn & Conway, 2010). The concept of whiteness encompasses a hegemonic framework that aims to uphold specific dominant notions about the allocation of power and privilege. With respect to the objectives of this research study, I acknowledge the validity of the concepts proposed by Steyn and Conway (2010). The perpetuation of whiteness within cultures is upheld by power dynamics that operate across several domains, such as language, religion, social class, racial relations, sexual orientation, and other related factors (Carter et al., 2007). The concept of whiteness may be seen as the outcome of a legal and political framework that has been instrumental in the establishment of a racial hierarchy, wherein those identified as White occupy the highest position within colonised nations like Australia, South Africa, and the United States (Coleman et al., 2021).

For the purpose of this study, the decision to write "White" with a capital letter, as opposed to a lower-case letter, is a matter of evolving language conventions and a reflection of changing societal attitudes toward racial terminology (Kendi, 2020). The use of the word White to refer to race is a linguistic choice that has gained popularity in contemporary discourse. Proponents of capitalising the word White believe that it acknowledges the historical, cultural, and social significance of this racial category in

the same way that capitalising Black or African American does (Bonilla-silva, 2017). This capitalisation emphasises the concept that White can refer to a unique cultural group that includes people of all nationalities and origins (Wiegand, 2013). By capitalising White, I hope to achieve a more fair and equal use of racial categories in the language and discourse within this study. This capitalisation also emphasises the significance of identifying the impact that whiteness has had in constructing societies and identities (Hale, 2020). It is important to note that these linguistic choices may vary and evolve over time, reflecting ongoing dialogues surrounding race and identity.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH PARADIGM

The researcher's philosophical assumption is what forms the research paradigm (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Rehman and Alharthi (2016) propose that the research paradigm inherently elucidates our understanding of the external reality, referred to as ontology, as well as our knowledge of the universe, known as epistemology. Therefore, the research paradigm plays a crucial role in shaping the way we generate novel insights pertaining to both individuals and society as a whole. In this section, I explain the paradigmatic perspectives that were employed in my research study.

My study, which is underpinned by an interpretivist epistemological paradigm (Weber, 1949), employed intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) integrated with social role theory (Eagly, 1997) and feminism as the metatheory as the conceptual framework. According to Eagly and Wood (2012), social role theory provides a framework for comprehending the persistence and evolution of gender roles and the resulting behavioural disparities across genders. This integration facilitates the acknowledgement that the overlapping social identities of race, gender, and class manifest themselves in various circumstances (Syed, 2010).

Certain feminist ideas offer insights into the disparities between women's experiences and social positioning in comparison to men's (Crossman, 2020). Cultural feminists examine the distinct values associated with womanhood and femininity as contributing factors to the divergent social experiences of men and women (Crossman, 2020). Feminism metatheory was adequate for this study, as it looks at the socio-cultural expectations that I experienced as a woman, and how I engaged with those experiences.

According to Cohen et al. (2007), an ontological assumption posits that social reality may be comprehended either by adopting an external perspective or by interpreting it through language and individual awareness. These two positions can be classified as the realist or nominalist stance. This study used a nominalist perspective, which refers to the significance of participants' internal and subjective experiences (Maree, 2019). Thus, my lived experiences as a female Afrikaner teacher were viewed as significant. The influence of socio-cultural expectations on my female Afrikaner teacher identity construction was seen as an internal understanding that I faced.

For this study, I used the interpretive epistemological paradigm. In doing so, I explored my lived experiences as a female Afrikaner teacher and tried to understand what influence perceived socio-cultural expectations had on my female Afrikaner teaching identity. The interpretive paradigm is subjective, therefore, I, as the interpretive researcher, was the primary instrument in conducting, collecting, and analysing the data (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

1.9 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Intersectionality, a concept that emerged in the late 1980s, serves as a means of comprehending the interconnected forms of societal oppression faced by marginalised groups (Syed, 2010). It also directs attention to the complexities of diversity and the shared experiences within the context of efforts to combat discrimination and advance social movements (Cho et al., 2013).

The experience of femininity and the intersecting forms of oppression that women face can vary significantly depending on the individual and the specific social, cultural, and historical circumstances in which they exist. It is important to recognise that what may be considered oppressive in one context might be perceived as a privilege in another (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). I was able to acquire a more nuanced understanding of identities by incorporating another existing theory, in this instance social role theory, into the intersectionality framework (Syed, 2010). The incorporation of social role theory and intersectionality aided me in understanding how intersecting social identities of race (Afrikaner) and gender (female instructors) become apparent in various circumstances (Syed, 2010).

The rise of feminism is perfectly consistent with social role theory, which holds that women's shifting vocational positions should result in a revised female gender role that reflects modern-day women's productive employment (Eagly, 1997). Social role theory provides a framework for understanding both the stability and evolution of gender roles, as well as the accompanying behavioural gender disparities (Eagly & Wood, 2012). This theory helped me to understand the social roles that I experienced as a woman and an Afrikaner and to explore how I engaged, accepted, or changed certain socio-cultural expectations.

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Autoethnography is a qualitative research approach that integrates the methodologies of autobiography and ethnography (Livesey & Runsen, 2018). Various methodologies for engaging with autoethnography are employed, with varying emphases placed on the components of auto- (self), ethno- (cultural connection), and -graphy (research process). Different instances of autoethnography are situated at different points along the spectrum of each of these three elements (Adams et al., 2021) (see Chapter 3). The differences in autoethnography can be simplified by looking at the framework in which the research is conducted, the importance of a position of power in a relationship, the emphasis the authors place on the researcher and collaboration with others, and finally the extent to which traditional analysis is used (Ellis et al., 2011). As researchers strive to obtain respect for the body of work itself rather than the study subject, autoethnography is gaining traction as a legitimate and less marginalised method of qualitative research (Pourreau, 2014). For this study, I employed autoethnographic narratives in which the researcher includes their own experience, which is relevant to the group under investigation, in the research (Livesey & Runsen, 2018).

There are several techniques for developing an autoethnography which have resulted in a variety of forms (Ellis et al., 2011). As part of the data creation process, I composed chronologically organised narrative vignettes followed by critical reflections, as Rådesjö (2018) did. This is the foundation of my methodological contribution, which resulted in a newly coined term which is elaborated on in Chapter 3. Vignettes aid in the comprehension of social issues by providing creative depictions of experiences that are designed to interest the reader and elicit their emotions (Ellis et al., 2011).

These vignettes were essential to my study since they allowed me to show the reader my experiences.

Autoethnography involves a great deal of memory work and self-reflection. This research study implemented the effect of music on memory recall. I recognised that by incorporating musical lyrics into the process of reflection, I was able to conjure up deeper memories and reflect on them. The chosen musical pieces were tracks with lyrics that were either sentimental or meaningful to me or tracks that evoked a significant memory overall. As noted by Souza and Barbosa (2023), lyrics can influence emotional and cognitive processes, which may interfere with the study's primary objective. However, this study's musical pieces were chosen purposely for their emotional content, as emotional valence has been found to impact memory recall (Dolcos & Cabeza, 2002). Therefore, the tracks selected were chosen to elicit an emotional response in me.

A listener's interpretation of music and lyrics may differ due to a difference in the analysis of the music, even though the lyrics remain the same (Dvorak, 2016). Consequently, individual interpretation is what makes music and lyrics enchanting – two people can listen to the same song and have distinct interpretations. I hoped to add depth to my autoethnography by engaging with sensibly chosen lyrics that evoked certain memories and expanding on those memories. To allow a truly immersive understanding of my chosen songs and lyrics, I have created a playlist with the referenced songs used throughout this research study (see Chapter 3).

Because this study used an autoethnographic technique, I was the primary participant in gathering data for analysis. The data were collected from the narrative vignettes I authored. To assist in steering my story, I employed the following methods: self-interview and memory work; critical talks with others as co-constructors of knowledge (memory sharing with others); and consulting personal diary entries. I combed through my experiences and selected a few instances that exemplified features of my experiences as an Afrikaner female teacher. Each of the provided vignettes was chosen to reflect epiphanies that I had throughout the writing process, which “stem[med] from or [were] made possible by being part of a culture” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 277). These strategies led me as I produced the vignettes as a form of data collecting for this project.

The data gathered from my narrative vignettes were analysed using thematic data analysis. Thematic data analysis is a versatile and helpful research method that has the capacity to produce a comprehensive, thorough, yet complicated description of the data (Peel, 2020). Qualitative researchers develop complex descriptions from data extracts using the participants' own words to support their views through thematic data analysis and interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). I interpreted my narrative vignettes in search of emerging themes to form the data analysis, which was then compared to current literature.

1.11 QUALITY CRITERIA

Autoethnography has been repeatedly criticised as being egotistical and vain (Rådesjö, 2018). Livesey and Runsen (2018) argues that autoethnography is deficient in external validation, thereby rendering it insufficiently rigorous for recognition by a significant number of scholars. The conventional perspectives in the field of social science are rooted in the notion of “minimising the self” and perceiving it as a detrimental factor. However, this critique is predicated on the premise that the individual and the social realms are distinct and devoid of any connection (Krieger, 1991, p. 47). Nevertheless, it is important to note that phenomena that are typically seen as individual or subjective in nature are also inherently influenced by social factors and might possess objective qualities (Rådesjö, 2018). The characterisation of an individual as autonomous or isolated is inadequate due to their fundamental humanity, undeniable dialogic nature, and ultimate susceptibility to cultural influences (Rådesjö, 2018). The characterisation of an individual as unique entails recognising their multifaceted nature and encompassing both intricate emotional dimensions and socio-cultural influences. Moreover, this perspective acknowledges the personal experiences of individuals, which frequently include relatability, social significance, and theoretical implications.

There is also the possible delimitation of the findings of this study having limited use for generalisations (Livesey & Runsen, 2018). Mitch Allen (publisher of Left Coast Press) said in a personal interview in a May 2006 report:

An autoethnography must look at experience analytically. Otherwise [you are] telling [your] story – and that’s nice – but people do that on Oprah [the US–

based television programme] every day. Why is your story more valid than anyone else's? What makes your story more valid is that you are a researcher. You have a set of theoretical and methodological tools and research literature to use. That's your advantage. If you can't frame it around these tools and literature and just frame it as "my story", then why or how should I privilege your story over anyone else's I see 25 times a day on TV? (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 276).

A central criterion of trustworthiness for self-study is verisimilitude (Humphreys, 2005). Verisimilitude can be implemented as a central principle to validate the worth of narrative inquiry. For this study, I subscribed to verisimilitude as a guide to check the quality of my narrative. To achieve trustworthiness, I asked my parents, mentors, colleagues, and friends to write letters to confirm my narrative as true.

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I conducted my study in accordance with the University of Pretoria's code of ethics. Researchers at the University of Pretoria have the following obligations, according to the Code of Ethics for Research: social duty, fairness, compassion, respect for the person, and professionalism (University of Pretoria, 2010). Ethical problems to be addressed included informed consent, secrecy, deceit, harm to participants, disclosing results, and language barriers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). My co-constructors of knowledge were treated with care and according to these ethical concerns.

Because researchers are regarded as "research tools" (Gilbert, 2000, p. 11), qualitative researchers are emotionally interested in their investigations. Given its introspective and retrospective character, autoethnography has considerable promise for investigating organisational culture, as well as a potential for improving knowledge of the relationship that exists between individuals and the companies for which they work (Poureaux, 2014). There is a rising appreciation for the importance of emotions in qualitative research, their important role in knowledge formation, and the possibility of acquiring a better understanding of our social environment (Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018). However, in addition to the benefits of focusing on emotions in qualitative research, such a concentration might endanger a researcher's emotional health and well-being, both mental and physical (Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018). When a researcher

is enmeshed in a study such as an autoethnography, their well-being may be jeopardised.

Kumar and Cavallaro (2018) outline steps that are the researcher's individual responsibility: to take care of their well-being, specifically, knowledge of the need for self-care; willingness to include self-care into the research plan; use of institutional resources and assistance; and active participation in self-care activities. I incorporated self-care into my research plan by staying connected to my emotional responses and being aware of my self-care needs during and after the research process. I made use of my university's resources by attending support sessions and working closely with my supervisor for guidance and support when my mental health was at risk. Self-care practices were actively introduced by having clear boundaries when I worked. These included establishing time limits, taking breaks, leaning on my husband and friends for encouragement, and having the motivation to take necessary "sanity breaks". It is said that it takes a village to raise a child – I relied on my village to raise my study.

1.13 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

To ensure the harmonious flow of information that was my research study, I needed to ensure that all the ideas were organised. To provide a well-organised research report in which the study questions and objectives are addressed and the information flows logically, the chapters were designed as follows:

In Chapter 1, I introduced the focus of the research, including the background and context of the study, rationale, and motivation as well as the purpose and focus of the study. I also presented a short overview of the research paradigm, methodology, and conceptual framework. Quality criteria and ethical considerations were briefly discussed.

The second chapter is dedicated to the literature review of the study. I start with the conceptual framework implemented in this study, namely intersectionality. The integration of social role theory and feminism is also inspected. I then explore the existing literature on socio-cultural expectations, the establishment of Afrikaner culture and identity, and delve into the identity construction of female teachers.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodological approach used during my research and explain the data gathering and analysis procedures. The significance of including autoethnography and the advantages of a narrative method are explored. I also introduce the neologism “lyricovignette” in this chapter.

In Chapter 4, I present my autoethnography. I share my experiences and my story about being an Afrikaner, a teacher, and a professional woman. This chapter includes song lyrics and is structured to resemble a mixtape of my identity construction.

Chapter 5 presents the analysis and interpretation of my autoethnography and compares it with the literature reviewed and the proposed research questions. It shows the different aspects that influenced the construction of my identity as a female Afrikaner teacher.

The sixth and final chapter is the conclusion in which I provide an overview of the research study and its findings. I reflect on my study’s methodological assumptions, research findings, and scholarly contributions.

The data generated during this study are presented in a less than traditional way. Why would I attempt to use autoethnography to convey my story? The answer to this question lies in the following chapters. I sincerely hope that when you have reached the last track of this story, you will recognise the merits of human narration (Kotze, 2013) when used as an instrument to understand the construction of the identity of a female Afrikaner teacher.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW



Spent a week in a dusty library
Waiting for some words to jump at me
~ *French Navy*, recorded by *Camera Obscura*
(written by *Campbell*, 2009)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Campbell (2009) was accurate in his description when he wrote the words “jump at me”. During the literature review process, the researchers read and explore connections that are relevant to their topic, often spending years conducting research and reviewing the literature. This can be a daunting task. After what felt like my thousandth article analysis, I wished that the correct words would jump out at me. It was during this laborious time that I came across the song “French Navy” by Campbell (2009) and realised that it had to be included in my thesis playlist.

In this chapter, I present a review of relevant literature involving the research question that drove this study, namely the influence of socio-cultural expectations on the construction of a female Afrikaner teacher’s identity. Several recurring themes emerged during the research and composition of the literature review. First, I begin by providing an overview of socio-cultural expectations, including the global and local contexts, and their influence on female identity. Thereafter, I discuss the establishment of Afrikaner culture and Afrikaner identity which is comprised of the formation of Afrikaner identity, socio-cultural expectations in Afrikaner culture, and female Afrikaner identity. Next, I examine female teachers by discussing female teachers in South Africa and female teacher identity. Finally, I frame my autoethnography in theory. I elaborate on the choice of the conceptual framework through feminism as a metatheory and the integration of social role theory with intersectionality.

2.1.1 Socio-cultural expectations: King of my castle



*We argue in the kitchen
About whether to have children
And about the world ending,
And the scale of my ambition*

*~ King, recorded by Florence + The Machine
(written by Welch & Antonoff, 2022)*

I listened to this song by Welch and Antonoff (2022) immediately after it was released, and instantly appreciated that I had found a song that resonated with my innermost feelings. Even though my husband and I had never argued about having children (although the conversation had come up a few times), my ambition and dreams career-wise, and when or whether children would fall into those plans, I caught myself thinking, “Why can’t I have both at the same time?” These thoughts about family and career and my identity as an Afrikaner and female teacher led me to explore the influence of socio-cultural expectations on the construction of my female Afrikaner teacher identity.

In this section, I provide an overview of socio-cultural expectations, starting by considering the conceptualisation of socio-culture expectations with reference to social norms and social roles. Next, I discuss socio-cultural expectations from a global perspective to provide relevance to this study. I then focus on socio-cultural expectations in the South African context, which is where my study is focused geographically. Finally, I concentrate on the influence of socio-cultural expectations on professional women and female identity.

2.1.2 Social norms vs social roles

Before I can provide an overview of socio-cultural expectations, it is important to briefly discuss the difference between social norms and social roles, as these terms cannot be used interchangeably. Even though the terms are closely related, this research study focused on social roles as part of socio-cultural expectations. This section briefly explains the two terms and why one is more relevant than the other in the context of this research study.

Social norms and social roles can sometimes be seen as dictating behaviour, hence their significance in society cannot be disregarded (Njogu, 2021). Social norms create and sustain social structures by providing us with the rules of conduct that we generally abide by (Raskoff, 2016). Thus, social structure and social order are created by social norms.

Social norms define our possibilities for proper behaviour since they serve as standards for anticipated behaviours (Mcleod, 2023). Social norms are unwritten rules that define what people are and are not allowed to do in social contexts (Raskoff, 2016). These rules could be norms, principles, or traditions. Social norms offer reliable indicators of people's behaviour. They are also considered helpful by society and act as behavioural guides in some circumstances (Njogu, 2021). Norms might be broadly accepted, like folkways, or they can be strictly accepted, like mores and taboos which are frequently included in legislation (Raskoff, 2016). The audience, however, affects how social norms are perceived.

The term social role refers to what society anticipates from a person's behaviour in a particular situation or in their status (Njogu, 2021). Given that each person plays a variety of roles in society, these roles influence how individuals behave. The roles include relatives, parents, teachers, students, bankers, and doctors to name a few. Nearly everyone is aware of their social obligations thanks to how society defines social roles (Mcleod, 2023). The group with which one is interacting also affects these roles.

Comparatively, social norms and social roles both influence how people behave and interact (Raskoff, 2016). The differences are summarised in the Table 2.1:

Table 2.1

Social Norms vs Social Roles Comparison Table (Njogu, 2021)

Characteristics	Social norm	Social role
Definition	Refers to unwritten rules that govern what people can and cannot do in social circumstances.	Refers to society's expectations of a person's status or their behaviour in a given setting.
Example	Workplaces should be respected and no activities that can compromise this should be carried out.	The interaction between a father and his son, which is different from that with his teacher or doctor.

Social norms can be seen as unspoken guidelines that dictate the conduct of individuals inside social settings (Raskoff, 2016). Social roles, on the other hand, are behaviours that society anticipates from a person in a particular situation or relative to their status (Njogu, 2021). Social roles are mentioned more frequently than social norms in this research study as the study focused on the socio-cultural expectations of the construction of my female Afrikaner teacher identity.

2.1.3 Overview of socio-cultural expectations

The concept of social context pertains to the environmental conditions in which social interactions occur. The concept of social context encompasses the distinct and frequently individualised connotations and understandings ascribed by individuals within a particular collective (Crossman, 2019). The perception of something might be influenced by the social environment in which it is experienced. For instance, an individual who engages in the consumption of novel food inside an inhospitable or antagonistic setting may develop a negative perception of its taste, thus leading to a lasting aversion towards this meal. However, if individuals are initially exposed to the meal in a pleasurable and tranquil setting, they may develop a positive perception of its taste, ultimately leading to their enjoyment of it.

Social and cultural norms exert significant influence on human conduct across a wide range of circumstances. During her conversation about social and cultural norms that underlie behaviour, Bicchieri (2018) defined social expectations as follows:

Social expectations are derived from schemata and scripts, with schemata being the generic knowledge of event sequences, roles, and rules that can affect our social expectations (as legitimate and normal); our perception (recall, the inference, and causal attributions of an event); and our emotions. Event schemata are known as scripts, and social norms are part of a script.
(p. 4)

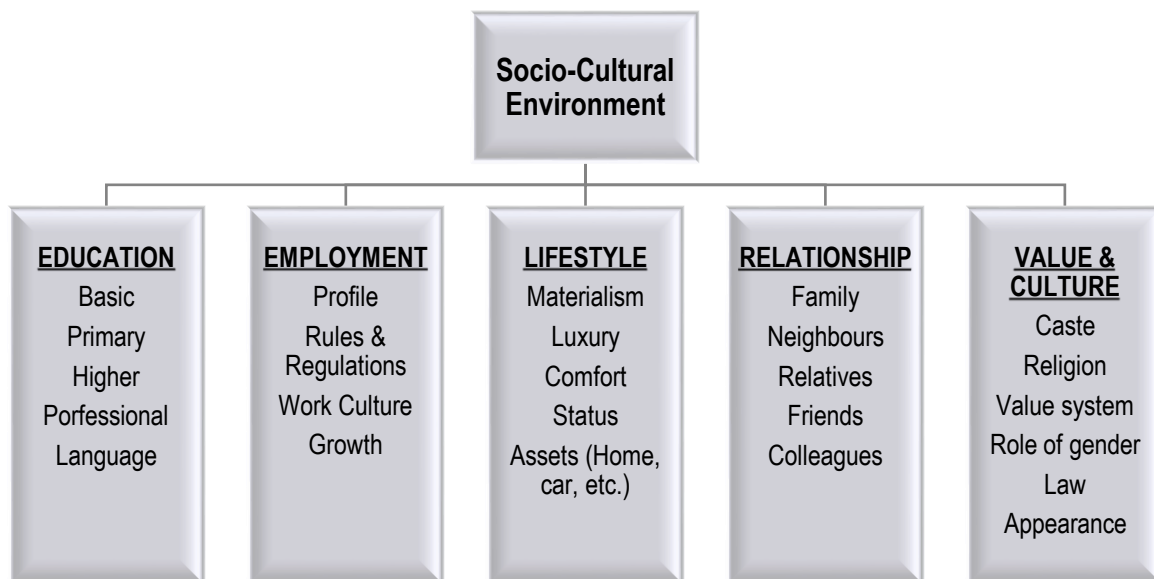
Social roles refer to the structured collection of social patterns of interactions that collectively constitute a society. They are a result of social interaction and have a direct influence on it (Crossman, 2019). The socio-cultural environment encompasses the entirety of behaviours and relationships in which individuals participate in their personal and private lives. This includes various aspects, such as the demographic characteristics of the population, gender and race, values, attitudes, lifestyles, and interpersonal connections (Singh & Dutch, 2014). The family institution serves to arrange individuals into certain social connections and positions, such as father, mother, daughter, wife, husband, and others. Consequently, it establishes a hierarchical structure in relationships, leading to varying levels of power differentials (Crossman, 2019). In general, there tends to be a concentration of women in social vocations that are perceived to necessitate feminine personality traits and physical features, whereas men are often concentrated in vocations that are believed to require masculine personality traits and physical qualities (Eagly, 1997).

Social roles have a significant influence in shaping our lives by influencing the range of possibilities accessible to us and by establishing behavioural and interactional standards that ultimately shape our life trajectories and results (Crossman, 2019). As per the analysis conducted by Goode (1960), the endeavour to meet these designated duties may lead to role strain, which he describes as the subjective challenge in effectively performing role obligations (p. 484). According to Goode (1960), individuals frequently employ trade-off bargaining procedures with themselves in order to meet the requirements associated with their jobs. The trade-offs are contingent upon various factors, including the extent to which individuals prioritise meeting societal

expectations associated with a specific role (referred to as “norm commitment”), their anticipation of the other party’s response in the event of role non-fulfilment, and broader societal pressures to conform to specific roles (Hopper, 2020, p. 5).

The socio-cultural environment encompasses the manifestations of individual and collective conduct that mirror customary practices, beliefs, and principles (Singh & Dutch, 2014). Norms provide a framework of societal expectations that dictate acceptable and unacceptable conduct within interpersonal exchanges among individuals (Bicchieri, 2018). Singh and Dutch (2014) compiled a collection of common variables about several perspectives of the socio-cultural environment, which are depicted in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1
Socio-Cultural Environment (Singh & Dutch, 2014)



The dynamics of social interactions are undergoing a transformation and are expected to undergo further evolution throughout the next generations. The magnitude of this shift may be more significant than in previous instances, mostly attributed to the expeditious transformations observed in the variables depicted in Figure 2.1. The measurement of changes in social interactions may be accomplished through the assessment of consensus and compliance within a society on the acceptability of

specific behaviours, as well as the circumstances that influence individuals' willingness to adhere to such behaviours (Bicchieri, 2018).

2.1.4 Global socio-cultural expectations

Global socio-cultural expectations refer to the shared values, beliefs, norms, and customs that guide the behaviour of individuals and communities in different parts of the world (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). These expectations vary greatly between cultures and can influence everything from communication styles to gender roles or social etiquette. This section explores some examples of global socio-cultural expectations from different countries and cultures.

In Japan, for instance, there is a strong emphasis on collectivism and group harmony (Triandis, 1995). Individuals are expected to prioritise the needs of the group over their personal desires. As a result, Japanese society places a high value on politeness, humility, and conflict avoidance (Nisbett, 2003). For example, it is considered rude to interrupt someone while they are speaking or to express strong emotions in public.

In the United States, individualism is a key cultural value (Triandis, 1995). Americans tend to prioritise personal freedom and autonomy over group harmony. This can manifest in a variety of ways, such as a willingness to speak up and express opinions, even in the face of disagreement (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In addition, Americans tend to place a high value on time, with punctuality being considered important in both personal and professional settings.

Women in India experience pressure from socio-cultural gender norms and practices in their daily lives, in education, and in their future career goals (Varga, 2003). They must adhere to rigid social and cultural standards and constraints (Jayachandran, 2021). In India, the concept of "face" or reputation is highly valued, which means that an individual is expected to behave in a way that upholds their own reputation as well as that of their family and community (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In addition, hierarchy is an important aspect of Indian culture, with respect being shown to elders and those in positions of authority (Hoang, 2011). For example, it is common for younger people to touch the feet of their elders as a sign of respect.

Arafat et al. (2021) analysed the multifaceted connection between socio-cultural expectations and the economic deprivation of families in rural Bangladesh. They found that the imposition of societal, cultural, and gender conventions on girls limited their potential and forced them into the deadly trap of early marriage, which ultimately caused a significant proportion of girls to drop out of high school (Arafat et al., 2021). Women in Bangladeshi culture must contend with patriarchy and socio-cultural gender roles that prevent them from obtaining wealth and positions of authority and compel them to defer to men in both public and private spheres (Au et al., 2021). When it comes to their female children, parents are the primary and, almost always, sole decision-making authority (Hoang, 2011). In the long run, these socio-cultural gender roles deepen prejudice against young women and promote child marriage.

These are just a few examples of the many different global socio-cultural expectations that exist around the world. By comprehending and valuing these expectations, individuals may effectively negotiate cross-cultural encounters and foster constructive connections with persons from diverse backgrounds.

2.1.5 Socio-cultural expectations in the South African context

South Africa is a country with a diverse population and a complex history that has shaped its socio-cultural expectations. This section discusses some examples of socio-cultural expectations in the South African context and elaborates on a particular study on this topic. The cited examples came from casual conversations with my colleagues during a lunch break.

Ubuntu is an isiZulu word that roughly translates to “humanity towards others”. It is a philosophy that emphasises the importance of community, relationships, and interconnectedness (Ngcobo, 2018). This philosophy is reflected in the South African Constitution, which recognises the importance of social cohesion and the need to build a united, democratic, and non-racial society (Buys, 2015).

In many South African cultures, respect for elders is highly valued. This is demonstrated through practices such as using honorific titles when addressing elders, seeking their advice and guidance, and caring for them in old age (Coetzee, 2021). For example, among the isiZulu people, it is customary for young people to kneel

before their elders as a sign of respect. In Afrikaner culture, young people will usually refer to an elder as oom (uncle) or tannie (aunt), even if there is no familial connection.

South Africa also has a complex history of gender relations, with traditional patriarchal values coexisting with more progressive attitudes (Ngcobo, 2018). However, many South African cultures still place a strong emphasis on gender roles, with men expected to be providers and protectors and women caregivers and nurturers (Buys, 2015). Among the Xhosa people, men are traditionally responsible for hunting and livestock herding, while women are responsible for domestic chores and childbearing.

The study conducted by Alabi et al. (2019) investigated the coping strategies employed by Black female postgraduate students in response to socio-cultural expectations and the subsequent influence on their perceived academic progress. They found that women's education was influenced by discriminatory socio-cultural norms, which resulted in delays in them obtaining postgraduate degrees (Alabi et al., 2019). Socio-cultural expectations have the propensity to affect educational attainment and impede the advancement of women in the field of education (Stander & Forster, 2019). Men outnumber women in senior administrative roles (Bhopal, 2020).

When it comes to marriage, Afrikaner society has fixed standards, and acting outside these standards is regarded as abnormal. Women are under pressure from society to give up their education goals in favour of marriage and starting families (Alabi et al., 2019). Increasingly, women are enrolling in administrative and management fields that are inextricably linked to the social and cultural roles that women fill (Harris et al., 2009). One of the things preventing Afrikaner women from pursuing higher education and moving forward is their adherence to their social duty or their gender roles.

2.1.6 Influence of socio-cultural expectations on female identity

Significant advancements have been achieved in the realm of understanding identity development, especially in the areas of race and gender (Cerezo et al., 2020). However, it is also important to expand identity research to address the intersectional lived experiences of individuals (Bowleg, 2008). Some hold the idea of a cultural or ethnic group as having a single, authentic identity, then there are those who recognise identity as a social construction and value fluidity and diversity among individuals and cultural or ethnic groups (Timms, 2017). Critical studies show that the intricate

intersections between traits of race, religion, and gender often lead to a variety of compromised relationships between individuals in society (Stander & Forster, 2019). I perceive identity as a social construction. I can attest to the differences of working with colleagues who are predominantly Afrikaners, or predominantly African, and the influence that these differences have on how they speak, act, and think about themselves. I have had to adapt my identity and actions according to the society in which I am working. I also had to recognise which parts of “me” I did not want to change, and which parts of society’s standards I could either change or should accept.

The reconstruction of traditional gender roles that took place in the first half of the 19th century both inspired and restrained women. These roles designated women’s spheres as the private domestic realm, where civic virtue was reproduced by mothers devoid of those very virtues, while the public spheres of the competitive market and political sphere were reserved for men (DeGroat, 2019). Globally women have entered employment in far greater numbers during the past 20 years, although more often this has been in the “informal sector” because of a combination of low wages and lack of labour rights (Van der Westhuizen, 2005). Women still face disadvantages in higher education even while making up more than half the workforce (that is, 54,2 per cent). For instance, they are more likely to be employed under fixed-term contracts and on a part-time basis in academic, professional, and support services than men (Bhopal, 2020). Work–life balance is conceptualised as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict”, and is affected by numerous aspects such as job satisfaction, motivation, work performance, income, and commitment (Ruan & Zheng, 2019, p. 349). The expectation of women’s role in society remains unchanged; it is a popular opinion that if a woman has young children then she should not work full-time (Sekatane, 2018). For many women, the decision to put family life above career aspirations is a conscious one (Rhodes, 2018) although there are mothers who do not see this as a problem as they want to spend quality time with their children, and they do not mind if that means a gap in their income (RedCatDigital, 2019).

In an article in *The Telegraph*, Katie Thompson wrote:

While millions of women around the world today are enjoying better education, career success, financial independence, and hard-won freedom, they are often forced to fend off pressure to conform. At family gatherings or public holidays, they may face a barrage of seemingly innocent questions from relatives about boyfriends, wedding bells and babies. (Pozniak, 2019, p. 2)

In the same article, she stated that young women faced criticism either as career women or for “just” being mothers (Pozniak, 2019). There is a need to advance socially valued roles other than motherhood for women (Pedro, 2015). Instead of being held in high regard for their capacity to procreate, women should be respected for their uniqueness and contributions to society.

Gender role expectations state that certain women are responsible for the bulk of childcare and home activities (Greenberger & Goldberg, 1989) and, as a result, they are more likely to face role conflicts (Ruan & Zheng, 2019). Natasha Collins wrote in *The Telegraph*:

I feel bombarded by media content putting pressure on the child-decision-making process when it is just between my fiancée and me to decide when we have children. I do not want to lose my current life just as I have got where I want to be. I have got a business to look after. I feel it is the woman who has to change everything whereas the man doesn't, and that's hard. (Pozniak, 2019, p. 3)

Gender constructs are intimately linked to the question of power – who has it and how they exercise it in different contexts and relationships (Van der Westhuizen, 2005). The issue of other people (namely family and peers) feeling that they have the right to impose their opinions on someone else's life has become a recurring topic of discussion within the younger generation's circles, such as mine.

For some, the cultural concept of motherhood is critical to a woman feeling adequate and whole on a social, psychological, and physical level (Pedro, 2015). Messages from society, culture, family, and friends frequently influence the decisions we make as

human beings (Ciletti, 2023). Understanding yourself deeply entails understanding how you embody and act upon your gendered and cultural identities (Whitaker, 2019). This research study required that I explore the messages received from society (socio-cultural expectations) to understand my identity deeper as a result thereof.

2.2 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AFRIKANER CULTURE AND AFRIKANER IDENTITY: EK SKYN (HEILIG)



*Ek is die hel in
Bibber en beef dié boerebedrieër
Die wêreld gaan jou haat my seun
As jy die waarheid praat gaan hulle jou wil doodmaak
~ Ek Skyn (Heilig), recorded by Fokofpolisiekar
(written by Badenhorst et al, 2006)*

Translation:

I am angry as hell
Trembling and shaking this farmer deceiver
The world is going to hate you, my son
If you tell the truth they will want to kill you

Given how predominantly conservative traditional Afrikaner culture is and how strongly religious ideals are portrayed in Afrikaner culture, it is safe to conclude that the alternative rock band Fokofpolisiekar is despised by most orthodox Afrikaners (Timms, 2017). Their music challenges conservative Afrikaner values that stem from the apartheid years (Timms, 2017) and cautions young Afrikaners against those values, as written in the song by Badenhorst et al. (2006).

The Afrikaner's story is one of perseverance and victory in the face of tragedy, romance, and heroism, and then exploitation and oppression in an era of universal freedom, disillusionment, humiliation, and guilt (Kotze, 2013). In the next section, I discuss the formation of Afrikaner identity by examining three joint powers, namely race, nationality, and religion. Thereafter, I review socio-cultural expectations in Afrikaner culture. Finally, I examine female Afrikaner identity.

2.2.1 Formation of Afrikaner identity

The word Afrikaans denotes two things. First and foremost, it refers to the language of Afrikaans. Secondly, it may be used interchangeably with the term Afrikaner as an ethnic marker or, more generally, to refer to a native Afrikaans speaker, regardless of race and/or ethnicity. The term Afrikaner is also applied differently depending on the situation. The Afrikaner population does not necessarily refer to themselves as Afrikaners, although the word is widely understood to denote White, Afrikaans-speaking people (Timms, 2017).

South Africa is still confronting many trials related to racial identity, relationships between persons of different races, class struggles, and gender inequality (Stander & Forster, 2019). Apartheid's dominant identity, "the Afrikaner", was the result of Afrikaner nationalism and its imagined community (the volk) (Van der Westhuizen, 2016). Only in the 1930s and 1940s was the Afrikaner identity story and awareness created (Viljoen, 2021). The concept of "the Afrikaner" was forged in the first half of the 20th century from within a mixed community of White British colonialists and indigenous Black people (Van der Westhuizen, 2016). The following quote reflects what many White Afrikaans-speakers believe to be phenomenological reality:

Once at the centre of South African identity, Afrikaners now find themselves on the scrapheap, and prone to the same old identity crisis that used to haunt them throughout the 19th century under British rule, and which was only resolved by the suffering of the Anglo-Boer War. (Davies, 2009, p. 97)

The argument here is that Afrikaners are more socially cohesive and dependent on each other because of negative stereotypes and stigmatisation, which prevents them from assimilating and participating fully in modern society (Theunissen, 2015). The most common perception about White, Afrikaans-speaking identity is that it seems to be dominated by ideas of race, nationalism, and religion (Kotze, 2013). The next subsections explore the common perceptions influencing Afrikaner identity, namely race, nationalism, and religion.

2.2.1.1 Race

As a social group, Afrikaners have been described as having stigmatised features that include racism, separatism, insularity, and arms-bearing. These features have caused identity engulfment to the point where Afrikaner speech and behaviour are viewed through the lens of those stigmatised features (Rintamaki & Brashers, 2010). Being White and Afrikaans-speaking was essential to be recognised as an Afrikaner (Theunissen, 2015).

South Africa's democracy was established in 1994, resulting in the dismantling of the system of apartheid and the first multiracial, democratic general elections. However, The end of apartheid did not result in the sudden reconciliation of South Africans of different races. Racial tensions still persist between Black and White South Africans (and especially Afrikaners) (Timms, 2017).

After 1994, most of South Africa's White population experienced a loss of identity and sense of belonging (Dlamini et al., 2021). How people responded to such loss has been specifically studied in South African research (Ballard, 2004; Schutte, 1995; Steyn, 2001; Werbner, 2010). Ballard (2004, p. 8), for example, found that White communities benefited from apartheid's provision of "islands of safety" in a "sea of threat", which let them feel like they belonged while, according to Dlamini et al. (2021), White people responded by using identity-protection tactics such as assimilation, emigration, remigration, and integration.

Considering that much of Afrikaner cultural identity, as a White identity, was shaped by the apartheid regime, it is obvious that a static Afrikaner identity, which is an identity lodged in apartheid and White nationalism, would be in direct conflict with the new South Africa (Timms, 2017). The enduring consequences of apartheid have resulted in a prevailing state of a power imbalance within South Africa, wherein individuals of White South African descent continue to have significant influence over the economy, media, and many social institutions (Stander & Forster, 2019). Thus, tensions persist in post-apartheid South Africa – both amongst Afrikaners and between Afrikaners and the wider South African community – as Afrikaner cultural identity slowly undergoes changes in the new South Africa (Timms, 2017). According to Stander and Forster (2019), the phenomenon of scapegoating White Afrikaners in South Africa's political

and economic challenges is apparent, particularly within the context of identity politics. Although certain elements of this assertion may hold validity, it is crucial to acknowledge the substantial implications that ensue for the identity and social status of this particular demographic (Stander & Forster, 2019).

According to Giliomee (2009, p. 658), the number of individuals who spoke Afrikaans as their primary language in 2002 amounted to six million, which accounted for 15 per cent of the overall population. This made the Afrikaans-speaking community the third largest in the country. Giliomee further observed that a larger proportion of Black and Coloured individuals than White individuals spoke Afrikaans as their first language. However, based on the aforementioned criteria, anyone who was not White would effectively be excluded from self-identifying as Afrikaner. The idea of Afrikaners being constantly under threat, the struggle for survival, and the battle for Afrikaans to be recognised as the language of the Afrikaners is fundamental to the creation of Afrikaner identity (Theunissen, 2015).

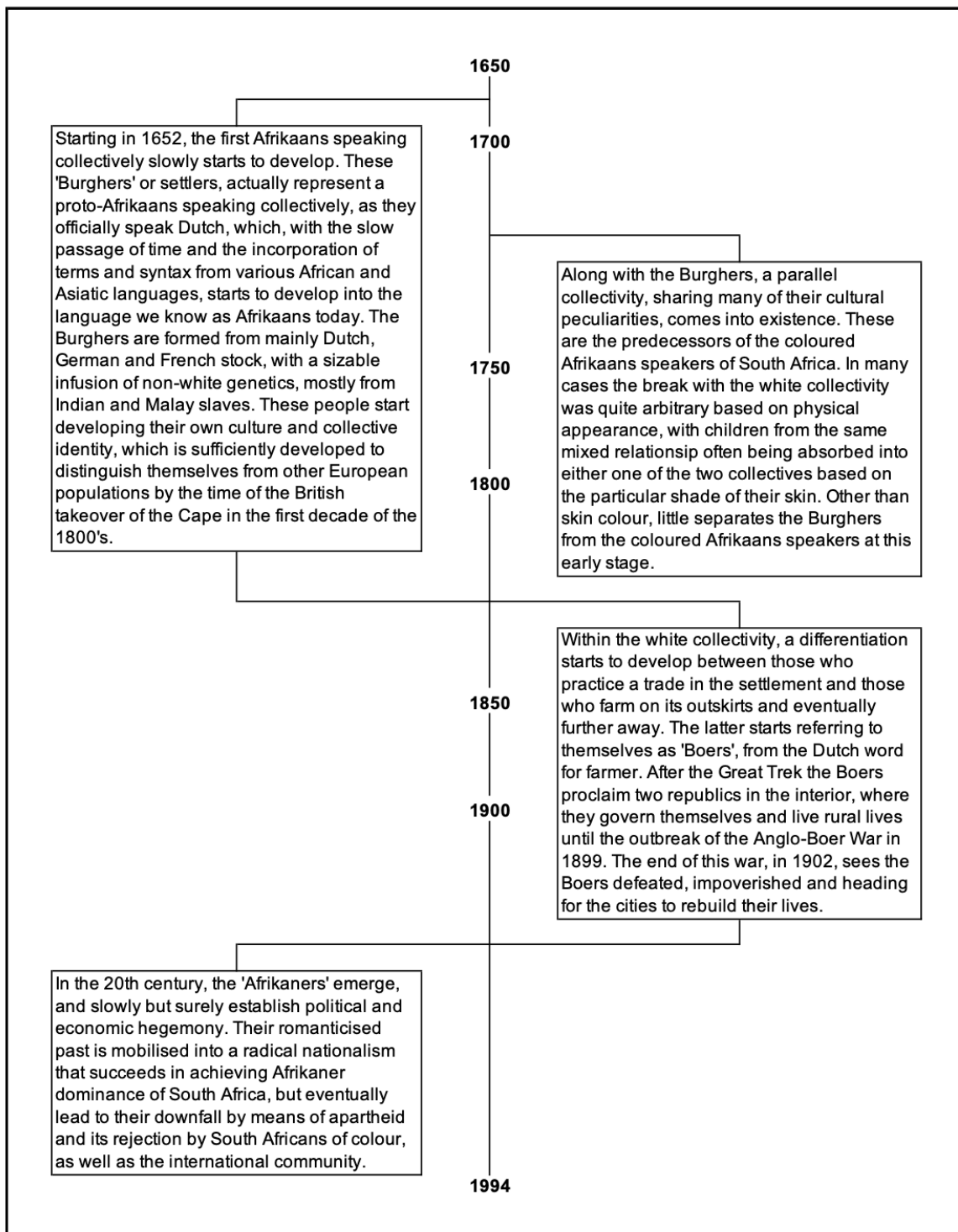
2.2.1.2 *Nationalism*

One of the first major events that informed Afrikaner consciousness was the Great Trek during the 19th century (1835–1846) in which the early Boer settlers (a mixture of mostly Dutch, German, and French farming settler communities) left the Cape Colony (originally the Dutch Cape Colony) after it was annexed by the British. They migrated in large groups to the interior of South Africa to escape British rule and to establish the two (former) Boer Republics (Boersema, 2013). Through a focus on Calvinist interpretations of the Old Testament, this event was mythologised to symbolise Afrikaners as the chosen people of God (Timms, 2017).

The second major event to be mythologised and thus inform Afrikaner consciousness was the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) at the turn of the 20th century. With the discovery of gold in the Transvaal Republic, war broke out as the British, backed by the large forces of the Empire, fought to gain control of the area. The defeat of the Boer Republics, the loss of independence, and the death toll at the hands of the British remained a resentful memory for Afrikaners for decades after the war (Timms, 2017). The development of a White Afrikaans-speaking identity was simplified by Kotze (2013) and is presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Simplified illustration of White Afrikaans-speaking identity up to 1994 (Kotze, 2013)



While in the past a homogeneous Afrikaner identity was regulated and confined by the state, this was not the case in the new South Africa where Afrikaners found themselves in a position where they needed to grapple with what it meant to be an Afrikaner in

post-apartheid South Africa (Timms, 2017). Vestergaard (2001) explains that Afrikaner identity in the new South Africa was a negotiation between “heterodox” and “orthodox” Afrikaners: those who welcomed the challenges of the new South Africa, and those who resisted change and clung to old values from the apartheid years (p. 19). The dissolution of apartheid brought to light the disparities within the perceived homogeneity of Afrikaners, leading to a profound identity crisis within this group (Stander & Forster, 2019).

After the collapse of apartheid, South Africans had to make sense of their dislocated Afrikaner identities while also navigating a global change in their identities (Van der Westhuizen, 2016). The born-free generation of Afrikaners – those growing up in the post-apartheid era – have had to construct a new South African and a new Afrikaner identity (Timms, 2017). They have had to navigate both apartheid Afrikaner imaginary – that is, the persistence of White, nationalist ideology presented through nostalgic parental generations, and global representations of White nationalism represented throughout the Western world – as well as fluctuating post-apartheid South African imaginary (Timms, 2017).

The identity narratives discussed in this study possess a dual nature, simultaneously embodying both singularity and plurality, as well as individual and collective dimensions. It is important to note that these aspects mutually influence and shape one another (Viljoen, 2021). The struggle against apartheid involved a certain degree of challenge of the official categorisation of individuals as Black, White, Coloured, or Indian (Jacklin, 2001). Following their rise to power in 1948, the National Party pursued a vision of Afrikaner nationalism centred on the establishment of a racially segregated society in South Africa, with the primary objective of advancing the interests of the White population (Van der Westhuizen, 2016). Therefore, apartheid functioned as the implementation of Afrikaner nationalism in order to cater to the White minority.

According to Stander and Forster (2019), the enduring legacy of apartheid continues to manifest in contemporary South Africa, as racial tensions and instances of racism persistently shape the daily realities of individuals from both Black and White communities. The current socio-political landscape in South Africa is characterised by intricate and multifaceted dynamics stemming from persistent challenges related to racial identity, gender dynamics, and socioeconomic class (Stander & Forster, 2019).

In this contemporary South Africa, Afrikaners identify themselves in a variety of ways – as boere, Afrikaners, Afrikaans-speakers, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, and/or simply as South Africans (Timms, 2017). I was born in 1990 and I cannot recall the four years that I lived during apartheid. My reality and memories are from contemporary South Africa, and I identify as a modern Afrikaner, or simply as a South African. I was born in Africa, I was raised and live in South Africa, and I speak Afrikaans.

2.2.1.3 Religion

It is helpful to define the notion of religion before diving into the specifics. Durkheim provided the first sociological outline of religion. He believed that religion represented a “unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim, 1965, p. 62).

Religion has always been central to White Afrikaans-speaking identity (Kotze, 2013). Early European settlers forebears of historical Afrikaners commonly identified as Christians, a self-identity that, at least during the first two centuries of White settlement in the Cape, carried more weight than race or skin tone (Giliomee, 2009). Early European settlers were mostly from Germany and the Netherlands, and they were followed a little later by a large number of French Huguenots fleeing Catholic persecution (Kotze, 2013). As a result, the pioneer community’s religious base was solidly Protestant. Furthermore, the powerful Dutch East-India Company (VOC), which effectively founded the Cape Colony in 1652, gave its official support to the Dutch language and the strongly Calvinist teachings of the Dutch Reformed Church (Giliomee, 2009).

With regard to the relationship between religion and identity, it should be kept in mind that “religious identity [refers] to a particular way of approaching difference” (Werbner, 2010, p. 233). Through religion, people and collectives internalise the lines separating us from other people and from one another, as well as the forces we perceive as opposing us in our effort to uphold and defend these lines (Kotze, 2013). In the instance of the Afrikaner in a historical context, it is intriguing to observe how religion

strangely binds the other two categories of concern, namely race and nationalism, together.

It has been suggested that the early settlers' strong Christian beliefs may have given rise to the earliest manifestations of crude racism, and it is widely known that the Afrikaner nationalism of the 20th century, which finally gave rise to apartheid ideology, was a nationalism that was firmly rooted in Christianity (Kotze, 2013). Modern White Afrikaans-speakers continue to frequently form social circles centred on racial, religious, and nationalistic ideologies.

2.2.2 Socio-cultural expectations in Afrikaner culture: Boer in Beton



Maar ek's 'n boer in beton
Soos Oom Paul op ou Kerkplein
Niemand weet van my pyn
Want ek is goed vermom

~ Boer in Beton, recorded by André Letoit
(written by Du Toit, 1995)

Translation:

But I'm a farmer in concrete
Like Uncle Paul on Old Church Square
No one knows about my pain
Because I'm well disguised

Your family and community are the primary sources of your cultural upbringing. The concept of culture extends beyond the concrete, outward components of a person's existence and focuses instead on the intangible ones, such as language, religious convictions, and the characteristics of values that influence how a person thinks, acts, and perceives the world (Rodríguez-Tamayo & Tenjo-Macias, 2019).

The concept of gender is the subject of extensive discourse in present-day society, encompassing the societal constructions and interpretations associated with male and female social categories within a certain cultural context (Ruan & Zheng, 2019). During the initial stages, Afrikaner women exhibited a notable degree of autonomy and possessed a clear understanding of their own needs. Throughout significant historical events such as the Great Trek, the Transvaal Rebellion, the Anglo-Boer War, and the violent strikes of 1922, women actively supported their husbands and sons in their

collective efforts to oppose British hegemony (Kgatla, 2019). They played a central role in the battles during the Great Trek (for example, refilling the weapons). This support is even depicted in the murals at the Voortrekker Monument, where a statue of a Voortrekker woman and two children was erected to honour the strength and courage of the women (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2

Bronze Sculpture Depicting a Voortrekker Mother and her Two Children



Note. The statue pays tribute to the Voortrekker women's resilience and courage, sculpted by Anton van Wouw. Photograph from personal archives, taken on 6 December 2020, Voortrekker Monument, Pretoria.

I have always been inspired by the role that the women played in the Voortrekker era – but not the role that the Afrikaner woman fell into during the late 1900s. The phenomenon of women assuming the role of full-time spouses and mothers had a notable increase subsequent to the ascension of the National Party to political power. According to Kgatla (2019), women adopted a politically conservative stance, therefore accepting the dominance of men in positions of authority.

Since the onset of the first part of the 21st century, women have been assigned the societal position of housewife, confining them to responsibilities linked to household affairs, nurturing, upbringing of children, and subservience (Stander & Forster, 2019). According to Giliomee (2003), the Afrikaner churches had a significant influence in shaping women's perception of their pivotal position as the foundation of their households. "Women are meant to be in the home – it is her domain and where she belongs" (Albertyn & Van der Merwe, 1973, p. 18). This statement is the epitome of what happened to the role of women during the late 1900s.

According to Van der Westhuizen (2016), the Afrikaner community places great importance on the institution of family, and it serves to establish and uphold social hierarchies, such as gender and age. Husbands must assume their God-given roles as prophets, priests, and kings in their homes, while wives must fulfil their role as helpers to their husbands (Stander & Forster, 2019). Men are encouraged to take the role of fearless leader in the family, strong and unemotional, even if they do not necessarily feel that way. Dutoit concurs with this in his lyrics when he writes that he, as a farmer and Afrikaner man, does not show his pain because he disguises it well and shows a concrete face to society (Dutoit, 1995).

In her pioneering book in 1994, *The Piety of Afrikaans Women*, Landman pointed out that Afrikaner women were domesticated and convinced to accept their role in society as a result of the ideological tool of being submissive to the "male-engineered environment" (Landman, 1994, p. 15). Even today, Afrikaner women are expected to turn their gaze downwards, be proper, humble, and faithful, but also be active in the future of the so-called "Boer nation" (Viljoen, 2021). Submissiveness in women is further driven by an extreme apprehension of other cultures (especially Black and British cultures) resulting in women embracing self-hate and resignation, which are further exploited by men and the church (Kgatla, 2019). According to Stander and Forster (2019), a woman's worthiness in the eyes of God is contingent upon her adherence to prescribed gender roles and societal expectations associated with womanhood and marriage. This criterion is established through the application of a certain hermeneutical framework to select biblical passages.

In their book, *Die Vrou*, Albertyn and Van der Merwe (1973) wrote that a discussion about women can begin with nothing other than the Bible. The book was written during a time when women had become accustomed to being full-time wives and mothers. Afrikaner women were bestowed with idealised designations such as “die boervrou” (the boer woman), “moeder van haar volk” (mother of her nation), and “volksmoeder” (the nation’s mother). This societal role played by women significantly diverted their attention from the prevailing male dominance in their existence (Kgatla, 2019, p. 4). Women were told that their appearance was manifested in their clothing, make-up, hairstyle, attitude, and so on and should always exert influence. Also, she should be willing to endure suffering for the greater good of the boer, work hard, and fight when called upon to do so (Viljoen, 2021). Afrikaner women’s role in the family sphere was prioritised as their most important duty. This social role was vested in women bringing up their children (Blignaut, 2015). These women, in turn, taught their daughters the same Afrikaner values and what it meant to be an Afrikaner woman. They instilled in their daughters the realisation that they should prepare themselves to be housewives and mothers one day, as motherhood was seen as women’s highest calling in Afrikaner culture (Blignaut, 2015). White women in South Africa have sought the favour of both the dominant man in their culture and God by accepting an inferior position in the home and community due to the complicated process of female subordination (Stander & Forster, 2019).

It is not immoral to have values and norms, especially in a culture, as it creates a bond between you and your community. However, it becomes problematic when the world starts to produce more opportunities for women to excel in their careers yet their families, employers, and friends are still bound and influenced by traditional Afrikaner values.

2.2.3 Feminine Afrikaner identity

There is a shortage of research on young, White Afrikaans-speaking women (Rauch, 2020). This research study arose from a woman’s identity struggle and an endeavour to actualise concealed pieces of herself. Sexism, androcentrism, and patriarchy have had a significant influence on the lives of White Afrikaner women living in South Africa. They have internalised their oppression and bought into oppressive structures,

thinking that patriarchal concepts of female subjugation and male headship are beneficial to them and society (Stander & Forster, 2019).

It is necessary to gain some understanding of the South African context within which these women form their identities and shape their theological, social, political, and economic lives with intersections existing between race (in this case, whiteness), class, and gender (Stander & Forster, 2019). Afrikaner identity is rooted in the Dutch colonial history of South Africa, and it has been shaped by the unique experiences and struggles of the Afrikaner people. Feminine Afrikaner identity in particular has evolved in response to the patriarchal and conservative cultural norms that have characterised Afrikaner society (Du Preez, 2018).

The origins of feminine Afrikaner identity may be traced back to the early twentieth century, when women's associations like the Women's Monument Committee were formed to remember the women and children who perished in concentration camps during the Second Boer War (Jansen, 2009). The volksmoeder was considered the ideal Afrikaner lady. She was dutiful, Christian, hardworking, altruistic, and subservient, all while restricting her own sexuality in order to keep the volk White (Rauch, 2020).

The formation of feminine Afrikaner identity was also influenced by the Calvinist religion, which emphasises traditional gender roles and the importance of family values (Jansen, 2009). According to Rauch (2020), Afrikaner women are subject to a social and historical context that emphasises obedience, duty, devoutness, and submissiveness, which may be seen as a form of enslavement. This ideology has been used to justify the subjugation of women and their exclusion from the public sphere. However, it has also led to the development of a strong sense of community and solidarity among Afrikaner women (Du Preez, 2018).

The process of transitioning from apartheid to democracy in South Africa resulted in the dismantling of the hierarchical unity associated with Afrikaner nationalism. Consequently, this created an opportunity for the reconfiguration of the identity of the Afrikaner woman (Van der Westhuizen, 2017). During the post-apartheid era, it appears that White Afrikaans-speaking women encountered a sense of identity crisis, maybe stemming from the suppression of some elements of themselves as a result of

their cultural identity and adherence to a dominant patriarchal authority (Rauch, 2020). The lives and identities of White women have also been impacted by race, which plays a significant role in shaping their sense of self, perception of others, identity formation, and overall worldview (Stander & Forster, 2019). Feminine Afrikaner identity has been shaped by historical, cultural, and religious factors, and it continues to evolve in response to changing societal norms and values. While some women continue to embrace traditional gender roles, others are challenging these norms and are working towards a more equal and just society.

In conversations about sexual oppression and enduring colonial systems, the positioning of White women is not often discussed or considered (Coetzee, 2021). As a result, White Afrikaner women are nearly absent from the new surging popularity of feminism in post-apartheid South Africa (Coetzee, 2021). While this is true for the older generation of Afrikaner women who were raised during the apartheid era, according to Hattingh et al. (2020), the younger generation of Afrikaner women in the post-apartheid era are actively addressing and interacting with the cultural expectations and stereotypes associated with their Afrikaner identity. Young Afrikaner women are reacting to traditional cultural roles and want to step outside of those roles and norms.

Afrikaner women have played a significant role in the fight against apartheid and have contributed to the development of a democratic and inclusive South Africa (Jansen, 2009). Today, many Afrikaner women are active in politics, business, and the arts, and they are using their influence to shape the future of their community and their country (Du Preez, 2018). Modern Afrikaner women have a complex and multifaceted identity that reflects the changing social and political landscape of South Africa (Visser, 2018). While some women continue to embrace traditional gender roles and values, others have challenged these norms and have become vocal advocates for gender equality and social justice.

2.2.4 Linguistic differences in the concept of 'aunt' in English and Afrikaans

The linguistic and cultural intricacies connected with familial responsibilities can have a considerable impact on individual identity construction, especially when considering varied family structures and experiences. The 'aunt' is one example of a familial function whose meaning and implications vary across languages and cultures. In

English, the name aunt often refers to a parent's sister or an uncle's spouse, with associated cultural and societal expectations of caregiving and nurturing (Sotrin & Ellingson, 2011). In contrast, the Afrikaans term 'tannie' may not always imply a blood relation, nor the same amount of maternal or carer responsibility. Tannie is usually used in the place of a proper noun or pronoun, to show respect to a woman who is older than you, even if the person is not related to you at all.

The Afrikaans term 'tannie' lacks mothering or caring undertones, which may reflect larger cultural ideas about family duties and obligations. In the English-speaking world, the function of an aunt frequently extends beyond biological links to include emotional support, mentoring, and, in some cases, surrogate mothering (Sotrin and Ellingson, 2011). This multifaceted position is especially important in families going through divorce or tragedy when aunts might step in to give additional emotional and practical care to children affected by these events.

The idea of an aunt and its significance in family relations can also be understood through the lens of divorce and family trauma research. Divorce can cause alterations in caregiving obligations and emotional support networks, thereby affecting the roles and expectations of extended family members such as aunts (Amato, 2000), or even non-familial tannies in the Afrikaner culture. In such situations, the lack of a stable mother figure may cause someone to rely more heavily on other female figures, for emotional and practical assistance.

As mentioned in my narrative, I have built an "Army of Mothers" in reaction to the lack or insufficiency of conventional mothering roles in my (teenage and adult) life. By surrounding myself with several women who play various mothering roles, I might strive to construct a more well-rounded and full personality that transcends traditional family structures and societal expectations.

The grammatical variations between the terms aunt and tannie reflect wider cultural beliefs regarding family duties and obligations, notably in the context of caregiving and mothering. Understanding these linguistic and cultural variations is critical for understanding the intricate intersections of family dynamics and identity development, particularly in families going through divorce or trauma.

2.3 FEMALE TEACHERS: AINT IT FUN?



*If it don't hurt right now then just wait
You're not the big fish in the pond no more
You are what they're feeding on*

*~ Ain't it Fun, recorded by Paramore
(written by Williams & York, 2013)*

As a student at university, you imagine yourself as a big fish in a small pond, but as soon as you join the workforce, it can feel as though you are drowning, as written in the song by Williams and York (2013). This song was released the year I had my first register class as a qualified teacher. I had spent the previous four years studying while working full-time as a student teacher, and now I was a “real” teacher. Making that jump from student teacher to teacher, even though I remained at the same school, was quite a shock in terms of what it meant to be employed in the “real world”. The lyrics of another song by Williams and York (2013) state, “Ain’t it fun, living in the real world?” I repeated this line regularly throughout my first year of teaching. Whenever I had an arduous, demanding, chaotic day, I would sing to myself, “Ain’t it fun, living in the real world?” and realise the expansive meaning of “fun” in those lyrics.

I have had the privilege of personally knowing (and having worked with) three inspirational women in educational leadership roles: two principals and one deputy principal. It is worth mentioning that all three are spinsters, which is part of what initially piqued my interest in this study. All three had devoted their time to their schools and excelled in their careers – but was it at the cost of having a family? Was it a conscious or subconscious decision that led to them pursuing careers, rather than having families, and achieving their goals of attaining leadership roles? Are there different pressures on women to attain and succeed in educational leadership roles compared to their male counterparts? Rhodes (2018) adds to this train of thought by stating the following about school principals:

The historical tradition is that of women and men having separate societal roles: men, in the public sphere of work and politics; women, in the private sphere of home and domestic life. Despite the rise of feminism, the notion of gender role suitability, whether through societal or personal views, remains.

While there has been a rise in shared domestic responsibility between men and women, the trends still show that women were more likely to take the bulk of responsibility regardless of whether they were a principal themselves or the partner of one. (p. 21)

Young teachers who have just joined the teaching workforce are faced with financial stress (for example, buying a house), which undoubtedly affects their work and, in turn, increases their professional stress and burnout (Hu et al., 2019). The study conducted by Szigeti et al. (2017) found a significant correlation between depressive symptoms, over-commitment, and overall burnout. The element that had the greatest impact on burnout, particularly in relation to emotional weariness, was age (Maslach et al., 2001). According to Anderson and Iwanicki (1984), several research findings indicate that young educators exhibit notably elevated levels of emotional weariness in comparison to their more experienced counterparts. In addition, it has been shown that female employees experience higher levels of emotional weariness compared to their male counterparts due to the emotional burnout caused by societal pressures (Tikhonova et al., 2019). I acknowledge that there is vast literature on teacher identity in general and specifically on male teacher identity as well. However, the focus of my study was female teacher identity, and thus my literature review will reflect as such.

2.3.1 Female teacher identity

The construction of a female teacher's identity is a multifaceted undertaking that is shaped by a range of elements that encompass individual encounters, societal conventions, and institutional demands. According to Keddie and Mills (2007), female teachers are often expected to conform to traditional gender roles and expectations, such as being nurturing, caring, and supportive, which can shape their professional identity. Furthermore, female educators may encounter difficulties in effectively managing the integration of their personal and professional spheres, particularly when they assume caregiving duties beyond their teaching obligations (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Today, with women dominating the teaching profession in South Africa (they constitute 68 per cent of the teaching force nationally), it would be expected that leadership roles would be equally dominated by women (Davids, 2018a). However, despite those

numbers, men are still ahead in the race when it comes to educational leadership, with 67 per cent of male teachers also being principals (Davids, 2018a). Thus, female teachers are only small fish in the big educational leadership pond, but I hope that these numbers are going to drastically change over the coming years.

Rhodes (2018) suggests that women do not necessarily aspire to leadership roles as “leadership is unconsciously associated with men” (p. 4), and women feel incapable of dedicating the required time to a role that they feel may not belong to them. Some female teachers regard their home life as having greater importance than their work life and decline managerial positions for that reason (Claassen, 2020). To deal with this issue, women who aspire to be educational leaders need to modify their perceptions and limitations, both in relation to outdated, traditional, patriarchal standards and to their own autonomy and agency (Davids, 2018b). Some women believe that it is very difficult to manage both a career as an educational leader and a family (Rhodes, 2018). Even though some women choose to prioritise their families, they still maintain a balance between work and life but feel incapable of devoting the time required to be educational leaders (Rhodes, 2018). According to Ruan and Zheng (2019), there is a disparity in the rates of role conflict between female and male instructors when examining the interplay between their professional and personal lives. Burnout has also been recorded as the highest among female teachers aged between 20 and 30 years due to them balancing work and family life (Tikhonova et al., 2019).

Several external factors influence the decision for women to apply for educational leadership roles and be appointed to these roles. These include responsibilities at home, familial duties, working conditions, sex discrimination, and a lack of support from both colleagues and family (Davids, 2018c). According to McKillop and Moorosi (2017), the empowerment of women from the early stages of their careers is expected to exert a substantial impact on the disparity between male and female educational leaders. In a study by Davids (2018c) in which six female principals from South Africa were interviewed, all reported that lack of support from their families was not their biggest concern; instead, it was their feelings of guilt about not “making enough time for family” (p. 5). Although a profession in teaching is often considered to be

compatible with family life, there is a widely held belief that positions in educational leadership do not offer the same level of family-friendliness (Rhodes, 2018).

Despite these challenges, female teachers have the potential to be powerful role models for their students and to positively impact their lives (Brock & Grady, 2016). To navigate the complexities of constructing a professional identity as a female teacher, it is important to seek mentorship and support from colleagues, and to engage in ongoing reflection and self-assessment (Keddie & Mills, 2007). By embodying qualities such as resilience, perseverance, and empathy, female teachers can inspire their students to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals (Brock & Grady, 2016). In doing so, female teachers can develop a strong sense of self and purpose and make meaningful contributions to their students and their communities.

2.3.2 Female teachers in South Africa

In South Africa, female teachers face unique challenges that influence the construction of their professional identities. The country's history of apartheid and gender-based violence has shaped cultural norms and expectations, which impacts female teachers' experiences in and out of the classroom (Davids, 2018a). Female teachers in South Africa often face a "double burden" of expectations, as they are expected to be caregivers in their personal lives as well as in their roles as teachers (Dorfling, 2016, p. 2). This can create challenges in balancing their personal and professional responsibilities. Additionally, female teachers in South Africa may face discrimination based on their race and ethnicity, as well as their gender (Davids, 2018b).

In this section, I provide a background on female teachers in South Africa by exploring the issue of teaching salaries as it relates to different genders in South Africa. Even though the majority of teachers state that they have a passion for teaching, in the same breath they mention that a teaching salary is low and not enough for the work required. Salary plays a noteworthy role in a female teacher's life; it has an impact on her female teacher identity because it influences the choices she makes during her teaching career. This raises various questions. If a female teacher feels financially stable, will the perceived Afrikaner socio-cultural expectations of family influence her career objectives? Is she stable because of her husband or because of her own salary? Will her husband expect certain "Afrikaner wife" duties from her (maintaining the household

and raising a family), and will that influence her choice to follow a career, or will she rather choose family?

The perceived pressure on an Afrikaner female teacher is to “make sure you marry a rich man” (as I have been told by my Afrikaans peers), rather than focusing on being promoted to positions in the school that earn a higher salary. As a result, when an Afrikaner female teacher is in a new relationship, it is not unusual for her to be overwhelmed with questions about her *partner’s* career – does he make a lot of money, does he have a secure position, will he be able to provide for you and a family one day? Between my colleagues and me, finances and salaries are almost a weekly topic of discussion. It is quietly projected into everyday conversation, that Afrikaner female teachers must make sure that they marry men who can take care of them – because of the previously mentioned average income of teachers.

The socio-cultural expectations imposed on female teachers force them to devote more energy to family life, which undoubtedly has a negative impact on their later career development (Hu et al., 2019). Even though female teachers account for 68 per cent of the teaching workforce (Davids, 2018b), it is difficult for women to be the breadwinner of the family (Napikoski, 2020). Admittedly, salary is a weak incentive because, even if you obtain a higher qualification than the minimum required four-year degree, this will not change your salary notch (Mlambo, 2020) – I can support this statement from personal experience. Thus, the teaching profession is least attractive to individuals with higher levels of education, as they earn less than their counterparts in other professional sectors who also have degrees (Van der Berg & Hofmeyr, 2018).

Most remarks that I have received regarding “marrying a rich man” are from older female teachers who used to earn lower salaries than their male counterparts in previous years. During the early 1990s, trade unions actively participated in the talks surrounding the termination of apartheid and played a significant role in the establishment of a fairer compensation framework for teachers. This framework aimed to rectify the existing salary disparities that disproportionately benefited White male teachers, as documented by Wills (2020). That resulted in the development of a government policy with regard to teacher salaries which was tasked with bringing the salary scales of the entire teaching force into line with those of White male teachers (Armstrong, 2009). This policy was accepted with an impartial salary structure, which

pegged teacher qualifications to different Relative Education Qualification Values (REQVs). These are the levels at which teachers' initial salary packages begin (for example, a four-year post-matriculation qualification was equivalent to REQV 14) (Soudien & Sayed, 2019). Furthermore, this policy comprised a single salary scale (no discrimination between race and gender), three pathways (Post Levels 1 to 3) that allowed for vertical and horizontal progression as well as evaluation for salary progression and professional development (Soudien & Sayed, 2019).

During the apartheid era in South Africa, education departments were divided along racial lines. According to Wills (2020), the implementation of the education apartheid policy led to the development of various curricula for learners and the establishment of diverse forms of power over instructors. According to Soudien and Sayed (2019), teacher wages exhibited variations based on gender and race. Various demographic groupings exhibited varying salary outcomes with White male instructors experiencing the most advantageous remuneration while Black female teachers saw the least favourable compensation (Armstrong, 2009). There were disparities in average earnings across different racial and gender groupings, as evidenced by Armstrong's (2009) findings which indicated that the mean income for Black female teachers was nearly half that of White male teachers. Female teachers could not obtain housing loans nor occupy permanent teaching posts in some education departments (Jacklin, 2001). The aforementioned regulations were established and formally governed based on widely accepted notions of female identities and the interplay between professional and household responsibilities (Jacklin, 2001).

Even though there has been reform in teacher salary scales that accounted for unbiased remuneration, the current economic climate in South Africa means that teachers were and still are poorly paid. Data shows that Post Level 1 teachers – that is, teachers, senior teachers, and master teachers – are in the majority in the sector. They are also the lowest earners, earning between R210 000 per annum and R418 000, depending on the number of years' experience (Mlambo, 2020). Mlambo (2020) further explains that it is very difficult for Post Level 1 teachers to aggressively move up in salary notches (not considering promotion), as it typically takes 10 years to move up 10 salary notches. Also, as a result of the vast number of teachers, the chances of being promoted to higher Post Levels are low (Nkosi, 2020).

Allen Thompson, president of the National Teachers Union (NATU), stated that teachers are resigning because of low salaries with numerous teachers taking the hard decision to resign when their income no longer meets their needs (Nkosi, 2020). Reading information like this was very disheartening for me, as I know the diligent work and hours that teachers put into teaching. Teaching should be done for the love of the occupation, but, unfortunately, you cannot survive solely on love and water.

Despite these challenges, female teachers in South Africa have the potential to be powerful agents of change in their communities. They can serve as role models for their students, particularly girls, and can work to challenge gender-based norms and expectations both in- and outside the classroom (Dorfling, 2016). In order to support female teachers in South Africa, it is important to address the systemic issue of gender-based discrimination and to provide resources and support for balancing personal and professional responsibilities (Davids, 2018b).

2.3.3 The influence of older female teachers on teacher identity construction

Personal experiences, educational background, and interactions with people within the educational system all impact the construction of teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Day & Gu, 2009). Among these prominent people, older female teachers frequently play a critical role in constructing the teacher identity of new educators. Older female teachers frequently act as role models and mentors for younger teachers, providing vital insights, guidance, and support that help shape their teacher identity (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2004). These mentors may exemplify specific teaching philosophies, classroom management tactics, or pedagogical approaches that align with the younger teacher's values and views, affecting their professional growth and identity construction.

Older female teachers, like mothers and aunts in family dynamics, can offer emotional support and nurturing to younger teachers, especially during difficult or uncertain periods (Hargreaves, 2000; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). This emotional support can assist younger teachers in navigating the complexity of the teaching profession, developing resilience, and maintaining a sense of purpose and dedication to their work as teachers.

The influence of older female teachers on teacher identity extends to constructing a shared identity and sense of belonging within the teaching profession (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Luehmann, 2007). Younger and older female teachers can co-construct their professional identities via shared experiences, collaborative learning, and collective reflection, cultivating a feeling of community and mutual respect that enhances their teaching practice and pedagogical methods.

2.3.3.1 Overlap between the concepts of mothering and tannie

The impact of older female teachers on teacher identity construction may be interpreted in the larger context of motherhood's caring and nurturing functions, as well as the already-stated idea of tannie (Sotrin & Ellingson, 2011). In the absence of a traditional mother figure, aunts may step in to provide additional emotional and practical support. Older female teachers may play a similar role in the professional lives of younger teachers, offering mentorship, guidance, and emotional support that contribute to their identity construction.

Older female teachers have a diverse impact on teacher identity construction, including role modelling, mentorship, emotional support, shared identity, and collective belonging. Understanding these effects is critical for understanding the complicated process of teacher identity construction, as well as the interconnection of personal and professional growth in the educational setting. As younger teachers embark on their professional journeys, older female teachers' experience, encouragement, and support are vital resources in shaping their teaching philosophy, pedagogical practices, and overall teacher identity.

2.3.4 The double-bind: Gender roles and work-life balance

The double bind refers to the contradictory cultural demands that women face, particularly when it comes to juggling career and family commitments. Gender roles frequently require women to thrive professionally and in the household, resulting in greater pressure and stress (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This section investigates the obstacles that women encounter in achieving work-life balance as a result of ingrained gender norms and cultural expectations, with a special emphasis on the impact of COVID-19 and post-COVID issues.

Gender roles continue to influence women's professions and home experiences. Traditional gender norms frequently require women to prioritise caring and family obligations above professional goals (Blair-Loy 2003). As a result, women are frequently stuck in a catch-22, where they are expected to thrive at work while still completing family responsibilities. This can result in increased stress, burnout, and difficulty maintaining a good work-life balance (Shockley et al., 2017).

The COVID-19 epidemic increased existing obstacles for women in managing work and family duties. Many women found themselves balancing additional caregiving obligations alongside their professional tasks as schools, day-care facilities, and support agencies closed (Collins et al., 2021). Post-COVID issues remain important impediments for women striving to attain work-life balance. The epidemic has highlighted the systemic disadvantages and vulnerabilities that women experience in the workplace, emphasising the importance of governmental measures and cultural change to help women balance work and family duties (Mann & DiPrete, 2021).

The double bind that women confront in juggling work and home duties owing to established gender norms continues to be a major issue, compounded by the obstacles posed by the COVID-19 epidemic and post-COVID reality. Traditional gender norms and cultural expectations continue to put unnecessary pressure on women, resulting in greater stress, burnout, and difficulty establishing work-life balance.

2.3.3.1 Female teachers: Navigating the double-bind in education

Female teachers, like many women in other professions, have special obstacles when juggling work and family commitments. In the educational sector, female teachers are frequently expected to excel not just in their teaching jobs but also in caregiving and family obligations (Lombard, 2020; Dorcas, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, as many female teachers found themselves balancing remote teaching, caregiving, and household administration at the same time owing to school and childcare facility closures (Collins et al., 2021). The breakdown of public infrastructure during the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on female teachers, particularly those from low-income households and marginalised communities, underscoring the systematic disadvantages that women confront in the educational

sector (Alon et al., 2020). Despite these obstacles, female teachers continue to show resilience, creativity, and dedication as they navigate the complexities of work-life balance, advocating for policy interventions, organisational support, and societal change to foster a more equitable and inclusive educational environment for all.

Female teachers, similar to other women, have substantial obstacles in managing work and family duties as a result of ingrained gender norms and cultural expectations. The obstacles posed by the COVID-19 epidemic and post-COVID reality, such as the breakdown of public infrastructure and increasing caregiving obligations, intensify female teachers' double-bind within society. Despite these hurdles, female teachers continue to display tenacity and passion for their jobs, urging for cultural change to overcome the systematic disadvantages that women confront in the educational sector. As society continues to navigate the complexities of gender roles, work-life balance, and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgent need for support, recognition, and advocacy to foster a more equitable and inclusive educational environment for all educators, including female teachers.

2.4 FRAMING MY AUTOETHNOGRAPHY IN THEORY: THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC



*Thank you for the music, the songs I'm singing
Thanks for all the joy they're bringing
Who can live without it? I ask in all honesty
What would life be?*

*~ Thank you for the music, recorded by ABBA
(written by Anderson & Ulvaeus, 1977)*

Music continually plays an integral role in my life. Particular songs evoke specific memories and I instantly get transported to a time and place in my past. Being creative brings me a certain peaceful mental state, and when I was pondering about conceptualising this thesis, I immediately knew that I wanted to incorporate my love of music and the memories that they evoke from me.

Autoethnography involves a great deal of memory work and self-reflection, and, by incorporating lyrics as part of that process, I knew that I would be able to conjure deeper memories and reflect on them accordingly. Music frequently exhibits a correlation with certain occurrences in an individual's life. The performance of a

composition from the past has the potential to evoke recollections of a previous period characterised by joviality and camaraderie with childhood acquaintances (Chou & Lien, 2010). Hearing the song in the future can bring back the initial memory cue link; thus, memory is enhanced both cognitively and from a learning standpoint (Zagerman, 2018). During my Grade 11 year, my high school performed *Mama Mia* (a play based on the music of ABBA); thus, ABBA's songs have always held a special place in my heart. One night while out with friends many years later, ABBA's song *Thank You for the Music* (Anderson & Ulvaeus, 1977) played, and while belting out every single lyric, my memories of the school play arose and the significance of the lyrics became evident.

That night, I noted the significance that music and lyrics were having on me in my research journal and that I should incorporate them into my study. The majority of the study focuses on the music itself, with a particular emphasis on its emotional–sensual characteristics and impacts, while ignoring the function of the lyrics and failing to identify the significance of the semantic content of the lyrics (Chou & Lien, 2010). In the next section, I discuss feminism as a metatheory and the integration of social role theory with intersectionality in this research study.

2.4.1 Feminism as metatheory

In this autoethnographic research study, feminism serves as a metatheory for examining the complex nature of identity. According to Bates (2005), a metatheory refers to the underlying philosophical framework that guides a theory. It encompasses a foundational collection of concepts and principles that dictate the manner in which a particular phenomenon of interest within a certain discipline should be comprehended and investigated. Metatheories are our assumptions about social interactions in the world which guide our research and, in turn, our theorising (Joosten, 2015). Feminist theory, a prominent field in sociology, diverges from the male-centric perspective and instead centres its assumptions, analytical framework, and subject matter on the experiences and viewpoints of women (Crossman, 2020). As this study followed my experiences as a female teacher, feminist metatheory could be employed. Abend (2008) states the purpose of including theory as:

Theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena and, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions. The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. (p.1)

2.4.1.1 *The rise of feminism: Riding waves and growing branches*

Feminism is often categorised as three waves which represent distinct periods of feminist activism and thought. The first wave of feminism originated during the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. Its primary emphasis was on women's suffrage and legal entitlements, with the primary objective being the attainment of women's political rights through the ability to vote (Malinowska, 2020). First-wave feminists also advocated for property rights, access to education, and employment opportunities (Offen, 2000).

The second wave of feminism emerged in the 1960s and continued into the 1980s (Malinowska, 2020). It broadened the feminist agenda beyond suffrage and legal rights to address issues such as reproductive rights, gender inequality in the workplace, sexuality, and domestic violence (Loney-Howes, 2019). Second-wave feminism sought to challenge cultural norms and patriarchal structures and saw the rise of feminist thinkers and activists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, and Gloria Steinem (Tong, 2009).

The third wave of feminism emerged in the 1990s (Malinowska, 2020). It is characterised by a more inclusive and intersectional approach to feminism, addressing the experiences and concerns of women from diverse backgrounds (Titton, 2019). Third-wave feminism emphasises the importance of individual agency, celebrates diverse expressions of femininity, and focuses on issues such as reproductive justice, LGBTQ+ rights, and global feminism (Canon, 2020). Prominent voices in the third wave include Bell Hooks, Judith Butler, and Kimberlé Crenshaw (Heywood, 2017). Crenshaw also rekindled interest in the use of intersectionality theory and intersectional feminism in modern academia (Cerenzo et al., 2020).

According to Mohajan (2022), a new form of feminism known as fourth-wave feminism began around 2012 and is dependent on online social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and so on. The fourth wave emerged in an effort to empower women and advance gender equality in society through the utilisation of internet resources to express their personal narratives (Munro, 2013). Through the use of online social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Tumblr, and blogs, women have been afforded the opportunity to expeditiously disseminate their personal encounters pertaining to sexual assault, violence, and harassment to a global audience.

Apart from being categorised as three (or four) waves, feminist metatheory also encompasses various perspectives and branches that analyse and critique the foundations, methods, and assumptions of feminist theories (Crossman, 202). While there is no universally agreed upon classification, there are some commonly recognised branches of feminist metatheory.

- *Standpoint Feminism*. Standpoint feminism argues that knowledge is socially situated and influenced by one's social position (Gurung, 2020). It emphasises the perspectives of marginalised and oppressed groups, particularly women, who have unique insights into social structures. Standpoint feminists argue that these perspectives offer a more accurate and complete understanding of gender and power dynamics (Hartsock, 1983).
- *Poststructuralist Feminism*. Poststructuralist feminism draws on poststructuralist theory to analyse the power dynamics and discourses that shape gender (Butler, 1990). It emphasises the deconstruction of binary categories, such as male–female, and questions the stability and naturalness of gender identities (Williamson, 2020). Poststructuralist feminists argue that gender is a social construct that is constantly produced and reproduced through language and discourse (Butler, 1990).
- *Intersectional Feminism*. Intersectional feminism acknowledges that gender is not the only determinant of an individual's experiences of privilege and oppression. It understands that gender interacts with other social categories, including race, class, sexuality, and disability, hence determining the complex and multifaceted nature of these experiences (Cerenzo et al., 2020). This perspective, developed

by Crenshaw, highlights the interconnected nature of systems of power and calls for an understanding of feminism that is attentive to multiple intersecting identities (Crenshaw, 1989).

- *Transnational Feminism*. Transnational feminism focuses on the global dimensions of gender inequality and activism (Mohanty, 2003). It examines how power operates across borders, highlighting issues such as colonialism, imperialism, globalisation, and migration (Meskimmon, 2020). Transnational feminists argue for an inclusive and globally informed feminist perspective that addresses the diverse experiences of women worldwide (Mohanty, 2003).
- *Ecofeminism*. Ecofeminism explores the connections between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature. It highlights the parallel domination and subordination of both women and the environment, emphasising the need for an ecological perspective in feminist theory (Foster, 2021). Ecofeminists argue for a more sustainable and interconnected approach that challenges patriarchal and anthropocentric systems (Merchant, 1980).

It is important to note that the categorisation of feminist metatheory branches can vary, and scholars often engage with multiple perspectives simultaneously, recognising the complexity and diversity within feminist thought (Few-Demo & Allen, 2020). Feminism as a conceptual framework emphasises the importance of acknowledging intersectionality and the social construction of gender, race, and class in shaping individuals' experiences (Hill-Collins, 2000). Feminist theory encourages a critical reflection on the power structures that shape one's identity and how those structures can perpetuate social inequalities (Crossman, 2020).

In applying feminist theory to autoethnographic research, the researcher can explore the impact of gender, race, and class on personal experiences and how these experiences intersect to shape identity (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Additionally, feminist theory encourages the use of personal experiences to uncover larger social and political issues, providing a valuable perspective on the lived experiences of individuals from marginalised groups (Reinharz, 1992). Through the lens of feminist theory, this autoethnographic study aimed to examine the complex intersections of socio-cultural expectations in constructing my identity, as well as how my experiences

related to broader social issues related to my culture (Afrikaner) and my employment (teaching).

2.4.1.2 *Feminism in this research study*

Feminist metatheory provides a lens through which to examine the gendered dimensions of social roles and identities, making it a useful framework for integrating intersectionality and social role theory (Harding, 1987). Feminist metatheory is a framework that focuses on examining the ways in which gender intersects with other social identities and power structures. It is a useful framework for integrating intersectionality and social role theory, as it provides a lens through which to examine the gendered dimensions of social roles and identities.

Feminist qualitative research encompasses a diverse array of qualitative approaches. Significant first scholarly inquiries arose from the feminist postmodern shift within the field of anthropology (Behar & Gordon, 1995). This paradigm shift was a direct response to the disregard exhibited by male anthropologists towards the gendered ramifications of ethnographic research. Feminist theory serves as a critical lens that illuminates societal problems, trends, and challenges that may otherwise be disregarded or misinterpreted due to the prevailing male-centric perspective in the field of social theory (Crossman, 2020). The historical exclusion of women and girls from social theory and social science has prompted a significant emphasis within feminist theory on examining their interactions and experiences within society. This emphasis aims to prevent the omission of half the world's population from our perceptions and comprehension of social forces, relations, and issues (Crossman, 2020).

Certain feminist ideas offer insight into the disparities between women's experiences and social positioning in comparison to males (Crossman, 2020). Cultural feminists examine the distinct values associated with womanhood and femininity as contributing factors to the differential social experiences of men and women (Crossman, 2020). Feminist metatheory, which examines the socio-cultural expectations that I experienced as a woman, especially as a female Afrikaner teacher, and how I engaged with those experiences made it a suitable framework for this study.

In my research study, I incorporated an intersectional feminist approach to better understand the construction of a female Afrikaner teacher's identity. Intersectional

feminism emphasises the intersection and interplay of multiple social identities, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, in shaping individuals' experiences of privilege and oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). By adopting an intersectional lens, I aimed to capture the unique challenges faced by me at the intersection of my multiple identities (woman, Afrikaner, and teacher) and acknowledged the interconnected systems that influence my life.

2.4.2 Intersectionality as theory

Significant progress has been achieved in the field of study pertaining to the development of racial and ethnic identification, sexual orientation, and gender identity (Cerenzo et al., 2020). Academic scholars have underscored the need to expand the scope of identity research to encompass intersectional lived experiences of individuals who face many forms of marginalisation, specifically focusing on gender and gender-diverse individuals belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups (Bowleg, 2008; Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1991; Hancock, 2007).

The concept of intersectionality emerged as a theoretical framework aimed at comprehending the interconnected nature of social oppression encountered by marginalised groups (Syed, 2010). According to Syed (2010), intersectionality can serve as an analytical framework to comprehend the complexities of systemic oppression. The seminal works of Beale (1969) and Bambara (1970) initiated the emergence of the concept of intersectionality within feminist discourse when they explored the interconnected challenges faced by African-American women in the United States. During the 1970s and 1980s, intersectional techniques were often employed within feminist academic contexts. However, it was Crenshaw's (1991) publication "Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of colour" that revitalised interest in intersectionality and garnered broader acceptance in the realm of social sciences. Crenshaw employed a particular case study to exemplify the tangible and enduring impact of structural and political intersectionality on the experiences of women of colour. Ultimately, Crenshaw, in conjunction with other scholars who focus on intersectionality, aimed to demonstrate the manner in which women of colour are rendered unseen and face greater disadvantages when the analytical frameworks of diversity and multiculturalism are employed to examine their lived realities (Crenshaw, 1991).

In more recent times, feminist psychologists have made persuasive cases for how intersectionality has the potential to advance research and better reflect and address the social and health needs of people who face many forms of marginalisation (Bowleg, 2008; Cole, 2009; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016). Bowleg (2008) argues that the use of an intersectional approach necessitates a thorough investigation into the many ways in which disparities rooted in race, sexuality, gender, and/or sexual orientation become evident across all aspects of the research process, encompassing measurement, analysis, and interpretation. In order to adopt an intersectional approach, it is imperative to recognise the interconnectedness and mutual influence of social identity and inequality (Cerenzo et al., 2020).

The utilisation of intersectionality encompasses both conventional and unconventional approaches to examining and comprehending the multifaceted identities of women, as well as the obstacles they encounter (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). An illustration of this is the examination of the intricate interplay between race, gender, and class within the labour market, which prompts an inquiry into the manners in which governing bodies establish systems of authority pertaining to identity, reproduction, and the formation of familial structures (Cho et al., 2013). The concept of intersectionality allows for a broader understanding of gender and feminism by including the impact of individual perspectives and acknowledging the interconnected nature of both oppressive and privileged experiences within different social settings (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). The incorporation of culture is essential when examining the intersection of gender within an analytical framework since it significantly shapes the experiences of those identifying as women.

Intersectionality, when explored properly, is a useful tool for investigating how competing or overlapping identities impact the way in which people in society see life (Bhopal, 2020). Individually, women experience their gender and other intersecting oppressions in different circumstances; what is oppressive in one context may be a privilege in another (Samuels & Ross-Sheriff, 2008). I was able to acquire a more sophisticated knowledge of identities by incorporating other existing ideas into the intersectionality framework (Syed, 2010). For this study, I inserted social role theory to work in conjunction with intersectionality. The incorporation of social role theory and intersectionality aided my understanding of how intersecting social identities of race

(Afrikaner) and gender (female teachers) become apparent in various circumstances (Syed, 2010).

2.5 DISCUSSING SOCIAL ROLE THEORY

A human being is created, modelled, and ruled from the outside; your inner self may be formed by your personality and moral system, but governance and the influence of others are important external factors. Although a person may appear to be battling for freedom, the battle is actually for a new type of relationship that will produce or confine that person in a different way (Kumar, 2022). Being human entails continually being defined from the outside (Falkiewicz, 1980). Individuals who wish to disagree with the standards imposed by the community must appeal to additional norms established by society (Greczko, 2022). Gender differences and similarities in conduct reflect gender role views, which, in turn, indicate society's understanding of the social positions of men and women in it (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Gender roles are socially constructed sets of concepts that are firmly rooted in the demands of productive activity within a society (Eagly, 1997). They do not arise arbitrarily from the division of labour by gender.

Social psychologist Alice H. Eagly, who is known for her work on the psychology of gender, was the first person to develop social role theory. She initially proposed social role theory in 1987 in her book, *Sex Differences in Social Behaviour: A Social Role Interpretation*. Her early strategy emphasised the link between social conduct and gender roles, and she provided a social psychology framework for understanding gender (Krainc, 2021). She thought that adult social positions had a stronger influence on a person's performance of distinct male and female behaviours than biological characteristics or early socialisation (Eagly, 1987).

All human behaviour is socially regulated; for example, society governs the sort of clothing worn or the manner in which food is consumed (Greczko, 2022). According to Falkiewicz (1980), human beings "only exist to the degree that they are felt and experienced by others" (p. 37), and the purpose of a human being is to leave an imprint on society so that "not all of that being's life is wasted" (p. 48). Even if it acts via individuals (objects), the creator of action – the active subject – is always a community. Similarly, because thinking is a "social process" (Greczko, 2022), the creator of

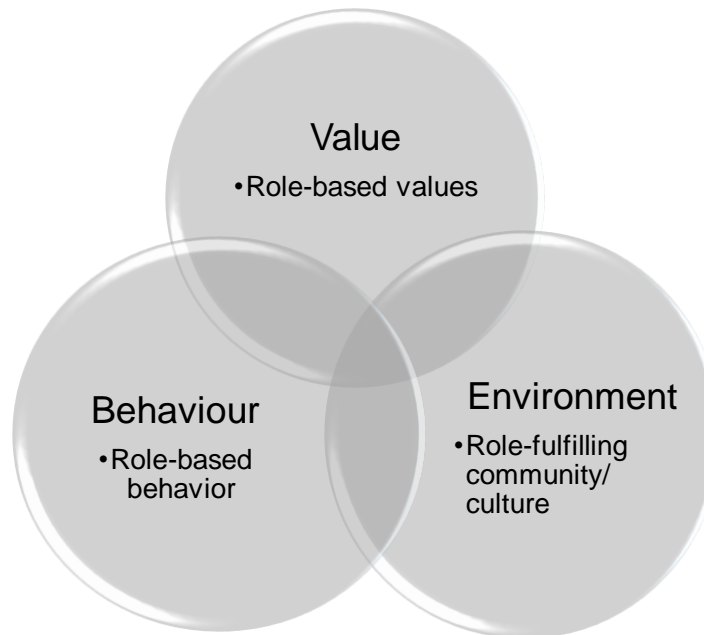
thought is always a society (or culture). Social role theory, like research on the behavioural validation of stereotypes and other expectancies, assumes that people communicate gender-stereotypical expectations through social interactions and can directly persuade the targets of these expectations to engage in behaviour that confirms these expectations (Eagly, 1997).

The fundamental ideas of social role theory are gender stereotypes and gender roles. Social roles are still divided as a result of gender stereotypes and ideas about men and women. People's behaviour in each social position has an impact on social roles as well. When a person is aware of and content with the benefits and costs connected with their social behaviour, it leads to predictable behaviour (Kumar, 2022). People are prone to adhering to gender stereotypes as a result of gender roles or the activities expected of men and women. Correspondence bias, according to social role theory, enables youngsters to pick up on gender norms and stereotypes early in life (Krainc, 2021).

The phrase "correspondence bias" refers to people's proclivity to form views on features based on behaviours they observe (Krainc, 2021, p. 1). Correspondence bias creates gender stereotypes that imply specific features and behaviours are a product of heredity and social experiences rather than societal influences (Kumar, 2022). It is possible to assess a person's social function by considering their social status (environment), the behaviours associated with that status (behaviour), or the normal behaviours of their social group (values), as illustrated in Figure 2.3 (Kumar, 2022).

Figure 2.3

Influencing Variables in the Formation of Social Roles (Kumar, 2022)



The rise of feminism is perfectly consistent with social role theory, which holds that women's shifting vocational positions should result in a revised female gender role that reflects modern-day women's productive employment (Eagly, 1997). Social role theory provides a framework for understanding both the stability and evolution of gender roles, as well as the accompanying behavioural gender disparities (Eagly & Wood, 2012). This theory helped me to comprehend the impact of socio-cultural norms on the development of my female Afrikaner teacher identity.

2.5.1 Integrating intersectionality and social role theory

Autoethnography is a research method that uses personal experiences and self-reflection to explore cultural and social phenomena. Intersectionality refers to the interconnectedness of social identities such as race, gender, and class, and how they shape an individual's experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). Social role theory posits that individuals are defined by their social roles, which influence their behaviours and attitudes (Eagly, 1997).

Research frequently misses the opportunity to examine the effects of overlapping identities on educational experiences and trajectories (Bhopal, 2020). Incorporating intersectionality in an autoethnographic study involves acknowledging and examining

the ways in which multiple social identities intersect to shape experiences. This intersectionality approach to autoethnography enables researchers to capture a more comprehensive picture of the experiences being studied. As Stacey (1988, p. 5) asserts, intersectionality provides an understanding of the “complexity and specificity of the interlocking systems of oppression”. A study that integrates intersectionality, social role theory, and feminist metatheory might explore the experiences of working-class women of colour in leadership positions (Crenshaw, 1991). Such a study would seek to understand how the intersection of race, gender, and class would have shaped these women’s experiences in their leadership roles and how social roles and expectations associated with their gender and race would have intersected to shape their experiences (Eagly, 1987).

Integrating social role theory into an autoethnographic study involves examining how an individual’s social roles shape their experiences. Social roles include a range of identities, such as a parent, student, worker, and member of a community. For example, a researcher conducting an autoethnographic study on motherhood may examine how her role as a mother shapes her experiences at work and in her personal life. Understanding the impact of social roles on experiences is important in understanding how individuals navigate different spheres of their lives. As Eagly (1987, p. 4) explains, “Social roles influence behaviour by providing expectations for how individuals should act.”

To use intersectionality and social role theory in an autoethnographic study, I had to first begin by reflecting on my own identity and social roles. This self-reflection enabled me to understand the ways in which my experiences were shaped by my social identities and socio-cultural expectations. Additionally, I considered how my experiences might have differed from those of others with different social identities or roles. As Kim (2018, p. 2) notes, autoethnography requires a “reflexive, introspective, and collaborative approach to research”. By utilising an intersectionality and social role theory approach to autoethnography, I was able to provide a nuanced and detailed understanding of the phenomena being studied, namely the influence of socio-cultural expectations on the construction of my female Afrikaner teacher identity.

2.6 REVIEWING ALLIED AUTOETHNOGRAPHY PROJECTS

This section provides an overview of the existing autoethnographic projects that have been published. I analysed three distinct categories of autoethnographies that were relevant to my research study, namely South African educational autoethnographies, autoethnographies related to teachers and teacher identity, and autoethnographies related to family abuse, trauma, and recovery.

2.6.1 South African educational autoethnographies

Autoethnography in the South African educational context provides a deep and nuanced perspective on the intricacies and problems that exist in the country's education landscape. South African educational autoethnographies offer unique insights into the interconnections of race, culture, identity, and pedagogy via personal narratives and reflective perspectives. This section briefly discusses significant themes and findings from autoethnographic research done within the South African educational context, focusing on major works by Lombard (2020), Dorcas (2020), Lewis (2019), Mitchell (2016), and Farmer (2021). By evaluating these works together, I can display the distinctive contributions and insights provided by South African educational autoethnographies.

Lombard (2020) and Dorcas (2020) explore the problems and potential of teaching and learning in post-apartheid South Africa, taking into account the country's unique cultural and linguistic terrain. Lombard's study looks at how white teachers navigate the issues of race and privilege in primarily black schools, emphasising the significance of critical self-reflection and cultural sensitivity in creating inclusive educational settings. Dorcas (2020) also focuses on black teachers' experiences, delving into the interconnections of race, identity, and pedagogy in the post-apartheid era. Both studies emphasise the need for educators to critically engage with themes of race, culture, and identity in order to promote equitable and culturally responsive educational methods.

Lewis (2019) and Mitchell (2016) broaden the study of South African educational autoethnographies by focusing on students' experiences and their navigation of the educational system. Lewis's research delves into the experiences of black students in higher education, namely the obstacles and barriers they encounter in obtaining and

excelling in tertiary education. The study emphasises the need to give assistance and resources to marginalised students in order to foster educational fairness and social justice. Mitchell (2016), on the other hand, focuses on teachers' and students' experiences in rural schools, delving into the particular problems and possibilities that rural education presents in South Africa. The study emphasises the significance of community participation, cultural relevance, and holistic approaches to education in promoting better educational results in rural areas.

South African educational autoethnographies provide an important lens for comprehending the complexity and subtleties of the country's educational scene. The works by Lombard (2020), Dorcas (2020), Lewis (2019), Mitchell (2016), and Farmer (2021) all focus on the interconnections of race, culture, identity, and pedagogy in South African education. These studies emphasise the significance of critical self-reflection, cultural sensitivity, community participation, and equal access to education in creating inclusive and socially fair educational settings. As South Africa grapples with the legacy of apartheid and strives for educational change, autoethnographic research continues to provide critical insights for guiding educational policy, practice, and research.

2.6.2 Autoethnographies related to teachers and their identity

The literature on autoethnography in the context of teacher and teaching identity provides a comprehensive knowledge of the complexity of the teaching profession. Scholars have conducted autoethnographic studies on numerous aspects of teacher identity, including personal narratives and cultural influences, as well as affective elements and intersectionalities. This overview draws on significant findings from five influential articles: Austin & Hickey (2007), Yazan (2019), Sahling & de Carvalho (2021), Parke (2018), and Meyer (2005). These studies together highlight the importance of autoethnography as a methodological technique for investigating and comprehending the diverse character of teacher identity. This section offers a review of each article's results and contributions, emphasising the many views and themes that emerge from their body of work.

The difficulties of teacher identity using autoethnographic research. Their research focuses on teachers' personal narratives, stressing the relationship between personal experiences and professional positions. They claim that autoethnography provides a crucial lens for understanding the changing nature of teacher identity by allowing teachers to reflect on their experiences and negotiate their identities in a variety of educational contexts (Austin & Hickey, 2007).

Yazan (2019) contributes to the issue of teacher identity by investigating the impact of language and culture in forming teachers' self-perceptions. Yazan's autoethnographic research emphasises the importance of language and cultural elements in shaping teaching methods and identity development. The study emphasises the need for teachers to critically engage with their cultural and linguistic origins in order to create inclusive and equitable learning environments (Yazan, 2019).

The emotional components of teacher identity using autoethnographic research are explored by Sahling and de Carvalho (2021). Their research sheds light on the emotional labour required for teaching and how it affects teachers' identities. They suggest that autoethnography allows teachers to express their emotional experiences, which contributes to a better understanding of the emotive components of the teaching profession (Sahling & de Carvalho, 2021).

Parke (2018) investigates the intersectionality of teacher identity, specifically how gender, racism, and other social characteristics interact with teaching roles. Parke's autoethnographic tales illustrate the obstacles and possibilities that teachers confront as they navigate numerous social identities. The study emphasises the necessity of recognising and addressing intersectionalities in teacher education and professional development (Parke, 2018).

Meyer (2005) provides a historical perspective on teacher identity via autoethnographic reflections. The research examines the evolution of teacher identity over time, emphasising the impact of educational policies, societal shifts, and personal experiences. Meyer claims that autoethnography may be used to chronicle and analyse the historical trajectories of teacher identity, providing insights into the changing character of the teaching profession (Meyer, 2005).

Autoethnography is a useful methodological tool for investigating the varied characteristics of teacher identity. These studies emphasise the role of personal narratives, cultural and linguistic variables, emotional aspects, intersectionalities, and historical settings in developing teachers' identities. Autoethnographic inquiry allows teachers to critically reflect on their experiences, negotiate their identities, and contribute to a better understanding of the intricacies of the teaching profession. By adding my autoethnography to the research sphere, I hope to add to the growing body of knowledge on autoethnography as well as autoethnography in the context of teacher identity.

2.6.3 Autoethnographies related to family abuse, trauma, and recovery

Autoethnographic research on familial abuse, trauma, and healing provides valuable insights into the lived experiences of people dealing with these complicated challenges. These studies enable survivors to relate their personal stories, providing light on the emotional, psychological, and social aspects of abuse and its repercussions. This section summarises the important conclusions from five inspiring articles: McMillan & Ramirez (2016), Tamas (2011), Adams and Manning (2015), Olson (2014), and Ronal (1996).

The research on autoethnography and familial abuse demonstrates the persistent influence of abuse on people's lives, which includes emotional anguish, damaged self-esteem, and strained interpersonal connections. McMillan and Ramirez (2016), as well as Tamas (2011), emphasise the emotional and psychological toll of abuse, focusing on survivors' feelings of shame, guilt, and dread. These studies highlight the need to recognise and address the emotional difficulties involved with abuse as part of the rehabilitation process.

In addition to emotional problems, Adams and Manning (2015) and Olson (2014) investigate the social components of familial violence, namely how societal norms, cultural expectations, and institutional responses might help or hinder survivors' recovery journeys. Adams and Manning (2015) emphasise the importance of social support networks in building resilience and promoting recovery, but Olson (2014) criticises societal stigma and victim-blaming attitudes, which frequently worsen survivors' suffering.

Furthermore, the literature emphasises the transformational power of healing from family trauma. Ronal (1996) offers a historical view on healing, following survivors from victimhood to empowerment. Ronal's research highlights survivors' resilience and fortitude as they traverse the challenges of rehabilitation, emphasising the value of self-empowerment, agency, and reclaiming one's story.

Autoethnographic research on familial abuse, trauma, and recovery provides a thorough grasp of the intricacies and problems that survivors experience. These studies provide light on the emotional, psychological, and social aspects of abuse, emphasising its widespread influence on people's lives. Despite the severe hurdles of abuse, the literature emphasises survivors' perseverance, fortitude, and transformational potential on their path to recovery. By sharing their own stories, survivors help to create a more nuanced knowledge of familial violence, trauma, and the complex process of healing and recovery.

2.6 CONCLUSION: DIT RAAK BETER AS JY OUER RAAK



Dit raak beter as jy ouer raak

Ek het niks meer nodig nie

Miskien weet ek eintlik nie

Miskien praat ek net te veel

*~ Dit Raak Beter (As jy Ouer Raak), recorded by Francois van Coke
(written by Badenhorst, 2017)*

Translation:

It gets better as you get older

I don't need anything anymore

Maybe I don't really know

Maybe I just talk too much

This literature review has explored several key themes relevant to the influence of socio-cultural expectations on the construction of a female Afrikaner teacher's identity. I began by discussing socio-cultural expectations and exploring how these expectations shape and influence the formation of individual identity. From there, I moved on to examine the establishment of Afrikaner culture and identity, tracing the historical and cultural factors that have contributed to the development of Afrikaners' unique sense of self.

Next, I explored the ways in which female teachers negotiate their identities within this context, discussing the challenges and opportunities they face as they navigate the intersection of gender, culture, and profession. Finally, I discussed the conceptual framework for this study, by reviewing feminism as a metatheory and integrating social role theory with intersectionality. Through this review, I have gained a deeper understanding of the complex nature of identity formation and negotiation, as well as the ways in which broader cultural and historical contexts can shape individual experiences. This review serves as a foundation for the study that follows.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY



*So scared of failure that we fail to try
Turning around before the finish line
Gotta fall for a minute before you can fly*

*~ Daydream, recorded by Lily Meola
(written by Brown, Meola & Chapman, 2021)*

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Conducting research can be a daunting task. Truthfully, I wanted to discontinue my journey of writing this research study quite a few times these past few years. On one of these days, the song by Brown, Meola and Chapman (2021) started playing and I felt re-energised to at least try again and not end before I reached the finish line. Music and its lyrics have had a profound influence on my emotional well-being, identity, and overall motivation. Using music as part of my conceptual framework was imperative, as it was part of me. Subsequently, the research design – autoethnography – also became part of me.

The qualitative research paradigm (Edwards, 2021) is a widely used approach in social science research, and one of its popular subfields is autoethnography. Autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology that integrates elements of autobiography and ethnography to investigate personal experiences within a cultural framework (Ellis, 2011). It allows the researcher to analyse and interpret their experiences, which can provide unique and valuable insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

According to Bochner and Ellis (2002), autoethnography is “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (p. 737). Autoethnography can be used to explore various topics, such as identity, culture, and social interactions, among others. This approach is often used in the social sciences and humanities to explore personal experiences and cultural phenomena (Ellis, 2011). This research design is particularly useful when the researcher’s personal experiences are the focus of the investigation. It allows for a deeper understanding of the researcher’s own perspective while also shedding light on broader societal issues (Edwards, 2021). Autoethnography provides an opportunity

for the researcher to reflect on their experiences, which can lead to a richer understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

In this chapter, I first mention my paradigmatic stance on the qualitative research methodology. Then, I discuss the research design used in this study, which is autoethnography. I elaborate on arts-based research and the reason for incorporating vignettes and music in my study and refer to my novel term lyricvignettes. Next, I detail the data collecting and analytic strategies and the quality criteria employed in this study. Finally, I discuss the ethical considerations of conducting autoethnography as a research design.

3.2 MY PARADIGMATIC STANCES



*Everything you lose is a step you take
So, take the moment and taste it
You've got no reason to be afraid
You're on your own kid, yeah you can face this*
*~ You're on your own kid, recorded by Taylor Swift
(written by Swift, 2022)*

The research paradigm is the underlying philosophical perspective or worldview that governs the researcher's approach to the study, such as positivism, interpretivism, or critical theory. A paradigm can be explained as a "collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research" (Peel, 2020, p. 5). The researcher's philosophical assumption is what forms the research paradigm. According to Rehman and Alharthi (2016), the research paradigm exposes how we see the real world around us, the ontology, and what we know about the world, the epistemology. As a result, the research paradigm influences how we create new information about ourselves and society.

My personal paradigm through which I conduct my life is illustrated when Swift (2022) mentions in her song that loss does not mean losing and that one should live in the moment. As I have grown older, I began believing that everything happens for a reason and that one should look towards the future and not the past. This is how I perceive my personal reality, and this reality is what has formed the basis of this research study's philosophical assumptions. In this section, I explain the ontological and

epistemological perspectives as well as the methodological paradigms that are employed in my research study.

3.2.1 Ontological paradigm

Ontology may be defined as our perspectives on the universe and how we see reality, such as wondering “what kind of being the human being is” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 31) or pondering “the nature of phenomena, entities, or social reality” (Mason, 2001, p. 14). Ontological perceptions pertain to many perspectives on reality, such as truths and views, subject and object, or deeds and actions (Hennink et al., 2020). When it is anticipated that reality is being researched to include basic motives, meanings, beliefs, and perceptions, qualitative research can apply ontological views (Hennink et al., 2020).

The ontological premise asserts that social reality can be comprehended through words and within levels of individual awareness – the realist or nominalist perspective (Cohen et al., 2007). The nominalist posture, which is characterised as the importance of the participants’ internal and subjective experiences (Maree, 2019), was used in this study. Thus, it was my lived experiences as a female Afrikaner teacher that were viewed as significant. The influence of socio-cultural expectations on the construction of my female Afrikaner teacher identity was seen as an internal understanding that I needed to face.

3.2.2 Epistemological paradigm

For this study, I used the interpretive epistemological paradigm. The term “interpretivism” was first used in the context of social science research by the German sociologist Max Weber in the early 20th century (Weber, 1949). However, it was not until the 1980s that the term gained wider use in the field of social science research, particularly in the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and communication studies (Denzin, 1989). The term is commonly associated with qualitative research methods that seek to understand the subjective experiences, meanings, and interpretations of individuals and groups (Morrow & Torres, 2002).

The interpretivist philosophical stance holds that there is no one reality that exists and that it varies throughout time and space (Maree, 2019). Interpretivism deals with the

fluidity of human behaviour (Luitel & Dahal, 2021) and generally tries to comprehend occurrences by the meanings that individuals attribute to them (Maree, 2019). The interpretivist researcher assumes that knowledge and experience are subjective in nature (Carcary, 2009) and focuses on describing individuals' feelings and experiences. The interpretivist researcher places emphasis on the process by which humans interpret experiences and develop their understanding of the world. Interpretivist researchers depend on the data they get from participants and how they analyse this data contributes to the intricacy, profundity, and multifaceted nature of the phenomena under investigation (Maree, 2019). Researchers strive to comprehend the lives, emotions, and daily encounters of participants, aiming to cultivate an empathic comprehension of their subjects' emotional states (Rubin & Babbie, 2013). To fully comprehend the phenomenon being studied, interpretative researchers need to provide detailed descriptions (Luitel & Dahal, 2021).

The interpretative paradigm is characterised by subjectivity. The interpretive researcher assumes the role of the principal instrument in the process of conducting, collecting, and interpreting data (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Furthermore, the interpretive paradigm fosters a context-based explanation of the phenomenon because it is founded on the subjective experiences of people's thoughts, beliefs, and values connected to social actions (Luitel & Dahal, 2021). By using the interpretivist paradigm, I explored the influence of socio-cultural expectations on the construction of my female Afrikaner teacher identity.

3.2.3 Methodological paradigm

The term methodology pertains to the systematic approach employed in collecting research data and acquiring information about the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The selection of the technique used in each research study is influenced by the underlying ontological and epistemological viewpoints employed (Hennink, et al., 2020). This research study employed a qualitative methodological framework.

The qualitative methodological paradigm is a research methodology that focuses on investigating and understanding the intricacies of human experience and social phenomena through non-numerical data collection and analysis methods (Hennink et al., 2020). It distinguishes itself by focusing on context, meaning, and interpretation,

with the primary purpose of producing in-depth, contextually rich insights rather than generalisable conclusions (Edwards, 2020). Qualitative research employs a variety of approaches, including interviews, observations, content analysis, and ethnography, allowing researchers to delve into the complexities of human behaviour, beliefs, and culture (Denzin et al., 2023). This paradigm recognises subjectivity while also fostering reflexivity and seeing the researcher as a vital aspect of the research process (Edwards, 2020). In recent years, qualitative research has earned a reputation for providing significant insights into a wide range of subjects, from psychology and sociology to education and health, leading to a better understanding of the social environment (Kelly, 2023).

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is characterised as a technique that seeks to delve into and comprehend the significance attributed by participants to their personal or societal problems. This approach refrains from altering the data and instead offers a comprehensive interpretation of the study being undertaken (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative researcher studies individuals in their own environment, hence, with this study, I studied my own environment and how my identity was constructed by that environment as a female Afrikaner teacher.

3.3 AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AS RESEARCH DESIGN

Once the research paradigm is established, the research design can be developed. It outlines the plan for conducting the research, including the methods and techniques that will be used to collect and analyse the data. The research design should be informed by the chosen research paradigm and should be structured in a way that allows the researcher to answer the research questions. Whereas the methodological paradigm is the overall approach to research, the research design provides details of the processes in terms of research instruments and how the data will be collected and analysed (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

I employed autoethnography as a research design. The methodology employed in this study is qualitative in nature, relying on an individual's subjective viewpoint to elucidate a cultural encounter. This experiential data is subsequently subjected to systematic analysis, as outlined by Adams et al. (2021). Autoethnography is a method characterised by a high degree of reflexivity, in which a researcher uses their own

experiences to contribute to the academic comprehension of social phenomena. Through autoethnography, researchers can explore their own experiences and emotions, and how these are shaped by larger cultural and societal factors (Edwards, 2021). The growing popularity of both learning about and engaging in autoethnography implies that those who write it place a high emphasis on narrative, first-hand experience, and critical analysis (Adams et al., 2017). The interpretive research paradigm encourages participants to engage with their lived experiences in autoethnographic research (Luitel & Dahal, 2021). In this section, I provide the necessary overview and recent developments in autoethnography as a research design. Next, I elaborate on my chosen genre of autoethnography, namely evocative autoethnography. Finally, I refer to the value of and criticisms against autoethnography.

3.3.1 Overview of autoethnography as research design

Autoethnography is a qualitative research design that has grown in popularity in recent years. This method is a unique combination of autobiography and ethnography in which the researcher acts as both the investigator and the subject of the study, allowing for a deeply personal and reflexive exploration of lived experiences within specific cultural or social contexts (Bochner & Ellis, 2022). To obtain insights into individual and community experiences, autoethnography emphasises self-reflection, narrative inquiry, and the investigation of personal stories, emotions, and interactions (Keles, 2022). The purpose is to reveal personal narratives while also situating them within larger socio-cultural settings, making it a strong tool for comprehending complicated events from a subjective position (Luitel & Dahal, 2021).

This method encourages researchers to use their personal experiences, ideas, and emotions as credible data sources. Researchers critically evaluate their own viewpoints, biases, and positions within the setting they are examining through self-reflection and introspection (Keles, 2022). In this way, autoethnography leads to a deeper understanding of the interaction between personal narratives and wider cultural, social, or organisational institutions. As a result, it produces a complex tapestry of tales that give insights into identity, culture, and society, making it a viable research design for a variety of fields.

One of the key merits of using autoethnography as a research design is its reflexive nature. Autoethnographers engage in a process of thorough introspection, also known as reflexivity, with the aim of acknowledging and investigating the intricate links between one's own experiences and the broader social context (Adams, Ellis & Jones, 2017). Autoethnography encourages researchers to reflect on their own experiences and biases, and how they may affect their research. The perspective they maintain posits that individual experiences are imbued with cultural norms and societal expectations (Adams et al., 2017). The ability to reflect on myself and compare the reflection to my experiences and culture made autoethnography a suitable choice in this research study.

In essence, autoethnography is a dynamic and novel research technique that links the personal and the cultural, making it a suitable instrument for examining the complicated elements of human experiences, identity, and society (Bochner & Ellis, 2022). Autoethnography researchers participate in a multi-layered method that mixes narrative, reflection, and cultural study, providing a unique vantage point for gaining deeper insights into the complexities of the human experience (Luitel & Dahal, 2021). This study approach not only adds to our knowledge of human experience but also provides a useful lens through which to analyse the larger socio-cultural settings in which these experiences are placed.

According to Chang (2008), autoethnography that lacks in-depth, cultural study and interpretation only produces tales that are on a par with descriptive autobiography or memoir. By contrast, autoethnography that is properly conducted can provide a deeper understanding of the researcher's own positionality and its impact on the research process (Ellis et al., 2011). In identity research, reflexivity is particularly important as identities are shaped by a range of social and cultural factors. By using autoethnography, researchers can explore their own identities and experiences, and how they relate to broader cultural and social contexts (Chang, 2008). This can lead to a more nuanced understanding of how identities are constructed and negotiated, and the ways in which power and privilege operate within identity categories.

3.3.2 Recent developments in autoethnography

Autoethnography is a research strategy and practice that is well-recognised and commonly utilised. It involves the researcher immersing themselves in their own lived experiences while engaging in activities like as observation, writing, journaling, and reflection (Edwards, 2021). Through various forms of expression, including poetry, novels, and plays, autoethnographers investigate their lives and lived experiences (Luitel & Dahal, 2021).

Recent advances in autoethnography have broadened and enhanced the approach, promoting its growth as a thriving area of qualitative research. One notable advancement is the acceptance of autoethnography as a scholarly and valid research method. While first regarded with scepticism, autoethnography has gained acceptability among academics (Bochner & Ellis, 2022). This acceptance is seen in increased publishing in peer-reviewed journals and the inclusion of autoethnography in research methodology courses, recognising its important contributions to understanding human experiences and societal phenomena (Denzin et. al, 2023).

Furthermore, the methodological toolbox of autoethnography has grown with the addition of novel methodologies. Scholars are increasingly interested in hybrid kinds of autoethnography, such as performative, arts-based, and visual autoethnographies (Denzin et al., 2023). These methods enable researchers to dive deeper into the sensory and physical dimensions of lived experiences, bridging the personal and creative divide (Luitel & Dahal, 2021). Additionally, there is a rising emphasis in autoethnography on ethical issues, emphasising the need to traverse the challenges of self-disclosure, privacy, and permission (Bochner & Ellis, 2022). These latest advancements ensure that autoethnography remains a methodologically robust and morally sound qualitative research technique.

The idea of personal experience and culture seems to be at the heart of every autoethnographer's definition, even though they might vary (Le Roux, 2017). Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that involves the use of personal experiences to understand cultural phenomena. In recent years, it has become an increasingly popular research method, particularly in studies related to identity (Bochner & Ellis, 2022). This approach can lead to a more nuanced understanding of

the complexities of human behaviour and social dynamics (Edwards, 2021). The fundamental goal of autoethnographers is to depict people who are in the process of figuring out how to live, what to do, and the significance of their problems (Adams et al., 2017).

3.3.3 Evocative vs analytical autoethnography

One objective of autoethnography is to describe cultural experiences in a way that makes them recognisable to cultural “outsiders” (Adams et al., 2017). In order to fully comprehend cultural phenomena and bring them to life in their writing, autoethnographers engage extensively with the subject (Luitel & Dahal, 2021). This is achieved by providing readers with a sense of presence in the experience through detailed, vivid, and precise descriptions (Adams et al., 2017). By making their personal struggles visible, autoethnographers make them strong, reassuring, vulnerable, and culturally significant (Luitel & Dahal, 2021).

According to Pace (2012), scholars interested in conducting autoethnographic research within the realist or analytic tradition are advised to acknowledge two distinct genres within this tradition: evocative autoethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Bartleet, 2021; Denzin, 2014) and analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006; Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; Butler, 2020; Delamont, 2009). Yet according to Manning and Adams (2015), there are many distinct autoethnographic practices, each of which emphasises a different part of the continuum between social study and daily life. This means that there are alternative approaches to and applications of this research method on the continuum spanning from evocative to analytic autoethnography (Le Roux, 2017).

Manning and Adams (2015) distinguish four approaches to autoethnography: social–scientific autoethnography (similar to analytic autoethnography), interpretive–humanistic autoethnography, critical autoethnography, and creative–artistic autoethnography, the last two being similar to evocative autoethnography. According to Anderson (2013), a prominent scholar in the field of analytical autoethnography, if he were to adhere to the analytical framework of autoethnographic writing, he would do it with a heightened awareness of indistinct borders rather than distinct contrasts.

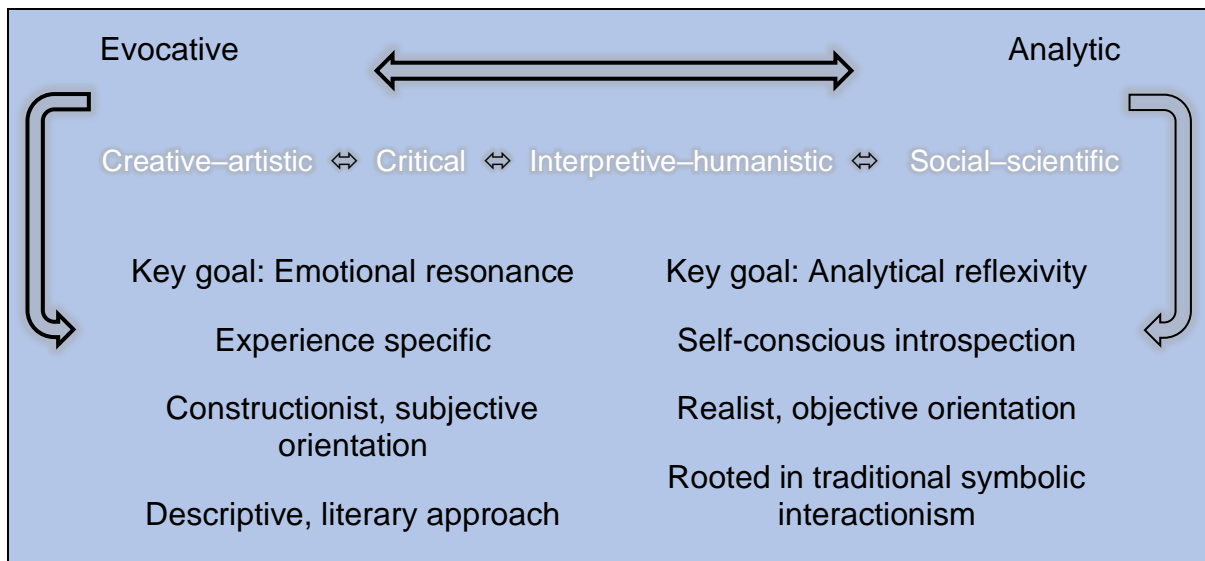
Thus, separate evaluation criteria would be needed for each of these variations on the strategy (Manning & Adams, 2015, p. 192).

The objectives of the two contrasting autoethnographic inquiry genres are not incompatible (Anderson, 2006). Personal experience is the primary focus of both genres and those that fall somewhere between the two (Le Roux, 2017). To generate emotional resonance through “artfully braided evocative prose” is the main objective of evocative autoethnography, which is at one end of the continuum (Tedlock, 2013, p. 5). Thick description, respect for aesthetics, and emotive, vulnerable stories are at the core of this technique, with minimal attention paid to objectivity and researcher neutrality (Manning & Adams, 2015). At the opposite end of the spectrum, analytic autoethnography is distinguished by its use of empirical data to shed light on and create a theoretical framework for a wider range of topics (Le Roux, 2017).

For this research study, my autoethnography leaned toward the evocative end of the continuum. Evocative autoethnographers are drawn to the aesthetic merit, reflexivity, and reader impact of the narrative, whereas analytical autoethnographers are drawn to contribution to the field, credibility, appropriateness of data and interpretation, scholarship, and accountability (Le Roux, 2017). The creative approach of combining my autoethnography with music and lyrics, and the fact that my storytelling is emotionally profound and reflects on specific experiences, built this as an evocative autoethnography. I elaborate on music as an arts-based research methodology in section 3.4.1.1.

Figure 3.1

Continuum of Autoethnographic Research (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013, p. 65)



According to Manning and Adams (2015), to characterise the sensations of being in or a member of a community, the analytical orientation combines interpretive qualitative data, fieldwork, personal experience, and systematic data analysis. Evocative autoethnography tends toward researcher introspection, from which readers are encouraged to draw connections with the researcher's feelings and experiences, whereas analytical autoethnography is focused on objective writing and analysis (Le Roux, 2017). According to Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013), a wide range of autoethnographic modes of inquiry is influenced by a set of ethical, aesthetic, and relational sensibilities rather than specific data collection methods (see Figure 3.1).

The primary aim of evocative autoethnography is to employ narrative techniques to evoke emotional responses and facilitate a deep, empathetic comprehension in and a personal connection with the reader. One of the criticisms directed towards evocative autoethnography is its potential to exhibit narcissistic and self-absorbed tendencies (Holt, 2003), undermining the primary objective of the study, which is to foster enlightenment, growth, and the advancement of knowledge (Davies, 1999).

3.3.4 Value of autoethnography as research design

The added value of using autoethnography as a research design is its validity as a research method. Despite some criticism, autoethnography has been shown to be valid and provide a holistic understanding of social phenomena (Anderson, 2006; Sparkes, 2021). By conducting an autoethnography, we study, engage with, and record a culture or cultural experience through the researcher's experiences (Adams, Ellis & Jones, 2017). This is particularly true in identity research, where personal experiences and narratives are central to understanding the complex ways in which identities are constructed and negotiated.

By using personal experiences as data, researchers can capture a range of emotions, feelings, and perspectives that may not be captured through traditional research methods (Sparkes, 2021). In addition to engaging in interpersonal conversations, individuals have the opportunity to explore historical events through various textual sources, such as photographs, personal journals, and recordings. Furthermore, they may consider consulting pertinent news articles, blogs, and other archival material to get further insights into life events (Adams, Ellis & Jones, 2017). Then they write about those experiences to compile a text using the principles of storytelling devices, including narrative voice, to produce precise, evocative representations of the culture or cultural experience and to give readers an understanding of the experience (Adams, Ellis & Jones, 2017). This can lead to a more nuanced and complex understanding of socio-cultural expectations and identity, and how this is experienced and negotiated in everyday life.

Autoethnography can be an empowering method for both researchers and participants. After consulting others, discoveries are linked to more formal studies regarding the experiences (Adams et al., 2017). By using personal experiences as data, researchers can give voice to marginalised groups, and provide a platform for their experiences to be heard and understood (Anderson, 2006; Chang, 2008). This can be particularly important in identity research, where individuals from marginalised groups may be underrepresented in traditional research methods. Autoethnography can also be empowering for participants, as it allows them to tell their own stories in their own words. This can be a powerful way of challenging dominant narratives about

identity and providing a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of lived experience (Ellis et al., 2011).

3.3.5 Criticisms against autoethnography as research design

Autoethnography has been repeatedly criticised as being egotistical and vain (Rådesjö, 2018). According to Livesey and Runsen (2018), autoethnography lacks external authentication and is not, therefore, adequately rigorous to be acknowledged by many researchers. The conventional perspectives in the field of social science are rooted in the notion of “minimising the self” and perceiving it as a detrimental factor. However, this critique is predicated on the premise that the person and the social aspects are distinct and devoid of any connection (Krieger, 1991, p. 47). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that concepts that are commonly seen as individual or subjective in nature are inherently intertwined with social and objective elements (Rådesjö, 2018).

There is also the possible delimitation of the findings of this study having limited use for generalisations (Livesey & Runsen, 2018). The characterisation of an individual as autonomous or isolated is insufficient due to their fundamental humanity, undeniable dialogic nature, and ultimate susceptibility to cultural influences (Rådesjö, 2018). The characterisation of an individual as unique entails acknowledging their multifaceted nature, encompassing both intricate emotional dimensions and socio-cultural influences. Furthermore, their personal experiences typically include relatability, societal significance, and theoretical implications.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the specific techniques and procedures that are used to collect and analyse data within the framework of the research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This encompasses the approach used for selecting the sample, the methodologies employed for data collection, the technology used for data analysis, and the ethical factors to be taken into account. The research methodology should be consistent with the research paradigm and research design and should be appropriate for addressing the research questions. Maintaining consistency between the research paradigm and research design is essential for ensuring coherence, methodological appropriateness, internal validity, and comparability of findings (Luitel & Dahal, 2021).

It strengthens the research's credibility, enhances its theoretical foundations, and contributes to the advancement of knowledge within a specific domain.

This section contains the aspects of participant selection, data generation and collection strategies, and data analysis techniques employed in this study. I commence by elaborating on arts-based research methodology.

3.4.1 Arts-based research methodology

From a research perspective, Conrad and Beck (2015) recognise that “an arts-based research paradigm encourages contributions towards honouring relations, human and non-human flourishing, and celebrates art’s potential to transform the world” (p. 13). In other words, an arts-based methodology is rooted in the understanding that art has the capacity to question, disrupt, and remodel social convention through interpersonal ethics (Smorschok, 2020). Autoethnography embraces a multi-paradigmatic design space as researchers must contextualise their narratives, consider the implications of presumptions, and employ artistic methods to represent experience (Luitel & Dahal, 2021).

Arts-based research is not simply an artistic representation of data; it is a practice of crafting knowledge and making meaning through intentional artistic engagement(s) (Smorschok, 2020). The major objective of employing arts-based vignettes in research is to emphasise elements of the research process in a manner that encourages readers to engage with them indirectly (Ely et al., 1997). Arts-based vignettes can be utilised as a tool to immerse readers in the perspectives of either the researcher or research participants, facilitating a more genuine comprehension of the research process or the phenomena being examined (Jenkins & Noone, 2020). This might potentially aid researchers in enhancing the vividness of their data, since it enables readers to develop a more immersive knowledge of the subjects being studied and engages their sympathetic faculties (Jenkins & Noone, 2020).

Art and art-making practices are essential to research and knowledge creation in educational practice and research (Conrad & Beck, 2015). I created a novel term for the purposes of this research study, namely lyricovignettes. Lyricovignettes represent a fusion of the literary and musical arts. It marries the descriptive power of prose or

poetry found in vignettes with the emotional depth, rhythm, and metaphorical richness of song lyrics. This newly created term is elaborated on in section 0.

By studying my life on a personal level through the artistic research process that involves creative writing (narrative vignettes infused with song lyrics) (Suominen, 2003), I hoped to gain a deeper, more complex understanding of my female Afrikaner teacher identity construction as influenced by socio-cultural expectations.

3.4.1.1 Music as an evocative arts-based methodology

Music and lyrics have been used in arts-based academic research as a means of expressing and interpreting various themes and phenomena (Aydin-Celikcan & Aksoy, 2020). They can offer a unique perspective on a research question and provide insight into the emotional and cultural aspects of a particular topic (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). In this section, I explore how music and lyrics can be used in arts-based academic research and provide examples of studies that have utilised these mediums.

Popular music is a kind of mass communication that elicits strong opinions and divides public opinion. It is widely enjoyed by the general population (Chou & Lien, 2010). The use of songs as a therapeutic stimulus for facilitating discussion might be referred to as lyric discussion, music discussion, song lyric discussion, or lyric analysis (Dvorak, 2016). Listening to music produces a chemical and emotional reaction in the brain (Zagerman, 2018). While some people prefer to work in silence, I prefer to work with music. Whenever I was working on this research study, I constantly had music playing (mostly over earphones). I had a few “study” playlists that I rotated, and even on completion, when I read through my work again, I could recall the playlist that was playing while working on a particular section. That is part of the impact that music had and continues to have on me.

One way that music and lyrics have been used in arts-based academic research is as a data source. The multifaceted nature of lyrics encompasses several roles, such as fostering empathy, capturing attention, imparting attributes and advantages information, and gently transmitting cultural values (Chou & Lien, 2010). In the context of lyric analysis interventions, the primary focus is often placed on the textual aspect of music, specifically the lyrics, as it pertains to its therapeutic function (Dvorak, 2016). Music and lyrics have been used as a way of gathering information about a particular

culture, group, or individual. Ochs and Capps (2001) used lyrics from country music songs to explore the construction of masculinity in rural America. By analysing the lyrics, they were able to identify common themes and patterns that reflected the values and attitudes of the culture they were studying.

In addition to being used as a data source, music and lyrics can also be used as a means of analysis. Researchers have used music and lyrics to explore various phenomena, such as mental health and social justice issues. In a study by Baker, Gleadhill and Dingle (2011), song lyrics were used to explore how individuals with depression used music as a coping mechanism. The researchers analysed the lyrics of songs that the participants had identified as having a personal meaning to them and found that the songs served as a means of expressing emotions and providing a sense of connection.

According to Zagerman (2018), the processing of music occurs in the right hemisphere of the brain and elicits activation in the intuitive aspect of cognitive functioning while Levitin (2007) found that the act of listening to music provided improved memory cues. Upon initial exposure to a song, an association is formed between the auditory stimulus and the concurrent activities engaged in by the individual (Zagerman, 2018). The experience of being exposed to music has the potential to elicit instinctive and emotive reactions. Affective responses are commonly understood as subjective emotional experiences or states that are not readily accessible to cognitive perception (Chou & Lien, 2010). The perception of music by the listener might vary significantly as a result of alterations in the facilitation of the musical elements, even while the musical composition itself stays unaltered (Dvorak, 2016). Individual interpretation is what makes music and its lyrics so enchanting – two people can listen to the same song, and each interprets it completely differently. I added depth to my autoethnography by using particular lyrics that evoked certain memories and expanded on those memories.

Music and lyrics can also be used as a means of dissemination in arts-based academic research. They can also be used to communicate findings to a wider audience in an accessible and engaging manner. In a study by Guldbrandsen and Johnson (2015), a songwriting workshop was used as a means of disseminating the research on sexual

violence. The researchers worked with survivors of sexual violence to write and perform songs that expressed their experiences and provided a means of healing.

According to Chou and Lien (2010), stimuli that are imperceptible to the senses, such as tunes, could elicit nostalgic emotions. Nostalgia may be seen as a cognitive and emotional phenomenon characterised by a combination of pleasant sentiments and ambivalent feelings, which arise in response to previous events, individuals, or experiences (Baker & Kennedy, 1994). The association of nostalgia might vary in songs from various times. According to Chou and Lien (2010), music from the past has the potential to establish connections with memories and elicit a greater number of thoughts and emotions associated with nostalgia, much like the lyrics from Anderson and Ulvaeus (1977). The lyrics I have chosen are all extremely nostalgic – whether from a specific time in my life or simply the lyrics themselves that mean a great deal to me.

The use of music as a tool for enhancing comprehension and recollection has several advantages, especially when dealing with personal experiences (Zagerman, 2018). According to Younkin (2009), the younger cohort has been brought up in a technologically advanced society where they have immediate access to a wide range of material, including visual content, videos, and music. Consequently, music offers a framework that individuals may readily connect with, especially if someone has been raised with a lot of exposure to music.

Music and lyrics can be valuable tools in arts-based academic research, providing a unique perspective on a research question, serving as a means of analysis, and offering an accessible means of dissemination. By incorporating music and lyrics into my research study, I could expand the reader's understanding of a particular topic and provide a richer, more nuanced narrative. The use of music in arts-based research entails the transference of ideas from one domain to another. Specifically, this involves substituting personal conceptions with musical lyrics to establish a resemblance between the two (Zagerman, 2018). In this way, I had the chance to transfer my own experiences to the reader, to help suggest a likeness.

3.4.1.2 *The role of music in arts-based autoethnography*

Arts-based research methodologies have grown in popularity as new means for investigating complex phenomena, providing different routes of inquiry that go beyond typical textual modes of expression. Among these techniques, music stands out as a potent medium for eliciting emotions, conveying meaning, and facilitating deep interaction with study subjects. Despite its promise, music in autoethnography, as an arts-based approach, is underrepresented in most disciplines. This section investigates the role of music in arts-based research, building on significant works by Manovski (2014), Daly (2022), Bartleet (2009), and Lewis (2019), among others. The contributions and problems involved with introducing music into arts-based research approaches can be better understood by comparing these studies.

Manovski (2014) and Bartleet (2009) emphasise music's transformational effect in arts-based research, citing its capacity to elicit emotions, activate memories, and develop deeper relationships with study participants. Manovski's research looks at the use of music in narrative inquiry, showing how musical compositions can be a creative and expressive vehicle for conveying personal tales and experiences. Similarly, Bartleet (2009) uses music as a collaborative tool in community-based research, demonstrating how music-making activities promote discourse, cooperation, and collective meaning-making among participants.

Daly (2022) and Lewis (2019) broaden the discussion of music in arts-based research by examining its function in trauma-informed inquiry and healing processes. Daly's study investigates music's therapeutic potential, demonstrating its ability to help people process traumatic events, promote emotional well-being, and facilitate recovery. Lewis (2019) investigates the nexus of music, memory, and identity, looking at how musical compositions may act as stores for personal and collective memories, reflecting people's identities and creating their narratives.

Music in arts-based research provides a rich and comprehensive way to investigate complicated phenomena, engaging participants, and promoting creative expression. Manovski (2014), Daly (2022), Bartleet (2009), and Lewis (2019) all stress the transformational power of music in arts-based research, emphasising its capacity to elicit emotions, awaken memories, create cooperation, and assist healing processes.

3.4.1.3 *The origin and significance of mixtapes*

The inception of mixtapes may be traced back to the mid-20th century, a period characterised by the widespread availability of audio-cassette recordings. According to Smith (2014), amateur compilations often consisted of a combination of music sourced from multiple outlets, frequently captured via radio broadcasts or borrowed vinyl long-playing records (LPs). Mixtapes served as a medium through which individuals with a passion for music could construct and disseminate their preferred musical selections to friends and romantic interests.

Mixtapes have played a crucial part in the development and transformation of music culture. According to Smith (2014), they facilitated the democratisation of music distribution by enabling users to generate and disseminate customised playlists. Mixtapes have also played a significant role in facilitating the recognition of underground and independent musicians by including their work alongside popular mainstream tracks. The democratisation of music distribution served as a prelude to the subsequent emergence of the digital mixtape culture on the internet.

I was introduced to mixtapes during my pre-teen and teenage years, that is, from about 1998 onwards. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, mixtapes took on new relevance, notably in hip-hop and rap communities (Chang, 2005). Mixtapes have historically served as a medium through which disc jockeys (DJs) and musicians disseminate exclusive songs, freestyles, remixes, and collaborations that are typically absent from official albums owing to constraints imposed by record labels. The distribution of these mixtapes involved the use of tangible formats such as cassettes or compact discs (CDs), which were commonly sold in informal settings such as on street corners or in local record stores (Chang, 2005). They have emerged as a potent instrument for artists to cultivate their standing and establish connections with their audience.

The mixtape culture in South Africa holds considerable significance, particularly within the framework of its dynamic music scene (Coplan, 2004). The genre of Kwaito, originating from South Africa, had a notable increase in the production and dissemination of mixtapes. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, up-and-coming Kwaito musicians employed mixtapes as a means of disseminating their music and attaining

visibility within the industry (Coplan, 2004). These mixtapes frequently showcased a blend of Kwaito, house music, and hip-hop components.

According to Vavi (2004), mixtapes in South Africa played a crucial role not only in promoting the growth of indigenous musicians but also serving as a medium for cultural expression and social criticism. Frequently, mixtapes had songs that engaged with social and political matters, thereby transforming them into a platform for not just musical expression but also for cultural and societal discourse. One website which is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of South African music shared an electronic mixtape named *Sound of South Africa: A Musical Journey*, a carefully curated compilation of 20 songs that showcase the rich and diverse musical landscape of South Africa (*Sounds of South Africa: A Musical Journey*, 2023).

The emergence of mixtape culture had a significant role in the proliferation of “mixtape DJs” who garnered considerable demand due to their provision of unique content (Chang, 2005, p. 4). As teenagers, my friend and I would create a personal playlist of songs, burn a CD with it, and then gift it to each other as a way of sharing our musical interests with each other. I also received a mixtape CD from boys a few times, filled with romantic songs to try and impress me and woo my heart.

In modern times, the term playlist is used to refer to a compilation of songs, as music is mostly listened to on a personal device using music streaming services. But, as a child, I grew up with CDs as the preferred music-sharing format, and prior to that cassette tapes and vinyl were used, hence the word mixtape, which refers to cassette tapes. In the next section, I discuss how I implemented music and playlists in my research study. While I do listen to music on streaming services, for the nostalgia and influence of the music in my research study, I listened to my mixtape of songs which I will now discuss.

3.4.1.4 *Implementation of music and lyrics for this study*

Presently, people have a wide range of alternatives when selecting how to listen to recorded music. Vinyl, cassettes, and CDs are just a few of the tangible forms that have historically been used to access recorded music (Brown & Krause, 2020). Although patrons can listen to music without owning it due to the digitalisation of music and the rising popularity of streaming, access is rapidly taking over the role of

ownership (Wilkström, 2012). Because of the simplicity of obtaining music nowadays, more people listen to it than at any prior period of time (Hagen, 2016). Subscriptions to streaming services like Spotify allow you to listen to a wider variety of music more frequently (Brown & Krause, 2020). Personally, I have examined many streaming services, and I have retained a Spotify subscription for the last few years.

One of the advantages of subscribing to a streaming service is the ability to listen to not just albums, but playlists as well. A playlist is a sequence of songs, not necessarily by the same artist but mostly categorised by a theme, genre, or mood. I have discerned that my favourite playlists are those that have a narrative in their sequence of songs. Just by placing an album or playlist's sequence in a particular order, a strong story may be established in the collection (Ashley et.al., 2022). The order of the album or playlist creates stories in it. Album sequencing provides the songs with a unique flow and transforms the album into a narrative with a beginning and an end (Edwards, 2021). Consider album sequencing as authoring a story; it must persuade readers to remain to the end and not skip chapters. Your album (or playlist) tells a complete story, and, in this case, my research study is part of a playlist that needs a narrative story to make it flow.

To allow a truly immersive understanding of my chosen songs and lyrics, I have created a Spotify playlist with the referenced songs as used in this research study, in the order presented. The songs (and playlist) are referenced in full in the Annexures. Although the modern term for a personalised list of songs is named a playlist, I will continue to refer to it as a mixtape for the remainder of my research study.

3.4.1.5 Lyricovignettes: Vignettes and lyrics as an arts-based methodology

Autoethnography and arts-based methodologies allow a researcher to be creative and incorporate their personality in a research study. To collect the data for my autoethnography story, I implemented the use of narrative vignettes and song lyrics to evoke memories. This has led to the creation of a new word: lyricovignettes. In this section, I start by broadly explaining what vignettes are and how they were applied for data generation. Thereafter, I focus on my newly penned word, lyricovignettes, the meaning of the word and its importance for my research study.

Vignettes have been used as a strategy for gathering qualitative data, and, in addition, they have been employed as a technique for evaluating and representing qualitative data (Jenkins & Noone, 2020). This research technique uses literary and arts-based methodologies for qualitative investigation, specifically following the approach advocated by Ely et al. (1997), who define vignettes as “compact sketches that can be used to introduce characters, foreshadow events and analysis to come, highlight particular findings, or summarise a particular theme or issue in analysis and interpretation” (Ely et al., 1997, p. 7)

In line with the work of Rådesjö (2018), I employed a methodology that involved the creation of narrative vignettes arranged in chronological sequence, which served as a means of data gathering. Additionally, I incorporated critical thought as an integral component of this methodological approach, thereby contributing to the field. Vignettes serve the purpose of enhancing comprehension of social events by giving creative depictions of experiences that aim to captivate readers and evoke their emotions (Ellis et al., 2011). The inclusion of this aspect was of utmost importance to this study as it served as a means of effectively conveying my own experiences to the reader.

The use of vignettes as a method for data production was motivated by three distinct rationales. The use of a chronological arrangement of the vignettes facilitated the exposition of my own encounters with socio-cultural expectations in my role as a female teacher within the Afrikaner community. Subsequently, the process of engaging in critical thought facilitated my interpretation of each vignette. Ultimately, the use of vignettes enabled me to craft concise introspective narratives with the intention of vividly depicting an event as if it were unfolding in real time for the reader (Rådesjö, 2018). Thus, these vignettes can be seen as concise textual depictions (Humphreys, 2005, p. 841). Nevertheless, the use of this form was undertaken in order to facilitate the comparison of the gathered data, namely the vignettes, to the existing body of literature in the context of this study.

The term lyricovignettes is a neologism that amalgamates the concepts of “lyric”, denoting song lyrics, and “vignettes”, which are concise and vivid scenes or descriptions. Lyricovignette is a distinctive but novel means for an arts-based methodology to merge narrative vignettes with song lyrics, resulting in a unique and compelling form of expression. The concept encompasses a fusion of literary and

musical elements, in which narrative and lyrical composition intertwine to effectively convey emotions, experiences, and atmospheres in a rich and engaging manner.

I decided on the conceptualisation of this new term for the following reasons:

- **Lyrics:** Song lyrics refer to the textual content of musical compositions, characterised by their poetic nature and intended to express a range of emotions, topics, and messages. The use of song lyrics in lyricovignettes contributes to the composition's lyrical aspects, enhancing the story through the incorporation of poetic elements, musicality, and emotional depth.
- **Co:** The use of the prefix "co" in the word lyricovignettes functions to establish a link and signify the amalgamation of two separate components, namely "lyrics" and "vignettes". The prefix "co-" is frequently employed in the construction of compound nouns to indicate a collaborative or merged notion. The newly introduced term signifies the fusion or combination of these two constituent components. The use of the prefix "co-" also has a resemblance to other terms that incorporate this prefix to indicate a collaborative or cooperative essence, such as "co-author" (when many authors collaborate on a singular piece) or "cooperate" (which signifies working together). Within the framework of lyricovignettes, there is a notable emphasis on the convergence of stories and song lyrics, resulting in the formation of a unique and discernible mode of creative manifestation.
- **Vignette:** Narrative vignettes refer to concise and evocative depictions or descriptions, typically distinguished by their conciseness and concentrated representation of a certain event or feeling. The narrative vignettes in lyricovignettes fulfil the role of storytelling, providing brief insights into people, circumstances, or feelings, and resembling concise narratives or snapshots of life.

The concept of emotional impact highlights the capacity of lyricovignettes to effectively communicate deep emotions and feelings. By virtue of its combination of narrative elements and poetic articulation, this artistic form possesses the capacity to elicit a diverse array of emotional responses, from nostalgia and introspection to joy and melancholy.

The term lyricovignettes encompasses the fusion of narrative intricacy with lyrical poignancy, offering artists a flexible medium to create emotionally evocative and

immersive compositions that engage with listeners via the combined power of language and music. This new term has the potential to be an emerging form of artistic expression, offering a fresh perspective on the synthesis of storytelling and songwriting.

3.4.2 Participant selection

As this study was conducted using an autoethnographic approach, I was the primary participant in obtaining data for analysis (Adams, Boylorn and Tillmann, 2021). Conducting research with oneself as the sole participant can offer unique insights into subjective experiences and personal perspectives. It allows for deep self-reflection and exploration of internal processes, beliefs, and behaviours (Ellis et al. 2011). Self-studies have gained recognition in qualitative research to investigate personal narratives. For example, Smith (2018) conducted a self-study exploring the impact of mindfulness practices on personal well-being, employing an introspective approach to gather data. Similarly, Jones (2020) utilised a self-study methodology to investigate the development of professional identity within the field of counselling. Self-studies in which the researcher is also a participant provide an intimate, first-hand perspective that can contribute to a richer understanding of the self and inform theoretical frameworks and practical applications within various disciplines.

Data were generated from the lyricovignettes that I wrote. I used the following methods to help guide my narrative: self-interview and memory work, critical conversations with others as co-constructors of knowledge (memory sharing with others) and consulting personal journal entries. Upon careful examination of my own encounters, I identified specific instances that effectively exemplified many facets of my existence as a female Afrikaner teacher. The selection of each lyricovignette was based on the deliberate choice to portray the personal epiphanies that I experienced throughout the writing process, which were derived from or facilitated by cultural influences (Ellis et al., 2011). These methods guided me when I wrote the lyricovignettes for this study as a data collection method.

Critical moments arise when writing lyricovignettes for a research study, as they require careful consideration and attention to detail in capturing meaningful experiences or events (Adams et al., 2021). These critical moments involve making

deliberate choices regarding the inclusion of individuals, settings, and dialogue. These choices should align with the research objectives and theoretical framework, ensuring that the lyricovignettes effectively represent the lived experiences of the participants (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Additionally, Smith (2021) emphasises the importance of balancing authenticity and confidentiality when constructing lyricovignettes, as they should maintain the integrity of participants' stories while protecting their identities.

I had to concentrate on relational patterns of personal experience – repeated encounters, emotions, and exchanges – and my close connections with friends, families, workplaces, and face-to-face and virtual communities (Adams et al., 2021). By navigating these critical moments, I could create lyricovignettes that engaged the readers, evoke emotional responses, and provide valuable insights into the research study.

3.4.2.1 Co-constructors of knowledge and memory sharing

Co-constructors of knowledge were involved in corroborating my lyricovignettes and relational patterns of personal experience. These co-constructors of knowledge included close family and friends who wrote letters of verisimilitude, stating whether they agreed with my narrative of events. Collecting and generating data this way can be seen as a collaborative effort between the autoethnographer and co-constructors (Lombard, 2020). Critical memory sharing involves the researcher sharing their own memories and experiences with others as a means of exploring broader cultural and societal issues (Edwards, 2021). This can involve sharing personal stories with family members, friends, or members of a research community.

Autoethnography acknowledges self-experience as a social phenomenon that is valuable and deserving of study (Edwards, 2021). For example, in a community or even within family dynamics, autoethnographic research aims to deepen understanding of multiple complex dimensions of culture and interpersonal dynamics (Lahman et al., 2019). Autoethnographic studies frequently centre on distressing experiences (Edwards, 2021). By sharing experiences and listening to the experiences of others, autoethnographers can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and societal factors that shape their own experiences (Adams, 2015). Critical memory

sharing can also be used as a means of generating data for analysis, as the stories and experiences shared by others can be analysed for common themes and patterns.

For this research study, my autoethnography was split into two sections, that is, my past (Side A) and my present (Side B). I contacted the following people to assist as co-constructors of knowledge and contribute to my autoethnography:

Table 3.1

My Co-Constructors of Knowledge

Person (initials)	Relationship	Corroboration input
Julian van der Westhuizen	Husband	Mixtape Side A & B
Carmen Struwig	Sister	Mixtape Side A & B
Annemarie van Heerden	Stepmother	Mixtape Side A & B
Chris-Mari du Preez	Stepsister	Mixtape Side A & B
Elaine Wannenburg	Friend	Mixtape Side A & B
Hanneke du Preez	Friend	Mixtape Side A & B

My co-constructors were all asked, either in person or via cell phone (calls and messages), if they were willing to assist as my co-constructors. After agreeing to assist me and agreeing for me to use their initials, they were sent the section they had to corroborate and comment on via email. Their letters of verisimilitude are included in the Annexures of this research study.

The letter of verisimilitude from my sister was the most acknowledging letter I received from my co-constructors. She was able to provide an additional perspective to our childhood and mentioned facts about my mother and stepdad that I did not know or which I had forgotten. I value her input of highest regard as she continues to have a (platonic) relationship with my mother and can attest to the facts of this autoethnography, as well as the trauma and subsequent growth I experienced, as she has been on the same healing journey of her own.

My autoethnography refers a great deal to my mother and stepdad, but I did not include them as co-constructors. Unfortunately, I do not have a decent relationship with them at the moment and, for my own mental well-being, I could not follow through with communication for this purpose alone. However, reflecting on my autoethnography has aided me to work through my past and memories, and will provide strength to potentially rekindle these relationships in the future.

3.4.3 Data generation and collection strategies

Autoethnographers utilise several methods for generating and collecting data to underscore the practical dimension of qualitative research and situate its cultural (ethno) element (Keles, 2022). Autoethnography is a research methodology under the qualitative paradigm that centres on the utilisation of the researcher's personal experiences as the primary source of data. The researcher uses self-reflection and storytelling to understand the cultural and social aspects of their experiences (Adams et al., 2017). To generate, collect and analyse data in autoethnography, I used various research instruments. This section discusses data generation and collection strategies employed in this study.

3.4.3.1 Memory work and music

Autobiographical narratives and self-representations often rely on the use of memory and retrospective analysis as essential tools for reflecting upon prior experiences (Adams et al., 2017). Recalling past events depends on the researcher's current worldview and moral principles, which help to reveal the complexities ingrained in our actions and their implications (Luitel & Dahal, 2021). Autoethnographers can conduct interviews with themselves or others to gather data on their experiences. These internal interviews (or memory work) can be structured or unstructured, and the researcher can use them to gain insight into their emotions, attitudes, and behaviours in specific situations (Denzin, 2014). Personal narratives are written based on accounts of the researcher's experiences. Researchers can use personal narratives to analyse their own experiences to establish how they are influenced by cultural and social contexts and to understand their identity, attitudes, and behaviours (Chang, 2008).

Critical self-reflection entails challenging ingrained beliefs and highlighting fresh insights and knowledge for actions that benefit the individual and others (Luitel & Dahal, 2021). Sometimes it may be challenging to reflect on your past and critically narrate it. The capacity of music to elicit emotional responses renders it a potent instrument of persuasion (Chou & Lien, 2010). I decided to include music not only as part of my conceptual framework but also to assist in writing narratives by stimulating the necessary emotions and memories. According to Chou and Lien (2010), certain nostalgic musical cues have the potential to selectively exclude undesirable ideas, promote or strengthen an individual's sense of self-identity, and foster a more optimistic mindset. I referred to nostalgic songs and lyrics to evoke unpleasant memories that were crucial to include in my lyric vignettes.

3.4.3.2 *Researcher journal entries*

Autoethnography encompasses a diverse range of textual material, which may consist of personal diaries or journal entries, written thoughts or memoranda, field notes, one's own published works, samples of creative writing such as tales and poetry, email conversations, blog entries, and social media posts (Keles, 2022). Field notes and journal entries are written records of the researcher's observations and experiences in the field. They can be used to document the researcher's experiences and interactions with others in specific situations, as well as note important thoughts and thought processes. Journal entries can be used to reflect on the researcher's thoughts and feelings about their experiences and interactions throughout the course of their study (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

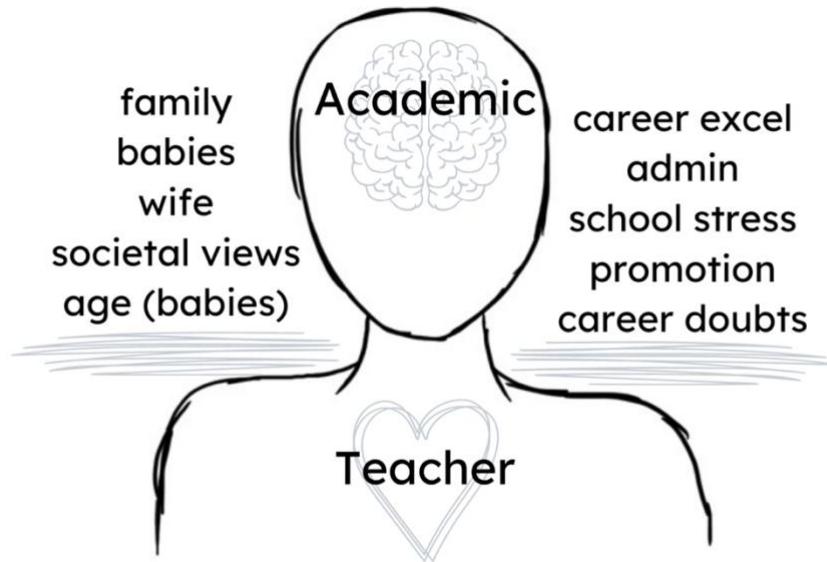
Choi (2012), for instance, examined the personal research diaries she kept while residing in New York, Tokyo, Sydney, and Beijing as a second-generation Korean American in her examination of her "multivocal post-diasporic self" through her habit of watching Korean dramas. Kamiya (2019) explored his L2 English vocabulary growth in his autoethnographic case study using the research journal he kept as a Japanese senior high school student while studying abroad in the United States for a year. Similarly, Osborne (2013) investigated the research diary that he kept for two weeks to report his experience acquiring Italian vocabulary using a mobile application.

Another method for generating data in my research journal was to identify key events or experiences from my life that were relevant to my study subject in chronological order. As a data creation activity, Chang (2008) proposed that one describe key events or occurrences and how they aided in cultural self-discovery, detail the circumstances of these events, and explain why they are significant in your life. I had to assess when the journal entries were written, whether they were written with possible study in mind, and whether it was beneficial to address factual, social, and emotional factors consciously rather than letting them develop later (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022).

One of my university cohort sessions required me to reflect upon my positionality in relation to my proposed study. The instructions required me to revise my research proposal, deliberate about the rationale and motivation, and then draw what my study meant to me. Figure 3.2 is a graphic representation of the original drawing that I made that day in my research journal, that is, 31 March 2022. It symbolises the different facets that influenced my reasoning to conduct this research study: in my heart, I am a teacher, but my brain is academic and yearns to be stimulated as such. On one shoulder, I bear the weight of my perceived socio-cultural expectations, and on the other shoulder, I have personal career-driven goals that similarly weigh me down. This personal sketch is a formative reflection and summation of my study, and it has assisted me in remembering the purpose and focus of my study time and time again.

Figure 3.2

Sketch Representing my Research Study, Based on my Research Journal (March 2022).



The importance of using a research journal became more evident once I drew the sketch and realised the significance it would have for my study. I continually wrote down ideas and notes regarding my study, but I referred to this sketch numerous times during my research journey.

3.4.3.3 Photographs

Various types of documents and artefacts can be incorporated into the practice of autoethnography. These may encompass photographs and images sourced from diverse media outlets, such as newspaper clippings, comic strips, school yearbooks, coursework assignments, and lesson plans. Additionally, questionnaires, samples of homework, test scores, course syllabi, and institutional reports can also be included in this process (Keles, 2022). Autoethnographers can use photographs and videos to document their experiences and interactions or assist in evoking memories as part of the writing process. Photographs and videos can capture the researcher's emotions and attitudes in specific situations. They can also be used to analyse cultural and social contexts that influence the researcher's experiences (Ellis & Bochner, 2016).

A secondary function of the use of images, in addition to observational data, is rooted in basic reasoning. According to Keles (2022), these sources were used to expand the available material and facilitate the re-examination of memories, as well as to enrich the understanding of lived experiences and the underlying social dynamics. In addition, they serve as substantiation for narratives during the process of data processing. I included various photographs from my personal archive interspersed throughout my autoethnography to assist the reader in building a picture of my narrative. I believed that the incorporated photographs would also create an all-around picture of my identity: the reader would read my narrative, look at my photographs, and listen to the music, all of which represented me and how I constructed my identity.

3.4.3.4 *Published material*

Published material refers to any written or recorded material that has been published and is publicly available for use in research (Adams, 2015). This can include academic articles, books, and media such as films or documentaries. Autoethnographers may use published material as a means of exploring their own experiences and understanding how they relate to broader cultural or societal issues. For example, an autoethnographer studying their experiences of immigration may use published material such as government policies, academic literature, and news articles to contextualise and analyse their own experiences.

Credible sources are those that are trustworthy, reliable, and recognised for their expertise and accuracy (Adams, 2015). These sources are crucial for obtaining accurate and verifiable information, as they undergo rigorous peer review processes and adhere to established standards of research and reporting. To conduct the literature review described in Chapter 2 of this research study, I looked at published materials with credible sources, including academic journals, books, theses, and online articles about Afrikaners, female teachers, socio-cultural expectations, and female professionals. I consulted fellow university scholars' theses, such as Lewis (2019), Lombard (2020), and Mlangeni (2020), and was motivated by their autoethnographic publications.

The abovementioned research instruments were powerful tools to implement, which allowed me to explore my own experiences and understand how they related to broader cultural and societal issues. By using these strategies to generate and collect data, I could gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of my experiences and contribute to broader discussions about culture and society.

3.4.4 Data analysis

Data analysis is a continuous procedure that occurs during research. It entails the examination and interpretation of participant data, wherein researchers commonly use both general analytical procedures and those unique to the chosen study design (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The process of data analysis in an autoethnographic research study involves a highly reflexive and iterative approach, blending self-reflection with scholarly analysis to explore and interpret personal experiences (Sparkes, 2021). In this section, I provide an overview of data analysis in autoethnography and discuss the stages applied for thematic analysis.

3.4.4.1 Overview of data analysis in autoethnography

Autoethnography, as a qualitative research method, centres on the researcher's subjective narrative and situates the self within broader socio-cultural contexts. As Ellis and Bochner (2000) point out, the process begins with collecting rich data, often in the form of research journal entries, field notes, memory work, and photographs, which serve as the raw materials for analysis. The process of data analysis in an autoethnography research study involves immersive self-reflection, interpretive exploration of themes, reflexivity, and the weaving of personal narratives with scholarly analysis (Sparkes, 2021). This approach allowed me to uncover meaningful insights about my experiences, emotions, and identities while also shedding light on broader socio-cultural phenomena.

In the initial stages, I immersed myself in the data, examining emotions, memories, and connections to identify recurring themes and patterns. Sparkes (2021) advocates an inductive and interpretive process, encouraging researchers to stay open to emerging insights and unexpected discoveries.

Next, I engaged in critical self-reflection and self-critique, questioning my assumptions and biases to avoid the imposition of preconceived ideas onto the data. As Richardson (2000) emphasises, autoethnographers must be transparent about their own subjectivity and positionality to maintain rigour and authenticity. In this sense, reflexivity becomes a vital tool for understanding how personal experiences interact with cultural, social, and historical influences (Sparkes, 2021).

The process of data analysis in autoethnography also involves examining the emotional and embodied dimensions of the researcher's experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Ellis (2004) suggests embracing the narrative nature of autoethnography, which allows for the exploration of feelings, sensations, and bodily experiences as part of the analysis. These embodied elements contribute to a deeper and more holistic understanding of the research phenomenon.

Throughout the analysis, I had to iteratively write and rewrite narratives, crafting evocative and contextually rich stories that conveyed my experiences authentically. Ellis et al. (2011) refer to this process as "writing culture", where the researcher's voice and personal storytelling merge with analytical insights. The resulting autoethnographic texts provide a compelling blend of self-expression and scholarly inquiry, inviting readers into the researcher's world while contributing to broader theoretical discussions and cultural understanding (Sparkes, 2021).

3.4.4.2 *Thematic analysis*

The data gathered from my lyricovignettes were analysed using thematic data analysis. This is a research method that is characterised by its flexibility and use since it can yield a comprehensive and intricate understanding of data (Peel, 2020). Qualitative researchers employ thematic data analysis and data interpretation to provide comprehensive descriptions that arise from data extraction, using the participants' own language as evidence to substantiate their conclusions (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). I interpreted my lyricovignettes in search of emerging themes to form the data analysis, which was then compared to current literature.

The thematic data analysis method is commonly employed in autoethnography research studies to uncover and interpret patterns, themes, and meanings within the collected data (Ellis, 2004). This approach involves a systematic and iterative process

of organising and analysing the data to identify significant insights and recurring themes that emerge from the researcher's personal experiences. Braun and Clarke (2006) outline a widely used framework for thematic analysis, which consists of several interconnected stages.

The first stage involved familiarising myself with the data by reading and re-reading my lyricovignettes and research journal entries (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This immersion helped me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content and allowed initial impressions and ideas to emerge. As I engaged in this process, I began to identify meaningful units of analysis, such as specific events, emotions, or experiences that stood out.

In the second stage, I generated initial codes, which are labels or tags assigned to segments of data (memories) that capture important concepts or themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These codes served as the building blocks for subsequent analysis. Coding involved closely examining my autoethnography, identifying patterns, and assigning descriptive or interpretive labels to segments that related to particular themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This process was conducted manually – I made notes of the codes and corresponding memories in my research journal.

Once the initial coding was complete, I moved to the third stage, which involved searching for themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This entailed sorting and collating codes that shared similar characteristics or conveyed related meanings. I looked for patterns and connections across the codes to identify overarching themes that captured key aspects of the data. These themes had to align with the research objectives and shed light on the research questions.

In the fourth stage, I reviewed and refined the identified themes. This involved revisiting the data to ensure that the themes accurately represented the dataset and to refine their descriptions and boundaries (Braun & Clarke, 200). I had to critically evaluate the coherence and consistency of the themes, considering if they aligned with the entire dataset and reflected the richness and complexity of my autoethnographic narratives.

The final stage involved producing a coherent and compelling narrative that incorporated the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I integrated the themes into

a cohesive storyline, employing literary techniques to engage the reader and convey the research findings effectively. This narrative approach in autoethnography research emphasises the importance of storytelling and provides an immersive and authentic experience for the reader (Ellis, 2004).

Overall, the thematic data analysis method in autoethnography research enabled me to systematically explore and interpret the data, uncovering significant themes and meanings within my personal experiences.

3.4.4.3 *Levels of analysis in narrative research*

The notion of levels of analysis in narrative research refers to the several layers or aspects that may be investigated inside a story. Narrative research examines human experiences via narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Rather than just narrating a tale, narrative researchers dive deeper into the underlying meanings, structures, and circumstances that influence personal experiences (Riessman, 2008). These levels include:

1. **Micro-level Analysis:** This level focuses on small-scale parts of a story, such as single events, dialogues, or actions. Micro-level analysis enables researchers to grasp the complexities and subtleties of individual experiences (Polkinghorne, 1988).
2. **Meso-level Analysis:** At this level, researchers look for bigger themes, patterns, or linkages that emerge from several tales. Meso-level analysis allows for the detection of similarities or contrasts across participants' experiences (Riessman, 2008).
3. **Macro-level analysis** focuses on the wider social, cultural, or historical settings that shape narratives. Macro-level analysis enables researchers to place individual tales within larger societal structures or discourses (Bamberg 2012).

When writing in a narrative style, the emphasis switches from just recounting a tale to using the narrative as a methodological tool for understanding human experiences (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). The following were guidelines that I be implemented for creating my narrative:

- Accept subjectivity: Narrative writing allows for the incorporation of personal experiences, feelings, and interpretations. Embracing subjectivity improves the narrative and leads to a better comprehension of the experience under consideration (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Even though my narrative might be objective as it only my side of the story, my co-constructors of knowledge aided in confirming or disagreeing with my viewpoint.
- Maintain coherence: A well-structured story keeps events, ideas, and interpretations together in a logical and meaningful way. This consistency helps the reader understand the substance of the experience (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997). My narrative had to flow and appear easy to the reader. I chose to structure my narrative chronologically, with carefully chosen snippets from my past.
- Engage reflexively: Reflexivity entails reflecting on the research process and recognising the researcher's involvement in constructing the narrative. Engaging reflexively increases the narrative's openness and believability (Ellis, 2004). I revised my narrative many times throughout the research journey, to make sure that only important vignettes are included to illustrate my story. However, some vignettes were included to ensure that the narrative remains coherent and still makes sense to the reader.
- Consider ethical implications: Writing in a narrative style necessitates careful consideration of ethical issues such as confidentiality and informed consent. Maintaining ethical rigour is critical to the integrity of research (Jones & Jenkins, 2008). I referred to relational ethics (Ellis, 2007) and removed any identifying factors from those involved that did not provide consent.

Knowing the levels of analysis in narrative research and using a narrative approach to writing necessitates a nuanced connection with human experiences. You may get a thorough grasp of individual and group experiences by analysing narratives at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. Writing using a narrative approach requires embracing subjectivity, preserving coherence, interacting reflexively, and considering ethical implications to generate insightful and meaningful stories.

3.5 QUALITY MEASURES

Certain components of interpretivist research are necessary for a study to be credible and trustworthy. The subsequent section, therefore, provides a discussion of the quality measures used in this study.

3.5.1 Criteria to evaluate evocative autoethnography

The topic of rigour in autoethnographic research is indeed acknowledged by scholars in the field. Ellis and Bochner (2000) elucidate that the concept of validity entails the pursuit of verisimilitude in our work, aiming to evoke in readers a sense that the documented experience is vivid, credible, and plausible. When it comes to evaluating evocative autoethnography, Bochner and Ellis (2016) reflected upon a conversation between their class of students and them. They elaborated that the quality measures upon which one should evaluate autoethnography would depend on the kind of autoethnography being employed (Sparkes, 2021). For example, analytical autoethnography should use quality measures that “should be more social scientific, such as considerations of validity, data collection, categorisation processes, and generalisability across cases” (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 212).

In the case of evocative autoethnography, which is being employed in this study, the same quality measures would not be deemed suitable. To demonstrate this notion, Bochner and Ellis gave the following quality metrics for analysing evocative autoethnography in their discourse with their students:

- I look for abundant, concrete details. I want to feel the flesh and blood emotions of people coping with life’s contingencies.
- I am attracted to structurally complex narratives that are told in a temporal framework representing the curve of time. I also reflect on the author’s emotional credibility, vulnerability, and honesty.
- I also prefer narratives that express a tale of two selves, one that shows a believable journey from who I was to who I am, and how a life course can be reimagined or transformed by crisis.
- I hold the author to a demanding standard of ethical self-consciousness. I want the writer to show concern for how other people in the teller’s story are portrayed, for

the kind of person one becomes in telling one's story, and to provide space for the listener's becoming.

- I want a story that moves me, my heart and belly as well as my head; I want a story that does not just refer to subjective life, but instead acts it out in ways that show me what life feels like now and what it can mean. (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 212-213).

During this study, it was imperative for me to remain on track and adhere to the quality measures set out by Bochner and Ellis (2016). I tried to stay as true as possible to my emotions and include all the necessary details. The details I included made my narrative structurally intricate yet maintained a clear timeline of events to avoid confusion. I endeavoured to stay factual in my narrative while also ensuring that I portrayed others in an honest way, without dehumanising anyone. My own narrative evoked many emotions in me as I wrote it, and those emotions were added to illustrate the accuracy of events to readers.

3.5.2 Trustworthiness through verisimilitude

Verisimilitude, or the appearance of truth or reality, is an important quality criterion for evaluating autoethnographic research. Autoethnography is a research method that involves the researcher examining and reflecting on their own experiences and relationships to gain insights and understanding about social phenomena. As such, it is critical that the researcher presents their experiences in a manner that is truthful, authentic, and accurate to establish verisimilitude.

According to Ellis and Bochner (2006), verisimilitude is achieved through thick description, or the use of rich and detailed descriptions of the researcher's experiences and relationships. This approach involves presenting a lived experience that is both personal and relational, and that is grounded in specific cultural and social contexts. By using thick descriptions, the researcher can provide a nuanced and multi-layered account of their experiences, which can help to establish the appearance of truth and reality.

To achieve verisimilitude, I had to be reflexive and transparent in my writing. This involved acknowledging and exploring my own biases, assumptions, and values and considering how these might have influenced my interpretation of my experiences. By

engaging in this type of reflexivity, I could demonstrate my commitment to presenting an honest and accurate account of my experiences, which helped to establish verisimilitude.

3.5.3 Credibility

The objective of establishing credibility is to effectively convey an authentic depiction of the setting or event under investigation, as stated by Morse et al. (2021). The researcher consistently attempts to convey findings that are persuasive and credible (Maree, 2019). Autoethnographers must also be mindful of their audience when presenting their experiences. This involves considering the cultural and social contexts of their readers and presenting their experiences in a manner that is accessible and relatable. In doing so, the researcher can help to establish a sense of connection and shared understanding with their readers, which can contribute to the appearance of truth and reality.

In this study, credibility was maintained by presenting my narrative with as many additional descriptions as necessary. Through my memory work, I embraced many memories and added thick descriptions. I did not alter or omit parts of the memories included. This was important so that the reader could interpret and understand my experiences vividly.

3.5.4 Generalisability

According to Maree (2019), the concept of generalisability pertains to the extent to which findings and conclusions derived from a research study may be applied to a broader population and location. According to Maree (2019), an interpretivist researcher does not often engage in generalising the findings of a study. Instead, their focus lies on providing comprehensive and deep insights into the views of the participants. To be able to generalise the findings of this research, I included perceptions from women globally in my literature review. This makes my shared observations more applicable to a wider population. I also included many conversations that I had with my peers about specific topics to indicate the opinions of others juxtaposed with mine.

Verisimilitude is a critical quality measure for evaluating autoethnographic research. To achieve verisimilitude, autoethnographers must use thick descriptions, engage in reflexivity, and be mindful of their audience. By doing so, they can establish the appearance of truth and reality in their research, which can contribute to its overall credibility and impact. I asked close family and friends to write letters of verisimilitude to exist as co-constructors of knowledge, which added to the data gathered as well as validated my lyricovignettes.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are several ethical considerations that must be considered when conducting autoethnographic research. One of the main obligations and goals of an autoethnographic ethic is to give the author's voice a chance to be heard (Edwards, 2021). Autoethnography involves the researcher examining and reflecting on their experiences and relationships to gain insight and understanding about social phenomena. As such, it raises ethical concerns related to confidentiality, privacy, and self-disclosure.

3.6.1 The ethical process at the University of Pretoria

This research was carried out in accordance with the Code of Ethics for Researchers and the Policy and Procedures for Responsible Research at the University of Pretoria. As to the Code of Ethics for Research, researchers affiliated with the University of Pretoria are obligated to uphold certain obligations, including social duty, fairness, compassion, respect for the person, and professionalism (University of Pretoria, 2010). There are several ethical considerations that researchers must bear in mind while conducting a study. These considerations include obtaining informed permission from participants, ensuring the confidentiality of their information, avoiding fraud, minimising damage to participants, accurately reporting study results, and accounting for language difficulties (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005), all of which were of the utmost importance as others were part of my lyricovignettes. My co-constructors of knowledge were treated with care and according to these ethical concerns. The subsequent issues have been duly considered in the context of this research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005):

3.6.1.1 Confidentiality

One of the primary ethical considerations for autoethnographic research is confidentiality. To ensure that responsibility and care are placed at the centre of ethical research, ongoing reflection is required to consider how including others in an ethic of research practice is given the proper attention within autoethnography (Edwards, 2021). As autoethnography involves the researcher reflecting on their own experiences, it was important to ensure that the identities of others who might be mentioned or referenced in the research were protected. This involved using pseudonyms or changing identifying details in order to maintain the confidentiality of others. The co-constructors were informed at all times of their contribution and why it was needed. Throughout the process of writing the letters of verisimilitude, it was explicitly stated that they had the prerogative to retract their contributions at any point and were not obligated to contribute.

3.6.1.2 Harm to co-constructors of knowledge

Opportunities to think about whether extensive personal revelation can harm others are wise when considering an ethic of the self (Edwards, 2021). The conducted investigation did not cause harm (physical, emotional, psychological, or otherwise) to the co-constructors who contributed letters of verisimilitude. All co-constructors who participated in this research were provided with the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any point if they experienced any unease.

Another ethical consideration to avoid harm to co-constructors in this autoethnography was privacy. I had to ensure that my research did not invade the privacy of others, particularly when my research involved sensitive or personal information. This meant ensuring that the identities of others who were mentioned in the research were sufficiently disguised where needed.

3.6.2 Self-care considerations

According to Gilbert (2000), qualitative researchers have an emotional involvement in their studies due to their role as “research tools” (p. 11). Autoethnography has significant potential for examining organisational culture due to its introspective and retrospective characteristics, as well as its ability to improve comprehension of the

connection between individuals and the companies at which they are employed (Poureau, 2014). There is an increasing acknowledgement of the significance of emotions in qualitative research, the influential role that emotions play in the generation of information, and the potential to acquire a more profound comprehension of our societal context (Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018). Nevertheless, despite the advantages of including emotions in qualitative research, it is important to acknowledge that such emphasis might potentially jeopardise the overall well-being of the researcher, encompassing their mental, bodily, and emotional health (Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018). The well-being of researchers is jeopardised when they are deeply immersed in their studies, as shown by the practice of autoethnography.

Self-disclosure is also a key ethical consideration for autoethnographic research. The author–researcher occupies a central position in autoethnography. Instead of describing the experiences of others, I wrote about my own experiences and my interactions with the people who were there when they happened (Edwards, 2021). I had to consider the potential impact of my own self-disclosure on my personal and professional relationships. This involved making a judgement about what to include or exclude from the research or being prepared to accept the potential consequences of self-disclosure.

There is a responsibility on the part of the researcher to honestly explore and describe their own experience (Edwards, 2021). However, remembering traumatic past experiences can be painful. Kumar and Cavallaro (2018) outline steps that are the researcher’s individual responsibility to take care of their well-being. Specifically, the key factors to consider are an understanding of the importance of self-care, the ability to integrate self-care into the research plan, the utilisation of available institutional resources and assistance, and the active implementation of self-care initiatives. I incorporated self-care into my research plan by staying connected to my emotional responses and recognising and attending to my self-care requirements throughout and after the research process. I made use of my university’s resources by attending support sessions and working closely with my supervisor for guidance as well as support when my mental health was at risk. Self-care practices were actively introduced by having clear boundaries when I worked; time limits, taking breaks, and

leaning on my husband and friends for encouragement as well as having the motivation to take necessary “sanity breaks”.

There is a risk to one’s mental health from unforeseen difficulties brought on by in-depth reflection on experiences (Edwards, 2021). Autoethnographers must be mindful of the power dynamics that may be at play in their research. They should carefully evaluate the possible ramifications of their study on many stakeholders, including themselves, the people involved, and the readers of their work, and take steps to ensure that their research is conducted in an ethical and responsible manner.

3.6.3 Relational ethics in Autoethnography: An exploration of consent, representation, and ethical engagement

Relational ethics in qualitative research provides a complex paradigm emphasising ethical participation, reciprocity, and mutual respect in interactions between researchers and participants (Ellis, 2007). Relational ethics is especially difficult to execute in the setting of autoethnography, which intertwines personal narratives with wider social contexts. This section dives into the use of relational ethics in autoethnographic research, with an emphasis on the complications of gaining consent and portraying other people's stories.

3.6.3.1 Ethical considerations for autoethnography

Autoethnography inherently involves exploring personal experiences within cultural contexts, often implicating others in the narrative (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). This poses ethical questions about informed consent, particularly when disclosing personal information about family members or close ties. The notion of relational ethics encourages ethical involvement that recognises the interdependence of lives and stories.

Consent is an essential component of ethical research practice, but acquiring it in autoethnographic studies involves unique obstacles, particularly when investigating intimate or family connections (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Family members may have differing views on sharing personal tales, complicating the process of getting informed permission (Ellis et al., 2011). Furthermore, the lack of communication or unwillingness to obtain consent might present ethical dilemmas for researchers

(Jones, 2007). This predicament is especially acute when investigating familial ties, since family members may have various degrees of comfort or readiness to engage in the study (Reed-Danahay, 1997).

To overcome these problems, tactics like anonymization and fictionalisation to safeguard participants' identities are frequently used (Ellis et al., 2011). By modifying names, locations, and particular information, researchers can maintain ethical standards while expressing the spirit of the story. Scholars such as Denzin (2001) believe that fictionalising identities detracts from the depth and complexity of human tales, asking researchers to investigate alternate ways that retain ethical integrity while preserving narrative authenticity. However, this method may jeopardise the story's authenticity and depth, thereby impacting the study's validity (Ellis et al., 2011).

In an insightful article about the intricacies of relational ethics in autoethnography, Ellis (2007) revealed that she also encountered an ethical dilemma, stating:

...protecting us together and individually, and other people in the story. Thus, I tried to tell a truthful account for readers, while I omitted things, occasionally changed details of a scene, and invented composite characters to protect identities. All of these techniques are commonly used in ethnographic storytelling and memoir. (p. 16)

Relational ethics prioritises reflexivity, encouraging participation in ongoing self-reflection and ethical introspection throughout the study process (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Ethical reflexivity entails critically analysing one's own positionality, prejudices, and the possible influence of study on participants (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014). This continual thought assists in handling ethical quandaries with compassion and subtlety, recognising the challenges of conveying others' stories without their explicit agreement.

Furthermore, the literature emphasises the necessity of openness and open communication regarding the ethical problems encountered during the study (Ellis, 2007). By openly addressing these concerns in the study narrative, it may demonstrate the commitment to ethical thought while also engaging in critical debate about the challenges of expressing others' perspectives.

In my own autoethnographic study, I struggled with the ethical concerns of telling stories about my mother and stepfather without their express consent. While I used anonymization to safeguard their identities, I was aware of its limits in capturing the entire breadth and depth of their lived experiences (Ellis et al., 2011). This experience highlighted the importance of continual ethical reflexivity and discussion, as well as critical engagement with the issues of conveying other people's experiences ethically and honestly.

3.6.3.2 *Implementing relational ethics in autoethnography*

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) identify two elements of ethics. The first is procedural ethics, which is required by Institutional Review Board (IRB) committees to ensure that protocols address informed consent, confidentiality, privacy rights, deceit, and the protection of human subjects from harm (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). The second is practical ethics, sometimes known as situational ethics, which deals with the unforeseen, often subtle, but morally significant events that arise in the field (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). For example, what if someone says something unpleasant, begs for assistance, or expresses dissatisfaction with a query for their response? Ellis (2007) added a third component, namely relational ethics, which is intimately connected to the ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984), feminist ethics, and feminist communitarian ethics (Christians, 2000; Denzin, 1997, 2003; Olesen, 2000; Punch, 1994). Slattery and Rapp (2003) define relational ethics as doing what it takes to be "true to one's character and responsible for one's actions and their consequences on others" (p. 55). Relational ethics acknowledges and promotes reciprocal respect, dignity, and connection between researchers and their subjects, as well as between researchers and the communities in which they live and work (Brooks, 2006; Lincoln, 1995; Reason, 1993; Tierney, 1993).

Relational ethics is based on the question "What should I do now?" rather than the statement "This is what you should do now" (Bergum, 1998). According to relational ethics, researchers must act from the heart and mind, acknowledge their interpersonal relationships with others, and establish and continue discussions (Bergum, 1998; Slattery & Rapp, 2003). As part of relational ethics, the goal is to address the reality and practice of evolving connections with our study participants throughout time. These practical and relational difficulties are typically not addressed in institutional

ethics applications (Denzin, 2003). Although IRBs provide useful recommendations, they assume that research would be conducted on strangers with whom we have no past ties and no plans to contact in the future (Ellis, 2007). That is not the case in autoethnography. Thus, some autoethnographic research faces ethical dilemmas that do not fully adhere to the benchmarks outlined by standard research ethics applications. The bad news is that there are no definite guidelines or universal principles that can tell you exactly what to do in any scenario or relationship you may come across, other than the broad and generic term "do no harm."

As a literary and research genre, autoethnography begins with personal experiences and examines the self in relationships and settings. Autoethnography comprises a back-and-forth movement between experiencing and investigating a sensitive self, as well as observing and disclosing the larger context of that experience (Ellis, 2007). When you write about yourselves, you inevitably write about others. In doing so, there is a risk of making other characters more recognisable, even if they have not accepted being represented in ways that expose their identity; or, if they have consented, they may not comprehend exactly what they have consented to (Ellis, 2007). As a result, this raises the question: How can we honour our relational commitments while still presenting our lives in a complicated and realistic manner? It is vital to evaluate the individuals who may be upset by the discoveries.

While advising autoethnographers on the process and implementation of relational ethics, Ellis (2007) stated the following:

In working with people who are doing autoethnography, I have encountered the fear that taking work back to others in our stories might disrupt the very relationships and family systems we're trying to improve by writing. Some have mentioned the fear of having charges pressed against them, or that family members might harm them. (p. 17)

Autoethnographers must decide how and what to inform intimate others about their inclusion in our tales. My main concerns about writing about my mother were the possibility of hurting her and the resulting further deterioration of our relationship. Similarly, Ellis (2007) also wrote an autoethnography about her mother and encountered the same dilemma, stating, "Protecting our relationship was more

important to me than being able to say that I had revealed every word. Examining how and what I revealed and concealed provided useful information about how difficult this kind of revelation can be and the grey areas between revealing and concealing” (p. 17).

Autoethnography includes raising questions and discussing their study with others (co-constructors of knowledge), always reflecting critically on ethical procedures at each stage (Cannella & Lincoln, 2004; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Mason, 1996). Co-constructed autoethnographies, in which researchers are both participants and writers, avoid some of the ethical pitfalls of typical qualitative investigations on unknown people (Ellis, 2007).

Obtaining consent and alerting characters may put them in danger (for example, from an aggressive parent or boyfriend) (Ellis, 2007). Sometimes the request for consent may prevent completing a research project, that might help with healing. Giving our work back to participants can sometimes harm the individuals and the potential improvements to those relationships (Kiesinger, 2002). Ellis (2007) posits the question, "Is the well-being of the researcher always less important than the well-being of the other, even others who have behaved badly?" (p. 24).

This section attempted to provide a more in-depth discussion of relational ethics in autoethnography, stressing the challenges of managing consent, representation, and ethical involvement in research that entails sharing personal experiences about others without their explicit consent. Relational ethics provides a sophisticated framework for negotiating the difficult ethical terrain of autoethnographic research, especially when sharing tales about people without their permission. Research can maintain ethical norms while expressing the core and authenticity of human narratives by utilising tactics such as anonymization, ethical reflexivity, and open communication (Ellis, 2007; Kiesinger, 2002; Reed-Danahay, 1997). However, these methodologies are not without obstacles, and continual discussion of the ethical quandaries inherent in autoethnography is critical for promoting ethical practice in qualitative research. I decided to rely on Ellis (2007) when she expressed that the most important thing to consider about whether to ask for consent or not, is that the process must not negatively impact the autoethnographer's life and relationships, or harm themselves.

“I advise autoethnographers to prioritise relationship issues over research” (Ellis, 2007: 25).

3.7 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, autoethnography is a valuable research design for identity research. Its reflexive nature encourages researchers to reflect on their own experiences and biases, leading to a deeper understanding of their own positionality and its impact on the research process. Autoethnography is also a valid and reliable method for understanding social phenomena, particularly in the context of identity research. Finally, autoethnography can be an empowering method for both researchers and participants, providing a platform for marginalised voices to be heard and understood.

CHAPTER FOUR: MY AUTOETHNOGRAPHY



*Kom ons skryf 'n dialoog
En maak ons daaraan vas
En dan droom ons
In suiwer Afrikaans*

*~ Erens in Afrikaans, recorded by Die Melktert Kommissie
(written by Neethling et al, 2016)*

Translation:

Let us write a dialogue and tie ourselves to it
And then we can dream in pure Afrikaans

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As I am writing this, it is January 2023. This is the year I turn 33. I did not truly think about this until one of my friends turned 33. Similarly, I had never comprehended the significance of this age's number until now.

I have a distinct childhood memory of my mother's 33rd birthday – I remember writing the number “3” on two balloons and telling all my friends that my mother was turning a double number. My mother had me at the age of 23, so I was nine (turning 10 later in the year) when my mother turned 33. I am one of three daughters. My youngest sister was born just a few months before my mother's 33rd birthday. I am turning 33 this year, with no children of my own as yet.

You might be asking why this is significant to my study. The basis of an autoethnographic study revolves around *my* story, *my* experiences, and *my* perceptions. This is my life story, instead of literature about similar stories.

In this chapter, I share my experiences and my story about being an Afrikaner, being a teacher, and being a professional woman, and how each aspect has constructed my identity as a female Afrikaner teacher. Each lyricovignette includes a different song along with the narrative. By the end of the chapter, I will have created a mixtape that will be accessible by you, the reader, to listen to (see Annexure A for the list of songs and details to access the playlist on the Spotify website or mobile application).

4.2 MIXTAPE SIDE A: AFRIKANER IDENTITY - MY PAST

4.2.1 Lyricovignette 1: Family portrait

“Tell me where you come from.” This is a question often asked during interviews or when meeting new people. It has always baffled me, because how do you summarise your entire childhood in a few sentences? Usually, I resort to a generic answer comprising the basic facts: I have two younger sisters, my parents are divorced, and both have remarried. But this answer does not relay all the memories that are evoked with such a question – all the memories that shaped you: good memories, happy memories, sad memories, and those you put in a box in your mind and forget about. Part of doing an autoethnography is sharing the wonderful and happy memories but also revisiting that box of mixtapes at the back of the cupboard that you have either forgotten about or intentionally want to forget. The mixtapes are full of songs and memories, mostly long forgotten. Certain memories, especially those you have chosen to forget, are stored away for a reason.

Diary entry: 05 January 2023

To be honest, I struggled to start writing this chapter because I knew of the emotional journey and hurtful memories that I will need to uncover and that I will need to dig deep to try to understand why and how I have formed my identity the way it is.

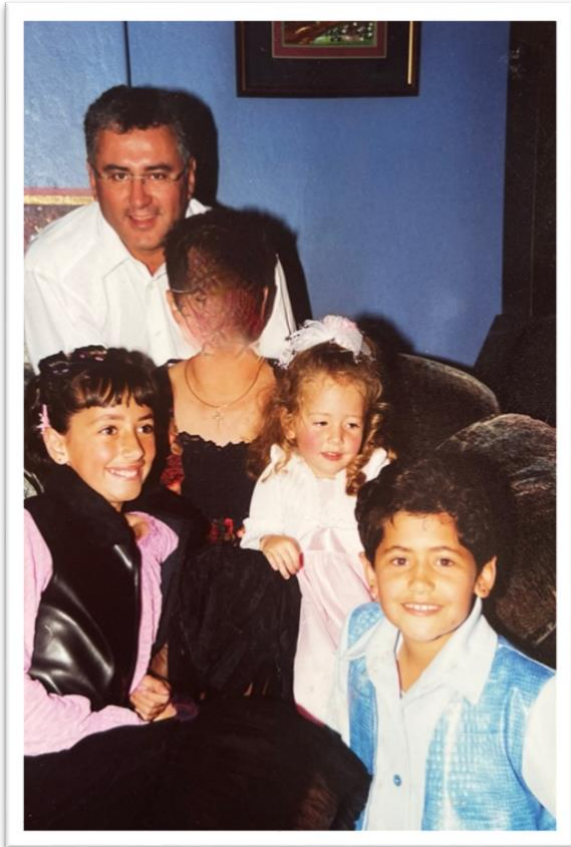
Music was always part of our household. I have memories of the radio constantly being on in the house and in the car. My mother was even on the Afrikaans music competition *Noot vir Noot* (Note for Note) where you could win money by answering various questions about songs and artists. During the taping of the show, I even won R50 for answering a question asked to the audience.

“In our family portrait, we look pretty happy, we look pretty normal” – these lyrics were written by Moore (2003). Looking at our last family portrait, you would agree – we look pretty happy and pretty normal (see Figure 4.1). My younger years were filled with

happy memories and a comfortable life. I was cared for and loved, we went on holidays, lived in spacious homes, and had strict but fair parents.

Figure 4.1

The Last Family Portrait (2002).



Note. This is our last family portrait that was taken before my parents divorced. I am on the left in pink (12 years old), my middle sister, Carmen, is bottom right in blue (nine years old) and my baby sister, Jeani, is in the middle (two years old). Photograph from author's personal archives; published with permission from recognisable subjects in the photograph.

My mother, who was born in 1967, was raised with traditional Afrikaner values and taught those same values to me when I was born in 1990. She was a homemaker; she did not have any higher education or training and worked in a bank for only a few years before she married and raised three daughters. My mother did small jobs on the side; she was an aerobics instructor, then a golf instructor, and she was and still is a very capable seamstress. My father was a businessman and entrepreneur of sorts – always

busy with something new and exciting. This meant that we moved a few times – I attended three different primary schools because of his various business ventures.

During Grades 6 and 7, I noticed that my father was more absent from home; we did not see him much. We had a tradition that he usually dropped us off at school in the mornings, which is a fond memory for me. But sometimes that was the only time we saw him – in the mornings when he dropped us off at school, and then not again for the rest of the day. Sometimes he was away on golfing or business trips for days or weeks at a time. When we did see him, we had fun and laughed a lot. He pushed us to do sport, as he came from a strong sporting family. The reality is that I am not particularly talented at sports – I was more attracted to academics and cultural activities at school.

I remember one night that we had inter-house athletics at school. I was in Grade 7 (I was 13 years old). My father was on the school governing body, and he was usually present on these occasions but sat with the principal and school management team. At this athletics event, I decided to run the 1 200 metre track event because my dad was there, and I wanted to make him proud. As I ran around the track and I ran past him at the sport lapa, I waved at him and said, “This is for you, Pappa.” He looked at me, waved, and continued talking with the principal. At the time, I thought that he was proud of me for trying and I was so happy that he saw me. But looking back at this memory as an adult, I remember now that he was drinking a beer and just smiled when I went past – and that he did not return home early from the athletics event as we did. I am glad that 13-year-old Mické never realised that night that her father rather wanted to drink and party with the teachers than cheer on his eldest daughter. But present-day Mické is hurt at realising that truth. I actually made the hockey team, and I kept playing hockey for three years, but I do not have one distinct memory of either of my parents being present at my games.

My parent divorced during that year. I, my mom, my two younger sisters, and my maternal grandmother moved out of my father’s house and into a small townhouse. As my mother had been a housewife all these years with no steady income or qualifications, the divorce meant that she had to suddenly get a full-time job. Financially, we struggled as my mother had a basic job at a rental company and my father’s contribution was not enough to cover all our costs. One Friday afternoon my

mother bought a loaf of bread and a packet of chips, and it was such a treat for us to eat a chips-sandwich for dinner. Though, when I was older, my mother confessed that she had only had R20 for dinner that day and that was all that she could afford that would feed all five of us. Again, luckily, as a child, I did not comprehend the situation.

I had to share a room with my grandmother, and my two younger sisters shared a room. Even though I was 13 years old and wanted independence, I understood that I had to set an example for my siblings. Sharing a room, bunk bed, and closet with your grandmother is not ideal for a teenager, but I bonded with my grandmother during that time. She also had a television, so I stayed up with her and watched movies until late – just our little secret.

Part of the custody arrangement was that my father had to pick us up for school every morning – that was the highlight of my day. We were late for school a lot, but when he dropped us off, he gave us a Super C vitamin sweet or dinosaur vitamin gummy. Each week he had different music in his car – from pop music to Gregorian chanting. His favourite was the *NOW That's what I call music!* series. These CDs were filled with songs that were popular at a certain time, all compiled onto one CD – like a mixtape. While dropping us off one morning, a song by the pop singer Pink played from *NOW Volume 34* (2003), and it has stuck with me ever since. The lyrics explain a broken home and how the child will do anything just to be a normal family again.



Can we work it out?
Can we be a family?
I promise I'll be better,
Mommy I'll do anything
~ Family Portrait, recorded by Pink!
(written by Moore, 2007)

We visited my father about once a month, and it was a nice break from the strict household of my mother. My father always said that his love language was money. He would buy us stuff; he would buy us takeaways, take us to the movies, and take us to The Magic Company where we would play games. Later, when I was older, I realised that this was his way of keeping us busy. When he had to play golf, he would send my stepmother with us to the movies or to the mall to shop for clothes. He bought us gifts

because he thought he could buy our love. All we wanted was time with him. But, at that stage, he thought the only way that he could get us to like him was with money.

The biggest fights between my parents after the divorce were about money. Owing to my father being an entrepreneur and businessman with various business ventures, his income fluctuated quite frequently. He never discussed his finances with me and still does not, but, as a daughter, I have learnt what signs to look out for. If my father had new things in his home, bought us takeaways, and gave us money to go shopping, his businesses were doing well. But the opposite counted as well. Unfortunately, my mother also knew about these signs and used them against him to my detriment.

As the eldest child, I would frequently be the “messenger” between my parents. My mother would have me ask my dad when he would pay maintenance, or, if she needed extra money during the month, and my father would reply (through me) that he would pay when he could, what he could. Being the eldest, I had to play the role of the middleman throughout the divorce for many years. Being only 12 years old when the divorce started, it was quite a traumatic experience every time I was asked to discuss finances with my father. To this day, I cannot ask my father for money (even if it is for myself), and I struggle to accept additional money from him for any reason. The discussions I had to mediate included not only finances but also custody negotiations and visitations. Thinking back, I wonder why I had to be the adult, when I was supposed to be the child. Why did they not protect me instead of using me as a mediator? I was only 12! When they divorced, my mother was about two or three years older than I am now. I cannot imagine the trauma of the divorce, but I also cannot imagine using children to deal with my trauma.



*I ran away today,
Ran from the noise, ran away
Don't wanna go back to that place
But don't have no choice, no way
~ Family Portrait, recorded by Pink!
(written by Moore, 2007)*

My father remarried and my first stepmother, Aunt J, was quite young and someone who was fun – wholly opposite from my stepfather. She played PlayStation with us for hours on end when we visited, and her two children were around our age, so we all

got along well and had fun together. However, when we visited my father, we sometimes spent more time with them than with him. Aunt J was beautiful – I always thought she looked like Britney Spears. She smoked a lot and liked to drink alcohol and dance around the house. That was fun for weekend visits and a nice break from my mother’s house. We had fun at my mother’s house too – but this was different.

Looking back, it feel like I had to be the adult and grow up much quicker than my peers who did not necessarily have these problems. The ongoing financial difficulties also meant that my mother could not care for my grandmother any longer, which meant she moved to a retirement home where my uncles helped to fund her stay. I was glad to have a room of my own, but I missed having my grandmother nearby as we had bonded a lot during those months.

4.2.2 Lyricovignette 2: Boulevard of broken dreams

When I was 14 years old, my mother met and married my stepdad. He was nice and stepped into the role of “dad”. He supported my mother a great deal financially; we always had a roof over our heads, food to eat, medication when we were sick, and we even went on holidays. He supported us, but we also moved a lot because of the nature of his job. I attended three different high schools and struggled to make friends as a teenager. High school was a different ball game altogether. To make my insecure self-esteem even worse, religion became a big topic in our household.

My mother always wanted my father to go to church with us, but Sundays were the “best days” for golf, so he would rather be at the golf course. My stepfather, on the other hand, was more religious and went to church with my mother and us. However, when I was 15 years old, religion became an issue. The problem was not that my stepdad was not religious – it was more that he was constantly searching for the “right” type of Christianity. We “church hopped” a lot, going to a different church every other week. None of the churches had the right message for my stepfather, so he decided we would have church at home. He studied the Bible each night and then, on Sundays, we would have our own services at home.

The difficulty with this was that, at that age, I was trying to figure out what religion was all about and what I wanted to believe. As a young child, it is easy to just believe what your parents tell you about religion. But as you grow older, you have to grow in your

understanding and expand your views in order to build your own identity and foundation in terms of religious views. If your parents are confused about their religious views, and you are at a different church every other week, and then you are at no church because your church is at home, you do not know what the truth is.

For instance, I loved Harry Potter. I still do; I still consider myself a big “Potterhead”. My father knew I loved Harry Potter so, for my birthdays and at Christmas, he would buy me the Harry Potter DVDs or Harry Potter board games. In my Grade 9 year, at 15 years old, I had ordered the latest Harry Potter book, *The Order of the Phoenix*, in hardcover, to be delivered the morning that it was released. I had saved up all my pocket money to buy the book, and I could not put it down all weekend. A few months later, out of the blue, my stepdad told me that Harry Potter was satanic and that he would not allow it to be kept in his house. I had to fetch my entire Harry Potter collection – my books, DVDs, board games, computer game, and even stationary. I could not hide anything because my mother and stepdad searched my closet to make sure that I had gathered everything. Then I had to put them in our barbecue, and my stepdad doused it in paraffin and set it on fire. When I started to cry and asked why he was doing this, he told me I was not allowed to cry because then I was crying for the devil because Harry Potter was from the devil. Of course, that was not the reason that I was crying – I was crying because it was my possessions, my gifts, my money that I had spent. I loved to read, and I especially loved reading Harry Potter books because of

Diary entry: 30 January 2023

I am still a big fanatic of the whole Harry Potter universe. Today, I wrote about this specific traumatic event. My husband came home, and he had bought me an illustrated Harry Potter book to add to my collection as a gift. But not just any one of the seven books – specifically, *The Order of the Phoenix*. He had not known about what I have been writing today, but I burst out in tears again thinking of the day I had lost my first copy of the book and finally having it again. In retrospect, I wonder sometimes if my love for this fantasy world is because of the trauma I experienced as a teenager.

the adventures, the friendships, the message of good overcoming evil, and the message of love being the most important thing in the world.

Not being allowed to cry for the reason that “it’s from the devil”, sent a mixed message to me. I questioned my religious beliefs and my personal identity – what was wrong with me, why did I believe in something that was from the devil? I believed that I was a good person with a pure heart, so why was I being punished for reading books, and why was I being told that I had satanic views? These sorts of questions have an impact on your personal identity and how you perceive yourself. My religious views were very uncertain due to this unreliable background and the influence of my stepdad.

It was during that year that the song “Boulevard of Broken Dreams” (Armstrong et al., 2004) was released by the emo-rock band Green Day. The song resonated with me as I felt alone and unsure of who I was, who I wanted to be, who I was expected to be, and who I was meant to be. I recall having the lyrics written out and pasted inside my cupboard, above my bed, and even on the back of my cell phone cover.



*I'm walking down the line
That divides me somewhere in my mind
On the borderline
Of the edge, and where I walk alone*
~ *Boulevard of Broken Dreams, recorded by Green Day*
(written by Armstrong et al., 2004)

Meanwhile my father had remarried, but he was also in an unstable and unhealthy relationship with my stepmother, Aunt J. I remember thinking as a teenager that she was only in a relationship with my father for his money. She was only 27 years old when she started dating my father – he was 40 at the time. She also had two children of her own, around the same age as me and my youngest sister. Aunt J was not someone you could call “the perfect example of a woman” or the role model that you would want for your young daughters. She dressed very provocatively and drank and smoked a lot. When it went well financially with my father, she would be loving and kind to him. But when he struggled with his finances (which happened quite often to him as a businessman), she fought with him and threatened to leave.

When I was 16 years old, in Grade 10, we moved in with my mother and stepdad to Ermelo. Ermelo is a small, tight-knit community in Mpumalanga. It took a while for me to find friends, but as usual, I adapted quickly. I struggled to make the right friends at first, and the strict rules that my mother and stepdad implemented did not help my situation.

In an attempt to make new friends and be accepted, there may have been a rebellious moment or two for this “good girl”. For my 16th birthday, my mother stated that I could go to a local restaurant, Spur, with two friends. My mother dropped us off at 18:00 and stated that she would pick us up at 19:30 again. At that time, a 16th birthday was a sort of “coming of age” birthday, made popular by television programmes like *My Sweet Sixteen* in which teenagers filmed their extravagant birthday parties. And there I was, at Spur, with two friends and a curfew of 19:30. My friend decided that she would contact one of her older friends to come and pick us up and take us to their house, where many older teenagers were drinking and partying. I kept reminding my friend that we had to be back at Spur by 19:30, otherwise, I would be in big trouble. On one hand, I did not want to be in trouble with my mother, but I also wanted to fit in and be accepted by my peers. Eventually, I called my mother and asked for some extra time, and she extended the curfew to 20:00. A few minutes before 20:00, we stopped outside Spur, just as my mother pulled up. She saw us walking to her car from the parking lot and not from the restaurant and knew that I had lied to her and was not where I was supposed to be. She did not scold me in front of my friends, but as soon as we arrived home, she grounded me for calling her and asking for extra time. She never knew that we went away from the restaurant, though I think she suspected it. The basis of her grounding me was that I had inconvenienced her by asking for extra time; she never mentioned that she suspected I had lied. I knew that what I had done was wrong, but looking back at this event I ask myself – was it really that bad? At the time, I thought I was being a rebel and the worst daughter because I had lied. After that event, my friendship came to a gradual end, and I eventually gravitated toward peers who had the same principles and morals as I did.

My mother was very strict when it came to my friends, being with them and going out. Even though I had made better friends (peers with whom I have kept contact over the years), my mother and stepdad were still very strict. In an age where everyone had

sleepovers every single weekend, I was not allowed to go. My mother always stated, “You sleep at a sleepover, so what is the use?” Her other reasoning was that she did not know the parents or where they lived, and when I wanted to arrange a meeting, she was always busy or not in the mood. She did allow me to host sleepovers at my house – but there were only a number of times that my friends wanted to come to my house before their parents wanted us to go there again. Also, my mother and stepdad did not want people in the house every weekend, so it was a careful balance to try and maintain. Thankfully, my friends had started to understand the dynamic of my household and the strict rules, and they did not shut me out as a friend but rather supported me and stayed loyal.

Part of being a teenager is peer pressure. It was the early 2000s and having a belly button ring was the “coolest” thing you could have. When I was around 15 years old, I asked my mother whether I could get a belly ring. She said that when I was 16, I could get one. Fast forward to me turning 16, and a few weeks later we went on a coastal holiday to Durban. Tanned bodies and belly rings everywhere reminded me of my mother’s promise.

One day in the mall, we walked past a piercing shop, and I asked about my mother’s promise that I could get a belly ring. My mother said that I should ask my stepdad, even though she had promised. I asked my stepdad, and he immediately said no and started preaching about how the Bible states that you should not pierce your body and that only whores and infidels had extra piercings and tattoos. He had two tattoos himself – but he explained that he had gotten them before he became a devout Christian. I questioned my mother about her promise, and she reminded me that Dad’s decision was final.

My mother had started to indoctrinate us that we had to call our stepdad “Dad”, as he was “doing more for us than our own father”. To a certain extent, that was true – my father had been paying maintenance, but my stepdad was paying for our holidays and looking after our needs. Deep inside, I did not want to call this man an intimate name like father – yes, he supported us, but he was not blood. Secretly, I decided that I would make a differentiation for myself. I called my real father Pappa – Afrikaans for father, and, in my mind, the ultimate name for a father. I called my stepdad Dad or Daddy (the English version) – this was the separation of figures in my mind. I never

told my mother as she would not have accepted this. She wanted us to replace our father and his role in our lives with our stepdad altogether. But I discerned the roles and subsequently the importance of the relationships for myself in this way – by using Pappa and Dad. For ease of reading, I will continue to refer to them as father and stepdad respectively.

Figure 4.2

Coastal Holiday (2007).



Note. This photograph was taken during our coastal holiday in 2007. From the left is my stepdad, my mother, me, Carmen, and Jeani in the front. Photograph from author's personal archives; published with permission from recognisable subjects in the photograph.

Even though there were some altercations and differences in opinions and feelings, I believed that I had a close relationship with my mother. Especially from Grade 11 – aged 17 years – we had bonded. I talked to her about everything – friends, schoolwork, boyfriends, and teachers. She was an aerobics instructor in the evenings at that time, and I went with her from Monday to Thursday every week. We had many opportunities to talk, and it was the main reason for our close bond. She used to refer to me as her mooiste, slimste, oudste dogter, translating to “smartest, most beautiful, eldest daughter”. All the adjectives were synonymous with her love towards me but also

reflected her desire for me to be the perfect daughter. My other two sisters had similar nicknames but with different adjectives suited to their personalities.

I was allowed to have boyfriends, but not to go out with them. They had to visit at home where there was constant supervision and strict rules. No boys were allowed in the bedroom, and no closed doors, even if I just quickly wanted to fetch something and a boy was close by. My mother and stepdad constantly told us that boys only wanted to get into our pants and that getting pregnant at a young age would ruin our lives. I recognised that these were valid points, but it was the execution thereof that did the most harm.

Reflecting on those rules, I understood that the strict rules were put in place to protect me and keep me out of harm's way. But I wonder if I would have had different relationships and would have treated my future relationship with my husband differently if I had had a bit more freedom to explore, make my own decisions, be able to make mistakes, and learn from my mistakes as all young people do. If you are constantly being supervised and told what to do, how do you know that your thoughts and morals are really your own?

We were told that we had to study after school and get a degree because a woman had to have a career to be able to take care of herself. This idea was purely from my mother, and I think it stemmed from her not having had a qualification and struggling to have a career after divorcing my father. This life lesson has stuck with me since then and I have made it part of my life. I worked hard at high school and achieved distinctions throughout. I knew that I was making my parents proud academically. It was also part of my identity – the nerd, the geek, the one everyone asked for help with checking their essays and giving them the answers to homework questions. I was not allowed to go out and go to parties, so if I was accepted by my peers as the nerdy one, I accepted it.

Religiously, we were still in limbo. When we moved to Ermelo, we tried out a few churches again, until my stepdad stated that none of them provided the right message. Thus, we had church sessions at home on weekdays, and on Sundays we would all go and play golf as a family. Even though I was not talented at sport, I was a good golfer – I think it is in my genes as my father played amateur golf and my mother was

a golf instructor. But there were mixed signals sent about religion and what to believe religiously.

The weekday Bible study sessions were scattered – some weeks we had daily sessions, and sometimes it would be once a month. Yet my stepdad insisted that we had to be religious and that his interpretation of the Bible was correct. His strict rules were based on his interpretations: he had his own study sessions; read a lot on the internet; and communicated with pastors around the world. He told us that no church or pastor in our country had the correct interpretation of the Bible, and he was getting our souls ready for the day when the world would end.

It was during my Grade 12 year, my final year at high school, that my stepdad's religious views became more extreme and difficult to understand and live with. From the scriptures that he had been reading online, his views about the Bible and Christianity had started to lean more towards the historical Jewish religion. He informed us that from Fridays at 18:00 to Saturdays at 18:00 was the actual Sabbath, instead of Sundays as most Christians believed. He also mentioned that our birthdays and Christmas were on other days according to a historical Jewish calendar. I perceived his views to be similar to those of Seventh Day Adventists, but he told me that his views were different from theirs.

These religious views would be fine to interpret and apply in our own household, but they began to interfere with my duties at school. I was part of the senior leadership team at school, and we had duties to perform and school activities to attend to and be present for. Most activities were on Saturdays (sporting events), which meant that it fell on our household's Sabbath. My stepdad refused to allow me to attend any events that were on Saturdays, even though it was part of my leadership duties. It became such a big problem at school that the principal, wanting to revoke my leadership status, had called a meeting with my parents to discuss my participation in school events and my duties as part of the head leadership team. My stepdad immediately told the principal that I was not to be punished based on our religious beliefs. I remember thinking that it was *his* religious beliefs – I did not understand why this had to be such a big problem and I just wanted to do my work and what was expected of me in my leadership role.

The religious/weekend issue was not only affecting my leadership role but other facets of my life too. My best friend was the head girl, and she had to think of excuses as to why I was never present at events on weekends until the meeting with the principal became public knowledge. Some of my peers looked at me differently and asked what my religious beliefs were and why I was exempt from my duties on weekends. It also affected my cultural activities. I was part of the school choir and was at every practice session during the week. I really enjoyed the choir as I love music. But again, when there were performances over the weekend, I was not allowed to go. I tried to make excuses until the choir director called me in and scolded me. She was a teacher for whom I had a lot of respect, and I did not want to fight with her (I never like to fight with anybody). My mother found out about the scolding and went to school immediately. This resulted in my mother telling the teacher that if that was the way that she spoke to learners, I would not be participating in the choir anymore. My heart was broken – I did not want to leave the choir. But how could I go against my mother's orders? If these religious views were part of our household and why I could not do the things I wanted to do, I could not go against her wishes because then I would be going against my stepdad.

Figure 4.3

My Nerds (2008).



Note. My close friends in Grade 12 on a biology class trip, also referred to as the “nerds” by our peers. From the left to right is V, Na (head girl), Linnie, and me. Take note of the fashionable socks with shoes to prove how “cool” we were. Photograph from personal archives.

Apart from the matriculation farewell dance, the Valentine’s dance was the second-biggest event of the year at high school. One of my male friends had asked me if I wanted to go, and, of course, I was elated to say yes. My mother did not have a problem with the dance, as she had an excuse to make me a nice dress. Being a seamstress, she enjoyed making dresses and events like these gave her an opportunity to play around with making dresses for us girls. However, she did say that I had to get my stepdad’s permission. After asking him if I could go, his immediate reaction was no. I did not like getting into conflict with him and I knew which battles I could not fight, but sometimes I had enough courage to question his decisions. Looking back, I wish I did that more. This is the conversation that followed:

Me:	Daddy, can I go to the Valentine’s ball? Julian asked me if I would go with him, and I hoped that I could say yes.
Stepdad:	No.
Me:	Please, Dad? (Silence) Why not?
Stepdad:	Valentine’s day is based on the ritualistic worshipping of the demon named Cupid. It is a satanic event, and I cannot allow you to take part in it.
Me:	Please, Dad. I promise I am not going to worship anyone or anything – I just want to dance and enjoy the night with my friends.
Stepdad:	You are starting to get old enough to make decisions for yourself. But just know – one day when you are standing in front of the pearly gates of heaven, I will have to account for your life and decisions. So, if you decide to go, you now have to live with your choices and make peace that your soul will be tainted in front of the Lord forever. I will not take accountability anymore.

I was speechless. I thought, is this really the truth? Is this what is expected of me as a Christian? My friends were all Christians, and some of them went to church every Sunday, yet they were allowed to go to dances and take part in weekend school activities. I had peers who were partying and drinking every weekend – surely that was more “sinful” than being a straight-A student just wanting to do her school duties. I wanted to enjoy high school and the activities that came with it, just like any other teenager. These “religious” views confused me, and I struggled to know the truth.

Figure 4.4

Valentine's Ball (February 2008).



Note. Me and my date at the Valentine's ball in Grade 12, which my stepdad did not want me to attend due to his religious views. Photograph from personal archives; published with permission from all subjects in the photograph.

My stepdad's religious views influenced my academics as well. I had been chosen to take part in the debate team based on my speech on bullying that I had done in class. I was bullied in Grade 12 – my peers would call me out whenever I answered the teacher or put up my hand. Hence, in my anti-conflict style of handling issues, I chose bullying as my topic for a class speech, hoping that I would get the message across to my peers to stop what they were doing. Needless to say, it did not change anything.

A few nights before the evening of the big debate, I was practising my speech and recited it for my mother. She gave me a few adjustments to make in terms of sentence construction but told me to give it to my stepdad to also revise as he was good with speeches and word choice. I gave it to him full of hope as I had been chosen to take part in the debate evening based on the speech's content. He read it and said it was good, but that I must rather change my topic. He rewrote my entire speech and based it on the topic of the role of a woman in the household and how a woman should be submissive to her husband. I remember telling him that I did not want to change it and

that I would not be able to memorise it in time. He insisted that I change it because it was a better topic and more relevant for people to hear. I had learnt over time to choose which battles to fight, and I did not have the time nor energy to fight this one. The night of the debate evening I was expecting my mother and stepdad to be in the audience and watch me deliver my “improved” speech but my mother dropped me off at the gate and told me that she was tired and my stepdad had to work, so she would pick me up later. If I had known that this would be the situation, I would have delivered my original speech without their presence, but I had already put all my effort into learning the new speech and had forgotten the old one.

I had forgotten about this speech-changing drama until years later when I was packing out some boxes and found my speech that had been rewritten. I could not believe my eyes at what I read, and part of the topic of this thesis was born that day. I remember the lost feeling that I had during my Grade 12 year – feeling like I did not know where my roots were. What were my religious roots? What was the correct way to be a woman – submissive and listening to everything her husband told her to do, or independent and supporting herself? The longer we lived with my stepdad, the more obvious it became that my mother was becoming more submissive and influenced by my stepdad’s thoughts and ideals.

My mother had a friend who played golf with us over the weekends. We became household friends – they lived close to the school so when my mother was busy, we would often go to Aunt M’s house. She and her husband did not have children and treated us as their own. They treated us with gifts and even had a dedicated drawer in their house full of snacks and treats for when we visited them. Aunt M and her husband liked to gamble, which meant that they received free nights at a hotel where there was a casino and golf course. We would often be gifted their free nights, so the household would all sleep at the hotel and play golf the whole weekend. After some time though, during my stepdad’s change in religious views, he started to cancel plans with Aunt M and think of excuses not to spend time with them anymore. At home, he explained to us that they were gamblers and gambling was an addiction and against the Law of the Bible.

One afternoon after school, I was in the car with my mother, and she received a call from Aunt M. Her phone was connected to the car's audio so I could hear the entire conversation. Aunt M declared that she missed spending time with us and that we should all go out together again. My mother answered that she also missed her and said she was open to visiting on Saturday, but she would call her later to confirm the time to meet for coffee. After the phone call, she told me that she was so happy to have received that call and was excited to see Aunt M that weekend.

Later that evening, my mother told my stepdad about the call from Aunt M and that she had made plans for that weekend. This is the conversation that followed:

Mother:	I got a call from M today; I was so glad that she contacted me! I made plans with her to drink coffee on Saturday.
Stepdad:	No.
Mother:	She reached out to me. I did not contact her.
Stepdad:	We have decided that we must not Blacken our souls by being friends with sinners. They are gamblers, and they are sinners.
Mother:	I understand that. I just thought I would be nice and go for coffee with her, she sounds lonely and misses the girls.
Stepdad:	We are good enough for the girls, they do not need others. Especially people who are sinners.
Mother:	Okay, I will call her now and cancel Saturday's plans.
Stepdad:	Good. It will be better not to have contact with them again.

I was very confused after that conversation between my mother and stepdad. Surely my mother did not want this? She was sincere in the car and told me how she missed them. I could not comprehend how after one short conversation with my stepdad, she had changed her mind completely. She called Aunt M right at that moment and cancelled the coffee date. It was a short conversation (the side that I heard) and her eyes were teary afterwards, but she did not show my stepdad that emotion. I remember I could not quite understand why this was happening. Why one moment when you are on your own, do you decide something, and then somebody else gives you another opinion and, just like that, you change your mind? That was the influence that my stepdad had on my mother. She never made her own decisions and never stood up against my stepdad's opinion. That dynamic still puzzles me to this day. My mother had some health issues and my stepdad ensured that she got the best medical attention, but that did not mean she should lose her individuality and opinions. What

kind of example was that to three girls about the type of relationship that you should have with your husband?

Contrasting the two women who were the mother figures in my life at that point was significant. My mother: loving but submissive to my stepfather, loved to sing in the car but never stood up for herself. And my stepmother, Aunt J: fun and “cool” but smoked non-stop (and even asked us to light her cigarettes), allowed us to do whatever we wanted but drank excessively and always wanted to leave whenever my father’s income fluctuated.

I know that everyone has a different picture of who and what a good example of a woman looks like, but I think that even at a young age I wanted to be the perfect example for my sisters. I constantly tried to make everyone happy, be a good girl, make my parents happy, and not fight with my siblings. One of my idols, Taylor Swift, said in her 2020 documentary, *Miss Americana*, “A nice girl smiles and waves and says thank you. A nice girl does not make people feel uncomfortable with her views. Those pats on the head were all I lived for”. This resonated with me as I always strove to be the nice girl, the good girl, to be liked by everyone. I believe this was rooted in the desire I had from childhood to set an example for my sisters.

4.2.3 Lyricovignette 3: Love story

Julian and I first met in Grade 11. We sat next to each other in Physical Science class. We bonded over our love for the emo-rock bands Green Day and My Chemical Romance’s CDs that we both listened to. We would swap the CDs (even though we both owned them) and listen to the lyrics of certain songs. We used to write notes on paper for each other during class to “chat”. We did not date at that stage, and in Grade 12 he asked me to accompany him to the Valentine’s ball as a friend.

Figure 4.5

Our First Photograph (August 2008).



Note. Photograph from author's personal archives; published with permission from all subjects in the photograph.

Then, just before the preliminary examinations began in Grade 12, we began talking more and just “clicked”. We started officially dating on 27 August 2008, two days before our first preliminary examinations. Our parents were apprehensive, but we encouraged studying with each other. I am a night owl and would message him to stay awake and study with me. He is a morning person, so he would call me early to wake me up to study. We ended up with nine distinctions between the two of us.

In December of Grade 12, Julian moved to Bloemfontein to study at the University of Free State. I did not know what I wanted to do with my life after Grade 12, so my mother encouraged me to apply to study for a BCom in accounting and work at a company at the same time. I knew this was a good degree although I did not even have accounting as a subject. I liked teaching and learning new things and reading languages. But, at the time, there was a stigma in my small town that you only studied for a teaching degree if you did not know what else to study, or if you were not smart enough to study something else. My mother said I was too smart to study to be a teacher, and that influenced my studying choices a great deal.

I tried my best at an accounting firm but hated every minute of it. To be behind a computer all day in a cubicle and type numbers was mind-numbing and boring. I did not understand the work I was supposed to be studying. But to be honest, I did not put

as much effort into it as I know I should have. Meanwhile, Julian and I kept dating and communicating over the phone. Bloemfontein was far from Ermelo – about an eight-hour drive. He was busy attending first-year camps and university classes and could not come to visit for a long time. Through it all, we communicated – via cell phone and email, and we even wrote letters and posted them to each other. We even had two or three different SIM cards as each service provider had a special of free minutes after midnight. So, we would sleep and then wake up at midnight, talk to each other for a free hour and then sleep again.

My mother kept telling me to forget about him, that he was too far, and that I was still young. She said I should not waste away my young years waiting for a guy that was so far away. She even tried to set me up on a date with a young optometrist in the town because he was successful and, according to her, “will be able to take care of you”. But I stayed loyal to Julian – I knew he was “the one” even though we were young, even though we did not know what all these things meant.

In April 2009, Julian came to visit for the first time since he had left for university. It had been five months of dating long distance – writing letters, emails, messages, and calling each other after midnight for the free minutes. I was so excited to finally see him again, but my mother and stepdad were not. I was not allowed to visit him at his house, so he came to visit me, or we went to a coffee shop. Mostly he would visit me, which was unfair because he also did not see his mother a lot so it would have been better if I was just allowed to go to his house where his mother was as well.

The second time he was able to visit was at the end of April when there is usually a long weekend. I was supposed to see him on Saturday morning. The week leading up to the visit, I asked my parents’ permission to see Julian but they simply avoided the topic. As a reminder, I was 18 years’ old at the time, still living in their house but receiving a salary while studying (and my mother was still receiving maintenance for me from my father). I did not have a car or a licence yet and was dependent on my parents to drive me around if I could not manage to find a lift with someone.

The Friday afternoon before the visit for which my parents had not yet given permission, I came home from work and my stepdad called me into his office. My mother followed me and closed the door behind her – never a sign of a good

conversation that would follow. My mother then started to explain to me that the long-distance relationship I had with Julian was not healthy and was not meant for a young, beautiful girl like me. She told me that I was busy wasting my life away and that I had to break off the relationship with Julian. At first, I kept quiet and did not talk back as usual – I am the good girl, the nice girl, the one who does not question or fight back. The moment she repeatedly stated that I had to break up with Julian, I decided that for once I need to stand up for myself, for my happiness, and for what I wanted. I kept on telling her that I did not want to break up and that I loved Julian, and her reply was, “You are too young to understand what love is”.

The conversation (which I did not win) ended with them typing a breakup text and ensuring that I sent the message to Julian. After pressing “send”, my mother immediately took my phone, switched it off, and hid it from me. Naturally, Julian did not know what had happened and only received the message out of the blue. He had my sister’s number and tried to contact her, just to find out what was happening. He even explained that he understood, he just wanted to tell me that everything was okay, and he respected my decision. But my sister was also forbidden to talk to him and had to switch her phone off as well.



*‘Cuz you were Romeo, I was a scarlet letter
And my daddy said, “Stay away from Juliet”
But you were everything to me
I was begging you, “Please don’t go”
~ Love Story, recorded by Taylor Swift
(written by Swift, 2008)*

On Saturday night I could not sleep. This was really, really bothering me. Deep in my heart, I knew what my parents were doing was wrong. I kept thinking, how can they decide for me how I feel, how I am not supposed to feel? That is when I remembered that I had an old cell phone at the back of my drawer. I also found one of our random SIM cards that we used to use, so I took a chance and sent him a “please call me” (a free message that you can send to someone, and they simply receive a message saying “please call me” with a cell phone number). Julian told me later that he was awake that night as well, and when he received the anonymous “please call me” message, he prayed with all his heart that it was me on the other side. He took a

chance and called the number, and I answered in quiet whispers under my blanket. I told him the whole story, that it was not my fault, and that I still loved him. He started crying with me and said that he felt the same and did not want to lose me. That has been the only 24 hours that we have not communicated with each other since then.

Now the planning had to begin, a way forward. I told him that I knew that my mother was going to a certain shopping centre the next day and that we should try to meet. I arranged that I would send him a “please call me” from this number secretly when we left home. The next day I tried to slip away from my mother by saying I forgotten something in the car and searched for him. I will never forget the scene when I saw him, and ran to him and hugged him, sobbing inconsolably.



*So, I sneak out of the garden to see you
We keep quiet 'cuz we're dead if they knew
So, close your eyes
Escape this town for a little while*
*~ Love Story, recorded by Taylor Swift
(written by Swift, 2008)*

Being the good girl, the nice girl, the keep-everyone-happy girl that I am, I confessed to my mother what I had done the moment we were home. I thought my honesty would mean something and make my punishment less. I told her that I had secretly seen Julian, that we had been communicating, and that I did not want to break up with him. She was disappointed in me for conspiring behind her back and going against their wishes. She said that she first needed to discuss this matter with my stepdad and then we could discuss it together.

Diary entry: 11 March 2023

I was sobbing like I'm sobbing right now. Why did I choose to do an autoethnography? Why this topic? I know this is part of the journey, the process, the “therapy” part of autoethnography. Unfortunately, our identities are formed by many experiences, and the traumatic and miserable ones make you tougher than the good memories.

On Monday night after work, my stepdad called me into his office. He started screaming at me – I felt disorientated and insecure. He was blaring at me, saying how dare I disrespect them, how dare disobey them. I understand their reason for being disappointed and punishing me, but surely there was a better way of treating your 18-year-old than screaming at her like she was 8? I cried a lot, and, as I am prone to crying easily (happy, mad, sad, anything and everything can bring a tear to my eye), it may be seen as a weakness. In that moment I realised that I had never stood up for myself, and if I did not do it then, I might lose something that was worth fighting for.

I told my stepdad that I loved Julian, and asked if they could please just allow me to give it a chance. I was working, earning a salary, studying to better my future, why could I not choose whom I wanted to date? Julian was a good guy – he had dreams and ambitions to be successful, he was studying and getting good marks, he respected me, made me laugh, and treated me like I was a princess. If the only problem was the distance, they had to allow me to at least give it a chance. I knew they did not have a problem with me dating, as my mother wanted to set me up with a few men in town that she approved of.

That was when my stepdad told me that Julian just “wants one thing” from me as a girl. I laughed as I thought he was joking – if Julian just wanted me for one thing, why would he drive 500 km for a girl he sees maybe once every few months? As a first-year student at a university without parental supervision, I am sure you could have got sexual favours more easily than that. It was a mistake that I laughed, as it sent my stepdad into a rage of insults and belittling me. He referred to me as a whore, told me that I was acting like a whore and being sexually active. He insulted my clothing, my body, and my behaviour. I was in total shock and could not even speak, the tears just rolled down my cheeks. At first I kept quiet out of shock, but the more he insulted me the more I wanted to defend myself. I blurted out that they should take me to a doctor to inspect my virginity and that it was still intact, and that there was no need for those words. I looked at my mother when I said this. It is such a private thing, and I did not want to discuss it with a man, let alone this man that is supposed to be a “father figure” but was insulting me instead. She just looked at my stepdad and listened to what he said.

4.2.4 Lyricovignette 4: Mean

Throughout this whole experience, my stepdad was doing all the talking, with my mother present in the room. When I pleaded my innocence and I looked at her, she did not look at me. I begged my mother to believe me, as she knew me, her eldest daughter. However, she agreed with what my stepdad said and never even tried to defend me, her own daughter.

Throughout that week, they agreed that I was allowed to see Julian, but he was not allowed to step foot into the house. They did not even want to see his car, so he had to stop down the street and I walked to join him. I was allowed to go to him and see him for an hour so that we could go to a coffee shop or just sit in the car and talk. When he dropped me off, he had to drop me off down the street and I had to walk back alone again. He always waited and waved at me to ensure that I was safe at home and as a last good luck.

Night by night, I was called into that dreaded office and the cycle of verbal abuse would start all over again. Insulting me, insulting Julian, insulting his parents, insulting my father. Anyone and everyone were at fault for my actions of going against their wishes. My stepdad accused Julian of being a slacker because he never faced my stepdad, yet they had forbidden him to step foot into their house, so what did they want? He was verbally “throwing” different scriptures at me and told me that children must honour their parents. He ranted about sexual behaviour before marriage, and about the man being beneath God and the ultimate monarch in a household. And every night ended with me crying, being forced to watch television with the rest of the family as it was “family time” and only being allowed to go to bed later.



*You, with your words like knives
And swords and weapons that you use against me
You, have knocked me off my feet again
Got me feeling like I'm nothing
~ Mean, recorded by Taylor Swift
(written by Swift, 2010)*

On a Thursday night, two weeks after this had all happened, I concluded that this was not sustainable every night. Julian had returned to Bloemfontein to university, and I told my mother that I thought it would be beneficial for us all to be separated for a few nights. I had arranged to stay with a friend from work that weekend, so we could all just think a bit more clearly and then the following week try talking it all out again. My

Diary entry: 07 April 2023

Reliving this experience and typing it out was a tough thing to do. I could feel myself not wanting to recall those memories – and this is where music saved me again with regard to writing my autoethnography. Whenever I struggled to start, I listened to my PhD playlist with the songs referenced in this study, and they transported me to the memories and emotions of a previous time. Specifically, Pink’s Family Portrait (Moore, 2007) evoked the pain of the divorce. But also, whenever I was busy writing and the memories and emotions became too much, I listened to my Mood Booster playlist full of happy and feel-good songs. Music helped me “cope” with certain traumatic times yet again. I used the songs to escape when it became too much.

friend was staying in a commune and I had to share a bed with her, but I truly thought that just spending some time apart would be good for thought processing. Here I was again, the child trying to make peace with the adults.

That Monday I went to work, which was just around the corner from where I was staying with my friend and that night sent my mother a message to ask how they were doing and if we could try talking again. She replied, saying that they had packed up all my belongings and clothes over the weekend, and I should let them know when I would be coming to fetch everything. I could not believe what I was reading. They had used the weekend not to try think of possible peaceful solutions as I did but rather to pack up all my belongings. They kicked me out of the house, just like that. I called my mother, but she ignored my call. I had no idea what to do, and I was feeling more distraught, betrayed, and abandoned than ever.

4.2.5 Lyricovignette 5: Elastic heart

Imagine you are 18 years old, sharing a bed with a friend because you just wanted to escape a toxic environment, and just having been told that your room was packed and ready for collection. What would you do? I did the only thing that I thought I could do – I called my father. I told him I had been kicked out of the house, and I did not know what to do or where to go. He drove through from Witbank (about an hour and a half drive) the very next morning, called my boss and told him he had a meeting with me, and that he should excuse me for the morning. My father picked me up, took me to Wimpy and the first thing he said was, “Everything will be fine”. I told him the whole story from start to finish, including where I snuck behind my mother’s back to see Julian, everything my stepdad said, and how I ended up living up with a friend.

My father believed me and consoled me. Thinking back as an adult, I realise my father was probably revelling in this situation as he could “save” me because my mother was the “bad guy”, whereas he had been the bad guy for such a long time. But even now I do not doubt his intentions as he stepped up to the adult role and helped me. Within a few days, he had sourced a garden cottage for me to move into and arranged a trailer so I could fetch my belongings from my mother’s house. My father also brought furniture as my mother only gave me an old desk, a chair, and drawers as furniture. The cottage was close to work and an elderly couple lived in the main house. They made dinner every night and left it in my kitchenette, helped with laundry, and gave me a lift to work in the mornings when it was cold.



*You did not break me
I'm still fighting for peace
I've got thick skin and an elastic heart
But your blade it might be too sharp
I'm like a rubber band until you pull too hard
~ Elastic Heart, recorded by Sia
(written by Furler, 2014)*

After about a month of living in the cottage, my father fetched me for the Easter weekend to visit him. He had a conversation with me about my future, and whether I was truly happy in Ermelo. I told him that, honestly, I did not know what I wanted to do with my life, and I did not enjoy my current employment or studies. I persevered as it

was expected of me to study and have a job, but I did not enjoy it at all. He proposed that I moved to Witbank to live with him and Aunt J and her children, where I would not have to find employment immediately and I could think about what I would want to study for a while.

My father came with a trailer yet again to move his furniture and my belongings to Witbank, this time including me. I had to share a room with my 13-year-old stepsister, but at least I was out of Ermelo and the fear of running into my mother at any moment. I always say that I lay on my father's couch for half a year before I figured out what I wanted to do with my life, but I think it was a necessary part of the healing process. But the wounds were not healed completely, and many cuts were going to open the wound again and again.

Throughout this process, my relationship with Julian remained strong. Sometimes I still cannot believe that this man sat through all this drama. My father met Julian and liked him, but I think even if he did not, he would not have said anything as he wanted to be the “good parent” for once. Julian was allowed to visit and sleepover. He would share a room with my stepbrother or sleep on the couch in the living room. For our one-year anniversary, my father allowed me to visit Julian in Bloemfontein. I took an eight-hour bus ride and visited him for about a week. I went to campus with him, and I was in awe at how magical a university campus was – just like high school, but better. I loved every minute, even though we lived off toast and water as we both did not have an income. My father had helped me to set a budget for the trip, so I had some spending money but feeding two on one budget was tight.

When I returned, my father called me to his office, and we discussed my future. I had some flashbacks of conversations in offices, but my father was calm and collected, and thus it was a totally different experience. Even though he explained to me sternly that I could not sit on his couch for the rest of my life and needed to get my life in order, I could converse with him and felt included in the whole process. I told him that I honestly did not know what I wanted to do, but I wanted to start doing something. I also wanted to prove to myself that I was not a failure and that I could be successful on my own.

My father was on the school governing body of KB Primary School, the school I had attended as a child before my parents divorced. He told me that they currently had student teacher positions available, but that I should first have a conversation with the principal and see what happened from there. The next week I met Ms L, the principal of KB Primary School. She was a lady in her fifties at the time, did not have children of her own, and had the biggest, caring heart. She took me on a tour around the school and explained the roles and responsibilities of a student teacher. My father had asked her if I could just help at first, with no expectation of payment or permanent employment, until both parties had come to a decision. I enrolled at the University of South Africa (UNISA) to start studying BEd part-time and started at KB Primary School in January 2010.

I elaborate on my teaching career and teaching identity on Side B of the mixtape.

4.2.6 Lyricovignette 6: No roots

I felt like I had finally settled and could start enjoying life and focusing on healing and building my new future. I enjoyed being a student teacher and found my studies intriguing and stimulating. In April 2010, Ms L came to the class where I was helping and told me that they would like to employ me full-time with a salary if I was interested. I was ecstatic and could not say thank you enough. She told me that I had impressed them with my work ethic and could see that I belonged in the teaching environment. At the end of the month, I received my first salary.

My father helped me to obtain my driver's licence, but I did not have my own car yet. As my stepsister was still attending KB Primary School, my stepmother or father dropped us off at school and work, and we walked back in the afternoons (we lived very close to the school). Once I had my driver's licence, my father allowed me to drive his old work bakkie (truck) every now and then. In the meantime, Julian had moved back to Ermelo as his father could not afford university anymore. He moved back to live with his mother and continued his studies through UNISA while working full-time. This was a bit better for our long-distance relationship as Ermelo is only 120 km from Witbank in contrast to Bloemfontein's 550 km.

My father agreed to pay for my studies, and, in return, I just had to pass. I made a pact with myself that I wanted to pass with as many distinctions as possible as a way of thanking my father. Upon receiving my first salary, I also told my father that I would contribute to the groceries and pay for my own toiletries and petrol when I visited Julian. Aunt J was not working so my father was the only person with a salary, and he was looking after Aunt J, her mother, her two children (whose fathers were not paying maintenance), and then me, as well as maintenance for my other two sisters. That is a great financial strain for one person, and that time was unfortunately when my father's financial situation was not the best.

The fact that I was working and receiving a salary had a strange effect on my stepmother. She constantly questioned my salary when I gave her money for groceries and when I bought myself clothes for work or went out with a friend. She would mention how that money could have gone to feed them all. She started to minimise the communication I could have with my father at home, secluding him in their room where he had a TV, and she took food to him. There would sometimes be days when I did not see my father or know whether he was at home.

One afternoon she came to me and told me that my father had decided that now that I was earning a salary, it would be best for me to move out as I could look after myself. I wanted to discuss it with him and talk to him, but she kept saying he was under a lot of stress or in a mood or was not at home. She told me that I had a month to find a place to stay and that was final – I had to think of my father and the stress that I was causing him.



*I build a home and wait
For someone to tear it down
Then pack it up in boxes
Head for the next town running*

*~ No Roots, recorded by Alice Merton
(written by Rebscher, 2019)*

The next day my mentor teacher whose class I was assigned to asked me what was wrong. Mrs D was very perceptive and could see if something was bothering you immediately. I told her about the predicament I was in, and she started making calls and said we would work something out. She went with me to look at a few housing

options, but as I was on a first-year student's salary, I was only earning R3 000 per month. To put it this in perspective, I was not even earning enough to pay taxes, so finding accommodation that was not only affordable but safe for a young woman was nearly impossible.

One afternoon we went to the principal's office and talked about my current situation. Mrs D and Ms L were good friends and had been working together for many years. Upon hearing my predicament, Mrs D called the deputy principal, Ms C, who was also one of their dear friends to the office. Ms C was also a lady in her fifties and had no children. Ms L shared the story and Ms C looked at me, studying me. Then she proceeded to tell me that she lived alone with her two dogs and had a spare bedroom if I was interested. She said all I needed to contribute to for the time being was the food she ordered every week and a little extra for the cleaning lady. Just until I could find something suitable and safe. I was astounded by her willingness to help a young person whom she has only known for about five months, and to welcome me into her home at barely any cost.

I went home that afternoon and told Aunt J and I could see the joy in her eyes. I asked if I could go to my father and tell him but was met with her usual excuses. The last night that I spent in the house I bought Kentucky Fried Chicken for everyone as a thank you and goodbye. My father did not join us for dinner and ate in his room as usual.

The next day when I had to move out, Aunt J (and by extension, my father) did not offer to help with my few belongings (my clothes and my chest of drawers), and I did not have a car. A friend had borrowed her father's bakkie and she helped me to move my belongings. Before I left, I insisted on saying goodbye to my father. I went into his room to say goodbye, feeling angry and hurt that he did not want me in his house anymore, but also understanding that it was due to financial strain. My father said goodbye and good luck, with less than the usual love. I was tired and did not have the emotional capacity to deal with this as well.

That evening I did not even sleep at Ms C's house – my friend had invited me to stay with her for the weekend to offer some emotional support. Her family was very loving and had welcomed me into their home many times. They were financially well-off, so

I always felt like royalty when I visited there and had food and snacks to my heart's content.

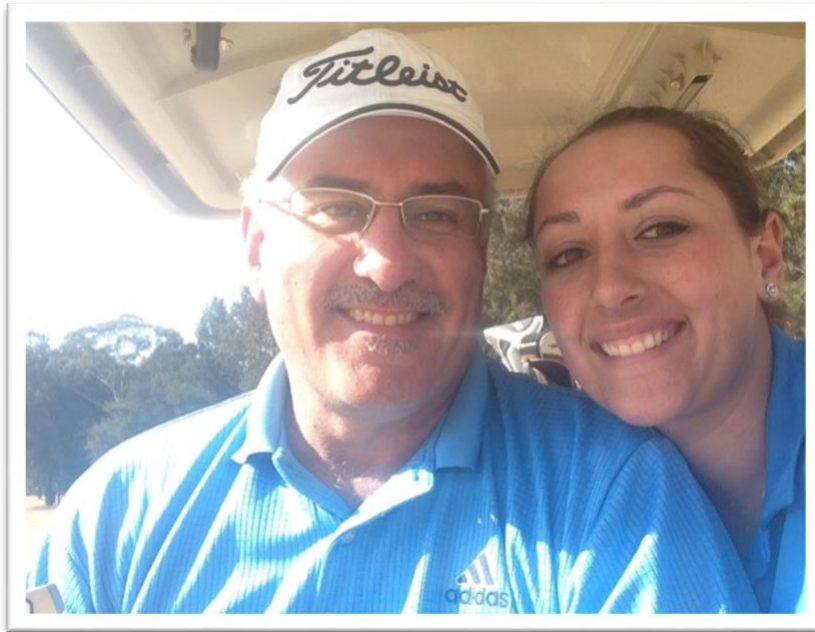
Living with Ms C was awkward at the beginning – we did not know each other well, and I had to adapt to her routine as she was now also my transport to work. Being the deputy principal meant that she left very early and sometimes returned home very late. I tried to not be a nuisance by taking study work with me to school to keep me busy while waiting for her. But what started as staying with her until I found something suitable, turned into a deep mentor–friendship and we continued to live together for more than five years. Ms C was very fair and followed rules to a tee. She was open and honest and did not shy away from telling you when you did something wrong, but she provided the stability, support, and love of a mother figure that I desperately needed in my life at that moment. To this day, she remains one of the first people I call if I need advice. She gave me the roots I needed to be able to focus on myself, my career, my studies, and healing from all the pain I had endured thus far.

4.2.7 Lyricovignette 7: Army

After about a year of living with Ms C, I started to rebuild my relationship with my father. He called me one day to ask if I wanted to have dinner with him. He told me that he and Aunt J were going to divorce, and she had already moved out. He offered that I could move back, but I told him that I was comfortable and I thought that the environment at Ms C was good for me. He admitted that Aunt J had lied to him about me moving out – she had told him that I wanted to move out. So, on the day that we said our goodbyes, my father had also been hurt and angry because he had thought I was leaving him and that his house was not good enough for me. He was oblivious to the poison that Aunt J had been whispering in his ear, but at that moment it was his “truth”, just as I had mine. He told me that he should have never allowed me to go without talking to me himself and that that was one of the biggest mistakes he had made. That night I forgave my father for all he did, as it takes a lot for a person to admit that they have done something wrong, and that they incorrectly chose their partner over their child; but to hear it, especially from my father, meant the world to me. I will never forget that night's dinner with him – it was the first time that I felt really connected and that he was the father figure he was meant to be.

Figure 4.6

Father and Daughter Playing Golf (2014).

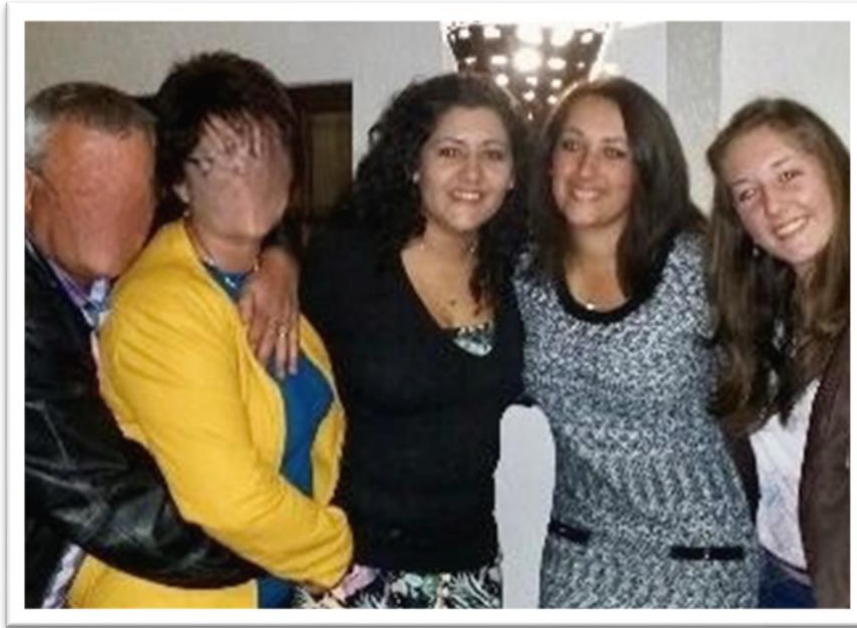


Note. Photograph from personal archives; published with permission from all subjects in the photograph.

I contrast this to my relationship with my mother, which after nearly 14 years has still not improved. There were times that I really tried to reach out. I contacted her, visited her, and tried to rebuild the relationship. But then the manipulation and false stories would start again, and I would lose contact. Some of the false stories included her spreading rumours about Julian in Ermelo, which affected his employment opportunities. It even went as far as reaching Julian's mother's employer at the time, almost affecting her employment. My mother even called me one day and told me that Julian was cheating on me as he was currently sitting at a coffee shop with another girl, showing affection in public. I was disappointed in myself after that insinuation, as I had believed her for a split second and confronted Julian, but after hearing the hurt in his voice, I knew it was all a ruse from her to influence my relationship with Julian once more.

Figure 4.7

Attempting Reunions (2014).



Note. I continued to attempt to reunite with my mother, after which it would be peaceful for a while and then something would happen again. This umpteenth attempted reunion photo was taken at my sister Carmen's 21st birthday party. My mother did not attend my 21st party, even though I had invited her and my stepdad. From the left is my stepdad, my mother, Carmen, me, and Jeani. Photograph from the author's personal archives; published with permission from recognisable subjects in the photograph.

My mother was also estranged from her brothers due to things that my stepdad had said, which he then tried to blame on me because I "had spread stories about them". My uncle contacted me and we met a few times. Each time he assured me that the estrangement had happened before my drama and that I was not involved. My maternal grandmother, before her passing, always believed me and constantly tried to broker peace between my mother and me, as well as between my mother and her siblings.



*You never let me give up
All the nights and the fights and the breakups
You're always there to call up
I'm a pain, I'm a child, I'm afraid*
~ *Army, recorded by Ellie Goulding*
(written by Kotecha, 2015)

My father later remarried again and this time, my new stepmother, Aunt A, was truly an angel sent from above. My father met her at the church where she played the piano and sang in the church choir. She was the same age as he was, had two older children, and was a successful businesswoman. She has provided me with another motherly role model in my life that I call part of my “Army of Mothers”.

Even though I have yet to improve my relationship with my mother, I have accumulated an Army of Mothers who fulfil different motherly roles in my life. By having multiple women who have an influence on my life, I feel that my identity as a woman and female Afrikaner is more well-rounded and complete. Instead of having one source as a reference, I have a few sources who provide me with a better overall picture.

4.2.8 Lyricovignette 8: Klein Tambotieboom

Julian and I married in 2017, after having had a long-distance relationship for almost seven years. Our families did not put pressure on us to get married, as we were not living in the same town. Once we moved to the same city in 2016, the natural process of getting engaged and married followed. Even though our friends are all our age or younger, once we were engaged most of our friends followed suit.

Figure 4.8

Our Wedding Day (2017).



Note. Photograph by Mandy Klopper Photography; published with permission from all subjects in the photograph.

Moving to the city and marrying Julian really brought an era of happiness and I could feel myself healing from the trauma. Yes, I did not have a relationship with my mother yet, but I had a loving husband, friends, my Army of Mothers, a career, and my family. Having friends who loved me and supported me for me was the last step to healing as much as I could. I finally felt like I could live my life, go out, have fun, and do what I wanted to do.



*Die gelukkigste wat ek ooit was
Op die naat van my rug in die natuurresewaat
Die wind sing my naam en deur die bottels wat knak
Hoor ek 'n skaterlag*

*~ Klein Tambotieboom, recorded by Die Heuwels Fantasties
(written by De Ridder, Kennedy & Greeff, 2009)*

Translation:

The happiest that I have ever been was on my back in the nature reserve
With the wind singing my name
And through the clinking of bottles I hear a hearty laugh

My two best friends are my biggest cheerleaders when it comes to my study, and even though they have started their own families, they support me and my studies as much as Julian does.

Figure 4.9

The Different Stages in a Woman's Life (2022).



Note. My best friends and I took this picture when we realised that this was the “perfect” Afrikaner depiction of what society expects from the role of a woman. They agreed to take this photograph with the sole motivation of including it in this research study. Photograph from personal archives; published with permission from all subjects in the photograph.

The expectation for children came after marriage, even though Julian and I had discussed this matter with each other and our families. As I was still studying and wanted to finish my PhD as soon as possible, so having children was pushed to the “five-year plan”. Julian was also still working on climbing the corporate ladder at work, so children were not our priority. But it felt like people outside our circle of friends and close family kept asking us about children after our marriage. My answer was always that I was still studying, and that both of us wanted to focus on our careers first. However, various replies ranged from, “But you can study while you have kids”, “Your husband can work hard, you don’t have to”, “Your studies will not assist your career goals”, and even “Children are not that expensive”. Oh, we’ll see what happens.

4.3 MIXTAPE SIDE B: FEMALE TEACHER IDENTITY - MY PRESENT

4.3.1 Lyricovignette 9: Ain't it fun

A person is shaped by many different experiences in their lives. Side A of my mixtape took a deep dive into my narrative about my past, the influence of my family, and the construction of my female and Afrikaner female identity. This side of the mixtape continues that identity construction, focusing on my teaching identity and the construction thereof, and the influence of socio-cultural expectations on my female Afrikaner teacher identity.



Ain't it fun?

Living in the real world...

*~ Ain't it Fun, recorded by Paramore
(written by Williams & York, 2013)*

After school, I was not quite sure what I wanted to do with my life. If you followed my journey on Side A of the mixtape, you know how I ended up working at a school. I always liked teaching and learning. In Grade 12, my friends and I provided tutor services and sold summaries to our classmates. But the perceived stigma around teaching, as well as my mother's insistence that I needed to study something "smart" and "noteworthy", deterred me from studying teaching right off the bat. Fast forward to when my father assisted me to start at KB Primary School as a student teacher. It was a new environment and some of the teachers who had taught me back in my primary school days were still teaching there.

I will never forget my first day at KB Primary School when the children started school. We had been working for two days getting the classes ready and I had been assigned to a mentor teacher (Mrs D). The first day that the children began, we were all gathered in the hall. The learners were sitting on the floor, and the staff were on the stage. We sang songs and then we all sat down. The principal, Mrs L, greeted the learners, and they all chanted back, "Good morning, ma'am." At that moment, my whole body broke out in chills as I realised, "Wow, this is where I want to be. I am meant to be a teacher."

I enjoyed being a teacher and enjoyed my studies as well. I was a hard worker in and out of the class, and soon the other student teachers began calling me pliggie.² One day when the principal asked the student teachers to do something, someone said to the others, “Don’t worry, Mické will handle it, she is always the pliggie.” This remark took me back to my school days when I had been bullied for my diligent work, but I decided that it was part of who I am. The good girl, the nice girl, the one that everyone likes.

During the middle of my first year at KB Primary School was when I moved in with Ms C. She was a true role model for a student teacher. She had been teaching for over 20 years at that stage, and her position as deputy principal was inspiring to me. As I was still young and had just left my father’s house, I did not have my own transport and thus had to drive along with Ms C. I think this was also where my nickname pliggie originated – Ms C had to stay late after events, therefore I stayed late as well. Ms C had to be at school early for meetings, therefore I was at school early. At first, this was arduous for me; if I wanted to buy something at the shops, I had to ask her to stop there. But as we became better acquainted, I learnt to adapt to her routine.

Ms C had many friends at school, and they had a standing monthly coffee date on Friday afternoons. As I was reliant on Ms C for travel, I went with her on the coffee dates. It was intimidating at first – here I was, a 20-year-old, first-year student teacher, drinking coffee with a group of 50-plus-year-old teachers who had been teaching for a vast number of years. Never did I imagine that those coffee dates would result in some of my closest friendships as well, with my “old juffies”³ as I lovingly referred to them. As a student teacher, I listened to their stories and learnt about their different classroom management styles, their planning strategies, and how to deal with parents. As I got older, I learnt more nuanced lessons from them such as conflict management and how to handle certain situations in school and outside the class, specifically

² Pliggie is an Afrikaans word abbreviated from “pligsetrou”, meaning dutiful. It can be used as a positive nickname, or it can be used to insinuate a sarcastic remark. It often has a negative connotation.

³ Juffie is an Afrikaans word abbreviated from the word juffrou, meaning female teacher.

referring to colleagues. I was (and still am) comfortable enough to ask their opinions about any school (and sometimes personal) situation. They joined my Army of Mothers from a school or employment perspective.

Figure 4.10

My Old Juffies (2022).



Note. Photograph From author’s personal archives; published with permission from all subjects in the photograph.

I soon rose through the ranks of student teacher as I did well in my studies, achieving distinctions in most of my modules. I was not popular in the sense that I was “cool enough” to be invited to parties, but I was good enough when others needed assistance with their studies. The fact that I did not have my own car made it difficult to have a “student life”, which consisted of going out to parties and bars, but it was not really who I was anyway. Also, I did not want to go out without Julian – not because I was scared or possessive, just because I enjoyed time with him more. I would rather have saved to pay for a lift to visit Julian in Ermelo than go out for one night without him. My studies also kept me busy, as I wanted to achieve good results and spent a lot of time at home with Ms C, studying and watching series with her in my free time.

Even though I was not a sportsperson when I was at school, I enjoyed coaching a great deal. I always said that you do not need to be able to play the sport if you want to coach it. The athletics season was my favourite as I was the team manager for six

years, a very prestigious role for a young teacher. I had to set the team lists and send them to the meeting organisers, accompany the athletes to every meeting, and ensure they were on time and warmed up for their events. I also coached and umpired netball, and my teams did quite well. I disliked umpiring in the beginning as I did not have confidence in my netball knowledge, but over the years I improved and attained my national C- umpire grading. I also noted everything that my co-coaches explained and thus developed my knowledge about netball.

Hockey season was my other love when it came to coaching as I had played a little when I was at school. I enjoyed the openness of the field and being able to look across the field and analyse the whole game. My proudest moments as a coach came as a result of coaching hockey.

Figure 4.11

The Netball Coach (2022).



Note. Photograph From author's personal archives.

In my first year as a student teacher, I started coaching a mini-hockey team of Grade 2 learners. They were only eight years old. I was privileged enough to be their coach for the next six years until they were in Grade 7. Once they were allowed to play full-field hockey in Grade 4, we won the provincial championships. The team and I went on to win the provincial championships every year thereafter as well, ending as number one in Mpumalanga in their age group four years in a row. In their last year, Grade 7, we were selected to attend the Champ of Champions in Potchefstroom, where the top 10 schools of the inland provincial teams all played against each other. We ended in fourth place; the best the school's team has ever achieved.

Figure 4.12

The Hockey Coach (2014).



Note. When my hockey team was in Grade 6, I was the solo coach. All the other years I had co-coaches, but in that year, I coached all alone. Winning the provincial title that year, 2014, was the peak of my coaching career, as I felt that it was just me that was good enough to win the title with my team. This photograph shows me receiving my medal as solo coach for my winning team. Photograph from author's personal archives.

Throughout the years, even while coaching long hours after school and teaching classes, I attained my BEd qualification with distinction in 2014. The night of my

graduation was one of the best nights of my life – the feeling of accomplishment, pride, and joy was unimaginable. If someone could bottle and sell that feeling, they would be instant millionaires. That night I decided that I did not want to have this feeling only once in my life, I wanted to keep on studying.

4.3.2 Lyricovignette 10: Lose you to love me

The decision to carry on with my studies had been two-fold. Intrinsicly, the feeling of accomplishment was indescribable; it was a feeling that nobody could take away from me – I completed the degree, it was *mine*. I was not “just a teacher”, I was smarter because I was advancing in my studies. I understand by saying it that I sound condescending and judgemental, but that is my truth. One part of me wanted to show my mother that I was smart enough. I did not fail by studying education. I could survive without her and still be successful. Also, one part of me wanted to prove to myself that I was indeed intelligent and did not believe the names my stepdad had called me.

I also wanted to be able to climb the ladder and be able to apply for promotional posts in the future. I knew that attaining additional qualifications would open these doors for me in the future. I wanted to be successful and more than just a teacher – deep inside I knew I was capable of more than one degree and just teaching every day. I have nothing against teachers and their work – my best friend is an amazing teacher, and I have many colleagues who have turned into close friends. I have always experienced teaching as something else I want to succeed at. However, while my colleagues were lying awake at night worrying about their learners in class, I lay awake thinking about managerial issues and how I could improve the schooling system in a different way. Even though I have heard people say many times, “You are a born teacher” and I do enjoy teaching and care for my learners deeply, I am stimulated differently and require intellectual challenges.



*I saw the signs and I ignored it
Rose-coloured glasses all distorted
Set fire to my purpose
And I let it burn*

*~ Lose you to love me, recorded by Selena Gomez
(written by Michaels & Tranter, 2020)*

When I decided that I wanted to continue with my studies, Julian and I were still dating long-distance. He supported my decision wholeheartedly as he had just begun his honours degree and we could continue our studies together. His career aim was to become a chartered accountant (CA) – a highly coveted qualification within the financial–accounting sector – which would secure his future for higher positions than just a degree in his field.

The long-distance relationship was difficult to understand by my teacher colleagues. There were many conversations about when we were going to get married, especially now that I had obtained my degree. The following conversation transpired in 2014, soon after I obtained my degree, with one of my older female colleagues, Mrs E, who was close to retirement. I had just returned from the April holiday which I had spent at Julian's home.

Mrs E:	(Takes my left hand and looks at ring finger) I see no ring yet?
Me:	No, no... we are both still studying, and we are too far away from each other to get married now.
Mrs E:	But why don't you move to him? You've been dating too long; you need to get married now.
Me:	I am not going to move to him because he lives in such a small town, we will move once we know where we want to settle and be together. Besides, we are also both still studying.
Mrs E:	You don't need to study if he is going to be successful, he can take care of you. You have a degree, and that is all you need to be a teacher. You are such a wonderful teacher; you are meant to be in a classroom!
Me:	But I want to study more and be successful too, we both can work hard for our futures.
Mrs E:	No, you need to get married so you can have children. That is just the way it is. Men get intimidated by women who are too successful, and someone needs to raise the children.
Me:	Julian supports my studying, and we both can raise children together, isn't <i>that</i> how it is supposed to be?

Suffice to say, Mrs E looked at my ring finger after every school holiday that I spent with Julian. After the above conversation, I decided that it was not worth the fuss to have that same conversation a hundred times over. Even though the topic came up many times thereafter, with many different people, I began avoiding it or just ending the conversation as quickly as possible. Why was this so difficult to grasp?

4.3.3 Lyricovignette 11: Younger now

Julian moved to Pretoria from Ermelo in 2015, and during that year I decided that I wanted to move to Pretoria as well. It was a bigger city with more opportunities, and we had many friends in Pretoria. That meant that I had to go job hunting at the end of 2015. It was a strange feeling – I had worked at KB Primary School for six years, I was used to everyone and how things worked, and I had “made a name” for myself. Ms C and Ms L were very supportive of my decision – even though they did not want to lose me as a teacher at the school, but they knew that I was young and that I wanted to be closer to Julian.

Pretoria is about an hour’s drive from Witbank, so I arranged to have four interviews on one day to save money on travelling. This day of interviews was mentioned in Chapter 2, where I commented on the interviews. By that time, I was in the last semester of my BEd Honours degree and I had results with distinction. For the interviews, I was prepared for questions about classroom management, the curriculum, dealing with parents, and sport coaching. At the beginning of each interview, they wanted to know why I was interested in the post, and I explained that I was moving to Pretoria to be with my boyfriend. The follow-up questions every single time were, “What are your plans, when will you get married, do you want children?” As mentioned, I understood that schools have to be aware of a young woman’s plans, as maternity leave at a school has a profound impact on the planning of a school year. I would just have appreciated answering these questions in a second round of interviews, rather than it being part of the opening statements.

I started working at VIL Primary School in January 2016, and what an amazing journey it was. For the first time, it felt like I could create and mould my teaching identity into what I wanted it to be. At KB Primary School, I had started as a student teacher not knowing anything and grew into my post as a teacher. But most people still perceived me as “the student teacher” and my reputation as pliggie could not be shaken off. At this new school, I could start over with a new teaching identity. I decided that I did not want the reputation of pliggie again, so I would help and do whatever I could – when asked. I was not going to offer my help or put up my hand to do everything. Unfortunately, that was easier said than done.

Being able to construct a new teaching identity was the best feeling in the world. I had some experience, so I knew what worked in the classroom for my teaching style, yet I had to adapt it to the school climate and culture. Even though I had vowed not to be a pliggie ever again, it contradicted my urge to prove myself at this new school. I wanted to show how successful I was at my previous school, yet not be a pliggie. I was stuck between a rock and a hard place, but that made the journey exciting. I still wanted to “prove” to someone how good I was – in reality, it was proving more to myself than others.

Part of my hard work at VIL Primary School included my election as a mentor teacher for student teachers who either had to complete their practical component for their teaching degree or who were studying part-time and working full-time at the school, as I had once done. This was a big honour for me, as I knew the influence that a wonderful mentor teacher could have on a student teacher. The topic for my MEd dissertation was born during these days; even before I had completed my honours. I knew that my master’s dissertation had to include beginner teachers in some way. I tried to portray the perfect image of a teacher and provide the students with as many recommendations and as much help as possible. It added to my teacher identity as I knew that I was helping others to become successful and better teachers themselves.



*Feels like I just woke up
Like all this time I’ve been asleep
Even though it’s not who I am
I’m not afraid of who I used to be*

*~ Younger Now, recorded by Miley Cyrus
(written by Cyrus & Yoel, 2017)*

I completed my BEd Honours degree in 2016. And just before my graduation Julian asked if I would marry him. We had been living together for only seven months but had been dating for almost eight years. I was elated and felt like my life was starting to fall into place – which place, I did not understand yet, but I felt happy and I felt like we were successful. My happiness and success were not dependent on Julian, but rather that we were moving forward in life together.

Figure 4.13

Honours Graduation (2016).



Note. My Honours graduation day. From the left is Julian, me, my father and my stepmother, Aunt A. Photograph purchased from Gordon Harris Photography; published with permission from all subjects in the photograph.

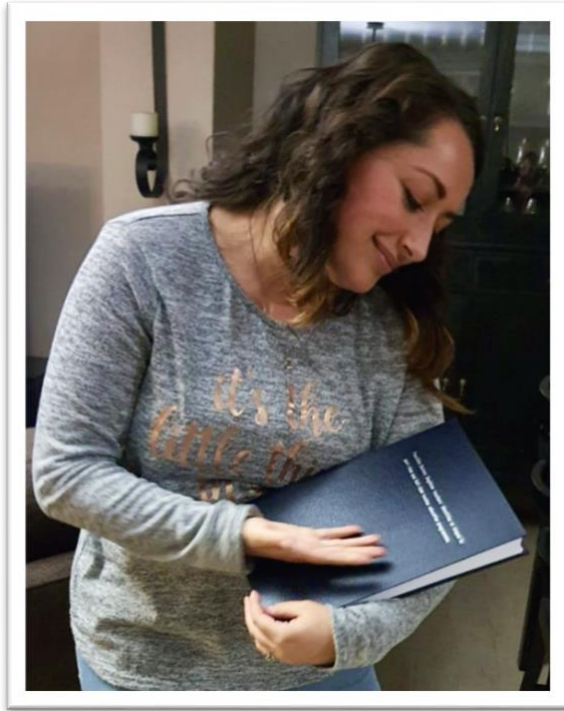
Julian was still busy with his articles and final examinations in 2017, so I decided to enrol for my MEd degree. I thought that while he was still studying, I could also study. As he was still a clerk, I had to support the household with my teaching income. We lived in a small two-bedroom flat, but it was home. My father had given me an amount of money for the wedding. We decided to pay for a honeymoon to Mauritius first, and the rest would be the wedding budget. 2017 was a big year for weddings in my friendship circle – we attended seven weddings apart from our own, two of which were weddings of close friends, and two were family weddings. Julian and I knew that with weddings, the inevitable question of “When are the babies coming?” would be asked, especially at family weddings. Julian and I were not against having children, but we had barely been living together and seeing each other every day was, in itself, a wonderful new adventure.

We decided that once we had completed our studies, we would evaluate the question of having children. I was content with just having Julian to myself for now – something that resulted in a person calling me “selfish” when I voiced it out loud. During my master’s dissertation writing journey, I mentioned to Julian that I was really enjoying the research and that I would love to complete my PhD as well. He supported my dream, and we decided that we would discuss the topic of starting a family again once I had completed my PhD. The principal of VIL Primary School was happy when he heard that, stating that at least he knew of one young teacher who was not going on maternity leave soon.

My family, on the other hand, did not understand our decision. Even though my father supported my dream of completing my PhD, he also really wanted to have a grandchild. My stepsister had a daughter and he loved her a lot; he was Oupa and spoiled her rotten, but he wanted one from one of his daughters. One night when we were visiting him, he stated that he would not buy me any more birthday presents – to which I replied that was good because I was an adult, and it was not necessary for him to buy me gifts. However, he countered with the fact that he would be buying me baby diapers for the foreseeable future. I knew it was all just a joke, but it still hurt my feelings. I had tried so hard to be the good girl, the nice girl, to be successful, and make everyone proud, yet the fact that I did not want to start a family at the time was held over my head like a sword. To lighten the mood, I jokingly posed with my master’s dissertation as if it was a baby and told my dad that he could frame that photograph in the meantime.

Figure 4.14

My MEd Baby (2020).



Note. Photograph from author's personal archives.

Just as I was reaching the pinnacle of my success at VIL School – being the grade head, assistant subject head, voted onto the school governing body and heading a few committees – Julian received a job offer that would shake everything up again. He had obtained his qualification as a chartered accountant and had started a job at another auditing company after he had completed his articles. Then, one of the banks offered him a really good position, but it meant that we had to move back to Witbank. We debated and discussed it a great deal as we really loved Pretoria and being close to all our friends. But we had to think of our future. It was difficult for me, as I felt that I had just started to settle into my position at VIL Primary School.

Moving back to Witbank in 2019 meant that I had to search for a post again, and, as fate would have it, there was a position open at KB Primary School. At first, I was extremely apprehensive – I did not want to go back to the school where I might still be seen as a student teacher. Luckily for me, there had been some staff turnaround and the change meant that many people did not know me. My old juffies group was somewhat diminished as well – two had moved, two had retired, and only three others

remained at the school. They were my refuge and I joined in with them immediately again.

Going back to KB Primary School was like riding a bicycle after many years – rocky at the start to find my stride, but once I was settled, I felt on top of the world again. I had my teaching identity that was shaped to my liking; I just had to retain it and not give in to my old pliggie habits. This time around I kept my head low and with the mindset of “don’t nominate yourself but assist when asked”. That helped me to balance my personal life (being married and studying) while still dedicating a lot of time and effort to the school.

It had been the pinnacle of overtime and hard work at school when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. I was thankful for the lockdown for many reasons – mainly for just taking a break to be able to spend time with my husband and to connect with my studies again. I had missed my MEd graduation due to the lockdown – something that was a deep loss for me. I craved the feeling of graduation; it was like dessert after a meal. I felt incomplete, as though I had never achieved the degree. I decided to take a pre-doc year, to write and publish an article and find the focus of what I wanted my PhD to be about. I presented a paper at the University of Pretoria about the influence of COVID-19 on my studies and won the best presentation award.

Once lockdown was lifted, it only took a few months until school was back to being as busy as ever. It felt like teaching had become a constant catchup session – catchup the curriculum after lockdown, catchup coaching hours missed, catchup administration requested by the Department of Education. Teaching was not the priority anymore, and, with that, my passion for being a teacher was diminishing as well. As a regular Post Level 1 teacher, I was also the grade head, subject head, head of the student teachers, and an elected member of the school governing body again. I loved teaching the children, but I wanted to pursue a higher post level like head of department (HOD) or deputy principal. I felt like it was a natural progression for my career.

4.3.4 Lyricovignette 12: Outokrasie van die hart

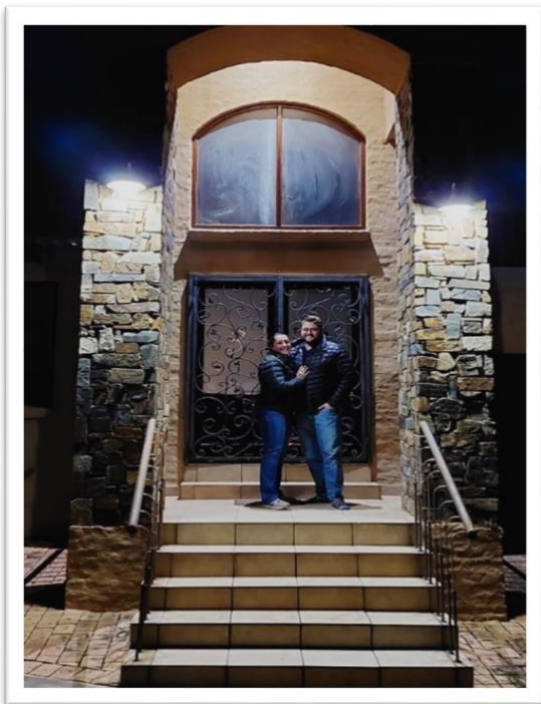
One of the positives that came from the lockdown period of COVID-19 was the fact that working from home became easier and more accessible. Being a teacher, I did not have the option to work from home, but Julian’s employers were not strict about

him having to work at the office, and he worked from home most days. This meant that a new possibility arose – we could move back to the city. Even though my father lived in Witbank and I loved being near him, and I was successful at KB Primary School, my heart longed for Pretoria and my friends. They had become our chosen family, and Julian and I both longed to be closer to them. Pretoria not only held our friends, but it felt like there were also more career opportunities there and it was the city where we wanted to settle for the time being.

In 2022 we decided to move to Pretoria and buy a house. We had been renting until then, as it had not been financially viable to buy a house and we had known that we did not want to live there for a long time. We found a house, instantly fell in love with it, and moved on 1 July 2022.

Figure 4.15

Our New Home (2022).



Note. Julian and I outside our new home on the first night after we had moved in. My mother-in-law had driven all the way to come and help us move. My best friend brought us dinner and took this photograph of us. Photograph from author's personal archives.

Julian was allowed to continue in his position, work from home, and travel for meetings when necessary. I, on the other hand, had to look for a new job – again. At the beginning of the journey, I had decided that I would apply for promotional posts – mainly as HOD, but also to try my luck at applying for the position of deputy principal. I felt that I had a strong CV in terms of my teaching experience and a lot of managerial involvement. I knew my teaching experience was sufficient and I was confident in my teaching identity, but I wanted to explore managerial positions.

After we moved to Pretoria, I had a few interviews lined up and I hoped that one would be successful. The first interview that I had was at a private school for an HOD position. It felt like one of the best interviews of my life – I could answer the questions, the interviewers laughed at my jokes and smiled; the whole interview felt positive, and I felt that I would have a good chance of being offered the position. A week passed with no feedback. Another week passed, and no call-back, even though they had said that they would call to advise whether I was successful or not. Three weeks after the interview, I contacted the school. The lady in the office informed me that the position had been filled, and she was sorry that no one had called me yet. I asked her who was successful, and she replied that it was a man from another school as they had been interested in someone who could coach rugby, but they did not want to include that fact in the interview. I could not believe my ears – if I had known that they were looking for someone who could coach rugby, I would not have put so much hope into being successful. I also felt discriminated against – the whole interview had revolved around academics and management, why did they not mention rugby coaching? Surely an HOD position is necessary for a school for academics and staff management, not for coaching?

The next interview I had was at a prestigious primary school, also for an HOD position. I was very nervous as I had held the previous interview experience close to my heart. I had to prepare a PowerPoint presentation and I dressed in my best interview outfit. During the interview I was nervous, but I felt confident in my answers. One question was disheartening, though – I was asked about my current PhD studies and whether I would ever leave teaching to be a lecturer. They required someone with stability for the position, so I understood the reason for the question. I will admit that I lied – I told them that I was doing my PhD for personal reasons and that I was not interested in

being a lecturer at all. This was not true, as I had applied for various lecturing positions, but was unsuccessful due to a lack of experience in lecturing. I knew that I could not mention that fact as I would have had no chance of being shortlisted or being successful at the interview.

A week after the interview, the principal called me. I felt nervous when I saw his number on my phone, as I had been waiting for this phone call. However, the moment he started talking, I knew I had been unsuccessful. The following conversation transpired:

Principal	I am so sorry to tell you that you were not successful with the interview.
Me:	That is okay, thank you for calling me personally. May I ask what did I fall short on, how can I improve my chances for future interviews? (I had read that this was a good question to ask post-interviews, and wanted to try it out).
Principal:	Actually... nothing, you were my personal number one option! Your answers and explanation of your managerial style was very impressive.
Me:	Okay... why was I unsuccessful then?
Principal:	Some of the other teachers felt like you needed more experience in a HOD or managerial position. The person who was appointed does not have such a strong managerial style, but she has about 10 years' experience as a HOD. So even though I liked your managerial style, she had the experience in the position already.
Me:	Thank you, Mr T, I understand. Might I just add that experience can be gained, yet you cannot easily change someone who is not a strong manager? That either comes naturally or not and if no one is going to take a chance on me, I am not going to gain the experience that everyone covets.
Principal:	Yes, well... um... you have quite a good point there. Well, we have sent her the offer, so if she declines you still have a chance as you are number two. I will call you as soon as I know, okay?
Me:	Thank you, Mr T, I appreciate your call.

Suffice to say, I did not hear anything back from that school. At this point, I was extremely disheartened and went through a mildly depressed stage. I had been unemployed for more than a month and we had already moved into the new house. We were coping financially as Julian had really excelled in his career, but I felt like a failure as a teacher. My whole adult life had revolved around me pursuing success and meaning. I was loved and cared for by Julian, was living in the most beautiful house, and had food and a warm bed. But intrinsically, I was not coping.



*Verstand kan nie regtig keer
As dit kom by dinge wat jou hart leeg kan maak
Gebreek sonder 'n toekoms vol geluk
Jy verstaan nie wat gebeur nie
Volg jou droom en kyk na bo
~ Outokrasie van die Hart, recorded by Bouwer Bosch
(written by Bosch, 2009)*

Translation:

Your mind cannot really control when it comes to what empties your heart
Broken, without a future filled with happiness
You do not understand what is happening
Follow your dream and look up

I had thought that staying at home would be fun – I could be a housewife and take all my time to focus on my PhD writing. Unfortunately, my depressed state of mind made me doubt everything I did, and it was the time when I did the least amount of work – cleaning, cooking, and studying. I felt like a disappointment in every respect. I had wanted nothing less than a promotional post, but after eight applications and four interviews, I had not been successful at one. I doubted my career choice and my ability to be a teacher, and whether it had all been a fluke. Sleepless nights were followed by unproductive days. I was scouring the internet and applying for any job opening – even outside teaching. I wanted to feel like I had a purpose and, unfortunately, I was judging my success by my career, instead of other aspects of my life.

Diary entry: 06 May 2023

Thinking about it now and the journey of my past and present, I noticed that my urge to be successful also originated from my trauma with my stepdad and mother. It started off as me wanting to show them that I could be successful without them, that I could look after myself and did not need a man, and that I could be better than my mother who was at home and had no qualifications. That was the root of my drive to succeed, but luckily, I have moved on in the sense that I want to be successful for myself. I have a husband who is successful at work and can care for me, but I want to be able to contribute to the household as well (even though it is not necessary).

Then one of my previous colleagues at VIL Primary School contacted me as he had heard that I was back in Pretoria. The school had a temporary position open for a teacher who was on sick leave, an old colleague and friend from VIL Primary School. The principal called me and his first words were, “I heard you were doing nothing at home – do you want to come to help us out?” The relief I had from that phone call was tremendous. I did not call him for a position when we had moved back, as I knew there were no promotional posts open at the time. I told him that I would love to help, but I had applied for some other posts, and I might need to go for interviews soon. He understood completely and stated that they really needed help; even if it was just for a month or two, they would appreciate it.

Waking up early to go to school made me gain confidence again and I felt like I was returning to myself. The temporary position was unknown to me – I had to teach Grade 7 English (I had previously taught English to Grades 4 to 6 for many years), but I also had to teach Visual Arts. I accepted the challenge and really enjoyed it; I returned to my old teaching identity and felt comfortable in knowing what I was doing. An advantage was that as a relief teacher I did not have any extra-curricular activities after school. It felt strange, but I noticed that I did not miss the coaching at all. I went to a few matches as a spectator, but I did not miss the long hours of coaching. I felt peaceful in knowing that I was teaching, and I could focus on that. I considered

applying for normal Post Level 1 teaching posts again to try and work my way up the ladder in a school.

While helping at VIL Primary School, one of my previous student teachers whom I had mentored came to greet me. He had graduated in the meantime and had a class of his own. He told me about the positive impact I had had on his teaching identity, and how he still used some of my teaching methods. He even brought me his administration file and proudly showed me how neat his file was and said that it was all thanks to me and what I had taught him. I could not have been prouder at that moment – as a teacher I have had many proud moments of learners, but to be praised for my mentorship was indescribable.

I was on holiday with friends and talking about my peaceful mindset of the previous month and how I thought I should just start at the bottom of a school ladder again when I received a call. It was for a position that I had applied for late one night on LinkedIn at an independent assessment body. They wanted to invite me for an interview as a coordinator of school-based assessment. I could not believe my ears and was so excited that I even forgot the name of the company that had called me. When I received the interview confirmation email, I had to look at the email addresses and search for the company on my LinkedIn job applications to find out more.

I had an interview with the company, and I felt extremely nervous. All I knew was how to teach and school-based questions – I knew nothing about the corporate world. Some people call it fate; I call it the path that the Lord set out for me. Not only was I invited for a second interview, but afterwards I received an offer that was beyond my expectations and more than my mentioned expected salary. I started at the company on 5 October 2022, and what a journey it has been.

The company is an independent assessment body for the FET phase, with registered institutions assessing the learners to equip them with an NSC qualification once they complete Grade 12. This is a field far outside of my comfort zone, but I am enjoying every minute of it. Even though I am not teaching in front of a class, I still have an influence on the lives of learners and even teachers. I communicate with over 80 institutions on a weekly basis, and mostly with principals. Even though it was quite daunting in the beginning, it has skyrocketed my teacher confidence to a higher level.

I still see myself as a teacher, as I am involved with assessments, curriculum matters, learners with barriers to learning, and even training teachers. I still have a great deal to learn, especially with regard to educational policies, but I feel stimulated every day and find myself wanting to learn more and more.

Being busy with my PhD I was also not seen as a threat, but rather as an asset. My HR department met with me regarding my future prospects, and how my PhD could add clout to the company in the academic world. When I had just begun and had to call principals, I would explain that I was the new coordinator. They would always ask what I had done previously, and I would answer I was a teacher for about 12 years. In one conversation, I could distinctly hear one principal answer, “Oh,” and heard the apprehension and doubt in his voice that I could uphold this position. I continued to add that I was busy with my PhD and was met with a resounding, “Oh! Wow!” It was the first time that my studies were met with such positive resonance in the educational sector.

Even my new colleagues have been very different from my whole 12 years of teaching. KB Primary School was a dual-medium school with Afrikaans and English as the languages of teaching and learning. The school’s learners had many different cultures – it was predominantly White, with the English classes containing Black, Indian, and Coloured learners. VIL Primary School was a single medium school that only had White learners, with the language of teaching and learning being Afrikaans. Both schools’ staff were mainly White Afrikaner teachers, apart from three Black teachers at KB Primary School.

By contrast, I now work in a corporate environment where my colleagues are primarily Black. In a staff of 18, there are only four Afrikaner staff members, including me. This experience has been a cultural awakening for me – I had always enjoyed teaching my Black African learners at KB Primary School and was aware of the cultural differences between the Afrikaans and English classes. However, working with a more diverse staff has opened my eyes to that fact that there are different types of employees and others should be accepted for who they are.

Figure 4.16

The NSC Team (2022).



Note. My new colleagues in the NSC department, who have accepted me wholeheartedly, on the night of our year-end function. From the left are TTM, EM, MR, me, and TAM. Photograph from author's personal archives; published with permission from all subjects in the photograph.

One big difference that I have noticed is that the Afrikaner teachers held the notion that you had to be skinny to be beautiful. Everyone was always on a diet and had a new exercise regime to share, and if you were a bit overweight and your clothes were too tight, you would get stared at and gossiped about. Even the learners adopted this attitude. I am not skinny; I am rounded at the edges and my stomach is not flat, I have a bit of a belly. As a result, many learners had asked me whether I was pregnant, just because of my body shape. It happened so often that I started replying, "No, I am just fat." This remark shut them up quickly as they soon realised that their question was quite rude. I would then continue with a lecture to the class about loving yourself, being healthy, and respecting others no matter what they look like. My new colleagues, on the other hand, did not have this same stance about weight and body shape. They would look stunning in corporate wear, including tight skirts and dresses, no matter if they were skinny or not. I have learnt from them that you have to be confident with the body that you have, something that my fellow Afrikaners rarely understood.

Today is Mother's Day. I had never noticed until today that I despise this day. The whole day there has been this question hanging over my head about whether to call my mother. Today I did not call her, as I did not feel that I had the emotional capacity to deal with her emotional manipulation. And yet, as peaceful as I was in my decision, I was still haunted by "what if she will hate me more now?" When will this end, if ever? I am thankful for my Army of Mothers, but your own mother is your blood, no matter what. But I have decided that as an adult, I want to make decisions based on my happiness and mental health. And, at this stage, that does not include my mother. Hopefully one day I can have a happy and positive feeling towards Mother's Day again.

Diary entry: 14 May 2023

Today I finished the last part of my mixtape reflection/autoethnographic story. After writing this chapter, I feel relieved. This was a traumatic process to start, but finishing it makes me feel cathartic.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I shared my experiences and my story about being an Afrikaner, a teacher, and a professional woman. Each section included a different song added to my mixtape, combining the song and narrative into different lyricovignettes. In the next chapter, I elaborate on the themes identified from my autoethnography and present the findings of this research study.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSING AND INTERPRETATION



*I see this life, like a swinging vine
Swing my heart across the line
And in my face is flashing signs
“Seek it out and ye shall find”*

*~ Counting Stars, recorded by OneRepublic
(written by Tedder, 2013)*

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Autoethnography is a qualitative research design that combines personal experiences, self-reflection, and cultural inquiry to explore and understand social phenomena (Adams et al., 2017). During this chapter, I experienced many new epiphanies. Some made my heart and emotions cross lines, and some were flashing like warning signs, as written in the lyrics by Tedder (2013). Certain epiphanies made me seek and question my religious views.

This research study was formed around the following research questions:

- How did I experience socio-cultural expectations as a female Afrikaner teacher?
- Why did I experience this in the way that I did?
- In which ways did my experiences influence the construction of my female teacher identity?

Chapter 3 discussed the methodological approach embraced during my study and introduced the data collection and analysis techniques used during the explorative process. In Chapter 4, I presented my narrative for this autoethnography. I shared my experiences and my story about being an Afrikaner, teacher, and professional woman. This chapter included song lyrics and was structured to resemble a mixtape of my identity construction.

In this chapter, I present the analysis and interpretation derived from my autoethnographic story in Chapter 4 which aimed to shed light on the influence of socio-cultural expectations on the construction of my female Afrikaner teacher identity. The purpose of analysing and interpreting the data gathered was to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of my identities (female, Afrikaner, and teacher) while recognising the influence of the Afrikaner cultural and social context.

5.2 DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS: ANALYSING DATA IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Analysing data is the act of looking for patterns in the data gathered and determining patterns, while data interpretation is the process of attempting to understand those identified patterns (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Interpreting complicated qualitative data and spotting patterns within it relies heavily on themes which stem from the data analysis. In this section, I discuss the data analysis process, which includes data coding, thematic data analysis, and the influence of memory work and music in data analysis.

The examination of the obtained qualitative data can reveal recurrent concepts, ideas, or patterns called themes. These themes provide a framework for comprehending the research phenomenon by assisting in the organisation and interpretation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data themes provided the foundation for the analysis which enabled me to go beyond specific data points and discover more generalisable, overarching patterns or trends that offered insight into the answers to my research questions.

In educational research, choosing the appropriate topics during the data analysis process is crucial for various reasons. These include:

- **Accuracy and precision.** The analysis must accurately reflect the data, provided that the topics are correctly identified and chosen (Saldana, 2021). The validity and reliability of the research findings may be jeopardised by improperly chosen topics that cause misinterpretations or distortions of the findings (Charmaz, 2014).
- **Relevance to research questions.** The selection of themes needs to be in line with the goals and open-ended questions of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The ability to draw meaningful conclusions from the research may be hampered by themes that are not directly relevant to the study's subject (Hamilton & Finley, 2019).
- **Practical implications.** Correctly discovered themes frequently have practical ramifications for educational practice and policy, according to Creswell and Creswell (2023).

- **Contributions to theory.** According to Braun and Clarke (2006), themes help theory explain educational processes. The theoretical underpinnings of the discipline can be advanced by carefully selecting themes that help to illuminate the underlying mechanisms, variables, and dynamics at work in educational situations (Miles et al., 2014).
- **Comparative analysis.** Meaningful comparisons between the literature study and the data generated (my autoethnography story) were made possible by accurately identifying themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). To contextualise the findings within the larger body of educational literature and enable cross-study comparisons, researchers frequently draw on pre-existing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- **Enhanced communication.** Carefully selected topics make it possible to communicate research findings to both academic and non-academic audiences clearly and efficiently (Saldana, 2021). To make complicated data clear and accessible to a variety of stakeholders, a structured framework needs to be offered (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

For the findings of educational research to be accurate, pertinent, and of practical use, appropriate theme selection is essential. These themes serve as the foundation for the entire analytic process. They identify the most profound insights hidden in the data and aid in the dissemination of important information to the academic community and beyond. The analysis and findings section should list any gaps in the body of knowledge that the study fills or draws attention to. This makes it easier to comprehend the study's importance and contribution to the field of study (Fink, 2019).

Autoethnography is a research approach that enables scholars to depict their personal and professional experiences as they have lived them (Luitel & Dahal, 2021). According to Greczko (2022), the existence of a “self-existent human being”, “human soul”, or “inner truth” is non-existent since the essence of human nature is fundamentally rooted in social constructs (p. 265). The process of crafting an autoethnography and subsequently interpreting the narrative data involves multiple steps that intertwine personal experiences, cultural analysis, and conceptual frameworks.

5.2.1 Thematic data analysis

Thematic data analysis is a widely used method for studying qualitative data. It aims to identify, scrutinise, and portray recurring patterns or themes within the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The concept of thematic analysis was developed by Braun and Clarke in 2006 and remains a popular qualitative research tool (Braun et al., 2022). It provides an adaptable and simple method for data analysis that works with a variety of research objectives and data formats. Thematic analysis research has evolved, but the process, which includes several separate steps, has remained constant over time (Braun et al., 2022).

In the first step, Chapter 4 of this study, I engaged in writing lyric vignettes, thereby generating data, by detailing my personal experiences, emotions, and observations related to the construction of my female Afrikaner teacher identity. The formation of a healthy identity and psychological well-being is dependent on a variety of storytelling and reflective abilities (Waters et al., 2013). I crafted my autoethnography by weaving together personal stories to present a narrative account that is both deeply personal and socially situated, with the purpose and aim of engaging readers. This initial step in Chapter 4 served as a foundation for exploring myself and the influence of socio-cultural expectations on my identity construction.

Next, I engaged in a process of coding and thematic data analysis and identifying recurring themes, patterns, and emotions within my narrative data. According to Merrill et al. (2015), creating meaning from memories is a challenging cognitive process. Narrative reasoning, which incorporates self-event linkages, is one crucial type of narrative meaning-making (Merrill et al., 2015). I examined the data for meaningful moments, cultural connections, and influential experiences. This analytical process enabled the identification of epiphanies and connections between personal experiences and broader socio-cultural contexts. Once the data had been analysed, I referred to the literature to help situate the data within relevant scholarly conversations, providing a conceptual framework that informed and enriched my narrative.

5.2.2 The influence of memory work on thematic data analysis

Memory work is a qualitative research technique built on autoethnography and narrative inquiry. Participants who engage in memory work review and reflect on earlier experiences, frequently about a particular event or time in their lives (Janata, 2009). By offering detailed and nuanced data that may call for a specialised approach to coding and analysis, memory work can have a substantial impact on thematic analysis. In this study, the special characteristics of memory data had to be taken into consideration when I incorporated memory work into my thematic analysis. Memory selection, subjectivity, and context dependence were all possible (Thomson, 2008). As a result, it was important to recognise any potential biases and distortions in my memory data.

Researchers may use reflexive coding procedures, which entail identifying and recording one's subjectivity and biases throughout the coding process to account for the impact of memory work (Finlay & Gough, 2008). I therefore took into account how the reflections of my co-constructors of knowledge on their memories may have influenced the development of the themes and categories, as well as how these themes may have changed as I moved through the memory work process.

As part of working through this research project, I had to choose who needed to be shielded from my trauma. Since I still have a very tense relationship with my mother and stepfather, I made the decision not to reveal this research study to my mother to avoid any potential retribution. She would not have considered my experiences to be credible, and she and my stepdad would likely have criticised me harshly, as I know from past experience. Thus, I did not ask her for verisimilitude, out of self-preservation and to ensure that the progress I have made in terms of my personal development and healing through my trauma was not jeopardised.

My father was another person I had to shield from my pain and experiences in the past. We now have a good father–daughter connection because of how our relationship has developed. However, my stepmother, Aunt A, and I decided that it would be counterproductive for my father to read my autoethnography to contribute to verisimilitude. I have received help from this research study in processing my trauma

and accepting my history but I wanted to keep my father from reliving some bad prior experiences since he might be vulnerable to my memories and experiences.

The systematic method of assigning codes to different data segments in qualitative research results in the discovery of patterns and themes. The technique for analysing the qualitative data generated was thematic data analysis, which included familiarising myself with the data, coding, developing themes, and drafting a report. I was also aware of the special qualities of memory data when incorporating memory work into thematic data analysis and I used reflexive coding to remove potential biases.

5.2.3 Connecting music with the data analysis process

The goal of an autoethnographic study is to understand both individual and group identities, experiences, and social phenomena by fusing personal experiences with cultural analyses (Ellis et al., 2011). An effective technique for memory work and theme analysis in autoethnographic research is the use of music in the data analysis process.

The ability of music to bring back memories and arouse emotions has long been acknowledged (Janata et al., 2007). Music may be a powerful memory assistant in autoethnographic research when personal experiences and narratives are important. I chose music for my mixtape that had special importance to me about my experiences and to evoke memories. According to Pavlicevic and Ansdell (2004), playing music while reflecting on old memories might aid in accessing and expressing deeper aspects of experiences. In this study, for example, music aided in my process of remembering certain events, feelings, or sensory information connected to my experiences. As a result, the data gathered during memory work may be more accurate and richer compared to memory work that does not include music (Hays & Minichiello, 2005). Emotions associated with the events could also be evoked by music. The emotive aspects of a narrative might be illuminated by exploring and incorporating these feelings into the analysis (Labbé et al., 2007).

Finding and examining recurring themes or patterns in personal narratives is the task of thematic analysis in autoethnography (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Music can contribute to this process. My mixtape was utilised to evoke themes and feelings. It was a valuable technique for topic elicitation during my memory work and thematic data

analysis since I could identify specific songs with parts of my experiences (Ellis et al., 2011). I could also take note of any instances in which music was discussed or played while transcribing or coding interview data. These musical interjections acted as possible theme analysis markers by pointing out significant or poignant occasions (Ellis et al., 2011). Music strengthened, challenged, and provided me with better knowledge of the highlighted themes, thus enhancing the findings of my study (Leavy, 2020).

As human beings, our decisions frequently reflect signals from society, culture, family, and friends. These messages – often referred to as socio-cultural expectations – can influence how we act and the choices we make (Ciletti, 2023). My autoethnography story was divided into two parts, Side A and Side B of my mixtape, but through the analysis process, I identified three distinct themes or epiphanies. These themes were not contained on only one side of the mixtape but spanned the whole album. To maintain the sequence of the mixtape album and the conceptual influence of the music and lyrics, this chapter is also interspersed with song lyrics relevant to the topic discussed.

In an autoethnographic study, music may be a useful instrument to help with memory work and theme analysis. It may increase the depth and complexity of an autoethnographic narrative and contribute to a more thorough knowledge of the themes by making use of music's ability to stimulate memories, emotions, and thematic connections. Music can also be used as a stimulus for therapy (Dvorak, 2016). Through the process of analysing my narrative, I realised the influence that music had on my autoethnographic story. Whenever I had to relive a particular moment, I listened to my mixtape playlist or the particular song referenced in the section. By contrast, when I relived an intensely traumatic experience, I listened to other songs to help me feel better.

Music has always been a therapeutic tool for me, and hence the rationale for including songs in my research study. I would have used music as a therapeutic and focusing tool for my study anyway, but by including this component I feel I have situated my authentic self in this study, making it true to autoethnography.

5.2.4 Coding of data

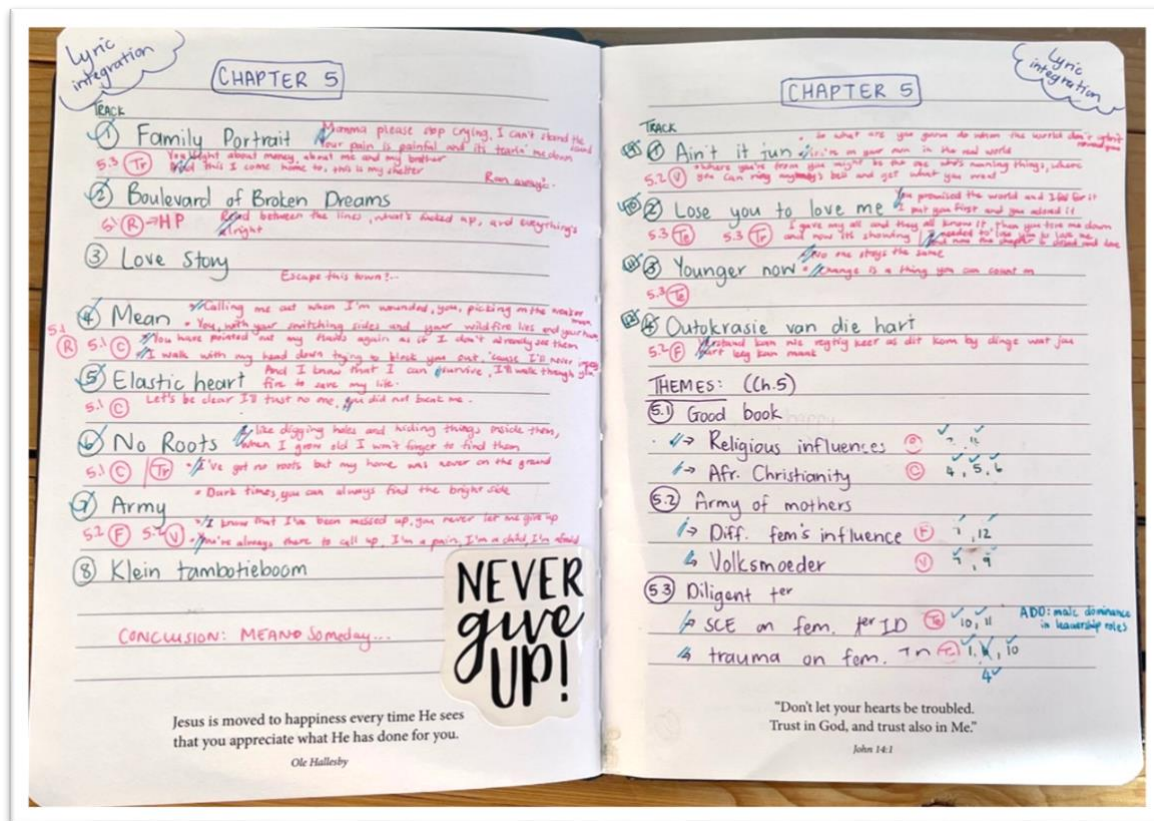
The systematic and repetitive process of coding is used in qualitative research to analyse and classify textual or visual data into useful categories or topics (Saldana, 2021). This method is crucial in the study of qualitative data because it makes it easier to spot trends, ideas, and connections within the data set. According to the context of the study, coding entails giving labels or codes to data segments, which can be words, paragraphs, or complete texts (Miles et al., 2014).

Open coding was the first step in the coding process (Saldana, 2021). I analysed my data (that is, my autoethnography story) section by section to find the first codes that best captured the information. Emergent themes started to develop spontaneously after open coding was completed. I then started to explore connections between the codes and created higher-level categories or themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The next step in the coding was to refine and combine the emergent themes to produce a comprehensive and cohesive representation of the data (Charmaz, 2014).

Software tools like NVivo or ATLAS.ti, which can speed up data management and improve the rigour of the analysis, have been used by researchers to help with the coding process (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Personally though, I preferred to use the old-school method of pen and paper to make notes and write down lists and ideas. Therefore, I did not use a software tool for the coding of the data; it was written down in my research journal.

Figure 5.1

Excerpt from my research journal where lyricovignettes are connected to themes



I chose to use my research journal for the coding of the data as pen and paper provided me with the creative freedom to write my thoughts, colour-code the lyricovignettes, and visually represent the ideas that I struggled to envision electronically. A photograph of my research journal (see Figure 5.1) is included so that the readers can understand my creative process but also appreciate the method to my madness. This image is not altered or edited; I chose to include the authentic journal on a whim and simply took the photograph without removing any details.

5.3 INTERPRETATION OF DATA: EMERGING MAIN THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

While identifying themes for my research study, I kept in mind that I had to make a scholarly contribution to educational research. One of the main themes that emerged while analysing my data was the gender inequality that I experienced as a female teacher. Through my literature review in Chapter 2, it was clear that the topic of gender inequality in education has been explored extensively (Claassen, 2020; Davids,

2018a; Davids, 2018b; Mlambo, 2020; Van der Berg & Hofmeyr, 2018). To provide a nuanced contribution to educational research, I decided to focus on the socio-cultural expectations and influence of trauma on my female teaching identity, instead of just on gender inequality. Similarly, literature on the history of Afrikaners was readily available (Boersema, 2013; Kotze, 2013; Theunissen, 2015; Timms, 2017; Van der Westhuizen, 2016, Viljoen, 2021). Consequently, the theme of religion and its influence on my female Afrikaner identity was explored more deeply to make a scholarly contribution.

Through the analytic process, with the scholarly contribution in mind, I read through my data and coded my main ideas into themes. As I dived deeper into the themes and started the writing process, I had certain epiphanies while I was reflecting on the memories. These epiphanies cemented my decision about my themes as they revealed rich autoethnographic data that I could include in my data analysis and interpretation.

After the data analysis, I started to interpret the data to explain the themes that were discovered. I listened to my mixtape closely while interpreting my data, and certain tracks of the lyricovignettes connected with certain themes. For ease of reading, I will refer to just the track number, as the whole lyricovignette (that is, story and lyric) might not apply to the theme. The themes are intertwined between the different lyricovignettes, thus just the song (track) will apply to the theme. In the table below, the tracks are listed next to the themes and form part of the interpretation of my autoethnographic data. The main themes and sub-themes are presented in a Table 5.1 below and is discussed in depth in the subsequent sections.

Table 5.1
Main Themes and Sub-Themes

Main Themes and Relevant Sub-Themes	Linked Lyricovignette Track from Mixtapes A and B
<i><u>Theme 1: The Good Book</u></i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Religious influences on my female Afrikaner identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Track 2: Boulevard of broken dreams ○ Track 4: Mean
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The influence of male social dominance on female Afrikaner identity as preserved by Afrikaner Christianity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Track 4: Mean ○ Track 5: Elastic heart ○ Track 6: No roots
<i><u>Theme 2: Army of Mothers</u></i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Different females' influence on my female, Afrikaner, and teaching identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Track 7: Army ○ Track 12: Outokrasie van die hart
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The influence of volksmoeder ideology on female Afrikaner identity and the various roles of a woman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Track 7: Army ○ Track 9: Ain't it fun
<i><u>Theme 3: The Diligent Teacher</u></i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Socio-cultural expectations of my female teaching identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Track 10: Lose you to love me ○ Track 11: Younger now
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The influence of trauma on my female teaching identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Track 1: Family portrait ○ Track 4: Mean ○ Track 10: Lose you to love me

The literature in this chapter includes new literature that connects to the identified themes and epiphanies, but also still ties in with the literature review of Chapter 2. The logical progression of the research study was strengthened by linking the analysis and findings to the literature reviewed. It enabled me to put together a rational case that started with a literature review, moved through methodology and analysis, and concluded with the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

It is crucial to connect a research study's analysis and findings section to the literature to provide context, show theoretical alignment, validate findings, identify gaps, construct a logical case, and explore consequences (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). It improves the research's general coherence and relevance within the body of current knowledge on the topic. The subsequent sections of this chapter will delve into the themes, linked tracks, epiphanies, and insights revealed through the process of interpreting the narrative data while reflecting on relevant literature and shedding light on my researched phenomenon through an autoethnographic lens.

5.3.1 Reflecting on the past: Childhood's influence on adult and subsequent teaching (professional) identities

Reflection on one's history is important for grasping the complexity of personal growth and identity construction. In the context of autoethnography, this reflective approach allows you to dive into your personal history to get insights into your current self and professional identities (Ellis, 2004). This section briefly discusses the significance of reflecting on childhood experiences to comprehend adult and professional (teacher) identities, with a particular emphasis on the impact of childhood trauma on teaching identity and the function of reflection in overcoming previous trauma.

Childhood experiences substantially impact adult identities by altering ideas, values, behaviours, and interpersonal interactions (Erikson, 1950). Childhood experiences and interactions serve as the basis for identity formation that continues throughout life (Marcia, 1980). Reflecting on these early events offers vital insights into the roots of one's ideas, attitudes, and behaviours, allowing for a more in-depth understanding of oneself (McAdams, 2001).

Similarly, your childhood experiences have an impact on your professional identity, especially those of teachers. Personal histories and educational experiences

frequently influence teachers' ideas, instructional methods, and classroom practices (Lortie, 1975). Reflecting on childhood may provide teachers with useful insights into their teaching identities, allowing them to understand why they approach teaching in a specific manner and directing them in adjusting their methods to better suit the needs of their students (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001). Reflection is a transforming technique for personal and professional development, allowing people to see patterns, create connections, and move through previous trauma (Schön, 1983). Individuals who reflect on their history might get insight into unsolved difficulties and create techniques for dealing with and overcoming prior trauma (Fivush & Zaman, 2015). This reflective activity increases self-awareness and promotes resilience, allowing people to negotiate problems more successfully and form better interpersonal relationships (Bauer & McAdams, 2004).

In the context of teaching, reflection is critical for developing teaching practices and encouraging professional development (Zeichner & Liston 2013). Teachers who participate in reflective practice are better able to adjust their teaching techniques, satisfy learners' different needs, and foster supportive learning environments (Schön, 1987). Furthermore, reflecting on and learning from previous experiences allows teachers to empathise with their pupils, comprehend their points of view, and develop meaningful relationships based on trust and mutual respect (Brookfield, 2017).

Reflection on childhood experiences is an effective approach for comprehending the intricacies of adult and professional identities, especially teaching identity. Individuals who reflect on their history might obtain insights into the roots of their ideas, attitudes, and behaviours, allowing them to confront unresolved issues, work through previous trauma, and nurture personal and professional progress (Ellis, 2004; Erikson, 1950; McAdams, 2001; Schön, 1983). In the context of teaching, introspective reflection allows teachers to change their teaching techniques, address students' different needs, and establish meaningful relationships based on trust and mutual respect (Brookfield, 2017; Schön, 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 2013).

5.4 THEME 1: THE GOOD BOOK - MOOISTE, SLIMSTE, OUDSTE DOGTER

While interpreting my data, it became evident that religion had a great influence on my identity during adolescence, specifically my Afrikaner and female Afrikaner identity. Adolescence is a time when people begin to develop stronger self-awareness as well as meta-processing, meta-cognitive, and self-regulation skills (Kira, 2019). My self-awareness, expectations, and perceptions were guided by my stepdad's religious views while I was growing up, and my identity was moulded by conforming to those religious views. Religion played a significant role in the construction of my female Afrikaner identity, and, as such, I have identified it as a prominent theme throughout the analysis and interpretation portion of my story.

In this section, I provide more detail about how religion and Afrikaner identity supplemented this theme. My discussion will be posited through the lens of intersectionality, by examining how conflicting and overlapping identities were manipulated, and, in turn, influenced how I perceive my life in society (Bhopal, 2020). This section connects with the literature in Chapter 2, section 2.3, regarding the establishment of Afrikaner culture and Afrikaner identity, particularly the influence of religion on Afrikaner identity.

5.4.1 Religious influences on my female Afrikaner identity

The concept of religion encompasses a structured framework of concepts, cultural rituals, and philosophical perspectives that pertain to human beings and their understanding of the natural order (Muchina, 2018). The essential individuation transformation that places a child on the developmental path and causes them to emerge as a distinct, interdependent individual into adulthood happens throughout adolescence (Kira, 2019). Early adolescence is when people begin to form their identities. In the adolescent and emerging adult years, when identity exploration and commitment are crucial developmental tasks, examining instances of self-event links within narratives of single events may be especially significant (Merrill et al., 2015). Identity is a phrase that is frequently used to refer to the roles, objectives, worldviews, and values that individuals embrace to give their lives meaning and significance (Berman et al., 2020). Side A of my mixtape in Chapter 4 related to my growing up years, focusing on ages 13 to 18. These adolescent/teenage years were when I

experienced the highest influence of different religious views from my stepdad. It is important to understand my upbringing and what influenced my identity construction, in order to appreciate my identity as an adult and subsequently as a teacher.

It was during my Grade 9 year that we started to “church hop” under his guidance. For many, religion is part of their core identity, “affecting how they understand themselves as religious or spiritual beings ... as well as determining their social identification with a particular religious group” (Park & Edmondson, 2012, p.150). While analysing my autoethnography data and story I remembered this year vividly. My stepdad decided that we were going to start attending the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) church (in Afrikaans, Apostoliese Geloofsending Kerk). The AFM church has existed since 1908 and was the first and largest Pentecostal church in South Africa (Kotze, 2013). From a young age, my mother had preferred the more traditional Dutch Reformed Church (in Afrikaans, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk), where the services had organ-led singing, traditional Christian songs, and formal attire. In the AFM churches, the services include a whole band for praise and worship sessions, congregants lift their hands during prayers, voice affirmations out loud during service, and the required attire is relaxed.

One of the main differences between the two churches that I experienced that year, was that the AFM churches included numerous events where churchgoers are “slain in the Spirit”. Pentecostal and charismatic Christians refer to a type of worship in which a person falls to the ground while in a state of religious ecstasy as being “slain in the Spirit” or “slaying in the Spirit” (Kotze, 2013, p. 23). Upon reflection, I remember witnessing these events and thinking, “This is too weird, this cannot be real!” However, every Sunday when we went to church, I noticed my stepdad started to talk in tongues (speaking in either Hebrew or a heavenly language) and he expected and pushed us to experience the same. I felt the pressure from him to be this type of religious person. I wanted to please him because I knew it would please my mother. Swift (2010) penned, in Track 4, “I walk with my head down, ‘cause I’ll never impress you.” I desperately wanted to make my mother and stepdad happy and impress them with my actions, as it meant that I was a perfect, good daughter. I also wanted to be in my stepdad’s good books as I thought that it would provide me with more freedom about my choices; for example, if I could prove to him that I was as a devout Christian as he

was, then surely I could have my Harry Potter books back (or buy them again) as I would not be easily influenced by the devil?

But no matter how hard I tried to be a Christian, how hard I prayed and read my Bible, I never experienced talking in tongues or being slain in the Spirit. By submitting to religion, those who do so not only forge a significant part of their own identity but also something that tangibly affects the lives of those who have different beliefs or who reject religion altogether (Kotze, 2013). Every Sunday that we went to church, I stood in the front asking the pastor to pray for me and hoping that I would experience the Holy Spirit, and every time all the people around me would fall, faint, or talk in a different language, I could feel the pressure from the other churchgoers, especially from my stepdad and mother.

During Grade 9 when we started to church hop, after the “Satanic Harry Potter” incident (see Chapter 4, Track 2), I started to doubt my religion and identity. In religious persons, especially those who professed orthodox Christian views, explanations of why immoral activities are wrong are more frequently centred on laws than on consequences (Baron, 2020). Reflecting on my narrative, I wrote:

I questioned my religious beliefs and my personal identity – what was wrong with me, why did I believe in something that was from the devil? I believed that I was a good person with a pure heart, so why was I being punished for reading books, and told that I had satanic views? These sorts of questions have an impact on your personal identity and how you perceive yourself. My own religious views were very uncertain due to this unreliable background and the influence of my stepdad.

Ellison and Lee (2010) suggest that religion has a “dark side” that is characterised by unpleasant relationships inside religious institutions, which can undermine the often-beneficial association between religion and mental well-being (Ellison et al., 2009). During that time, I felt like I was failing my stepdad, my mother, and my religion. It is commonly assumed that religion does not exert a significant influence on daily life, despite its pervasive presence throughout many cultures and groups (Kaoma, 2018). People adjust their behaviour in an effort to attain semantic congruence between the meanings associated with their identities and how they perceive themselves to be

receiving relevant feedback from others (Baron, 2020). As I was only 15 years old at the time, I did what I thought was the only way to prove myself to others: fake it.

One Sunday morning during service, while standing in front of the pastor while praying and feeling absolutely no spiritual awakening or slaying while everyone around me was on the ground, I decided to imitate them and just fell to the ground. After the service my stepdad and mother were so proud of me and could not stop praising me and saying how far I had come on my spiritual journey. In my heart, I knew it was fake, and I have never admitted this fake fainting to anyone. Yet, the praise from my stepdad and mother meant too much to me, so I continued to fake faint every time the opportunity arose that year.

Armstrong et al. (2004) wrote in Track 2, “Read between the lines, what’s fucked up but everything’s alright.” If outsiders were to look at our family, they would not see many problems. But being on the inside, I experienced the whole situation as fucked up. One of the key dynamics that is essential in dealing with challenges to identity is value and processing (meaning-making) (Kira, 2019). Self-identity is a value and meaning-making processing agency in addition to being an information processing agent (Baumeister & Landau, 2018). Even though it might seem like a small event, it was the start of a trajectory of traumatic events that would have a key influence on my identity construction, especially regarding my religious views and how I perceived my female Afrikaner identity.

The circumstances surrounding identity development and the associated suffering seem to be connected (Ertorer, 2014). My stepdad, mother, pastor, and the other members of the church never noticed that my spiritual slaying was fake, and I was never confronted about it. In my mind, I was more confused than ever. If I was true to myself, specifically my religious self in this regard, my parents and church would doubt my religious beliefs. Yet if I conformed to the socio-cultural expectations, even if it required me to fake it, I was praised and accepted. How could I be true to myself, if I was only accepted by being fake? Uncertainty over one’s identity and what is deserving of one’s commitments might cause a personal crisis (Berman et al., 2020). For a 15-year-old, this was too much to comprehend.

According to Galliher et al. (2017), the activation of self-identity depends on the circumstances and changes as a result of exposure to the evolving environment of stresses and traumas. Adolescents obtain both internal and external developmental assets as a result of this process. The process of navigating internal, external, and social stressors and traumatic experiences contributes to the formation of one's self-identity as a versatile and responsive agentic system, which can have either positive or negative outcomes (Kira, 2019). Traumatic experiences may lead people to reconsider their adherence to certain roles, objectives, values, and beliefs (Berman et al., 2020). As an adult, reflecting upon that year, I see the influence of socio-cultural expectations and how they negatively formed my identity.

Socio-cultural expectations might be challenging to reject depending on our living situation, how we were raised, and whether we follow specific religious traditions (Ciletti, 2023). Reflecting on the influence of religion on my adolescent years was insightful in gaining an understanding of the religious views that I currently have. As an adult, I consider myself a Christian who prays and reads her Bible. I pray often in times of hardship and rely on my faith to get me through difficult times. But I still battle to go to a church sermon and try and associate with someone's message about Christianity. I have tried to attend church numerous times as an adult, and as soon as someone starts talking in tongues or is slain by the Spirit, I immediately lose interest and belief in the church.

Diary entry: 16 July 2023

I just encountered an epiphany about why I do not like to go to church and why I struggle to believe and connect with a pastor's message – it is all a result of my stepdad constantly telling us what we *should* believe. *His* word was the truth, the way, and the life that we had to follow and not the Lord's word.

My stepdad constantly told us that we should follow the Bible to the letter, but as an adult, I have found discrepancies in this way of living. When I asked about getting a bellybutton piercing when I turned 16, he referred to Leviticus 19:28 in the Bible which states, “Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves” (New International Version [NIV]). As mentioned, he had tattoos that he said he had gotten before becoming a reborn Christian. In the same chapter, Leviticus 19:27 (NIV) also explicitly states, “Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard,” and verse 19:19 states, “Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material”. I could have tolerated this statement and tried to follow every letter of the Bible if that were true of *his* way of life but I can attest that my stepdad shaved his face every morning, and his clothes were woven of different materials (cotton, polyester, spandex, and so on). These may be rash examples, but as a child (and now an adult), his prejudiced views that stated that we should follow every letter of the Bible did not really count because my stepdad chose which rules he would follow.

The formation of a human being is contingent upon communal necessities, necessitating their existence within a society that undertakes the process of civilising and humanising through means such as education (Greczko, 2022). Self-categorisation is a type of group identity in which individuals recognise their emotional links to and identification with a certain group as their own (Dlamini et al., 2021). Culture can be defined as the collective patterns of conduct, beliefs, values, attitudes, arts, sciences, modes of perception, and cognitive processes that characterise a particular group of people (Singh & Dutch, 2014). People may find it easier to learn about other people’s cultures once they are more conscious of their own culture (Rodríguez-Tamayo & Tenjo-Macias, 2019). An autoethnography enables you to understand the culture you identify with by including yourself (Luitel & Dahal, 2021).



*Maar tye het verander en ons raak nie jonger nie
Ek kan nie eers meer byhou nie*

*~ Leja, recorded by Die Heuwels Fantasties
(written by De Ridder, Kennedy & Greeff, 2009)*

Translation:

But times have changed, and we are not getting any younger
I can’t even keep up anymore

This song written by De Ridder et al. (2009) resonated with me as I struggled to come to terms with life as I grew older. Numerous times I thought that times had changed and that, indeed, we could not be living the same way as our parents and grandparents had lived. The “religious” views forced upon me as I was growing up confused me, and I struggled with knowing the truth. These childhood experiences impacted my adult religious views as I still struggle to go to a church and connect with a pastor. I doubt their intentions and whether they are living as purely as they preach. The implicit demands that our culture or society place on us, and the expectation that we will comply in particular ways could also encompass socio-cultural expectations (Ciletti, 2023). In my opinion, no human can live precisely according to every letter of the Bible, as times have changed, and the way of living has changed.

Christian utilitarians assert that there is no need for deontology in religion and that there is no conflict between their religious and philosophical convictions (Baron, 2020). Baron (2020) further explains that the attachment to rules can simply come from belonging to a particular cultural group; after all, etiquette standards are also culturally determined and frequently upheld as social norms. Religiously, I pray and believe in God and His son, Jesus, and I rely upon Him to give me strength and guide my life choices, but my Christianity is practised in my own way, the way that makes me feel comfortable and safe. My core beliefs are centred around the principle that you should be a good human being and be nice to others.

According to Stryker (1980), the concept of self is comprised of several identities that symbolise the diverse societal roles everyone assumes. Whether I end up in heaven or not one day, no one will know. When I wanted to go to the Valentine’s ball in Grade 12, my stepdad stated:

One day when you are standing in front of the pearly gates of heaven, you will have to account for your life and decision. You have to live with your choices and make peace that your soul will be tainted in front of the Lord forever. I will not take accountability anymore,

and I am truthfully grateful for that. I choose to live a good life, be a good person, and be respectful toward others, and I do not know whether he will be able to attest to the same. To quote Deuteronomy 24:16 (NIV), “Parents are not to be put to death for the

sin of their children, nor children put to death for their parents' sin; each will die for their own sin”.

5.4.2 The influence of male social dominance on female Afrikaner identity as preserved by Afrikaner Christianity

Religion has also had a significant impact on who I am as an Afrikaner. As a young Afrikaans person growing up in the new South Africa, I grappled with my own identity because of all the expectations placed on Afrikaner children at a young age (Timms, 2017). I was too young to really understand what apartheid was about but too old to be part of the people who knew nothing about it. I had to explore my potential and limits as well as deal with challenges thanks to developed self-evaluation skills (Kira, 2019). This sense-making process of the past and present, as well as who I am as a female Afrikaner was significant for me.

To remain unbiased in this research study, I must concede that many Christians retain the view of that men should be socially dominant, including some of my friends. Many other religions also have the same views about religion and the hierarchy of men and women. Many religious traditions, such as Afrikaner Christianity, uphold the notion of male social dominance within social hierarchies. This is reinforced by religious scriptures that advocate for the exclusion of women from positions of leadership within the family, church, and wider society. Consequently, these religious teachings shape interpersonal interactions and contribute to the unequal treatment of women in domestic, societal, and professional contexts (Muchina, 2018). In order to organise themselves as a community, Afrikaners place a strong emphasis on language, Christianity, history, sport, and literature (Boersema, 2013).

Religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism have historically offered women consolation, guidance, and a sense of community contingent upon their adherence to traditional gender roles encompassing motherhood and homemaking. Numerous little shifts in schools, workplaces, and neighbourhoods often occur in the day-to-day lives of ordinary Afrikaners, each with a unique impact on various groups. Culture, identity, and belonging are all anchored in interpersonal connections made at work, at school, and in one's neighbourhood (Boersema, 2013). As this is an autoethnographic research study, my experiences are being scrutinised against culture, thus I have

focused on the religious and societal views I believe in. Religiously inclined people form complex alliances with their preferred worldview (Kotze, 2013), and my preferred worldview is that women be seen as equal partners in a relationship.

Intersectional feminism emphasises the connection and interplay of multiple social identities, such as race, gender, sexuality, and ability in shaping individuals' experiences of opportunity and repression (Crenshaw, 1989). By adopting an intersectional lens, I captured the unique challenges faced at the intersections of multiple identities (female, Afrikaner, and teacher), recognising the interconnected systems that influenced my life.

Afrikaner Christianity which preserves male social dominance was one of the main themes that was taught to me and my sisters when we were growing up. My stepdad continuously clarified that he was the main authority in the house, and my mother upheld that theme. Looking back at my narrative, I wrote about one encounter with my stepdad: "He was throwing different scriptures at me, of how children must honour their parents, about sexual behaviour before marriage, about the man being beneath God and the ultimate monarch in a household." He also passionately loved to point out that "the role of a woman is in the household, and she should be submissive to her husband".

The way in which my stepdad treated me and spoke to me resonated closely with Track 4 where Swift (2010) penned, "Calling me out when I'm wounded, you, picking on the weaker man," and "You have pointed out my flaws again as if I don't already see them." Similarly, in Track 5, Furler (2014) wrote, "And I know that I can survive ... You did not break me; I'm still fighting for peace". When these songs came out, I remember singing along and screaming the lyrics in the car, tears rolling down my cheeks, connecting with the lyrics and then feeling better after letting out my feelings. I never have, and never will, have the courage to speak my truth to my mother and stepdad. But if I could, I would play these songs to them.

Religion-related concerns in the context of the historical Afrikaner help to provide details about the origin, influence, and distinctive nature of the Afrikaner identity in the 20th century (Kotze, 2013). Even though many Afrikaners have similar views of Christianity and familial hierarchies, my stepdad's rigid discipline and implementation

thereof had a greater impact on me than many of my peers. These rigid guidelines influenced me to be the good daughter, the nice daughter, and the keep-everyone-happy daughter. I wanted to set an example for my sisters, and many times I wanted to protect them and rather take the brunt of the discipline than have them go through the same. There were no opportunities to discuss any of my feelings with my mother, as she was blindly following everything my stepdad was saying. I wrote in my narrative:

If these “religious views” are a part of our household and the excuse as to why I cannot do the things I want to, I cannot go against my mother because then I would be going against my stepdad.

When I discussed this with my sisters a few years later (after all, three of us were out of my mother’s house as adults), they reflected on the unfairness of the situation when I was still living with my mother and stepdad. My youngest sister, in particular, was raised very differently; she had more freedom in going out, was not expected to help with household chores, and was allowed to dress any way that she wanted to.

It is vital to comprehend the significance of religion and its impact on certain behaviours, as well as to ascertain strategies for effecting constructive transformations within the parameters of a given religious framework (Kaoma, 2018). In my narrative, I wrote:

I felt like I did not know where my roots were. What were my religious roots? What is the correct way of being a woman – submissive and listening to everything her husband told her to do, or being independent and supporting herself?

This connects with the lyrics that Rebscher wrote in 2019, stating “I’ve got no roots but my home was never on the ground” (Track 6). After my reflection, analysis, and experienced epiphanies, I now understand a little bit more about who I am as an Afrikaner and how my identity has been formed as a result of my religious upbringing. Rebscher (2019) also penned in Track 6, “I like digging holes and hiding things inside them, when I grow old, I might forget to find them”. These lyrics best describe my identity journey thus far – I hid a lot of my feelings and experiences in holes in my mind, covering them up and forgetting about them. Reflecting upon my past has

enabled me to remember my roots, remember who I am and why I am, and thus understand who I want to become.

Respecting your individuality can be a key strategy for enhancing self-worth and creating a strong sense of self (Ciletti, 2023). The religious impact my upbringing had on my identity was that I find it difficult to be part of a traditional church setting, but I have found solace in religion by praying and relying on God in my own way. It may not be the right way or the perfect way, according to my stepdad or Afrikaner Christianity, but it is the way that feels safest and brings me peace. The impact that it had on my Afrikaner identity is that I do not want to be a submissive woman, but rather a partner in a household, someone who also contributes financially and who collaborates in household decisions. My adult life has not followed the traditional Afrikaner plan of dating, marrying a husband who will be the main breadwinner, buying a house, and having children. Luckily for me, I have married someone who sees me as an equal, and if I had followed the traditional Afrikaner plan, this research study might not have been born.

5.5 THEME 2: ARMY OF MOTHERS

Identity implies a need for authenticity, to confirm one's active social personal identity and to self-actualise, satisfy, and affirm it while advancing one's objectives and life projects (Kira, 2019). Identity formation is a complex and multidimensional process influenced by various factors, including personal experience and socio-cultural expectations. In the context of female identity, the influence of different ideologies and individuals plays a central role in shaping one's understanding of femininity and womanhood.

This section explores the impact of various women on my female identity and mentions volksmoeder ideology as a component of female Afrikaner identity. I delve into the specific experiences, reflections, and epiphanies gained through my narrative writing process. By reflecting on personal stories and analysing the impact of different women on my female identity, I seek to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics that influence the construction of my female identity within the Afrikaner community. The literature from Chapter 2, section 2.3, which is specifically about

female Afrikaner identity, and Chapter 2, section 2.4, which is about female teachers, is reflected in the following section.

5.5.1 Different women's influences on my female, Afrikaner, and teaching identities

Gender not only reflects one's biological sex but also the cultural and social constructs of gendered identities (Boersema, 2013). Through the lens of feminist theory, I aimed to analyse the complex intersections of socio-cultural expectations in constructing my identity and how my experiences related to broader social issues related to my culture of being an Afrikaner. To implement intersectionality and social role theory in my autoethnographic study, I had to reflect on my own identity and social roles. This self-reflection enabled me to understand how my experiences were shaped by my social identities and socio-cultural expectations. I also had to consider how my experiences might have differed from those of others with different social identities or roles.

Throughout this research study, I reflected upon the experiences and encounters with various women who played significant roles in shaping my understanding of my identity. These influential figures encompassed family members, friends, and mentors, each contributing distinct perspectives and values that have influenced my own female identity. In Chapter 4, I referred to these women as my Army of Mothers, and for ease of reading I will continue to refer to them as such. As mentioned in my narrative:

I have accumulated an "Army of Mothers" who fulfil different roles in my life, that a mother would usually fulfil in one. By having multiple women who have an influence on my life, I feel that my identity as a woman and female Afrikaner can be more well-rounded and complete. Instead of having one source as a reference, I had a few sources that could provide a better overall picture.

My Army of Mothers was named as a result of Track 7, which has a similar title, "Army". The track describes how others need to protect you and support you, thus creating your chosen army.

Humans are often very reliant on one another, and they often do best in a community setting (Ciletti, 2023). In Track 7, Kotceha (2015) wrote, “You’re always there to call up, I’m a pain, I’m a child, I’m afraid”. The concept of the agentic self, sometimes referred to as self-identity, encompasses several identities inside one individual. Individuals intersect within a dynamic hierarchical framework, wherein specific identities may assume more prominence while others remain less active, influenced by triggering events or the inherent value assigned to each identity (Kira, 2019). Analysing my narrative, I noticed that various people each influenced a different element of my female identity. My female Afrikaner identity was formed by my stepdad and is currently influenced by my stepmother, while my female teacher identity was moulded by my colleagues and mentors.

Children acquire a significant quantity of cultural and social knowledge as they grow, and one of these lessons is often learning to conform to societal standards (Ciletti, 2023). As revealed in the previous section, I had to learn to adapt my Afrikaner identity based on the religious views of my stepdad. The standards set by him were the rules that we had to conform to, otherwise we would be met with tyranny. The fact that my mother allowed this dictatorship in the house meant that there was little that I could learn from her as her opinion was mostly my stepdad’s opinion. When my mother changed her opinion based on my stepdad’s, I reflected, “[financial support from my stepdad] does not mean you must lose your individuality and opinions. What kind of example is that to three girls about the type of relationship that you should have with your husband?”



*Ons sê wat ons nie moet nie
En bly stil oor dit wat gesê moet word*

*~ Skree, recorded by Klopjag
(written by Pretorius, 2005)*

Translation:

We say what we should not

And keep quiet about what needs to be said

As I grew up, I was taught that you should not talk back when you do not agree with your parents. This has had a meaningful influence on my conflict management skills as I am scared to raise my opinion, especially when I am unsure of it, or if the other person has a more dominant personality than me. As a result, I regularly say the wrong thing as I am not used to relaying my opinion. I connected with the words of Pretorius (2005), especially about keeping quiet about what needs to be said. Sometimes your opinion will hurt or be wrong, but part of personal growth is learning from your mistakes, debating an opinion, and not only listening but having a voice as well.

Diary entry: 14 July 2023

Unfortunately, epiphanies like these made me realise why I had lost a certain degree of respect over the years for my mother. Writing it down in words sounds appalling, but I know it is true. How can you preach to your daughters that a woman needs to be able to take care of herself, yet she allows a man to govern her every word and action? I have wondered many times how my mother could have allowed my stepdad to “kick” me out of the house. I have also cried many tears over why she did not choose me, her blood, over him. But reflecting on my narrative and the epiphany, I rather pity my mother and feel sorry for her. But all the world’s pity and respect are not a reason to treat your own daughter the way she (he) did. I am again thanking my blessings for my real Army of Mothers.

One of the few life lessons that my mother ingrained in us was that “we have to go study after school and get a degree because a woman has to be able to have a career and take care of herself”. Even though my mother never studied and was a housewife, she realised after her divorce that a woman needed to be financially stable herself. Whether she thought it was too late for her to try and be successful on her own, I do not know. After being divorced for about two years – two years of standing on her own, working 9 to 5 for a salary and taking care of us – she married my stepdad and became

a housewife again. To echo Pretorius (2005), sometimes we say what we should not and keep quiet about what needs to be said. This epiphany needed to be admitted for me to make meaning of my female identity and to grow as a woman.

Reflecting on Track 12, Bosch (2009) wrote, “Verstand kan nie regtig keer as dit kom by dinge wat jou hart leeg kan maak” (translated: Your mind cannot really stop when it comes to things that can empty your heart). Even though it is hard to think about past experiences, it is those same thoughts that empty your heart if you do not process the emotions and reason for the thoughts. By reflecting on my past identity formation, I try to understand my present identity formation.

5.5.2 The influence of volksmoeder ideology on female Afrikaner identity

According to Morrell (2015, p. 25), Afrikaner masculinity emphasised “independence, resourcefulness, physical and emotional toughness, ability to give and take orders, of being moral and God-fearing”. The most appropriate way to define the position that women are supposed to perform in this religious, patriarchal, and traditional Afrikaner culture is as the spouse and supporter of their husband (Hattingh, et al., 2020). Gender ideals have a significant impact on people’s emotional lives in patriarchal societies like South Africa (Boersema, 2013). The transition from apartheid to a democratic South Africa resulted in the loss of a sense of second-hand superiority and dominance experienced by Afrikaner women due to the racial divisions of the apartheid era (Stander & Forster, 2019).

Another epiphany that I encountered as I reflected and analysed my narrative is the influence that my father’s third wife, Aunt A, had on my female identity. In my eyes, she emanated the ideal image of a strong, independent woman – the complete opposite of my birth mother. Aunt A was a successful business owner before starting a career as a manager at a national charity. She has had a tremendous influence on my female identity as part of my Army of Mothers. Not only does she set an example of how to be a successful, self-sufficient leader as a woman, but she also upholds the traditional values of femininity and is an example of a volksmoeder. The way she dresses, cooks, cleans, and supports my father as a spouse is remarkable. She is one of the few women I know who are both successful as an individual woman and as a spouse and partner in a household. Volksmoeder ideology, deeply rooted in the history

and cultural heritage of the Afrikaner community in South Africa, assigns a central role to women as custodians of the nation, culture, and family values (Boshoff, 2020). The concept of volksmoeder or “mother of the nation” emphasises the traditional gender roles of women as nurturing and preserving cultural and ethnic traditions (Van der Westhuizen, 2020, p. 260). This ideology has influenced the construction of female Afrikaner identity, shaping perceptions of femininity, motherhood, and community responsibilities.

The belief that marriage and having children are the ultimate goal in life is not unique to the Afrikaner culture, but it certainly placates volksmoeder ideology (Hattingh et al., 2020). Stemming from volksmoeder ideology, in my narrative I had colleagues and friends state: “But you can study while you have kids”, “Your husband can work hard, you don’t have to”, “Your studies will not assist your career goals”, and even “Children are not that expensive”. A barrier for women in any setting is the need to make trade-offs between work and family obligations (Sekatane, 2018). Women often struggle with social acceptance in a culture that values childbearing highly and stigmatises childlessness (Pedro, 2015).

Diary entry: 23 April 2024

In my narrative I also mentioned in Lyricovignette 3 about how my relationship with my husband started. Personally, I felt this was imperative to mention, as from the beginning I experienced pressures of having the perfect relationship, according to outsiders’ perspectives (whether my mother, my stepdad, colleagues or friends). I acknowledge that I am in the extremely privileged position today that should I want to, I can be a housewife and do not need to work. Unfortunately, what may seem difficult for others to understand, is that I am also very ambitious and want to excel in my career. Part of my privilege is that my husband supports my career choices. Part of my challenges, are that my female Afrikaner identity keeps influencing my internal monologue and the feeling of guilt of being career-driven.

The younger generation, confronted with historically motivated cultural structures, has shown originality as they come to grips with Afrikaner identity in the new era (Hattingh et al., 2020). As a post-apartheid Afrikaner woman, I have had to reconsider my female Afrikaner identity. I have never identified myself as a volksmoeder due to my disagreement with the ideology's perspective that women should exhibit obedience to their husbands and assume domestic responsibilities centred around childcare. This has led me to wonder about my identity as a female, a female Afrikaner, and a female Afrikaner teacher.

The concepts of gender, race, and class are considered to be social constructions that exhibit fluidity and are subject to transformation throughout time in response to evolving historical conditions (Stander & Forster, 2019). Stereotypes, like the volksmoeder and other cultural or gender-based stereotypes, describe how a subject is thought about from a historical or cultural standpoint, yet they are essentially untrue (Hattingh et al., 2020). As a result, the portrayal of women in a certain period or location will reflect standards that do not consider, but rather lessen, the diversity of women. The rigorous values that Afrikaners used to identify with have generally been abandoned among the younger generation.

As the ideals on which Afrikaner women based their identity came under scrutiny, women experienced an identity crisis (Hattingh et al., 2020). Identity distress, which has been connected to trauma, is the name given to worry and concern over being unable to settle numerous identity difficulties (Berman et al., 2020). In my narrative, I reflected, "There was a stigma in my small town that you only go study for a teaching degree if you do not know what else to study, or if you are not smart enough to study something else." At first, that assumption had a great influence on my career choice, also because "my mother said I am too smart to study to be a teacher". However, once I started to deliberate about what I sincerely wanted and did not listen to other people's opinions, I realised I wanted to be a teacher.

As a member of my Army of Mothers, my mentor at school, Ms C, also influenced my female identity, namely my female teaching identity. In my narrative, I wrote,

Ms C was very fair and followed rules to a tee, and she was open and honest and did not shy away from telling you when you did something wrong. But she provided the stability and support and love of a mother figure that I desperately needed in my life at that moment.

Living with Ms C meant that I was able to obtain first-hand experience in teaching, having the opportunity to ask her opinion about teaching methods, classroom management, and career opportunities. As Ms C was a deputy principal and best friends with the principal, Ms L, they could provide valuable guidelines on teaching and what constitutes being a teacher.

My personal relationships with Ms C and Ms L meant that I was welcomed into their friendship group, namely My Old Juffies from my narrative, where “I learnt more nuanced lessons from them such as conflict management and how to handle certain situations in the school outside of the class, specifically referring to colleagues”. In Track 7, Kotecha (2015) wrote, “I know that I’ve been messed up, you never let me give up”. Even though My Old Juffies sometimes questioned my family planning decisions, they never allowed me to give up on my plans for studying and pursuing leadership roles in the school.

Having my whole Army of Mothers at my disposal to learn from was a huge advantage. However, after reflecting on my narrative I realise that the different influences on my identity sometimes made me confused as to who I really am. Do I want to be like my stepmother, do I want to be like my best friend, do I want to be like Ms C? Role strain is widespread because people frequently strive to complete numerous roles at once, each of which requires a unique set of behaviour (Hopper, 2020). The distinctive roles of being a female, a teacher, and an Afrikaner were conflicting and made me doubt my identity.



All they keep asking me is if I'm going to be your bride

The only kinda girl they see is a one-night or a wife

~ Lavender Haze, recorded by Taylor Swift

(written by Sweet & Swift, 2022)

Role strain happens when we struggle to fulfil the social duties that are required of us. These roles may be associated with the household duties of being a bride or wife as written by Sweet and Swift (2022), that is, mother, caretaker, cook, and cleaner, as well as roles in the work environment. Role conflict, which occurs when two roles have demands that are incompatible with one another, and role overload, which occurs when a person lacks the resources to handle the demands of several roles, can also affect people (Hopper, 2020). Other facets of their identity are also scrutinised by this sense of failure. It causes them to question their sense of identity concerning their families, social networks, communities, and the wider world (Pedro, 2015). The associated problem of socio-cultural expectations serves as a prominent illustration of women's status in society (Sekatane, 2018). People use a range of coping mechanisms to deal with role strain, which is regarded as a frequent experience in contemporary culture (Hopper, 2020). During my narrative analysis, I realised that I would need to focus on myself and my identity to decide who I was and be comfortable with that decision.

Intersectionality necessitates becoming aware of, paying attention to, and learning from a variety of women and their issues (DeGroat, 2019). Comparing the different women in my Army of Mothers reminded me of a volksmoeder who prioritised the well-being of her family over her personal needs. My mother regarded only my stepdad as of the utmost importance, and not the family as a whole. She chose her own happiness above her daughters' and lost her daughters in the process. I think that being a volksmoeder includes taking cognisance of the needs of others as the most important, but it does not necessarily have to be your family. You can choose who your family are, as I have chosen my Army of Mothers. However, where I differ from traditional volksmoeder ideology is that you should not eliminate your sense of self and identity to uphold others as more important.

The historical illustration of the relationship between tenacity and female solidarity offers a clue to modern feminism (DeGroat, 2019). My stepmother regarded my father and family as important, but still had the drive to be successful. My mentors, Ms C and Ms L, regarded school as their most important priority but never forgot to make time for friends. That is why my Army of Mothers all had different influences on my identity as a female, a female Afrikaner, and a female teacher – I could learn from them all and still try to retain the most important parts for me. Williams and York (2013) penned in Track 9, “You’re on your own in the real world”. A person has to go through life making decisions on their own in the real world. Sometimes we are lucky to have other people in our lives to whom we can refer, ask opinions, and discuss situations. However, we have to make the final decision on our own in this real world and deal with the consequences.

Socio-cultural expectations have an impact on what communities, societies, and families view as appropriate or inappropriate for businesswomen and professionals to perform (Sekatane, 2018). This section contributed to the broader analysis surrounding gender and identity by examining the complexities and nuances of my female identity formation. By exploring the influence of different women and volksmoeder ideology, I aimed to shed light on the intricate interplay between personal experiences, cultural norms, and societal expectations in shaping my understanding of womanhood and femininity.

5.6 THEME 3: THE DILIGENT TEACHER - FROM PLIGGIE TO JUFFIE

The expectations placed upon female teachers encompass a complex interplay of societal norms, gender roles, and personal standards. This section explores the multifaceted nature of these expectations, analysing the personal journey and experiences I encountered in striving to meet and exceed these demands. I examine how the desire to achieve and be successful, rooted in childhood, shaped my career path as a teacher. Additionally, I acknowledge the influence of the trauma associated with being a people-pleaser (a pliggie, as referred to in Chapter 4), and how it washed over into my female teaching identity (being a juffie, also referenced in Chapter 4).

The intersection between the desire to achieve, the expectations placed upon female teachers, and the trauma of being a people-pleaser presented a complex dynamic

within my teaching career. I delved into my personal experiences, reflecting on how these factors shaped my teaching practice and influenced my perceptions of success and self-worth. In the literature, Chapter 2, section 2 denotes socio-cultural expectations, social norms, and female identity. It also links to Chapter 2, section 4 regarding female teaching identity.

5.6.1 Socio-cultural expectations on my female teaching identity

My childhood experiences greatly influenced my identity construction as an adult, and subsequently as a teacher. In a classroom situation, I was able to connect with learners who also came from a broken home or divorced household. I could also provide advice, for example during Life Orientation lessons, on how to cope with divorced parents, as well as how to support their siblings emotionally and even how to act towards their parents. Learners trusted my advice as I understood what they were going through.

From an early age, propelled by familial and societal expectations, the desire to achieve and excel often takes root in individuals (Ciletti, 2023). I had been driven by a strong desire to meet the expectations set by my parents since childhood. As I reflected in my narrative, “From a young age I wanted to be the ‘perfect’ example for my sisters. I constantly tried to make everyone happy and be a good girl, make my parents happy, not fight with my siblings”. I set myself these high expectations, but they were driven by my mother and how she used to refer to me as her “mooiste slimste oudste dogter”, translating to “smartest, most beautiful, eldest daughter”. All the adjectives were synonymous with her love towards me but also reflected her desire for me to be the perfect daughter.

Michaels and Tranter (2020) penned in Track 10, “You promised the world and I fell for it; I put you first and you adored it”. These lyrics resonated with me when I was writing my autoethnography, as I had put my mother’s needs first when I was younger. She signified me as being beautiful and smart, thus I desired to be beautiful and smart so as not to dishearten her. My mother even introduced me by that name every time we met someone new, meaning that I had to live up to that name to not disappoint my mother. I also trusted her wholeheartedly when she promised the world until that world came crashing down.

“No one stays the same,” Cyrus and Yoel (2017) wrote in Track 11. For me, that included my mother who changed, as well as the changes I encountered to form my identity into what it is today. Depending on the collectives they are a part of and the narrative repertoires they have access to, an individual’s identity is concurrently influenced by aspects of who they are and who they ought to be (Kotze, 2013). My identity has been influenced by the desire and expectation to achieve. As I noted in my narrative, “I made a pact with myself that I wanted to pass with as many distinctions as possible as a way of saying ‘thank you’ to my father”. This early motivation to succeed eventually steered me toward a career in teaching, where the desire to achieve and be successful remained a significant driving force.

Diary entry: 15 July 2023

I know that I was not the “sportiest” child, even though my father had a desire for me to be this wonder child. His whole family were national champions in either athletics, swimming, or some sport when they were at school, and I know he really wanted the same from me (and my sisters). Yet I just did not have the ball skills and was just more academically inclined. I realised, as I analysed my narrative, that I wanted to make up for my “non-sporty” childhood by being an exceptional coach while teaching and was still trying to please my father in that regard. This epiphany has made me realise that childhood expectations are rooted deeper than one can imagine.

As I embarked on my teaching journey, the pressure to meet the expectations of being a competent and effective teacher became increasingly evident. The trajectory of the development of identity and its behavioural effects are influenced by how the growing identity responds to threatening or challenging internal and external stresses and traumas (Kira, 2019). My teaching identity was influenced externally by the desire to be a competent teacher, and internally by wanting to excel in my studies and qualifications as a teacher.

When I analysed and reflected on my years of competing in extra-mural activities, I noticed the influence my parents had on my willingness to compete. I knew I was not the best sportsman or the best debater, but the mere presence of my parents was all I craved in those moments. I noted that “I do not have one distinct memory of either of my parents being present at my games”, and that I was expecting my mother and stepdad to be in the audience and watch me deliver my “improved” speech. My mother dropped me off at the gate and told me that she was tired, and my stepdad had to work, so she would pick me up later.

Adversities are the setting in which self-identity, or the executive self, arises (Kira, 2019). My parents being absent from my extra-curricular activities had a deeper impact on my teaching identity than I had anticipated. As I reflected on my narrative, I recalled the feelings that I had when my parents were not present. I contrast that with my coaching duties as a teacher, where I was overwhelmed by the support that some of my learners’ parents provided. The year that I won the provincial championships in hockey as the singular coach, I had tremendous support from the parents of my team. I remember being extremely grateful for them and not understanding how they would take off a whole weekend, drive 300 km to a different town, and pay for transport and accommodation, just to support their daughters. What was even more surprising was the fact that whenever they bought food and drinks for their daughters, they bought something for me as well. The amount of respect they showed me as a coach, and the amount of love and support they provided exceeded my expectations. I was not used to parents supporting you next to the sports field (or even in the school hall when delivering a speech). I taught my team that year not only about being diligent and working hard for their goals, but I also told them to be thankful for their parents and support systems. By not having the support myself as a child, I wanted my team to know that they should be grateful for the support provided to them.

As defining moments in a person’s life, traumatic experiences may also become a part of their identity (Berman et al., 2020). I detected that as an adult, spending time together is one of my love languages. If someone spends time with me and goes out of their way to be with me, help me, or support me, then I feel connected to that person and appreciate them even more. Simply sitting next to my husband, even if we are not talking, makes me feel special and loved. When my husband needs to work late in his

office, I often sit with him (or even take a nap in the chair) just so that I can be close to him and not feel abandoned or that I am abandoning him.

In Track 11, Cyrus and Yoel (2017) wrote that “change is a thing you can count on”. Individuals vary in the extent to which they actively construct new stories of identity for themselves or, conversely, adopt pre-existing collective frameworks of identity which result in a constant reconstruction of identity through a unique individual balancing act of these frequently antagonistic forces (Kotze, 2013). Being a teacher enabled me to reconstruct my identity into being stronger at sport because “even though I was not a sportsperson when I was at school myself, I enjoyed coaching a great deal”. The external influence of sport on my teaching identity made me gain confidence in myself as a coach, as some of “my proudest moments as a coach came because of hockey”.

At the same time, my internal teaching identity was being shaped by my desire to achieve and excel in my studies. When I started my educational journey, I wrote that “I wanted to be successful and more than just a teacher – deep inside I knew I was capable of more than one degree and just teaching every day”. This statement has been met with controversial testimonies from colleagues, as some of them are truly content with possessing one degree and just being a teacher. It was only my internal desire that was stronger, driving me to achieve success, especially after my first graduation, when I noted:

The feeling of accomplishment was indescribable; it was a feeling that nobody could take away from me – I completed the degree, it was mine. I was not “just a teacher”, I was “smarter” because I was advancing in my studies.

The desire to please others and fulfil these expectations can also carry its own emotional weight. I experienced the trauma of being a people-pleaser, constantly seeking validation and approval from others. This deeply ingrained pattern of behaviour, rooted in childhood experiences, has permeated my teaching identity, leading to feelings of anxiety, self-doubt, and the perpetual need to meet the needs and expectations of students, colleagues, and parents.

5.6.2 The influence of trauma on my female teaching identity

The influence of trauma on a person can be moderated by using identity as a lens through which it is viewed and processed (Berman, 2020). In an eye-opening article, Ciletti (2023) stated:

Being too intent on pleasing others, especially if we tend to do it to our own detriment, also can be a form of trauma response. This tendency to people-please is called the “fawn” response, and it often arises as a childhood survival strategy meant to appease a neglectful or abusive parent. Adults who have a fawn response can have difficulty setting boundaries with other people, i.e., people-pleasing. (p. 5)

This quote immediately caught my attention as it resonated with my inner people-pleaser and explained why I am who I am. I experienced a moment of clarity and understood myself and where I came from on a deeper level. My childhood trauma has influenced how I respond to people as an adult, whether on an everyday basis or within conflict situations. I am constantly seeking validation and acceptance and want to make sure that everyone around me is happy, even if it is to my detriment.

Event centrality refers to how closely an experienced trauma relates to one’s identity. This concept is important for understanding trauma recovery because it influences whether the resulting distress will result in post-traumatic stress disorder or post-traumatic growth (Berman et al., 2020). Moore (2007) wrote in Track 1, “Mama, please stop crying, I can’t stand the sound. Your pain is painful and it’s tearing me down”. In the same track, the lyrics also state, “You fight about money, about me and my brother. And this I come home to; this is my shelter”. As the first track on my mixtape, this is the song that I refer to the most when I need my thoughts to travel back to the specific year that my parents divorced. Even though those years had some traumatic events, I have learnt to hide the thoughts away. This song assisted me in reliving my feelings and emotions, as the lyrics were true then and now. To maintain post-traumatic growth, I had to understand my trauma and not allow it to result in traumatic distress. That is also why I have associated Track 1 with most of my trauma – so that I can conserve the time I think about the trauma and easily revert to growth instead of distress.

The other factor in the identity development equation is identity stresses and traumas which form the background and requirement for identity development (Kira, 2019). My teacher identity development was formed by stresses and traumas from my childhood. It all started when I narrated, “Why did I have to be the adult when I was supposed to be the child? Why did they not protect me instead of using me as a mediator?”

Later in my narrative, I recalled that “night by night, I was called into that dreaded office again and the cycle of verbal abuse would start all over again”. The influence that this memory had on my identity development was that I still dread being “called to the office” by anyone – whether it is the principal or my new boss. When my anxiety spikes at that moment, I have to remind myself that I am not in my mother’s house anymore, that I am a good person, and that I have not done anything wrong. Yet the trauma still stays with me almost 15 years later.

Traumatic experiences are seen as one sort of acute stressor and a crucial component of the general theory of stressors (Kira, 2019). I have had to cope with the childhood trauma of my stepdad “insulting and belittling me” and, after being kicked out of my mother’s house, “feeling more distraught, betrayed, and abandoned than ever”. These traumatic moments make me repeat Track 4 from Swift (2010) in which she penned, “You have pointed out my flaws again as if I don’t already see them”. The biggest epiphany that this autoethnography research study has provided me with is the healing that writing and reflecting on your past can bring you. Even though I have not achieved my dreams and successes yet, being able to reflect on my journey and where I started has made me proud and helped to heal the childhood traumas I experienced.



*All my life I was never there
Just a ghost running scared
Here our dreams aren't made
They're won*

*~ City of Angels, recorded by Thirty Seconds to Mars
(written by Leto, 2013)*

As written by Leto (2013), dreams must often be won. What I understand from this song quote is that to win or achieve your dream, you have to work hard. To make something is an effort, but to win means you have to be diligent and work harder than anyone else. Thus, to achieve your dream, hard work is indispensable. You cannot

run away or be scared if you want to be successful; growth is only possible with due diligence, reflection, and learning from your mistakes.

Identity can also act as a lens through which trauma is viewed and processed, influencing the possibility of post-traumatic growth in the wake of a traumatic event (Berman et al., 2020). I understood some of the growth when I wrote in my narrative:

To be able to construct a new teaching identity was the best feeling in the world. I had some experience; thus, I knew what worked in the classroom for my teaching style, yet I had to adapt it to the school climate and culture. Even though I vowed not to be a pliggie ever again, it contradicted my urge to prove myself at this new school. I wanted to show how successful I was at my previous school, yet not be a pliggie.

Part of working through my trauma for this research study meant that I had to decide whom I needed to protect from my experienced trauma. My relationship with my mother and stepdad is very strained still, and to protect myself from potential backlash I decided not to show this research study to my mother. From experience, I know that she would not perceive my experiences as valid and that there would be a lot of criticism from her and my stepdad. Track 10 by Michaels and Tranter (2020) states, “I needed to lose you to love me, now the chapter is closed and done.” For now, I have had to escape the relationship with my mother in order to love myself and build my identity into something that I am proud of. If our relationship changes in the future, this research study might be a valuable tool to provide her with my experiences. To echo Swift (2010) in Track 4, “Someday I’ll be living in the big old city, and all you’re ever gonna be is mean. Why you gotta be so mean?”

By sharing personal stories and examining the intersections between desire, expectations, and trauma, this chapter aimed to contribute to a broader conversation on the relationship between expectations, trauma, and identity. Through this exploration, I was able gain a deeper understanding of the personal and professional challenges that shaped my teaching identities, fostering empathy and providing a foundation for critical reflection and growth. Through autoethnographic reflection, I explored the impact of these expectations and trauma on my teaching identity, examining how I navigated the challenges and sought to find a balance between

meeting expectations and prioritising my well-being. By engaging in this self-reflection and analysis, this section provided a nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics that influenced my professional teaching journey.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Stress, identity, and trauma are topics with rising popularity and momentum in the literature (Kira, 2019). There is also very little written about the relationship between trauma and identity (Berman et al., 2020). By using life-writing practices and storytelling techniques, autoethnography can advance the causes of social justice and empowerment according to our conception of it as a critical project (Luitel & Dahal, 2021). Autoethnography offers a valuable and transformative approach to research by embracing personal narratives, cultural analysis, and conceptual insight as well as fostering empathy and deepening our understanding of complex social situations. Overall, this autoethnographic research study aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of the influence of socio-cultural expectations on the construction of a female Afrikaner teacher's identity while recognising the subjective nature of my experiences and interpretations.

In the lyrics below by Swift (2024), she states that looking back might be the only way to move forward. People that think back on their past may learn about the origins of their beliefs, attitudes, and actions, which will help them face unsolved problems, heal from past trauma, and advance both personally and professionally. Within the classroom, introspective reflection enables educators to modify their methods, meet the various needs of their students, and build meaningful connections founded on mutual respect and trust.



*The professor said to write what you know
Looking backwards might be the only way to move forward*

*~ The Manuscript, recorded by Taylor Swift
(written by Swift, 2024)*

CHAPTER SIX: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION



*I'm feeling better ever since you know me
I was a lonely soul, but that's the old me
A little wiser now from what you've shown me*

*~ Feel Again, recorded by OneRepublic
(written by Tedder, 2013)*

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The journey of autoethnographic exploration embarked upon in this study has been a deeply personal and scholarly endeavour, guided by the desire to understand the intricate interplay between me and my society. As I shared my story with you, the reader, I started to shed the old me and have grown in my identity even more. Reflecting with Tedder (2013), I feel better now that you know me, and wiser from what this journey has shown me.

In this concluding chapter, I reflect upon the insights garnered from the harmonies of my personal narratives, cultural encounters, and critical self-examination that have unfolded throughout this study. Drawing on the foundations of autoethnography (Ellis et al., 2011), I synthesise the diverse notes of my experiences and observations, offering a comprehensive understanding of the significance and implications of this autoethnographic research study.

This chapter serves as a culmination of the research journey, bringing together the lived experiences, self-reflection, and scholarly inquiry that have shaped my exploration. In it, I aimed to provide a comprehensive perspective on the transformative power of autoethnographic research (Chang, 2008), shedding light on its implications for self-awareness, interpersonal dynamics, and the broader field of qualitative inquiry.

In the process of concluding my study, I begin by providing an overview of my study. Next, I delve into my research findings based on each of the research questions. Thereafter, I stipulate the scholarly contribution created by the generation of new knowledge in this research study. I then provide personal and professional reflections on my study. Finally, this chapter concludes by offering insights into potential recommendations for practice, policy, and future research.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF MY STUDY

To facilitate the coherent dissemination of information within my research study, it was necessary to establish a harmonious organisation of concepts. To provide a research report that is well-organised and effectively addresses the study questions and objectives, the chapters were designed as follows:

Chapter 1: Research focus

Chapter 1 introduced the research, encompassing the background and contextual information of the study, the rationale and motivation behind it, as well as the objective and emphasis of the exploration. Additionally, a concise summary of the research paradigm, methodology, and conceptual framework was provided. The quality requirements and ethical issues were briefly addressed.

Chapter 2: Literature review

The second chapter was dedicated to the literature review of the study. I started with the conceptual framework implemented in this study, namely intersectionality. The integration of social role theory and feminism was also inspected. I then explored the existing literature on socio-cultural expectations, establishing Afrikaner culture and identity, and constructing female teachers' identities.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

In Chapter 3, the study delved into the methodological approach adopted, while also introducing the methodologies employed for data collection and analysis throughout the investigative process. This chapter also explored the significance of including autoethnography as a research methodology and the advantages of adopting a narrative framework. The neologism lyricovignette was introduced and elaborated upon.

Chapter 4: My autoethnography story

In Chapter 4, I presented my narrative. I shared my experiences and my story about being an Afrikaner, a teacher, and a professional woman. This chapter included song lyrics and was structured to resemble a mixtape of my identity construction.

Chapter 5: Data analysis and interpretation

In Chapter 5, an analysis and interpretation of the autoethnography was presented, exploring its relationship with the examined literature and the themes that were identified through the analysis process. The chapter explored the influence of socio-cultural expectations on the construction of my identity as a female Afrikaner teacher.

Chapter 6: Recommendations and conclusion

In this concluding chapter, which is the sixth and final section of this research study, I present a summary of the exploration and the corresponding conclusions. I engage in personal reflection about the methodological assumptions employed in my research study, the research findings obtained, and the academic contributions made.

6.3 MY RESEARCH FINDINGS

In Chapter 5, I analysed and interpreted my autoethnography. I connect my analysis and interpretation to my research questions in the following section.

6.3.1 How did I experience socio-cultural expectations as a female Afrikaner teacher?

In the context of autoethnography, the process of triangulating internal thoughts and exterior behaviours, current memories with historical notes, and descriptive facts with instinctual emotions is considered essential for cultivating self-observation (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). This approach enables the generation of valuable contrasts and comparisons, hence facilitating a deeper understanding of oneself. To answer this research question, I needed to explore my experiences and emotions during the recollected memories reflected in Chapter 4. For ease of reference, I reflect on the memories in the chronological order that they were first mentioned.

6.3.1.1 Religion's socio-cultural expectations of my Afrikaner identity

One of the fundamental aspects that influenced how I constructed my Afrikaner identity, was my religious upbringing during my teenage years. My stepdad's views and his implementation thereof, made me confused about my religious views. I doubted whether I was a real Christian, I queried whether our family was being

Christian in the right way, and I doubted my mother for supporting my stepdad's way of implementing Christianity in our home.

My confusion about Christianity and what was expected of me to be seen as a good Christian led me to fake certain religious acts. I faked being slain by the Spirit in Grade 9 as I had experienced socio-cultural expectations from the church and my family. The church community and my stepdad only truly accepted my faith once I started faking my religion, and the confusion was a difficult hurdle to overcome later in my religious journey. To this day, whenever I see people being slain by the Spirit in churches, I doubt their intentions and whether it is real as I know that I have faked it before. Nothing stops someone else from faking it for various reasons as well.

My religious upbringing also led to me feeling secluded from my peers in Grade 12. When my stepdad insisted that I not take part in school activities on Saturdays, which led to me almost being suspended and being kicked out of the choir group, I felt like religion was interfering uncontrollably in my life. Some of my peers gossiped about me and how it was unfair towards them that I did not have to be present on Saturdays, even though I truly wanted to be there. I experienced isolation from my peer group and was bullied by them as well.

The religious upbringing and adjoining emotions of confusion, doubt, and isolation due to the socio-cultural expectations from my Afrikaner Christian culture had a great impact on my identity construction. I have had to rebuild my strained personal relationship with religion and have made peace with the fact that I may not believe in the same way as others but my Christianity is what feels comfortable and safe for me. I still encounter Afrikaner Christians who practice religion in ways that are confusing to me, but part of my growth is that I have realised that each person will do what is best for them. Many Afrikaners still judge me when I say I do not go to church every Sunday, and I have had to endure additional lectures about the right way of being a Christian from colleagues and family. The feeling of isolation and confusion starts to creep into my mind at those times, but upon reflection afterwards, I convince myself that I am good enough, and I must do what feels right for me and my religious views.

6.3.1.2 *Socio-cultural expectations experienced as a female Afrikaner teacher*

My female Afrikaner identity was further influenced by the socio-cultural expectations I experienced as a young teacher. I was constantly inundated with questions about marriage as a young woman because I was in a long-term relationship. The teacher who looked at my ring finger after every holiday, searching for an engagement ring, was irksome and infuriating. After we eventually got married, the next question that I was asked constantly was about starting a family. The frustration continued as I had to repeat continuously why we were waiting to start a family. Reflecting upon this makes me even more infuriated today, as these personal questions are not supposed to be topics of everyday discussions, but I am still constantly asked about them. Nobody thought that maybe we were trying to conceive but were having fertility issues. Nobody considered that maybe we had experienced loss and miscarriages. Fortunately, this was not the case, but every time I was asked the question about family planning, my heart immediately thought of other young couples being asked the same questions, but who were, perhaps, experiencing trouble conceiving. The Afrikaner culture, especially older Afrikaners, are not ashamed to ask questions about marriage, family planning, and certain socio-cultural expectations.

The pressure that my father put on me regarding starting a family made me feel ashamed about my relationship and life decisions. As mentioned, I had decided that I first wanted to finish my PhD before starting a family as it was a lifelong dream to obtain my PhD. I was privileged to have a husband who supported my choice and supports my studies. My father's pressure made me doubt my decision to further my studies and even ashamed that I had not already given him the grandchildren he wanted. To this day, all I try to be is the good daughter, the nice daughter, the keep-everyone-happy-daughter. But how do I do this while keeping myself happy? Do I sacrifice my happiness for the happiness of others? Honestly, I have deliberated this exact thing – to give up or pause my studies and obey socio-cultural expectations by starting a family. In those moments, my husband has been the one to keep me on track by asking whether I am considering changing my mind because I really want it, or because others expect it from me. That has usually been enough to remind me that I need to conform to my expectations and not others. But it is still not easy.

Similarly, being a female teacher trying to climb the ladder has been just as frustrating. Even though women are the majority of the teaching staff, men still account for most of the promotional posts in a school. In my search for promotional posts after moving back to Pretoria, many past emotions became evident again but for different reasons. I was angry at some schools for misleading me in interviews, when they stated that I had an extremely successful interview but that either I lacked experience or the post required rugby coaching experience (in other words, it was meant for a man).

During those three months of going for multiple interviews and being turned down for each one really aggravated my feelings about teaching and the hopes of being appointed to a promotional post. Worst of all was the doubt in myself that returned. I doubted my abilities, I doubted my studies, I doubted that maybe I was over-qualified, and I doubted my worth. At one point, I even started to doubt my religion again – was I praying hard enough, was I believing hard enough, was I enough?

All these negative emotions are not conducive to constructing a successful female Afrikaner teacher identity. Overall, my female Afrikaner teacher identity was constructed out of emotions of doubt, isolation, shame, frustration, and anger. But there were also positive emotions from smaller incidents during this time. The joys of a learner understanding a concept, the hug from one of the struggling learners after you have just given them some love and positive attention, the success when your team wins a match or tournament after many hours of coaching, the laughter and happiness from spending time with your colleagues. This proves that human beings are made up of a culmination of many emotions, feelings, and experiences. Unfortunately, it is those emotions and events that hurt the most that sometimes linger and have a bigger impact on your identity than you think.

6.3.2 Why did I experience this the way that I did?

In contemporary academia, scholars across many disciplines persist in crafting narratives that aim to comprehend a social phenomenon using introspective reflection on their individual experiences, employing a personalised literary approach (Wall, 2006). In contrast to conducting research “on” a particular subject to comprehend a specific phenomenon, these researchers instead delve into their realms and personal encounters to reveal, analyse, and scrutinise the societal frameworks and fundamental

power dynamics at play (Keles, 2022). Individuals engage in a process of introspection and reflection, through which they endeavour to gain insight into their emotions, thoughts, and beliefs by recollecting, revisiting, and reconstructing their past encounters. This endeavour serves the purpose of comprehending and formulating hypotheses about the interrelationships between the self, different power dynamics, and cultural influences (Holman Jones, 2018). Additionally, individuals undertake this process to express their critiques, make contributions to, and expand upon the current body of scholarly knowledge (Adams et al., 2015).

To answer the next research question, I delve deeper into my experiences and emotions mentioned in the previous section, by elaborating on why I experienced the socio-cultural expectations in the way that I did. I also compare it to literature to show the relevance between me and the outside world, thus tying the auto- to the ethno-part of this research study.

6.3.2.1 Religion's socio-cultural expectations of my Afrikaner identity

One of the great epiphanies that I experienced through this research study was that I recalled how I faked my religious views as a teenager. I feigned being slain by the Spirit to gain approval from my stepdad and church community. According to Sosis and Ruffle (2004), those who actively participate in the prescribed set of ceremonial obligations enforced by a religious organisation can be seen as really adhering to the principles and teachings of their religious groups. By faking certain religious acts, I was accepted by my church community and stepdad, which consequently led to my mother's approval.

Sosis and Ruffle (2004) further explains that religious organisations that place the most significant requirements on their members are more likely to evoke a greater degree of dedication and loyalty. Only those who are dedicated and devoted will exhibit a willingness to adopt distinctive attire and conduct that deviate from societal norms. The conformity of being slain by the Spirit (even though fake) showed my devotion to the religious requirements. Accepting that Saturdays were seen as the Sabbath and that one must not be part of any social interactions on that day, also showed dedication to Christianity. When I started to doubt the teachings of my stepdad

and pushed back against his conformity, I lost his approval as I was seen as disloyal and a disappointment.

As early as 1928, Boison (1928) wrote that the inability to socialise and digest a new experience was crucial to the individual's position in his own eyes as a major element in functional mental illnesses. My mental health was significantly influenced by the religious isolation I experienced, first, when I did not understand being slain by the Spirit, and later, when I questioned my stepdad's view of holy Sabbath days and holidays such as Valentine's Day. I had to make a choice – to conform to the socio-cultural expectations and religious ideals to be accepted by my stepdad and the church, or to stand my ground and not have their support. Much group activity may also be explained by taking into consideration the desire for mutual support and justification in areas in which people assess themselves.

Religious affiliation is generally related to increased social activity, as well as an increase in a sense of belonging and a decrease in negative emotions (Tholkes et al., 2022). I firmly believe that one of the basic needs of a human being is just to belong and be accepted, which correlates with Maslow's third tier of his hierarchy of needs (1943). This feeling of belonging, however, comes with the social dilemma of choosing a group to belong to. When I was a young teenager, I decided to conform to the social activity of my religious affiliation just so that I would belong. But later, as I grew older and started to understand society a bit more, I questioned my stepdad's religious views and chose to rather be affiliated with other groups. There were times that I did not belong anywhere, but I knew that I was true to my personal views and that made me accept myself and not need validation from others.

6.3.2.2 Socio-cultural expectations experienced as a female Afrikaner teacher

As time passed though, I struggled to belong to a new group, that is, my colleagues – the female Afrikaner teachers. The decision I had made that I wanted to pursue studies and a career instead of following the Afrikaner's traditional view of marriage and babies started to cleave a wedge between me and my colleagues. Some of the older Afrikaner women frequently told me that I could not wait too long to start a family, as my body was growing older and that I would struggle to conceive if I waited too long. Several researchers have presented findings that establish a correlation between lifestyle

choices and infertility in both males and females. These include factors such as the age at which one begins a family, the postponement of childbearing to pursue career or educational ambitions, smoking, consumption of fat-rich diets, alcohol and caffeine use, physical activity, engagement in risky sexual behaviours, substance abuse, anxiety or depression, cellular phone usage, and exposure to radiation (Durairajanayagam, 2018, Silvestris et al., 2019, Alabi, 2020).

People are delaying establishing a family owing to educational and job ambitions, according to a new modern lifestyle trend (Emokpae & Brown, 2021). Changing societal norms, however, prevents both sexes from entering partnerships and having children until their late thirties and early forties due to economic conditions, educational aspirations, and career demands (Simionescu et al., 2021). As a result, both men and women are often uninformed of the potential dangers associated with delaying childbearing. I understand that socio-cultural expectations pressure young couples to start a family, but I do believe that it should not be a topic of everyday discussion. From my experience, I was drawn into this topic of conversation frequently, and sometimes it was from a person I barely knew or a question just to make conversation, like asking about the weather. I am fully aware of the risks that may present themselves if we try to conceive at an older age, but surely it is a personal journey between husband and wife and not up for general discussion?

As mentioned previously, I always wondered about the pain a couple would have to endure during those conversations if they were trying to conceive but were experiencing infertility problems. Having a child is highly valued in general society, even though it may add to the stress of possible infertility (Simionescu et al., 2021). Furthermore, because infertility is still considered a private matter, infertile couples frequently conceal their feelings, attitudes, and opinions. As a result, infertile couples may face socio-cultural expectations and restrict social interactions. My reasons for waiting to start a family were not due to infertility issues, but similarly I started to restrict social interactions with certain colleagues who I know frequently brought up the topic of family planning. The highly private journey of family planning should remain as such – private and only to be discussed when the couple wants to discuss it.

The function of a teacher is of the utmost importance in enhancing educational standards. When a female teacher encounters conflicts related to home life, it might

have a detrimental impact on her professional performance (Akram, 2020). The issue of work–family conflict has emerged as a significant worry among women. The identification of signs such as sadness, social interaction, anxiety, and sentiments of ineffectiveness and insecurity might facilitate the assessment of psychological health (Goldberg & Smith, 2008). The research demonstrates a clear correlation between psychological well-being and the ability to lead a vibrant and energetic life. This is shown by the examination of the relationship between work–family conflict and psychological discomfort and depression, as highlighted by Allen et al. (2000). Psychological well-being indicators are represented as the consequences of the interaction between job and family domains. According to previous research conducted by Chapman et al. (1994) as well as Akram (2020), the experience of work–family conflict and role strain is associated with the manifestation of psychological symptoms, including stress and depression. Frone (2000) posited that there exists a longitudinal relationship between job conflict influenced by home life and several negative outcomes, including depression, diminished physical health, and hypertension.

I have experienced faking religion, religious isolation, being judged for my family planning ideals, and work–life conflict. All these aspects had a significant influence on my mental health but also helped me to construct my female Afrikaner teacher identity. Without these experiences, I would be a different person entirely. By connecting my experiences to literature, I encapsulated my personal journey and made it relevant to others as well.

6.3.3 In which ways did my experiences influence the construction of my female teacher identity?

Owing to the intricate nature of the subject matter, there exist several conceptualisations of female teachers' identity. Nevertheless, it is widely agreed upon that female teachers' identity may encompass several aspects such as meanings, perceptions, images, self-awareness, and even beliefs (Chong & Low, 2009; Gaudelli & Ousley, 2009; Lim, 2011).

Through the examination of interpretation, reinterpretation, negotiation, and the integration of personal (individual) and professional (educational) interactions, several

scholarly works have investigated the notion of identity (Mahmoudi-Gahrouei et al., 2016; Schepens et al., 2009). My religious interpretations, and reinterpretations, had an impact on my Afrikaner identity, which, in turn, influenced my female teaching identity.

Scholars also argue that the development of one's identity is a multifaceted process that incorporates several elements such as past, present, and future encounters, historical and cultural influences, as well as individual and psychological attributes (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2010; Dang, 2013; Van der Westhuizen & Woest, 2020). The Afrikaner socio-cultural expectations regarding religion and family planning influenced my identity as a female Afrikaner as well as my identity as a female teacher. When I teach, I incorporate examples from my own life to make the lessons meaningful, and often to try and connect with the learners. Even though I do not focus on the negative experiences in my lessons, I do mention how I was bullied at school for being different, as well as how I want to pursue a career and studies first before starting a family. My past experiences have led me to try and inspire my learners to believe in themselves, even though I did not believe in myself. I also try and encourage them to study and work for a better future, one where they do not have to rely on anyone to look after them, and to be independent. I believe that this stemmed from my past experiences in which I wanted to be independent from my mother and stepdad, to build my future, and to be successful on my own.

6.4 SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTION: GENERATION OF NEW KNOWLEDGE FROM MY FINDINGS

This section reflects on my autoethnographic methodology and presents the generation of new knowledge gained from this research study as a scholarly contribution.

6.4.1 Generation of new knowledge on autoethnography as research design

Autoethnography is a research methodology that integrates elements of autobiography and ethnography to explore and evaluate personal experiences within a wider cultural and social framework (Ellis et al., 2011). This methodology enables researchers to engage in a critical examination of their personal lived experiences and gain insight into how these experiences are influenced by broader societal dynamics.

For this research study, I reflected on my upbringing as a female Afrikaner, and how the experienced socio-cultural expectations constructed my female Afrikaner teaching identity.

As a qualitative research method, autoethnography provides a unique perspective on lived events and personal narratives. Autoethnography allows researchers to dive deeply into personal experiences, providing rich, contextually integrated data that can lead to significant conclusions (Ellis et al., 2011). I wanted to include music as a part of my conceptual framework integrated with autoethnography. By providing meaningful and chronological reference points, music is a commercial product that inspires and amuses a substantial portion of society (Allan, 2006). The importance of music in my personal life and the personal viewpoint that autoethnography provides made it possible to marry both ideas into my research study. Natural science methods are insufficient to study human behaviour (Luitel & Dahal, 2021). Autoethnography grants the author the authority to describe oneself and others in various ways (Dahal & Luitel, 2022). My mixtape concept not only facilitated me to stay on track and refer to chronological reference points according to the song I listened to, but it also provided the reader with a deeper understanding of my viewpoint.

Despite its underrepresentation in most disciplines, music as an arts-based approach has the potential to improve research approaches and broaden our knowledge of the intricacies that underpin human experiences. As researchers continue to investigate and incorporate music into their arts-based investigations, there is an increasing need for more discovery, cooperation, and debate to fully realise music's potential as a creative and expressive medium in research.

Ethical issues are critical in autoethnographic research, particularly when writing about others (Reed-Danahay, 2009). Researchers must tread carefully when it comes to permission, anonymity, and privacy. My story relied on my perspective, but that does not mean that it was the only perspective. I had to be vigilant in recognising and correcting my biases because this story deeply explored my past familial trauma. Autoethnography also encourages researchers to critically analyse their subjectivity and positionality through self-reflection and authenticity (Reed-Danahay, 2009). This reflexivity has the potential to lead to more complex and self-aware research. Contrastingly, the emphasis on subjectivity in autoethnography might also raise

questions regarding bias and validity (Ellis et al., 2011). I had to be vigilant in recognising and correcting my biases. Throughout the writing process of Chapter 4, my autoethnographic story, I had to think of the perspectives of the other people involved in my story.

I wanted to include photographs as part of my story, as I felt that it could assist the reader in painting a picture of who I am. Obtaining informed consent from those featured in the photographs is one of the most important ethical considerations when utilising photographs in autoethnography. This is critical to ensuring that participants understand how their photographs will be used and are given the option to assent or decline consent (Andrew, 2020). Even if consent is obtained, it is essential to protect the identities and personal information of participants, especially when dealing with sensitive or stigmatised issues (Ellis et al., 2011). It was easy to obtain the necessary consent from my friends and colleagues as they were all aware of my PhD journey and my topic of exploration and wanted to support me in this journey. It was especially important for me to obtain consent from my friend Hanneke, as the photograph included the face of her daughter (see Figure 4.9). She gladly gave consent and told me that her daughter (who is my goddaughter) has grown so much that she barely looks like the baby in the photograph anymore.

The use of images in an autoethnographic research project involves careful consideration of ethical issues. In compliance with ethical norms, informed agreement from those included in pictures is required to ensure they are aware of the intended use of their images (Andrew, 2020). Furthermore, researchers must be diligent in protecting the privacy and identity of participants shown in pictures, especially when the images pertain to sensitive or intimate situations (Ellis et al., 2011). Another ethical necessity is cultural sensitivity since pictures can contain cultural meanings and implications that demand attention and respect, particularly in cross-cultural situations (Dahal & Luitel, 2022). Reflexivity is also important since it guides researchers to recognise their subjectivity and potential biases in selecting and interpreting visual data. These ethical issues emphasise the significance of maintaining participants' dignity, autonomy, and rights when including images in autoethnographic research.

The decision on whether to use the photographs of my family, specifically my mother and stepdad, was difficult. Presently, I do not have any communication with my mother and stepdad, thus I could not even ask for their consent. This decision was mulled over and deliberated on many occasions throughout the last phase of my autoethnography journey. The question was first raised by my stepsister after she read my autoethnography story as a co-constructor of knowledge. She was concerned that my mother or stepdad might find my research study offensive, even though I did not mention them by name. Most people who know me, know who my mother and stepdad are. But an outsider who read my autoethnography story, not knowing me personally, might recognise them from their photograph. Thus, after this reflection and deliberation, I decided to blur their faces instead. I deliberated on whether I wanted to use the photographs at all but ultimately felt that I still wanted to include them, as it added some colour and depth to my story even though their faces were blurred.

The purposeful withholding of certain information in the context of an autoethnography is sometimes required, especially when those details do not clearly correlate with the major emphasis and objective of the study. In this decision-making process, ethical issues were critical. Ellis et al. (2011) emphasise the need to establish a balance between transparency and privacy, emphasising that autoethnography does not have to include all personal experiences. There were a few details that I decided to omit from my story, as they had the potential to come across as unbiased and potentially hurt the people involved. This analysing-while-writing process assisted in creating themes to analyse but also to question my subjectivity, to ensure that my autoethnography story is as close to the truth as possible.

Omitting facts that are irrelevant to the focus and purpose of the study aims to respect the autonomy and privacy of those mentioned, as well as ensuring that the research stays ethical and respectful. This kind of selective disclosure contributed to my research study's integrity while protecting the well-being and dignity of my experiences depicted in the story.

6.4.2 Neologism: Lyricovignettes and the use of music in my research study

The use of music in my research study has been an enthralling and fascinating trip, adding a new and dynamic layer to the exploration of memory work and the process of healing through trauma. The use of music as a tool for introspection and emotional expression has proven surprisingly beneficial throughout this study, leaving a lasting impression on my research process.

The substantial influence of music on memory work has been one of the most surprising discoveries. Music, with its evocative power, has the potential to transport people to certain points in time, allowing them to retrace the paths of their memories with an unprecedented level of emotional resonance (Schulkind et al., 1999). By including song lyrics and melodies in the study, I was able not only to recall events and feelings more vividly, but also to revisit and reinterpret my former experiences through a uniquely engaging and therapeutic lens. This is consistent with previous research that demonstrates a strong link between music and memory recall, emphasising music's cognitive potential (Janata, 2009).

The addition of the term lyricovignettes to the scientific lexicon has sparked my interest and creativity. This newly developed term captures the core of my data generation by combining narrative vignettes with song lyrics. It acts as a link between the complexity of storytelling and the lyrical depth of music, providing a new and expressive method of comprehending and conveying my personal stories. The development of this neologism adds a new dimension to my research, illustrating language's versatility and ability to adapt to new forms of expression.

Working with lyricovignettes has provided not just a new language instrument, but also a technique of digging into trauma analysis. The combination of narrative and music has provided remarkable insights into how I tried to manage and heal from previous experiences. The combination of narrative vignettes and song lyrics has enabled me to address and move through my painful experiences in ways that traditional narrative alone may not have done. This is consistent with the rising acknowledgement of creative and artistic expression's therapeutic value in trauma rehabilitation (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010).

Thus, including music in my research study, notably through the development of lyricovignettes, has been an exciting and successful addition. It has improved the memory work process, opened a therapeutic route for trauma exploration, and created a spirit of inventiveness and creativity in my research study. This research journey demonstrated the transforming impact of interdisciplinary approaches in academics, demonstrating how the combination of language and music may open new avenues for learning and healing.

6.4.2.1 Generalising lyricovignettes for future research potential

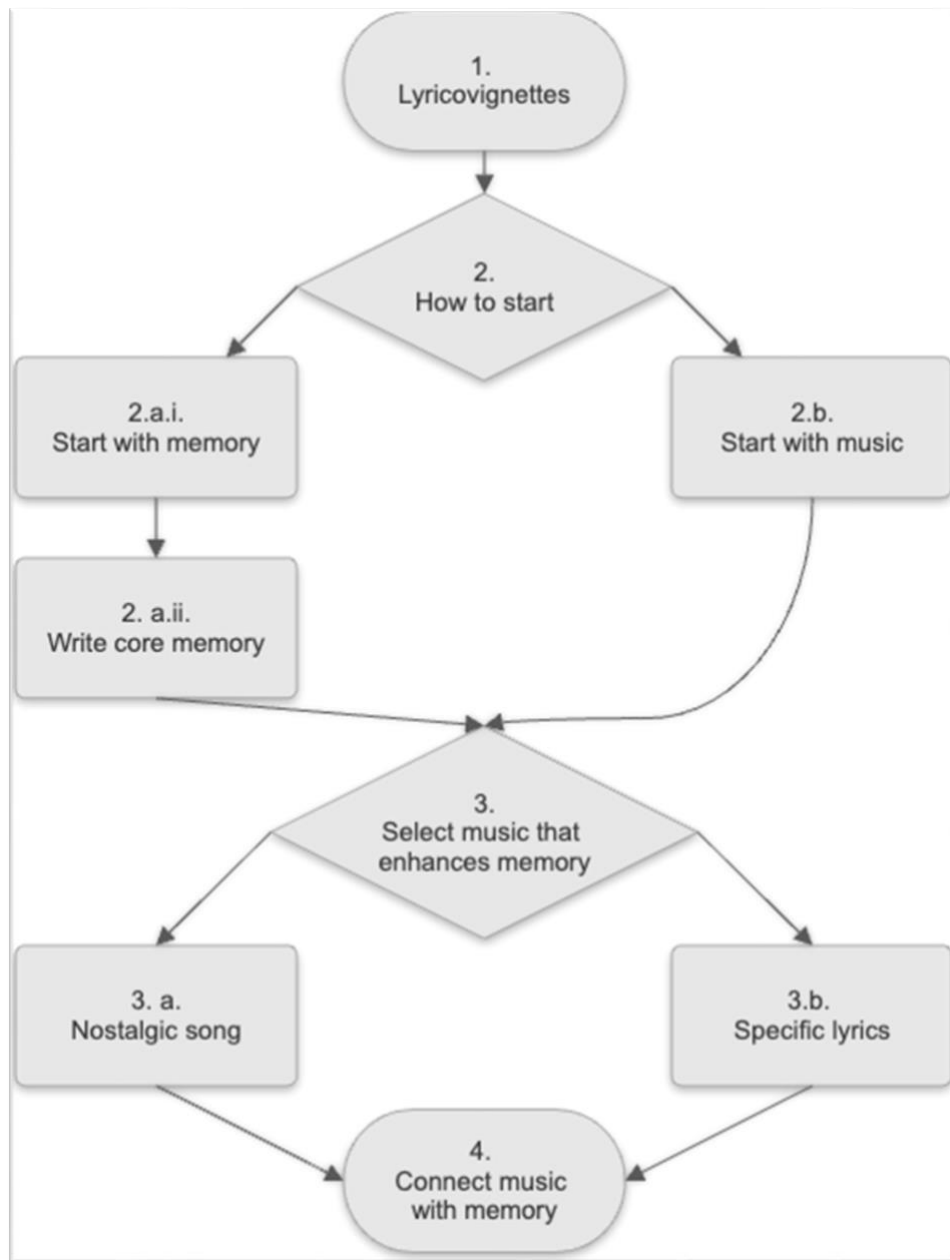
Lyricovignettes provide a diverse method of qualitative research that is appropriate for a variety of disciplines and subject areas. Their shortness, emphasis on vivid imagery, and emotional resonance make them suited to a wide range of research aims. Lyricovignettes, whether investigating societal events, cultural traditions, or individual experiences, can enhance qualitative data by giving subtle insights and compactly conveying complex emotions.

Compared to typical data-generating methodologies such as interviews, surveys, or observations, lyricovignettes provide a distinct approach that blends creativity with analytical depth. While interviews and surveys give direct feedback from participants, lyricovignettes allow researchers to explore deeper into emotional and sensory qualities that may be difficult to obtain using other approaches. When combined with typical data generation processes, they provide a supplementary perspective that allows for a more comprehensive understanding.

Lyricovignettes are unique in their capacity to elicit profound emotional reactions while also capturing complicated events succinctly. They provide a creative avenue for researchers to investigate and communicate complicated notions, hence increasing the depth and richness of qualitative data. Furthermore, lyricovignettes may be effective narrative techniques, captivating readers and enabling a deeper connection with the study findings. Their potential goes beyond academic study, including activism, storytelling, and participation, demonstrating their adaptability and influence.

Figure 6.1

The lyricovignette process flowchart



The flowchart in Figure 6.1 above provides a visual representation of the process that might be followed when implementing lyricovignettes in a research study. The process is described in more detail below Table 6.1. The descriptions are correspondence with the numbering in the flowchart.

Table 6.2

Lyricovignette writing process

1. Lyricovignettes writing process	
<p>2. <i>How to start</i></p> <p>The researcher selects lyricovignettes as data generation strategy. There are two starting points:</p>	
<p>2.a.i. <i>Start with memory</i></p>	<p>2.b. <i>Start with music</i></p>
<p>2.a.ii. Write core memory</p> <p>Decide which memory requires reflection (a specific day/event/experience, etc.)</p>	
<p>3. <i>Select music that enhances chosen memory</i></p> <p>There are two different types of musical influence that will enhance the chosen memory. A combination of the two may also be applied.</p>	
<p>3.a. Nostalgic song</p> <p>The song itself elucidates a deeper reflection on the chosen memory or event. The lyrics may not necessarily be meaningful to the memory, but rather the song's nostalgic connection.</p>	<p>3.b. Specific lyrics</p> <p>Specific lyrics from a song evoke a certain emotion that illuminates a richer addition to the chosen memory. The song as a whole might not be relevant to the memory, but rather only a portion of the lyrics.</p>
<p>4. Connect the music with the memory</p>	

The lyricovignette journey can be inspired by two different pathways: either starting with the memory or starting with the music. From my experience of creating lyricovignettes for the first time, these pathways can be illustrated by the following examples from my narrative:

- I reflect in Lyricovignette 4 about my stepdad and his treatment during a turbulent time. I connected this memory to the song *Mean* by Swift (2010), connecting my stepdad's conversations to the lyrics which describe, "You, with your words like knives and swords and weapons that you use against me." In this Lyricovignette, I chose the memory first, and the memory then inspired the search for the song that enriched it (step 2.a.i. in the flowchart). This step usually correlates with step 3.b. as well, as it contains certain lyrics that remind you about a memory instead of a nostalgic song.
- In Lyricovignette 5, I reminisce about the time after I left my mother's house, linking the memory to the song *Elastic Heart* written by Furler (2014). In this instance, the nostalgic song was selected first, as it evoked and enhanced the memories of that period in my life. Every time I hear the song, I am reminded of that time, even though the song was only released a couple of years after the events happened (step 2.b. in the flowchart). This step is also typically associated with step 3.a. because it is the nostalgia of a specific song itself that reminds you about a certain memory.
- In some instances, it may be that the Lyricovignette is inspired by the memory and song in equal measure, as they are from the same time. In Lyricovignette 1, I recall listening to the song *Family Portrait* by Moore (2007) while driving in my father's car after the divorce. The song's nostalgia, as well as the lyrics, are directly linked to the memory, as it happened at the same time. Thus, sometimes the memory and chosen song/lyrics are equally important as one did not inspire the other, but rather they happened concurrently.

Despite its potential benefits, using lyricovignettes in research might be challenging. Researchers may have difficulty finding relevant vignettes, integrating them seamlessly into the study narrative, and preserving methodological rigour. When

employing personal or sourced lyricovignettes, it is important to address ethical factors such as privacy and cultural sensitivity.

However, lyricovignettes can be particularly important in studies regarding identity construction. They offer a creative space to express and explore personal identities, experiences, and views. Lyricovignettes may help academics understand the diverse nature of identity construction, including cultural, societal, and personal components. This method provides for a more nuanced view of identity processes, providing light on the complexity and nuances involved in developing one's sense of self.

This section attempted to offer a complete overview of lyricovignettes' function and relevance in research, highlighting their diversity, difficulties, and distinct contributions across numerous disciplines and subject areas. It included a process flowchart to assist future researchers who may want to implement lyricovignettes in their research study.

6.5 PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL REFLECTION ON MY STUDY

Engaging in this research study has proven to be a vital educational experience. I have acquired a certain level of comprehension of the essence of research and the iterative, occasionally disorganised, character of the research process. In this section, I elaborate on my personal and professional reflections on my study.

6.5.1 Personal reflection

The idea of conducting an autoethnography for my PhD was born on a sunny Saturday morning in 2019. I was sitting under a tree at the University of Pretoria's campus café, discussing the submission of my master's dissertation and the completed journey with my supervisor. After the stress and hustle of finishing my dissertation, it was lovely to enjoy a cold drink with her and talk about things that were not study-related. We were informally discussing our families when I started to share my upbringing and the challenges and trauma that came with it. She tilted her head to the side and told me that I should consider doing an autoethnography for my PhD. I had not heard about this methodology before, so upon returning home that evening, I started to read up about it. My supervisor sent me a few articles, and I remember telling her that I did not think anyone would be interested in my story as I am not that interesting a person, so

why should I write it if nobody would want to know about it? She told me to read more and explore the idea a bit.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, I took a pre-doc year to decide on what I would want to explore for my PhD research study. I wanted to present a paper at a university conference about loss, living, and hope during the pandemic, and when I sent my presentation speech to my supervisor for feedback, one of her comments was, “You have a way with words when telling your story.” That one comment convinced me that I should attempt to conduct an autoethnographic research study. Sure, I believed that no one would truly be interested in my story, but that is not the argument for an autoethnographic study. The purpose was to use my story but to compare it to literature and my broader culture.

On both a personal and scholarly level, the process of undertaking this autoethnographic research has been remarkable and transforming. It has enabled me to negotiate the complex landscape of my own identity, navigate the emotional toll of the research process, and manage the difficult demands of maintaining a full-time job and academic endeavours.

Engaging in autoethnography has seemed like a journey of self-discovery. As I delved deeper into my own experiences and narratives, I discovered aspects of my identity that had previously gone unnoticed and unexplored. Autoethnography enables the exploration of emotions and emotional experiences, which are frequently present in personal narratives (Adams et al., 2015). This can lead to a greater knowledge of the self. I have always known that I am a people-pleaser and that I am highly aware of the emotions and responses of those around me. Through my autoethnography journey and exploration of my trauma, I identified the reason for my response to others. Exhibiting excessive tolerance towards the demands of others, particularly when it consistently compromises our well-being, can also be seen as a response to trauma. As previously mentioned, the inclination to satisfy others is referred to as the “fawn reaction” (Ciletti, 2023, p. 5). This response often emerges as a coping mechanism throughout childhood, employed to appease abusive or neglectful carers. Coming across this piece of information made it clear to me why I am who I am and will assist me in my future identity construction. This process of introspection and self-reflection resulted in a palpable improvement in my knowledge of who I am as a person and as

a researcher. The memories I recalled and the emotions I felt have created new harmonies in my identity, broadening my self-perception.

This journey, however, was not without its difficulties, and the emotional toll of autoethnography was one that I faced with great intensity. Employing autoethnography as my research study included a heavy burden on my emotional well-being. Delving into my personal experiences and emotions was emotionally draining (Adams et al., 2015). It necessitated emotional fortitude and self-care measures. The starting point of sitting down to write my autoethnographic story was delayed a few times, as I was anxious to start the process. I was reluctant as I had been keeping the thoughts and memories buried away deep in my mind and did not want to visit those negative emotions and relive some memories. Luckily, once I started, with the assistance of music and certain songs to refresh my memory, it became easier to revisit the past. In some instances, I felt relieved to be able to write my stories, and I experienced many epiphanies and memories long forgotten.

My co-constructors of knowledge shared my emotional burden. My husband also delayed reading my autoethnography as he has been part of my life for the past 15 years and experienced most of the trauma either alongside me or with me. My two best friends were not aware of the details of my past, thus sharing my autoethnography with them was my way in which I could help them to understand why I constructed my identity in the way I did. One friend recently sent me a message stating that she even listens to certain songs differently now after reading my story; she listens to the lyrics from my perspective and imagines how I would have interpreted them. Exploring my own experiences and feelings via the perspective of autoethnography was extremely taxing at times. Confronting prior traumas, reliving profoundly personal experiences, and grappling with the intricacies of my sentiments was therapeutic as well as emotionally exhausting. This study process's frequent emotional intensity left me vulnerable and exposed, emphasising the significance of self-care and emotional resilience.

It was important to tie my autoethnography to certain facts and cultural and social groups. Autoethnographic studies are frequently context-specific and may have limited generalisability to larger groups (Chang, 2008). This has the potential to restrict the external validity of findings. By using the Afrikaner culture as the cultural influence on

my identity, I could help to generalise the findings to other Afrikaner women who might feel the same as I do. When I mentioned my research study to friends and colleagues, I could easily determine whether the listener could connect with my study, either from the point of view of being an Afrikaner, an Afrikaner woman, or a female teacher. Often it was older, childless Afrikaner women who resonated with my study, rather than female teachers in general. I knew I was trying to connect with a very small group of people, namely Afrikaner female teachers who wanted to excel in their careers and not necessarily conform to the socio-cultural expectations of family planning, but I knew I was not the only person on this earth who felt that way.

Furthermore, the blurred boundaries between personal and study life in autoethnography presented their own set of obstacles as the emotional weight of the research frequently accompanied me in my daily life. It was this emotional engagement that allowed for a profound connection with the memories I was unearthing. Balancing full-time employment responsibilities with the demanding needs of academic research offered its own set of challenges. As I attempted to accomplish my job obligations while devoting the necessary time and attention to my studies, time management became a difficult balancing act. The strain of fulfilling job expectations while immersed in the realm of autoethnography was constant, necessitating rigorous preparation, discipline, and adaptation.

Autoethnography was an accommodating qualitative research method for investigating my personal narrative and lived experiences. Its depth, honesty, and capacity to highlight various viewpoints were its virtues. It did, however, provide issues in terms of subjectivity, ethics, generalisability, and emotional demands.

6.5.2 Professional reflection

Completing this autoethnographic research represents an important step in my academic and professional development. It not only represents the completion of my PhD ambition but also has the potential to open doors to new and interesting professional options. Furthermore, this research study has substantially improved my research skills and sparked a desire to share my findings through publishing and presentation at academic conferences.

The completion of this autoethnographic study is the result of years of dedicated effort, rigorous scholarship, and steadfast determination. A PhD has long been a treasured aim, but it required intellectual rigour, patience, and resilience. This accomplishment gives me a tremendous sense of satisfaction and reinforces the need for continual learning and improvement in the quest for academic merit.

This autoethnographic study has the potential to open doors to new and diversified work prospects both inside and outside academia. The abilities developed throughout this research journey, such as qualitative data analysis, critical thinking, and the capacity to negotiate complicated narratives are highly transferrable and sought after in a variety of professional fields. The PhD qualification itself, along with the scope of knowledge obtained via autoethnography qualifies me for professions that involve study, analysis, and a deep understanding of human experiences.

Autoethnography has been a transforming experience for my research talents. It has broadened my methodological toolbox and deepened my understanding of qualitative research. The distinct combination of personal story and scholarly analysis inherent in autoethnography has enhanced my research practice and sparked a desire to share these discoveries with the larger academic community.

As I think about this journey of my research study, I am inspired by the idea of adding to the academic discourse through publishing in peer-reviewed publications and presenting at conferences. The willingness to convey the information obtained from this research demonstrates a dedication to scholarly engagement and a vision of continuing development as a researcher, an academic, and a professional.

This autoethnographic study not only fulfilled an important academic purpose but may also open the door to new career options. It has improved my research skills and inspired me to share my findings with the larger academic community. As I progress, I have a feeling of success, excitement, and a genuine dedication to the pursuit of knowledge and its meaningful application in both academic and professional settings.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON MY STUDY

Based on the findings of this research study, the following recommendations may be considered.

6.6.1 Recommendations for practice

The use of music as a memory aid in this autoethnographic study provides a practical recommendation with possible implications beyond research. While there has been research on music and memory (Hanna-Pladdy & Mackay, 2011), its use as a tool for improving memory work within autoethnography is an innovative contribution. This study provides a practical strategy for qualitative researchers and practitioners by proving the possible usefulness of music in boosting memory recall during the research process.

The conceptualisation and introduction of the word lyricovignettes represented a methodological recommendation that effectively established a connection between the disciplines of literature, music, and psychology. This newly coined term enhances the scholarly conversation by adding to the conceptual framework for comprehending the combined power of narrative vignettes and song lyrics as a unique form of creative expression and introspection. The term lyricovignettes represents the artistic fusion of two separate forms of media, providing a novel viewpoint on the intersection of narrative and music about the processes of memory, trauma exploration, and emotional interpretation. This novel concept promotes the exploration and discussion of the relationship between language and music within the fields of memory studies and narrative recall. This new term is recommended for practice as it has the potential to enhance the comprehension of the capacity for linguistic and artistic innovation in scholarly endeavours.

6.6.2 Recommendations for policy

The autoethnographic exploration of women's experiences in educational leadership roles goes beyond practice to contribute to policy issues. While gender differences in leadership roles are well-documented (Eagly & Carli, 2007), this study may possibly provide a nuanced viewpoint through personal accounts. It advocates for the need to address gender imbalance in educational leadership through legislative reforms by showcasing the challenges and accomplishments of women in leadership positions. This may, perhaps, advocate for policies that encourage gender diversity, equitable opportunities, and support systems for women pursuing leadership positions in

education, in line with larger initiatives to attain gender equality in leadership positions (World Economic Forum, 2021).

6.6.3 Possible recommendations for future research

This autoethnographic study possibly contributed considerably to the limited body of research on female Afrikaner identity, a topic that has received relatively little attention in academic debate. While there is a study on Afrikaner identity, there is a deficit in understanding the varied experiences of female Afrikaners in a changing South Africa. This study has the possibility to recommend a platform for future research by giving rich narratives and insights into the complexity of female Afrikaner identity, potentially discovering unique intersections of gender, ethnicity, and identity development (Schlemmer, 2017).

Also, while there has been some research on the integration of intersectionality and social role theory, there is still much to be explored in terms of integrating these frameworks with feminist metatheory (Crenshaw, 1991; Eagly, 1987). Such research has the potential to provide a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between social identities, social roles, and power structures, and can inform efforts to promote social justice and equality.

The focus of the study on female teacher identity may, perhaps, influence the expanding body of literature on teacher identity. Research on teacher identification is well-established (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009), however, the gendered components of teacher identity has provided a new perspective, particularly from an autoethnographic viewpoint. This work possibly recommends the path for further study on female teachers' experiences, identity negotiation, and how gender intersects with their professional duties in educational settings.

While this study focused specifically on female Afrikaner teacher identity, it is essential to extend the investigation to include male Afrikaner identity (including male Afrikaner teacher identity) and the identities of individuals from diverse cultural and gender backgrounds. The intricate tapestry of South African society, characterized by its rich cultural diversity, presents a unique opportunity to explore how these identities manifest and interact across different groups. Future research could provide valuable insights by examining the experiences and perspectives of teachers across South

Africa, as their diverse backgrounds and identities significantly influence their teaching practices and interactions within educational settings. This broader scope would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of teacher identity construction in the South African context.

Finally, this autoethnographic study recommends the possibility of broadening the boundaries of the growing field of autoethnography. Although autoethnography has grown in popularity as a qualitative research approach (Ellis et al., 2011), there is still potential for additional exploration, particularly in varied cultural and identity situations. This research study endorses the methodological and thematic variety within the discipline by using autoethnography to analyse the intersections of gender, identity, and culture, inspiring future scholars to continue pushing the boundaries of autoethnographic inquiry.

6.7 CONCLUSION

This autoethnographic path has been both complex and transformative. It has revealed the contours of my identity, tested my emotional fortitude, and necessitated a delicate balance between my full-time employment duties and academic ambitions. While the road has not been without its hurdles, the personal growth and enriched perspective that has resulted highlight the significant influence of autoethnography on both the researcher and the researched. As I conclude this research study, which has been a part of me for so long, I reflect upon the song written by Swift (2024), which describes my emotions and personal journey about finishing this research study:



*And at last, she knew what the agony had been for
The only thing that is left is the manuscript
One last souvenir from my trip to your shores
Now and then I re-read the manuscript
But the story isn't mine anymore
~ The Manuscript, recorded by Taylor Swift
(written by Swift, 2024)*

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A - MUSIC AND LYRICS (DISCOGRAPHY)

To allow a truly immersive understanding of my chosen songs that are part of my lyric vignettes, I have created a playlist with the referenced songs as used in this research study.

The playlist can be accessed at the following link:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/15m5N7XwBUkQN5OmQ4AwoD?si=81ae8da18dbc47a0>

Alternatively, scan the following image from the Spotify application to open the playlist:



The following applications/websites were used in this research study:

Spotify music streaming service: <https://open.spotify.com/>



Compact disk stock image: <https://pixabay.com/images/search/cd/>

Otter transcription service (used to transcribe voice notes/research journal notes into raw autoethnographic data): <https://otter.ai/>

Discography for songs mentioned in this study:

- Anderson, B., Ulvaeus, B. (1977). Thank you for the Music [Song recorded by ABBA]. On *The Album*. Polar Music International AB.
- Armstrong, B.J., Drint, M., Cool, T. (2004). Boulevard of broken dreams [Song recorded by Green Day]. On *American Idiot*. Reprise Records.
- Badenhorst, F., De Ridder, G.J., Kennedy, J.H.E. (2006). Ek skyn(heilig) [Song recorded by Fokopolisiekar]. On *Swanesang*. Rhythm Records & Punkskelm Records.
- Badenhorst, F., De Ridder, G.J., Kennedy, J.H.E. (2017). Dit raak beter (as jy ouer raak) [Song recorded by Francois van Coke]. On *Hierdie is die lewe*. VCK Music.
- Bosch, B. (2009). Outokrasie van die hart [Song recorded by Bouwer Bosch]. On *Antimaterie*. Brettian Productions.
- Brown, C., Meola, L., Chapman, M. (2021). Daydream [Song recorded by Lily Meola]. On *Daydream*. Lilkoj Productions, LLC.
- Campbell, T. (2009). French navy [Song recorded by Camera Obscura]. On *My maudlin career*. 4AD Ltd.
- Cyrus, M., Yoel, O. (2017). Younger now [Song recorded by Miley Cyrus]. On *Younger now*. RCA Records.
- De Ridder, J., Kennedy, H., Greeff, P. (2009). Klein tambotieboom [Song recorded by Die Heuwels Fantasties]. On *Die Heuwels Fantasties*. Supra Familias.
- De Ridder, J., Kennedy, H., Greeff, P. (2009). Leja [Song recorded by Die Heuwels Fantasties]. On *Die Heuwels Fantasties*. Supra Familias.
- Du Toit, A. (1995). Boer in beton [Song recorded by André Letoit]. On *Vêr in die ou kalahari*. Shifty Records.
- Furler, S. (2014). Elastic heart [Song recorded by Sia]. On *1000 Forms of fear*. RCA Records.
- Kotecha, S. (2015). Army [Song recorded by Ellie Goulding]. On *Delirium*. Polydor Ltd. (UK).
- Leto, J. (2013). City of angels [Song recorded by Thirty Seconds To Mars]. On *Love lust faith + dreams*. Virgin Records.
- McCartney, P., Lennon, J. (1966). Paperback writer [Song recorded by The Beatles]. On *Paperback writer* (Single). EMI London.
- Michaels, J., Tranter, J. (2020). Lose you to love me [Song recorded by Selena Gomez]. On *Rare*. Interscope Records.

- Moore, A. (2001). Family portrait [Song recorded by P!nk]. On *M!ssundaztood*. RCA Records.
- Neethling, L., Korff, J., Van der Westhuizen, T., Korff, J. (2016). Erens in Afrikaans [Song recorded by Die Melkert Kommissie]. On *Wonderwoorde*. Records DK.
- Pretorius, M. (2005). Skree [Song recorded by Klopjag]. On *Album Drie*. Records DK.
- Rebscher, N. (2019). No roots [Song recorded by Alice Merton]. On *Mint*. Paper Plane Records Int.
- Sweet, J.A., Swift, T. (2022). Lavender haze [Song recorded by Taylor Swift]. On *Midnights*. Universal Music Operations Ltd.
- Swift, T. (2008). Love Story (Taylor's version) [Song recorded by Taylor Swift]. On *Fearless*. Universal Music Operations Ltd.
- Swift, T. (2010). Mean [Song recorded by Taylor Swift]. On *Speak now*. Apollo A-1 LLC.
- Swift, T. (2022). You're on your own, kid [Song recorded by Taylor Swift]. On *Midnights*. Universal Music Operations Ltd.
- Swift, T. (2024). The manuscript [Song recorded by Taylor Swift]. On *THE TORTURED POETS DEPARTMENT*. Universal Music Operations Ltd.
- Tedder, R. (2008). Come home [Song recorded by OneRepublic]. On *Dreaming out loud*. Mosley Music/Interscope Records.
- Tedder, R. (2013). Counting stars [Song recorded by OneRepublic]. On *Native*. Mosley Music/Interscope Records.
- Tedder, R. (2013). Feel again [Song recorded by OneRepublic]. On *Native*. Mosley Music/Interscope Records.
- Welch, F., Antonoff, J. (2022). King [Song recorded by Florence + The Machine]. On *Dance fever*. Universal Music Operations Ltd.
- Williams, H., York, T. (2013). Ain't it fun [Song recorded by Paramore]. On *Paramore*. Atlantic Recording Corporation.

ANNEXURE B – LETTERS OF VERISIMILITUDE

Letter of Verisimilitude from my husband, Julian van der Westhuizen

35 Soetdoring Avenue
Lynnwood Manor
Pretoria
0041
9 August 2023

LETTER OF VERISIMILITUDE

I hereby acknowledge that I have read the autoethnography of Mickè van der Westhuizen and that I am satisfied that it fulfils the requirements of verisimilitude.

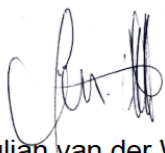
I have known Mickè for most of my adult life – It is rather self-explanatory that some of those difficult experiences detailed in her AE coincides with some of my most difficult experiences.

Her non-confrontational stance is how I have come to know her, however the line in the sand that she draws in Chapter 4 Track 3 is quite telling. With hindsight, this is the point in time that she decided to pursue independence.

Her accurate reflections details a past that shapes the person she has become - She is a fiercely independent individual and remains remarkably ambitious in nature, and it is now that I see that it is rooted in her past experiences.

Her need to achieve distinctions in her undergraduate studies, complete Masters, pursue her PHD makes more sense in the context of her past.

Lastly, revisiting trauma from the past is never a great experience, I have put off reading this document despite the good story that it has become. It is for this very reason that I am proud of Mickè for reflecting on her past. I hope that her findings will live with her for a long time to come.



Julian van der Westhuizen

Letter of Verisimilitude from my sister, Carmen Struwig

15 Mathers Court
Timberlea
Nova Scotia
Canada
B3T 1A4

22 April 2024

LETTER OF VERISIMILITUDE

I hereby acknowledge that I have read the autoethnography of my sister, Mické van der Westhuizen, and that I am satisfied that it fulfills the requirements of verisimilitude. I was asked to provide my experience of the events in Mické's autoethnography to provide additional contextual information, which is outlined in this letter.

Mické and I spent our whole childhood living in the same home environment and even though she is 3 years older than I am, we had a good rapport growing up. I can attest to the fact that we had a challenging childhood and that our teenage years had many incidents which had a significant impact on the formation of our identities as adults. These incidents were mostly linked to the absence of our biological father and the heavily disciplined, controlling home environment created by my mother and stepfather, as outlined in Mické's recounting of events.

From my perspective, however, there were a few details outlined in Mické's autoethnography that I experienced differently. It should be noted that Mické and I have distinctly different personalities, and as such, will have experienced certain events differently. That is why I will only be pointing out differences based on facts that Mické might not have been aware of, since she was not involved in the discussions where these facts were exposed to me.

Firstly, in the text Mické explained that the reason we had to move frequently was due to my stepfather's job requiring it. I was present in many discussions my stepfather had with my mother about this, and it was revealed to me that the reason we had to keep moving was because he could not keep his job – he was continuously either fired from his job or he quit due to, what he called, working with “a bunch of idiots” who “didn't want to listen” to him. We had to move to different cities because he would get a bad reputation after treating his employers poorly and wouldn't be able to get a job in the same area again. However, I think this just confirms our stepfather's controlling and narcissistic behavior as outlined by the events Mické described, but I thought it could provide some additional context to his character.

Additionally, I wanted to provide additional context to the character of my mother. From the description of events outlined by Mické it made my mother appear like she was being controlled and that many of the events that occurred were outside of her control. From my experience and the things I witnessed and heard, this was not the case. This could be seen from as early as just after the divorce between my father and mother. While it is true that we were struggling financially and that there were nights where we had only bread to eat, or our mother would take us to the grocery store to “taste samples” – which would serve as dinner – this wasn't solely because there was no money. My mother always had her weekly manicure and pedicure done, no matter how “little” money we had, and she always had money for her monthly facial treatments and shopped at the

most expensive stores for her clothes. When she married my stepfather, she eloped with him because she knew if she did that, they could afford to take an expensive, long vacation – to which we weren't invited. She confirmed this to me when, as a child, I asked her why we couldn't come to the wedding (I was very excited to be her bridesmaid), her words were that they “couldn't afford” to take us with them. It was too expensive and not a place for kids.

She also had this idea that she wanted to be “friends” with us, so she didn't want to be the bad guy from a disciplinary point of view. She would always divert us to ask our stepfather when we wanted to do something, even if she didn't want us doing it. I had overhead many conversations, where my stepfather would actually not mind if we did something, but she would insist that he say no to us.

While it is true that my stepfather developed some strict rules in the house surrounding our religious beliefs, which did lead to many conflicts, most other conflicts arose due to my mother's influence. Even the conflict between my mother and her brothers was due to my mother feeling like they were judging my stepfather, she was the one who cut off contact with them, that was not my stepfather's doing. This was confirmed to me by various family members as well as my mother herself in later years.

I felt it was important to add context to the character and influence of my mother on our lives, since her manipulation and chronic lying is something that affected me and my siblings in different ways. While I can guess that is probably why Mické surrounded herself with trustworthy mother figures, because that is what she was lacking in childhood, it is also why I struggle trusting the mother figures in my life. It should also be noted that my mother has struggled with undiagnosed mental illness relating to her insatiable need to be loved, needed, and cared for. I have been involved in conversations with doctors who wanted to refer her for mental evaluations and care, however she has always denied this treatment.

I can only speak to the accuracy of the events described in Mické's childhood (up until she moved out of my stepfather's house), since that is the only portion of her life that I was actively involved in, but I have to say that I admire her perseverance and resiliency. She can be very proud of what she had achieved and the life she has built for herself. I am sure her story can serve as an inspiration for others.



Carmen Struwig

Letter of Verisimilitude from my stepmother, Annemarie van Heerden

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6 December 2023

LETTER OF VERISIMILITUDE

I am writing this letter of verisimilitude on behalf of my stepdaughter, Micke van Heerden, in response to her autoethnography. I am Annemarie van Heerden, and I have had the privilege of knowing and sharing my life with Micke for the past 12 years. I am writing to acknowledge that I have read her autoethnography and can attest to its authenticity and the truth of her experiences.

Micke is a remarkable young woman who I hold close to my heart. She is not just my stepdaughter, but in every sense, she is my daughter. Over the years, I have witnessed her growth and development into a respectable, well-studied, and intelligent individual. Her academic achievements and dedication to her studies have been truly commendable.

I have seen her face challenges, overcome obstacles, and evolve into the person she is today. Her dedication and hard work, particularly in her tertiary studies, have been nothing short of inspirational. Micke has always demonstrated a strong character and a beautiful personality that endears her to those around her.

I am extremely proud of the effort she has put into her studies and personal growth, and I have no doubt that her determination and resilience will lead her to great success in both her life and career. Micke is a young woman of immense potential, and I am excited to see what the future holds for her.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly vouch for the authenticity of Micke's autoethnography and her character.

She is an exceptional individual, and I am privileged to have her as part of my family. I have confidence in her future and her ability to make a positive impact on the world.

Sincerely,



Annemarie van Heerden

Letter of Verisimilitude from my stepsister, Chris-Marie du Preez

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31 October 2023

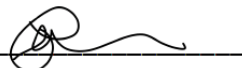
LETTER OF VERISIMILITUDE

I hereby acknowledge that I have read the autoethnography of my stepsister, Micke van der Westhuizen and that I am satisfied that it fulfils the requirements of the verisimilitude.

I have known Micke for 12 years and have come to see her as my own blood sister. Although I know about some of her childhood experiences, it was hard to read the finer details and experience it from her childhood perspective. I am overjoyed that her life has evolved into a beautiful story, yet I wish she did not have to endure certain hardships. I do know that this has played a pivotal role in shaping her into the remarkable person she is and that without the hard parts in life, we cannot value the softer and happier parts.

I can clearly see the growth in her as a person and I am extremely proud of her achievements and the hard work that she dedicated to her tertiary education. I firmly believe that she will be incredibly successful in any career path that she chooses because her foundation and knowledge gained through study and practical application have equipped her for this journey. She is the perfect combination of wit, intelligence, and beauty.

Her autoethnography is inspiring, motivating, and informative.



Chris-Mari du Preez

Letter of Verisimilitude from my friend, Elaine Wannenburg

446 Rossouw street

Die Wilgers

Pretoria

0184

10 July 2023

LETTER OF VERSIMILITUDE

I, Elaine Wannenburg, hereby acknowledge that I've read the autoethnography of Mické van der Westhuizen (Mixtape Side A: Afrikaner Identity – my past and Mixtape and Side B: Female Teacher Identity – my present) and that it fulfills the requirements of verisimilitude.

I've been privileged enough to know Mické for almost 10 years, I met her through my husband; he is also from Ermelo and has known Mické from high school. I know Mické very well, we really have a tightly knitted friendship, basically family and yet, reading through her point of view about her upbringing, childhood, hardships and successes brought tears to my eyes on more than one occasion. Although I knew about all the major events that happened in her life, it is different reading about it, it is written so well that I could imagine myself in her position, I felt the emotions as she described them, my heart ached while reading about the difficult times and I smiled during re-living the good times as I read about them. I am grateful for the opportunity to witness it first hand as well.

I've been a grade 3 teacher for 9 years and Mické has always inspired me to be better. Whether it was a word of encouragement or just by being a person who led by example; I've seen the impact that she has on people that she works with and the students that were privileged enough to have crossed paths with her at the schools where she worked. She is a person that does everything in excess, she is dedicated and puts everything into all that she does. The determination that I've seen throughout the years, from completing degree after degree and working hard outside of school hours and giving 120% to the schools and institutions where she works/ed is amazing.

Some people might read through someone's hardships and feel pity, perhaps. I felt the opposite while reading through Mické's autoethnography, I felt angry at first; reading about her mother, stepdad and the bullying that she went through but throughout the whole chapter I could imagine Mické singing those lyrics, meaning every word and thinking about a song that suits the way she excelled in everything that she did. Katy Perry's famous song 'Firework'; "You don't have to feel like a waste of space. You're original, cannot be replaced. If you only knew what the future holds After a hurricane comes a rainbow. Maybe a reason why all the doors are closed. So you could open one that leads you to the perfect road. Like a lightning bolt, your heart will glow. And when it's time, you'll know". I know that it was very difficult for Mické to relive the past, but I trust that she now sees, what is very clear; that her determination and hard work has paid off. There is more success and amazing moments still coming her way. I know that she will continue to make a big contribution to society; whether it

is through learners, mentoring students, being a teacher, working in a more managerial position, or just by being herself.

Wannenburg

Mrs. Elaine Wannenburg

Letter of Verisimilitude from my friend, Hanneke du Preez

1 Sultas Street
Hereford #135
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0157

31 July 2023

LETTER OF VERISMILTUDE

I hereby acknowledge that I have read the autoethnography of my best friend, Mické van der Westhuizen, and that I am satisfied that it fulfils the requirements of verisimilitude.

I had the incredible privilege of gaining the friendship of Mické, when I married my husband in 2019. Even though we had not really met up until then, I like to think that she and I would have found each other in one way or another. She is one of those rare people that will remain in my life forever.

By reading her autoethnography I have gained a deeper understanding and respect for the formidable person that she has become despite her turbulent upbringing. I've always been confident in her ceaseless dedication to teaching, and I think this study confirms that her skills as an educator are as innate as the music we enjoy daily.

I truly believe that Mické is destined for greatness, in which ever Afrikaner role she strives to achieve.



Hanneke du Preez