

Learner agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses

By

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Magister Educationis

(Humanities Education)

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

South Africa

Supervisor

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November 2019



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
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Faculty of Education

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CLEARANCE NUMBER: **HU 18/02/03**

DEGREE AND PROJECT

MEd

Learner agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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Declaration

I declare that the dissertation which I hereby submit for the degree of Master of Education in Humanities Education 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.

Signature of student

Signature of Supervisor

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother, Ntombifuthi. For her spirit will live forever in me. I know she would have been a proud mother. May her soul be at peace knowing that her son is not doing too bad in this thing called life. This one is for you mama.

To my son, Lethokuhle, may you grow older and as you always say ‘ufane nami’ and even be better than me.

To my mother and grandmother, Nomusa and kaMthembu, thank you for your endless and unconditional support. I would never be where I am today if it were not for you. For that I will forever be grateful.

Mama Ndimande, thank you for your efforts in helping me when I was desperate to get a school I needed for my data. May God bless you.

To my managers, Mr Sibeko and Mr Mogogovhali, thank you for your understanding when I had to leave work early because I had to attend to my school matters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Professor Saloshna Vandeyar for her continuous support during this process, for her patience, motivation and immense knowledge. Thank you so much for believing in me even when I doubted my ability to finish this study. This thesis exists because of you. I fought so many demons during this process and any other person would have given up on me but you did not and for that I am grateful.

ABSTRACT

Using a mixed method approach, a case study and narrative inquiry approach, this study explored how learners exercised agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses. The study investigated different discourses that existed in schools and the meanings that learners attached to these discourses in their understanding of what it meant to be *a learner* at schools. Data capture incorporated a mix of survey and semi-structured interviews and a researcher journal. Data was analysed using content analysis. A total of 90 learners participated in the survey. Fifteen learners and three teachers participated in the semi-structured interviews. This study juxtaposed two theories: theory of power and theory of performativity to explore the construction of learner identity and exercise of agency. Findings of this study were threefold: First, schools had used Foucault's mechanisms and instruments of constructing learner identity. Learners were subjected to a constant gaze at schools. Second, learners had used internal and external influences in their negotiation with school discourses. Their identities and agency was a product of these influences. Third, learners became agentic in schools and asserted their own identities. Some of these identities clashed with the identity of the 'ideal learner' of schools. Despite established subject positions in schools, learners created their own subject positions as they believed that the school was limiting and constraining their abilities. The study makes the following recommendation: Schools must be welcoming and accommodative of identities and discourses that learners bring to school.

KEY CONCEPTS

Learner identity

Learner agency

Discourse

Subject

Hierarchical observation

Normalising judgement

Symbolic violence

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I certify that I have edited the Masters of Education in Humanities Education dissertation:

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However, the correction of all errors remains the responsibility of the student.



G.C. HANNANT
BA HED

ACRONYMS

EYFSP Early Years Foundation Stage Profile

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and background context

Research in education has seen the emergence and the development of various and often contradicting theoretical and methodological paradigms. Despite contradictions, the paradigms brought forth useful analyses of the education system. The focus of this analysis extended to the holistic view of schools and the actors involved. This study focused on one actor ‘the learner’ and how he has been objectified over the years by humanist and post-structuralist paradigms.

With education becoming a prominent feature in human life all around the globe, parents take their children to school for the acquisition of specialised school knowledge. As young individuals entering school for the first time in their lives, they are struck with certain expectations that the school has of them. The expectation is that individuals must be ‘school learners’. That is to say, young individuals must possess an identity constructed in school, the ‘learner identity’. With more focus on educational research, the humanist and post-structuralist paradigms conceptualised and refined the idea of ‘learner identity’. The humanist perspective of learner identity has concentrated on the inherent attributes of the individual. Upon entering school, a learner is regarded as being in control of his environment and is self-determining and self-regulating (Charteris, 2014). A learner’s control of his environment stems from the idea that he is naturally capable and competent. He is independent from his external discourses and influences and can manage himself in school. This humanist paradigm view attaches sameness to all learners and is universal in its nature. Furthermore, whether learners thrive or fail at school is solely their fault since all learners are born inherently capable of prospering in school. In addition, learners are viewed as autonomous. They all possess inherent agency they exercise at will without any constraints. According to this view, the school and other external discourses have no influence on learner agency. However, the post-structuralism paradigm takes a different stance regarding learner identity and learner agency.

Post-structuralism contends that a learner is socially constituted. This perspective regards a learner as a product of school. The post-structuralism paradigm recognises the constitutive

force of discourses and discursive practices beyond learners' control. Moreover, it takes into account the possibilities of a dynamic learner identity that may emerge in school. This is recognition of learners' capabilities of taking up subject positions and renegotiating them rather than being docile. In fact, being constituted at school does not equate to determinism. On the contrary, learners are in constant intersecting relationships of power with fellow learners and teachers in school. The intersecting power relations imply that learners are the product of relationships and power. Further, the post-structuralist paradigm acknowledges that learners' agency is constructed in discursive discourses. Since discourses are different from school to school, the manner in which learners exercise agency varies. Thus, agency is relational and mediated by the discourse available. For this reason, learners use the available discourse to recognise the available positions to either accept or resist the positions. In addition to this view, agency is not innate and static. This view is contrary to the humanist interpretation of learner agency. Using the post-structuralist perspective, we are able to explore how different learners take up different subject positions. The humanist interpretation of learner identity and learner agency fails to acknowledge the influence of discursive discourses on learners. Alternatively, post-structuralism contends that the influence of discursive discourse is a key feature of learner identity and learner agency. Based on the above tenets of the two paradigms, post-structuralism disturbs the taken for granted conventional humanist perspective that ignores external influences on learners. It further ignores the singularity and reductionism embedded in the humanist interpretation of schools and recognises differences. It then follows that we acknowledge school as a complex institution with various social practices. This research belongs to the tradition of learner identity and learner agency in education drawing on a post-structuralist perspective.

Following the post-structuralist posture that a learner "is a socially produced 'agent' and 'deliberator'" (Butler, 2009, p. xxx), Butler extends on this position with the assertion that learner agency is a product of a language that precedes that 'I'. She argues that this 'I' is produced through a system of power. To then assume a prior individual inherently possessing agency would be to obscure and neglect the need to interrogate the construction of learner identity and learner agency (Stern, 2000). The suggestion that there is a prior subject that exists before the individual is constructed into learner identity denotes that identity is discursively constructed within the society in which we live. If one is to use Foucault's theoretical understanding of identity formation, it denotes "a move away from biological determinism to examining how identities are forged in the modern society" (Besley, 2010, p.

126). We must interrogate how an individual is made into learner identity and what are the consequences, both intended and unintended of the construction of learner identity. Accordingly, this study asks: How do learners exercise agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses?

Historically, different education systems around the world have at some point of their existence and development experienced disciplinary crises (Wexler, 1992). As a means of negotiating their way out of the crises, a reformation approach became the solution (Axelford, 2010). The reformation approach was meant to curb the reported unacceptable behaviour from learners. The United States of America (USA) decided on the restoration of the social regime (Wexler, 1992). In South Africa prior to 1994, there existed an education system that functioned on the basis of discriminating black Africans (Gaganakis, 2006), which meant that less attention was given to the construction of learner identity in black townships (Christie & Collins, 1984). During the period of apartheid, The Eiselen Commission in 1951 had recommended that education should be “a carefully planned policy of segregated socio-economic development for black people” (Christie & Collins, 1984, p. 160). This was signified by the allocation of the budget, the quality of the teachers in black township schools, the distribution of infrastructure, and teaching and learning resources. After 1994, the South African education system was reformed to redress past injustices and offer equal opportunities, specifically to black Africans who were racially discriminated against during apartheid.

As revealed by Wexler (1992), part of the restoration cultural agenda was to restore respect for authority and resuscitate the moral authority of traditional institutions. In South Africa post-1994 more focus and resources have been allocated to close the gap of the past injustices. As part of the reformationist justice (Peters, 2017), Foucault draws on Bentham’s (1843) panopticon as a means of addressing disciplinary societies. Foucault (1977) uses the panopticon as a metaphor for the way disciplinary power operates. He offers the analysis of the school in terms of the disciplinary technologies that compartmentalise, distribute, normalise, and individualise bodies in the creation of the modern subject (Peters, 2017). As a point of departure I draw on the work of Foucault to give the detailed analysis of the use of the mechanisms, namely, hierarchical observation, normalising judgement, and the examination, in the construction of learner identity in school.

I am conversant with the fact that education systems throughout the world and the schooling process have previously been subjected to vigorous research and analyses dating back to the sociology of education (Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977) and reproduction theories (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). Ubiquitous within reproduction theories analyses are the analyses of the school as a ‘black box’ (Apple, 1982). This unidimensional analysis of school by reproduction theories was critiqued by radical theories which argued that there is more to what happens at school than just the reproduction of the dominant ideology, its forms of knowledge, and skills needed for the division of labour (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). Following these epochs of criticisms of schools, education research (Wexler, 1992; Olitsky, 2006; Mick, 2011; Rahm & Gonslaves, 2012) has seen a shift to studies that covertly encompass the construction of learner identity and different voices.

Schools have a function to distribute knowledge (Young, 2009) and skills to learners necessary for the betterment of their own personal lives. Schools craft learners into adult citizens who will be productive in their communities (Jardine, 2005). Schools are tasked and entrusted by society to construct the identity of ‘a learner’ who will be a responsible citizen in society. Upon entry to the schooling process, learners as individuals lack the identity of the learner. I posit that the school as an institution has, among other things, a role of constructing a learner identity. I make a bold assumption that each school around the world in existence, with a vision, has what I call an ‘ideal learner’. As school constructs the identity of the learner it is significant to have a clear understanding of the kind of individuals the school aims to target, construct the identity of the learner. The understanding of individuals would include but not be limited to mainly their socio-economic background. The responsibility of school to construct learner identity does not downplay its significant role - the school role - of relaying knowledge (Young, 2009). I focus on the construction of a learner identity as there has been a gap in the knowledge in this regard. In the South African context, much research has concentrated on curriculum.

This research study further explores the effect of the geographical location of schools, how it influences different schools to construct learners differently depending on the space, time and the dominant discourse at that point in time. The dominant discourse plays a pivotal role in the construction of the learner as it operates as the regime of truth for the particular school and society (Foucault, 1977). Discourse being the regime of truth suggests that it also determines what is not the truth, the possible available subjects for the individual, and at the

same time constrains the individual from occupying positions. It is critical that we analyse what discourses are dominant over others and how and why a particular discourse comes to dominate others.

In discourses, learners are not without the capacity to make their own choices. Learners have agency (Willis, 1977). In the school context, as Willis (1977) has powerfully shown, some learners are capable of opting for the identity that is contrary to the construction of the school. These different identity positions that learners assume are a clear indication that identities and agency are not stable (Rogers & Scott, 2008). Individuals shift and change all the time. The fluidity of identity and agency makes it necessary to explore how learners exercise agency and what informs the manner in which they exercise agency (Mercer, 2012).

1.2 Rationale for the study

My interest to explore how learners exercise agency during the construction of their identity in school discourses stemmed from my day to day engagements with learners. As a teacher, I was equipped with first hand experiences of learners' daily experiences. I had observed with great curiosity learners' engagements with each other and their negotiations with demands the school had of them. I had listened to their emotional expressions of their feelings and experiences in schools. I used my experience both as a teacher and a postgraduate student to locate their voices within a body of literature. The literature on identity had given me confidence to explore in-depth the underlying mechanisms and instruments of constructing learner identity. As teachers, we are guilty of making unfounded assumptions about learners in the absence of their voices (Clark & Gieve, 2006). I posit that it is vital that teachers understand where learners we teach come from and the underlying influences that shape learners' experiences and attitudes, in order to prevent subjecting them to 'symbolic violence'. The subjection of learners to symbolic violence would mean not acknowledging the experiences they bring to school.

Literature within the sociological perspective of epistemology which regarded knowledge as a social construct (Gergern, 1985) made it possible to go in-depth in the exploration of the profound influences of the mechanisms and instruments used in the construction of learner identity (Foucault, 1977). Employing mechanisms and instruments for constructing learner identity brought to light the view that learners were not of their own making within the school, but were made into becoming the kinds of individuals they ended up being. Education

research (Willis, 1977; Wexler, 1992) had at great length encapsulated voices of learners in schools. However, what was not clear was the in-depth analyses of the dominant discourses in different schools and the influence they had on learner identity and learner agency. By dominant discourses, I refer to the appropriate ways of thinking and appropriate ways of doing things. The dominant discourses in schools, as will be argued, shaped identities constructed in school. However, learners were not without agency. It was critical that education research encapsulated how learners exercised agency. In exploring learner agency, I was able to divulge different kinds of experiences, feelings and meanings that learners made in school.

1.3 Research questions

The main research question for this study was:

How do learners exercise agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses?

The secondary research questions that emerged from the main research question were:

- What mechanisms and instruments do schools use to construct learner identity?
- What is the impact of internal and external influences on learner identity and learner agency?
- How do learners negotiate subject positions in school discourses?

1.4 Locating myself within the study

One way to locate a thinker is through the influences upon his/her work (Besley, 2015). Having worked as a teacher both in the city and township schools I had a first-hand experience of what it meant to be a learner in those two distinct geographically situated schools. I had witnessed the construction of learner identity in two unique schools. I noted learners taking up different identity positions. As a postgraduate student who also possessed teaching experience, I was cautious not to tell my own story but stories of learners. I let learners offer their understanding of their school life both in writing and in a semi-structured narrative. Learners spoke and I recorded, and selectively re-presented their voices. I was guided by my place as a postgraduate student and the language available to me. I selected, juxtaposed and re-contextualised learners' lived experiences into the analytical social language. However, I took cognisance that I was not error-free, that my engagement with

learners was assumption, belief, and value laden. However, I offered a narrative of learners as objectively as possible. I gathered data from learners through the use of the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. I followed quality measures in Chapter Three to ensure that what followed here was not my truth but my participants' voices.

1.5 Theoretical Frameworks

In this study I used Foucault's theory of power and Butler's theory of performativity. In this chapter, I present a brief overview of the two theories. A much more detailed account of the two theories is provided in Chapter Two.

1.5.1 Theory of power

Foucault (1977) uses Bentham's (1843) panopticon to manifest how learner identity is discursively constructed in school. Foucault's suggestion that learner identity is discursively constructed, "moves identity away from biological determinism to examining how identities are forged in the society" (Besley, 2010, p. 126). Foucault suggests that learner identity is made possible through "the use of the mechanisms and instruments of 'hierarchical observation', 'normalizing judgement', and 'the examination'" (p. 170).

According to Foucault, "linked to the architecture of the school is the 'hierarchical observation' which emphasizes on 'observation' by those that are accorded power within the disciplinary space" (Foucault, 1977, p. 170). Observations are to guarantee that learners are constantly under the gaze all the time and that they comport themselves as desired. Linked to the "hierarchical observation" is the socialisation of the individual into becoming a learner. This socialisation of the learner includes "learning manners, how to dress properly, how to talk to other learners, and what are the correct body postures" (Althusser, 1971, p. 133). Combining both the 'hierarchical observation' and 'normalizing judgement' is 'the examination'. Foucault (1977, p. 184) argues that "it is through the examination that the individual is qualified, classified and punished".

Linked to these mechanisms and instruments is power. Foucault (1977) states that power ensures that those to whom it is applied feel its effects, and therefore conform in the rituals initiated in the practice for the construction of the identity. According to Foucault, "power should not be conceived and described in negative terms but in positive terms". Power produces reality (Foucault, 1977).

1.5.2 Theory of performativity

The nature of this study can be best explored by locating it within post-structuralist theorising. Charteris asserts that post-structuralist theory is suitable for demonstrating how learners “hybridise discourses to agentially initiate their identities in unexpected ways” (2016, p. 193). Jackson (2004) argues that post-structuralist theories examine, disrupt, transgress structures and categories that normalise and regulate people. Recognising differences is critical since learners’ identities are contingent, fluid, complex and learners are comprised of multiple selves (Olsen, 2008; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011) and often contradicting identities (Rogers & Scott, 2008; Vandeyar, 2008, 2011; Woest, 2016).

Butler’s (1998) theory of performativity conceives “identity as a paradox that is inherently unstable and revealing norms requiring continuous maintenance” (cited in Hey, 2006, p. 439). This conceptualisation of identity provides grounds for agency to be conceived as contingent, non-unitary, complex and inter-discursive (Charteris, 2016). Butler (1993) argues that these norms are used to regulate people through a process of ‘interpellation’ or ‘hail’ (Althusser, 1971). Althusser (1971) defines interpellation as “an act of calling an individual which subjectifies the individual and initiates him or her into the subjected status, and therefore into a certain order of social existence”.

Butler (1998) argues that agency is the effect of power and is constituted in the discourse (Charteris, 2016). Butler (2009) asserts that learners are transformed and acted upon prior to any action that we might take, notwithstanding being radically reworking (designated/prescribed) identity. Learners in the schools subversively transform, refuse, parody, or rupture the laws of discourse, thereby reconfiguring and redefining their identities (Jackson, 2004). Learner identities that emerge from the school context are not fully expressed identities. Foucault (1970) asserts that there is no presence of power without resistance. The discourses, that are constituents of historical processes and power relations that exist in a school, make possible the self-knowledge.

1.6 Overview of research methodology

Table 1.1 *Research design summary*

PARADIGMATIC ASSUMPTIONS	
Meta-theoretical paradigm	Social constructivism
Methodological paradigm	Mixed method approach
STRATEGY OF INQUIRY	Case Study and Narrative Inquiry Approach
SELECTION OF CASES	
Purposeful sampling	Selection of 90 learners with thirty learners from each school for survey. Fifteen learners were selected for interviews, five learners from each school and three teachers, one from each school were interviewed.
DATA COLLECTION	
Data collection methods	Survey, semi-structured interviews, and researcher's reflective journal.
DATA ANALYSIS	Content analysis
QUALITY MEASURES	
Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability.	
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	
I got ethical clearance from the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and the Gauteng Department of Education. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants; privacy, confidentiality and anonymity were assured.	

In this section, I introduced the paradigmatic assumptions which underpinned this study followed by the strategy of inquiry. I presented the sampling method, data collection and data analysis, I then discussed the quality measures and the ethical consideration.

1.6.1 Meta-theoretical paradigm: Social Constructivism

As a researcher, it was significant to make explicit the philosophical worldview that I espoused. Creswell (2013) asserts that this is crucial in explaining why I chose the research approach I did for the study. Drawing on Guba's (1990) notion of worldview definition, Creswell (2013, p. 35) asserts that "worldview refers to the basic set of beliefs that guides action".

Social constructivism

This study espoused the social constructivist paradigm/worldview. Gergen (1985, p. 4) argues that social constructivism is concerned with the “inter-subjectively shared, social constructions of meaning and knowledge”. In the ‘lived world’ of the human, Creswell (2013) argues that individuals are capable of developing subjective meanings of their experiences directed towards certain objects. The social constructivist paradigm argues that reality is made possible after it has entered the communicative space (Keaton & Bodie, 2011). Emphasising the emergence of meaning concerning the ‘lived world’ of individuals, Crotty (1998), in agreement with Gergen (1985), argues that sense about the world is based on the historical and social perspectives. From Gergen’s account of meaning, it then follows that meanings are made over time, are context based, and can change. This worldview has implications in the selection of the research approach I selected for my study.

1.6.2 Methodological paradigm: Mixed method approach

The methodological paradigm from which the study was nested and which guided the study was the mixed method approach. Creswell (2013, p. 3) defines a research approach as a “plan and the procedure for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation”. At the centre and informing the selection of “a research approach, are the philosophical assumptions the researcher brings to the study; procedures of inquiry and the specific research methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation” (Creswell, 2013).

The research question that I answered in the study was suitable for the adoption of “the third major research approach or research paradigm” (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007, p. 112), the mixed method approach (Creswell, 2003). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 17) describe the mixed method research as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study”. Creswell (2013) argues that this approach involves the collection of qualitative and quantitative data that is later integrated. The combination and integration of the qualitative and quantitative data sets was done on the basis that each research method had biasness and weakness therefore mixed method neutralised the data that was initially conceived as bias (Creswell, 2013). Combining the two databases is important and useful (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) because they enhance triangulation (Webb, et al.,

1966) between databases which seeks convergence (Jick, 1979 cited in Creswell, 2013) between the two databases (Scott & Morrison, 2005).

1.6.3 Research design

The case study approach and narrative approach were used in the research study. An in-depth presentation is made on these approaches in Chapter Three. The research conducted had in some way an implicit or explicit research design that it adopted (Yin, 1984). The research design was significant as it mapped the direction the study took (Yin, 1994). Through mapping of the direction of the study, the researcher avoids the situation where the evidence collected does not address the initial research problem (Yin, 1994). Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) posit that “research design acts as a plan that guides the researcher in the process of collection, analysing, and interpreting data” (Yin, 1994).

Case study approach

Noor (2008) suggests that the choice for the case study relies on the research question that the study engages to answer. The nature of this research study made it suitable to use the case study (Yin, 1994). This is necessary as it allows for the holistic, in-depth study of the particular individual or event (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991; Yin, 1994). Yin (2003) argues that the in-depth study of the phenomenon is possible since the study is context situated and has to deal with individuals, where the manipulation of their behaviour is not possible (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Case study becomes useful when the researcher might have little control over events (Yin, 1994).

Narrative Inquiry

It has become common for the narrative inquiry to be fused into the qualitative research in education studies (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Czarniawska (2004, p. 17) defines narrative as being “a spoken and written text giving an account or series of an event(s) or action(s) that is chronologically connected”. In addition to this view, Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002, p. 332) assert that “a story in narrative research is a first-person oral telling or retelling of events that are related to the individual’s personal experience”. As the inquiry is story oriented, this learning occurs through stories told by the participants (learners and teachers). This was useful for the study as I sought to understand the lived experiences of the learners both in the school and the macro social setting.

1.6.4 Participants and site selection

Concerning the selection of the research site, Walford (2001) asserts that it is critical for the researcher not to select the research site only on the basis of convenience and ready access, but a researcher should take into account the implications of the selection to the theoretical objectives of the study. The selection of the distinct three high schools for this study was based on the view that their distinctiveness would ensure rich data and provide different accounts of how learners exercised their agency. This study was constituted by data from three schools: a township, a suburb and an inner city. The rationale for the selection of these schools was that despite the construction of learner identity which could be similar in principle, through the use of similar mechanisms and instruments, learners could be exercising agency in a distinct manner within different context of the school. The experiences of the learners in different schools might not be the same. Thus it might offer different accounts of the learners' experiences in schools.

The contextual background of schools

This research was conducted with three grade 10 classes, three teachers, in three high schools in the city of Johannesburg, in Gauteng, South Africa. For confidentiality and anonymity purposes, schools will be referred to as School of Excellence, Independent School, and Masibambane High School. All schools were public schools. They were different in that they catered to learners from different socio-economic backgrounds. Schools were also located in different parts of Johannesburg.

School of Excellence was established in the 1960s during the epoch of apartheid. It is a well-resourced school situated in the inner city of Johannesburg. The school offers a wide range of extra-mural activities including art, athletics, basketball, chess, cricket, charity club, dance, debating, drama, hockey, netball, public speaking, robotics, rugby, soccer, squash, swimming, tennis, and touch rugby. School of Excellence participates in international competitions representing South Africa. At School of Excellence, one sport does not reign supreme. The school prides itself on academic excellence, having been crowned the Top Public School in the late 2000s. The school's ability to produce quality academic results meant that it was one of the top feeder schools to one of the top universities in South Africa. The demographics of School of Excellence have changed considerably since its establishment. The school accommodates learners from diverse cultures. For the maintenance of the school, parents agreed to pay a yearly school fee of between R30 000 to R40 000.

School of Excellence had English as its first language with IsiZulu and Afrikaans being the elective subjects. When this research was conducted, the school had 974 learners from a diverse racial and cultural spectrum. There were 66 teachers from diverse race groups at the time the research study was conducted at this school.

The second school, Independent School, was established in 1993, as a private school by a private citizen of South Africa. Since then, the school has expanded its campuses all over South Africa. The school changed its status from a private to a public school. One of the campuses of Independent School is in the east of Johannesburg. It is at this campus where I conducted the research. When this research was conducted in 2018, the school had a learner population of 900, with African learners being the dominant group. There were 32 teachers at this school who were predominantly African. However, the language of instruction remained English, with IsiZulu and Afrikaans offered as additional languages. At the time of this research, there was one white teacher at the school. The campus was not as resourced as the School of Excellence. Interestingly, it had cameras in its classrooms. Perhaps cameras were used to regulate learner conduct. There were few extra-mural activities for learners. Parents had agreed to pay a yearly school fee of R1780. The school catered to learners from middle-class backgrounds. The majority of learners came from the suburbs of Johannesburg. A small portion of learners came from the townships.

The third school, Masibambane High School, is situated in a township east of Johannesburg, Gauteng. The school is less resourced in comparison to the School of Excellence and the Independent School. Masibambane High School is a no-fee school. It catered to learners from child-headed homes with some learners living in shacks. The majority of parents in the township were unemployed and had no formal education. The school had a feeding scheme which catered for the majority of learners. The school was also affiliated to different organisations that donated different items from the school uniform, learning resources to sanitary pads for girl learners. The learner population at the school was 1600, with 46 teachers. The language of instruction was English. These three schools catered to learners from different home backgrounds. African learners dominated in these three schools.

Selection of participants

Scott and Morrison (2005) assert that research investigations involve selection. Such selection is made possible through sampling which pertains to activities involved in selecting

a subset of persons or things from a larger population. Maree (2007) asserts that when conducting a qualitative study it is useful to give a description of your participants. I purposefully selected (Creswell, 2013) grade 10 learners as participants of this study, who were aged between 14 years and 16 years. The selection of the grade 10 learners was made on the basis that they were at their adolescent stages where they were more aware of themselves (identities) and their social world. They therefore offered good insights concerning the phenomenon of the study. Each class had a total of thirty learners, therefore in total I administered 90 questionnaires to grade 10 learners. Based on the responses I received from these questionnaires. I purposefully selected five learners in each class with whom I conducted semi-structured interviews. This population of learners was constituted of both genders, this was based on the view that their experiences of being a learner were not the same. Learners were from different backgrounds; the working class background and the middle class background to an extent informed the kind of beings they were becoming. In addition, I had for validation, credibility and accuracy purposes one teacher from each school (Creswell, 2013). The selection of the learners and teachers was based on their availability. I had to work with participants that had no commitments at the time this study was conducted.

1.6.5 Data collection methods

The methods of data collection which were informed by the research question and the nature of the study were the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Nested in the data collection methods are the steps used to collect data that sets the boundaries for the study (Creswell, 2013). Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that applying these two methods of data collection is useful for triangulation purposes.

Questionnaires

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) define a questionnaire as “a written set of questions which are characterized by sameness for all subjects and can endure anonymity”. I administered questionnaires to one grade 10 class per school, each grade 10 class in each school had an average of thirty learners. This was useful in the sense that I was able to extract data from a large population of subjects with regard to their experiences as learners and it assisted in the selection of the five learners who participated in semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews

Interviews as the integral part of the study in a form of data collection procedure allow the researcher to extract useful information from the participants. This study employed the semi-structured interviews. This form of interview was useful as participants were able to provide their historical information and further allowed the researcher to have control over the line of questioning (Creswell, 2013). The semi-structured interviews were fixed for all learners. I also conducted a face-to-face semi-structured interview with one teacher from each school. The use of different data sources was significant for triangulation purposes. Triangulation in this study helped with the validity of the data collected from the different participants. The interviews conducted with the participants were captured using simultaneously hand written notes and audio recording, which helped capture all words uttered by the interviewee (Creswell, 2013).

1.6.6 Data analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 145) describe the process of data analysis as “working with data, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (cited in Westbrook, 1994, p. 245). In this study I made use of a content analysis method to analyse the data. Content analysis, Kaplan (1964, p. 21) asserts, is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their contexts” (cited in Westbrook, 1994, p. 245). Data was analysed on its merit and inferences arrived at were then contextualised.

1.7 Research assumptions

Assumption 1

All schools used mechanisms and instruments of constructing the identity of the learner and all learners were by virtue subjected to power relations that constituted individuals as subjects (Foucault, 1977; Leask, 2012).

Assumption 2

Learner identity and learner agency was a product of internal and external discourses, hence discursively constructed (Charteris, 2014).

Assumption 3

All learners possessed and exercised agency in school discourses (Jackson, 2004).

1.8 Quality measures

Quality in the study meant that the study was not influenced by the beliefs, interests and bias of the researcher. Trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a) was fundamental for qualitative research. *Trustworthiness* was ensured by utilising different data generating instruments to gather information. The use of a variety of data sources and instruments allowed for triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b; Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002). Triangulation was pertinent for validity and reliability of findings (Creswell, 2003; Saunders et al., 2003) and reduced systematic bias that could have resulted from using a single source and method (Saunders et al., 2003; Creswell & Miller, 2000). In this study trustworthiness was ensured through utilising Lincoln & Guba;s (1985) and Denzin & Lincoln's (2005a) quality criteria which involved establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a).

Credibility (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a) involved establishing that the data and results were true and were also believable from the perspective of the participants. Moreover, credibility was maintained by presenting the perspective of the participants as honestly as possible. Member-checking of transcripts (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell, 2003) was used to ensure credibility. Audio- digital recording and verbatim transcription of data (Saunders et al., 2003) enhanced credibility of the study.

Transferability (Creswell, 2003) refers to 'the extent findings can be generalized or applied in other contexts'. Transferability was ensured by providing an honest thick description (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a) and interpretation of data so that other researchers can evaluate its applicability to other contexts.

Dependability (Trochim, 2008) means "when conducting research findings are reliable, consistent and can be repeated if the same study could be replicated with the same participants in the same context". An inquiry audit (Creswell, 2003) was used to ensure reliability and dependability of findings.

Confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a; Trochim, 2008) refers to the possibility of the findings and interpretations being confirmed and reflecting the experiences and ideas rather than the perceptions of the researcher. Audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p, 292) which involves “a transparent description of the research steps and procedures from the start of the research to the reporting of findings”.

Authenticity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a) was achieved through presenting an honest perception of the participants’ realities and feelings. Audio-digital recording, field notes and reflective journaling was utilised to enhance the quality of findings.

1.9 Ethical considerations

I applied for the ethical clearance at the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and at the Gauteng Department of Education. Scott and Morrison (2005, p. 88) assert that if the:

research is to be conducted in a school setting, careful attention is paid to various levels of power within the organisation, within the initial negotiation to gain access being conducted with the headteacher and/or the governing body, and subsequent negotiations conducted with teachers and students (perhaps through their parents) to allow access to specific setting within the institution itself.

I issued participants’ information letters as well as informed consent sheet to ensure that I got their consent to participate in the research. Learner’s parents/ guardians were also asked to sign consent forms on behalf of the learner.

Confidentiality and anonymity

To protect the participants in my study, I did not reveal their identities in the project. To name the participants, I used pseudonyms. The names of the participants and schools in this study are not their real names. Scott and Morrison (2005) assert that as researchers, we have ‘to protect the interest of the participants in their research, as they are involved in collecting information which is sensitive or has the potential to do harm to that participant or group of participants’. This was made possible through the use of various anonymity devices (Scott & Morrison, 2005).

1.10 Limitations of study

First, this study concentrated only on a small sample of learners. Second, there were only three sites in which data was collected. Findings of this research study are drawn from the engagements I had with participants. I do not aim to generalise findings of this study, as I only provide a very limited account of how learners exercise their agency in three specific high schools.

1.11 Concept clarification

For the reader of this research study to quickly comprehend the report, I clarify some of the key concepts used in the research study. This is because some of the concepts may have a different meaning to the manner in which the words are used in the everyday language.

Learner identity

In this study I juxtaposed the concepts “learner” and “identity”. I situated the concept learner in a school context, to mean any person that is receiving education in a school (South African Education Act 6 of 1996). Identity on the other hand has to do with the state of being of an individual and how they are perceived (Olsen, 2008). Identity is conceived as socially constructed. Carrim (2006, p. 56) asserts that this “social identity, is derived from ‘vertical’ influences: history, cultural or religious inheritances, the attitudes and behaviour of influential figures in one’s life”. Learner identity then referred to the manner in which learners viewed themselves and the manner in which teachers viewed them within the school context.

Discourse

Foucault refers to the concept discourse as the “ways of thinking and speaking about particular social knowledge, objects and practices” (cited in Makoe, 2012, p. 235). Makoe (2012) posits that discourse is a social construct that is socially situated. For Foucault (1969), a discourse organises knowledge, practices, bodies and emotions into formations that regulate and produce certain conditions. By this definition, discourse shapes the way of being for individuals. It also means that all people are situated within a certain discourse at a particular time and space.

Hierarchical observation

In this context, hierarchical observation had to do with the observations of learners by those in positions of authority in school. Observations are usually done by selected learners, assigned either by the teacher or the principal. Teachers and the principal are the personnel with authority to observe learners in the school premises.

Normalising judgement

According to Foucault (1977), normalising judgement pertains to the socialisation of learners into what it means to be a learner in school. This socialisation includes acculturating learners to the acceptable ways of comporting oneself, ways of dressing properly, ways of talking to others and body deportments, etc.

Symbolic violence

This has to do with “the school’s failure to legitimize the culture the working class child is coming from and forcing the child to be assimilated into the middle class ways of doing things” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 80).

Subject

Foucault (1982) provides two meanings for the concept subjects. It means to “subject someone else or individual by control and dependence and tied to his own identity by a conscious or self-knowledge” (1982, p. 778). By this definition, as learners are discursively constructed in school into the learner identity, subjected to the mechanisms of power, makes them subjects.

1.12 Outline of chapters

Chapter One: Orientation of the study

In Chapter One, I introduced the topic of the research, provided the background context, discussed the rationale of the study and the statement of the research study. I presented the main research question and the secondary questions of the study. I gave a brief view on my location within the study. This was followed by a brief description of the theoretical framework and the main theories of the study. I gave an overview of the research study, research design, selection of sites and selection of participants. This was followed by data collection methods, data analysis, research assumptions in the study, and quality measures. I

then gave a brief view of the ethical consideration I followed. This was followed by the limitations of the study and concept clarification.

Chapter Two: Literature review

In Chapter Two I review in much more detail the literature around the construction of the identity of the learner using mainly Foucault. I locate Foucault's theoretical understanding both in the international and the South African context. I proceed to unearth what identities learners construct in the school and the extent to which those identities are discursively constructed and influenced by discourses. I explore the impact the background from which learners come influenced the kinds of meanings, and experiences learners made in school. I unearth the manner in which learners exercised their agency in the school discourses.

Chapter Three: Research design and methodology

In Chapter Three, I present the research strategies which include strategy of inquiry, selection of participants and schools, data collection and data analysis methods. I also discuss quality measures and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four: Findings of the study

In Chapter Four, I discuss the findings of the study. I begin by presenting the contextual background of the schools that participated in this study. I then present survey findings and summarise them. I subsequently discuss the semi-structured interviews findings conducted with five learners and one teacher from each of the three schools. The interview findings centre on the internal and external influences on learner identity and learner agency. This is followed by Foucault's disciplinary mechanisms and instruments in schools. Finally, I present how learners negotiated and re-negotiated their subject positions in schools which was a form of exercising their agency.

Chapter Five: Discussions and analysis of findings

In Chapter Five, I analyse the findings of the study against the backdrop of the literature presented in Chapter Two. I begin by echoing the literature through presenting the similarities and differences of findings of this study against findings of the literature. Second, I present silences in my study. Third, I give an account of the contribution of this study by presenting the generation of new knowledge. Last, I present findings of this study against the tenets of the theoretical framework in which this study was grounded.

Chapter Six: Recommendations and conclusions

I make recommendations and conclusions reached in the study. First, I give a summary of the themes that emerge in this study. Second, I state what the limits of this study are. Third, I state the contributions of this study in educational research. Fourth, I revisit the assumptions made in Chapter One to ascertain if they are in consonance with findings of this study. Last, I make recommendations of the areas that future research in the discipline of learner identity and learner agency could explore.

1.13 Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the topic of this research project. I introduced the study and gave a brief view of the background of the study. I revealed the rationale of the study that drove me to work on the research topic that I selected for this study. I indicated the main and secondary questions for this research and located myself within the study. I briefly explained the theoretical framework of this study and the main theories of the study. This was followed by the overview of the research methodology and the research design. I indicated the research assumptions, quality measures of the research and defined the concepts in the study. The limitations of the study were considered. Chapter Two of this study presents in more detail the literature review comprised of both the international and local landscape.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Studies within the education realm argue that in a school context, an individual is socialised into becoming a learner (Foucault, 1977; Durkheim, 1999; Silbert & Jacklin, 2015). According to Duff (2007, p. 564), learners are “socialized both into and through language by means of interaction with others in the educational context” (cited in Ochs & Schieffelin, 2011). Socialization of learners, Kim and Duff (2012), found is made possible “through the complex interplay of the past, present, and future ‘imagine’ experiences of learners”.

Drawing from post-structural theory, schools are conceived as being heterogeneous in their form due to their geographical location and their history. Studies (Willis, 1977; Wexler, 1992) have shown that schools cater for learners from different home backgrounds and geographical locations. Despite this, the school has to socialise all learners who possess complex identities into learner identity. The term identity is vague. Hence, Brown and Heck (2018) assert that the notion of identity is difficult to theorise. According to Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014, p. 32), this is because “identity is often an ambiguous, confused, and abstract term where there is no general agreement about what identity is and how it is constructed”. This means identity exists in a broad spectrum and cannot be pinned to a single element as its source of construction. Regarded as situated in a broad spectrum, scholars (Block, 2007; Jo, 2002; Kibria, 2000; Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2003; Park, 2001; Roberge, 2002; Talmy, 2005) argue that “identity is dynamic and multidimensional, influenced by social environments, socio-political interests, transnational experiences, and discourse itself” (Kim & Duff, 2012, p. 84).

Despite identity being regarded as difficult to theorise, different understandings of the concept identity have been provided. The concept identity can be understood in many ways. To better understand the concept identity, Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014, p. 37) assert that it “refers to the internalized and externalized set of meanings, practices, and distributed resources embedded in ways of life and context of learning”. Identity can be seen as relating to the personal self, taking place in the mind of the individual and derived from our day to day engagement with the social world. Being linked to the individual, “identity can be

understood as a cognitive phenomenon, a cultural process or as personal thing” (Leary & Tangney, 2003, p. 3). In extension to this definition of identity, Kumpulainen and Rajala (2017, p. 24) argue that “identity defines how we position ourselves and our actions”. For this reason, it is important to situate identity in a social context. Identity is seen as inseparable from the social world. Brown and Heck (2018) conceptualise identity as a community-forming process where learners and teachers express themselves and communicate ideas according to a shared set of principles and practices. According to Norton (2000, p. 6), this community-forming process that is constructed across time and space is the backdrop of “how people understand their possibilities for the future”.

In gaining more insight into learners’ experiences and meanings, the process of socialisation into various identities/spaces, practices and communities should be researched (Kim & Duff, 2012). In addition, analysis of schools and learners should cater for the heterogeneity of identities that exist within the school. Willis (1977) in his study of ‘the lads’ and ‘ear’oles’ explicitly shows that learners themselves embody various and often contradicting identities in school. This is because learners evolve from different racial spheres and different classes. Using the funds of knowledge approach, Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014) posit that families and communities are valuable educational resources. This is so because they influence learner identity. Class is also critical in a sense that it influences the kind of meanings, experiences and choices learners make at school (Bourdieu, 1986).

Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014, p. 35) assert that the notion of “identity is made up of cultural factors such as sociodemographic conditions, social institutions, artifacts, significant others, practices, and activities”. In order to understand the construction of learner identity, first, we ought to understand the “funds of practices, beliefs, knowledge, and ideas” that learners make use of (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014, p. 31). This study seeks to explore how learners exercise agency in school discourses. The starting point of this study is to explore how learner identity within the school is constructed, what positions are made available for learners and how their agency is either facilitated or constrained in school. This study draws on the work of Foucault (1977) in exploring how learner identity is constructed within the school. This encompasses the mechanisms that are used during the construction of learner identity. Understanding the mechanisms of constructing learner identity is critical in understanding how learners exercise agency. It is of critical importance to consider that the “organization of classroom interaction and choices of discourse either by teachers or learners

carry implications of how learners and teachers perceive both each other and themselves” (Kumpulainen & Rajala, 2017, p. 5). Linked to mechanisms of identity construction within the school is the notion of language. Weedon (1997) argues, “it is through language that a person gets access to or is denied access to social network” (cited in Norton, 2010, p. 2). I therefore draw on the work of Norton (2010, p. 1) to further understand “the relationship between language and identity”. As will be encapsulated, learners use language in taking different subject positions and further asserting their identities within the domain of the school. Furthermore, I argue that it is critically important to take into account the notion of discourse in the school. Drawing mainly on Foucault (1970), discourse is understood as the ways of thinking and speaking about particular social knowledge, objects and practices (Makoe, 2012). The importance of discourse in society is emphasised by Foucault (1970) who argues that discourse operates as the regime of truth (Ullman, 2010). Locating my argument in the post-structural framework mainly using Mick’s (2011) theory of agency, I argue that as much as learners are socialised in schools, learners are also agentic (Shalk & Ebrahim, 2015). Located in the theory of agency is the theory of performativity (Butler, 1988). Butler’s (1988) theory of performativity conceives learners as active players in the school context. A study (Willis, 1986) in the education realm illustrates that the manner in which learners exercise agency cannot be homogenised as their agency is influenced by various and complex factors. It follows then that when exploring the notion of agency in the school, it is important to hear learners’ voices so as to avoid generalising.

2.2 Mechanisms used in identity construction

In exploring how the construction of identities happens in disciplinary institutions, Foucault (1977), drawing from the post-structural framework, argues that learning identities are a social construct. In consonance with Foucault’s (1977) assertion is the conceptualisation of the post-modern subject. The post-modern subject is conceived “as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity” (Hall, 1987 in Hall, 1992, p. 227). According to Hall (1992, p. 277). “identity becomes a moveable feast: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surrounds us”. In conjunction with the post-modern view of the subject, Charteris (2016) argues that learner subjectivities develop through repeated positioning within frequently used discourses. Conceptualising identity from a post-structural framework, the individual is made into an identity that is required in the disciplinary institutions. Foucault (1977) argues that “the construction of the learner in the disciplinary space of the school is made possible through the

use of the mechanisms of ‘hierarchical observation’, ‘normalizing judgment’ and ‘the examination’”.

Linked to these mechanisms is power, which ensures that those whom it is applied to feel its effects and are therefore subjectified and objectified to the rituals practiced during the construction of learner identity (Foucault, 1977). It is through the power rituals that the identity of the learner is constructed (Foucault, 1977). In relation to the use of power in the construction of the identity, Foucault asserts:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in the negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (Foucault, 1977, p. 194)

Drawing from Foucault’s (1977) view with regard to power, it must be conceived in ‘positive terms’. It is through the use of power within the school that the individual in Wexler’s (1992) terms ‘becomes somebody’. That is a learner that does his school work, obtains good marks, behaves appropriately and has a better chance of accomplishing something in life with regard to his/her studies. Becoming in this sense rests on conforming to the rules and authority within the institution. Foucault’s (1977) account on the construction of learner identity shows the link between ‘power and knowledge’. It is the interconnection between these two notions that makes it possible for the learner to be subjectified and objectified within the school. The learner gains knowledge and becomes what the school wants him/her to become as a consequence of being positioned. Drawing from Foucault’s assertion that ‘each society has its regime of truth’ (Ullman, 2010), Silbert and Jacklin (2015) argue that it must be borne in mind that learners are shaped in different school contexts on the basis of the school’s imagined learner.

2.2.1. Power

Central in the disciplinary process is the disciplinary power that exists within the disciplinary space (Foucault, 1977). The disciplinary power within the disciplinary space of the school takes a form of invisibility to those it acts upon, it is not a ‘thing’ that can be seen, we only see its effects (Foucault, 1977). The effects of power are visible in the spatial arrangements and bodily practices during assembly (Silbert & Jacklin, 2015). This power constructs a homogenous identity of the learner but it does construct the identity by differentiating

learners in the school, “it separates, analyses, differentiates, carries its procedures of decomposition on to the point of necessary and sufficient single units” (Foucault, 1977, p. 170). The use of the disciplinary power sees individuals being “hierarchized on the basis of their behavior and academic performance, individuals are measured in relation to each other in order to classify them and use them according to their different abilities” (Foucault, 1977, p. 177). According to Foucault, disciplinary power imposes itself on the subjects to a point where their individuality shines through and they are distinct from other individuals. Foucault asserts that “discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and instruments of its exercise” (Foucault, 1977, p. 170). This suggests that the ‘individual’ in the disciplinary space presupposes discipline; one is able to become a learner within the disciplinary space because of the rituals he undergoes together with its mechanisms that ensures the construction of the identity (Foucault, 1977). Concurring with Foucault, Ball (1990) argues that “the very act of learning is contingent upon learners allowing themselves to be constituted through disciplining processes so as to become a particular type of subject” (Silbert & Jacklin, 2015, p. 327). This can be construed as suggesting that ‘no person has an innate identity of being a learner inherent to him; a person is trained into becoming a learner’ (Foucault, 1977). The following paragraphs explore the use of the aforementioned disciplinary mechanisms in a school context.

2.2.2 Hierarchical observation

In the disciplinary process, the architecture of the school plays a prevalent role in the construction of learner identity. Connected to the architecture of the school is the instrument of “hierarchical observation” which emphasises on ‘observation’ by those that are accorded power within the disciplinary space (Foucault, 1977). The consistent observation and surveillance of learners has a great effect in that it makes learners feel that they are deprived freedom (Wexler, 1992). Observation is also carried out in the assembly where visibility of learners makes observation function as a learning machine (Silbert & Jacklin, 2015). Wexler (1992) argues that surveillance is made possible by deploying hall monitors, teachers and administrators that ensure constant observation of learners. Similar to Wexler, Silbert and Jacklin (2015) found that in an effort to ensure surveillance of learners in the assembly, prefects were deployed on the sides of the walls in the hall.

2.2.2.1 The architecture in the disciplinary institution

As the construction of learner identity took a center stage in the classical age, the architecture was used for a different role (Foucault, 1977). According to Foucault it was no longer used as the disciplinary space that would allow a clear gaze of the spaces and those within it, it was used to:

permit an internal, articulated and detailed control – to render visible those who are inside it; in more general terms, to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them. (Foucault, 1977, p. 172)

As Silbert and Jacklin (2015) highlight, this is evident in the school hall where assembly is conducted with every learner made visible and their conduct constantly under the gaze. The way a learner conducts himself and performs becomes the product of the architecture itself. The power of the architecture and the gaze affect the body of the subject. Silbert and Jacklin (2015) found that during the assembly learners were seated on the floor with undesirable body movement being prohibited. The calculation of space, paths, cells and buildings provides constraints in movement of the individual, what he/she can do or see within the disciplinary space (Foucault, 1977). The architecture as part of the disciplinary space is used to “train vigorous bodies, the imperative of health; obtain competent officers, the imperative of qualification; create obedient soldiers, the imperative of politics; prevent debauchery and homosexuality, the imperative of morality” (Foucault, 1977, p. 172). Foucault (1977) argues that within the disciplinary space of the school, the individual is subject to treatment involving punishment and rewards that shapes him/her into becoming a learner. This is evident during the assembly when learners who engage in undesirable activities are identified by name and the instruction ‘fall-out’ is given by the figure in authority (Silbert & Jacklin, 2015).

Within the disciplinary space, the construction of the learner is also possible through “strict discipline” (Foucault, 1977, p. 170). Strict discipline was evident “in the classical age through the distribution of rooms that were along the corridor like a series of small cells, with the officer constantly observing to ensure that pupils were still at the desired behaviour” (Foucault, 1977, p.172-173). Pupils were confined to their cells and had no movement. During school assembly, learners sat according to their grade with a demarcating line between grades which served to provide different positions of the learners (Silbert & Jacklin, 2015). In addition to the distribution of rooms “was the placement of the window that enabled

the officer on duty to observe what was happening inside the cells” (Foucault, 1977, 173). The exercise of power and surveillance of the subject in the classical age was also evident as there was:

a slightly raised platform for the tables of the inspectors of studies, so that they may see all tables of the pupils of their division during meals; laterines had been installed with half-doors so that the supervisor on duty could see the head and legs of the pupils, and also with the side walls sufficiently high ‘that those inside cannot see one another’. (Foucault, 1977, p. 173)

Similarly, Silbert and Jacklin (2015) found that the seating arrangements during school assembly were delineated in levels of authority with the principal sitting in front on stage, behind were deputies and the management behind the deputies. This allowed those in power to have a clear view of the subjects. Furthermore, Foucault (1977) argues that within the disciplinary space, the disciplinary power accorded in the hierarchized surveillance takes the form of a ‘pyramid’, where many agents are in positions of power. This indicates that within the disciplinary space, power is much broader, it is not centralised and possessed by a single agent. As disciplinary power is in the form of a pyramid, it is characterised by a ‘network of relations’ where the agent that holds power, at the base of the hierarchy, is as important as the agent that has power at the top. It is this network of power that ‘holds’ the whole system of discipline intact (Foucault, 1977). With the principal, deputies, management, head boy and head girl and prefects on the side walls all assuming positions of power, this ensures that power is much broader than centralised power (Silbert & Jacklin, 2015). This network of relations by those in power positions becomes useful in the disciplinary space as it ensures that the gaze is everywhere to see what transpires inside the school. According to Foucault, surveillance is an integral instrument in teaching. He argues that “a relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and increases its efficiency” (Foucault, 1977, p. 176).

2.2.3 Normalising judgement

Building on the notion of hierarchical observation, Foucault (1977, p. 178) argues that “as the learner is constructed within the school using the technique of observation, he is also socialized into becoming a learner who is able to conduct oneself appropriately and obtain good grades”. Learning manners, how to wear the school uniform properly and how to talk appropriately to others is part of socialisation that the learner goes through with attention

being also paid to the body department (Althusser, 1971 in Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). The socialisation into an acceptable dressing code is explicit as learners are instructed to wear their blazers and only remove them when granted permission by those in authority (Silbert & Jacklin, 2015).

Foucault (1977) argues that the learner who conforms to orders from authorities is being subjected to ‘rewards’ and that whose behaviour and performance is considered unacceptable is recorded and subjected to various forms of punishments that range from light physical punishments to subtle punishment which included standing, kneeling, joining of hands and minor deprivations. During this disciplinary process the technique of ‘writing’ becomes an essential in assuring that the learner is constantly socialised and not a single detail is missed, therefore, he is made into becoming a learner. As part of punishment, Silbert and Jacklin (2015) found that learners are detained and an upturned hand is used to admonish learners. In this context, punishment does mean subjecting learners to corporal punishment. Foucault (1977) quoting La Salle (1720) elucidates punishment as:

everything that is capable of making children feel the offence they have committed, everything that is capable of humiliating them, of confusing them... a certain coldness, a certain indifference, a question, a humiliation, a removal from office. (Foucault, 1977, p. 178)

According to Foucault (1977, p. 178), punishment within the disciplinary space of the school is received as a result of the “slightest departures from correct behaviour” by the subjects.

The micro-penalty that the pupil is subject to within the school are those:

of time (latenesses, absences, interruptions of tasks), of activity (inattention, negligence, lack of zeal), of behavior (impoliteness, disobedience), of speech (idle chatter, insolence), of the body (‘incorrect’ attitudes, irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness), of sexuality (impurity, indecency). (Foucault, 1977, p.178)

As punishment is utilised in the school, Foucault asserts that it is an “element of a double system: gratification-punishment” (1977, p. 180), that means the school concentrates more on rewarding pupils when they have conducted themselves in an appropriate manner or have completed their school tasks on time. As much as punishment is an essential and necessary technique in correcting behaviour within the school, the teacher ought to “avoid the use of punishment and make rewards more ‘frequent’ than punishment” (Demia, 1716 in Foucault, 1977, p. 180). Silbert and Jacklin (2015) found that the school conducts special ceremonies that recognise achievement. During the traditional event, top achievers are given prizes in

forms of certificates, books and trophies (Silbert & Jacklin, 2015). Prize-giving ceremonies are done to recognise learners' performances and motivate learners to work hard on their school work. According to Demia's (1716 cited in Foucault, 1977, p. 180) assertion when "learners are completing tasks, they should be encouraged by rewards than the fear of being subjected to punishment". The disciplinary space of the school applies the system of rewards and punishment which characterise and distinguish performance and behaviour as either 'good' or 'bad' and this classifies learners into different categories which are subject to different kinds of punishments and rewards (Foucault, 1977). This provides a model of comparison where learners are hierarchized in relation to each other; they are differentiated according to their nature, potentials, capabilities and their level or their value (Foucault, 1977). The school distributes "ranks or grades to learners that marks the gaps, hierarchizes qualities, skills and aptitude but it also punishes and rewards" (Foucault, 1977). This is followed by the "distinction of uniforms of the pupils separates them from each other and indicates which class they belong to with different classes subjected to different treatment in the school" (Foucault, 1977). The hierarchization of learners should not be perceived in negative terms as it functions to construct learner identity:

it exercised over them a constant pressure to conform to the same model, so that they might all be subjected to subordination, docility, attention in studies and exercise, and to the correct practice of duties and all the parts of discipline'. So that they might all be like one another. (Foucault, 1977, p.182)

This was evident when only top achievers in each grade were called up on stage and handed rewards in forms of certificates, books and trophies (Silbert & Jacklin, 2015). The event is used to inspire other learners to do well and be top achievers themselves. In addition to differentiation of learners, they are homogenised so that they can be constructed into becoming a learner.

2.2.4 The examination

In addition to hierarchical observation and normalising judgement, Foucault (1977) argues that the school also uses the instrument of the examination in the construction learner identity. Foucault (1977) argues that "the examination combines the techniques of an observing hierachization and those of a normalizing judgment". During the process of the examination, the learner gets to be observed and normalized into its correct identity (Foucault, 1977). It is through examination that the individual is qualified, classified and punished (Foucault, 1977). The qualification of the individual is possible through the display

of correct behaviour and academic performance which signifies that the knowledge and the field that the learner was socialised into has been internalised and the learner now understands its identity.

The use of the examination in the construction of learner identity combines “the ceremony of power and the forms of experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth” (Foucault, 1977). In the process of examination, the learner sits on a chair and has a desk in front of him which constrains his movement and limits his gaze; “it is only the examiner that has the eye that sees it all” (Foucault, 1977). Through the examination the teacher is able to ‘extract knowledge’ from the pupil and at the same time introduce him into new knowledge (Foucault, 1977). When the learner answers questions in the examination, he displays his understanding of the rituals of the construction of the identity of the learner that he was introduced to and the teacher introduces the learner into the new knowledge by passing or failing the subject.

Nested in the examination of learners, is the technique of documentation. Records of learners are taken by examiners and it is through the records that a teacher is able to determine whether the learner has been successfully normalized into correct learner identity. In the process of examination, Foucault (1977) argues that the learner “undergoes ‘intense registration’ and becomes ‘coded’”. It is the ‘code’ that is used to identify and separate the learner from others. Registering of learners enables the teacher to ‘know the ‘habits’ of learner as the behavior and performance of the learner is noted down in the record’ (Foucault, 1977). With the techniques of documentation at work in the examination, Foucault (1977) argues that it makes each learner a ‘case’. A learner becomes a ‘case’ that disciplinary power gets to be exercised upon, and during the process of examination, the learner is ‘observed, socialized, and measured’ (Foucault, 1977). The learner is the “individual that is described, judged, measured, compared with others, in his very individuality; and it is also the individual who has to be trained or corrected, classified, normalized and excluded’ (Foucault, 1977).

However, as useful as Foucault’s (1977) account of how the construction of learner identity happens within the disciplinary space of the school, there is no plain coverage of the kind of educational knowledge that is transmitted in school. As Bernstein (1986) asserts, the main business of the schools is “the selection, classification, distribution, transmission and

evaluation of educational knowledge”. Furthermore, as Young (2014) argues, schools are about the kind of knowledge that cannot be accessed at home. When exploring the holistic functionality of school, it is pivotal that knowledge transmitted in the school is covered. There is also no mention of the various types of identities that exist within the school. Research (Wexler, 1992; Willis, 1977) shows that in school learners are capable of negotiating established identities and constructing their own identities; it is then important to explore the existence of contrasting identities that learners are capable of constructing. For example, the study conducted by Wexler (1992) is a useful reference for multiple, complex and contradicting identities of learners which included the radicals, jocks and thespians that existed in school in his study. Lastly, Foucault (1977) does not state the backgrounds from which learners are coming in his study. The background from which a learner is coming is significant as it influences how the learner conducts himself at school and it also influences meanings learner in his socialization (Bourdieu, 1986).

2.2.5 The role of discourse in shaping learner identity

Discourse plays a significant role in the construction of learner identity. Discourse offers learners ways to use language to indicate and posit learner identity and to indicate group affiliation and cultural membership (Gumpers, 1982; Gee, 1999, 2000; Hymes, 1974). Discourse then shapes how the individual constructs learner identity as it either facilitates or constrains identity. Consequently, by facilitating or constraining identity, discourse influences the possibilities for thought and action by positioning people (Weedon, 1987 in Olitsky, 2010). Makoe (2012) argues that discourses should be perceived as “social discursive frameworks and hierarchies that order reality of learners in specific ways”. Furthermore, Foucault (1990) argues that discourse operates as a regime of truth (Ullman, 2010). For Foucault (1972), discourse refers to “ways of thinking and speaking about particular social knowledge, objects or practices” (cited by Makoe, 2012, p. 235). Foucault asserts:

Discourses are systematically organized sets of statements which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution. Beyond that they define, describe and delimit what is possible to say, and not to say ... A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organizes and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object or process is to be talked about ...[I]t provides descriptions, rules, permissions and possibilities of social and individual actions. (cited by Kress, 1989, p. 7 in Makoe, 2012, p. 235)

However, discourse should not be conceived as a universal principle. This is because discourse is socially and culturally constructed and historically changing. Pacini-Ketchabaw and Amstrong de Almeida (2006, cited in Makoe, 2012) argue that discourse should be viewed as assuming “different forms and trajectories depending on socio-political, cultural and historical conditions of use”. Discourse should not therefore be seen in a narrow sense, its essence, nature and influences being reduced to a single cause. A broader analysis of the classroom discourse should extend to the overall dominant school discourse. This is because the school is nested in a broader community, the neighbourhood and the school district, which all influence the dominant classroom discourse and school discourse (Olitsky, 2006). Schools cannot therefore be conceived of as neutral spaces; “they carry historical, cultural and ideological messages” (Makoe, 2012).

Archer and Dewitt (2010) found the influence of discourse to be profound in the sense that in the school it gets circulated and sustained by both the teachers and the learners. Both teachers and learners consciously and unconsciously reproduce the dominant discourses. Assuming the subject positions made possible by dominant discourse, teachers and learners exacerbate inequalities and stereotypical views related to subject positions (Olitsky, 2006). However, within the discourse, learners agentically assume various subject positions (Bourdieu, 1986; Willis, 1977). Education research (Willis, 1977; Archer & Dewitt, 2010; Silbert & Jacklin, 2015) explicitly shows that some learners conform and others re/co-construct their identities within the school. In exploring learner agency, readers must be equipped with an understanding of how such conformity and resistance comes about and what triggers it.

2.2.6 Framing of the ideal learner

The view that identities are a social construction as encapsulated in educational studies (Hall, 1992; Gergen, 2009) is given more emphasis in the work of Bradbury (2013). Bradbury (2013) asserts that the construction of the ‘ideal learner’ in reception classes mirrors the neoliberal values which encompass entrepreneurialism. Learners are pressured to always improve the self. They are in Woodrow and Press’s (2008) terms, “consumers in waiting” and those who cannot be what the school constructs them to be are, in Bauman’s (2005) terms “flawed consumers” or “defective consumers” (Bradbury, 2013). Nichols (2003) argues that marketization of educational provision constructs students as customers (Clark & Gieve, 2006). Bradbury (2013) argues that the mechanism of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) describes and defines the characteristics of the ‘ideal learner’ and assesses

the extent to which one can be recognised as a learner. This mechanism affects classroom practices and shapes the learner's identity. Learners are viewed in relation to the EYFSP in terms of the extent to which they are able to internalise the school discourse and become what is encapsulated in the EYFSP. The EYFSP thus shapes who is conceived as successful and who is not successful. The EYFSP encapsulates a set of demands that learners must meet to be viewed as "good learners". Bradbury (2013) argues that EYFSP reveals the "not-ideal – the abject, rejected, inadequate or impermissible learners through which some children are constituted as impossible subjects of schooling". The values that the school instil into the learners reflect a "new normality of the child", where the ideal is "a child who will be flexible, who is developmentally ready for the uncertainties and opportunities of the Twenty-first century" (Dahlberg & Moss, 2005 in Bradbury, 2013).

Bradbury's (2013) views that EYFSP is framed in neoliberal values and discourse is critical in understanding the kind of learner that is being constructed in reception classes. To better understand the neoliberal characteristics, Walkerdine (2003) argues that the liberal subject is "industrious, diligent, responsible and self-regulating" (and self-blaming), introspective, flexible and self-transforming, reflective and caring (cited in Bradbury, 2013). The learners in reception classes are constructed to be rational and enthusiastic (Bradbury, 2013). As rational subjects, they are required to apply their minds in the choice of what tasks to be carried out and how they should carry them out in their learning (Bradbury, 2013). It therefore should not only be a matter of learners merely making choices, but they must make good choices. Applying rationality in making choices is emphasised because in Bauman's (2005) view "freedom to choose does not mean that all choices are right – there are good and bad choices [...] the kind of choice made is the evidence of competence or its lack" (cited in Bradbury, 2013, p. 9). This, according to the EYFSP, encourages learners to engage in purposeful activities that have value in their development as learners. The learners are pressured to engage in a wide range of activities which equip learners with more skills and the ability to multitask (Bradbury, 2013). Consequently, learners who engage in one activity for a long period of time are conceived of as being resistant to learning and lacking imagination (Bradbury, 2013). Full engagement with learning is prioritised as learners who fail to do so in stipulated time, are categorised as failing learners.

2.2.7 The learner as a heterogeneous subject

In exploring learners' attitudes towards schooling one must analyse attitudes through the lens of identity. The notion of identity encapsulates the complex nature of the individual and components involved in the construction of various identities the individual holds simultaneously. Furthermore, identities are multifaceted and complex in the sense that they are shaped by intersecting components such as gender, age, race and social class which all determine the discourse and subject positions that are available for the individual (Bourdieu, 1986). Charteris (2016) argues that learners as subjects demonstrate 'double directionality' where they both act upon and are constituted through discourse. Archer and Dewitt (2010) argue that "identities are embodied and performed constructions that are both produced agentic by individuals and shaped by their specific structural location". Identities are fluid, multifaceted and complex which can change over time and are contextually produced (Charteris, 2016). Archer and Dewitt (2010) regard identities as relational. Learners construct their identity in relation to the identity that the school seeks to construct. Said (1978) argues that "a sense of self is constructed as much through a sense of what/who one *is not*, as much as through the sense of who/what one *is*" (cited by Archer & Dewitt, 2010). There is evidence in education studies (Willis, 1977) that points to a "learner's sense of self-identity as being a major factor in how learners either conform or resist what the school seeks to construct of them". It is also responsible for the attitudes learners have towards schooling, behaviour and experiences within the school. Learners' attitudes towards schooling are shaped by the structure that they are located in which encompasses the dominant and desirable discourse. Learners will have a negative attitude towards schooling as a result of the mismatch between the dominant school discourse patterning school's ethos, aspirations, ideals and developing identities of learners (Archer & Dewitt, 2010)

The complexity of identities that learners hold informs the kind of experiences that they have in the school. Archer and Dewitt (2010) found that in the classroom, learners are intruded divergently. This is largely influenced by the kind of class and school they belong to (Bourdieu, 1986). Erickson (2004, p. 489 cited in Charteris, 2016) argues that "a classroom of children is not that uniform or the same or monochromatic a social world – it is characterised by difference, it is a place in which the colours and shadings of paradox are being enacted constantly, verbally and nonverbally."

2.2.8 Language and identity

In exploring the construction of learner identity and how the learners exercise agency, it is vital to take into account language. Language in this context is critical as learners use it to negotiate their sense of self. It is through language that “a learner gains access to or is denied access to a social network that gives learners the opportunity to speak” (Weedon, 1997). Construing the relationship between ‘language and identity’, Norton (2010) stresses the significance of trading previous views in relation to the theory of language. This allows for an in-depth understanding of language and the meaning it has for different people. This analysis of language is in conjunction with Foucault’s (1990, p. 131) assertion that “each society has its regime of truth ...the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true”. It is therefore critical to comprehend that language is not neutral but is understood with reference to its social meaning in a complex, changing and unequal world.

Power within society plays a crucial role in understanding the ways in which people make meanings and relate to the world (Foucault, 1977). Bourdieu (1977) asserts that “the value ascribed to speech cannot be understood apart from the person who speaks, and the person who speaks cannot be understood apart from the larger networks of social relationships” (cited in Norton, 2010, p. 1). It is therefore significant to understand people in relation to the structure in which they are located. Linked to power is Weedon’s (1997) notion of subjectivity which stresses that the person needs to be understood in relational terms; a person is either in a position of power or in a subordinate, marginalised and reduced position of power (Norton, 2010). Drawing from the perspective of framing individuals as subjectivities, Norton (2010) asserts that the common sense understanding of the individual as ‘the real me’ is a fiction. Learners are a social construction within the disciplinary institutions. However, Norton (2010, p. 2) argues that “while some identity positions may limit and constrain opportunities for learners to speak, read, or write, other identity positions may offer enhanced sets of possibilities for social interaction and human agency”. Charteris (2016, p. 191) further argues that “the degree to which learners can appropriate agentic subject positions depends on the contextual affordances; the resources of identity recognition offered by peers, teachers and others”. Various studies (Foucault, 1977, Willis, 1977) have argued on the availability of subject positions and shown how learners are positioned within the school structure. The availability possible of subject positions is encapsulated in Willis (1977), where ‘the lads’ and ‘the ear’oles’ assume different positions. When learners speak or choose to remain silent; when they read or resist, one needs to comprehend such “position of

the learner in relation to the extent to which the learner is valued in a particular community or classroom” (Norton, 2010).

Norton (2010) argues that learners’ imagined communities shape the identity of the learner. The imagined communities go beyond the classroom context to the communities learners are from (Norton, 2010). As shown in previous studies (Rahm & Gonsalves, 2012; Willis, 1987), learners assimilate and construct the identities that they relate to, which are seen in their communities. Assimilation is evident in Makoe’s (2012) study where learners in the school take assimilationist positions in language learning. Learners assume imagined identities within imagined communities and they construct their identity on the basis of what they imagine to be in future. Gao (2010) found that the imagined self contributes to the performance in language learning. The imagined self is constructed so that the actual learner can engage with this self in imagined conversations to aid in construction of the language learner identity. In this sense, the learner would talk to herself/himself and ask questions to the self and be the one to give back the answers to questions. Language learning for learners improves as it is due to a consistent engagement in language.

The manner in which learners are categorised within society and in school impacts the language learning process. Categorising learners in terms of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation influence the meanings, experiences and choices that learners make inside school. Althusser (1971) asserts that what the world means to an individual will depend on the kind of class one belongs to. As it was with apartheid in South Africa where people were disaggregated on the basis of their gender and race, what it meant was that even the knowledge people were given differed on these bases and so were the meanings made. Cameron (2006), Pavlenko (2004) and Sunderland (2004) have all argued that the concept of gender must be comprehended as a system of social relationships and discursive practices that are socially constructed that leads to a systematic inequality among a particular group of people. Ibrahim (1999 in Norton, 2010, p. 7), exploring the impact on language learning of “becoming black”, argues that “the student’s linguistic styles, and in particular their use of black Stylized English, was a direct income of being imagined and constructed as Black by hegemonic discourses and groups”.

Norton (2010) argues that there exists a relationship between language, identity and resistances. While structures may subjectify learners to learning positions, learners with a

sense of agency may resist these positions in innovative and unexpected ways (Norton, 2010). Bown (2009) argues that “effective learners are aware of themselves as active agents capable of expressing agency through various strategies to actively shape their learning experiences as well as their motivational responses” (cited in Moini & Sajed, 2012, p. 3). Learners construct “subversive identities” in the learning classroom (Canarajah, 2004a). Such identities are constructed consequently of learners’ ambivalence with regard to learning a second language (Norton, 2010). Learners resort to “clandestine literacy practices’ in order to create “pedagogical safe houses” in the language classroom (Norton, 2010). These “pedagogical safe houses” become sites of identity construction for learners. When learners are expected to comply with the instructions from the teacher, which include bringing required learning material, meeting assigned dates, in contrast, they engage in oppositional activities (Talmy, 2008 in Norton, 2010).

2.2.9 Class

As learners make meanings and their own experiences in school, we should also take into account the intersection between ‘race’ and gender; ‘race’, gender and class; and, sexual orientation (Carrim, 2009) among other things. Learners use different tools to assert their identities, with hair being one of them. In his study of *Hair: markings on the body and the logic of discrimination*, Carrim (2009) found hair as a tool to have been used to signify an identity possession of the learners. First, hair had the basis for the discrimination that learners experienced in school. In this instance, hair is used to reinforce the logic and practice and provided a bio-physical signifier to justify and naturalise discrimination. Hair “marked black learners from white learners” (Carrim, 2009). Second, hair was what marked working class learners from middle and upper class learners. However, learners used hair in the most creative of ways. Learners used hair as a way of contesting stereotypical projections of forms of masculinities and femininities. Learners used hair as a signifier of resistance (Carrim, 2009). Hair in this instance plays a critically important role in the experiences and meanings learners make in school. And therefore, hair restriction constrains identity expression of learners. This results in a conflict between learner identity and their personal identity. Not to downplay the importance of other various tools that play a significant role in the learners’ experiences in school, I identify class as an important element that affects learners’ experiences in school.

The significance of class in relation to construction of identity as encapsulated by Bourdieu (1986) is prevalent (Olitsky, 2006; Archer & Dewitt, 2010). The ‘lads’ (Willis, 1977) have shown that learners resort to using dominant discourses from their neighbourhood to negotiate with the school’s dominant discourses. When learners from the working class communities engage with subject content in their leisure time, they have to improvise (Archer & Dewitt, 2010). They do this by making their own experimental materials as they do not possess suitable learning materials (Archer & Dewitt, 2010). This results in learners not having a full grasp of the subject content. Working-class learners take up ‘the lad’s’ identity (Willis, 1977) where they become anti-establishment and anti-bookish. When they assume this identity, they further distance themselves from engaging with the subject content.

Lareau (2007) thus argues that “working-class family practices are associated with the ‘accomplishment of natural growth’ in which children’s growth isn’t given much attention” (cited in Archer & Dewitt, 2010). There is not much effort to aid learners understand and engage with the subject content in a better way. Learners have parents who cannot assist them with school work as the parents do not have advanced form of schooling (Olitsky, 2006). This is in contrast to the manner in which middle class learners engage with the same content in their leisure time. At leisure time, middle class learners engage in a much more formal learning of the subject (Archer & Dewitt, 2010). The engagement reflects a greater use in Ball and Vincent’s (1998) terms “cold (formal/official) knowledge” (cited in Archer & Dewitt, 2010). Middle class learners are able to engage with ‘cold knowledge’ as most of their parents have some advanced level of schooling (Archer & Dewitt, 2010). Middle class learners have at their disposal reference books, microscopes and other scientific experiment materials which all aid learning (Archer & Dewitt, 2010). Middle class learners have the privilege of being taken to science labs and get experience of what is science in real life (Archer & Dewitt, 2010). This engagement with the ‘cold knowledge’ (Ball & Vincent, 1998) in leisure time is likely to translate and further strengthen the cultural capital within the class (Bourdieu, 1986). Consequently, this further exacerbates the inequality that exists within social structures. Middle-class learners are easily normalised within the school’s ethos due to the fact their background is associated, in Lareau’s (2007) assertion, with an interventionist and structured approach, a ‘concerted cultivation’. This means children engage in formal educational programmes that foster the attainment of skills, interest, capabilities and success (Archer & Dewitt, 2010).

2.3 South African scenario

In the South African context few studies have been conducted on how learners exercise agency in school discourse in the construction of their identity. The learners' voice in terms of how they relate to the mechanisms used in constructing their identity and how they relate to school's dominant discourse seems to be absent. It is not clear how learners exercise agency and what triggers the exercise of agency.

2.3.1 Co-construction of learner identity

However, following the argument that learners' identities are largely influenced by the context in which they are situated and the discourse that acts as the regime of truth in that context (Foucault, 1977), studies (Willis, 1977, Olitsky, 2006) have shown that learners co-construct identities and negotiate their identity differently in different contexts. Learners do not exercise agency in the same manner. Mpeta, de Villers and Fraser (2015) in their study of a learner's response to teaching evolution in Limpopo found that in a life science class learners hold different views when it comes to learning biological evolution. This is because learners hold conflicting identities, with some seeing themselves as religious people and others seeing themselves as scientists (Mpeta, de Villers & Fraser, 2015). For the learners who are religious, the study of evolution is dismissed on the basis that it lacks evidence and is perceived as a 'myth', 'not true', 'guess', 'not real' (Mpeta, de Villers and Fraser, 2015). These views are consequences of their upbringing from home where they are exposed to the Biblical version of creation. This leads to learners dismissing the idea of learning about evolution (Mpeta, de Villers & Fraser, 2015).

2.3.2 The influence of external factors

Learner identity is a social construct influenced by a complex set of phenomena. Learner identity that is constructed at school is influenced by various external factors that are not under learners' control. These external factors include family and community. Coll and Falsafi, (2010) assert that the "individuals learn to be members of social and cultural communities, to experience themselves in a particular way". I use Esteban-Guitart and Moll's (2014) concepts of *funds of knowledge approach* and *funds of identity* in explaining the influence of external factors on learner identity. The funds of knowledge approach can be understood as being based on the premises that "people are competent, have life experiences; consequently, they have accumulated knowledge or forms of capital" (Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011). Learners therefore go to school already possessing an identity and

tools external from the influences of the school. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez define the funds of approach as “these historically accumulated and culturally-developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (1992, p. 133). These bodies of knowledge and skills cannot therefore be acquired instantly, they take time. Households “acquire multiple bodies of knowledge, ideas, and skills in order to maintain the household and individual well-being” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). The funds of knowledge are products of “people’s lived experiences, meaning, what people do and what they say about what they do” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Citing Vygotsky (1978), Esteban-Guitart and Moll argue that the funds of knowledge are artifacts or psychological tools (distributed semiotic resources that mediate human behaviour). It is significant to investigate funds of knowledge because identities learners possess and bring to school can be validated and incorporated into the school (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002)

Linked to funds of knowledge are funds of identity. According to Esteban-Guitart and Moll, (2014, p. 31) the notion of funds of identity refers “to the historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed resources that are essential for a person’s self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding.” The two funds link to each other in a sense that when people use funds of knowledge to define themselves, funds of knowledge become funds of identity. When people “internalize family and community resources to make meaning, experiences, and to describe themselves, funds of knowledge becomes funds of identity” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). They subdivide funds of identity into five major categories. I contextualise the following funds of identities into the South African context:

Geographical Funds of Identity (which would mean Pretoria as an administrative city of South Africa), *Practical Funds of Identity* (which would mean meaningful activity such as sport), *Cultural Funds of Identity* (which would mean a South African flag), *Social Forms of Identity* (which means significant others such as relatives, friends, and school mates), *Institutional Funds of Identity* (any social institution, such as family). (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014)

Learners in the school context use the above materials for their self-understanding and development of self-definitions. To comprehend learner identity, one must understand funds of knowledge from which identity is situated.

The cultural capital that learners bring from home influences the kind of meaning they make from school (Bourdieu, 1986). In a study conducted by Mpeti, de Villiers and Fraser (2015),

it was found that learners who view themselves as scientists accept the idea of evolution and are prepared to engage with the content and learn more about it. Learners take this position because they perceive science as the absolute form of knowledge. This positioning on behalf of learners is in Gao's (2010) terms, how they exercise their agency which encompasses some actions on their behalf. Learners engage with the subject as a consequence of different forms of motivation (Mpeta, de Villers & Fraser, 2015). As part of the mechanism for constructing the identity of the learner, learning for examination (Foucault, 1977) leads to learners engaging with evolution (Mpeta, de Villers and Fraser, 2015). Learners learn to prove that evolution is false and the biblical version of creation is the absolute form of knowledge (Mpeta, de Villers & Fraser, 2015). Since evolution is part of the official policy, it therefore means that those that do not view the concept of evolution as legitimate are likely not to provide the kind of acceptable answers when examined.

Drawing from the findings of the international context and the South African context, it seems apparent that the manner in which learners exercise their agency differs from context to context (Mercer, 2011). What also emerges is that in different schools there seem to be multiple identities that exist (Willis, 1977 and Wexler, 1992). Different learners who attend the same school make different meanings and experiences. Significant to the kind of meanings and experiences made by learners within the school is the background from which they come (Bourdieu, 1986). Learners coming from middle class backgrounds quickly adapt to the ethos of the school as they attend school with the ready-made cultural capital. However, learners coming from working class backgrounds experience 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1986) as 'school fails to legitimize' the kind of experiences and knowledge that they bring with them to school.

The notion of learner agency is triggered by many factors, its exercise cannot therefore be reduced to just one factor (Mercer, 2011). It is important to identify the factor that triggers one to exercise his/her agency and also acknowledge the existence of other factors. The notion of motivation and self-regulation are the dominant reasons for the manner in which learners exercise their agency (Mercer, 2011). As identities are fluid, not stable, not static, the manner in which agency is exercised will differ from the identity the person will be holding at that particular space and time. One cannot therefore assume that learners exercise agency the same way in all spaces and at all times.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks

In this study I juxtapose two distinct theories, which when they converge, both contribute immensely in exploring how learners exercise agency in school.

The nature of this study can be best explored by locating it within post-structural theorizing. Charteris (2016) asserts that post-structuralist theory is suitable for demonstrating how learners “hybridise discourses to agentially initiate their identities in unexpected ways”. Jackson (2004) argues that post-structural theories examine, disrupt, and transgress structures and categories that normalize and regulate people. Bhaskar (2002) defines post-structuralism as an epistemological approach to the study of reality that primes differences, relativity, and celebrates diversity. Recognising differences is critical in that learners’ identities are contingent, fluid, complex and learners are comprised of multiple selves (Goffman, 1963) and often contradicting identities (Rogers & Scott, 2008; Vandeyar, 2005; Woest, 2016). Furthermore, post-structural theories examine how fixed categories or structures that are discursively and socially constructed are taken up and resisted (Duff, 2012).

2.4.1 Foucault’s theory of power

Foucault (1977) uses Bentham’s (1843) panopticon to explain how learner identity is discursively constructed in the disciplinary space of the school. Foucault analyses the dominant institution of the school “in terms of the disciplinary technologies that house, compartmentalize, distribute, normalize and individualize bodies in the creation of modern subjects” (Peters, 2017). Foucault’s analyses suggest that human beings do not possess in them an innate learner identity, but they are constructed to become a learner by the different forces that work in the disciplinary space of the school. This stance by Foucault pertaining to identity formations moves identity away from “biological determinism to examining how identities are forged in the society” (Besley, 2010). According to Foucault, “the construction of learner identity within the disciplinary space of the school is made possible through the use of the mechanisms/instruments of ‘hierarchical observation’, normalizing judgement’, and ‘the examination’”.

Linked to the “architecture of the school is the ‘hierarchical observation’ which emphasizes on ‘observation’ by those that are accorded power within the disciplinary space” (Foucault, 1977). Observations are to guarantee that learners are constantly under the gaze all the time and that they comport themselves as desired. Linked to the “hierarchical observation” is the

socialisation of the individual into becoming a learner. This socialization of the learner includes ‘learning manners, how to dress properly, how to talk to other learners, and what are the correct body postures’ (Althusser, 1971). Linked to socialization are rewards and punishments. Learners who comport themselves as expected are given rewards. In contrast, those who do not do as expected in the school are subjected to punishment. This punishment does not refer to “corporal punishment but a certain coldness, a certain indifference, a question of humiliation, a removal from office” (La Salle, 1783 cited in Foucault, 1977). Combining both the ‘hierarchical observation’ and ‘normalizing judgement’ is ‘the examination’. Foucault (1977) argues that it is through “the examination that the individual is qualified, classified and punished”. During the examination process, the learner gets to be documented and he/she becomes a case. Through examination, the teacher is “able to ‘extract knowledge’ from learners and at the same time introduce him/her into new knowledge” (Foucault, 1977). Linked to these mechanisms is power. This power, Foucault (1977) explains, ensures that those whom it is applied to feel its effects, and therefore conform in the rituals initiated in the practice for the construction of the identity. The disciplinary power, Foucault, (1988b) argues, determines the conduct of the individual and submits the individual to certain ends of domination within the disciplinary space of the school. It is worth noting that Foucault (1977) argues against conceiving and describing this disciplinary power in negative terms. He argues that it should be conceived in positive terms as it produces reality and “the individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production” (Foucault, 1977, p. 194).

2.4.2 Butler’s theory of performativity

Following the conceptualization and position of post-structuralism pertaining to the hermeneutics of the people, within this theory I extract the notion of agency. The notion of agency makes it possible to deeply explore the learners’ experiences, acts and choices within the disciplinary space of the school. I draw on Butler’s (1988) ‘theory of performativity’ to encapsulate how agency is exercised by learners and the preconditions for exercising agency. I argue that agency should therefore be understood as existing not in a vacuum but is influenced by school discourses. Sullivan and McCathy (2004) argue that agency is culturally, historically, socially, and contextually influenced.

Butler’s (1998) theory of performativity conceives “identity as a paradox that is inherently unstable and revealing norms requiring continuous maintenance” (cited in Hey, 2006, p. 439).

Vitanova, Miller, Gao and Deter (2014) argue that agency and self (identity) seem intertwined. This conceptualization of identity provides grounds for agency to be conceived as contingent, non-unitary, complex and inter-discursive (Charteris, 2016). Butler (1993, citing Althusser, 1971) argues that these norms are used to “regulate people through a process of ‘interpellation’ or ‘hail’”. Althusser (1971) defines interpellation as an act of calling an individual which subjectifies the individual and initiates him into the “subjected status, and therefore into a certain order of social existence”. As a consequence, of being called, the subject complies and obeys the existing laws of the social domain. Following Butler’s (1993) understanding of the function of the norms, it follows that norms discursively construct the meaning of reality. If one is to locate this understanding of the function of the norms in the school context, then learners are not of their own making. Learners are shaped to become specific individuals that fit in the school. During the shaping and construction of individuality in the school, subversive ideas or acts may emerge that are contrary or threatening and the ideal learner identity is suppressed through the use of punitive measures so as to hail back the learner in a grid of intelligibility (Jackson, 2004).

Butler (1998) argues that agency is the effect of power and is constituted in the discourse (Charteris, 2016). Butler (2009) asserts that learners are transformed and acted upon prior to any action that we might take, notwithstanding, being radically reworking (designated/prescribed) identity. We are in the grip of norms even as we struggle against them. Jackson (2004) extends this understanding of the effect of power by viewing the learner as being the site of reworking power relations so that learners can produce society that is less constraining and different. Learners in the schools subversively transform, refuse, parody, or rupture the laws of discourse, thereby reconfiguring and redefining their identities (Jackson, 2004). Learner identities that emerge from the school context are not fully expressed identities. Learners are capable of resisting established subject positions. The discourses, that are constituents of historical processes and power relations that exist in a school, makes the self-knowledge possible.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the literature that is relevant in my study. I unpacked how Foucault (1977) explains the application of the mechanisms and instruments of constructing learner identity. I uncovered experiences of learners in classrooms in the South African context.

Moreover, I explained the impact of external influences on learner identity and learner agency.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the research design of this study. I begin this chapter by presenting the paradigmatic assumption that ordered the research paradigms. I follow this with the selection and the justification of sites. In addition, I present the participants and the rationale behind the choice of the participants I worked with. I then present the data collection methods used in this study. This chapter concludes by uncovering the quality measures undertaken, and the ethical considerations I had to consider.

Table 3.1: An outline of research strategy

PARADIGMATIC ASSUMPTIONS	
Meta-theoretical paradigm	Social constructivism
Methodological paradigm	Mixed method approach
STRATEGY OF INQUIRY	Case Study and Narrative Inquiry Approach
SELECTION OF CASES	
Purposeful sampling	Selection of 90 learners with thirty learners from each school for survey. Fifteen learners were selected for interviews, five learners from each school and three teachers, one from each school were interviewed.
DATA COLLECTION	
Data collection methods	Survey, semi-structured interviews, and researcher's reflective journal.
DATA ANALYSIS	Content analysis
QUALITY MEASURES	
Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability.	
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	
I got ethical clearance at the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and the Gauteng Department of Education. Informed consent obtained from all the participants, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity were assured.	

3.2.1 Meta-theoretical paradigm: Social Constructivism

As a researcher, it is significant to make explicit the philosophical worldview that I espouse. Creswell (2013) asserts that this is crucial in explaining why I chose the research approach I have chosen for the study. Drawing on Guba's (1990) notion of worldview definition, Creswell (2013) asserts that worldview refers to the "basic set of beliefs that guides action". Creswell further argues that worldview is "a general philosophical orientation about the world and nature of research that a researcher brings to study" (2013, p. 6). The notion is that worldview is synonymous with paradigm (Kuhn, 1970; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Mertens, 2010). Bodgan and Bilken (1998, p. 22) assert that paradigm is a "loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research" (cited in Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

This study espouses the social constructivist paradigm/worldview. Gergen (1985) argues that social constructivism is concerned with the "inter-subjectively shared, social constructions of meaning and knowledge" (cited in Schwandt, 1994, p. 240). In the lived world of the human, Creswell (2013) argues that individuals "develop subjective meanings of their experiences directed towards certain objects". He further argues that individuals are in interaction with the world in which they live and work because they seek its understanding. For Creswell (2013), meanings about the 'lived world' are "formed through interaction with others through cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives as well". The social constructivist paradigm argues that reality is made possible after it has entered the communicative space (Keaton & Bodie, 2011). For Crotty (1998), meaning is "always social arising in and out of interaction with a human community". This meaning about the world made by people is characterised by variety and multiplicity. Crotty (1998) argues that meaning is arrived at by individuals as a consequence of different interpretations they engage in within the 'lived world'. Gergen argues that the meaning about the world is subjective and historically negotiated. Put differently, they are not a given or natural and therefore not absolute (Gergen, 1985, in Schwandt, 1994). Emphasising the emergence of meaning concerning the lived world of individuals, Crotty (1998) in agreement with Gergen (1985), argues that sense about the world is based on the historical and social perspectives. From Gergen's account of meaning, it then follows that meanings are made over time, are context based and can change. Creswell (2013) argues that social constructivism is specific about the "context in which people live and the world so as to understand the historical and cultural setting and context informing the

kinds of meanings human beings make”. This worldview had implications in the selection of the research approach I chose for my study.

3.2.2 Methodological paradigm: Mixed Method Approach

The methodological paradigm from which the study was nested and that guided the study is the mixed method approach. Creswell defines the research approach as a “plan and the procedure for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation” (2013, p. 3). At the centre, and informing the selection of a research approach, are the philosophical assumptions the researcher brings to the study; procedures of inquiry and the specific research methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2013).

The research question that I answered in the study is suitable for the adoption of the third major research approach or research paradigm (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007), the mixed method approach (Creswell, 2003). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 17) describe the mixed method research as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study”. In an extension to this definition, Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) define mixed method as “an approach to knowledge (theory and practice) that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, positions, perspectives, standpoints of both the qualitative and quantitative approach”. Creswell (2013) argues that this approach involves the collection of qualitative and quantitative data that is later integrated. The combination and “integration of the qualitative and quantitative data sets” is done on the basis that each research method has biasness and weakness therefore mixed method neutralises the data that is initially conceived as biased (Creswell, 2013). This combination further bestows a more complete understanding of the research problem. Integration of the two data sets as one database is useful in checking the accuracy (validity) (Campbell & Fiske, 1959) of the other database (Creswell, 2013). In addition to Creswell’s (2013) assertion with regard to the usefulness of combining the two databases, is that combining the two databases is important and useful (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) because they enhance triangulation (Webb et al., 1966) between databases which seeks convergence (Jick, 1979 in Creswell, 2013) between the two databases (Scott & Morrison, 2005).

This research approach, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue, offers a logical and practical alternative. This is because the approach brings together the positivist assumptions (Maxwell & Delaney, 2004) and the constructivist assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Schwandt, 2000; Baxter & Jack, 2008). According to Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) the mixed method approach is inclusive, pluralistic and complementary, and a researcher is able to take “an eclectic approach to method selection and thinking about the conduct of the research”. This research approach was mixed because it offers the best opportunities for addressing the research problem (Scott & Morrison, 2005) and for answering the research question (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Creswell (2013) argues that both forms of data provides different information, however, these forms of data collection have limitations and strengths and a combination of their strengths provides a better understanding of the research problem than either by itself.

The selection of the mixed method approach is influenced by varied factors such as the research problem and questions, personal experiences and the audience that the study is directed to (Creswell, 2013). The void in the literature and the quest for a better exploration and understanding of the notion of learner agency merits the integration of the qualitative and quantitative approach, mixed method approach will provide best answers to the research question (Creswell, 2013). Being familiar with both qualitative and quantitative approach at a personal level and having the time and resources to collect both qualitative and quantitative data influenced the decision for choosing the mixed method approach. The audience are people within the field of humanities who ought to be familiar with both the qualitative and quantitative approach, thus it made even more sense for me to use the mixed method approach. Drawing from this research paradigm, this study employed the convergent parallel mixed method design. Creswell (2013) suggests that this approach allows the researcher to collect both the qualitative and quantitative data, that is later analysed separately, and compared to establish whether the findings confirm or disconfirm each other. The data is converged and merged so as to provide a compelling and comprehensive analysis. Creswell (2013) further argues that this is critical as both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews are key in the study as data collection tools, and they provide different types of information which together yield results that should be the same. This information, Creswell (2013) argues, uses the same or parallel variables, constructs or concepts.

3.3 Research Design: Case study

The research conducted has in some way an implicit or explicit research design that it adopts (Yin, 1984). Yin's work, first published in 1984, provides a useful insight into understanding a case study and how it is applied in contexts. His work was later republished in 1994. The research design is significant as it maps the direction the study takes (Yin, 1994). The mapping of the direction of the study is critical in the sense that the researcher avoids the situation where the evidence collected does not address the initial research problem (Yin, 1994). Nachmias and Nachmias suggest that research design acts as "a plan that guides the researcher in the process of collection, analysing, and interpreting data" (1992, in Yin, 1994). Furthermore, Yin (1994) indicates that it is the processes to be taken in arriving at the answer to the research question. Yin (1994, p. 19) defines research design as "the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research question and, ultimately, to its conclusions". Furthermore, Yin (1994) suggests that it should be conceived as a blueprint of the research.

3.3.1 Case study

The nature of the study calls for the adoption of the case study (Yin, 1994). This is necessary as it allows for the "holistic, in-depth study of the particular individual or event" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991 in Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994). Yin (2003) argues that the in-depth study of the phenomenon is possible since the study is context situated and has to deal with individuals, where the manipulation of their behaviour is not possible (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Noor (2008) suggests that the choice for the case study relies on the research question that the study engages to answer. Yin (1994) defines this study as concentrated on the "empirical inquiry that investigates and explores a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context". As for Anderson (1993), a case study is concerned with how and why things happen within contextual realities (Noor, 2008). Case study becomes useful when the researcher might have little control over events (Yin, 1994). It is however critical to understand what the 'case' is in general terms. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe it as a "phenomenon of some sort in a bounded context" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). In a different account, Gillham (2000) defines 'case' as the "human activity embedded in the real world, which can be studied and understood in the context in which it exists". Miles and Huberman (1994) and Gillham (2000) all assert that a 'case' may be the individual or various schools, which would constitute a multiple-case study.

In answering the question of how agency is exercised by grade 10 learners in Gauteng, the case study becomes useful as it enables deep understanding of the complex real-life realities that emerge through the interaction with multiple sources in the study (Noor, 2008; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 1994). It facilitates the exploration of the phenomenon using a variety of data sources and leads to the revelation of the essence of the phenomenon studied (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Tellis (1997) asserts that it further brings the details about from the viewpoints of the participants. Baxter and Jack (2008) argue that this selection is guided by the study purpose. Using multiple sources equips the study with multiple facets of understanding of the phenomenon studied. It then follows that this multiplicity will further converge data for triangulation purposes.

Drawing from Yin's (1984) five critical components of a research design, firstly, a case study was suitable for this study on the basis that the question I posed was the 'how' question. The 'how' question is conceived by Yin (1994) as much more explanatory and deals with operational links needing to be traced over time. Secondly, this study was directed by the proposition of agency on which the study hinges. This proposition emerged from the literature and theories which later guided the data collection and discussion (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The third component as proposed by Yin (1994) pertains to the units of analysis which in this study were the learners. I studied learners and collected data from them and teachers, and that helped answer the research question. This interaction between the researcher and the learners together with teachers was guided by the proposition so as to avoid collecting 'everything' that was unnecessary. Fourthly, this study aimed to link data to proposition through the 'pattern-matching' (Campbell, 1975) where "several pieces of information from the cases may be related to the theoretical proposition used in the study" (Yin, 1994). Lastly, the criteria for interpreting the findings hopes to find the patterns that are contrasting, and such was achieved through comparison of the propositions (Yin, 1994). This design allowed for the recording of details about the context surrounding the case. This was done through documents, interviews, and audio-visual materials (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

The multiple participants found for this study called for the *multiple-case studies* (Yin, 1994) or what Stake (1995) calls *collective case study*. Yin argues that "multiple-case studies enable the researcher to explore differences within and between cases" (2003, in Baxter & Jack, 2008). Stake (1995, in Baxter & Jack, 2008) further argues that it is a "collective case study when more than one case is being examined". This multiple-case study/ 'collective case study

allows the researcher to analyze within each setting and across settings’ (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Herriott and Fireston (1983) and Baxter and Jack (2008) all “suggest that the use of multiple cases is considered more compelling, with the study regarded as being more robust and reliable” (Yin, 1994). The rationale for multiple-case studies is the “replication” logic (Yin, 1994; Noor, 2008) of the findings across cases (Yin, 2003 in Baxter & Jack, 2008). On this basis, Yin (1994, p. 46) asserts that “each case has to be carefully selected so that it either (a) predicts similar results or (b) produces contrasting results but for predictable reasons” based on the theory.

There have been concerns/issues (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1995) about the value of case study in the research realm. The concerns have been that case study lacks rigour and reliability and that it is insufficient for the generalisability that research seeks to achieve (Noor, 2008; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994). The argument has been how can researchers use one or two case studies that are not widely applicable in real life and thus be conceived as knowledge? (Tellis, 1997). However, Yin (1994, p. 10) counters this argument by suggesting that case studies “are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes”. Case studies in this sense seek to focus more on the theories than people and its judgement should be based on theories.

3.3.2 Narrative Inquiry

It has become common for the narrative inquiry to be fused into the qualitative research in education studies (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It has been argued that the basis for the incorporation of the narrative inquiry with the qualitative research has been that telling stories helps people to think about, and understand, their personal or another individual’s, thinking, actions, and reaction (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988, Ricoeur, 1991 in Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Czarniawska (2004) defines narrative as being a “spoken and written text giving an account or series of an event(s) or action(s) that is chronologically connected” (cited in Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark & Morales, 2007). In addition to this view, Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) assert that a “story in narrative research is a first-person oral telling or retelling of events that are related to the individual’s personal experience”.

This study uses narrative inquiry as it is generative and encourages diverse and original interpretations for the authors and the audiences (McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead, 1996). With the use of this inquiry, the study is comprised of rich data that is generated from multiple

participants (learners and teachers). Connelly and Clandinin argue that the narrative brings both the “researchers and educators collaboratively to construct school experiences” (1990, in Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 329). Consonant with the view that narrative inquiry is generative, Errante argues that it also “provides a voice for teachers and students” (2000, in Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). The collaboration, Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) argue, means that both the participants and the researcher are actively involved as the inquiry unfolds to the extent of checking and “negotiating the meaning of the database”. Both the participants and the researcher are involved in the “explanation of the purpose of the study” and negotiating the transition from the gathering to the writing of the story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In addition to the researchers and educators, at the centre of the study were the learners who were the major participants as the research question of the study had to be answered by them.

Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) argue that this inquiry allows the learning of the participants in a setting to take place. As the inquiry is story oriented, “this learning occurs through stories told by the participants (learners and teachers) to the researcher” (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that these stories report personal experiences and social experiences. This was useful for the study as I sought to understand the lived experiences of the learners both in the school and the macro social setting. Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) argue that these stories, called *field texts* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), constitute data that is collected through interviews and informal conversations with participants. Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) further argue that inquiries provide “raw data for the researcher as they restory or retell the story based on the narrative elements such as the problem, characters, setting, actions and resolution”. Ollerenshaw and Creswell thus define restorying as the “process of gathering stories, analyzing them for key elements of the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewriting the story to place it within a chronological sequence” (2002, p. 332). Cortazzi (1993) thus suggests that it is this chronological sequence that “sets the narrative inquiry apart from other forms of research”. This re-storying of the raw data has as its essence the rich details about the setting or context of the participants’ experiences. The narrative setting for this study were the schools in which I physically conducted the study.

Nested in the narrative inquiry and useful for the analytical purposes in this study was Clandinin and Connelly’s three-dimensional approach (2000, in Ollerenshaw & Creswell,

2002). This approach has as its foundation Dewey's philosophy of experiences which is conceptualised as both personal and social (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). Clandinin and Connelly argue that firstly, this theory covers as its essence *interaction* which means that to understand people, one examines their personal experiences and how they interact with those around them (2000, Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). The researcher analyses the transcript for the personal experiences that the participants may have in relation to the subject of the study. Secondly, is *continuity* or *temporality* which pertains to learning the past and present experiences to make future predictions. As a researcher, I analysed the transcript for the information about the past and the present in order to make inferences about the future. Lastly, the *situation*; for Clandinin and Connelly this pertains to the context within which the interaction between the researcher and the participants take place (2000, Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). In this study, this refers to the school, as I conducted the study in the school.

3.3.3 Selection of site

Concerning the selection of the research site, Walford (2001) asserts that it is critical for the researcher not to select the research site only on the basis of convenience and ready access, but a researcher should take into account the implications of the selection to the theoretical objectives of the study. The selection of distinct various schools for this study was based on the view that their distinctiveness would ensure rich data. This study was constituted by data from three schools: in the township, in the suburb and the inner city. Township in this context refers to the underdeveloped area. The rationale for the selection of these schools was that despite the construction of the learner identity that might be similar in principle, through the use of similar mechanisms, learners might be exercising agency in a distinct manner from context to context. The experiences of the learners in different schools might not be the same. Thus it might offer different accounts on the learners' experiences in schools.

3.3.4 Selection of participants

Scott and Morrison (2005) assert that research investigations involve selection. Such selection is made possible through sampling which pertains to "activities involved in selecting a subset of person or things from a larger population". Maree (2007) asserts that when conducting a qualitative study, it is useful to give a description of your participants. I purposefully selected (Creswell, 2013) grade 10 learners as participants of this study, who were aged between 14 to 16 years. The selection of the grade 10 learners was made on the basis that they were at their adolescent stages where they were more aware of themselves and

their surroundings. They therefore offered good insights concerning the phenomenon of the study. Each class roughly had a total of 30 learners, therefore in total I administered 90 questionnaires to grade 10 learners. Based on the responses I received from these questionnaires; I purposefully selected five learners in each class with whom I conducted semi-structured interviews. This population of learners was constituted of both genders, this was based on the view that their experiences of what being a learner is, ought not to be the same. Learners were from the different backgrounds; the working class and the middle class which to an extent informed the kind of beings they grow to be. In addition, I had for validation, credibility and accuracy purposes one teacher from each school (Creswell, 2013). The selection was based on the availability of learners and the teacher. I had to work with participants that had no commitments at the time this study was conducted.

3.3.5 Data collection methods

The methods of data collection which were informed by the research question and the nature of the study were the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Nested in the data collection methods were the steps used to collect data that set the boundaries for the study (Creswell, 2013). Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that applying these two methods of data collection is useful for triangulation purposes.

3.3.5.1 Questionnaires

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) define a questionnaire as “a written set of questions which are characterized by sameness for all subjects and can endure anonymity”. I administered questionnaires to one grade 10 class per school with an average of thirty learners per class in each school. This was useful as I was able to extract data from a large population of subjects with regard to their experiences as learners and it assisted in the selection of the five learners who participated in semi-structured interviews.

3.3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews, as the integral part of the study in the form of a data collection procedure, allows the researcher to extract useful information from the participants. The researcher asks questions related to people’s beliefs, feelings, standard of behaviour, conscious reasons for actions or feelings, etc. (Silverman, 1993 in Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). This study employed semi-structured interviews. This form of interview is useful as “participants are able to provide their historical information and further allows the researcher to have control over the

line of questioning” (Creswell, 2013). Semi-structured interviews are more flexible and encourage the interviewer to probe and seek clarity on the issues discussed during the interview (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Noor (2008) asserts that through the use of the semi-structured interview, the interviewer is able to approach different participants differently while still covering the same phenomenon. The semi-structured interviews were fixed for all learners, so I asked more or less the same questions to all those interviewed. I also conducted a face-to-face semi-structured interview with one teacher from each school. The use of different data sources was significant for triangulation purposes. Information that emerged from this interview was used together with that which emerged from the interaction with the learners to build a coherent justification for the themes (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2000, p. 126) argues that triangulation is “where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes and categories in a study”. Triangulation in this study helped with the validity of the data collected from the various participants. The interviews conducted with the participants were captured using simultaneously handwritten notes and audio recording, which helped capture all words uttered by the interviewee (Creswell, 2013).

3.3.5.3 Researcher Journal

As the researcher is “involved in a sustained and intensive experience with the participants” (Creswell, 2003, p. 211), Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (2013) argue that this raises ethical and personal issues involved in the study. As researchers using the qualitative approach, Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that there is a need to self-disclose our assumptions, beliefs, and biases. Here the researcher reflects on the “social, cultural, and historical forces that shape his world” (Creswell and Miller, 2000, p. 127). This is significant as assumptions, beliefs, and biases may shape their inquiry. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) asserts that this includes statements about past experiences with the research problem. Creswell and Miller (2000) argue that this allows readers to understand the researcher’s position and then suspend the researcher’s biases. The researcher’s interpretation of the world has to therefore be recorded in the researcher journal.

3.3.6 Data documentation

The data collected in the semi-structured interviews was captured simultaneously in handwritten notes and audio-recorded. Audio-recording helped capture all the words uttered

by both the interviewer and the interviewee. The audio-recorded data was then transcribed and used in the analysis of the data.

3.3.7 Data Analysis: Content analysis method

After collecting data from the participants, the data was then analysed. Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 145) describe this process as “working with data, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others” (Westbrook, 1994, p. 245). According to Westbrook, the data analysis in the qualitative paradigm requires a “cyclical approach in which collection of data affect the analysis of the data which in turn, affects the gradual formation of theory which, in turn, affects the further collection of data” (1994, p. 245). The researcher engages in an iterative process, where he/she continually moves back and forth between the data collection and data analysis (Petty, Thomson & Stew, 2012). In the data analysis I contrasted the data collected with the key concepts in the literature review. Data analysis hinges on the principles that:

first, it is an ongoing process that feeds back into the research design right up until the investigator leaves the field for good. Secondly, whatever theory or working hypothesis eventually develops must grow naturally from the data analysis rather than standing on the side as an a priori statement that the data will find to be accurate or wanting. (Westbrook, 1994, p. 245)

In this study I made use of content analysis in the data analysis. Content analysis, Kaplan (1964) asserts is “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their contexts” (cited in Westbrook, 1994, p. 245). Data was analysed on its merit and inferences arrived at were then contextualised. Furthermore, Weber argues content analysis is “a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from the text, these inferences are about the participants of the study and the message itself” (1990, in Westbrook, 1994, p. 245). In the process of content analysis, words from the collected data can be reduced to categories in which words share the same meaning or connotation (Westbrook, 1994).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Mellon (1990) argue that the ‘constant comparative method’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is the most suitable method for ‘content analysis’ (Westbrook, 1994). This is because it involves “joint coding and analysis to gradually form categories” (Westbrook, 1994). Krippendorff asserts the researcher goes through cycles for the coding

criteria to be accurate and consistent (1980, in Westbrook, 1994). By cyclical period, Westbrook (1994) argues that the “theory develops out of the data”. The data collected was coded. Strauss argues that coding data is when a researcher “identifies the main categories as well as associated subcategories so that, eventually, all units of data can be categorized according to these codes” (1987, in Westbrook, 1994, p.247). Furthermore, Glasser and Strauss (1967, Westbrook, 1994, p. 247) argue that “by comparing where the facts are similar or different, we can generate properties of categories that increase the categories’ generality and explanatory power”.

3.4 Quality measures

Quality in a study means that the study is not influenced by the beliefs, interests and bias of the researcher. Trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a) is fundamental for qualitative research. Trustworthiness was ensured by utilising different data generating instruments to gather information. The use of a variety of data sources and instruments allowed for triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a; Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002). Triangulation was pertinent for validity and reliability of findings (Creswell, 2003; Saunders et al., 2003) and reduced systematic bias that could have resulted from using a single source and method (Saunders et al., 2003; Creswell & Miller, 2000). In this study trustworthiness was ensured through utilising Lincoln and Guba (1985, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a) quality criteria which involved establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a).

Credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a) involved establishing that the data and results were true and were also believable from the perspective of the participants. Moreover, credibility was maintained by presenting the perspective of the participants as honestly as possible. I made sure that I did not lose track of the purpose of the study by avoiding researcher bias on the participants’ interpretation of the phenomenon studied. Member-checking of transcripts (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell, 2003) was used to ensure credibility. Audio-digital recording and verbatim transcription of data (Saunders et al., 2003) also enhanced credibility of the study.

Transferability (Creswell, 2003) refers to the “extent findings can be generalized or applied in other contexts”. Qualitative studies do not aim at generalising findings to the general population because in most cases the sample is not representative but rather to transfer

findings to other research sites (Saunders et al., 2003). Transferability was ensured by providing an honest thick description (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b) and interpretation of data so that other researchers could evaluate its applicability to other contexts. Wilford (2001) argues that if the researcher can give full and detailed description of the particular context studied, then readers can be able to make an informed decision as to whether the inferences that emerge in the study can be used in their own personal situations.

Dependability (Trochim, 2008) means findings are “reliable, consistent and can be repeated if the same study could be replicated with the same participants in the same context”. An inquiry audit (Creswell, 2003) was used to ensure reliability and dependability of findings.

Confirmability (Trochim, 2008) refers to the possibility of the findings and interpretations being confirmed and reflecting the “experiences and ideas rather than the perceptions of the researcher”. Audit trail (Lincoln & Guba 1985) which involved “a transparent description of the research steps and procedures from the start of the research to the reporting of findings”.

Authenticity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a) was achieved through presenting an honest perception of the participants’ realities and feelings. Audio-digital recording, field notes and reflective journaling were utilised to enhance quality of findings.

3.5 Ethical considerations

I applied for the ethical clearance at the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria and at the Gauteng Department of Education. Scott and Morrison (2005, p. 88) assert that if the:

research is to be conducted in a school setting, careful attention is paid to various levels of power within the organisation, within the initial negotiation to gain access being conducted with the headteacher and/or the governing body, and subsequent negotiations conducted with teachers and students (perhaps through their parents) to allow access to specific setting within the institution itself.

I issued participants with information letters as well as informed consent sheets to ensure that I got their consent to participate in the research. Learner’s parents/guardians were asked to sign consent forms on behalf of the learner.

3.6 Confidentiality and anonymity

To protect the participants in my study, I did not reveal their identities in the project. To name the participants, I used pseudonyms as I gave participants and schools false names. Scott and Morrison (2005) assert that as researchers, we have to “protect the interest of the participants in their research, as they are involved in collecting information which is sensitive or has the potential to do harm to that participant or group of participants”. This was made possible through the use of various anonymity devices (Scott and Morrison, 2005).

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the paradigmatic assumptions that this study was nested in, namely, the meta-theoretical paradigm and the methodological paradigm of this study. I then presented the strategies of enquiry; the case study and narrative inquiry and the rationale behind utilising these strategies. A brief contextual background of the three schools was presented. Last, I covered the data collection methods; questionnaire issued to 90 learners, semi-structured interviews that were conducted with fifteen learners and three teachers and my research journal.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter recorded my research strategy, and motivated my choice of methodology and paradigmatic orientation. This chapter begins by presenting the findings from quantitative data, namely the survey that was conducted. This is followed by a summary of the themes and categories that emerged through the coding process of the qualitative data that was captured. This process involved an immersion in the data, repeated readings of the transcripts and note making. Engagement with the texts was done in conjunction with field notes and my research diary. The content analysis method was used to analyse the captured data, which allowed for major themes to emerge.

4.2 Findings from the survey

As detailed in Chapter Three, a survey was administered to grade 10 learners at the three schools. The average number of learners expected in each grade 10 class was thirty. This section presents the results of the statistical findings of each school: *School of Excellence*, *Independent School*, and *Masibambane High School*. In this reporting, I rounded off the decimal numbers to the whole number. Some of the answers provided in the survey were counted to determine the frequency of occurrence. The number of responses was then converted to a percentage. In Table 1, in Appendix 1, I have summarised the participants' responses to the main and secondary questions from the survey. The purpose of administering the survey was to extract data from a large population of participants regarding their experiences as learners. The next section looks at findings from the survey.

TABLE 1
4.2.1

Findings from the survey

APPENDIX 1

Categories	Independent School	Masibambane High School	School of Excellence
Parents' formal education	89% have formal qualifications	33% have formal qualifications	79% have formal qualifications
Learners' reading materials	75% have reading material	85% have reading material	97% have reading material
Usefulness of school	96% value school	100% value school	93% value school
Characteristics of ideal learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful • Responsible • Hard worker • Well mannered • Gets good marks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good behaviour • Obedient • Good listener • Respectful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal oriented • Academically inclined • Respectful • Hard worker • Gets good marks
Code of conduct of the school	93% received the code of conduct	95% received the code of conduct	100% received the code of conduct
Expected behaviour from learners in school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discipline, well behaved, do not backchat teacher. • Be obedient 	Respect; listen; and do school work	Well mannered; do not backchat; respect; and do school work
Did learners behave as expected?	86% behaved as expected	87% behaved as expected	99% behaved as expected
How did the school ensure acceptable behaviour?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demerit system • Detention • Disciplinary hearing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary processes • Grounded • Corporal punishment • Invitation to parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punishment • Writing of the code of conduct • Demerits of points • Detention
Did learners receive accolades?	79% receive accolades	100% receive accolades	100% receive accolades
Did learners feel free at school?	71% feel free	33% feel free	72% feel free
How often did school check the uniform?	Checked sometimes	Checked on every day	Checked at every morning assembly
Did school check learners' hair?	75 % mentioned that there is a prescribed hairstyle	79% mentioned that there is a prescribed hairstyle.	There is a prescribed hairstyle

4.2.2 Summary

The overall response rate on this study was 97%. The three schools had learners from different socio-economic backgrounds. The majority of learners came from households where parents/guardians had formal education. Some learners received no assistance with their school work at home due to various reasons. Learners possessed different identities and had different perceptions and understandings of the identity of the learner that each school sought to construct. There is evidence of the schools' application of the disciplinary measures in an effort to shape and construct the identity of the learner. Some learners had become what the school sought to construct, while others had resisted. It is clear that from time to time, learners exercised agency in the three schools.

4.3 Findings from the interview data

This section discusses the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted with five learners and one teacher from each school. The semi-structured interviews were conducted to probe even further the understandings of the construction of the learners' identities and how learners exercised agency in school discourses. It is worth noting that insights into the questions posed to the participants are the reflections of the participants' perceptions and understandings of the matters discussed and are highly contextualised. Consequently, no attempts are made at generalising the participants' perceptions and understandings. I draw on the emerging themes of this study and feature the participants' voices in the description of the themes. Teachers, as participants in the study refused to give consent to being audio-recorded and their voices were captured using the note taking method.

4.4 Themes and categories

In this section I present the findings in three themes and categories that emerged from the interviews. These themes and categories interweave. The themes offered categories that contributed to the understanding of exercising of agency by learners. This study explored learner agency in school discourses. I begin this section by presenting external and internal influences on learner agency.

The first theme uncovered influences that shaped learner agency in school. This study acknowledged that learner agency is influenced by internal and external influences. I began uncovering different forms of parents' cultural capital that were influential to learner identity. This was followed by an exploration of the impact influences have on learner agency.

The second theme explored the mechanisms and instruments school used in the construction of learner identity. The categories provided the application of the mechanisms and instruments on learner identity. Evident in the application was power and how it positioned the learner and made certain subject positions available and certain subject positions not available. Learners expressed their discontent of the ways mechanisms and instruments were applied and how it constrained learner identity, learner agency and suppressed the emergence of possible subject positions.

The third theme focused on learner agency in school discourses. These findings uncovered learners' experiences in school discourse. This category unearthed how learners navigated through the mechanisms and instruments, and school discourses to take their own subject positions. Learners in school exercised learner agency by asserting and re-negotiating learner identity through conformity and resistance.

The order of the themes presented different discursive discourses that shape learner identity and learner agency. Learner identity and learner agency is discursively constituted and learners drew from their experiences outside school discourses to assert their own identities and subject positions in schools. Moreover, learners demonstrated that they are not docile and can either resist or conform to dominant discursive discourses in schools.

The literature on cultural capital demonstrated the influence that external influences have on learner identity and that learners bring the capital with them to school. Theme 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 presented how the influences shaped learner identity. Theme 4.5.3 and 4.5.4 demonstrated the shaping of learner identities in school. However, theme 4.5.5 unearthed how learners take up various own subject positions in schools and therefore become agentic.

A table reflecting themes with categories that emerge in the study follows:

Table 2 Summary of the emerging themes and categories

Themes	Categories
Theme cluster One: Internal and external influences	
4.5 The influence of parental cultural capital on learners	4.5.1. The influence of parental embodied cultural 4.5.2 The influence of parental objectified cultural capital on learners 4.5.3 The influence of parental institutionalised cultural capital on learners
4.6 Influences on learner agency	4.6.1 Family influence 4.6.2 Peer influence 4.6.3 Community influence 4.6.4 Teacher influence
Theme Cluster Two: Mechanisms and instruments of constructing learner identity	
4.7 Foucault's disciplinary instruments	4.7.1 Observations and normalisation
4.8 Maintaining learner discipline	4.8.1 The use of demerits and detention system 4.8.2 Learners not fearing disciplinary system 4.8.3 Violation of learners' human rights
Theme Cluster Three: Learner agency	
4.9 Asserting identities through the school system	4.9.1 Becoming the ideal learner 4.9.2 Imposing an identity on learners 4.9.3 Freedom with conditions

4.5 The influence of parental cultural capital

The themes I identified emerged from the interviews with participants during data capture. These themes were derived from learners' voices as a collective to reflect the cultural capital that their parents possessed. The influence of parental embodied cultural was evident at School of Excellence, Independent School, and Masibambane High School. Cultural capital seemed to influence the experiences and meanings learners made at schools. Furthermore, the cultural capital that learners brought to schools did to an extent influence the way they exercised agency. Analyses of the influence of parental cultural capital were significant as it

served as a reminder that it takes more than measured ability to attain the desired school outcomes. Measured ability cannot therefore be regarded as the solitary predictor of learners' school performance. This implies a break from the assumption inherent in the common sense view, which attributes academic success or failure to natural aptitude. Bourdieu argues that capital - or resources – that learners bring to school, determines at any given time what is or is not possible for individuals to achieve (in Claussen & Osborne, 2012). Cultural capital as understood by Bourdieu (1986) exists in three distinct forms: in the *embodied state*; in the *objectified state*; and in the *institutionalised state*. This section discusses the findings regarding the influences on learners of the abovementioned states of cultural capital in three schools.

4.5.1 The influence of parental embodied cultural capital on learners

In the context of this research, this form of cultural capital can be measured in the form of cultural behaviour. School of Excellence catered to learners from middle-to-upper-class backgrounds. Learners seemed to behave in ways that were congruent with the ethos of the school. Mr Smith, the Vice principal, stated that “*discipline, respect, and honour were non-negotiable cardinal pillars of the school*”. All participants shared the view that the school demanded that they “*exhibit good behaviour at all times*”. Akhona mentioned that “*they don't want us to have a sort of attitude towards teachers. We should respect them*”. According to participants, good behaviour was ‘listening to their teachers’. “*You mustn't be talkative in class. Listen to what they say. You need to have good morals*” (Maria). It would seem that despite having the right kind of embodied cultural capital congruent with the school's ethos, not all learners behaved as expected. There seemed to be inconsistency in learners' behavioural habits. “*I am not a good learner in class...I'm here up and down*” (Mpedulo). Maria, was “*inconsistent in completing [her] tasks on time*”.

There seemed to be no cultural clash evident between the school and learners. There were no signs also of symbolic violence as learners were familiar with the ethos of the school. Whenever there was ill-disciplined conduct by learners, it seemed to be exacerbated by teachers. At times teachers seemed to be out of breath at handling human relations at school.

This school has brilliant teachers, teachers who can teach. It is no coincidence that we scoop awards at both district and provincial level. But there are times where some struggle a little bit dealing with learners. (Mr Smith).

Teachers' lack of learner management skills seemed to create tensions in classrooms. It seemed that the inability of teachers to handle learners professionally, sparked ill-discipline from learners. Could the reason behind teachers' lack of learner management skills be that they were still fresh from university? This is perhaps a reason that might have contributed. Akhona agreed that teachers lacked skills necessary to handle learners, hence there was "*lack of mutual respect*". "*The newer teachers actually are bit hard to respect them...not all teachers definitely are respectful*" (Akhona). Teachers' struggles might be attributed to the fact that they were still inexperienced and trying to assert their own teacher identity. Furthermore, learners accused teachers of not 'responding to them in a proper way, hence learners talked with disrespect to them'. Akhona mentioned that 'some teachers were not civil towards them'.

There are teachers that like to speak in a way that they have to yell louder as if it's going to help better. Sometimes children will respond badly to that type of behaviour towards them. There are some teachers that kind of act in a way that the kids find a bit annoying as well, like yelling...my IT teacher...yells over us...how he generally acts towards us is not really pleasant. (Akhona)

This assertion by Akhona suggested that learners from the middle-class backgrounds were capable of behaving in ways that are incongruent with that of the school. It seems that improper behaviour was the consequence of a lack of mutual respect from both the teacher and the learner.

At Independent School, learners knew how they were expected to behave. They were not supposed to make noise in class, not allowed sometimes to utter even a word. As Thandi mentioned the school wanted them:

to be quiet all the time. Like they don't want us to talk. Like every time even when you have lowered your voice, they still gonna shout. No, don't!

Dineo echoed the same sentiments: "*it's the usual. Keep quiet in class*". Being quiet in class was preceded by "*listening to teachers*" (Tlhokomelo). However, as a form of resistance from learners, Thandi mentioned that:

We do not know how to keep quiet...Learners do not like to keep quiet at school. They like to talk. Every time they talk!

According to Tlhokomelo and Lerato, learners' misbehaving was a consequence of the school's failure to recognise that everybody had different personalities and behavioural patterns. Furthermore, Lerato mentioned that the school had *failed to set its own culture and standards*. All participants remarked that learners had no respect for authority or for teachers

at school. *'We walk all over teachers. We disrespect teachers'* (Lerato). According to Lerato, *'the school lacked discipline'*. Therefore, *'learners knew that nothing would happen to them'* (Lerato). The school was a *'front and nobody seemed to know what they were doing'* (Lerato). Tlhokomelo echoed Lerato:

Learners in this school don't respect teachers. Their behaviour is something else...when you come to a private school, you expect these well behaved kids. You expect manners...Here you get students that just responds to anyone how they feel like responding, to the teacher, they be like 'I'm not talking to you'...their behaviour is bad.

Some participants felt that the disrespect aimed at teachers was justified.

Sometimes these teachers become difficult to us and we do not like that. They like shouting too much even when there is no reason to. (Thandi)

Like Thandi, Tlhokomelo singled out the school principal as being *"unfriendly"*. Further, she stated that *"she was a bit rude, short tempered and lost patience too quickly"*. Tlhokomelo mentioned that she would never have a one on one with the principal because of *"her lack of that motherly thing"*. According to Dineo, *"the principal tended to utter words that were hurtful"*. She felt that *"because they are merely learners, they were expected to bottle it up"*. She further stated that as a learner, she *"felt like reciprocating the treatment she received from her principal"*. It seemed the inconsistency in learner conduct was heavily motivated both by the school's lack to instil discipline and exacerbated by teachers' failure to set clear boundaries. And last, it was a lack to reciprocate respect on the part of teachers. According to Lerato, how she conducted herself at school, depended on the teachers:

I analyse you as a teacher. How you are. So if you are a new teacher and you set the bar high, then I will respect you. (Lerato)

By setting the bar high, she meant that the teacher had high expectations. The teacher appreciated quality education, academic excellence and was not happy with mediocracy.

At Masibambane High School, all participants mentioned that learners were *"expected to conduct themselves in a respectful manner"*.

We should engage as teacher and learner. We supposed to respect, like you should have a voice and the teacher should not think that she/he is superior than you and therefore should take advantage of that and we should not disrespect teachers as learners. (Jabulile)

At Masibambane High School, there seemed to be mutual respect between learners and teachers. Miss Mkhize seemed very satisfied with the learners' conduct at school.

They are not bad learners. The majority of learners have manners and respect for authority. (Miss Mkhize)

The influence of parental embodied cultural capital on learners was apparent in all schools. It influenced learners' abilities to engage with their school materials. The influence extended to how they conducted themselves at schools.

4.5.2 The influence of parental objectified cultural capital on learners

In the context of this study, objectified cultural capital was understood to be in the form of books, magazines, and newspapers. At School of Excellence, all participants claimed to have been in possession of the objectified cultural capital at their homes. Maria claimed that "*once in a while, my mom, does buy from Exclusive Books. Like they told me, just read!*" For participants at School of Excellence, parents were not their only sources where they got the reading material. "*I just got the book from the school, the club*" (Mpendulo). All these participants suggested that they read their books, newspapers, and magazines.

At Independent School, participants claimed that they had books, newspapers, and magazines to read at home. Some learners claimed to have read the books for pleasure during their free time at home, while some learners claimed that they did not do much reading when at their homes.

At Masibambane High School, Thandeka and Jabulile claimed to have reading material at their homes. Both claimed to have read them while at home. The other three participants did not have any reading material at their homes. They claimed lack of economic capital from their parents as being the reason for not having reading materials.

4.5.3 The influence of parental institutionalised cultural capital on learners

All five participants at School of Excellence claimed that their parents had formal education. The parents'/ guardians' educational qualifications ranged from diplomas to PhDs. According to Akhona, his mother had "*a degree in computer sciences*" and the father was in possession of "*two degrees in theology*". For Mpendulo, his mother had "*a degree in nursing*" and his father had "*a degree in teaching*". Furthermore, Malusi claimed that his father was "*an*

architect”, while both Maria’s parents were in possession of PhDs in mechanical engineering. It seemed that education was prioritised in these learners’ families. Participants seemed to have been socialised into institutionalised cultural capital at a very young age. It would seem that being from a middle-class household that valued education motivated participants and they became university and career oriented. Maria said she was “*goal driven*”. She claimed to have “*found passion for accounting in grade 8*” and her wish was to “*become a personal financial advisor*”. Meanwhile, Akhona was determined to “*become a civil engineer*”. For Malusi, his goal was to “*become a computer scientist or a mathematician*”. He derived his desire to pursue computer science from his two family members that studied computer science at university and from “*his companions that have interest in computers related studies*”. Zamani wanted to “*study programming*” and was inspired by his “*uncle who was also in the same profession*”.

Participants seemed to have fathomed the concept of being responsible learners. Mpendulo seemed to have no problem assuming responsibility of his own school work. He felt that he was “*at a stage where [he] did not need his parents’ help when it came to [his] school work*”. Malusi mentioned that he was “*last assisted with [his] school work when [he] was in primary school*”. He categorically mentioned, “*I am on my own*”. Zamani claimed that he “*needed no assistance from [his] parents with regards to [his] school work, because [he] truly understood everything*”. When needed, parents seemed to have assumed the role of merely guiding learners. According to Maria, her “*parents usually edit after I am done*”.

At Independent School, all participants claimed to be from homes where parents had formal education. Lerato mentioned that her “*mother was a teacher, and would from time to time encourage [her] to take [her] education serious*”. It emerged that all the participants had one parent who was committed to assist in their school work.

At Masibambane High School, some participants mentioned that their parents did have formal education, and others mentioned that they “*did not have formal education*”. The influence of parents’ lack of institutional cultural capital on learners was that parents were unable to assist them with their school work.

From these participants’ voices, significant findings emerged. First, the three schools demanded learners be respectful to teachers and authority. The majority of the participants

interviewed did not have a problem respecting authority and teachers, but a lack of mutual respect seemed to be the cause of tension and sparked resistance from learners. Second, participants from middle-class schools had objectified cultural capital transmitted to them by their parents, whereas, the majority of participants in the township school did not possess objectified cultural capital. At School of Excellence, participants' possession of the right kind of embodied cultural capital seemed to enable them to operationalise the objectified cultural capital in ways that could benefit them. Third, at School of Excellence, participants seemed motivated to do better, to proceed to universities and acquire institutionalised cultural capital. At Independent School, learners seemed to be self-motivated to push themselves and have a bright future. Perhaps this could be attributed to the fact that some came from homes where there was a single parent? Or could it be that because some learners did not have a great relationship with their parents, hence there was a lack of interest to look up to them? Could it also be that learners wanted to take their own paths and assert their own identities? At Masibambane High School, the influence of parents' lack of cultural capital on learners seemed evident, but that did not discourage participants from wanting to become somebody.

4.6 The influences on learner agency

The manner in which learners exercise agency at school can be linked to different influences. These influences directly or indirectly affect the ways in which learners exercise agency. In this theme, I provide an account of how family, friends, the community, and teachers to a larger extent influence the daily lives of learners at school.

4.6.1 The influence of family

All participants at School of Excellence claimed that family played a huge role in their lives. Participants mentioned that they "*were kind of people they were because of family's guidance*". Participants' behaviour reflected their family's teachings. Maria claimed that "*My parents, like they tell me every single day that I must be good at school...not make stupid decisions like not to study for test and my average drops*". For Akhona, it was in his family where he had learned a lot of things about life. His family helped him develop the kind of character that he was. Zamani seemed to be the kind of learner that assimilated his uncle's actions.

At Independent School, Thando claimed that his "*father in particular was very strict and taught [her] respect*". Dineo only had her father in her life who was there for her and her

mother was absent. It seemed that her mother's absence left some void in life. She felt neglected and that she was on her own. Lerato mentioned that her mother taught her "*how to conduct herself as a woman and to fear God*". However, Nyakalo perceived her "*parents to be good and bad*". Good in the sense that "*they always had [her] back*". Bad in the sense she felt they were "*trying to make me a prodigy...they hold me back from being what I want to be*". Tlhokomelo felt she was "*made a prodigy*". It seemed as if the relations had broken down between her and her parents, they were no longer influential to her:

They used to be a huge influence...but then as we grow up, I tend not get along with my parents. There are situations where I just don't get along with them. So then I just learned to do things my own way. Where I have seen that I'm not understanding or I feel like I need to talk to someone, I only talk to my cousins about it because I don't feel like my parents fully understand the type of a person that I am, my likes and dislikes. They have typical image of who they want me to be. (Thlokomelo)

It seemed that parents were ignorant of the uniqueness of Tlhokomelo, hence they compared her to her cousin.

They expected me to be her. She always came out number one in every single year. I was just an average student and then that was a problem because my parents would be like, 'Why don't you be like her?' And I would always feel like I am me, that's her. You shouldn't even bother comparing us...I don't even feel good about myself anymore because I would be like, I'm forcing to be her and that's not really me. (Thlokomelo)

Further, it seemed that she did not cope well with the comparisons, hence the relationship broke down between her and the parents.

At Masibambane High School, all participants claimed that their families had a positive influence on them. They mentioned that their families had "*always encouraged them to do right all the time*". And since the participants did not want to disappoint their parents, they always "*acted right at school*".

4.6.2 The influence of peers

Peers at School of Excellence seemed to have a positive influence on each other. Maria mentioned that they "*motivate each other to study together*". Mpendulo shared the same sentiments about his peers. According to Mpendulo, they were "not shy to point each other's wrong doings and correct one other". However, Akhona claimed that his peers had only a little influence on him. "*I know they don't know better. Of course I do hear them...but I won't take what they say as the ultimate basis*". (Akhona)

Participants at Independent School mentioned they “*associated themselves more with peers they had the same interest with*”. As much as their peers were not bad peers, they “*did not let them influence the manner in which they carried themselves at school*” (Lerato & Thandi). That extended to the kind of life choices they made outside school.

At Masibambane High School, Thandeka mentioned “*there was no opportunity for [her] peers to influence [her] as [she] had strict parents*”. And because of her parents, she learned to be her “*own person and not let [her] peers influence her choices*”. Like Thandeka, Amahle regarded herself as being her “*own woman*”. She claimed to be her own influencer: “*I use to have bad friends, who use to do wrong things...I almost ended up joining them*” (Amahle). Ramatla had friends too, but they encouraged her to study.

4.6.3 The influence of the community

Participants at School of Excellence were from the inner city. Their households were surrounded by big walls. Participants claimed, “*after school, they would stay home and did not meet a lot of people*”. They claimed, “*the only time [they were] in contact with people would be when [they] went to church*”.

Participants at Independent school claimed they were “*not influenced much by [their] communities*”. They claimed there was “*minimal contact with [their] community members as [their] parents would not allow [them] to play outside of [their] homes*”. For Lerato, it was different. She was from “*a township where everybody knew everybody. [They] were one big community*”. She claimed that her “*community taught [her] the spirit of togetherness*”.

At Masibambane High School, participants claimed their “*community did not have much of a positive influence*” on them. Thandeka seemed to dread every moment she had to leave her home because there would be “*boys at every corner, whistling and harassing*” her. She claimed to “*not be comfortable in [her] own community*”. Ayanda echoed Thandeka’s sentiments by mentioning that “*the community members wouldn’t stop minding [her] business and [she] felt uncomfortable*”.

4.6.4 The influence of teachers

There seemed to be little to no relationship between learners and teachers beyond the curriculum at School of Excellence. Every participant seemed not keen in establishing relationships beyond the teacher and learner professional relationship. Maria remarked, *“there is not much, like you go to class, they teach you, you leave”*. It seemed that both the teacher and learner maintained a professional relationship. Akhona stated that he *“simply behaved towards them and acted respectful”*. It would seem that he did that to merely maintain harmony. It seemed that relations between learners and teachers had broken down. Akhona mentioned *“some instances where teachers would act unpleasant towards them”*, but he *“kept his cool and did not cause any trouble”*. Furthermore, Mpendulo felt that:

teachers did not hate [him] but at the same time [he] did not think that they liked [him]. My visual art teacher, that’s the one! I think she has a problem with me and my friend.

Could the seemingly broken down relations have affected the manner in which learners carried themselves around the school? Perhaps!

At Independent School, participants categorically claimed *“teachers [had] no positive influence”* on them. Perhaps it could have contributed to the manner learners responded to authority. It was quite clear that relations between learners and teachers were broken. Tlhokomelo mentioned that her *“teachers did not influence [her] even a bit”*. She further mentioned:

To be honest, the teachers, they are dead! I could never go to them because I just don’t understand who they are really. And I feel like they don’t understand who I am. They are just there to teach, to give work and go out.

Thandi, when asked about the state of the relationship between her and her teachers, simply said, *“I don’t like some other teachers, but I don’t show it”*. In addition, Thandi’s sentiments were echoed by Tlhokomelo, who claimed:

There are certain teachers I just don’t get along with. I tend to tolerate them because I have no choice. I just don’t understand her (the Afrikaans teacher). I don’t see her purpose. She really doesn’t do anything...she gets up, she reads what we have to do then she would sit down and get hooked on her laptop or cell phone. People literally come and go, and she would be stuck on her phone. You could probably see she does not care whether you understand or don’t understand. She just gives you like, ‘I don’t care’.

Lerato further mentioned that *“there are those teachers who push the buttons”*. According to Dineo, *“the principal undermined learners”*. *“The principal did not know how to talk to*

them as learners” (Dineo). In addition, *“the principal did not know apologise”* (Dineo). Dineo claimed to be *“almost at her breaking point”*, where she felt that she needed to *“confront the principal and tell her, her thoughts”*. It seemed that the majority of learners were *“scared to voice out how they felt about their principal”* (Lerato). *“We scared that she is gonna be very rude towards us”* (Lerato).

One way or another, participants seemed to be influenced by the abovementioned influences. These influences shaped learners’ experiences and meanings in school. It seemed that where both parents were involved, learners tended to be well behaved. Teachers too had a great influence on learners. If they did not conduct themselves appropriately, learners tended not to see the need for them to behave in a correct manner.

4.7 Foucault’s disciplinary instruments

In this theme, I present how Foucault’s disciplinary instruments were applied by the school in constructing learner identity.

4.7.1 Observations and normalisation

It seemed that schools had applied disciplinary instruments in constructing learner identity. All participants at School of Excellence claimed to have received the school’s code of conduct. They claimed to *“have read it even though they did not go through the whole document”*. The school had *“student senior leaders every morning of the assembly walking between the class-lines checking whether everybody was on their full school uniform”* (Mr Smith). Hair was also checked to make sure that it was not too long. It had to be a certain length. Participants claimed to have *“worn their full school uniform”*.

At Independent School, all participants claimed to have received the school’s code of conduct. However, they were frustrated by the fact that they were given it every year and felt that they did not need it since they were seniors. Lerato’s frustration was that *“it was huge”*. According to her it felt like she was *“carrying a bible”*. Participants claimed to have stopped reading the school’s code of conduct. The school had prefects observing whether learners had worn their full school uniform (Miss Chivani).

However, at Masibambane High School, participants claimed to have received the school's code of conduct late in the year. They claimed to have read their school's code of conduct. The school had "*used prefects in checking learners' school uniform*" (Miss Mkhize).

It seemed that all schools had regularly checked on the learners' school uniform and used students' assistance in checking the learners' uniform. It seems that the school's code of conduct was given to learners, but the majority of learners did not thoroughly engage with it.

4.8 Reinforcing learner behaviour

In this theme, I present the measures applied by the schools to reinforce either a positive or a negative behaviour from learners. All three schools were confronted by learners with different personalities and different behaviours. One of the ways to encourage good behaviour from learners is through accolades. On the other hand, punitive measures need to be applied as a form of reprimanding negative behaviour. If negative behaviour was left unpunished, the construction of the identity of the learner might not be successful. The following outlines measures that schools used to reinforce either good or bad behaviour.

4.8.1 The use of demerits and detention system

School of Excellence was confronted by learners that seemed to possess the right kind of cultural capital. "*This school has good learners, learners that know how to behave. Seemingly, they were well brought up*" (Mr Smith). It seemed that teachers were not subjected to disruptive behaviour from learners at School of Excellence. Learners seemed to have bought into the idea of schooling. The school encouraged excellence and learners seemed eager to be excellent. All participants were in agreement that they were "*for excellence in their academics and sports*". At School of Excellence, excellence was rewarded. Maria claimed to have "*received an academic merit*". Mpendulo had received an award for rugby.

There are incentives and rewards. Definitely! Like for academics and sports. They do things like certificates and colours. Umm they have this new system of like giving gold braiding to like the kids that partake in activities where they go nationals. We have red and white blazer for like your hard work and achievement you have done in school. We have merit system...badges...this merit system goes to a trophy and like a pro-merit award. (Mpendulo)

It seemed that the school rewarded learners differently based on their different academic or sporting achievements. All participants mentioned that the school applied detention to reprimand unacceptable or bad behaviour. Akhona mentioned:

We have disciplinary measures like with detentions, demerits mainly detentions; break detention, afternoon detentions like we are supposed to sit or stay like that for the entire session...write down the whole code of conduct on a piece of paper...or they call parents if the child is being too troublesome. They take away some of that child's privileges.

Mpendulo agreed with Akhona's account and added that *"for misbehaving you get 5 demerits. You can get 20 demerits in a week. That's a 2-hour detention on a Friday afternoon"*.

4.8.2 Learners not fearing the disciplinary system

It seemed that Independent School sought to issue punitive measures more than accolades. Participants stated that *"the school used to apply the system of demerits and detention to reprimand negative behaviour"*. The detention system used included giving learners *"paper to fill, then if they did not do the homework, they wrote 'Homework not done', and minus some points"* (Thandi). Participants categorically mentioned they *"did not care much about what the school did to curb negative behaviour"*. Drawing from participants' accounts, it seemed the school's 'obsession' with punishing learners all the time made the punitive system weak. The punitive system seemed to be marred with loopholes. First, there seemed to be inconsistency with regard to how the punitive measures were applied.

At first we used to go to detention. If you got minus 20 demerit points, detention. That's how it was. Then it just stopped and then people were like 'Oh ok, they leaving us. Ok let me go back'. (Lerato)

Thando echoed Lerato's claim, *"They don't even do it anymore. Even them, they no longer care about it"*. Tlhokomelo seemed amused by the school's inconstancy in enforcing their own punitive measure. She (Tlhokomelo) remarked that *"the demerit system only existed for only three weeks and it did not work no matter what!"* Thlokomele further echoed Lerato's perspective that *"the school was all about talk and no action"*.

They (learners) are still waiting for demerits. Nobody gets demerits. No one has been to an afternoon detention. (Tlhohomelo)

school's punitive system. Thando mentioned, *"I don't care! Give me the demerits! We inconsistency in the application of punitive measures seemed to have led learners not to fear the don't care about it!"* In agreement with Thando, Lerato mentioned that:

There is no discipline...we do what we want because there is no core of being the bigger person...they talk; we don't take them seriously anymore...there is no action...at the end of the day aah you not gonna do anything. Like at first we weren't allowed to bring phones but now I can put my phone here in the school pants, they won't do anything. It's just nothing weird. We do as we please. We just don't care...they don't care.

Tlhohomelo claimed that all they (teachers) did was to shout at them and after that they let you go.

4.8.3 Violation of learners' human rights

At Masibambane High School, learners lamented that *“when school was confronted by ill-discipline learners, it resorted to punitive measures that were in violation with their human rights”*. Different punitive measures were applied to curb undesirable conduct, and in some instances, *“teachers inflicted pain to learners”* (Jabulile). To curb undesirable behaviour, *“teachers would chase learners out of school”*, claimed Ayanda and Thandeka, with broad smiles. Both Jabulile and Ayanda claimed that *“various punitive measures were applied by the school which included corporal punishment”*. Jabulile expressed her disapproval at being beaten up by teachers because she had not done her school work. *“We also human isn't...I should not be beaten for me to do work”*, remarked a furious Jabulile. Furthermore, participants claimed to be on the receiving end of humiliation from teachers. Participants claimed that humiliation would take place in the presence of learners in class. Jabulile claimed that *“the teacher would take [her] shoe and return it back to [her] after some time and for the considerable period of time, [she] would walk barefoot”*.

The schools seemed to use accolades to encourage good behaviour and different punitive measures to curb negative behaviour. Some learners feared being subjected to disciplinary measures, while other learners had no regard for disciplinary measures. It was clear that the manner in which some schools punished learners was illegal, much to the irritation of the learners.

4.9 Asserting identities through the school system

In this theme, I present how learners viewed the schooling process. Furthermore, I present how they navigated through the schooling process in asserting their own learner identity. Participants shared their experiences of how they flourished or felt constrained by the school.

4.9.1 Becoming the ideal learner

School of Excellence seemed very clear on the kind of learner they sought to construct. The school prided itself in their production of learners who got *“high standard of education required to equip them for tertiary education”* (Mr Smith). Mr Smith mentioned that *“we aim to produce top learners. Learners who will study at top universities in the country.”* It seemed that this message was equally understood by learners. Maria remarked, *“I think the school would want someone who is academically stable”*. Zamani echoed Maria’s remarks by claiming that the school wanted learners that were *“academically great”*. In agreement with Maria and Zamani, Akhona mentioned that the school sought to construct *“a learner who was responsible with his academics and possessed leadership qualities”*. Mpendulo claimed *“teachers were concerned more about the marks of learners and they would not settle for any low marks”*. Maria, Mpendulo and Luyanda, all felt they *“had what it took to become the kind of the learners the school sought to construct as they did well academically and participated in sports”*. Akhona and Zamani, felt that they were not yet what the school sought to construct. However, Akhona claimed he was *“eager to possess all types of characteristics that were ideal for the school”*. His desire though should not be mistaken for him wanting to be the prodigy of the school, he mainly wanted to be his own person. Zamani, held a different view of school and the ideal learner. It could well have been that he *“hate school...hate classrooms and the way the school functioned in general”*, that was why he lacked interest in being the kind of learner that the school sought to construct. Zamani, further mentioned that *“I do have my moments where I’m really, can I say not in the mood...I don’t think I’m that type they are trying to craft”*. Interestingly, despite possessing the right kind of cultural capital, Zamani did not see himself being what the school sought to construct.

Being a resourced school, School of Excellence prioritised participation in different sporting codes and learners were encouraged to participate in these different sporting codes. *“We have rugby, football for boys and girls. We have volley ball, tennis and hockey”* (Mr Smith). Maria reiterated Mr Smith’s claim by mentioning that *“they play sport; they get merit”*. Mr Smith further mentioned that *“the school participated in district, provincial and national sporting competitions”*. Seemingly that attracted big teams to recruit players at School of Excellence. Mpendulo seemed to relish the opportunity to participate in rugby and the benefits that came with it. For him, being part of the rugby team was what *“gave him a sense of worth and belonging at School of Excellence,”* since he was *“not strong academically”*.

4.9.2 Imposing an identity on learners

Learners at Independent School voiced frustrations over their experiences at school. There seemed to be incompatibility between the kind of experiences Independent School provided to learners and the experiences learners desired. Miss Chavani, remarked that the “*school sought to construct a learner that would perform well at school*”. According to Miss Chavani, “*performing well at school included but was not limited to, obtaining good grades, completing tasks, attending classes and behaving well*”. Furthermore, she mentioned, “*a learner should have manners and tolerate differences*”. However, it seemed that the kind of learner the school sought to construct was resisted by learners. All participants held the view that “*school held a fixed view of the ideal learner*”. That view, participants argued, “*blinded school from recognising the kind of learners they (participants) were*”. Nyakallo remarked that school focused on a “*certain group of people instead of checking whether this ideal learner we are looking for...might be like a different brand, but then they focusing on one particular brand*”. In agreement with Nyakallo, Lerato added that:

I feel like they trying to make all of us about academics, and they wonder why the child fails...and I feel like they don't understand that. They don't get that not every student is gonna be academically strong.

Tlhokomelo seemed frustrated by the school's persistence to want to construct them into something they were not. She remarked:

They haven't tried to build me in any type of way...they will never try to build me in any type of way. I am still that person, even if they think they are trying, it's not working at all. I mean there is no difference! All they have ever done in my experience is to bring down a child emotionally. Instead of raising you up and making you happy, making you, help you try achieve your goals in life, they just bring you down emotionally.

Dineo and Lerato seemed not to comprehend the sense of learner identity the school sought to construct. Dineo, simply “*didn't know the kind of learner that was constructed at school*”. For Lerato, “*the school itself seemed not to even know the kind of learner it was constructing*”. In her perspective, “*they are trying to enforce ways into your mind so that they can look good*”. Furthermore, participants lambasted the school for “*constraining them and their potentials*”. Shaking her head, Lerato, mentioned that “*they are not opening opportunities for us...we have models in this school but they don't open opportunities for student*”. Dineo, Lerato and Tlhokomelo accused the school of “*failing to recognise differences*”. Learners were constrained as they “*did not have many extra mural activities to choose from*”. There seemed to be limited choices in subjects and in sporting codes.

Some are good at sport, some are not. Umm when it comes to subject choices you know we have the basics. We don't have art even don't have EGD. We don't have consumer studies. Going on someone would prefer technical maths, we don't have it, you understand! Subjects are limited... So you are literally forced to stay in a small box while we as individuals in a high school we are trying to build yourself. We are trying to find yourself. Regarding who are you! (Dineo)

Participants mentioned that things had changed under the new principal at Independent School. Participants felt that 'things that used to mean much to them were taken away from them'.

I feel like they taking away things that could potentially make us great people. We don't have public speakers that come and share their stories. We don't have that anymore. It got taken away. We use to have good acts. We use to have people that come from jail to come and talk to us about maybe drugs. Whatever that might be that teenagers are going through. That we don't have it anymore. (Lerato)

Participants held different views regarding how the school allowed them to freely express themselves. It seemed that participants saw themselves as having two identities: the learner identity and the personal identity. For Thandi and Lerato, school allowed them to freely be themselves and assert their personal identities. Thandi felt she was "*herself at school because school was not racist*". Lerato had a different view to that of Thandi, she mentioned, "*We already feel free because there is no discipline*". Nyakallo felt constrained by the concept of the ideal learner, hence she "*could not be [herself]*". Echoing Nyakallo's view on not being allowed to be herself at school, Tlhokomelo mentioned:

They don't! They don't! They don't allow you to be who you really...this school is also judgemental for you, you being yourself, expressing who you are...you fear that you will be judged by the learners and the people in the school. They just do not accept you for who you are. I had to be like be careful and watch out for the things I do because I have people who will judge me for who I am, so you just kinda like compose yourself together so to avoid being judged.

From the participants' accounts, there seemed to be limitations to what learners at the school could become. Participants felt they could not be themselves.

4.9.3 Freedom with conditions

At Masibambane, participants felt that the school "*allowed them freedom*". That freedom, they claimed, "*had conditions*". All participants mentioned that even though they felt free at school, on the other hand, felt that every move they made was closely monitored. Thandeka

claimed “*being constrained came in a form the hairstyle they wore*”. She mentioned that “*teachers chose for [them] the type of hairstyle they wore*”. According to her, “*that did not sit well with [her] because [she] wanted to be comfortable and beautiful as [she] was unique*”. According to Amahle and Jabulile, “*constrains came in a form of being instructed on the length of your hair*”. It seemed that teachers allowed learners to teach and assist each other where they struggled.

All participants were becoming somebody. However, that took place in different contexts and different meanings were made from the experience. Some learners bought the whole idea of schooling, on the other hand some learners resisted and defied school.

4.10 Conclusion

From the data collected in the study, I found that each of the three schools had learners from different socio-economic backgrounds. There were similarities and differences in the model of the learner that each school sought to construct. Within the school discourses, learners had different perceptions of and understandings of their identities and the kind of learner that the school sought to construct. Consequently, the manner in which they exercised agency was not uniform.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss and analyse findings of my study against the backdrop of the literature presented in Chapter Two. I begin this chapter by echoing the literature through presenting similarities in the findings of my study and of the literature. This is followed by differences in my study compared to the literature. Here I present what the literature in Chapter Two of the study found versus what findings of my study were. The similarities and differences between my study and the literature reflect on how learners exercised agency in the construction of their identity in school discourse.

I then present two silences. First, silence in my study where I present findings in the literature that were not found in my study. Second, silence in the literature where I present what my study found but which was silent in the literature. The second silence focuses on the generation of new knowledge. Last, I match findings of my study against the tenets of the theoretical framework upon which this study was grounded. Themes and categories presented in Chapter Four are central in this discussion and analysis of findings.

5.2 Echoing the literature

Findings of this study that were similar with the findings in literature used in Chapter Two are presented within this section. The learners' voices during interviews reiterated voices of scholars presented in Chapter Two. First, it became apparent that schools used Foucault's mechanisms of constructing learner identity. Second, learner identity is a social construct influenced by both internal and external influences. This section begins by exploring the mechanism schools used to construct learner identity. This is followed by the internal and external influences on learner identity and the extent to which they influenced both the construction of learner identity and the exercise of agency by learners. Embedded both in Foucault's mechanisms and internal and external influences is how learners navigated through the school discourse to assert their own identities.

5.2.1 Foucault's mechanisms of constructing learner identity

Foucault (1977) argues that learner identity in school is constructed using 'hierarchical observation', 'normalising judgement', and 'the examination'. This section presents how 'hierarchical observation' and 'normalising judgement' were used by schools to construct learner identity. 'The examination' will be excluded from the analyses as it was not fully covered during the interviews.

Observation of learners

It seems that all schools used mechanisms of constructing learner identity as advocated by Foucault (1977). In all three schools there was constant observation of learners either by prefects, senior leaders, teachers or the principal. This finding resonates with Foucault's assertion that "a relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and increases its efficiency" (1977, p. 176). Mr Smith shared that the school had senior student leaders every morning of the assembly walking between the class-lines checking whether everybody was in their full school uniform. The deployment of senior student learners strengthened the authority that the school had over learners. The constant checking of the uniform could be viewed in a positive light in the sense that it ensured that all learners looked alike. In addition, it made it possible to identify learners of School of Excellence from non-learners. According to Miss Chivani, at Independent School prefects were assigned the role of ensuring that learners wore their uniform appropriately. Participants described how they were closely monitored by both the teachers and the learners in the assembly. They further described their encounter with peer educators who would walk between the lines to check if they had worn their full school uniform. This finding is consistent with Silbert and Jacklin's (2015) finding that there was a demarcating line between grades. Walking between the lines by peer educators ensured the space in between class lines which consequently constrained movements of learners (Foucault, 1977). This is consistent with Silbert and Jacklin's (2015) finding that learners in the assembly were made visible and their conduct was under constant gaze. As learners' conduct was under the gaze, it meant that they could not disturb the assembly since they were consciously aware that somebody was watching their conduct. This constituted the 'strict discipline' process that learners had to endure (Foucault, 1977). According to participants, strict observation of their conduct resulted in discomfort. Discomfort in the constructing of learner identity was experienced as learners' established identities were challenged and re-constructed. With teachers, peer educators, and

prefects working together in the assembly to ensure order and discipline of learners, one sees observation taking a form of a ‘pyramid’ (Foucault, 1977). The power that is accorded to those observing learners in the assembly becomes broader than centralised power (Silbert & Jacklin, 2015).

The purpose of observation was to ensure that learners behaved in a seemly manner. This is consistent with Foucault’s (1977, p. 172) view that observation “permit an internal, articulated and detailed control... to provide a hold on their conduct... to make it possible to know them, to alter them”. It seems that observation of learners had a positive effect in constructing learner identity. Fear of being called out if found behaving in an unseemly manner during assembly, had learners respecting those in positions of power. This confirms Foucault assertion that “power produced reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belongs to this production” (1977, p. 194). The construction of learner identity played itself out in the assembly.

The effect of power during assembly was visible at the School of Excellence, Independent School, and Masibambane High School. There was separation and differentiation of learners according to their grades at the assembly as a mark of separation of learners. This finding is consistent with Silbert and Jacklin’s (2015) finding that the effects of power were visible in the spatial arrangements and bodily practices during assembly. In addition to the separation of learners, schools used blazers and tags to mark senior leaders and prefects from school learners. As Silbert and Jacklin (2015) found, the blazers were not removed at learners’ will. Learners had to have teachers’ authority to remove the blazers. Being in blazers meant that the rest of the learners knew who held power in the school. According to Foucault, this is how school constructs a homogenous learner identity by separating, analysing, differentiating, carrying “procedures of decomposition on to the point of necessary and sufficient single units” (1977, p. 170). This could be seen to further strengthen the authority of people accorded power. When teachers, peer educators, and prefects have power, they are able to “train vigorous bodies... obtain compete officers... and create obedient soldiers” (Foucault, 1977, p. 172).

Learner body deportment and behaviour were closely monitored in the assembly. However, learners from working class backgrounds in particular felt uncomfortable during this process.

It could be that being uncomfortable by being looked at was a result of not being used to the gaze from their homes. It further suggests that learners were not accustomed to ‘strict discipline’ from their homes. The gaze they were subjected to at school was foreign to them, hence they became uncomfortable. Learners feared being called out and sent back home since they did not have a full school uniform. It was understood that the fear forced learners to comply with the school’s demands. Close monitoring of learners’ conduct and uniform at Masibambane High School made learners feel that there was freedom with conditions. That sentiment arose from being closely monitored by those in positions of authority. Learners’ sentiments echo Wexler’s (1992) assertion that consistent observation and surveillance make learners feel deprived of freedom. Such compliance from learners to authority and allowing themselves to be subjected to discipline defined learners’ understanding of what it meant to be a learner in a school context. This finding is consistent with Foucault’s (1977, p. 170) assertion that “discipline ‘makes’ individuals”.

Socialising learners

The findings of this study were consistent with Foucault’s (1977) view that nested in observation of learners is the process of socialisation. In a study conducted by Silbert and Jacklin (2015), they found that school used the ‘disciplinary code’ to socialise learners. The purpose of the ‘disciplinary code’ was to serve as a guide to the acceptable and prohibited behaviour. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Bradbury (2013), it was found that the school used Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) to outline the characteristics of the ideal learner and his acceptable conduct. Learners were framed against the disciplinary code and the EYFS. Similarly, I found that all schools socialised learners through the use of the code of conduct. The code of conduct was an integral instrument in the normalisation of learners. It had a set of rules for learners. The code of conduct encapsulated, among other things, acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, body deportments and the dress code of learners. I found that learners knew and understood what they could do and could not do the subjective definition of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and how they had to comport themselves. This is consistent with Althusser’s report that socialisation of “learners includes body deportments, how to dress properly, and how to talk to other individuals” (1971, in Aronowits & Giroux, 1985). Furthermore, Foucault (1977) stresses that part of socialising learners includes learning manners. Having manners is important in creating harmony in the school. However, despite the code of conduct being issued, not all participants read it; as a result, they could not adhere to the school’s code of conduct. This was evident at Independent

School. The decision of learners not to read the code of conduct can be viewed as assuming a subject position of rebelliousness as it meant that they did not know all that was in the code of conduct. Typically, they were exercising their agency.

In addition to normalising learners, all schools used accolades and punishment to reinforce positive and negative behaviour. Learners expressed how happy they were that their efforts and commitments to school work were recognised. Moreover, Silbert and Jacklin (2015) had found that school conducted ceremonies to recognise learners. Moreover, my finding is consistent with Foucault's (1977) assertion that well-behaved learners should be awarded accolades and ill-mannered learners be subjected to various form of punishments. I found that schools recorded the names of rebellious learners so that they could be known by the school. At School of Excellence, incentives and accolades were more 'frequent' than punishment (Demia, 1716, cited in Foucault, 1977). Mpendulo stated that School of Excellence presented learners with certificates, gold braiding, and red and white blazers for their excellence in different categories. The accolades motivated all learners - even those who performed poorly - to give their best in their school work and extra mural activities. In contrast to Demia's comment with regard to making accolades more 'frequent' than punishment, it seems that Independent School was determined to punish learners rather than to give them accolades. As Foucault (1977) asserted, punishment is the key instrument in disciplining learners. The schools used detention as a measure to discipline learners. Akhona confirmed the use of detention by the school as she stated that "*we have disciplinary measures like detention... break detention, afternoon detentions*". In addition, punishment included issuing papers for learners to fill. The finding is consistent that of Silbert and Jacklin (2015) who found that learners were detained and an upturned hand was used to admonish learners. Foucault, quoting La Salle (1720) elucidates punishment as:

everything that is capable of making children feel the offence they have committed, everything that is capable of humiliating them, of confusing them... a certain coldness, a certain indifference, a question, a humiliation, a removal from office (Foucault, 1977, p. 178).

At School of Excellence light punishment came in a form of giving 5 demerit points to learners. Learners expressed that they were made to stand or sit down as a form of punishment. At Independent School it seems that obsession with punishment and inconsistent application of it led to participants not caring at all about the school's disciplinary measures. As Thando asserted, "*I don't care! Give me the demerits!*" It seems that inconsistent

application of disciplinary measures eroded discipline at school. Learners stated in disbelief how the punitive instrument stopped being used. This gave learners freedom to be whoever they wanted to be. Some learners perceived the stopping of detention as lack of care from the teachers. The school was perceived as being about all talk and no action. As a consequence of such inconsistency, participants at Independent School felt there was no discipline. This was because learners did not feel any effect of discipline. Absence of discipline at school led learners to behave in any way they saw fit. Learners became more rebellious and had little respect for authority. Rebelliousness enacted by learners tried to provoke the school to act. Learners mentioned how eager they were to see the school act. As Thlokomelo mentioned *“learners are still waiting for demerits”*.

Foucault argues that punishment in school ought to be received as a consequence of a “slightest departures from correct behaviour” by learners (1977, p. 178). Masibambane High School applied punishment ranging from subtle punishment to physical punishment. The slightest departure from correct behaviour, such as arriving late at class and not writing work, had the teacher resorting to taking a learner’s shoe. This finding resonates with Foucault’s assertion that learners ought to be subjected to micro-penalty:

of time (latenesses, absences, interruptions of tasks), of activity (inattention, negligence, lack of zeal), of behavior (impoliteness, disobedience), of speech (idle chatter, insolence), of the body (‘incorrect’ attitudes, irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness), of sexuality (impurity, indecency) (Foucault, 1977, p. 178).

Participants described how they would be punished for the smallest things at school. According to them, they found that to be unfair. In conclusion, schools employed the mechanism of constructing learner identity as suggested by Foucault. As a result of observing and normalising a learner, a learner identity was constructed. However, the construction of learner identity was met with resistance from learners as their disapproval of the application of the mechanisms of constructing learner identity.

5.2.2 Internal and external influences on learner identity

In this section, I present the internal and external influences on learner identity. These influences on learner identity affected meanings and experiences learners made in school. As a consequence of the meanings and experiences they influenced ways individuals constructed learner identity and exercised agency. The influences include discourse, class, and community

The role of discourse

This study found discourse to be an influence in how individuals construct learner identity and how they exercised agency. The influence of discourse is that it “offers learners ways to use language to signal and assert learner identity and to indicate group affiliation and cultural membership” (Gumpers, 1982; Gee, 1999, 2000; Hymes, 1974). The findings of this study are consistent with this view as discourse shaped meanings and experiences of learners in all schools. Weedon (1987) argues that discourse influences the possibilities of thought and action by positioning learners (Olitsky, 2010). I found that learners were encouraged to see beyond high school experiences and aim for university access. As a result, learners seemed to have been motivated to study hard at the School of Excellence. Learners became university oriented. Furthermore, learners had confidence in education and its rewards. This could be attributed to how the school presented the idea and the importance of education in an individual’s life. Masibambane High School had different contradicting discourses. Teachers emphasised the importance of education in an individual’s life. They encouraged learners to fully concentrate on their school work and not pay attention to experiences that would hinder their progress. Learners mentioned how important it was to have their teachers mention that to them. It led learners to behave and fully concentrate on their school work. They mentioned how much they looked to their teachers and wanted to emulate them. Learners became goal driven after hearing histories of their teachers and how far they had come in life. Teachers’ life stories brought self-belief in learners and they believed that their home backgrounds would not define them. They became eager to chase their dreams. On the other hand, learners in some classrooms created the discourse that was based on the view that school was not important. These learners believed that having group discussions was a waste of time and learners who assisted other learners had a sense of superiority. Participants mentioned how some learners became demotivated and discouraged from participating in class. Hence, not all learners did well in their school performances at Masibambane High School. By sharing their life histories, teachers created a discourse and opened up a dialogue between them and learners. They ordered reality in a certain way that learners were not familiar with (Makoe, 2012). In addition, when learners assisted each other in class, they also became agentic and took a subject position. These findings are consistent with that of Archer and Dewitt (2010) who found that discourse was circulated and sustained by both the teachers and the learners.

At School of Excellence the dominant discourse was that of excellence in every aspect of the learners' lives. This discourse ordered learners' realities in ways that learners saw themselves as people who were capable of achieving excellence. As a result of the positive atmosphere at school, learners were motivated to be part of everything at school. Learners' lived experiences went beyond academics and included sporting experiences. By learners using their sporting experiences, they had used what Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014, p. 37) termed "practical funds of identity for self-definition, self-expression and self-understanding".

At Independent School influences of discourse was evident. Both teachers and learners created discourses. Miss Chivani shared her life stories with learners and, according to learners, was approachable. This allowed learners to be comfortable in sharing their experiences with her as they trusted her. By being open to learners, Miss Chivani created an opportunity for engagement with learners. Learners were able to voice to her their experiences and frustrations in school. Consciously or unconsciously she created a subject position for learners who felt that the school did not care about them. In addition, learners had their own discourses which were more based on being vocal and resistant. They voiced their dissatisfaction on how the school principal had treated them and how unapproachable she was. They felt that their feelings and daily experiences were not considered. Their discourse created a group affiliation and cultural membership (Gee, 1999; 2000). Learners had grouped themselves according to similarities of their views and life experiences.

Embedded in discourse is language. Weedon (1997) argues that it is in "language that individual gains access to or is denied access to a social network that gives learners the opportunity to speak" (cited in Norton, 2010, p. 2). The findings of this study are that discourse at Independent School regulated what to say and what not to say. The regulation of what was possible and not possible to say is consistent with Weedon's (1997) view with regard to the role of language. This finding is consistent also with the literature, as Foucault described discourse as:

They define, describe and delimit what is possible to say, and not to say ... A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, and organizes and gives structure to the manner in which a particular topic, object or process is to be talked about ... [I]t provides descriptions, rules, permissions and possibilities of social and individual actions. (Kress, 1989, p. 7, cited in Makoe, 2012)

Lerato stated that learners felt they had no voice at school. Clearly for some learners this could constrain their exercise of agency. It could also limit their abilities to negotiate their sense of self (Norton, 2010). This finding is consistent with the view that “the degree to which learners can appropriate agentic subject positions in school depends on the contextual affordances; the resources of identity recognition offered by peers, teachers and others” (Charteris, 2016). However, amid feeling voiceless, learners became agentic by being resistant to dominant discourse; consequently, they created their own statements. This finding is consistent with Norton’s (2010) assertion that learners with a sense of agency may resist established positions in schools in innovative and unexpected ways. Participants stated how they could not be kept quiet despite numerous instructions from teachers to keep quiet. It seems that learners had used a ‘funds of knowledge approach’ to construct ‘subversive identities’ in order to undermine the authority of teachers and the principal (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014). Furthermore, participants mentioned how they would spend much of their time together so as to discover themselves as they felt free when among their friends. This grouping became a place where participants would negotiate learner identity. The influence of discourse was prevalent at Masibambane High School as there was exacerbation of stereotypical views regarding learners. It seems that learners who may have conducted themselves in an unseemly manner in the previous years were regarded as permanent troublemakers.

The influence of class

In this study, class played an important role in the experiences and meanings learners encountered at school. Class also influenced how learners exercised agency in schools. In alignment with Bourdieu’s (1986) views that learners from middle to upper-middle class backgrounds possess cultural capital that is compatible with that of the school, learners at School of Excellence possessed the right ‘cultural capital’. This could be because their parents possessed all forms of capitals: *the embodied*, *the objectified*, and *the institutionalised capital*. Learners had reading materials at their homes. Consequently, learners at School of Excellence were able to do well in their schoolwork. On the other hand, working class learners from the township, at Masibambane High School in particular, did not possess the right kind of capital. They struggled to fit into the school’s expectations; as a result, they went against the grain of the school. There is a sense that at Masibambane High School learners experienced ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu, 1986). Those learners came from poor home backgrounds and experienced a cultural clash at school due to the incompatibilities of

cultures. Also those poor learners did not have parents who were working; as a result, they were unable to wear a full school uniform as was expected by the school. It seems ‘symbolic violence’ was experienced by black learners in particular in all three schools. This finding is consistent with Carrim’s (2009) view that there is an intersection between ‘race’, gender and class. Symbolic violence happened in terms of hair, as black learners were expected to cut their hair short. Participants mentioned how schools would not allow them to have their own choice of hairstyles. According to Carrim (2009), hair was found to be used by learners to signify an identity possession of the learners. This study found that as a tool of expressing their identity, the cutting of hair constrained learners from exercising agency in the manner they wished. Cutting of hair was problematic and discriminatory to working class learners from poor backgrounds as they did not have money to cut their hair. This finding is consistent with Carrim (2009) who found that hair was used to reinforce the logic and practice of discrimination.

The influence of community

Findings of the study indicated that identities were contextually produced. The communities from which learners came played a major role in the experiences and meanings they made at school. Learners’ sense of being was influenced by people they lived with in the communities. One learner mentioned how his identity was shaped by members of the community where he originated and that he aspired to be a great rugby player so that he could make his community proud. Since learners at the School of Independence were from a community dominated by educated people, they brought the culture of discipline with them to school. It seems learners used ‘funds of identity’ (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014) as they internalised community resources in order to make their own meanings and experiences at school. This finding is consistent with Coll and Falsafi’s (2010) view that individuals “learn to be members of the social and cultural communities, to experience themselves in a certain way”. They aspired to make it to university. The churches they attended and advice given at church influenced their view of the world. As they attended school, they knew that discipline was key to realising their goals. This finding is in alignment with Willis’ (1977) finding that learners use dominant discourses from their neighbourhood to negotiate with the school’s dominant discourse. Moreover, learners at Masibambane High School, constructed their identities against the backdrop of their community. They wanted to be educated as a means to escape the poverty and harassment that was prevalent in their community. In this instance, learners could be seen as using institutional funds of identity to assert their own identities.

The conditions which they were subjected to in their communities influenced them to be disciplined and committed at schools. Learners of Independent School mentioned how the togetherness in their communities had made them realise the significance of living with other learners at school. The groups they formed at school and subject positions they assumed were products of the community discourses.

Framing of the ideal learner

The literature uncovered that ideal learners in Western Europe mirrored the neoliberal values which demanded that learners always improve themselves (Bradbury, 2013). Western Europe defined the ideal learner as someone who was rational and enthusiastic. In this study I found that School of Excellence learners mentioned how they were expected to behave as adults, which meant that they were supposed to think before any action. Further, the school also emphasised the need for learners to take responsibility for their school work. In addition, learners were encouraged to be the best they could possibly be. Learners were groomed to be independent. This finding is consistent with Walkerdine's (2003) finding that the liberal subject is industrious, diligent, responsible and self-regulating, introspective, flexible and self-transforming. Western Europe might have used EYFS to define the characteristics of ideal learners (Bradbury, 2013), however all schools in my study used the school's code of conduct to outline characteristics of ideal learners. Both Western European literature and schools in my study emphasised that learners were rational subjects that were able to apply their minds to different issues they encountered. At Masibambane High School, there was confusion regarding the kind of learners that were expected by the school. Learners mentioned how some teachers saw them as winners while other teachers saw them as losers. Learners mentioned that teachers who perceived learners as winners emphasised to them that they would pass if they studied. In contrast, teachers who viewed learners as losers, always told learners that I did not matter how much they were dedicated to their school work because at the end they would fail. At Independence School learners mentioned that they had no idea of the learner the school sought to construct. They mentioned that there was no clear communication from the principal concerning the expectations she had of learners.

In this section I have presented the internal and external influences that shaped learner identity and influenced ways in which learners exercised agency in school. This section also shed light on the tool used to define the ideal learner. The literature and findings of my study show that learner identity was influenced by influences learners had control over and

influences learners had no control over. Despite this, learners became agentic and negotiated their identities in schools.

5.2.3 Complex and multifaceted identities

In this section I present the complexity of identities that were evident in all schools. I discuss how learners did not hold one identity, rather they had multiple identities. Some of these identities signified how learners exercised agency.

In the literature, Charteris (2016) mentioned that identities are fluid, complex and can change over time. This assertion is consistent with the findings of my study as I found that learners in all three schools were heterogeneous subjects possessing complex and multifaceted identities. Some learners believed that they were more than school learners. They viewed themselves as having dominant identities that were not fully given attention at school. I found that learners saw themselves being more of sport players, dancers, writers than being learners. To them school ought to have been a space where their true selves were realised. School was not only the place for constructing learner identity, it was more than that. To learners, it had to facilitate their talents. Failure of the school to assume the role that learners believed it had to assume lead them to not see the value of it. At times learners' personal identities clashed with the learner identity that the school sought to construct. As Dineo stated, Independence School was trying to keep them in a box when all they wanted was to build their own identity. Being kept in a 'box' frustrated learners and other identities important to them were constrained. In addition, Lerato stated that not only did learners possess their own learner identity, they were more than that. According to her, they were much more talented and could do a lot of things including being athletes, netball players, soccer players, etc. Findings at the School of Excellence echoed that learners were heterogeneous subjects that held multiple identities. Mpendulo identified himself more as a rugby player than he did as a learner. It seems that learners in all schools demonstrated 'double directionality' as they allowed schools to construct learner identities and they negotiated their own identities (Charteris, 2016). As Akhona stated, despite allowing school to shape his learner identity, he did not want to be a prodigy of the school, thus he further negotiated his identity. In conclusion, schools needed to take into account the existence of other identities learners constructed so as to avoid a clash. At Masibambane High School learners believed that their human identity was important and therefore needed to be taken

into account by the school. They demanded that they be treated equally and respected by both the teachers and other learners.

5.3 Differences

In this section I discuss the difference between findings in the literature and the findings of my study. The difference that was obvious from the outset was in the methodology. This is followed by ways in which schools employed mechanisms of constructing learner identity compared to how they were presented in the literature.

The differences between the findings in my study versus the findings in the literature are that my study were, first, that in the literature the architecture was the panopticon that was designed with a series of small cells along the corridor with the officer constantly gazing at learners (Foucault, 1977). Learners became confined to their cells. In my study, the architecture was that of the school with learners being kept in their classrooms. Teachers and peer educators were responsible for observing learners. Second, the literature uncovered “a slightly raised platform for the tables of the inspectors of studies, so that they could see all tables of the pupils of their division during meal” (Foucault, 1977, p. 173). In the study, teachers and the principal stood on stage during the observation of learners. Third, the literature covered language in its verbal sense. The findings of this study extended the use of language to the nonverbal use of it and concentrated on the actions of learners. Fourth, the co-construction of learner identity in the literature was based in the interactions that took place in the class during teaching and learning. There was mention of the knowledge that is transmitted in classrooms. In my study I focused on the learners’ experiences in the whole school. Last, in the literature I covered hair was a tool for discriminating learners. Carrim (2009) had found hair to be what marked black learners from white learners. In this study, learners spoke of the limited haircuts not in discriminatory terms. The findings of this study revealed that hair had not been used to mark black learners from white learners but on the contrary, hair was used as a tool of asserting identity by learners.

Not much was said by participants with regard to the use of examination. Foucault (1977) stated the importance of examination and how it is used to construct learner identity. Not mentioning much on the examination suggests that the focus was put on disciplining learners rather than extracting knowledge from them.

5.4 Findings reflected on the theoretical framework

This study juxtaposed two distinct theories: Foucault's (1977) theory of power and Butler's (1988) theory of performativity. Both theories were relevant in this study as, first, reflected power was employed in constructing learner identity, and second, how learners navigated through power to exercise agency.

Foucault's theory of power

Foucault's (1977) theory of power indicated that individuals entered school not possessing learner identity. The learner identity was constructed by subjecting individuals to socialisation so as to construct learner identity. Socialisation of learners was embedded in observation and normalisation of learners. The findings of the study echo Foucault's mechanisms of constructing learner identity. Participants mentioned that they were under constant gaze in school. Furthermore, mechanisms of constructing learner identity incorporated power and show explicitly how power functions in the school. The literature showed the relationship between different actors in the school operating in the form of a pyramid (Foucault, 1977). This was evident in the study as they were the principal, teachers, and prefects who assumed different positions to give effect to power. Power allowed these actors to see everything that happens in the school. The study found that prefects and peer educators walked in between learners to check if they wore their full school uniform. In addition to strict observation, learners were subjected to various forms of punishment. Punishment in my study was a result of a slight deviation from correct behaviour

Butler's theory of performativity

Employing the theory of performativity, learner identity was seen as inherently stable and revealing norms requiring continuous maintains. Participants in the study revealed that they held multiple identities that shifted and changed based on their interaction with their teachers. The findings of this study revealed that failure of the school to be consistent in the application of the mechanisms of constructing learner identity led to confusion of learners. Learners did not have a clear sense of the kind of learner that school sought to construct. The inconsistency of school in its application of the mechanism resulted in learners behaving in ways deemed to be unacceptable. The study found that learners exercised agency in non-unitary, complex and inter-discursive ways (Charteris, 2016). In addition, it was apparent that learners' agency was constituted in different discourses.

5.5 Areas of silence

Areas of silence in my study

It is important to note that in the literature “hair was used to mark working class learners from middle to upper middle class learners” (Carrim, 2009, p. 375). In addition, in the literature hair was used as the basis for discrimination. There is no clear evidence in my study of hair being used as a tool of discrimination. However, in my study I found that not all learners in the middle and upper-middle class school possessed the right cultural capital. Attending middle to upper-middle class school does not necessarily mean that learners will do well at school. Also, attending a working class school does not automatically mean that learners will do badly academically. It is important also to note that despite being from the middle to upper-middle class, learners do not always utilise cultural capital in productive ways. The findings in the literature incorporated more of the learners’ engagement with subject content as that is the main purpose of the school.

Generation of new knowledge

The findings of my study indicate the need for the education system to look beyond the marks of learners when understanding learners’ performance. Attention must be given to the social relations that learners have with fellow learners and, most important, with the teachers and the principal. The findings of the study revealed that human relations play an important role in determining marks and learners’ academic progress. It was uncovered that when learners are not content with people in position of authority, their academic performance in class drops. Consequently, this leads to a loss of interest in academics. Also, people in positions of authority need to be open to opposing views of learners and encourage dialogue. This study explicitly showed that had learners at Independent School been heard and found the principal approachable, maybe their rebelliousness would have been curbed.

Moreover, the study uncovered that not all learners who attend upper-middle class schools attend school for the purpose of the acquisition of specialised knowledge. Some learners attend school having a dominant identity which is not that of the learner. Learners see themselves being more than learners and school ought to take into account contradicting identities learners hold and perhaps assist learners reach their full potential by letting them decide what they want to be and be supportive of learners’ choices. School should encourage more subject positions for learners and not impose an identity onto learners.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how schools used mechanisms for constructing learner identity as advocated by Foucault. I then explained subject positions that existed and were available in schools. In some instances, those subject positions arose from dominant school discourse. I further indicated the internal and external influences that influenced learner identity. Nested in the influences was how learners negotiated both their personal identities and learner identity. I cited the form of symbolic violence learners experienced. Despite constraints and limitations, learners co-constructed different identities using different tools and approaches. There is enough evidence in the study to suggest that learners are agentic in school contexts. Despite the established subject positions in school, learners intentionally take the initiative and action to re-position themselves as individuals.

CHAPTER SIX

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I present the summary of emergent themes and findings of this study. I outline the limitation of the study which are then followed by the significance of study. I then revisit research assumptions that were made in this study. In conclusion I present study recommendations for practices and future research.

6.2 Summary of emergent themes and findings

This study explored how learners exercised agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses. The findings of this study were framed on the three themes that emerged from the study. First, the internal and external influences on learner identity and learner agency. Second, the mechanisms and instruments schools used in constructing the identity of the learner. Third, how learners negotiated with school discourses and expectations that schools had of them. In this section I summarise the themes and findings of this study.

6.2.1 Internal and external influences

Learner identity and learner agency was influenced by both internal and external influences. This study found that parents' embodied cultural capital influences learners' identities. Learners' brought to school cultural behaviour that was instilled at their homes. Parents of learners had instilled manners and behavioural patterns to learners at a young age. It was at their homes where learners had learned how to conduct themselves. At School of Excellence, learners portrayed the kind of behaviour and attitudes that they had learned from their parents. This resulted in no cultural clash between the school's ethos and learners' behavioural patterns. At Masibambane High School, it was evident that learners that came from unstable families where little teaching of correct behaviour took place. This led to learners finding it difficult to adapt to the school's expectations. Parents who were well-off managed to acquire objectified cultural capital for their children. This meant that learners had book, magazines and newspapers to read at their homes. The level of education of parents shaped learner identity in that learners became eager to study further and have educational

qualifications the same way as their parents. And because their parents had some formal education, it was easy for them to assist their children in their school work.

Learner agency was found to have been influenced by family, peers, community and teachers. The subject positions learners took were informed by their families. Some learners became good learners at school and did their school work because they did not want to disappoint their families. They either wanted to be like their parents or emulate them. For other learners, they allowed their peers to define them and how they ought to have conducted themselves in school, while other learners resisted the temptation of peer influences and made their own decisions on how they would conduct themselves in school.

6.2.1 Mechanisms and instruments of constructing learner identity

All three schools in the study had used the mechanisms and instruments recommended by Foucault (1977) for constructing learner identity. Learners were subjected to a constant gaze from teachers to peers' educators. The conduct of learners was closely monitored in schools. From the assembly to the classrooms, learners were required to be always on their best behaviour. There was checking of the school uniform that took place daily. Failure to wear full school uniform was condemned and learners were called out. In some instances, learners who did not wear their full school uniform were not allowed to enter school. Names of rebellious learners were noted for record keeping so that they could be known by authorities. All schools used a demerit and detention system in disciplining learners. This shaped learner identity and due to fear of punishment learners behaved appropriately. However, the inconsistent application of disciplinary measures at Independent School led to learners not fearing being disciplined. It became known to learners that whatever wrong they committed the school was not going to act against it. Punishment at Masibambane High School extended to corporal punishment. At times learners were physically assaulted for failing to complete their tasks on time or for arriving late in class after the lesson had commenced.

6.2.3 Learner Agency

In schools, learners became agential. They negotiated learner identity and constructed their own identities in school. In classrooms learners took the initiative in their learning and engaged each other on certain subjects. They would discuss topics they found challenging. This was done by forming groups and positioning themselves according to their own abilities. Learners expressed how they felt about the school and authority. In instances where they felt the school was not accommodative of them, they resorted to grouping themselves and

forming a community that shared similar values. It was in the community where learners felt they could be anything as they were not judged for who they were. In addition, learners exercised agency by accepting instructions from school. They did their school work and participated in various sporting activities.

6.3 Limitations of study

First, this study concentrated only on a small sample of learners, three classes in particular with a total of 90 learners. Second, there were only three sites in which data was collected. Findings of this research study are drawn from the engagements I had with participants. I do not aim to generalise findings of this study, as I only provided a very limited account of how learners exercised their agency in three specific high schools.

6.4 Significance of study

The significance of this study is that it explored life experiences learners are subjected to daily in schools. It uncovered meanings learners made in schools. This study opened the ‘black box’ by listening to voices of learners. It allowed learners to speak on their behalf and not have assertions imposed on them. This study signifies the importance of acknowledging and accommodating learners from different spheres of life. It serves as an eye opener to teachers and different stakeholders in education that learners are heterogeneous and are capable of co-constructing their own identities. This co-construction of learner identity is against the backdrop of internal and external influences. In addition, this study showed that learners are agentic. They are capable of creating their own subject positions and also resisting authority in school.

6.5 Revisiting research assumptions

Assumption 1

All schools used mechanisms and instruments of constructing the identity of the learner and all learners were by virtue subjected to power relations that constituted individuals as subject (Foucault, 1977; Leask, 2012).

Findings in this study confirmed this assumption. Participants in the study revealed how they were constructed in the school. Their construction had taken place in assembly and classrooms. Authority subjected learners to a constant gaze that is central in constructing

learner identity. The disciplinary mechanism had used peer educators and prefects for monitoring of learners' uniform and conduct in the school. Power in schools functioned in a form of a pyramid. Teachers, peer educators and prefects all enjoyed power and the right to condemn wrongful behaviour.

Assumption 2

Learner identity and learner agency was a product of internal and external discourses hence discursively constructed (Charteris, 2014).

My study found similar findings that were in alignment with this assumption. Participants in this study indicated how much they learned from their families, communities and peers. They brought with them to school the cultural capital they had accumulated from home. The cultural capital shaped the kind of learners they turned out to be. Internal and external discourses informed learner agency as learners drew from them to assume subject positions in schools and to resist authority.

Assumption 3

All learners possessed and exercised agency in school discourses (Jackson, 2004).

Findings in this study concurred with this assumption. Learners in schools possessed agency and exercised it. Despite feeling suppressed and that their voices did not matter in school, they went on and voiced their frustrations nonetheless. They took the initiative in their learning and assisted one another on their school activities.

6.6 Recommendations

6.6.1 Study recommendations for teachers

In this study I make a recommendation that educators should be accommodative of different learners from different backgrounds. This study revealed that learners understood and interpreted life in different ways. It is then important for teachers to keep this in mind when dealing with learners. Some learners experience hardships and neglect from their home so when they attend school, teachers should not remind them of the horrific experiences they endure at home as participants revealed in this study that some teachers and principal were unapproachable and unwilling to listen to their voices.

6.6.2 Recommendations for future research

More research needs to be conducted on learner agency. Perhaps one could conduct a broad study and explore learner agency of all learners in a school as this would assist the school in understanding the kind of learners they would be dealing with. Understanding all learners' experiences and cultural capital they possess would avoid cultural clashes and subjecting learners to symbolic violence.

6.7 Conclusion

In this study I uncovered learners' experiences and meanings they made in schools. I began by exploring the use of mechanisms and instruments in the constructing of learner identity. I found that all used the mechanisms and instruments. Learners were subjectified and power was exercised over them. This led to a feeling of uncomfortability. However, the mechanisms and instruments were not employed consistently by teachers with led to confusion of learners. Learners did not have a clear idea of the kind of learner identity the schools sought to construct. This study brought to light the influence of external and internal influences on learner identity and learner agency. Learners are shaped by influences external to the school. The cultural capital they bring with them to school informs their agency. This study found that learners hold multiple identities that are contradictory to learner identity. Teachers and schools need to be accommodative of all learners from different backgrounds.

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APPENDIX A: Questionnaire to be answered by learners

1. Do your parents/guardians have educational qualifications? i.e. passed matric/have a certificate/diploma/degree. **YES/NO. if yes, please indicate what kind of qualifications they have.**
2. Do your parents help you with your homework and other school activities? **YES/NO.** If **YES**, who helps you?
3. Do you have books/newspapers/magazines at home to read? Do you read them?
4. Has being at school all these years been helpful to you? **YES/NO.** Explain **WHY** it has been useful or not useful.
5. What do you think is the kind of learner that the school wants you to be?
6. Do you think that you are the kind of learner that the school wants you to be? **YES/NO.** What makes you think that way? Explain.
7. Did the school give you the code of conduct? **YES/NO.** If yes, do you read it?
8. What kind of behaviour is the school expecting from you when you are at school?
9. Do you behave as expected in the premises of the school? **YES/NO.**
10. What does the school do in order to ensure that you behave as expected?
11. What happens to you at school when you do not behave as expected?
12. How does the school keep a track about you and the progress you make?
13. Do you think the school allows you to be yourself and do what you like on the school premises? **YES/NO. What makes you think that?**
14. Do you wear your full school uniform? **YES/NO?**
15. How often does the school check your school uniform?
16. Is there any prescribed hairstyle or haircut that you are supposed to have as a learner? **YES/NO.**
17. How do you feel about having or not having a prescribed hairstyle or haircut?
18. Do you receive any rewards at school? **YES/NO. If yes, how often do you receive rewards?**

APPENDIX B: Learner semi-structured interview schedule

1. What do you think is the kind of learner the school wants you to be?
2. Do you think you are that kind of the learner that the school wants you to be? Why?
3. Do you think the school considers your feelings, experiences and your background?
4. What do you think the school does in order to make sure that you become the learner they want you to be?
5. What difficulties do you experience at school, and what difficulties do you have to become the kind of learner the school wants you to be?
6. If the school does something you don't approve of, how do you show your disapproval?

APPENDIX C: Teacher semi-structured interview schedule

1. Do you have rules for your learners that stipulate what they should and should not do?
YES/NO. If **YES**, why do you have such rules for learners?
2. What kind of learner do you want to develop in your class?
3. What do you do to ensure that the kind of learner you want to develop happens in practice?
4. When do you reward learners and why?
5. When do you not reward learners and why, and what do you do?
6. What background do you think your learners come from?
7. What are the difficulties that you experience with the kind of background your learners come from and what do you do to deal with such difficulties?
8. What kind of behaviour and attitudes do you expect from and encourage among your learners?
9. How do learners resist the construction of the identity of the learner?
10. When learners are around the school premises, how often do you observe them?

APPENDIX D: SGB Information letter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria
Groenkloof Campus
Pretoria
0002

Date: 02 January 2018

Dear SGB Chairperson

My name is Lwazi Ziqubu. I am a Master of Education student at the University of Pretoria.

I am doing research on the **learner agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses**.

My research involves administering a questionnaire to one grade 10 class that learners will answer according to their understanding and this will be followed by the interviews of five grade 10 learners, who would have volunteered to participate in the interviews. Both the learners' questionnaire and the interviews will be conducted in classrooms or any other suitable venue in the school that may be recommended by the principal. The questionnaire and the interview will take place after the school day has concluded. Both the questionnaire and the interviews are scheduled to take 20 minutes each. This will be followed by the interview with one grade 10 teacher which is also scheduled to take 20 minutes in his/her respective office. All of the questionnaire and interviews are to be carried out during non-contact time so that it does not disturb the teaching and learning in the school.

The reason I have chosen your school is to some extent due to its geographical location and the kind of learners it has which are from different socio-economic backgrounds. I believe that with the kind of learners at the school, I will be able to get the rich data I require for my study.

I hereby invite your school to participate in this research project on the learner agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. Although there are no foreseeable risks involved in this study, counselling support will be provided to learners in the event they experience any discomfort during the interviews. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study as I will use pseudonyms when referring to the participants .i.e. learner A, teacher A. The school's privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be stored in a secure place at the University of Pretoria and will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Lwazi Ziqubu

48 Mathenjwa Street
Katlehong, Sluma Gardens
1434

ziqubulwazi@gmail.com
071 1315 346

Signature of student

Signature of supervisor

APPENDIX E: Principal information letter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria
Groenkloof Campus
Pretoria
0002

Date: 02 January 2018

Dear Principal

My name is Lwazi Ziqubu. I am a Master of Education student in the University of Pretoria.

I am doing research on the **learner agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses**.

My research involves administering a questionnaire to one grade 10 class that learners will answer according to their understanding and this will be followed by the interviews of five grade 10 learners, who would have volunteered to participate in the interviews. Both the learners' questionnaire and the interviews will be conducted in the school's classrooms and they are scheduled to take 20 minutes each. This will be followed by the interview with one grade 10 teacher which is also scheduled to take 20 minutes in his/her respective office. All of the questionnaire and interviews are to be carried out during non-contact time so that it does not disturb the teaching and learning in the school.

The reason I have chosen your school is to some extent due to its geographical location and the kind of learners it has which are from different socio-economic backgrounds. I believe that with the kind of learners at the school, I will be able to get the rich data I require for my study.

I am inviting your school to participate in this research on the learner agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study. Although there are no foreseeable risks involved in this study, counselling support will be provided to learners in the event they experience any discomfort during the interviews.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study as I will use pseudonyms when referring to the participants .i.e. learner A, teacher A. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be stored in a secure place at the University of Pretoria and will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Lwazi Ziqubu

48 Mathenjwa Street
Katlehong, Sluma Gardens
1434

ziqubulwazi@gmail.com
071 1315 346

Signature of student

Signature of supervisor

APPENDIX F: Parent information letter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria
Groenkloof Campus
Pretoria
0002

Date: 02 January 2018

Dear Parent

My name is Lwazi Ziqubu. I am a Master of Education student at the University of Pretoria.

I am doing research on the **learner agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses**.

My research involves administering a questionnaire to one grade 10 class that learners will answer according to their understanding and this will be followed by the interviews of five grade 10 learners who would have volunteered to participate in the interviews. Both the learners' questionnaire and the interviews will be conducted in classrooms or any other suitable venue in the school that may be recommended by the principal. The questionnaire and the interview will take place after the school day has concluded. Both the questionnaire and the interviews are scheduled to take 20 minutes each. This will be followed by the interviews with one grade 10 teacher which is also scheduled to take 20 minutes in his/her respective office. All of the questionnaire and interviews are to be carried out during non-contact time so that it does not disturb the teaching and learning in the school.

The reason I have chosen your child's class is because it is a perfect class to work with for my topic due to the kind of learners it has. The school has learners from different socio-economic backgrounds and I believe such learners will be able to provide me with the data I require for my study. I hereby request your child's participation in the questionnaire and in the interviews (that is if s/he will be one of the 5 volunteers) that I will conduct in the school during non-teaching hours.

Your child will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. S/he will be reassured that s/he can withdraw her/his permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating and your child will not be paid for this study. However, counselling support will be provided to your child if the interview causes them any discomfort. So you can be assured that no harm will be done to your child.

Your child's name and identity will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study as I will use pseudonyms when referring to them .i.e. learner A, learner B. His/her individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Lwazi Ziqubu

48 Mathenjwa Street
Katlhong, Sluma Gardens
1434

ziqubulwazi@gmail.com
071 1315 346

Signature of student

Signature of supervisor

APPENDIX G: Teacher information letter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria
Groenkloof Campus
Pretoria
0002

Date: 02 January 2018

Dear Teacher

My name is Lwazi Ziqubu. I am a Master of Education student at the University of Pretoria.

I am doing research on the **learner agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses**.

My research involves administering a questionnaire to one grade 10 class that learners will answer according to their understanding and this will be followed by interviews of 5 grade 10 learners who would have volunteered to participate in the interviews. Both the learners' questionnaire and the interviews will be conducted in the school's classroom or any other suitable venue in the school that may be recommended by the principal. They are scheduled to take 20 minutes each. This will be followed by the interviews with one grade 10 teacher which is also scheduled to take 20 minutes in his/her respective office. All of the questionnaire and interviews are to be carried out during non-contact time so that it does not disturb the teaching and learning in the school.

The reason I have chosen your school is to some extent due to its geographical location and the kind of learners it has which are from different socio-economic backgrounds. I believe that with the kind of learners at the school, I will be able to get the rich data I require for my study. I hereby request your participation in this research project.

Your name and identity will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study as I will use pseudonyms when referring to the participant .i.e. teacher A. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be stored at the University of Pretoria and will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. Your participation is voluntary, so you can withdraw your permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating and you will not be paid for this study.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Lwazi Ziqubu

48 Mathenjwa Street
Katlehong, Sluma Gardens
1434

ziqubulwazi@gmail.com
071 1315 346

Signature of student

Signature of supervisor

APPENDIX H: Learner information letter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria
Groenkloof Campus
Pretoria
0002

Date: 02 January 2018

Dear Learner

My name is Lwazi Ziqubu. I am a Master of Education student at the University of Pretoria.

I am doing research on the **learner agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses**.

My investigation involves giving one grade 10 class a list of questions that learners will have to answer according to their understanding and then after the questionnaire, I am going to have interviews with 5 volunteers from the grade 10 class. Both the questionnaire and the interviews will be taking place in the school's classrooms or any other suitable venue in the school that may be recommended by the principal. They are both scheduled to take 20 minutes each. All of the questionnaire and interviews are to be carried out during non-contact time so that it does not disturb the teaching and learning in the school.

I hereby request your participation in this research project. If accepted, you will be required to answer a questionnaire and participate in an interview. The interview will be audio-recorded for research purposes. Also, note that this is not a test. Your participation is voluntary, and you have the choice to withdraw from the interview at any time. Your withdrawal from the interview will not affect you negatively. If, during the course of the interview, you feel uncomfortable, a counsellor will be available for your support.

I will not be using your own name but I will make one up so no one can identify you .i.e. learner A, learner B. All information about you will be kept confidential in all my writing about the study. Also, all collected information will be stored safely at the University of Pretoria and will be destroyed between 3-5 years after I have completed my project.

Your parents have also been given an information sheet and consent form, but at the end of the day it is your decision to join us in the study.

I look forward to working with you!

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you

Lwazi Ziqubu

48 Mathenjwa Street
Katlhong, Sluma Gardens
1434

ziqubulwazi@gmail.com
071 1315 346

Signature of student

Signature of supervisor

APPENDIX I: Learner Consent Form

Please fill in the reply slip below if you agree to participate in my study called: **learner agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses.**

My name is: _____

Circle one

Permission to be audiotaped

I agree to be audiotaped during the interview. YES/NO
I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only. YES/NO

Permission to be interviewed

I would like to be interviewed for this study. YES/NO
I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the questions asked. YES/NO

Permission for questionnaire

I agree to fill in a question and answer sheet. YES/NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

- My name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped.
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign _____ Date _____

APPENDIX J: Parent Consent Form

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to allow your child to participate in the research project called: **learner agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses**.

I, _____ the parent of _____

Circle one

Permission to be audiotaped

I agree that my child may be audiotaped during interview.

YES/NO

I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only.

YES/NO

Permission to be interviewed

I agree that my child may be interviewed for this study.

YES/NO

I know that he/she can stop the interview at any time and doesn't have to answer all the questions asked.

YES/NO

Permission for questionnaire

I agree that my child may fill in a question and answer sheet.

YES/NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

- My child's name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my child's name and the name of my child's school will not be revealed.
- He/she does not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- He/she can ask not to be audiotaped.
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign _____ Date _____

APPENDIX K: Teacher Consent Form

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to be a participant in my voluntary research project called: **learner agency in the construction of their identity in school discourses**.

I, _____ give my consent for the following:

Circle one

Permission to be audiotaped

I agree to be audiotaped during the interview. YES/NO
I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only. YES/NO

Permission to be interviewed

I would like to be interviewed for this study. YES/NO
I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the questions asked. YES/NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

- My name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped.
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign _____ Date _____