Using drama in a life skills course:

a social constructionist exploration

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<u>ABSTRACT</u>

The field of interest in this study focuses on exploring a life skills course in which drama was used, and how first year drama students at Tshwane University of Technology constructed their experience of this, as well as what informed their experience. This research was conducted within the framework of social constructionism, which allows the space for the co-construction of knowledge and meanings. The research questions for this project are thus, how did the first year drama students construct their experience of the life skills course where drama was used as a medium? What informed their experiences? Written accounts were made use of as a form of data collection. Themes were identified in their texts and this was then taken back to the participants to check the meaning generated in the analysis. The findings are relevant to those who deal with life skills in higher education. The aim of the research study was not to find a final answer for the questions posed but rather to provide an interpretation, or analysis, of the constructions contained in the texts. It has provided an alternative body of co-created, co-constructed knowledge.

<u>Key words</u>

Life skills; Higher Education; Drama; Post Modernism; Social Constructionism.

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CHAPTER 1 – IN THE FOYER

Dear reader,

Welcome to the start of this research, my mini-dissertation! Before I continue with the more traditional introduction to the work you are about to read, allow me to make a note about the literary styling used. In the presentation of this research report, I want to share an informal conversational style (Viljoen, 2002). By making use of different styles and ways of presenting, I hope to make the meaning process known to the reader. I have made use of drama terms in the titles and also in the presentation of the data, exploring the dialogue genre that forms part of drama and productions. This research report will be presented to you in the form of a drama production. The use of drama and dialogue was influenced by my love for the dramatic arts. I also wanted the context of the Drama Department used in this research, to come to life in the representation of the research. By making use of a creative form, we are given the opportunity to experience the ordinary and understand in new and different ways (Morgan, 2000). To engage with research that is represented in a creative form can be seen as a creative act itself. The invitation to the reader in such creative forms of representation is different from the invitation in a more traditional research study. The former is based on the belief that meaning is not encountered, but rather constructed, and that the act of constructive interpretation is a creative event (Barone & Eisner in Brearley, 2000).

This research report is situated in the qualitative, social constructionist epistemology, with the aim of exploring the participants' process of meaning making, or how they constructed meaning from their experience. As such, the style employed in this report is in line with the qualitative research culture, which views research reporting as including elements from various genres such as fiction and performative texts (Alvermann, Moon & Hagood, 1998). The conversational tone of this research can also be seen as fitting in with social constructionist views, whereby ideas, beliefs and concepts arise from social interchange and are mediated through conversation. Knowledge evolves between people, with dialogue as the core (Freedman & Combs, 1996). It is central to social constructionist thought that

people construct their life experiences, and in that way their realities, through language. Hoyt (1998) describes language as the medium through which we punctuate, organize and structure our reality, and in this way the language we use is a reflection of how we think.

I hope that the literary styling of this research will assist in creating an interactive dialogue with readers as well, and that the dialogue explored here will continue conversations, and create new narratives on this topic. I trust that the performative and creative process will create a community of discovery and meaning making, thereby creating new and different circles of meaning.

This is a co-constructed exploration of how first year Drama students at Tshwane University of Technology gained and processed meaning from the life skills course they attended in 2006. My understanding of the term 'co-constructed' acknowledges the various voices used in this research. It has been a creative putting together, a partnership, that is interactive, conversational and performative, and can hopefully lead to the development of new and different thoughts and ideas, and allow for the opening of new possibilities. Thus there are different voices that fill this research, that have contributed to the co-constructive dialogue and performance piece. I am aware that this is an academic undertaking, and so I have also made use of academic expression to allow for the academic voice to form a part of this co-construction.

While you are here in the foyer, allow me to tell you more about the research. This project and I have come a long way, and as with any production in progress, there has been much frustration, confusion and tantrums, along with the magic and joy! It has been a very interesting journey and I am privileged to share this with you.

The topic of this mini dissertation came into existence while I was working for the Directorate of Student Development and Support, at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). I was asked to co-facilitate a life skills course for the first year Drama group. As part of the syllabus, the Drama Department of TUT offers a life skills course to the first year students. In the past, the production of life skills has received some bad reviews from

the students who take part, particularly from the Drama students. As a result, a new life skills course was produced from July to October 2006.

Life skills lectures at TUT generally take on the following structure: an orientation session, academic skills development and then personal skills development. Under the umbrella of academic skills development, the lectures are divided into themes such as lifelong learning, learning styles, summarizing, memorizing, concentration and writing skills, among others. Personal skills development follows themes such as motivation, stress management, self awareness, empathy and helping skills, sexuality, and many others.

This course was different to its predecessors in life skills teaching, in that it was facilitated through the use of some drama techniques, mirroring the current drama culture in which the students find themselves. It was not held in a conventional lecture room context with conventional styles of lecturing. Instead, the sessions were held in a studio with no fixed seating or desks.

As I looked for literature on compiling an alternative form of facilitating life skills sessions, different to traditional lecturing or facilitating, I had difficulty in finding information on life skills using art and drama. The literature that I could find focused on teaching in a classroom with conventional methods, and topics of life skills. More on the literature will be discussed in the following chapter.

This research project is an exploratory one, looking at the incorporation of drama into a life skills course and how this was received by the students. As this is only the second time that a course of this nature has been implemented at the Tshwane University of Technology, it is necessary to explore and report on its meaning and experience from the point of view of those who participated in it. Additionally, information gathered in this research could be useful for further research and promote the development of life skills courses that make use of drama as a medium at all levels of education.

I chose to look at the stories of the participants after the completion of the programme as I was curious about their experiences. Barragar-Dunne (1997, p.72) states that "drama and narrative together can open and expand therapeutic space and possibilities for alternative stories, self-descriptions, and change". I wanted to look at these possibilities that may have opened from their experiences. I wanted to hear their thoughts and ideas, and gain a better understanding from them personally. This leads me to think about the aims for the research, as well as the research questions.

1.1 Research aims and research question

The general aim is to explore how the students constructed their experience of the life skills course and what informed their experiences. By the term 'constructed', I mean how they have storied their experiences, how they have made sense of their experiences. It is also the aim of this research to initiate dialogue by creating a space of understanding, and encouraging dialogical listening to the voices expressed in this text. It is not the intention of this research to provide a hypothesis in order to give a definite answer to the research questions posed, but rather to offer possibilities and different meanings as generated from the conversation with the participants. By looking at the stories of the participants, it is hoped that this exploration will elicit conversation between myself and the participants, and will allow for future dialogue around the topic of higher education and life skills in particular, where the voices of students can be heard and expressed.

To this end, I have asked the following question when approaching this exploration: how have the students themselves described, or constructed, their experience of the life skills sessions?

1.2 Structure of the research report

The outline of the production programme of this research report is as follows:

In Chapter One, the reader is introduced to the topic, its aims and objectives, the research question and also the general structure of the research report. Chapter Two focuses more on the literature pertaining to the research where I wish to examine literature on the topics of higher education, life orientation, life skills, and the techniques employed during the course that were derived from drama therapy. Chapter Three explores the research position from which this study has been conducted, and discusses the epistemological stance employed. Chapter Four illustrates the research methodology employed to collect and analyse the data. The collected and analysed data will be explored in Chapter Five in order to provide some understanding as to how the students who participated in the life skills course 'languaged' and constructed their experiences thereof. Finally Chapter Six marks reflections on the research, where further recommendations are also discussed.

Following on from this introductory chapter where I have described the research problem, questions and goals, the next chapter will focus on literature. Please come in to the theatre and find your seat. The show will begin soon!

CHAPTER 2 – SETTING THE STAGE

Please make yourself comfortable in your seat. Let me set the stage for you here in the theatre, with a discussion on literature while the orchestra warms up and the final preparations are being made.

This literature study focuses your attention on the context of higher education in South Africa, Curriculum 2005 and life orientation, life skills, drama and drama therapy. This is the backdrop on the stage on which the production is set.

2.1 Higher Education in South Africa

Higher education plays an essential role in the social, cultural and economic development of modern societies. In present day South Africa, the challenge that the Department of Education faces is to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, to meet national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities. It must lay the foundations for the development of a learning society which can stimulate, direct and mobilise both the creative and intellectual energies of all the people towards meeting the challenge of reconstruction and development. (Education White Paper 3, 1997). The purpose of Higher Education includes the following: to meet the learning needs and ambitions of individuals; to address the development needs of society, providing the labour market with the necessary expertise; to contribute to the socialization of responsible and enlightened citizens; to contribute to the creation, sharing and evaluation of knowledge. Higher Education also encourages the development of a reflective capacity and a willingness to review and renew prevailing ideas, policies and practices based on a commitment to the common good. (Education White Paper 3, 1997).

Since 1994, education and training have undergone significant changes. Eighteen departments have been restructured in to nine. Budgets have been redesigned to shake off the inequality that Apartheid had left. Education control has been decentralized. All schools, colleges, universities and technikons have been opened to all races. Curricula have

felt changes as well. New forms of assessment, qualifications and certification have been brought in through the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Higher education itself has been reorganized dramatically. Some changes have been small and some gradual, while others have been large-scale. Jansen (2004) proposes ten spheres of change in higher education in South Africa. Change in size and has included the merger of several universities and technikons. In 2001, it was announced that the number of higher education institutions would be reduced, and later that year, the plan was to reduce the number of institutions by a process of merging. Tshwane University of Technology is comprised of three merged Technikons, namely Technikon Pretoria, Technikon Northern Gauteng and Technikon North-West. Through this, the landscape of higher education in South Africa was changed radically. 21 universities became 11. 15 technikons became five 'stand alone' technikons and six combined universities and technikons. 150 colleges of education became only two colleges, with the remainder incorporated in to universities or technikons or disestablished. In summary, 306 separate institutions for post-school education were reduced to 72 remaining institutions (Jansen, 2004).

Changes also included the accountability of higher education, the nature of higher education providers, the character of the student distribution, the organization of management, roles in student policies, the models of delivery, the value in higher education seeing a rise in economic sciences and a decline in the humanities, and also the nature of the academic workplace (Jansen, 2004).

2.2 Life Orientation

Before I continue to explore life skills, allow me to explain the term life orientation. Life orientation is the general term used for life skills, and is one of the identified eight key learning areas of the Department of Education's curriculum framework (Department of Education, 1997). Life Orientation guides and prepares learners for life and its possibilities. A little vague in its description, the concept is seen as equipping learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society

(www.polity.co.za/html/govdocs/policy/2002/curriculum/part3.pdf). Life orientation is fundamental in empowering learners to live significant and meaningful lives. It has become an integral part of education and development, and has been described as being central to the holistic unfolding of learners, where their intellectual, physical, personal, social, spiritual and emotional growth may be cared for (Department of Education, 1997). Life orientation aims to enhance the practice of positive values, behaviours, attitudes and skills in both the individual and the community. What is more, it endeavours to promote the achievement of the potential of learners, by strengthening and integrating their self concept, capacity to develop healthy relationships with others, decision-making abilities, creative and critical thinking, coping skills, and commitment to lifelong learning. Life orientation encourages a healthy lifestyle that is characterized by the celebration of, care for and responsibility towards the self and also the social, natural and material environments. (http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/discuss/life.html)

Having gained more of an understanding of life orientation, let us continue to explore the notion of life skills education and training.

2.3 Life Skills Education and Training

If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach him how to fish you feed him for a lifetime.

This well-known saying gives a good starting point for understating the concept of life skills education. It is training that is meant to prepare individuals for living, by equipping them with skills to survive. Moote and Wodarksi (1997) add to this understanding that life skills is the formalized teaching of requisite skills for surviving, living with other people, and succeed in a complex society.

2.3.1 Defining Life Skills

Powell (1995, p.24) gives the following definition:

> Life skills are the life-coping skills consonant with the developmental tasks of the basic
> human development processes, namely those skills necessary to perform tasks for a given
> age and sex in the following areas of human development: psychosocial, vocational,
> cognitive, moral, ego, and emotional.

De Jong, Lazarus, Ganie and Prinsloo (in van Staden, 2000, p.17) give an extensive definition of life skills from a South African perspective: " Life skills may be defined broadly as not only skills but also insight, awareness, knowledge, values, attitudes and qualities that are necessary to empower individuals and their communities to cope and engage successfully with life and its challenges in South African society".

From these definitions given, it can be understood that life skills involve many important and different areas of functioning. Life skills help people to know what to do, how to do it and when it is appropriate to do it (Rooth, 1997). Life skills education and training is thus the process of giving indivuals the opportunity to develop and practice necessary life skills (Rooth, 1997).

Life skills is a broad term and it is necessary to look at the different approaches found within this field, in order to gain a better understanding. Below, approaches in life skills education is examined.

2.3.2 Approaches in Life Skills Education and Training

In the multitude of approaches to life skills facilitation, the needs based approach is probably the one that is the best known. The needs based approach emphasizes problems and deficiencies, where facilitators become experts in fixing these problems, supplying ready-made solutions. The facilitators see dysfunction in the clients and label them according to their weakness (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003). This view is also supported by Hopson and Scally (1981, p.85) who state: "Each individual may be seen in terms of qualities or strengths, which he uses for the good of himself and others, and weaknesses,

areas or features of himself that block or impair his own development or that of others". However, this approach has been severely criticized for being "an endless revolving door" that merely collects the same data time and again, and moves on without providing further assistance to address identified problems (Ammerman & Parks, 1998, p.34). Their practice serves to emphasize weakness, and those who make use of this approach become experts who can fix these weaknesses. These professionals come with ready-made solutions to problems; however these solutions are inefficient and seem inadequate in addressing the challenges in the South African context (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003).

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (1997) discuss the ecosystemic approach in South Africa, and how it has made a valuable contribution to overcoming the limitations of the needs-based approach, in that it focused more on the broader social context in which problems manifest themselves. It also allowed for a more complex understanding of problems, and showed the rather quixotic nature of trying to address issues in the lives of South Africans by using the needs based approach. The ecosystemic approach allowed for a more social, holistic perspective.

The asset-based approach is seen as another alternative to the needs based approach. McKnight and Kretzmann (in Ammerman & Parks, 1998) see this approach as an alternative that is capacity-focused and holds an enablement perspective. The asset-based approach is seen as a bottom up approach, which emphasizes partnerships and participation, shifting away from a mentality of professional dominance. It focuses on the capacities and abilities of people. Effective living is dependent upon making use of those capacities and abilities, and every time a person makes use of their assets and capacities, the system becomes stronger and the individual is enabled. Instead of seeing dysfunction and what is lacking n people, this approach sees the strengths and assets inherent to individuals and their environment (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003).

2.3.3 <u>Specific life skills</u>

There are certain themes that can be found in literature surrounding specific life skills, namely the enhancing quality of life, coping skills and social and community functions. These will be explored below.

The first theme examines specific skills that can enhance one's living and quality of life. Lindhard and Dlamini (1990) define life skills as practical skills in living. Strydom (in van Staden, 2000, p.15) characterizes life skills as a "comprehensive approach to helping individual human beings achieve optimal functioning at the present developmental stages and for fostering healthy development throughout the lifespan". Rooth (1995) describes life skills as skills that are necessary for successful living and learning.

Coping skills is another theme used in describing life skills. Rooth (1997) describes life skills as coping skills that enhance one's quality of life and can help prevent dysfunctional behaviour. Lindhard and Dlamini (1990) also view life skills as coping skills that enables one to cope with tasks in times of transformation and change. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2003) discuss life skills as a coping tool, skills that are critical for individuals to cope independently and proficiently with every day activities, demands and changes in different environments.

A social and community focus outlines the next theme. Rooth views life skills as a social skill (1995, p.2): "Lifeskills are the competencies needed for effective living and participation in communities. The greater the range of skills that we possess, the more alternatives and opportunities are available to us – and as a result, there is more meaningful and successful interaction". The better one is equipped with life skills, the greater one's potential for contributing to one's community.

Lindhard and Dlamini (1990) state that there are three objectives to life skills teaching, namely to develop self-knowledge, to develop attitudes and values, and to teach skills for life. Nelson-Jones (1993) adds that the goal of life skills facilitation is to help people to be able to help themselves by using skills that they are taught. This theme of empowerment is

further elaborated on by Rooth (1995) who explains empowerment as a process whereby people gain power of their own lives and focus on the idea of control. Self empowerment is seen as a key theme in life skills education. This sense of empowerment allows the individual to see that regardless of one's situation, there is the ability to look at alternative solutions, and to choose on the basis of one's values and priorities (Rooth, 1995).

I hope that you are now more comfortably situated within the realm of life skills. Let me shift your attention to the next focus area in this production, that of drama.

2.4 Drama

If you were asked to give a definition of the word 'drama', you would probably look away as you sit in your theatre seat. Drama can refer to a theatre production, a movie or a television show. It can refer to the type of drama, such as a comedy or a romance. It could refer to the Greek tragedies of Sophocles or Euripides, or the magnificent works of Shakespeare.

No singular definition exists for drama. The *Oxford English Dictionary* states that drama is a composition in prose or verse that has been adapted to be acted upon a stage, in which a story is related to an audience by means of dialogue and action, and is represented with accompanying gesture, costume, and scenery, as it would be in real life.

It has also been described by Aristotle as "a tragedy" and "the imitation of an action that is serious, has magnitude, and is complete in itself… There are six points consequently of every tragedy which determine its quality: Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle and Melody" (Aristotle in Banks & Marson, 1998, p. 4).

Styan (1975, p.vii) describes drama as not made up of only words, but of "sights and sounds, stillness and motion, noise and silence, relationships and responses. Yet these relationships and responses are not between characters, rather those between actor and audience." McGregor, Tate and Robinson (1977) define drama as an expressive process

which is best understood through the idea of symbolization and the role it plays discovering and communicating meaning.

Drama is also used interchangeably in literature with theatre. Banks and Marson (1998) list four elements as making up the complexity of theatre, namely actors, space, script and audience. They also discuss theatre as being alive, in the here-and-now. It is transitory, in that is can be simultaneously created and experienced. It is also a performing art. While it sounds obvious, drama is meant to be performed. Scripts are written not as an end product but as a stimulus for the theatrical production.

Drama is rooted in social rituals and religions. People have developed rites and rituals to explain the natural functions of the world around us – the sun rising and setting, the change of season, births, and deaths. Drama has also allowed us a platform to mirror what happens in our lives – the tragedy and the comedy.

2.5 Drama and life skills

In South Africa, it appears as though the main focus of the incorporation of drama with life skills is on HIV/AIDS. DramAide uses an educational drama approach with the focus being on AIDS and life skills education. DramAide makes use of poetry, song, dance, theatre-in-education, and art workshops to inform and educate young people about HIV/AIDS (www.ukzn.ac.za/dramaide/default.asp). In 2004, Artscape and Grandwest theatres in Cape Town presented an interactive life skills programme entitled "GrandWest Sound Track 4 Life" that aimed to empower teenagers to stand up for themselves when confronted with problems such as relationships and HIV/AIDS (http://www.capegateway.gov.za/eng/pubs/news/2004/sep/84464). The Johannesburg Youth Theatre also presents life skills sessions focusing on molestation, bullying and HIV/AIDS (http://www.at.artslink.co.za/~jyt/edu.htm). The Baxter Theatre Centre in Cape Town has hosted a life skills theatre programme called Sithi@baxter (http://www.litnet.co.za/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=cause_dir_news_item&cause_id=1270&news_id=31508&cat_id=249) .

The programme aims to teach life skills to teens between the ages of 14 and 18, using the medium of theatre. Personal skills, such as communication, assertiveness and confidence, as well as group skills, including team work and conflict resolution, are the focus of the programme. PeacePlayers International-South Africa (PPI-SA) runs a life skills programme aimed at 10 to 14 year olds, with the main focus placed on HIV/AIDS (http://www.peaceplayersintl.org/dsp_lifeskills.aspx).

I found it difficult to find more relevant, and recent, research in this field in South Africa and perhaps this can be the subject for further research to be done. The programmes mentioned above focus primarily on children below the age of 18, and have a strong focus on HIV/AIDS related life skills. I had a similar experience when researching life skills programmes on an international level.

2.6 Dramatherapy

Next I look at dramatherapy as a genre and the techniques used within dramatherapy. I have explored this as the life skills programme made use of various techniques found within dramatherapy. I believe it will add to the reader's understanding of the programme and its contents.

Dramatherapy is one of the several art therapies, among which are art therapy, music therapy, psychodrama and bibliotherapy. It has its roots in the work of Stanislavski, Evreinov and Iljine (Landy, 1997). Stanislavski looked at the process of enactment as a way of making meaning for both the audience and actors. Evreinov conceptualized two realities, namely that of the person and the persona. The persona functioned to enter the imagined realm and create alternate ways of being. Vladimir Iljine developed a notion of therapeutic theatre based upon improvisation training. Another European influence in the history of dramatherapy is Moreno, who looked more at the art form of theatre.

It concerns a relationship between a therapist and client who is trying to make sense of his/her life experience by engaging in a creative drama process (Landy, 2001).

Dramatherapy's emphasis falls on spontaneity and creativity and, as a result, leaves a lot of freedom for experimentation and change (Kedem-Tahar & Felix-Kellerman, 1996). It involves the intentional or planed use of the healing aspects of drama in a therapeutic process as "drama helps us to share the things that disturb our peace, things we would rather not face, and to do so in safety" (Andersen-Warren & Grainger, 2000, p.13). Drama therapy also refers to the use of dramatic methods in group situations for the purpose of promoting healing, developing improvisation skills as well as creative thinking.

According to Kedem-Tahar & Felix-Kellerman (1996), dramatherapy has evolved into a more controlled and systematic approach through which emotional issues can be explored through dramatic action. Making use of dramatic and creative techniques, people are enabled to give expression to, and work through, problems they may be experiencing or to maintain a sense of well-being. Dramatherapy allows for reflection and may reinforce skills and competencies in themselves, where the words, actions and experiences may provide insights that may be used to change patterns of behaviour and make improvements in personal relationships (www.saits.org.za/kirsten.html). Each person can participate at his/her own level and pace, where they can observe themselves in action. It follows that we learn about human reality by observing others as well as ourselves, making sense of what we see in terms of our own experiences. Furthermore, dramatherapy's characteristic approach is to leave the "crucial business of focusing on individual lives to the persons most intimately concerned" (Andersen-Warren & Grainger, 2000, p.15). The therapists working with them are the guides who help their clients through examining their own temperaments, personal strengths and weaknesses, affective styles.

Dramatherapy fits in well with the concept of life skills as using drama as therapy encourages liberation, expansion and perspective. It invites us to uncover and integrate aspects of ourselves, to stretch our idea of who we are, and to experience our connection with others (Emunah, 1994). This is in line with the objectives of life skills, namely developing self-knowledge, attitudes and values and learning skills for life in a social setting.

Jones (1996) lists the following drama therapy techniques that may be used in sessions: storytelling and story making; puppets; masks; objects; sand tray; role play; improvisation; metaphor and symbols; movement; image making; and text. A wide range of exercises are used taken from music, sound, mime, narratives, imagery, play and physical relaxation (Kedem-Tahar & Felix-Kellerman, 1996). I have given a more detailed over view of how techniques from this genre were employed during the life skills programme in Chapter Four.

2.6 Reflecting on the chapter

In this chapter I have explored the voices found in literature, to explain the concepts that have been made use of in the research at hand. I have looked at higher education in South Africa, giving a broad context to the research.

In the following chapter, I will describe the epistemology followed, as well as qualitative research, postmodernism and social constructionism, and last of all the research methodology employed in exploring the construction of the students' experiences.

CHAPTER 3 – THE BACKDROP

The backdrop of a production allows one to understand the context of the production. Without it, the production would be difficult to situate and understand fully. The epistemology provides the backdrop for this production. Once read, I hope that you will have a more clear idea of how this research is situated.

3.1 Epistemology

Epistemology provides an overall framework for how we look at reality. In short, it informs us on what reality is like, as well as the basic elements it contains, and what the nature and status of knowledge is (Silverman, 2001). Everyone has an epistemology. It is your theory on life, the means through which you see reality. It can be likened to wearing dark glasses - you see the world through those glasses, and behave according to how you see the world. According to Bateson (in Keeney, 1982) it is impossible to be without an epistemology.

I have chosen social constructionism as the epistemology from which I will approach this research. According to Freedman and Combs (1996, p.16) the main assertion of social constructionism is

> that beliefs, values, institutions, customs, labels, laws, divisions of labor, and the like that
> make up our social realities are constructed by the members of a culture as they interact
> with one another from generation to generation and day to day.

I will discuss the main assumptions and terms making up this epistemology, and give you more of an insight into social constructionism. My understanding of social constructionism has grown, and every time I read, or re-read a text, I see new meanings that add to this understanding. However, I feel as though for the purposes of this section, I am going to rely more on literature's academic voices to explore this understanding with you. As the reader, I feel you need to be aware of my position before you begin reading further.

Social constructionism is a part of the postmodern movement. What does postmodern mean? By definition, postmodernism defies definition. Rather than being a theory, it is a

collection of themes, or philosophy, whose core is the doubt that any method, theory, discourse, or tradition has a universal and general claim as the privileged form of knowledge. It developed in strong reaction to modernism (Gergen, 2001).

3.1.1 Modernism

Modernism can be traced back to the 17th century, to the works of Galileo and Descartes. Modernism's emphasis falls on rationality, involving a rejection of tradition and medieval superstition. Modernism posits a strong belief in the lawful nature of the universe as well as in the explanation and control of nature. Modernism could be explained by using the metaphor of a machine, where everything is mechanical and controllable. From this paradigm, psychology concerned itself with the development of logical and empirical methods, such as quantification, controlled experimentation and statistical inference. At the core of the modernist frame of reference sits the belief that the world is 'knowable'. One can understand, predict and control the world. Modernism holds a strong belief in progress through reason and science, a universal truth. Here, the power of knowledge and science, as well as the knowledge of objective experts is of the utmost importance. Modernist approaches support an objective world that we have come to know through progressive scientific knowledge, where empirical methods can be used to generate this knowledge (Gergen, 2001). A search for an ordered and unified view of the world is encouraged. Modernism focuses on dualistic thinking, a hierarchical structuring of reality, and language reflects reality. According to Wilbraham (2004) language, from a modernistic perspective, is a medium of description or communication. Objects and phenomena can be described. Freedman and Combs (1996) point out that language for modernists is a dependable link between the objective and subjective worlds, and that we can know about the world through the language link.

As modernism's opposite, postmodernism developed in strong contract and criticism of modernism.

3.1.2 <u>Postmodernism</u>

Postmodernism offers the most radical challenge to modernism's settled assumptions concerning society and culture, the nature of the individual and also questions concerning knowledge and truth (Blake, 1996). Contrasted with the positivistic nature of modernism, postmodernism negates a world that is held together by universal and absolute truths and universal reason (Burr & Butt, 2000; Gergen, 2001; Kanpol, 1992). The emphasis falls on the local and contextual nature of knowledge. Postmodernism accepts plurality and even celebrates it. There is a spirit of 'both/and', and it is not seen as necessary to reconcile what we think or feel (Burr & Butt, 2000). There is no universal human nature to be discovered, and truth is seen as descriptions of the world, and anything can be re-described (Gergen, 2001). Postmodernism rejects grand narratives that attempt to provide encompassing explanations, such as Christianity, science, capitalism. Knowledge that is contingent, contextual, and linked to power is supported. Postmodernism recognizes that perception is interpretive and inseparable from our frameworks, including language (Kerka, 1997) It upholds identity that is fluid and able to change, and that is derived from multiple discourses. Postmodernists lost confidence in rationality, science, progress and an 'objective' reality. Power is viewed as a process that promotes or discourages forms of practice or thought. (Atkinson, 2002; Burr & Butt, 2000). Rather than having a split between objective and subjective, we are seen as naturally sense-making beings who interpret events and confer meaning upon things (Burr & Butt, 2000).

Social constructionism advanced out of the postmodernist worldview. Having gained an understanding of the paradigm that social constructionism comes from, let us take a closer look.

3.2 Social Constructionism

Rather than giving a single definition, you can loosely group as social constructionist any approach that has one or more of the assumptions, discussed below, as its foundation (Burr, 1998). Social constructionism is mainly concerned with "explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain or account for the world in which they live"

(Gergen, 1985, p.266). Instead of a concern for the external world or an individual mind, it is concerned with social relationships and negotiation, cooperation, rituals, and social scenarios (Steffe & Gale, 1995).

There are four key assumptions that underlie this approach, namely a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge; historical and cultural specificity; knowledge being sustained by social processes; and the partnership of knowledge and social action (Gergen, 1985). These are explained in more detail below.

With social constructionism, we are invited to take a critical view of taken-for-granted knowledge in our understanding of the world. Thus, there are no essential truths, rather our realities are constructed socially and occur through our social interactions with others (Freedman & Combs, 1996). As Gergen mentions (2001, p.7), "from a constructionist's perspective, truth and falsehood exist only within traditions of talk". Our knowledge of the world and reality is constant, where new knowledge statements replace old ones. Research conducted from a modernist epistemology has considered the researcher to be in the best position to describe the research problem. Social constructionism challenges this, focusing on the participants rather to describe their experiences through dialogue, in this instance how they perceived the life skills course. What is of importance in this research is how the students constructed and perceived the life skills course. The meanings that will be generated in the conclusions of this research are not to be seen as ultimate truths, rather an understanding reached after a journey of exploring the life skills course.

Secondly, the manner in which we understand the world is both time and culture bound, and cannot be taken as a permanent description or explanation. It focuses one's awareness on human experience being mediated on a historical, cultural and linguistic level (Willig, 2001). From this, it can be said that what we perceive and experience needs to be "understood as a specific reading of these conditions" (Willig, 2001, p.7). Working from the realm of social constructionism provides me as researcher with a set of lenses that enforces an awareness of historical, cultural and linguistic context of the drama students.

Further, I need to have this same awareness of my own context, as researcher, as I enter in to a dialogue with the students.

The third assumption states that through our everyday interactions, our own knowledge is constructed. Thus our idea of reality is a product of social processes and interactions that people are constantly engaged in (Burr, 1998). In the context of this research, the engagement of the participants and researcher will generate meaning that is in essence a co-constructed process dependent on the interchange of words and meanings in the group.

Lastly, the fourth assumption explains that social constructions of the world are a product of "negotiated understandings" between people (Burr, 1998, p.5). Each construction invites with it a different type of action from people (Burr, 1998). "Descriptions and explanations of the world themselves constitute social action. As such, they are intertwined with the full range of human activities" (Gergen, 1985, p.268).

If no one, objective reality exists, as previously explored in the section on modernism, then how do multiple, social, historically and contextually specific subjective realities exist? According to Rogers (2001), there is a simple explanation. Reality is constructed through a process of three main events, namely externalization, objectification and internalization. Externalization refers to the external social world that we live in, the world that contains different cultures and social groups that construct their own social world. Objectifications refers to the external existence of these constructs, and how these social constructs are seen as objects external to the self. Internalization, as a process, refers to the way in which the external objectified world becomes internalized, or on other words, seen as truth through socialization. Thus, it seems that our behaviour and beliefs are informed by the internalization of our social reality, and the historical and cultural context in which this reality is constructed.

Berger and Luckmann (in Freedman & Combs, 1996) state that our reality is constructed through three steps, namely typification, institutionalization and legitimization. Typification is the process through which we categorize our beliefs into groups. No single

typification can be viewed as being representative of a collective reality, and so it is possible to have different and multiple typifications of one construct. These typifications are learnt from our own culture and social world, and those who reside in them. Institutionalization comes about when typification results in the creation of institutions of knowledge. These institutions assist individuals and social groups in maintaining social knowledge. These institutions become enforced by society through the final process, legitimization. This is a process where social knowledge becomes accepted as reality and truth. Berger and Luckmann (in Freedman & Combs, 1996) also put forward another step, known as reification. This refers to the means by which society begins to accept socially constructed knowledge as a universal truth. Reification combines the previous three steps, implying that people accept concepts as they are and do not question their origin. We disregard our own part in this negotiated construction of truth.

Social constructionism sees reality, and in the same sense truth, as being created by society though a process in which people engage and interact with one another to construct and maintain the truths, beliefs and knowledge of their particular society (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

The emphasis on the social links with Gergen and Gergen's (1991) thought that people participate in multiple realities continuously. People engage in various contexts with multiple demands. They negotiate these multiple contexts everyday and manage to maintain a sense of continuity (Gergen & Gergen, 1991). Furthermore, he states that knowledge is a process of social exchange and emphasizes how one's social interpretations and also culture, family and language have an influence on this interpretation (Gergen, 1985). While there is the acknowledgement of multiple views of reality, social constructionism does not mean to imply that all stories are equally valid, as some accounts are not respectful of difference, religion, gender or race. It adopts flexibility, favouring a both/and idea (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). This both/and approach allows for an interactive process where the addition of other voices is encouraged.

Social constructionism believes that it is essential for me to understand language and the role it plays in order to understand reality and how it is constructed. Strong emphasis is placed on language, specifically how meaning and understanding are expressed through the language we use. Previously language was aligned with the modernist view of being a means to describe reality, dividing reality into an objective and subjective world, where real and perceived are on opposite sides. For social constructionism, language has become the "medium through which knowledge is actively constituted" (Harris, Lea & Foster, 1995, p.175). It is not a tool to view an objective reality. People live in language. Life is experienced in language and, furthermore, how we experience life is given meaning within the boundaries of our language. Shotter (http://www.roguecom.com/roguescholar/collaboration.html) adds to this viewpoint: "Our ways of talking lend further form or structure to what we know about the world and what we know about the world is rooted in our ways of talking".

Language provides us with a means of making sense of our collective world, a means of constructing an understanding of the world we live in. However, this understanding and meaning is not constructed in isolation, but is rather a social process that is influenced by our cultural and historical contexts, as well as by our race, gender, and religion.

According to Burr (1998), social constructionism holds that out knowledge and experience of the world is constantly being produced, or constructed, by people in everyday interaction with on e another. It places a special emphasis on language in this interaction. Through our linguistic exchanges, we construct and re-construct the concepts, objects and categories which we know and with which we are familiar. Meaning is achieved through social interdependence (Steffe & Gale, 1995). In other words, meaning is created within relationships, where knowledge forms a part of people's activities. Within this research context, meaning is created within the relationship between myself and the participants. Following this, as Gergen and Gergen (1991) contend, the researcher becomes part of the outer sphere of shared languages. Participants invite the researcher into their fuller realm. Language and meaning constitute people's lives (White & Epston, 1990). All realities are

socially constructed in language and are maintained through narratives, from which meaning is generated.

Within social constructionism the concept 'discourse' is central. Discourses are concerned with clarifying the processes people use to describe or account for the world in which they live (Kotzé & Kotzé, 1997). Discourses refer to a set of ideas, meanings, metaphors or representations that make up a certain version of events (Burr, 1995). Discourses exist in every society and in every culture. They can be found in the language and narratives used in that particular culture, and provide the framework in which to understand the world. Discourses exist throughout our cultural and historical contexts our language and also the organizations within our society. They do not exist in isolation, but are shaped by a number of discourses that each provides alternative view or possibilities (Burr, 1995).

Each discourse holds a certain truth and meaning. Discourses appear everywhere, in the way people write, speak, and as such then in any use of language. It then stands to reason that if a discourse provides this lens, or frame of reference, that my own experience is granted by the discourses from my own culture and context in time. My experience in the life skills course is then shaped by my own discourses, and similarly as you read this text, your own thoughts will be informed by your own discourses.

Now some discourses are more privileged than others. 'How?' is a question that you might ask. The French philosopher, Foucault, brought to our attention the concepts of power and knowledge, and the relationship they have with discourses. Discourses are maintained through power. Knowledge increases power. Foucault posited that power and knowledge were two practically inseparable concepts – "power is knowledge, and knowledge is power" (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p.38). Thus some constructions and some discourses will be more privileged, as we use discourses to inform our thought and actions. Obviously we would want to use discourses that make our actions seem favourable. In this way we give more power to certain discourses than to others. This gives us a backdrop against which to understand dominant and alternative discourses. Dominant discourses present a specific view of reality, and a specific truth. Dominant discourses, in providing us with a

certain version of reality, are upheld as we choose to accept them. They predominantly inform our beliefs and actions. Alternative discourses, then, are those that stand apart from the dominant discourses, offering a different choice. Alternative discourses exist in society to a lesser extent. When we choose to allow alternative discourses to inform our beliefs and actions, we do so almost in conflict with the dominant discourses (Burr, 1995).

Our realities and our understanding thereof, are contained within our language. We organize our experiences in narratives, giving each experience a beginning, middle and an end. Narratives can be seen as units of meaning (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Through narratives that function within our culture, our understanding is maintained and transferred. Narratives contain language and are can be understood as being stories regarding social practices and beliefs. Morgan (2000) likens narratives to thread that waves events together, forming a story. Narratives within a society create meaning and inform our behaviour. These stories prescribe the dominant and accepted forms of behaviour. Meaning and experience are organized in narratives and are maintained in narratives. By retelling a story, a person can reconstruct the meaning attached to the narrative or 'story' an experience that was previous not 'storied'. By retelling stories, one can rediscover and relive experiences, giving voice to marginalized stories.

Discourses exist within language, but it is our narratives/stories that contain the language that will inform our understanding of our socially constructed reality (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Narratives are our experiences and stories, and discourses, which are etched in us all, inform the meaning we assign to these particular experiences.

Having looked at social constructionism in general, I would like to explore how research can be conducted in social constructionism.

3.3 Research in Social Constructionism

The social constructionist explanation of meaning demands an alternative approach to research (Durrheim, 1997). The aim of one's investigation cannot be truth, one objective

conclusion. In shifting away from an empirical method of research, psychological researchers "must also reject the mechanistic, dualistic, and individualistic understating of their object of study" (Durrheim, 1997, p.176).

Science, through the lens of social constructionism, is no longer a reflection of the world, rather it is "a reflection of the social processes through which it is constructed" (Gergen in Kotzé & Kotzé, 1997, p.30). Gergen states that social constructionism "asks a new set of questions – often evaluative, political and pragmatic – regarding the choices one makes" (Gergen, 2001, p.2), and that "constructionist dialogues are triggering dramatic developments in methodology" (p.3), where the emphasis is on co-construction, narratives, collaboration and dialogue. Research from the vantage point of social constructionism concerns itself with identifying and exploring the diverse ways of constructing social reality that are available in a specific culture, and looking at the implications for human experience (Willig, 2001). Social constructionism holds no preferred research method that needs to be followed; rather it allows the space for almost any method to be used. What is asked of researchers is the awareness of the morality of research (Gergen, 1985). Researchers hold power when dealing with the stories of others in how these stories are interpreted and valued. Further, researchers need to approach their research from the position of 'not knowing', where one takes the stance of interest and tentative inquiry, rather than that of expert and all-knowing.

Similarly, with the "understanding that there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.24), the use of social constructionism allows for the co-construction of meaning and experience with the participants. Language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity always filter one's inquiry into the life of an individual. There can be no objective observations, only observations that are 'situated' in the world of the observer and the observed (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). It is for this reason that I have chosen to include my participants in the analysis of the data to be gathered, as will be discussed in the following section of research methodology. As meaning is constructed within relationships, meaning here is constructed by the researcher and participants together. My

description of the experiences of the participants is only one 'truth' or account and can be interpreted in different ways.

3.4 Reflecting on the chapter

I have explored my understanding of modernism and postmodernism, and how social constructionism evolved from the postmodern movement. Having looked at social constructionism, I am left with the thought that this approach allows for a unique and also empowering way of viewing our reality. Our behaviour and beliefs are constantly constructed by our interactions with other individuals, but also organizations and institutions. It allows for the understanding of how we construct our social realities that sits much more comfortably with me than the explanations of the modernistic epistemology. Postmodernism in general, and social constructionism in particular, have shown me how the behaviour and beliefs of the students in the life skills course, the focus of this research, have been influenced and informed by dominant discourses and narratives and have been influenced by their historical and cultural context.

CHAPTER 4 – THE SCENERY AND PROPS

The backdrop allows for situating the production, and the scenery and props give an understanding of the tools used to make the production possible. Having discussed the epistemological approach followed, this chapter focuses on the props and scenery necessary, the methods used, to explain how the research was conducted. Let me begin with the method followed, namely that of qualitative research.

4.1 Qualitative research

For the purposes of this research report, I worked from a qualitative research position, as I believe that this position ties in appropriately with the world view of social constructionism. What is qualitative research? While both quantitative and qualitative researchers are concerned with the individual's point of view, the latter believe that they can get closer to people's perspectives through detailed interviewing and observation. The argument holds that quantitative researchers rarely capture their subjects' perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). "It appears to differentiate [qualitative researchers] beautifully from those benighted number-crunchers whose concern for mere 'facts' precludes a proper understanding of [perspective]" (Silverman, 2004, p.343).

Qualitative research has had a long history with the human sciences. It involves an interpretive approach to its subject matter. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, where they endeavor to interpret occurrences in terms of the meaning that people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). De Vos (1998) purports that qualitative research is an antipositivistic approach that aims to understand social life as well as the meaning that people attach to everyday living. The word *qualitative* implies focusing on processes that are not meticulously measured, as one would understand *quantitative* research to do. Quantitative inquiries call attention to the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, as opposed to processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Richardson (in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.928) fittingly explains:

> Qualitative writers are off the hook. They don't have to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal, atemporal general knowledge; they can eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as situated speakers, subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it.

Most psychological research is modernist in its assumptions, where "[t]here is a true reality to be uncovered by the activities of its researchers, and findings at one moment in time are the stepping stones to refined findings later on" (Ashworth, Giogi & de Koning, 1986, p.21). Modernism assumes, in this light, that ongoing progress is possible in research, as the assumption that there is one non-negotiable truth, from which it is possible to arrive at ever more accurate knowledge (Ashworth *et al.,* 1986). This assumption is in stark contrast to the guiding principles of postmodernism which social constructionism falls under.

4.2 Research design and process

Before I continue with giving more insight in to the research process, the tools used for data collection and analysis, let me first give a clearer picture of the context of where the research took place, as well as life skills programme that was followed. I believe that it would be more suitable to understand the context of the research participants and the topic at hand first and foremost, before delving in to the research methods.

4.2.1 Context

As my research takes place within Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), I would like to inform you, the reader, about the vision and mission of TUT and the Drama Department, to orientate you. TUT's vision is to be the leading higher education institution with an entrepreneurial ethos. It strives to promote knowledge and technology, and to provide professional career education of an international standard, which is relevant to the needs and aspirations of Southern Africa's people. (www.tut.ac.za)

The mission of TUT is to create, apply and transfer knowledge and technology, of international standards, through professional career education programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Moreover, it has undertaken to serve and empower society by meeting the socio-economic development needs of Southern Africa through the fruits of its teaching and the skills of its staff and students. (www.tut.ac.za)

The Drama Department of TUT has produced both locally and internationally acclaimed actors for more than 30 years. Regarded by the acting industry as one of the top training institutions for actors in South Africa, the Department strives for excellence in the training of professional actors. The drama course focuses on the practical implementation of the knowledge, aesthetics and technical skills of the art of acting. The emphasis is placed on the development of the individual potential of each student. (www.tut.ac.za)

4.2.2 Situating the life skills programme

The life skills course ran from July to October 2006. The course formed a part of the second semester modules of the first year Drama course at the Tshwane University of Technology.

The life skills course took place at the Tshwane University of Technology's Arts campus. This is where the Drama Department is situated, and where the life skills classes were held. As was mentioned in the beginning of this research report, a total of 7 sessions took place. Each session was held for two hours, in which a specific theme was explored.

Allow me to orientate you about the content of the life skills programme that was used. The sessions with the students were conducted in two hour slots. A total of seven sessions were held, with on session per week. Sessions generally lasted about two hours. Each session was held around a different theme. The themes that were explored included teamwork, self awareness, emotional awareness, time management, stress management, conflict management and, lastly, inspiration.

The two main activities that were used continuously through the process are named below. These served to provide structure to the process, following in the style of drama therapy. To begin each session, the 'Name Game' was used, whereby each member of the group was instructed to write their name on a sticker. They had the opportunity to make use of any colour and style that gave expression to their emotional state on that day. This allowed the facilitators and group members to gain insight into each other's moods and feelings. In closing each session, the facilitators and group members formed a circle, greeted each other silently by making eye contact, then turned outwards with their backs to each other, breathing in deeply and making a conscious decision to leave the group behind and ready themselves for the outside world, another exercise from drama therapy techniques.

We held the first session as an introductory one, giving the students an opportunity to voice what they would like to do during these sessions, and the themes that they would like to explore. From this, we designed a programme and the following themes were explored: team work, interpersonal relations, distancing, conflict management, stress and relaxation. A total of seven sessions was held, with the last session being an evaluation of the programme, and focused on inspiration.

Session	Theme / Topic	Activities
1.	Introduction	* Name Game * Expectation Circle (Each group member had to share at least one expectation of the program- these were noted) * Rules (group members and facilitators identified guidelines and rules for the process- these were noted) * Closure
2.	Teamwork	* Name Game * Category Game (the members had to group themselves as quickly as possible, according to various categories called out by the facilitator e.g.; shoe size, star sign, brand of toothpaste used etc) *Self Characters & Questions for Characters (in small groups, each group member had to identify three characteristics of

		themselves, name these to the rest of the group and create a group sculpture from this. This would then be presented to the main group. During reflection, the focus was on teamwork and sharing emotionally).
		* Closure
3.	Interpersonal Relations	* Name Game
		* Dodging (to mobilize energy, members were instructed to walk around the room faster and faster, eventually being "greedy" with space while dodging each other as they moved. During the reflection the emphasis was on interpersonal space and the effect thereof on relationships).
		* Emotional Spacing (practical exercise to determine how close or distant members prefer others being from them. The emphasis during the reflection was on boundaries and interpersonal space and the effect thereof on relationships).
		* Closure
4.	Distancing	* Name Game
		* Distancing with a drumming session
		* Reflection
		* Closure
5.	Conflict Management	*Bean Bag
		*Questionnaire
		* Visualization
		* Sculpt
		* Reflection & Alternatives
6.	Stress and Relaxation	* Name Game
		* Identify & Express Stress
		*Questionnaire
		* Relaxation Exercise
		* Identify and Express Relaxation dramatically
		* Closure
7.	Completion/Evaluation	* Name Game
		* Individual Presentation of Collages (Self Awareness / growth)
		* Small group presentations: evaluation of change that took place during the process
		* Completion of evaluation forms.

TABLE 1: *Outline of programme of themes in Life Skills Course*

Having completed the course, an 'evaluation' of it was necessary to establish the meaning it held. This evaluation, or appraisal, would better be constructed from the viewpoint of the students, as it is their lives that are focused upon during the course, and so, I believe, their experience would be more relevant than that of the facilitators, or Departmental Head. How have the students themselves described, or constructed, their experience of the life skills sessions? The need to answer the following question led me to focusing my research interest on this topic, how have the students constructed their experience of the life skills sessions?

4.2.3 <u>Participants</u>

The participants are two of the first year Drama students of 2006, who attended the life skills course. There were 31 students enrolled in the course for the first year. For the purposes of this study, all students were approached to participate in the research. Out of the students in the class, 2 students chose to participate, namely a female and a male. For the purposes of this research study, I have chosen to name them Jane and Joe, to maintain anonymity.

4.2.4 <u>Self</u>

Allow me to share my own, personal production with you. I am a student in psychology, completing a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology with the University of Pretoria. I did my internship at TUT where working with the drama students and the life skills course was part of my experience. I worked with the drama department on this project, as a facilitator in the course, and so I bring many aspects to this research. I am not only researcher, but also facilitator and participant. I have been a part of a collaborative process. This brings me to another topic, that of voice and reflexivity in research.

4.2.5 <u>Voice and Reflexivity</u>

In academic discourses, the academic voice reigns supreme, a voice that is passive, where no human being is visible. Instruments were selected; decisions were made; records were reviews. The researcher is a third person, a passive voice who gives the impression that the research concerns itself with procedures rather than people. The academic style of writing is employed to convey a sense of objectivity and authority. The overall impression is mechanical and distant, a detached voice. The research is the object of attention, where any human influence is barely implied, and is hidden away in the background (Patton, 2002).

In contrast, the personal voice of qualitative analysis acknowledges the humanity of both oneself and others. It implies relationship, genuine dialogue between the researcher and reader, and mutuality. In qualitative research, the perspective that the researcher brings to the inquiry is part of the context for the findings (Silverman, 2001). A person is the instrument of qualitative methods. In this light, then, reflexivity emphasizes the importance of self awareness, political or cultural consciousness as well as ownership of one's perspective. Being reflexive entails both self-questioning and self-understanding. Reflexivity reminds the inquirer to be aware of and attentive to the cultural, social, political, linguistic and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice, as well as the perspective and voice of those one interviews (Patton, 2002). Hertz (1997, p.viii) describes being reflexive as undertaking an ongoing examination of what is known and how it is known, "to have an ongoing conversation about experience while simultaneously living it".

Regarding voice in qualitative inquiry, voice is more than grammar. According to Patton (2002, p.65) a 'credible, authoritative, authentic, and trustworthy voice engages the reader through rich description, thoughtful sequencing, appropriate use of quotes, and contextual clarity so that the reader joins the inquirer in the search for meaning". Postmodernism challenges us as inquirers to be clear about and own our authorship, to be self reflective, to acknowledge biases and limitations and to honour multiple perspectives. We are challenged to connect voice and perspective to the world we are exploring, to personalize evaluation,

both by owning our own perspective and by taking responsibility to authentically communicate the perspectives of those we encounter during the course of our inquiry.

Self-reflection, or reflexivity, becomes significant in the research epistemology of social constructionism, where the researcher can reflect on his/her own experiences during the research process. When working with the meaning-making of the participants during this research project, I will need to constantly check myself and my position as researcher to be aware of my own assumptions and beliefs and to not let these cloud the stories of the participants. A process of reflexivity produces meanings. If I can turn away from everyday way of looking at the text to seeing alternative possibilities then I will hopefully be able to generate new meaning for myself as I explore the text.

My own discourses and beliefs will inform a great deal of this research, and will also influence the interaction with all of the participants involved in the research study. For these reasons, it is of vital importance that I continuously remain aware of, and examine, my own discourses during the research process, so as not to alter the meaning that the participants have constructed. To further help me in this regard, I have decided to take the identified themes, from the data analysis, back to the participants in order to ensure that they co-construct the analysis with me, as researcher. By so doing, the constructions of the participants maintain their meaning.

Hoskins (2000) suggests that we can acknowledge researcher subjectivity by integrating the voice of the researcher in to the text of the research. I have done this in two main ways. Firstly, I have written this report in the first person, thereby not hiding my voice in the passive third person. Secondly, I have also included my voice in the data analysed, as a participant in the production. I engage in a dialogue with the participants and include this in my analysis.

4.2.6 <u>Data</u>

4.2.6.1 <u>Data Collection</u>

I have made use of written descriptions as my data collecting procedure. In effect, this falls in the scope of interviewing, but the individual, instead of providing a verbal description for a verbal question, has written a text about their experience (Kruger, 1988). This method of collecting data, in my mind, allows participants to pursue their own priorities on their own terms, specifically in their own words. Time is not restricted for the participants. It also prevents altering the meaning of the participants. The meaning of what is being said can only be explored "in the context of the sentences which surround it and the conversation as a whole" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999, p.132).

I have chosen this as my way of data collection as it provides the participants with the opportunity to word their experiences in a manner that is best for themselves, with as little intrusion or control coming from me as the researcher (Kruger, 1988). In this manner I have very little chance to influence the way in which they express themselves, on what aspects they may choose to direct their focus. Their voices are able to be heard as clearly as possible. I am aware that I may use some influence through the way that I word the question that I pose to them, but in essence I intend to provide them only with the topic on which I wish them to reflect, no more. In this instance, I asked them to tell me about how they experienced the Life Skills Course. I left it open ended, so as to allow as much opportunity for a richer response.

4.2.6.2 <u>Data Analysis</u>

For the purposes of this research project, I have made use of the Holistic-Content Analysis, described by Lieblich, Tuval-Masiach and Zilber (1998). This methodology falls within the category of narrative research. According to Lieblich *et al.* (1998) the undertaking of psychology is to explore and understand the inner world of individuals. One of the ways to access this inner world is through verbal accounts of people's lives and their experienced reality. These accounts can be written or oral, that represent a "succession of happenings" (Webster in Lieblich *et al.*, 1998, p.2). This approach follows the whole story, where both

the meaning and the content are the focus. Through reading the narratives, the researcher attempts to create a holistic picture of the text. This specific analysis method is fitting in that the whole story can be the focus, and the voices of the participants can be heard fully. By allowing the researcher to identify themes, or stories, within the text, it opens space for possibilities in meaning. It also allows for different voices within the analysis. By looking at the whole text and identifying themes, it is possible to construct rich and thick descriptions from the stories. I wish to add to the steps indicated by Lieblich *et al.* (1998) by including another step where identified themes are taken to the research participants for reflection and the co-construction of more themes, if necessary. By adding this step of data analysis, the method becomes more co-constructionist and collaborative, opening a space where meaning can be generated, even negotiated, by both the researcher and participants.

The following steps are outlined in the process of data analysis.

- *Step One*

  Read the full material several times until a pattern emerges.
  Read carefully and empathetically, and with an open mind.

- *Step Two*

  Write down initial and global impressions of the text, noting any unusual features, contradictions and unfinished descriptions.

- *Step Three*

  Identify themes, and follow these through in the text. "A special focus is frequently distinguished by the space devoted to the theme in the text, its repetitive nature, and the number of details the teller provides about it" (Lieblich *et al.,* 1998, p.63).

- *Step Four*

  Indicate themes throughout the text by using coloured markers.
  Read the text separately for each theme.

- *Step Five*

  Follow each theme through the text.

  (Lieblich *et al.,* 1998)

- *Step Six*

> Take the identified themes to the research participants and gather their ideas on these themes, allowing them to reflect on the themes highlighted as well as allowing them the opportunity to add to the list of themes. This step allows for the co-construction of the analysis of the data.

I believe that this form of analysing data allows the space for meaning to be generated and for reflections to be made. It allows for analysis without being prescriptive. It is not my intention to find specific truths through the analysis of the data, rather to interpret the text with relation to the context of the lifer skills course.

4. 2.7 Research process

I met with the participants and explained to them the nature of the study. Given the busy nature of their course, it was more effective to get them to write their experiences in their own time. They handed their responses to me, after which time I analysed it, according to the process described below. Once I had made an initial analysis, I gave my work back to the participants so that they could reflect on it. Upon receiving it back, I then reflected on their reflections, creating a circle of meaning. We formed each other's reflecting team. Gergen and Gergen (1991) explain that from a social constructionist point of view, descriptions of the world occur within shared systems of intelligibility, usually spoken language or written text. In this study, the accounts of the participants' experiences are explored within dialogue through written text. In this way, the emphasis falls on the meanings that we have created between us, as we construct and reflect descriptions and explanations in language together (Gergen & Gergen, 1991). Moreover, as Burr (1998) posits, as social constructionist researchers, we should endeavour to interpret the text or material with the full involvement of the participants. It is common, according to Burr (1998), to go through the initial analysis, as I have done in this process, with the participants and to negotiate with them the final form of the report. In my role as researcher, I became a participant, and we could together co-create and co-construct meaning from our experiences. Rather than attempting to safeguard the report from the

'contamination' of the researcher's voice, it is acknowledged that all accounts are co-productions. After getting feedback from the participants, I then looked at my global impressions and noted them in the final section of the analysis, including the texts from the reflections of the participants. Once this process was complete, I reflected on the entire process, and noted this in the concluding chapter of the report.

I have chosen to present the data analysis to you in the form of a script, as if it were being acted out on a stage. I have done this in an attempt, not only to maintain the drama theme of this mini-dissertation, but also I employ the genre of dialogue in the data presentation. Dialogue forms the basis for most drama productions, where characters converse on stage. By employing dialogue as a tool for representation, the participants have the opportunity to talk back, as it were, making their stories more alive. Kvale (1996, p.5) states that "conversation is a basic mode of human interaction. Human beings talk with each other – they interact, pose questions, and answer questions. Through conversations, we get to know other people, get to learn about their experiences, feelings, hopes and the world they live in". Dialogue or conversation, as a method of constructing understanding, seems to be appropriate in this context. By taking these conversations to a reflective level, it allows for "discussions between people who are working together and engage in a search for a level of understanding that will be beneficial for the community as well as illuminating in a theoretical sense" (Halling, Kunz & Rowe, 1994, p.111). This implies that what is known through this process is due to their interaction.

I have made use of most of the text of the responses from participants. Where I have indicated that it is their speaking turn, the words are taken from their texts verbatim as they were submitted to me. I did this to help ensure that the participants' voices are not lost in my own interpretation. I also wanted to provide the opportunity to ensure that their own voices do not go unheard. By presenting their words, I hope to provide a clear channel for learning about these two individuals and their experienced reality. By reading the voices of the participants in this manner, I feel that the meaning generated from you, the reader, will have more space and will not be as cluttered with my own interpretations. I hope that this form of presenting the data analysis to you will enable this process.

4.3 Quality

Quantitative research concerns itself with finding the one, single truth, and objectivity is of utmost importance in obtaining knowledge (Kvale, 1995), to such an extent that it makes competing explanations of the results "implausible" (Kazdin, 1992, p.15). When undertaking research, the knowledge that was generated had to be valid, reliable and generalisable. Kvale (1995) named this the trinity of modern research.

According to Henwood and Pidgeon, as well as Elliot, Fischer and Rennie (in Willig, 2001) quality in qualitative research, on the other hand, calls for a clear and logical presentation of one's analysis, that is demonstrably grounded in the data and that has shown attention to reflexivity issues. "The role of the qualitative researcher requires an active involvement with the interpretation of data" (Willig, 2001, p.141) which maintains a subjective element in the research process. Willig (2001) continues by stating that criteria for evaluating qualitative research need to be tailored to fit the specific method that is used in the research. Considering the social constructionist framework of this research report, I have chosen to draw from the approach of Kvale (1995) to outline the criteria of quality.

Kvale (1995) has taken the concept of modernistic absolute knowledge, and has replaced it with the term defensible knowledge claims. He notes three processes through which defensible knowledge claims are made valid, namely quality of craftsmanship; communication validity; and pragmatic validity.

Kvale (1995, p.27) raises the notion of craftsmanship in describing the validation process in qualitative research in the following manner:

> Validation comes to depend on the quality of craftsmanship in an investigation, which
> includes continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings. In
> a craftsmanship approach to validation, the emphasis is moved from inspection at the end
> of the production line to quality control throughout the stages of knowledge production.

As researcher, one needs constantly to examine the method of collecting data, analysis and the interpretation of the data. An awareness of my own discourses, biases and beliefs will also aid in the quality of craftsmanship, by making certain that my research represents the truths of the participants, and not my own biased version of their reality. I wish to include this awareness in the form of reflection in the research text, by creating a space for reflexivity. "Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research" (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 228).

The second measure of Kvale (1995) is communication validity. This is checked through dialogue, and occurs through a conversation about the participant's social reality (Kvale, 1995). "Valid knowledge claims are established in a discourse through which the results of a study come to be viewed as sufficiently trustworthy for other investigators to rely upon in their work" (Kvale, 1995, p.11). The dialogue with the participants in the fourth stage of the data analysis serves to make the results of the study trustworthy. By inviting the participants to reflect on the themes identified by the researcher, communication validity can be checked.

The third gauge of ensuring validity is pragmatic validity, where the application of the knowledge claims comes to the fore. Kvale (1995) is of the meaning that knowledge leads to action. He discerns between two types of pragmatic validation, when a knowledge statement is accompanied by action, and secondly when a knowledge statement prompts change. In other words, the truths that are created by pieces of knowledge are made more valid when they incite certain actions, or behaviour, in people. Through the publication of the research report, this research would gain pragmatic validation in that the knowledge claims made will possibly spur further research along with programmes where drama can be included in life skills courses. Moreover, the knowledge claims gathered from this research may also lead to the altering of the programme used in the course.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

When entering a research relationship with people's stories, it is of utmost importance to take care and responsibility in how the research text is shaped. "[T]here is the potential to shape their lived, told, relived, and retold stories as well as our own" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998, p.169). Because we are going in to a relationship with certain intentions and purposes, specifically that of conducting a research project, care and responsibility is primarily directed towards the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). In order for the greatest amount of care and consideration to be taken as regards the participants, the ethical guidelines below were taken into consideration.

Consent of participants to take part in this research project has been obtained. The participants received a clear and comprehensive explanation of the tasks that are expected of them, so that they could make an informed to choice to join the research. There would be no impact, in terms of their studies and course, should students decide not to participate.

The participants were assured of their confidentiality and the parameters thereof. They were informed that their anonymity would be maintained. The process of conducting the research did not expose the participants to any substantial risk of personal, psychological harm.

The participants were informed that the results will be published for the purpose of the completion of a Master's mini dissertation. Results of the study will be published with careful attention to the rights of the participants in terms of confidentiality. Utmost care has been taken to protect the identities of the individuals involved in the research. For this reason, I have chosen to use different names to my participants to ensure that their identities remain anonymous, and you will see this in the next chapter.

4.5 Reflecting on the chapter

In this chapter, my understanding of the research approach was discussed. I have explained the life skills course as the background to this research, and have explained the research process undertaken. I have explained why I chose to use a dialogical approach to the data analysis, and how the participants became collaborative partners with me as researcher, in order to create circles of meaning around the experiences shared.

In the next chapter, let us look at the stories of the participants and the co-created reflections on these.

CHAPTER 5 – THE PRODUCTION

I hope you are comfortable in your seat, now that you have been able to explore the stage, its backdrop, scenery and props. In Act I, I explore the story of Jane. Act II comprises of Joe's account. Act III is a reflection on the previous two acts, and also includes the global impressions made. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I have included most of the accounts of the participants, so there is no appendix included in this report with their stories. I have also explored the analysis in the form of a drama production, as you will see below.

Let us welcome the participants on to stage. The lights in the theatre are dimming.

ACT I
Scene 1

(*Curtain draws back, lights come on*)

Researcher: Welcome to this production. This evening I would like to introduce you to two unique individuals who have taken part in a life skills course, where drama was used. We will be exploring how they constructed their experiences. I will be highlighting areas and themes that I found interesting. Please know that these explorations are my own interpretations. You may construct different meanings to mine. Please share them with me. In that way, we can construct multiple meanings.

Jane walks on to stage

Jane: Being part of the life skills groups was a really different experience. I thought that it was a good way to get us all in touch with ourselves and to spend time exploring things that affect us all as young South Africans. At first I didn't really want to do it, because at school we did so much on life skills with our guidance teacher. Life skills was something that was boring

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and really did not help me to get 'skills' for my life. But this was different, maybe because we did things differently. We didn't just sit in a classroom and do exercises that I did not like. We moved around and played and acted even. It was relevant to my studies and in that way to my life.

Researcher: The first narrative I would like to explore is that of being different. You sound almost surprised that the course was "different". I get the idea that you wish to inform me of this comparison immediately. Life skills, for you, appear to have been constructed as a boring experience and this new experience seems to have found meaning for you. It seems to be different because of the activities – "we did things differently"; also it was not a useful experience at school – "did not really help me get skills"; and this course now held relevance for you in two spheres, your studies and your life. I wonder what happened at your school that made the course boring for you. I wonder what would be more relevant for you in your high school career, to learn about that would hold relevance in your studies and your life, and that you would have found useful in your studies and your life as a young South African. It was good do for you to spend time on topics that "affect us all as young South Africans". You spent time on team work, interpersonal relations, conflict, stress and relaxation. This then leads me to understand that you see these topics as useful and as holding value for young people. I wonder what other topics would also hold value for you.

I can see that your experience of your high school life skills course informed your expectations of this course. This leads me to think about this in a broader sense. Does this perhaps mean that we are creating an educational narrative in this country of life skills being boring and not having an impact on our lives?

I am really interested in how you describe your normal way of living and the status quo in your community.

Jane: No one teaches you this kind of stuff in normal life. Not where I grew up anyway. Life skills at school was about safe sex and studying well to pass your matric exams. And I did not always pay attention – it was boring and old news often. It did not apply to me all the time.

Researcher: You also talk about how no one teaches you these skills in "normal life". This leaves me with the impression that there is a need for being taught different life skills, but this need was not being met. It sounds a bit lonely to me as well. It also seems that one, then, would only learn these skills in an abnormal way of living. It was not a reality in your society.

This makes me think further about difference. There seems to have been a difference but not only in content of the course, but also in your attention, and openness to learn new skills. I wonder how these classes were presented to you at school that made you not pay attention. You say it was old news, and my understanding from that it is important to ensure that the content of the life skills courses holds current value to the target learners.

Jane: We didn't just sit in a classroom and do exercises that I did not like. We moved around and played and acted even. It was relevant to my studies and in that way to my life.

Researcher: You mention that the previous life skills course you attended was held in a classroom, so the venue or set up of this course was then also different. The course you did now was set in a studio with no chairs or desks or black board. What did this change of venue allow for? You also raise the idea of the type of content you had in this course, how you were physically involved in the sessions, by moving around and playing. It sounds like fun. You enjoyed the relevance this course held to your studies too. I can see how focused you are on your studies and that you see your studies as directly

related to your life. Your success as a student is your success in life, if I can put it that way.

The enjoyment of the course now seems to also be a different experience for you.

Jane: I liked it when I could say goodbye to each person, because in everyday life we don't always do that.

Researcher: You mention enjoyment again later on.

Jane: I enjoyed being able to talk about what was going on…
             I also enjoyed the relaxation day. It was so much fun to just be able to stop and lie down and breathe deeply…
             I would definitely want to do something like this again. I know that there are some things I can do on my own now, like the relaxation and reflecting…
             I really enjoyed the course and hope that the students in next year can also use it…
             I don't want to end up messed up. That's why I am glad we got to do something like this course, so that I know where to look for warning signs…

Researcher: Enjoyment for you was coupled with the usefulness of the learning experience, where you liked some of the aspects of the themes explored. You seemed to enjoy the course more when you found that you had gained more skills, such as reflection and relaxation. Your enjoyment also leads to a recommendation for future students. For me, this indicates that you want them to experience what you did, and share in the enjoyment that you had constructed out of this.

Scene 2

(Spotlight on Jane as she begins to talk)

Jane: The facilitators encouraged us to talk openly about the relevant theme of the day, whether it was talking about our own stuff or about each other. I enjoyed being able to talk about what was going on. It was important to also listen to each other. Sometimes the others would comment that there was too much time spent on reflecting but I didn't agree. I just don't think we take enough time to listen to each other and to actually hear what we are saying. We also don't take time to stop and think what have I just done? What was I thinking? Why did I do that? It's important, and not just personally but I think it is important in what we do in our studies.

Researcher appears from the wings

Researcher: Jane, let's look at what you have mentioned now about reflecting, of I may call it that. Reflecting for you holds different aspects. Firstly, it is about talking about what is going on in general, about the process happening, and being able to look at that. Reflecting also is about looking at yourself and thinking about your own actions and thoughts. You mention that not enough time is spent on stopping and taking stock of what is going on, whether it be with yourself or others. You say that we do not take time to listen to each other and hear what is being said. I wonder what takes up our time that we cannot do that. I wonder if we are developing a theme of not stopping to smell the metaphorical roses. What would we then reflect on? I wonder what difference that would make in our lives. Jane, I wonder what difference this new skill will make for you. I wonder how it will affect your relationships with others and with yourself. You mention that it will also impact on your studies. How does it do that?

Jane: I think we need to be able to reflect on our work as actors. I need to be able to look back and see what I did and understand my critics, or my director, or even my co-actors. I need to learn to listen to others properly. When these people are unhappy with me, I need to be able to listen to what it is that they want me to do better so that we can do it better next time. I need to be able to think about why I did things so that I can explain it to other people so that they can understand it too.

Researcher: Jane, you bring in your future work here as an actor. You express the desire to be able to understand those involved in your career, the critics, the director and your co-actors. It seems as though reflecting on their words will help you to gain a better understanding and enable you to improve. You also mention that reflecting would help you better explain yourself. Perhaps without this skill being present in your life, you have not always had the words to describe something that makes others understand you. I wonder when people have not understood you and what that has done for you. You speak of the need to reflect, the need to learn to listen and the need to think about your actions so to better express your thoughts around that. This necessity is interesting. A necessity is essential; it is something that is an obligation, and not an option to go without. I can't help but think about this need that has been brought in to your life. How will you fulfill this need in your studies? I wonder if others have the same need, and how it is fulfilled for them in their education, their careers and personal lives.

             Your emphasis on reflecting was closely linked to listening to others. You mention the importance of listening to each other. This is a theme that has been present in your life for a long time, as it was introduced by your family.

Jane: Maybe I feel this way because it comes from my family too. In my family we have to listen to each other, from the oldest to the youngest. It is just the way we have been brought up to do things. Everyone has the right to be

heard and everyone is allowed to say that the think something other. In class, I didn't always feel that the others shared that view. The other students don't want to hear things that they have got to say, they don't want to listen to deep things. That sometimes annoyed me. We need to listen.

Researcher: For you, age does not matter. Everyone has the right to be heard, to speak. It seems as though you did not see this right coming through in the minds of others in your class – 'not everyone shared that view'. I wonder if people learn to listen in their families, in school. Who needs to listen to your voice? It seems as though you were alone in your need to reflect and listen. Here is another construction of need, that of listening to others. You value this greatly and it is not a shared need. Perhaps others' families did not share the same need to listen, and perhaps age did matter in their communities, whether in families or schools. You mention the right to voice difference. I have heard you voicing your own thoughts about the life skills course. I wonder whether I am hearing what you want me to hear. I wonder what my own stories and experiences are leading me to pay attention to.

I am hearing a theme about respect for people, for each other as well. You talk about not only listening to each other as a right, and that people fundamentally should be allowed to be heard, but you also mention greeting each other as something that is also sometimes neglected. In this course you were almost forced to greet those in your company.

Jane: The class would silently greet each person and then breathe in deeply focusing on the time ahead. I think it was respectful to greet each person there. It acknowledged them in a way, I suppose. I liked it when I could say goodbye to each person, because in everyday life we don't always do that. We have lost some respect and manners, and this forced us to greet people. Sounds simple but we just don't always do it anymore. It also gave us

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structure to work with. We knew when we were starting and when we were now ending the sessions together.

Researcher: There is a theme of loss that comes through here. You speak of a loss of manners and respect. It is almost as though we are so rushed in our daily lives that even the most basic of interactions are getting lost in time. You mention that you started and ended the sessions together – this word 'together' for me indicates that this is something important to you. Again it speaks to not feeling connected to others in our day-to-day lives. Are we losing the sense of connectedness in our communities? Are we so busy living our own lives that others become passers by, who are not acknowledged? The simple structure of starting and ending the sessions with greetings and making each person in the room feel recognized as being of value, speaks to the earlier mention of respect. I wonder where the value is going for those in our lives. What do we do to acknowledge the presence of people in our own sessions of time? And more importantly, how can we go about finding the connection with others again? I wonder if you, the reader, have also experienced this sense of loss in your own life.

Another theme that struck me as I was reading through your letter was that of the perception of others. You did not want to seem silly in front of others, for concern of how they would perceive you.

Jane: When they first told us to lie down we all laughed at the lady. I felt stupid lying there doing nothing. When we had to breathe, I felt as though people were watching me and going to laugh.

Researcher: Later you talk about feeling vulnerable by sharing.

Jane: Sometimes I felt a bit vulnerable sharing really personal stuff in front of the other guys. I did not want to be judged by them. I know that the facilitators

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also spoke about that, that we all had to leave what we heard in the room but I was not 100% sure that everyone would leave what they had heard in the room. I have been through some rough times at home or when I was in high school and I did not always want that to come up. It's not that I wanted to hide it totally but I wanted to be sure that what I said would stay there.

Researcher: You are worried about what others will think of you. This means their opinions matter. The negative perception of others is a dominant narrative for people. This can be seen by fashion, diet, trends. It matters what one wears, does and even says. Fitting in is important. This leads me to think about judgement. Jane, you were concerned about being judged by those listening to your story. You were worried that it would follow you out of the session. No one wants to be thought of in a bad light, especially when sharing something personal.

Jane: When we had to talk about how we handled fights or arguments I felt shy and that they would think I am stupid. But even when I did tell people that I had handled conflict in a certain way before, no one judged me. No one made me feel that I was stupid or dumb or had no clue. We were all learning together. And it was great to feel that way for once. It was great to hear that I was not the only one that did this, but that other people also did not know what to do before.

Researcher: Again the notion of togetherness comes through when looking at the perception of others. You seem to come to a point of realization where your construction of the perception of those around you changes. Everyone here was on the same learning curve, and this seems to have helped with the impression of perception. It was easier to talk about conflict managing skills as no one judged. No one made you feel that you did not know. Perhaps that is a fear people have – that of not knowing? It makes for uncertainty, creates room for doubt and opens possibilities of others' knowing better. Possibly

this 'not knowing together' is a good starting point for those in a classroom situation, where everyone can move towards a position of knowing while learning, and thereby promoting a better sense of certainty and lessening the space for self-doubt.

Scene 3

(Researcher stands at stage left, with Jane to stage right)

Researcher: I also noticed a theme of learning in your story. You learnt new skills, such as reflecting which we have explored. I noticed that you mention learning new skills a few more times.

Jane: I also learnt to handle stress and conflict better. I don't like fighting, and I have backed away from fights. My friends always say that I run away and am scared of fighting. But with the session on how to handle conflict better, I really learnt that I could do something different. I could not run away any more, instead there is something else I can do when I am arguing with another person. No one had ever told me how before, and I guess I had never asked.

Researcher: You speak here about the ability of handling conflict that has grown in you – you can now do something different when confronted with conflict. You say that no one had told you about this before. You learnt about reflecting and relaxing, too. It was not a meaningless course, without value or merit for you. You could walk away with some life skills, as such, that could enable you to make use of what you had learnt. When you describe the life skills you had done at school, you mention that 'it did not really help get any skills in to my life'. I wonder what was helpful here to allow the transfer of skills in this instance.

I would like to look at the theme of specific course related skills. You mentioned earlier that it was important to you that the course held some value for your studies.

Jane: My favourite session was the drumming, to be able to get in and out of character. I can't remember what they called it. I really enjoyed being able to picture how I get into character, and how I become myself again afterwards. I am sometimes scared that I will start to live the thoughts and feelings of my character all the time. I know I must relate to them, but our lecturers always tell us how important it is to become us again, and not stay too focused on the characters in real life. Sometimes I can see how I can get to identify with them. I need to learn how to let go. I am going to get better with this, I know, especially as this is only my first year. I think I stress about stuff like that sometimes. I don't want to end up messed up.

Researcher: I can hear a sense of determination to make use of the skill of distancing, getting in and out of character and being able to let go. Learning distancing has given you a sense of purpose not to take on the characters you act. I am really touched by the resolve in your voice to improve your skills here. You do not want to become affected by this, and 'end up messed up'. This makes me wonder how many people can end up like that without these skills. What other skills are important to learn for specific courses being studied? Can they all be taught, or learnt for that matter?

ACT II

Scene 1

(Curtain draws back, lights on)

Joe walks on to stage to where Researcher is sitting, and sits down as well

Joe: When I first heard we were going to do a life skills course I was very skeptical. We had done so many life skills things at school and I did not need to waste time with another one. I was here to study and learn to be an actor and learn to be the best. I did not think that life skills had a place in the university set up.

Researcher: Your goal is immediately clear. You do not waste any time in voicing your opinion. You seem so focused on your studies, and this stood out for me the most. You do not commit yourself to something that may be a time waster. You were there to study and that was your focus, like a horse with eye clappers on taking part in a race. Anything in the periphery was not to be paid attention to. You want to get to the finish line as quickly as possible. Any activity in the mean time had to be related to your studies and your goal of becoming a successful actor. You refer to this again later on.

Joe: I liked doing something that had meaning for my course. It is something I can use in the future. I want to make the best of my career.

Researcher: It seems incredibly important to you to be involved in something that will only enrich your studies and your future career. This leaves me with the impression that you had already decided that the course was a waste of time – "I did not think life skills had a place in the university set up". Again, I see the focus you have on your context, your studies. The theme of determination comes through strongly for me. I wonder where that comes

from. When did the construction of focusing strongly on your studies come from? I wonder what would happen if you found yourself paying attention to something else? I wonder what the focus is of the others in your class. Do they share your intense focus on your studies?

Let's have a look at the theme about life skills that comes through in your narrative.

Joe: When I first heard we were going to do a life skills course I was very skeptical. We had done so many life skills things at school and I did not need to waste time with another one.

Researcher: Life skills appear to be a waste for you. It appears that your relationship with life skills is one that can be seen as useless and this seems to be a theme from your life at school. You also bring in the difference between school and university. There are certain things you do at school, such as life skills classes, and then certain things you do in university. In your mind, life skills had no place in the context of university. It was not meant to fit in to a place where studies are the focus. The only learning that could take place had to have something relevant to your drama course. It seems as though you have not created space for any other form of learning in your reality.

Joe: I am sure we could have looked at HIV, or the usual stuff like that, and I was scared that we would have done that. When I hear life skills I think of those sorts of themes.

Researcher: There seem to be specific themes that go hand in hand with life skills, such as HIV. You even say that you feared that you would be faced with more of the same. It seems that this is so dominant in your reality that when you hear of life skills, you automatically think of "those sorts of themes", the "usual stuff like that". Perhaps it is your previous experience that informed your

view of life skills. This type of approach also appears to hold little value for you, possibly because of how you see the applicability of the themes discussed as being invalid in your life. I wonder if in your understanding of life skills, there is space for different themes, and different approaches.

What other themes are associated with life skills? Are these the only themes that are explored when doing life skills? This leads me to think about the value that life skills have now in the lives of young people. I wonder if there are other youths also dreading the idea of another life skills course, with more of the same?

I noticed that you bring in the idea that the themes explored in this course were done together, between the facilitators and the students.

Joe: We then talked about what themes we wanted to look at together. This was already better than at school. At least they were trying to see what we wanted to do.

Researcher: It seems that the themes were not forced on you, that at least you had a say in creating the content of the course, and that you were able to look at 'what we wanted to do'. You then compare this to your experience at school – 'this was already better than at school'. I wonder how this added to your construction of the difference between school and university. There is an obvious difference and a natural progression, one can say, moving from school to university yet I wonder what you were trying to say by putting these differences forward. My first thought when I read this is that you are wanting me to see you in the context of being older and therefore not in need of skills development. Is this how you are trying to have me see you in a different, possibly older light? I can't help but think about this difference and what it means for you.

I noticed that your hesitation comes through in the first part of your narrative. It seems as though your previous experience had informed the way in which you see all life skills courses. I wonder if this hesitation is related to the concern of doing the same thing over again.

Joe: I was still not convinced but decided to come back again in the next class. They said it would not be compulsory, so I thought about a wait and see approach.

Researcher: The lack of forced attendance seems to lead to your re-thinking your own attendance, the idea that it was not compulsory, so you decide to see how it goes, as it were. You come up with a strategy to navigate your way through the course that gives you a way out should you need it. You continue to make use of this approach for the next session.

Joe: I decided to come back again and give it another try. It seemed to be all right to stay.

Researcher: I hear the construction of an evaluation of the course coming through for you. You had been to a few sessions and deemed it 'all right' to continue.

Joe: But we did things that mattered to us here.

Researcher: Because the focus of the course was on your own field of study, it made it relevant for you, and thus acceptable to continue with. It could now be included in your path on the way to your success. It was no longer unwanted or a hindrance in your studies. It was not a waste of time because the activities had bearing on your current life, and could potentially add to skills you would need to be the best.

Scene 2

(Researcher and Joe sitting by a table)

Researcher: It was remarkable for me how you describe the different aspects of learning for you. Learning for you came from being in the group with others and watching them. This came coupled with the perception of those around you.

Joe: Guys are not meant to be that emotional and are not meant to show emotions… But then I looked around and I saw some of the other guys had some people closer to them, and this made me think about that for a while.

Researcher: For you, the dominant narrative of 'men do not show emotions' was raised in the session about interpersonal relationships. For you it was important to state that men are not meant to show emotions, almost implying that men are not made that way genetically, by saying that they are not "meant to be that emotional". I wonder who informed this narrative so strongly in your life, Joe. It reminds me of the adage, cowboys don't cry. The session, though, seems to have allowed you the opportunity to see that narrative challenged, by seeing the representation of the emotional closeness that other men in your group can have.

Joe: I thought about what difference it would make to have some people closer. But then I remembered when I had done that, and I got hurt. So I decided to keep the distance for now.

Researcher: You recognize something in you but it's almost as though you choose not to focus on that. I wonder where your focus is. It is almost as though as you continue on with the course, you discover more about yourself. It is perhaps the spotlight that is shedding light on different areas for you, allowing for the construction and re-construction of aspects of yourself and others.

Researcher: You go on to mention how you thought about this but then decided to stick with what you knew and were comfortable with. You do not want to have any hurt in your life – I wonder if this is because it would also detract from your focus? Also, how has the sight of other men allowing emotional closeness impacted on your construction of the narrative? I am curious about the constructed relationship you seem to have created between emotional closeness and being hurt. This personal narrative seems to play out very powerfully in your life, so much so that you seem to be uncomfortable with the idea of doing something different. I wonder what you are allowing to have happen by not being close to people. I wonder what the impact of this has been for you.

I recognize something similar later on in your narrative.

Joe: The conflict management class made me realise how I deal with stuff that gets under my skin. I didn't know that I choose to attack people and get in their faces. I am not sure why I do that, but I think it is because I don't want them to hurt me first.

Researcher: Again, you would rather strike first, it would appear, than have to be hurt. Attack being the best form of defense is your strategy here to deal with conflict. You seem to come to a realization after this session on conflict management that you employ this strategy, although again hesitation is present in your voice, for me. Is this because it is too close to you to comfortably deal with?

You seem to enjoy that people do have their differences, and maybe this also challenged some more social narratives for you. You come to like seeing differences. Did the challenging of the emotions theme maybe open the possibility of differences?

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Joe: I liked hearing about the other types in my group and to hear how they do things. We all do stuff so differently.

Researcher: Later on you repeat this way of thinking.

Joe: That was what I liked about this – I could learn from the students in the class with me. I could see how they do things and see how I do things and then see how it is the same or different.

Researcher: I get the idea that this is the first time you have witnessed differences between people. That in this context you could see how people differ in approaches and styles, whether it be gender based or not. You could also find a comparison for yourself – "…then see how it is the same or different". This is not a bad experience for you, rather one of excitement almost at being able to have something new introduced into your life. Your hesitation has now seemingly disappeared and you have possibly bought in to the course now. It seems as though, by seeing that you can learn from others, you have opened the possibility for different learning.

                With the impact of others around you, this brings me to another theme I picked up on. The perception of those around you appears to play a very important role for you. You seem to measure the impact of a session by seeing how those around you react. The need to fit in comes through strongly in your narrative, for me. And, it is a need that you hold on to strongly.

Joe: I didn't want to show that it had worked in case it was not cool.

Researcher: During the relaxation exercises, you felt that the exercise had worked but you did not want to show this, for fear that those around you would see that

you were relaxing in a non-socially prescribed way. This again makes me think of the spotlight and where it shines. You choose to keep your reactions hidden, in case some one notices that you are not fitting in to the social norm. You describe the usual way you relax.

Joe: I had always relaxed by drinking, hanging out with friends, smoking. I don't think these are bad and this is how we grew up and did stuff at school too. .. When we go out and drink it's because life is difficult and we need a break.

Researcher: Going out and drinking is the accepted way of relaxing, as is smoking or being with friends. This is what has worked for you and is how you have constructed relaxation in your life. It is how you 'grew up'. That statement makes it seem right, justifies even. You qualify this by saying that this is how you relaxed at school, almost making school an authoritative place that gives an approval stamp on this method. You also relate drinking to making life easier, as you do so when there are difficulties in your life, when you 'need a break'. This form of relaxation seems to create a space where you can get away from the reality of your life. You can take time out and get away from your stresses.

Joe: I have never thought about doing relaxation like that before… Maybe I will ask for the CD still and try it again, when I am alone at home.

Researcher: You also here imply that drinking is a group form of relaxing. And it has been the only possibility in your reality until you took part in the relaxation exercise. Again hesitation comes in to your voice when you say that 'maybe' you will ask for the CD and try the exercise for yourself again. You will not do it in a group, again bringing in the importance of image and perception of your peers. No one can see you do this, so you will only try this form of relaxation at home alone. I get the impression that there are other things that you also do not want to try out in front of others, but rather when the

spotlight is not on you and you cannot be seen. This is something that has struck me – the theme of fitting in and being acceptable has such strength and power in your words. The thought that it is widely known that people want to do what will make them seem acceptable in the eyes of significant others, is something that adds to the power that this story holds. These can be peers, family, or even the general public, complete strangers. I can see how this dominant narrative has gained power – you feel that even while doing a relaxation exercise that requires one's eyes to be closed, that others will be focused on you and what you are doing, instead of their own exercises. This narrative's power is such that it manages to get you feeling incredibly self-conscious. You almost put the spotlight on to yourself here, by fueling this narrative.

You also talk about getting bored when others reflected on the sessions.

Joe;   Sometimes I got bored with listening to the whole group and their feelings and what they had done and why. I thought we could have made that a bit shorter and spent more time on more activities.

Researcher: This, for me, contradicts what you had mentioned as well, how you learnt from others. I wonder what about listening to others made you bored? Could it be when they reflected on their reactions to the session, and not just on their conflict style types, for example, that you did not want to listen?

Joe: This made me think about my childhood and what had happened then. I don't like thinking about that, so I stopped. It made me uncomfortable to think about that. There's stuff I don't want to dwell on. It makes me feel down sometimes.

Researcher: I wonder if the reflection aspects of the sessions lead you to think in ways you were not comfortable with, and whether it is this experience that creates a space of discomfort with others' reflections.

ACT III

This part of the production focuses on the reflection of the participants, after they had been given the initial analysis of the stories. This is written verbatim from their reflections and contains their whole reflection, so that their voices can be heard as clearly as possible.

Scene 1

(Jane and Joe on stage, after the analysis of the data was given to them)

Jane: When I read through the analysis of what I had written, I must be honest I was surprised. I have never had my thoughts looked at like that before and it was so interesting to read and discuss. It was like seeing myself through the eyes of someone else. Looking in the mirror and seeing myself, but different. I agree with what was written – nothing made me think that I did not mean that, or that that was not what I wanted to say. I read through my bit on reflecting again, and about needing to have everyone listened to. I feel that I was listened to. Looking back, I can see again what I was thinking and what I had experienced. I again remember the annoyance at those not listening, feeling those emotions come up again as I remember that. It really stuck with me, I suppose because it is so important to me. This specific way of looking at the world is really interesting. I had never thought like this before and it has made me want to look more at it.

Joe: Getting the themes back to look over was an eye-opener for me. I have never had that happen before, but I am getting used to new experiences now. I looked at the work and thought to myself, wow, did I really say that? Did I

think like that? Do I still think like that? Some of what I read still made me feel uncomfortable. Uncomfortable because of seeing myself like that. It made me think about how other people will see me, and I was really glad that my name here is Joe, not my real name! I can't disagree with the stuff written, as I do see something of the truth in it. Sometimes I struggled to follow the language as it is foreign to me, but I do not think anything was written that I did not mean.

Scene 2

(Researcher on stage alone)

Researcher: Allow me to look at those now as global impressions gained from reading the texts. After reading the accounts of Jane and Joe time and again, there are several significant themes that have been identified and have found meaning for me. I would like to take some time to look at these global impressions and themes.

Jane begins her story with how she experienced the course in a good way, seeing it as different. Her account takes on a structured approach, as if she has thought about her choice of words carefully. She starts by describing the process followed in the programme, then discusses what she enjoyed, what she did not enjoy and ends with describing her favourite session. For her, the acknowledgement of people appears to be important. She speaks about how it made her angry when other students in the course did not listen to one another when they were talking, and how their ritual of greeting one another added to the meaning she expressed in this form of acknowledgement. She describes how she was brought up, having her voice, and those in her family, listened to. I am grateful that the research approach I employed in this study, allowed for Jane to see her voice acknowledged by having the analysis of her story given back to her to reflect upon.

Joe's story starts with his expression of skepticism about the course, and he continues to express how he has a 'wait and see' approach to the process, as if not wanting to get too involved. This straight forward approach can be seen all the way through his story, to the end, where he mentions that the course was a good experience, and he is not saying that 'to be nice'. There is almost a toughness in his account that is contrasted with the fear of being 'exposed' or recognized, as he mentions in his reflection.

Learning was a part of the course. Both participants discuss having learnt skills such as reflecting, conflict management and relaxation. In this way, they do get to experience some of what the literature describes as learning to make responsible choices, coping with problems and also being more self-efficient (van Staden, 2000). They were able to choose to use the skills presented to them, learnt how to cope with conflict, and probably by learning a different form of relaxation, were becoming more self-efficient. In this way, their construction of the course was one that was positive and useful, which then answers the research question to an extent. However, from my point of view, there was so much more than just that in the texts of the participants.

The first theme that caught my attention was that of the previous life skills experiences. These previous experiences seem to have informed the participants that they are, by default, boring and useless. The themes explored were of little or no value, it seems. Jane spoke about the previous experiences not holding relevance in her life, and that she had found them boring. I heard something similar in Joe's account. He only remembers HIV as a theme looked at, and did not mention other themes that formed a part of the process, except for grouping them as "the usual". The impression I am left with is that they did not see where the themes that were completed in school had bearing on their own lives. When I look at the literature on life orientation, it talks to equipping learners for meaningful and successful

living, in a rapidly changing and transforming society (www.polity.co.za/html/govdocs/policy/2002/curriculum/part3.pdf). My understanding of the participants' experience is that this did not happen for them. I cannot hazard an explanation for this as none was given by the participants.

The theme of difference was striking for me. Joe and Jane both made mention of how the course they took part in was not the same as that at school. The idea of togetherness, or perhaps partnership, came through strongly, in that there was a decision made together of what themes would be followed, that were relevant to the context of the students. The setting was different, the content was relevant to them and they enjoyed themselves.

Both Jane and Joe mention how this life skills course hold applicability to their careers as actors. They found it relevant to their studies, and in that way useful to their future careers as actors, too. In his account, Joe talks about the desire to make the best of his career. He does not want to get involved in substance abuse because he cannot get out of character, and then cannot cope. Jane also expresses this goal to not get 'messed up'.

Another theme that I found striking was that of the perception of others. There is a dominant theme of wanting to fit in and give the appearance of being normal. The participants describe how they had experienced the positive impact of the course but were careful to express this, due to the possible impression others would gain from this. I know that I have felt that theme play out in my own life too. It is an incredibly powerful narrative that plays out in the lives of the participants.

Reflecting on the chapter

In this chapter the participants and I have explored their experiences, and have gained meaning from their experiences. Ricouer (in Gergen & Gergen, 1997) said that a person's

experience cannot directly become another's experience. Yet, nevertheless, something passes from one to another. This 'something' is not the experience as experienced, but its meaning. I appreciate their openness and honesty about their reflections, and that they could engage in a reflecting process with me.

In the next and final chapter, I conclude this research study, and discuss the recommendations and limitations of the research.

CHAPTER 5 - THE FINAL CURTAIN

5.1 Reflections

The interest in this particular research topic came about when I assisted in facilitating a life skills course, as part of my internship at TUT. I decided to write about the student construction of their experience outside the realm of surveys, numbers and statistics. I wanted to hear the personal accounts of the students.

The research question, how have the students constructed their experience of the life skills sessions, I feel has been looked at. My aim was to provide some understanding around this question, not to give a definite answer. I feel I have maintained the trustworthiness of the study by reflexivity, and taking the analysis back to the participants to look at. This study has provided the space for the voices of the participants to be heard, and for meaning to be generated from hearing their accounts. Meaning will continue to be generated with each person who reads this mini-dissertation. In giving a definite conclusive answer, I feel I would be blocking the opportunity for further meaning to be generated.

Looking back at the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the main areas of focus were on Higher Education, Life Orientation, Life Skills, Drama and Dramatherapy. I thought it was important to provide a backdrop of the context and history of Higher Education and Life Orientation to have a better understanding of the contexts of the participants.

If I reflect now on my journey with the texts of Jane and Joe, and the writing of this chapter of exploration, I find myself feeling that I have learned and have gained from it. I have found a way to navigate through the texts in my own way, and this leaves me feeling empowered.

Through exploring the information gathered this study has attempted to contribute to the understanding of the construction of life skills using drama as a tool. Needing to conclude this study, I ask myself what I can conclude. I have gained knowledge and insight in to the

constructions of two young individuals. I feel privileged to have been allowed to explore their constructions with them. I feel comfortable that this has been a social constructionist exploration as it has allowed for the construction of knowledge to be presented, not as the truth, but as an interpretation. It has also allowed for Jane and Joe's personal constructions to take centre stage. Again, this has been my exploration and I invite you to draw your own conclusions about the constructions.

It has not been the intention of this study to minimize or criticize the work done by those who have created life skills courses before, those who have imparted life skills to our youth. This study offers another way of looking at life skills and a different approach. I do not believe that there is a right or wrong way of 'doing' life skills, only other possibilities and alternatives that create different spaces allowing for the construction of different realities, for both the teachers and those who are taught.

There are still many themes left unexplored. This does not go to say that these untold narratives or themes hold any less value or importance than those which have been explored. my own context, with my own stories, which ones have I allowed to be heard and which not? I wonder what different meanings you, the reader, and Jane and Joe have generated from what you have seen on this stage. I wonder where my own explorations of the texts have left you. How do you understand this? How does it inform your own construction of this life skills experience? What meaning can you take from this?

5.2 Recommendations and Limitations

A few ideas have come to mind as to how this topic can be explored further. The topic of life skills courses can be researched with different programmes and different cultures, making use of different approaches, be it from the more traditional needs based approach, to the ecosystemic or asset-based approach, as discussed in Chapter 2. I would like to explore the role that gender plays in the learning of life skills, as Joe's experience of constructing a different story around men and emotion has made me curious about what other experiences could be highlighted, specifically from a gender specific perspective. I

also think that looking at life orientation courses in high schools could provide interesting knowledge. The use of different approaches in the presentation of life skills courses specifically, but also general facilitating or teaching techniques and the impact thereof, could also be followed.

There are a number of limitations with this study. Firstly, by making use of a different methodology or epistemology, different knowledge would be gained. By making use of quantitative methods, for example, empirical and objective findings can be obtained. Secondly, in using the social constructionist epistemology, a conclusive outcome cannot be given, whether the course has been positive or negative. In using a different approach, it may allow for this outcome. Moreover, this research had limited participants, and information gained from this study cannot be generalized across all first years who took part in the course.

5.3 Closing words

There are still many themes left outside the exploring spotlight, still left untold. This does not go to say that these untold narratives or themes hold any less value or importance than those which have been explored. my own context, with my own stories, which ones have I allowed to be heard and which not? I wonder what different meanings you, the reader, and Jane and Joe have generated from what you have seen on this stage. I wonder where my own explorations of the texts have left you. How do you understand this? How does it inform your own construction of this life skills experience? What meaning can you take from this?

I would like to invite prospective researchers to explore the valued experiences and learned skills and knowledge of our South African youth, and to honour them as experts in their own lives. In this way, I feel that we can learn and create new and different educational realities for our youth, the future of the country. I would like to encourage them to continue to shine the exploring spotlight on those themes that I have not looked at and, in so doing, give them an equal space in the academic realm.

As the final curtain closes, I would like to thank you for joining me on this production.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMATIONAL LETTER ON RESEARCH BEING

CONDUCTED BY XANDIE THOMPSON

THE RESEARCH GOAL:

The research is interested to find out how drama students experience the Life Skills course that was held from July to October 2006.

RESEARCH METHOD:

Participants will be invited to write their experience of the life skills course to the researcher.

This will be analysed thematically.

Data will be collected at Tshwane University of Technology, Arts Campus.

RELEVANCE OF STUDY:

To gain insight into how students experienced the Life skills course, in order to get a better understanding of their personal experience and the meaning attached to this experience.

WHAT IS REQUIRED FROM THE PARTICIPANTS?

 Open mindedness, willingness to write about your experience.

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

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

Signed by _____

On the _____ day of _____ at _____.

_____

Signature

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE AS RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I, ……………………………………………………. hereby acknowledge that I have been informed of the content and the procedure of the research being conducted by Hester Alexandra (Xandie) Thompson. I understand that all information will be treated as confidential and that no data will be shared outside of the research context. The research context consists of the researcher, a co-facilitator, a supervising psychologist, an external evaluator and UP. I understand the goals of the research and have been informed that I will have access to the final product of this research, if I choose so. The researcher may publish for academic purposes.

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

This document was signed on this _____ day of _____ at _____.

ID Number: _____