

**TEXTS OF IDENTITY: REWRITING THE SELF
WITHIN A MULTICULTURAL SCHOOL
COMMUNITY**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The study records narratives told by 11 black and coloured ex-pupils, who between 1992 and 1998 gained access to being educated at a private European school in the suburbs of Johannesburg. The contextualised stories of how they developed “texts of identity” for themselves within the multicultural setting of the school were used to explore a process called “rewriting the self”. The identity of the school also is contextualised within its own socio-cultural community, as well as that of multiculturalism in schools.

The study is placed within a postmodern Community Psychology epistemology, with a social constructionist “lens” attached to it. The excess of a social construction “lens” (such as “anything goes”) is countered by defining the key notions of “texts of identity” - a “sense of self”, “human diversity” and “multiculturalism” - within the collapsed boundaries of sameness and differences, global and local, as well as personal and collective notions of the self. The notion of transformation is contextualised as part of the process of “rewriting the self”. This is illuminated by means of discourses of the past and human agency/empowerment as well as those related to the South African history of colonisation and apartheid.

Narrative discourses also are introduced as a related epistemology and used to construct the ex-pupils' narratives within an Action Research mode, formulated in three ever-widening and interlocking phases. In the process of re-telling their stories the ex-pupils gained self-knowledge regarding how their schooling experiences allowed them to "stretch across (their) boundaries" and re-identify themselves anew. The vantage point was achieved by means of the ex-learners deconstructing their stories as part of a series of reflexive conversations.

The insights yielded in this manner achieved the objective of the narrative research procedure. Viewed in a wider South African context, the ex-pupils' personalised stories highlight important issues that help or do not help South Africans make sense of their past and re-identify themselves within new boundaries. One issue that still hamstrings South Africans "rewriting the self" is the dominant discourses of the past regarding race and culture. It is suggested that a "common humanity" discourse (as well as that of "hybridity") be developed more fully as the way out.

Key Notions:

identification; transformation; multiculturalism; narratives; Action Research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*You say I am repeating
Something I have said before. I shall say it again.
Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there,
To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is not ecstasy.
In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.*

(From East Coker - T.S. Eliot, 1963:201)

Buddhists, such as Pema Chodron (1997), implicitly believe that “change is the only constant”, a belief that has realised itself in the present and ongoing South African transitional phase.

Many of the changes, however, are a result of South Africans in all areas of life finding themselves placed in multicultural settings in which they are forced to redefine themselves, be it as individuals or collectives - a process in this thesis dubbed “rewriting the self”.

Specifically in the area of schooling such rewritings are inevitable, especially so for pupils who are part of the exodus from the former black and coloured areas.

That is, in their quest for a better education, they now on a daily basis trek to private and formerly white schools in the suburbs, a phenomenon that my research will go to show often results in such black and coloured pupils feeling displaced and their identities in flux because of having to move between two diverse and different worlds or cultures.

1.1. Contextualised Stories

This study explores how a group of black and coloured adolescent South Africans rewrite themselves within one such educational community - the Deutsche Internationale Schule zu Johannesburg.

Although the school sees itself as being multicultural, it is a school that expects learners to assimilate into their dominant European culture, thereby unwittingly creating a dilemma for South African pupils, more specifically the black and coloured ones.

It, therefore, is a setting or backdrop for interesting stories, more specifically stories of how black and coloured ex-learners (in this study the terms pupils, learners, and students will be used interchangeably) struggled to develop “texts of identity” for themselves within a “foreign country” (a term used by many of the school’s black and coloured students).

As part of a participatory research study, their stories weave in and out of my own story, with my story adding another layer of reconstruction with which to explore and interpret the transformative journeys the ex-pupils undertook at the school.

The contextualised stories are told within an overarching postmodern Community Psychology framework, more specifically with a social constructionist “lens” attached to it, i.e. one in which

- “truth” and “reality” are to be found in acts of interpretation, a stance inherited from hermeneutics (the “science” of interpretation, as first proposed by the 19th century German thinker, Dilthey) (Edward Bruner, 1986a);
- human knowledge is seen to arise in the social interaction between people;

- “only in the ongoing conversation between intimates does the individual develop a sense of identity or an inner voice” (to quote Hoffman, 1992:8);
- narration is seen to be a fundamentally important way for people to organise their experiences at all levels, from the individual to the cultural level.

Although the stories contextualised in this manner are explored within the realm of Community Psychology, studies that deal specifically with the identity issues of black and coloured South African learners who attended formerly white-only schools, be they private or ex-Model C schools (i.e. schools formerly run by stakeholders such as parents and governing bodies), are also to be found in the realm of Education (Gaganakis, 1990), Social Psychology (Bennewith, 2003), Sociology (Dawson, 2002) and Psychology (Barnes, 1993).

Barnes' (1993) study is the one that is the furthest and the closest to my own. What makes it the furthest is the choice of terrain. Namely, the terrain of the study covers four different school environments, of which only one is a racially integrated private Johannesburg school, the others being a recently integrated public Johannesburg school and two segregated rural Free State schools (an Afrikaans and a farm school). In comparison to this, the terrain of my study is a specific private Johannesburg school where I am employed part-time. My insider status thus too is different.

However, we both have chosen to make a sense of identity (Barnes' term) or a text of identity (my term) the subject of our studies, both viewing the notion through a social constructionist "lens". This also allows us both to view identities as always changing and interacting with social changes, as in South Africa. To cope with the changes, we both also contend that South Africans need to reconstruct an identity that is partly based on a previous identity (e.g. a cultural group identity) and partly on the demands of a new environment (e.g. develop a more multicultural identity). It is a viewpoint that we both base on the social constructionist belief that people are capable of having many identities.

It also is a viewpoint that links our studies to the subject matter of both Bennewith's (2003) and Gaganakis' (1990) studies. That is, they both explore the subjective experiences and perceptions of cultural minorities, who have to live in two diverse worlds of school and home. My finding confirms their finding that cultural minority learners have a great need to have their experiences as a minority understood within the school itself.

Bennewith (2003) and Gaganakis (1990), however, add that the learners experience their minority status also in terms of a perceived privileged position that alienates them (Bennewith, 2003) from others within the school community and (Gaganakis, 1990) from their home community, findings that do not relate to my study.

What does relate to my study is Gaganakis' (1990) end-conclusion. But, although we both agree that minority learners at private schools academically benefit from their schooling experience, Gaganakis (1990) argues that minority learners do not benefit socially, while I argue that they ultimately also can benefit socially.

According to Dawson (2002), what plays a crucial role in whether minority learners benefit or do not benefit socially from being educated at a formerly white-only school is the attitude of teachers - a finding that correlates with my own. For example, a positive attitude would be for a teacher to actively challenge cultural myths and stereotypes in a manner that teaches pupils an appreciation of their own identity as well as an appreciation of cultural diversities - a multicultural education principle to which both Dawson (2002) and I adhere.

But, although we all have chosen a qualitative research approach, where my study differs from all four of the above-mentioned studies is that my data was generated within a two-way Action Research procedure. That is, it is a procedure, in which my storytellers' "who am I?" narratives generate knowledge for me, while the storytellers themselves simultaneously gain self-knowledge from (with hindsight) rewriting their personal stories in a more evolved light.

1.2. Story Participants

As Epston and White (1992) point out, knowing requires a knower who consciously reflects on human life and its ramifications. Put in the context of the study this also includes gaining knowledge of oneself, i.e. self-knowledge via the stories we tell about ourselves.

The ex-learners in this study, therefore, were made part of a story-telling process that not only gave them a vantage point from which to look back on their experiences at the school but also to gain a better understanding of how their schooling experiences transformed the way they perceived themselves.

It is a vantage point that was achieved via reflexivity, a deconstructive process, which - in the tradition of 20th century French philosopher Derrida (Sim, 1999) - means unravelling underlying alternative meanings, with which to extract people from their own embeddedness in dominant discourses (the term "dominant discourse" here denotes historical and current social beliefs and myths).

In the context of the study, however, the reflexive "turn" of the study was achieved by means of the ex-learners deconstructing their stories as part of a co-evolving reflexive process. That is, the stories of the ex-learners evolved out of a series of reflexive conversations, that included their own internal dialogues as well as dialogues between themselves and with me.

Other series of conversations that also were part of the co-evolving reflexive process were between

- me and myself (i.e. my own internal dialogues);
- myself as researcher and texts or thinkers;
- myself and my promoter.

Using the metaphors of storytelling, I therefore at times see myself as the “researcher”, the “scriptwriter”, and at times one of the “protagonists” in the whole story-making process (this is in contrast to an author whose sole aim is to become THE “storyteller” of the study).

Hopefully, the reader (in accordance with social constructionist ideas) too will not see the text that follows as a finished entity, but as a body of ideas that is brought to life by the active participation of all involved. As Eagleton (1983) says, ultimately “the text itself is no more than a series of ‘cues’ to the (audience), invitations to construct a piece of language into (new) meaning” (cited by Hamilton, 1995:1).

1.5. Unfolding of the Study

To orient the reader, I now turn to an overview of the chapters that follow:

Chapter Two sets the stage for the study. This is done by firstly discussing the historical and socio-cultural development of the school *per se*, while a discussion of developments in the field of Community Psychology serves to place the study within a specific theoretical framework.

In different ways these two backdrops create a setting for the study, the one representing its contextual reality, while, the other represents its ideological postmodern agenda - namely, a Community Psychology social construction agenda.

To address the psychology of identity, postmodern Community Psychology social constructionist notions of “sense of self”, “human diversity” and “multiculturalism” thus are linked in *Chapter Three* to Shotter and Gergen’s (1989) metaphor of “texts of identity”.

The notions are discussed as a transcendence of paradoxes in which the boundaries of sameness and differences, global and local, and personal and collective notions of the self, are collapsed.

The notion of transformation itself, however, is discussed as a process of “rewriting the self”, a term borrowed from Freeman (1995). The process is illuminated by means of discourses of the past and human agency/empowerment, as well as those related to the South African history of colonisation and apartheid - namely, discourses of race and culture.

In *Chapter Four* the notion of multiculturalism again is revisited, this time within the context of education. Van der Merwe’s (2004) four different theoretical forms of educational multiculturalism are used as guiding metaphors to explore, internationally as well as a locally, issues pertaining to multicultural schooling.

An analysis of the educational identity of the Deutsche Internationale Schule zu Johannesburg is included in the discussion of multicultural schooling in South Africa.

To summarise: *Chapters Three and Four* lay the theoretical stepping stones for the “who am I?” narratives by discussing the three key notions encapsulated in the title of the study - namely, that of “texts of identity”, “rewriting the self” and “multiculturalism in schools” - within the social constructionist agenda described in *Chapter Two*.

In *Chapter Five* (my research methodology chapter) an Action Research procedure is interfaced with a postmodern narrative/social constructionist epistemology, i.e. before explaining how data was generated in three interlocking stages.

The stages include the storytellers (as I call my research participants) reflecting on their school experiences via diary-writing (Phase One), writing self-referential narratives (Phase Two) and verbal sharing (or not sharing) of their experiences with one another in a group session (Phase Three).

I also describe how my role as an ethnographic researcher automatically involved me in the whole research procedure (in which the distinction of object and subject, data and interpretation are blurred) as well as enabled me to explain my own story bias.

Chapter Six focuses on extracts from dialogues generated by means of the retrospective recollections in Phases One and Three of the research procedure. I have placed the extracts within Steier's (1991) ecological constructionist framework as this allowed me to analyse the selected dialogues in a collaborative way (a combination of the storytellers' work, as well as my own analytic work). It also allowed me to formulate a co-constructed "worldview".

Chapter Seven again is used to tell the personalised stories scripted by the storytellers in Phase Two of the research procedure, stories in which they (directly or indirectly) relate how they made sense of the past and also made sense of the new identities they formulated within the new boundaries created for them by the school.

I use *Chapter Eight* (the concluding chapter) to reflect on my own story, which includes reflecting on both the empirical and theoretical components of the study. I conclude that the theoretical frame helped achieve the objective of the narrative research procedure.

The objective, namely, was to use the personalised stories of the eleven ex-learners to highlight important issues that help or do not help South Africans make sense of their past and re-identify themselves within new boundaries.

Discourses of race and culture were found to still be the major stumbling blocks for the "rewriting of self" within a South African context. It thus is suggested that a "common humanity" discourse (as well as that of "hybridity") is the way out.

CHAPTER 2

MAPPING OUT THE SMALLER AND THE BIGGER BACKDROPS FOR THE “WHO AM I” NARRATIVES

To set the stage for the study, a two-tiered backdrop will be fleshed out - one of which serves to create the specific setting or terrain of the study (the smaller backdrop), while the other places the study within a specific theoretical framework (the bigger backdrop).

The theoretical framework is an epistemological one that defines how I in my study view the world and human behaviour. It places my thinking and perceptions as well as my understanding of the “who am I?” narratives within a Community Psychology template that underpins my ontological understanding (or interpretation) of key notions such as

- identity and change in Chapter Three;
- multiculturalism in schools in Chapter Four.

2.1. THE SMALLER BACKDROP: THE DEUTSCHE INTERNATIONALE SCHULE zu JOHANNESBURG

*Come writers and critics who prophesise with your pen
And keep your eyes wide
The chance won't come again
And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no telling who
That it's namin'
For the loser now
Will be later to win
For the times they are a-changin'.*

(From The Times They Are A-Changin' - Bob Dylan)

2.1.1. Introduction

The terrain of the study is the Deutsche Internationale Schule zu Johannesburg, which, for the purpose of the study, henceforth simply will be known as the DSJ or the German school.

I have been employed there as a consulting psychologist for over 10 years on a part-time basis. Having worked for the school for a long period means I am accepted as a part of the system. My insider-status at times makes me unwittingly (like the school itself) lose sight of the fact that the

school does not exist in isolation. That is, the school (often involuntarily) is part of the changes and transitions taking place in its host country, South Africa, as well as in Germany and other countries.

2.1.2. The School's Attempts at Integration

Founded in 1890 for the children of gold-seeking German immigrants, the DSJ is among the oldest private schools in Johannesburg. The school was founded to fulfil a dual objective: It was to be an educational institution, which simultaneously had to uphold the German language and cultural heritage of the German-speaking community in South Africa.

As the admission criterion to the school was the ability to speak, read and write the German language on a mother-tongue level (a criterion which meant that the school admitted only children of German descent, be they European or South African by nationality), no non-German pupils were admitted.

In the late 1970s, altering socio-political circumstances in South Africa, mainly put into motion by events such as the 1976 students' uprising in Soweto and the ensuing unrest, affected the school. Bowing to pressure from anti-apartheid organisations and the German government, the school altered its policy of solely being a German community school to being a school of "cultural encounter" (a shift in ideology mentioned by Stabel & Gerstenberg, 1990;227).

The broadened focus thus meant that the school committed itself to

- offering black and coloured South African pupils an educational opportunity that they would not experience in their traditional schools;
- providing black and coloured South African children with access to the German language and culture, thereby also providing them with an additional opportunity to study in German on a tertiary training level; and
- acting as a builder of bridges not only between German and South African societies but also between people of different races and socio-cultural backgrounds (DSJ's Mission Statement; Nussgruber & Wendorff, 1992).

By re-defining its educational identity in this manner the DSJ thus automatically entered the arena of multicultural education, an educational stance that in its ideal form advocates practising tolerance and respect for human rights as well as working to liberate minority cultures that have been disadvantaged (Vandeyar, 2003).

Critical problems around language, however, forced the school to implement a system that kept "white" and "black and coloured" classes separate, a system that is maintained until today, albeit (as mentioned later in this section) with a few white pupils who do not speak German also recently ending up in these classes.

That is, admitted on a grade five level, even today black and coloured South African pupils, because of their inability to speak German, for the first five years are put in a separate class and mainly taught in English and only formally integrated with German speakers in “non-academic” classes such as sport, craft and needlework, choir and art - and (since 1992) in English and Afrikaans classes. They, therefore, are at a disadvantage when it comes to social contact with German speakers.

From grade 10 onwards, the black and coloured pupils are fully integrated with the German classes in all subjects, except German. It is an integration that is facilitated by the fact that the medium of education from grade 10 onwards changes to English as DSJ pupils write the South African Independent Education Board matric.

A further obstacle to social contact, however, remains. Namely, there is the geographical segregation of German-speaking pupils living in well-established, middle- to upper-class white residential areas, whereas black and coloured pupils generally are confined to living in traditional townships, such as Soweto and Coronationville.

No wonder, therefore, that Nussgruber and Wendorff (1992:52), in a third-year Industrial Sociology project called “‘The Foreign Language Branch’ at the DSJ - Integration or Separation?”, conclude that the DSJ’s schooling system ultimately does not facilitate social integration of their black and coloured South African learners.

In fact, taking it to an extreme: A danger exists that the German school's black and coloured pupils could perceive themselves to be trapped in a form of apartheid and, therefore, experience themselves trapped between two separate and different worlds or cultures.

It is a perception that could create a dilemma for them, either in the guise of feeling lost in a type of no-man's-land in which they lose touch with their own community and do not feel comfortable in the society of their "new world", or adamantly wanting to retain their own ethnic identity instead of associating with the dominant culture of the school.

These are two extremes that have contributed to

- the demise of the Red Indian population in the United States of America (USA) according to Little Lee Soldier (1985); and
- a great deal of research being done into areas of enculturation (a process by which individuals mainly identify with their ethnic minority culture) and acculturation (a process by which individuals mainly relate to a new dominant society) - for example, Knipscheer, De Jong, Kleber and Lamptey (2000) examined acculturative stress in Ghanaian migrants in The Netherlands.

Opening its nursery school to non-German speaking children in 2001, albeit again as a separate group called the New Primary School (NPS) group, however, could mean that the times are a-changin' at the German school.

For example, it was noted at the 2006 International Congress of German schools in Cape Town that

- children between the ages of four and six learn German with greater ease and, therefore, become multilingually competent much sooner, a factor which facilitates integrating the non-German speakers into German classes much sooner; and
- the integration process of nursery school children already is started on a grade one level, thereby giving black and coloured South African children a much better chance of appreciating cultural diversity (Dettweiler, 2006; Heuwieser, 2006).

Nevertheless, the issues of integration or segregation alluded to here remain pertinent for exploring not only the multi-layered world of the study's 11 ex-DSJ black and coloured storytellers, but also multicultural school communities in general.

2.1.3. The School's Dominant German Discourse

As learners of 27 different nationalities attend the school (e.g., some pupils come from South American and Eastern European countries, as well as one or two from China and Japan), the DSJ ostensibly acts as a multicultural centre (Dettweiler, 2006; Heuwieser, 2006).

Acting as an international encounter centre, however, does not include the school going out of its way to meet the needs of the different ethnic and cultural groups that make up the South African "rainbow nation".

Rather, the dominant cultural discourse of the school still remains German, a state of affairs which mainly is due to

- the school belonging to a larger “sisterhood” of 117 German schools dotted all over the world - in southern Africa alone there are five of them (Heuwieser, 2003:8-9);
- practically half of the teaching staff being contractual staff from Germany, including the headmaster; and
- school policies of all German schools still being controlled by the motherland.

Like its sister schools, therefore, the school has a basic assimilation policy, in which non-German ethnic and cultural groups have to adapt and change, not the school.

Moreover, so as not to undermine its “Germanness”, the DSJ also has set a quota of not more than one black and coloured South African class per grade consisting of approximately 25 to 30 learners each - which then makes them a minority group.

It is a quota system, which, according to Nussgruber, *et. al.*, (1992) was in accordance with German parents’ wishes not to have the German “elitism” of the school threatened. In fact, before opening up the school to

black and coloured pupils in the 1980s, some German parents showed such strong resistance to the move that they distributed pamphlets at the school gates, in which they voiced their fears (the major fears being a drop in academic standards and in overall discipline, as well as a fear that violence could increase).

These fears, however, simply echo popular white attitudes found during South Africa's legalised apartheid days - a time in which negative racial categorising and stereotyping dominated every aspect of the South African social reality. Viewed from this aspect the school's expectations of assimilation relate not only to Germanness, but also to whiteness and middle-classness.

However, with a few exceptions, most German parents nowadays treat the opening up of the DSJ to black and coloured pupils as an opportunity for them and their children to develop a better appreciation of the South African as well as the 21st century global cultural diversity.

Other signs that times indeed are a-changin' at the DSJ are:

Firstly, opening its doors to a wider South African community means that the DSJ (as mentioned before) now has white non-German speaking pupils in black and coloured classes, a move which makes it possible that classes soon will be categorised according to a German first language and a third language streaming, rather than race.

According to Nussgruber, *et. al.*, (1992) it is a possibility that Brother Neil McGurk (former headmaster of Sacred Heart College) already more than a decade ago foresaw as the way forward to creating a truer spirit of cultural encounter in South African schools.

Secondly, multi-racial contact during break times has contributed to English, and not German, being adopted as the common language among students - hopefully yet another stepping stone towards the truer spirit of cultural encounter.

And, thirdly, as the language barrier also has contributed to parents of black and coloured pupils themselves feeling excluded, the school now has a policy of sending circulars in both German and English. This has made those parents more prepared to be involved in the affairs of the school (e.g., as parent representatives).

Incidentally, communication in parent-teacher meetings now too has to be in both languages, a principle which also has to be upheld by contractual German educators.

However, the rise of English as a *lingua franca* at the DSJ potentially could mirror complications found in South Africa as a whole. That is, the use of English as a common language requires greater cultural shifts from some groups than others and threatens the rights of ethnic minorities to protect their language. This right ironically includes Germans as an ethnic minority protecting their language.

2.1.4. The School's Minority South African Group

In spite of black and coloured pupils still remaining a minority group within the German school set-up, their admission is touted as a good example of the school's proactive stance in meeting the challenges of the changing times in South Africa.

However, seen through the eyes of this minority group, it is a perception that inevitably shifts.

For me, personally, the shift started when I was called in to observe a specific black and coloured class, which at the end of the 1990s had earned itself the reputation of being "the most difficult class in the school" - a reputation that, unfortunately, also became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Sitting in on their classes, I observed that part of the problem was a divide, a "them" and "us" dichotomy between educators (particularly the contractual German ones) and black and coloured students (whom I dub my "pilot study" group). For me the divide helped explain the solidarity the pupils showed.

In fact, the students reminded me of an enmeshed family, in which everyone acted as one (e.g. when one pupil started acting out, the others quickly followed suit, a youth phenomenon that here had racial overlays).

Such reactions thus helped awaken in me an awareness of how many of the black and coloured students at the school preferred to separate themselves into their own "psychological sense of community", a term, which according to Newbrough and Chavis (1986), refers to a "we sense" of togetherness and belonging.

That is, many of the black and coloured students paradoxically tended to identify more and more (and not less and less) with their own minority ethnic culture (a process of enculturation), instead of fulfilling the school's expectations that they would assimilate and integrate into the German culture (a process of acculturation).

Ultimately, therefore, their reactions could be perceived as their way of trying to deal with a dilemma they believed they faced while studying at the school.

They, namely, believed that they could only benefit from the school's superior education (the school each year is named by "The Star" newspaper as one of the schools of excellence in education) if they submerged their own identities as individuals and as cultural groups, - or worse still, sacrificed their home culture for the school culture.

Taken to its extreme, black and coloured pupils, therefore, tended to perceive the school in terms of power and control, another form of European "colonialism", because of the school's emphasis on promoting a German culture and language within South Africa.

It is a situation further complicated by legacies of the apartheid era, in the sense that this then also plays into the black and coloured students' entrenched perception of a cultural hierarchy of domination/ subjugation and oppression/freedom.

For example, a discussion with the black and coloured students in the class I observed, on their chosen topic, “Race”, revealed over-learned stories that, even if negative, for some remained so powerful that they trapped themselves in it, despite their own desire to escape.

As one student noted, he still found himself believing that he was inferior to the white DSJ learners in a number of ways, an internalised negative perception he held onto, in spite of knowing that he had been selected on merit to attend the German school.

Such revelations, however, simply served to add to the impression that the reactions I had observed could be explained in terms of Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) social identity theory.

That is, (as identified in other walks of life) the reactions could be seen to be an attempt to redress an imbalance of power between a privileged “in-group” and a disadvantaged “out-group”. In other words, the black and coloured students simply were attempting to identify themselves in a more elevated and positive light.

But for the school’s black and coloured students, especially, times they are a -changin’, in the sense that

- the paradoxical tag of being the “Foreign Language Branch” students, a label which ironically accentuated their separateness, was removed at the end of the 1990s;

- for a few years now, two headgirls and a vice-headboy have been black and coloured learners, a phenomenon which suggests that not only have black and coloured learners become more involved in school matters, but they have become much more accepted socially within the school community itself; and
- (since 1994) South African society has been “normalising”, to the extent that the majority of today’s South African teens no longer are really interested in politics and (much like their counterparts in many other parts of the world) are far more interested in clubbing, shopping, making money, etc.
 - aspirations which then could make the black and coloured DSJ learners use their shared teenage experiences as identity markers for themselves, instead of politically and historically inspired negative self images.

Nevertheless, the possibility exists that these changes are less of an indicator of changing times and more of an indicator that in real life boundaries between the processes of enculturation and acculturation are in no ways clear. Rather, in real life processes of enculturation and acculturation co-exist, often in tension.

Therefore, I can also conclude that, although some of the black and coloured learners at the DSJ resist acculturation, to a greater or lesser extent the acculturation process and the enculturation process both influence the way they identify themselves.

2.1. THE BIGGER BACKDROP: A POSTMODERN COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY FRAMEWORK

... Context is the water in which we fish swim. There are mirrors within mirrors as we attempt to understand its influence and implications. As each new understanding comes, I think of Paul McCartney's description in the song "Penny Lane": "Though she thinks as if she's in a play, she is anyway".

(Trickett, 1996:226)

2.2.1. Introduction

Already formalised in the USA as a separate discipline at the 1965 Swampscott Conference in Boston, the field of Community Psychology in its four decades of existence has developed a worldview - a "bigger backdrop" that guides the thinking and ideology in which this particular study operates.

The field itself has moved through various reform movements, which not only eventually helped Community Psychology move away from conventional Psychology concepts and practises, but also helped put the field in the cutting edge of new postmodern psychological paradigms and approaches.

2.2.2. Early Thrust towards a Paradigm Shift

Kvale (1992) aptly describes the early shifts as a move from inside to outside, where the focus of interest shifts from the archaeology of the psyche (the inwardness of the individual psyche) to the architecture of social/cultural landscapes (being-in-the-world with other human beings).

For Community Psychology the origins of this shift is very much tied to the sixties social reform movements in the USA - more specifically to the mental health reform movement, the war on poverty and the civil rights movement (Mann, 1978).

The mental health reform movement, born out of the new thinking of psychiatrists like Szasz (1960:118), redefined mental disorders (a medical model terminology) as “problems in living”, a term coined to draw attention to a belief that social, and not individual, issues were the cause of human’s problem behaviours.

And as part of the war on poverty and the civil rights movement, social activists - including early community psychologists - fought to realise the sixties belief that something close to a just and equitable society was just around the corner.

That is, by advocating the championship of the “underdog” or “victim” (e.g. people with socio-economic problems such as poverty, unemployment and poor education) they created a move towards empowering the powerless (a move that also entailed putting pressure on those in power to make structural changes needed to improve the quality of life of unequal or marginalised communities).

For example, the 1960s agitations against social inequalities and discrimination forced the desegregation of American society, an externally propelled societal intervention that Levine and Perkins (1987:312) describe as “one of the most admirable and successful battles for social justice (in the USA)”.

More specifically, on the school level it forced the desegregation of many formerly segregated schools, an external reform of the educational system based on viewing segregated schools as fostering unequal educational opportunities as well as racial prejudice and ethnocentrism with its concomitant views of inferiority/superiority (Bennett, 1999; Darder & Torres, 1998; Walker, 2005).

Yet, although the mental health and social action models definitely challenged the dominant ideological view of mainstream Psychology, in practise early community psychologists in the USA generally failed to implement alternative modes of interventions.

For example, because of state cuts in budgets no fewer than 500 of the promised 200,000 community centres were established, while the help offered by community psychologists in such centres remained traditional (focused on individuals) rather than based on advocated reforms (e.g. group interventions via community consultation) (Mann, 1978).

Nevertheless, the American mental health and social action models have left lasting legacies. For one, their shift to an understanding of human problems as part of a larger social phenomenon conceptually has left a legacy mainly grounded in matters of prevention (a health-care framework adopted by the South African ANC government) and empowerment - the latter being an important metaphor for this study.

Also, the social action and mental health models' encouragement of a search for resources and well-being, instead of a search for psychopathology (another cornerstone of the medical model) converges with beliefs upheld by the ecological model - one that also underpins viewpoints upheld in this study.

The USA's mental health and social action models have parallels within the South African context, where the field of Community Psychology first gained currency in the 1980s. The idealistic socio-political philosophies of the social action model in particular were adopted as part and parcel of the 1980s struggle for political and social change.

Community Psychology in South Africa, therefore, provided an important vehicle for psychologists such as Berger and Lazarus (1987) to oppose apartheid and become part of the struggle for democracy and human liberation, a stance that also is intertwined with South African Community Psychology challenging mainstream psychological theories and practises (aspects of which are highlighted by community psychologists such as Ahmed & Pretorius-Heuchert, 2001; Hamber, Masilela, & Terre Blanche, 2001; Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed, 2001; Seedat, Duncan & Lazarus, 2001).

Nevertheless, as an evolving discipline that Sigogo, Hooper, Long, Lykes, Wilson and Zietkiewicz (2004:77) say is best defined as a "work-in-progress", Community Psychology is of particular relevance in my quest to address one of the newer social issues that a post-apartheid South Africa faces.

That is, I address the issue of how the re-organisation of human relationships and cultures in a post-apartheid country has resulted in South Africans encountering experiences that challenge their assumptions regarding themselves, as individuals and as collectives. In this sense, say Pretorius-Heuchert and Ahmed (2001), South Africa is a unique social laboratory in which to explore - and possibly resolve - similar 21st century global issues.

However, as the country's apartheid past has left a legacy of a society partitioned artificially along racial lines (a stratification also embedded in the country's colonial past) as well as distorted socio-historical images of communities, my study simultaneously explores how this legacy often makes South Africans confound identity with race.

It is a distortion that Butchart and Seedat (1990) say also applies to social and psychological discourses that uphold a definition of race as the sole way of defining the self. Yet, despite the need to be critically aware of distortions arising from the use of race as a central analytical category of theory making, Darder and Torres (1998) maintain that there are scholars who seem to be unable to break with the hegemonic tradition of its use in the field of education.

Darder, *et. al.*, (1998), therefore, argue for a new theoretical language that can help reconstruct education programmes to more accurately reflect and address the different forms of social inequities that shape the lives of students from minority groups.

2.2.3. A New Epistemological Position

Early proponents of Community Psychology (e.g. Kelly, 2006) also set out the main elements for an ecological model, which Mann (1978) says became one of the main bridges used for the establishment of a shift towards a new epistemological position for Community Psychology.

Borrowing the underpinnings of environmental biology, the ecological model creates a metaphorical analogy for the study of human beings focused on the interrelationship (or fit) of people and environments in natural settings.

It is a fit in which the components are interdependent, to the extent that a movement in one component influences other components, and vice versa. This also means that the development of competencies and strengths within one part of a community again will bring about beneficial changes in other parts of the community (Levine, *et. al.*, 1987; Keeney, 1983).

The ecological model, therefore, holds assumptions that allow Community Psychology to

- “illustrate the dynamic interplay between the qualities of people and the attributes of smaller social settings and larger social environments” (Kelly, 2006:251); and
- portray communities as having an adaptive and evolutionary nature - a viewpoint that is the beginning of a historical as well as contextual approach to understanding communities (Berry, 1994).

But even if this interactionary and adaptive vision of a community marks a sharp break with traditional psychology's static understanding of things, it is from within the domain of the ecosystemic model that the full potential for alternative formulations of Community Psychology arose.

Based on the ecological viewpoint as well as that of systems theory (to a lesser extent also cybernetics), proponents of the integrated ecosystemic epistemology (e.g. Bateson, 1979; Keeney, 1979) briefly defined a system as an organisation of living parts in dynamic interaction, a viewpoint that for Community Psychology emphasises

- describing a community as a part of a complex and holistic network of systems and sub-systems;
- focusing on the self-regulatory and interconnected networks of relationships within and without a community; and
- understanding the processes, developments and changes of a community in an interactive, "non-causal" fashion (Keeney, 1983; Visser, 2007).

Therefore, adopting an integrated ecosystemic viewpoint as part of the framework for this study, has a number of advantages:

Firstly, as the host community (the DSJ) and their participants (learners) are seen to be interdependent, it is specifically the ecological approach that allowed me to explore within a natural social setting how the school influenced the re-writing of the ex-DSJ learners' identities under a special set of circumstances. As Kelly (2006:252-253) says, "by being in places our identities are elaborated".

However, it was important to me not to depict the school in isolation, but rather as a microcosm of the South African macrocosm. I, therefore, used the ecosystemic approach to focus on the black and coloured ex-DSJ students, as the appropriate sub-system to study within the school's network of systems and sub-systems, while (to use Minuchin's (1979) analogy of a zoom lens) zooming out to observe with a broader focus whenever I wished.

Secondly, the ecosystemic viewpoint allowed me to replace the constricting and one-dimensional mental health model definition of a community as a geographical terrain with a more complex and flexible working definition of a community as a relational one, in which an individual may be a member of more than one community at a time (Auerswald, 1978; Keeney, 1979).

Within the context of my study, this meant I could view the black and coloured ex-DSJ pupils' re-formulation of their identities being influenced firstly by an interconnected networks of relationships within and without the DSJ school community, and secondly by an adaptive dynamic interplay of enculturation and acculturation processes between home and school environments.

Thirdly, the holistic, non-exclusive nature of the ecosystemic approach dovetails well with the heterogeneous nature of Community Psychology mentioned by Ahmed and Pretorius-Heuchert (2001) as well as Visser (2007).

It, therefore, allowed me not only to interface various arenas of systems (e.g. the individual and the collective), but allowed me to put on another "lens" when necessary, be it one "borrowed", for example, from cross-cultural theory or other disciplines such as Ethnography, a sub-system of Anthropology.

Lastly, as the integrated ecosystemic model helped community psychologists to move beyond traditional research methodologies with their linear causal hypotheses, it paved the way for me to use a “non-causal” Action Research methodology for my study.

As Dokecki (1992) says, it is a methodology that denotes a close interplay of knowledge and practise, of reflection and data generation, in which an important premise is that the researcher merely provides the context in which community members become aware of their own processes.

I, therefore, saw my role in my research procedure as merely providing a context in which a series of reflexive conversations and dialogues could make both the black and coloured ex-DSJ students, as well as myself, aware of how the DSJ had influenced the formulation of their identities anew.

It is a role in which I have taken heed of Kelly’s (2006:113) advice, namely, to use the ecological premise of “so goes the community, so goes the processes of doing the work”.

2.2.4. A Postmodern Re-conceptualisation

Postmodernism represents a scepticism that led to a revision of many universalising theories or grand narratives as they have been dubbed by the 20th century French philosopher Lyotard (Sim, 1999).

In general, it is a re-vision that does not necessarily consider such dominant universalising theories or grand narratives to be incorrect. Rather, within postmodern thinking they simply become one way of knowing about the world and human beings among multiple ways of knowing (Trickett, Watts & Birman, 1994).

The postmodern “turn” thus helped create a paradigm shift that gave a new vista or a new “lens” with which to find new options and alternative ways of looking at human beings and their social life - a way of thinking that also stretched the boundaries of community theory (Beyer, du Preez & Eskell-Blokland, 2007).

For example, Newbrough (1995) interpreted community theory anew as a holistic synthesis of paradoxical viewpoints, he called the Third Position (a position I use to formulate a 21st century worldview of identity based on a synthesis of opposing discourses regarding identity logic).

It is a shift in perspective that also intersects with a postmodern social construction discourse, in which the over-riding contention is that human reality is socially constructed (a contention already formulated in 1967 by Berger and Luckmann).

That is, people are assumed to work out a shared conception of their world in the realm of the “common world” or the “common dance” of social exchanges mediated through language (Hoffman, 1992:8).

Basic assumptions of a social construction discourse, therefore, are that

- there is no direct correspondence between an event and people's inner experience of it; and
- the world as we know it is entirely constructed by ourselves (Freedman & Combs, 1996; McNamee & Gergen, 1992).

It thus follows that a community is seen to be yet another human product that is embedded in and emerges out of the interaction in people's communication networks and information flows.

In fact, Hunter and Riger already in 1986 referred to a hierarchy of symbolic communities in which people, in an ongoing balancing act, identify themselves as belonging to several different levels of community simultaneously, be it formal networks and flows, as in local organisations, or informal networks and flows, as in friendship circles (a range of meanings of the notion of community which Kelly and van der Riet, 2001, emphasise influences the planning of a participatory research project in community settings).

It thus is a multi-layered and symbolic re-conceptualisation of a community that allows me in my study to refer to a "psychological sense of community".

A notion that I use to describe the black and coloured learners at the DSJ as being bonded by a subjective knowing that they belong to a collectivity, according to McMillan and Chavis (1986), the meaning of a "psychological sense of community" is derived from a dynamic interaction of the following four elements:

- a feeling of belonging, of being part of a collective (membership);
- a need by the group to be sufficiently attractive to influence its individual members (influence);
- the individual-group association having to be sufficiently rewarding for the individual members (fulfilment of needs); and
- a commitment to sharing a history and similar experiences, which again strengthens the “we” bond (a shared emotional connection).

Additionally, as a social constructionist perspective extends to viewing people as having their own experiences of the world and reacting according to this experience, I also was able in the study to use the notion of a “sense of identity” to paint pictures in which each and everyone of the 11 black and coloured ex-DSJ students develops their own specific mix of identifying themselves, instead of automatically placing them in stereotypical categories.

The pictures painted, however, also are pictures that include taking cognisance of the social constructionist viewpoint that peoples’ sense of their identity simultaneously are constrained by socially and culturally established forms of identification. As Freedman and Combs (1996:35) say: “While no self is ‘truer’ than any other, it is true that particular presentations of self are preferred by particular people within particular cultures”.

Ultimately, therefore, I take cognisance of the newer social theories that place the highly contested notion of identity - a key notion used in this study - in a specific ecological and social setting, instead of in conventional Psychology's global, context-free categories.

They are newer social theories that also led to proponents of social constructionism often using a narrative approach to identify ecologically and socially evoked stories, an approach based on the belief that people are the locations where the stories of their place and time can be told (Trickett, *et. al.*, 1994).

In this sense the use of a narrative approach helped me, for example, familiarise myself with assumptions and ideas of an African society that traditionally has a holistic approach to life and the self - a viewpoint that Mokwena (2007) defines as an African cosmology, in which the notion of humanness (ubuntu) is central. The question then being to what extent such traditional notions of self have changed as a result of Western influences?

But, although I constructed an ethnographic study in which I aimed to identify knowledge as understood and experienced by people within their own culture, my own biases do show.

In fact, to go back to Paul McCarthy's description in the song "Penny Lane": "Though she thinks as if she's in a play, she is anyway" (Trickett, 1996:226).

I, therefore, rather see myself as part of an ongoing flow of perspectives and understandings that are derived from a two-way exchange process, in which,

a la Trickett's (1996) social constructionist vision, there are "mirrors within mirrors" for me to reconstruct a better understanding of the storytellers' experiences at the DSJ. -Therefore, "though (I think) as if (I'm) in a play, (I am) anyway".

It also is a two-way perspective that extends to the notion of identity itself, in the sense that this again is seen as intrinsically intertwined and interlinked with collective and social identity notions such as that of "culture", "race" and "ethnicity".

But even though the notions of culture, ethnicity, and race are used interchangeably, each notion in a social constructionist context itself again can be seen to possess multi-layered aspects of a macro-level as well as a variety of subsidiary levels.

For example, the notion of culture can signify a macro-culture of individualism (usually seen to be a traditional Western notion) or of collectivism (usually seen to be a traditional African notion), while - within the South African context - subsidiaries nowadays (as one of the 11 storytellers of the project pointed out in the group session) even can extend to notions of "we create our own electricity" a la Soweto, and "there are no trashcans", a la Sandton.

Ultimately, the complexity of such notions open up a vista for the study, in which not only the notions of self and identity, but also notions of culture are multi-layered and subjectively defined.

A social constructionist viewpoint, therefore, also intersects with the overarching multicultural education assumption that educators need also to be able to interpret children's notions of self and identity in the cultural context in which they have grown up, be it the community and/or home environment.

2. 3. OVERARCHING BACKDROP

In their own ways, the smaller and the bigger pictures have created two worlds or backdrops for the study in which to operate - the one representing the contextual reality of the study, the other a much more ideological framework in which the study can operate.

It is an ideological framework that is based on Community Psychology theories regarding social issues that over decades have been re-assessed and re-evaluated. The framework, therefore, now not only includes early notions such as empowerment and social change, but also more recently developed social theories that follow an argument that reality is socially constructed.

But not only does the ideological framework give my study appropriate theoretical parameters; it simultaneously allows me to do what Rappaport called "boundary spanning" (cited by Swartz and Gibson, 2001:41), i.e. explore understandings of some of the core notions via other related or "borrowed" theoretical backdrops.

For example, I use an interpretive, hermeneutic stance to explore the notions of “narrative knowing” and “narrative thinking”, while I again use an ecosystemic approach to analyse various dialogues in a collaborative manner - i.e. via a combination of the storytellers’ as well as my own analytic work.

The challenge, as Visser (2007) says, thus was to develop my own perspective in which the theories are used in a manner useful for my study.

CHAPTER 3

LAYING THEORETICAL STEPPING STONES FOR THE “WHO AM I” NARRATIVES: TEXTS OF IDENTITY; REWRITING THE SELF

The question of “who am I?” is age-old and has evoked much debate. In Psychology humankind’s identity (also here dubbed selfhood and personhood) has been a major object - or subject - of enquiry. And as part of this particular exploration, I discuss “texts of identity” via central postmodern Community Psychology notions of “sense of self”, “human diversity”, as well as that of “multiculturalism”.

As the term postmodern has been used to mean so many different things that it is now often associated with loose, “anything goes” thinking, I henceforth call my position “postmodern”.

3.1. TEXTS OF IDENTITY

.... the primary medium within which identities are created and have their currency is not just linguistic but textual: persons are largely ascribed identities according to the manner of their embedding within a discourse - in their own or in the discourses of others.

(Shotter and Gergen, 1989:ix)

“Texts of Identity” is the title of a book edited by Shotter and Gergen (1989), to which they both also have contributed chapters. It is a metaphor which for all contributory authors denotes an exploration of how people’s identities are constructed out of, as well as constrained by, socially and culturally established forms of communication (i.e. texts), be it via discourses of others, or their own.

But while affirming this social constructionist viewpoint of “texts of identity”, the emphasis here also is on how “contributions of the past” inevitably “(remain) a resource for the present” (Cronbach, cited by Trickett, 1996:214), i.e. as part of a paradox and not as a monolithic conventional identity meta-discourse.

3.1.1. SENSE OF SELF

3.1.1.1. The Paradox of the “One” and the “Many”

To begin exploring how the metaphor of “texts of identity” can transcend the boundaries of a conventional identity logic, Newbrough’s (1995) postulations regarding Community Psychology is used as a point of departure:

As a critic of the community theory of his time, Newbrough (1995) used his paradox of the “One” and the “Many” to place his Third Position within a

Hegelian dialectical paradigm of Positions One (the thesis) and Two (the antithesis). The conflict thus is between Position One's solution of the collectivity of "One" and Position Two's solution of the individuality of "Many".

In essence it is a contradictory dualistic viewpoint of how society functions that Newbrough (1995) elaborates on, via Kirkpatrick's (1986) descriptions of an organic community and a contractarian community.

That is, in an organic community (as found in a feudal society) loyalty to the collectivity is of paramount importance (Position One); while in a contractarian community (as found in a free market society) the primary concern is to protect individual liberty and privacy (Position Two).

For Newbrough (1995) it is the over-commitment to either Position One or Two, which is problematic (for example, the American over-commitment to the philosophy of individualism and the African over-commitment to the collectivity), in the sense that it forces an either-or vision, in which the one pole has to be "good" and the other "bad" - a modern vision of society.

Newbrough (1995), therefore, creates the Third Position, which (as his solution to the juxtapositions of the "One" and the "Many") is a synthesis of individuality and the collective - a grounding for a "postmodern" paradigm of personhood.

3.1.1.2. A Third Position Perspective

Adopting a Third Position thus means that the notion of identity no longer is seen as an either-or issue of whether humankind is the centred “master of their own universe” (an extreme modern viewpoint) or whether humankind’s identity is socially constructed - a decentred “postmodern” viewpoint, which at its extremity even questions the existence of an entity such as identity.

Rather, a Third Position circumvents the either-or trap by giving a perspective in which personhood is formulated in terms of a personal (individual) and a social (community) identification - a “postmodern” solution to the identity issue which automatically

- negates the modern depiction of a non-reciprocal and hierarchical society, in which there is a domination of individual over individual, group over group, culture over culture; and
- embraces a viewpoint of networks of belonging, comprising both social and personal identities, which are contextualised.

In Shotter’s (1989) language, it is a viewpoint that recognises that “I’s” in being “me’s” must inevitably be intermingled with the “you’s” of many “others”.

Ultimately, therefore, (again in Shotter’s (1989) language) it is a re-cognition of joint actions between first and second persons, rather than seeing people

as owners of themselves, owing nothing to society. The formation of personhood then varies according to the social constructions of participants in a particular socio-cultural context - a “postmodern” epistemological framework that Trickett already in 1996 saw as paving the future way for Community Psychology.

3.1.1.3. A “Postmodern” Sense of Self

To sustain a “postmodern” viewpoint of selfhood, Adorno’s concept of a negative dialectics is added to the picture. That is, Adorno, a 20th century German philosopher, recommended a negative dialectics of a never-ending process, without beginning or end, as an antidote to the positive “resting place” of Hegel’s dialectics (Sim, 1999:180).

The “postmodern” formulation of the notion of identity thus may be seen as one that is an ongoing process, an ongoing debate, rather than a monolithic and progressive discourse.

For example, the notion of identity recently has been re-explored and re-debated by community psychologists in the context of McMillan, *et. al.’s* (1986) definitive notion of a “psychological sense of community”.

It is a re-exploration which has led to Obst, Smith and Zinkiewicz (2002) proposing that McMillan, *et. al.’s* (1986) original four elements of a “psychological sense of community” be expanded to a fifth, namely that of a conscious identification (an in-group/out-group identification).

Based on social identity theory, it is an added dimension that (among other things) emphasises that people's group membership has strong affective and cognitive consequences, including a biased evaluation of in-groups/out-groups.

In Australia, too, the re-exploration of the notion of a "psychological sense of community" has led Fisher and Sonn (2002) to identify a series of salient Australian identity markers (e.g. common symbols and shared history) which can be used to help immigrants identify more easily with Australian communities, rather than resist changes in their lifestyle.

However, for Fisher, *et. al.*, (2002) the challenge not only is to get immigrants to identify more easily with an Australian sense of community, it also includes getting Australians to incorporate into their sense of community the identity markers of the newcomers as well as those that they have developed together.

On a more radical note, Puddifoot (2003) proposes that the original notion of a "psychological sense of community" be re-defined as a "psychological sense of community identity" - a shift which he says replaces

- the emphasis on an idealised picture of a community with an emphasis on the concrete realities of an actual community setting he explored (Durham City, England); and

- the emphasis on an individual's own orientation to her or his community with an emphasis on both personal (a sense of personal support, personal contentedness and personal involvement) and shared aspects (perceived community engagement and perceived settledness) of a sense of community identity.

According to Puddifoot (2003), therefore, there are major differences between McMillan, *et. al.*'s (1986) notion of a "psychological sense of community" and his notion of a "psychological sense of community identity".

The major difference being that a "psychological sense of community" is a social construct that refers purely to a personal orientation to a community; while in a "psychological sense of community identity", no distinction is made between peoples' personal perceptions and those that are widely shared.

Ultimately, therefore, a "psychological sense of community identity" reflects the complexities of real life, that allows for multiple psychological senses of community as well as multiple layers of identity within a community setting.

3.1.2. HUMAN DIVERSITY

3.1.2.1. The Paradox of Sameness and Differences

Proponents of a "postmodern " perspective also challenge (and deconstruct) the status quo of sameness, a modern viewpoint that interfaces with notions of "norms" and "deviances from norms".

Inextricably linked to notions of ethnocentrism, oppression, and disenfranchisement, it is a fundamental viewpoint in which normative identifications remain that of the dominant culture, while the notion of differences (as deviances from those norms) means inferior as well as a lack of genes, culture, or personality to live a successful life.

In the field of Psychology in particular, there are a number of illustrations of this type of bias that apply to questions of race, ethnicity, gender, and other dimensions of differences.

To focus on one: The penchant to adopt male life as the norm in conventional Psychology has led to the human life cycle being depicted in the image of the male's development - a norm that then frames the different notions of what is of value in lives of women as a sign of inferiority (Gilligan, 1982).

Pitting human sameness (the thesis) against human differences (the antithesis), however, ironically also can lead to postmodernists diminishing the common ground people share.

In fact, the deconstructionist attack on the status quo of man's sameness has led to "revolutionaries" radically deconstructing the status quo of sameness to nothingness - a radical move that then represents the extreme pole of the antithetical argument.

"Postmodern" extremism thus also creates problems, in the sense that the extreme emphasis on differences could lead to a backlash - one that more and more (not less and less) supports sameness, for example, in the guise of ethnocentrism.

3.1.2.2. A Third Position Perspective

In terms of Cross-Cultural Psychology, cultural holism (a sameness notion) and cultural relativism (a difference notion) can be incorporated into a broader framework.

For example, in the cultural and ethnic ecosystemic perspective advocated by Berry (1994) they are incorporated into a flexible, multi-layered framework, in which the commonalities of humanity are recognised, without demanding uniformity - while the trap of radical cultural relativism is avoided by defining human differences in terms of inter and intra-cultural contact and exchanges.

It is a synthesis that not only allows for cross-fertilisation of cultures; it also intersects with perspectives of cultural pluralism, i.e. perspectives in which cultures have value in their own terms.

The Third Position of similar-differences thus ultimately also acknowledges that everyone has a culture, a race, a gender and a place in the social order, including alternative culture groups such as gays, lesbians, and so forth (Jones, 1994).

But part of the challenge of giving access to such new voices is replacing colloquial terms (e.g. "ethnic" or "racial") with the language of human diversity, to convey

- a framework which looks for both similarities and differences in the experiences of varied groups;

- an acceptance that each cultural group has its own distinctive worldview embedded in its own culture-specific context;
- a positive regard for human differences rather than emphasis on negative stereotypes perpetuated by deficit models; and
- an avoidance of person-blame explanations (Jones, 1994; Trickett, *et. al.*, 1994).

Both the terms “human diversity” and “cultural pluralism” are strongly implied in the new South African ideology of a “rainbow nation”, albeit easier to express on paper (e.g. in our constitution) than to implement on an everyday basis.

3.1.2.3. A “Postmodern” Human Diversity

In a “postmodern” perspective recognition also is given to the subjective aspect of a human psychological diversity, in which people derive a sense of identity from their own definitions of belonging.

Analogous to a “psychological sense of community”, it is a defined membership in which cultural/racial/ethnic components too can play an important role - although they are constructed differently in different parts of the world.

For example, in the USA the term Hispanic nowadays is applied to all Latin Americans regardless of the wide variety of races, ethnicities, and cultures of their ancestors.

In South Africa the apartheid policies of the past have conditioned many of us into believing that racial group membership is THE core aspect of our South African identity, an identification marker that now again plays a dominant role - this time as a rationale for affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) societal transformations.

But, as affirmative action efforts tend to not go beyond superficialities such as a concern with numbers, rather than concentrating more on “window dressing”, say Thomas and Ely (1996), people need to begin to perceive themselves as being part of a complex society in which they are on the same “team”, with their differences, not despite them - an affirmative diversity perspective in which the collective or group ideally is strengthened (and not weakened) by the diversity of their individual members (Jones, 1994).

Thus, perceiving our complex “postmodern” societies in terms of similar-differences is a way of thinking which affords us the possibility of moving into a “postmodern” paradigm in which communities also are perceived in terms of similarities (common culture) and in terms of differences (different cultures).

For example, for quite a while there has been a major trend in the USA for people to describe themselves as Afro-American or Hispanic Americans, and so forth, an indication they are proud of their different cultures within the common culture.

In the South African context, this could mean that South Africans too could start thinking of defining themselves as Xhosa or Zulu South Africans, German or Austrian South Africans, Coloured South Africans, and so forth.

But to achieve such a mind shift, however, South Africans need either to stop harking back to the racial discourses of the apartheid era or propounding a post-apartheid non-racial utopia in which cultural specificity does not matter anymore - two poles of a binary that disenable people from achieving a satisfactory description of their own commonalities and diversities (Sastry, 2002).

3.1.3. MULTICULTURALISM

3.1.3.1. The Paradox of Global Village and Globes of Villages

On the one hand, the global village is said to have opened up the world to individualism and democratic principles. On the other hand, globalisation paradoxically is seen to be a Western neo-colonial process, an acculturation process, which threatens to create one homogeneous worldwide culture of a global labour force, electronic communication and “designer” lifestyle or identities (Nikelly, 2000; Richmond, 2002).

As a proponent of the latter view, Arnett (2002), therefore, homes in on the psychological consequences of the growing pressures of globalisation (as another type of Western oppression), particularly relating to the formation and development of 20th and 21st century identities.

Concentrating mainly on the backlash to pressures of globalisations, Arnett (2002), for one, highlights a counter-movement, a counter-thesis, which in the instance of non-Westerners takes the form of identifying more, and not less, with indigenous cultures as a way of protesting against absorption into a global culture. Samoans, for example, have elevated traditional rituals associated with rites of passage into symbols of dissidence and resistance.

Globalisation pressures too, says Arnett (2002), can result in people taking refuge in self-selected cultures with like-minded persons, and developing their own contra-structures and identities distinct from and in opposition to the global culture and its values.

For example, although fundamentalist movements over the world differ in many ways, they have in common

- a self-selected counter-culture based on a religious counter-response to the secular nature of globalisation; and
- a belief in a hierarchy of authority, which starkly contrasts with globalisation's democratic principles.

However, Arnett (2002) questions whether the appeal of such self-selected cultures is especially strong among people who have suffered from identity-confusion, a phenomenon that he says is becoming particularly pervasive among young people in non-Western cultures.

That, as local cultures change in response to globalisation, and the global culture undermines local cultural practices, many young people feel displaced and experience themselves as belonging neither to their local culture nor the global culture. The end-result is that their identity too is in flux.

3.1.3.2. A Third Position Perspective

In contrast to the confusions and stresses developed from experiencing conflict between an original culture and a new culture, the development of a bicultural identity is seen by Arnett (2002) to be a much more active and a more viable response to the internal dilemmas created by our ever-changing 21st century world.

As a Third Position perspective, a bicultural identity allows people to continue to develop a local identity, while additionally developing a global identity that allows them also to belong to a worldwide culture and to communicate with people from diverse places.

This includes communicating with people through media technology such as e-mail - a Third Position perspective encapsulated in a media giant's advertising slogan of "Think Global - Act Local" (Wicker, 1997).

And, as such, a bicultural identity is seen to be based less on prescribed social roles and more on individual choices - more on decisions that each person makes about what values to embrace and what paths to pursue.

With a bicultural identification, therefore, the likelihood is greater that people will find a psychologically rewarding match between their choices and their individual desires and abilities.

It is a context in which globalisation ultimately also is seen to expand, and not curtail, the range of identity choices - an expansion in which the phenomenon of global flux and border-crossing of people (as is the case with immigrants and refugees) has to be described in more fluid terms such as multi, pluri and trans-cultural (Wicker, 1997; Richmond, 2002).

Complex cultural crossover and mixed identifications additionally also have spawned renewed interest in Caribbean writers such as Bernabe, Chamoiseau and Confiant, who elevate the various “shades of hybridity” of the Caribbean ethnic identity of Creoleness (a mixture of Caribbean, European, African, Asian and Levantine culture) to a privileged status, while repudiating the notion of pure ethnic categories (Sastry, 2002).

Other writers such as Bhabha (1994), even advocate celebrating “hybridity” as a “third space”, as an international cultural identity which integrates and bridges all polarities and fragmentations - a viewpoint which Bhabha (1994) saw as specifically applying to the South African coloured population (Friedman, 1997).

3.1.3.3. A “Postmodern” Multicultural Approach

In a “postmodern” worldview even biculturalism is viewed in “shades of greys”, thereby opening up the field to even more complex cultural notions such as

- blended biculturalism (in which an individual synthesises or “fuses” the two cultures);
- instrumental biculturalism (in which an individual’s “blendedness” is on a behavioural level but does not include a “psychological sense of identity”); and
- an integrated biculturalism (in which an individual is behaviourally involved in both cultures but has a firm sense of identity as a member of the culture of origin) (Birman, 1994; Helms, 1994).

Additionally, “postmodern” acculturation theorists nowadays even see both acculturation and enculturation as viable and understandable choices, dependant on the situation and context, a point that Birman (1994) illustrates by means of the roles Moses and Joseph played in Jewish history. To quote Birman (1994:281):

Joseph’s assimilationist attitudes in Egypt allowed him to rise to a high position in Pharaoh’s court and to help his family when they came there to survive the famine. Moses, however, was a separatist, leading the Jewish people out of Egypt to escape slavery. Both are heroes in Jewish history, for unless each of them did what they did, the Jewish people would not have survived either the famine in Canaan or slavery in Egypt.

To complicate matters further, one can safely assume that nowadays some of the worlds internalised by teenagers are determined by

- the “global village” media of movies and television; and
- a teenage sub-culture (Werbner,1997).

In fact, Berger, *et. al.*, already in 1967 pointed out that, in contrast to the world acquired in the primary socialisation process (an enculturation process), the worlds internalised in secondary socialisation processes (an acculturation process) are generally partial realities.

Yet, they too are more or less cohesive realities developed out of a network of multiple attachments, of multiple options of identifications.

3.2. REWRITING THE SELF

In general people experience their present naively, as it were, without being able to form an estimate of its contents; they have first to put themselves at a distance from it - the present, that is to say, must have become past - before it can yield points of vantage from which to judge the future.

(Sigmund Freud, quoted by Freeman, 1993:front page)

The 20th century “Material Girl”, Madonna, has re-invented herself so many times that she (like entertainer Cher) seems to epitomise the concept of “rewriting the self”.

But in spite of “re-invention” fast becoming yet another over-worked and hollow 20th century cliché, the notion still remains central to the psychologist’s understanding of humankind.

Understandings over the centuries, however, have vacillated between deciding that people are controlled internally (“free will”) or are controlled externally (“determinism”).

For example, American citizens in particular pride themselves in being self-made “free agents”, who are masters of their own destiny - an ideal and romantic image of the self that most prominently plays itself out in John Wayne Westerns, often ending with him “riding off into the blue” on his own.

The study, however, generally follows a “postmodern” train of thought, which questions to what extent people indeed are “free agents” while they simultaneously are constrained by their circumstances and histories.

The notion of “rewriting the self” is borrowed from Freeman (1995), who describes it as a “process by which one’s past and indeed oneself is figured anew through interpretation” (Freeman, 1995:3) - a description attuned to the

- given “postmodern” framework; and
- processes of change and transformation.

3.2.1. HUMAN AGENCY

3.2.1.1. Not Any Choice Will Do

“Free will” advocates (e.g. motivational speakers) often tell people that “the sky is the limit”, suggesting thereby that people are free to create their own destiny. What they do not take into account is people’s ambiguous attitude towards freedom *per se*.

To put it in Fromm’s (1952) famous words, people have a “fear of freedom”, which makes them desire it, yet simultaneously shrink away from it when it presents itself.

For example, when opportunities of liberation arise, people often trap themselves between a desire to move towards it and (like a child) wanting to submit to an external locus of control (an authority figure).

In fact, the “fear of freedom” often makes people so blinkered in their choice and decision-making that they constrain themselves, imprison themselves in a “truth” or “certainty” determined by others.

In terms of personhood, this means that people often let their “I am” image of themselves be determined by a “not-I” group - an external prescription.

But it is within the context of domination and oppression that the external prescription is particularly problematic, especially as the “I am” image in oppressive situations often also is damned to non-existence, to a “not-I”.

For example, articulating from the position of a black man, Fanon (1968) describes a discourse of the dominant colonial white European group, in which the exclusion of the “Other”, the black man, is based on a stereotypical mind-set of superior/inferior races.

So, even when he wears a “white mask”, says Fanon (1968), the black man finds he cannot overcome the white man’s prejudices, which include defining the black people as not even fit to be included as part of the human race.

Thus, for Fanon (1967), as well as black American civil rights advocates, the only escape from this dominant, white discourse, is a Black Consciousness ideology.

But, although originally an ideology to redeem the image of the black people, the Black Consciousness discourse ultimately is seen as antagonistic and combative, which in its extreme form in the 1960s led to the Black Panthers in America being declared “enemies of the state” - a radicalisation of the Black Consciousness ideology based on resistance to the dominant white discourse, and not on its own discourse.

A similar criticism is levelled by Appiah (1992) against the Pan-Africanist movement, whose foundations were laid by Du Bois in the late 1950s. Meant to claim that the white and black races in America were not related as superior/inferior, its over-simplified emphasis on the glorification of the history of Africa as the common history of all African-Americans ironically became a formula for trapping the movement in yet another dialectic - one in which the black grouping, and not the white, this time was elevated to a special status.

Many feminists, too, seem to have fallen into the same trap. Originally making claims of equality as a reaction to male sexist prejudices (another classic dialectic), feminism re-valued the feminine "Other" as the "Superwoman", another special and elevated grouping, which ironically still remains determined by their resistance to dominant male discourses.

Benhabib's (1992) criticism of "first wave" feminist writers such as Flax (1987), therefore, is that they once again place the self within gender relations of domination/suppression, i.e. the same limiting discourses of women's self-identification.

To summarise: Without denying the validity of the axiom that it is impossible for people not to make a choice (an axiom based on the belief that "even a non-choice is a choice"), for the purpose of the study it is contended that when people make choices while being controlled by or subjected to choices of others, they make reactive choices. They, therefore, no longer have the "free will" to determine their own way forward - one of the pre-requisites for "rewriting the self".

3.2.1.2. Multiple Choices as Way Forward

As someone, who can help determine the way forward, Shotter (1993) reminds us that the images many people construct of themselves is simply only one among a multitude of what we might be.

Rather, within a world that is socially constructed, according to Shotter (1993:90), there are “imaginary entities”, a special category positioned between the factual and the fictitious, which not only partially structures social life, but also enables an openness for further articulations and development.

In other words, as part of a knowing “from-within” (from within a situation) “imaginary entities” not only help shape and re-shape our everyday social life. They also allow for what is not yet wholly real, for what does not yet really exist, including

- contentious discussions and debates regarding such felt tendencies as people’s self and their society; and
- differentiated ongoing constructions and re-constructions of our images of ourselves and our society.

And as “imaginary entities” possess ambiguity or vagueness that prevent their complete specification, what ultimately is at stake in people’s identifications of themselves is who and what they imagine themselves as being (or as trying to be) in relation to others.

In short, according to Shotter (1993) the nature of people's identities and how that "fits" within society is open to their own articulations.

It is a perspective also based on depicting people as active creators and unique definers of their realities - a social construction perspective that is best captured by Freire (1990):

(People) participate in the creative dimension as well; (they) can intervene in reality in order to change it Integration(,) as distinguished from adaptation, ... results from the capacity to adapt oneself to reality plus the critical capacity to make choices and to transform that reality (in Trickett, et. al., 1994:20).

It, therefore, is deemed important that people develop divergent thinking, so that their minds are opened to creatively survey and explore alternative ways of looking at life and humankind.

In comparison, convergent thinking, gives a choice of a "correct" and an "incorrect" answer to questions regarding life and humankind.

But, as divergent thinking often creates contradictory and disparate thoughts, people have to find their own way out of this dilemma.

3.2.1.3. Authorship and Selfhood

To resolve the dilemmas created by divergent and conflicting thoughts, people ideally have to construct a “third perspective” for themselves, i.e. articulate a new perception of the world and themselves which fits for them (the process is analogous to the one Buddhist monks use to expand the mind-set of novices). This is a transcendence of polarities that also potentially opens up new possibilities for others to consider.

For example, Appiah (1992) in his book “In my Father’s House”, writes about developing his own set of perspectives, including his own view of colonialism. It is a viewpoint in which people were not reduced to objects (not dehumanised), because the large majority of Africans living under colonial rule simply continued to maintain a substantial degree of cultural autonomy, i.e. in a sense, went on just “doing their own thing”.

This alternative perspective opens up the possibility that the extent of cultural invasion brought to bear by the colonisers on the colonised in Africa tends to be over-estimated.

Put in the context of the feminist movement, opening up another perspective means moving away from “first-wave” writers to an alternative feminist viewpoint grounded in more recent feminist theories. The “second wave” feminist writers defined feminist images in terms of “grey” areas and advocated promoting women’s agency based on their own independent choices and decision-making.

For example, Sanchez-Hucles (1997) declares that African American women themselves need to transcend the trap of viewing themselves as affirmative action tokens in the workforce and see themselves as a person who simply is another link in a company's cultural diversity, and not in competition with males. They should see themselves as simply "doing their own thing" within the workforce.

Similar themes are touched on by Van Vlaenderen and Cakwe (2003) in their description of the changes in women's identity that have been instigated by educated black South African women.

Having grown up in a society where the notion of ubuntu (human connectedness) is fundamental to a woman's identity, the new identity created not only is characterised by a strong feeling of independence but also by a strong commitment to family.

However, clear gender role divisions, characteristic of traditional African society, are largely rejected. This leaves modern black South African women with a greater personal responsibility to develop their own identities and to create a new reference group, consisting of like-minded women.

3.2.2. THE PAST

3.2.2.1. THE Past as Trap

The failure of people to integrate the past into their lives is said to lead to an alienation so profound that they might be unable to make sense of themselves and their lives, or even survive (the extent to which attempts at obliterating the past can be destructive is surrealistically explicated by a film called “The Sunshine of the Eternal Mind”).

On the other hand, a morbid pre-occupation with the past can also become imprisoning, in the sense that a journey into the past no longer nourishes a future. Rather, it becomes a “stuckness”, which then often is articulated in discourses of blame, especially when subjects see themselves as victims of the past.

Even on a socio-political level the past can become an entrapment. Kristeva (1993), for example, views African monolithic discourses of fatherland and motherland, as well as tribal clanship, as particularly regressive in that they often entail the justification of practises and prejudices in terms of culture and tradition, with these posited as ‘written in stone’ and being beyond question.

But entrapment may even happen when people are called upon to pay allegiance to a past which absorbs them into a ready-made, unitary identity, instead of allowing them to articulate their own.

To illustrate: As a central figure to the foundation of the Organisation of African Unity, Ghanaian president Kwama Nkruma created a populist image of an African “fraternity” bonded together by a history of colonial discrimination and insult - a historical “badge” of victimisation which then made it easy to persuade most Africans to glorify the traditional and denigrate anything modern. This harking back to the past then became a holding back from the future.

Even in the USA there are conservative black politicians such as Sowell and Steele, who criticise black Americans for being bonded not so much by slavery or racism but by a cult of victimhood, a vision that ironically makes them remain victims in the present.

It is an argument that writer Rian Malan (2006) transposes into the scenario of present day South Africa. He contends that 12 years down the democratic road, black South Africans still tend to look backwards instead of forwards and therefore still define themselves as victims instead of taking charge of their own lives.

The South African coloured population’s past visions of themselves and their kind of society often also constrains more than enables them.

Their vision is based on their sub-ordinate “Otherness” position, which links them to the white supremacist rulers of the apartheid era, means they still tend to view themselves as “God’s stepchildren” (Zegeye, 2002:346) - as an appendage to the whites - a vision of themselves which they have carried into the post-apartheid era.

Therefore, there is much confusion and controversy surrounding the reconstruction of their image to “fit” into the post-apartheid environment. That is, still in a state of flux, coloureds now are trying (and not succeeding) to reconstruct their identity as part of

- the “Kleurling Weerstandbeweging” (Coloured Resistance Movement), a separatist movement;
- the Khoisan revivalism; and
- a rainbowist positioning, espoused as a multi-culturalist framework (Adhikari, 2004).

To complicate matters even further, there also still is a strong coloured identification with Afrikaans, which then is seen as a token of the coloured’s cultural solidarity with white Afrikaans-speakers, and a shared sense of being excluded from the new African and English-centric dispensation (Martin, 2000).

3.2.2.2. Multiple Pasts as a Way Out

As an alternative to various prescriptive articulations of THE past, discourses that allow for the assimilation and transcendence of the past thus become important.

According to Appiah (1992), one alternative is that of developing a decolonised mind-set, in which the colonial experience not only is definitive, but also a conglomeration of heritages, which then together define what it means to be an African.

For Appiah (1992) this includes recognising his tribal heritage (Asante), a national heritage (Ghanaian) and a continental heritage (African) - a multiple attachment explanation of himself which also helps open up the space for him to continuously re-evaluate the way he identifies himself.

For L'Ange (2006) the same principle applies to Africans. He advocates that Africans stop turning inwards to search for their "true" roots and identity in the re-telling of themselves. Rather, they consciously should choose to create discourses of themselves in which they mix the best of their own past traditions and cultures with the best of what they got from the Europeans, or from anyone else - and consciously shed the worst in all of them.

In fact, according to Freeman (1995:), human beings continuously need to be able to re-evaluate past experiences in the context of the present, so that they then can figure and re-figure themselves and their worlds anew in reverse. This is a crucial step in Freeman's (1995) process of "rewriting the self" in which THE past itself can be critically deconstructed and rethought.

Martin (2000) and Zegeye (2002), for example, both contend that it is the stereotypical definitions of colouredness that needs to be rethought and rewritten, because in reality a distinctive coloured identity simply is a myth created by our apartheid past.

In fact, Zegeye (2002) maintains it will be impossible to identify a single dominant coloured identity, because there are multiple coloured identities based on regionalism, language and ideology.

He, therefore, espouses recognition be given to the route that they already have chosen for themselves. Namely, as people who personify a fluid “in-betweenness”, a “hybridity”, coloured people should be seen as forerunners of a new, more inclusive South Africanism, in which the old racial paradigms play a less important role.

This is a re-imagining of their identity that he says is based on past natural “hybridities” they created in places such as District Six in Cape Town, in Mayfair and Fordsburg in Johannesburg.

3.2.2.3. Retrospects and Prospects

The multiple rewriting (or re-telling) of the past is particularly important in a South African context. That is, the multiple rewriting or re-telling of our past is needed to counteract old discourses of racial discrimination and separation, simplistically depicted in plays such as “Woza Albert!” (Ngaboh-Smart, 1999).

Although Naidoo (2005) recognises the relevant and important role Black Consciousness played in South Africa's history of liberation struggle, he pleads for a re-vision of the image of the movement. He says, Black Consciousness no longer can afford to view itself as the antiracism to a white racism.

Rather, in the spirit of shaping our young democracy, Black Consciousness needs to see itself as one of the key role players in negotiating an intersected and amalgamated culture made up of our various conventionally dichotomised identities, e.g. that of the "I" of European discourse and the collective "we" of black South African discourse (Naidoo, 2005).

On a more personal note, Ratele (1998) specifically criticises the myth of THE South African black man, and advocates its end, because it is based on the old dualistic Black Consciousness reverse paradigm of inferior "bad-whites" and superior "good-blacks", albeit it this time an image created by Steve Biko in the 1970s as part of a united resistance to white oppression.

For Ratele (1998), the way out of the trap of the myth of THE black man, therefore, is to construct a new meaning for black manhood, which is not historically embedded in racism and segregation.

He suggests it is a reconstruction that is based more on a history of being a human being rather than that of being black - a wider definition that not only encompasses blackness of all kinds, but also sees black men as varying individuals.

It is a wider definition which Gresson (1992) suggests is intertwined with a trend in America toward greater racial and ethnic tolerance and which makes one interviewee declare

I am black, but blackness is not the totality of my identity. It is not even the core of my identity I have the freedom to define myself as I think best (after all, who's living my life?) and if I have to fight white and black America to retain that freedom, so be it. Blackness is not my identity but an aspect only, which I do not denigrate in racial self-hatred, nor elevate in panegyrics of narcissistic racial self-love. To do either would be childish (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992:165-166).

3.2.2.3. EMPOWERMENT

3.2.3.1. The Power in Empowerment

Definitions of empowerment abound. It is usually seen as a twin process by which people gain control over their lives as well as participate actively in the life of their community (Rappaport, 1981; Rappaport, 1995).

To define empowerment, however, most find it necessary to define the “power” in empowerment in terms of domination and control - a definition greatly influenced by the 20th century French philosopher, Foucault (Sim, 1999).

Therefore, a discussion regarding an alternative viewpoint of power is given here, one that allows a natural interlocking of the notion of diversity with that of empowerment.

It is an expansion which mainly rests upon re-formulating power as a resource derived from peoples' willingness to help each other out, rather than simply seeing it as a scarce resource for which they have to compete (or in Foucault's terms, for which people have to oppress others).

Put in another way, power now is formulated as a process of empowering others, rather than simply as having power over or control over others.

The shift is embedded in the "postmodern" assumption that the notion of empowerment is part of an interdependent whole, i.e. part of a people-in-context viewpoint, in which

- diversity is to be expected; and
- empowerment will look different for different people.

Central to a contextual empowerment epistemology thus is the link between individual well-being with that of the larger community, a contextual empowerment epistemology that also lends itself to seeking a variety of locally rather than centrally controlled solutions based on different assumptions in different settings and neighbourhoods.

Also of particular interest for this study, therefore, is the notion of a “psychological sense of empowerment”, which Zimmerman (1995:588-590) asserts is multi-dimensional, as for him it includes

- intra-personal components - such as perceptions of own abilities and a perceived sense of control;
- inter-actional components - such as critical awareness of problems and their causes and skills to work for social action; and
- behavioural components - such as coping efforts, involvement in organisations, and behaviours that can create community change.

In fact, Peterson and Reid (2003) maintain that the promotion of a “psychological sense of empowerment” is integrally linked to an improved sense of community, and vice versa.

3.2.3.2. Self-awareness and Empowerment

Banyard and Laplant (2002:691) point out the difference between “power-over” and “power-to”, a distinction in which the former denotes the classical notion of the dominance and control of one person or group over another, while the latter has to do with the personal control one feels over oneself and one’s behaviours - a modern viewpoint.

In respect of self-awareness and empowerment, for postmodernist thinkers the difficulty then is as follows: if one's self-understandings is shaped in accordance with culturally available discourses, then how is it possible for them to extricate themselves from these in a process of becoming self-aware - especially if the discourses are repressive?

To circumvent the difficulty, the definition of self-awareness, therefore, is not seen from a conventional point of view, one that solely defines self-awareness in terms of a personal liberating effect.

For the purpose of the study, self-awareness rather is formulated as part of a process, which has to do with someone becoming conscious of themselves in accordance with available cultural discourses. In this sense self-awareness then becomes part of a consciousness of how people are with others.

In the study too the notion of self-awareness is linked to that of "reflexivity", a deconstructive process, which, in the tradition of Derrida (Sim, 1999:5-6), means unravelling underlying alternative discourses with no end point or finality.

Self-awareness in this sense thus involves the re-cognition of disparities and contradictions and as such combats being entrapped in pre-conceived cultural and linguistic meanings.

Ultimately, in the study, self-awareness, therefore, is seen as a necessary part of "rewriting the self". It is seen as part of a type of transitional ritual, in

which, to go back to Freud (1927), people first have to distance themselves from experiencing their present naively, so that the present becomes the new past before it yields points of vantage from which to judge the future.

That is to say, people have to be able to stand back from their own embeddedness - socially, historically and interpersonally - before they can look at this embeddedness from a different vantage point, a different perspective, which then theoretically influences their futures.

3.2.3.3. Empowerment Meets Narratives

Within a “postmodern” framework empowerment often is contextualised via narratives (Rappaport, 1995).

For example, within the African context, stories re-told frequently are aspects of a liberation struggle against domination and oppression. They are stories that afford a “plotline” in which people successfully gain access to a wider range of choices and opportunities, as well as resources.

In the West, on the other hand, stories of personal liberation abound. It often is retold as a journey on the “road less travelled” (Scott Peck, 1978) or as a journey of self discovery and self actualisation - discourses close to the hearts of sixties humanists such as Rogers and Maslow.

In the West, too, the re-telling of personal stories generally are woven into a narrative about a “crisis”, which then makes a person “see the light” - a “plotline” already retrospectively recollected by St Augustine in his 4th century autobiography (Freeman, 1995:20).

It is a “plotline” that Freeman (1995) describes in phases of re-cognition (a realisation that all is not well), distanciation (beginning to see the “light”), articulation (of both the difference between the old self and a future possibility), and that of appropriation (a final phase of development of knowledge being transformed into action).

For adolescents the crisis traditionally is re-told in the context of an “identity crisis”, a story in which adolescents ideally gain a growing awareness of whom they really are - the identity crisis is seen to be transcended by a growing sense of self - while the alternative is that of being “doomed” to an identity diffusion/confusion (Erikson, 1968).

Within a “postmodern” framework, however, consideration also has to be taken of the social realities in which the story unfolds. As Warren (1962) says, even

if fiction begins in daydream, if it springs from the cramp of the world, if it relieves us from the burden of being ourselves, it ends, if it is good fiction, and we are good readers, by returning us to the world and to ourselves (quoted by Kober, 1997:53).

For this study, therefore, the question is not whether a story is fact or fiction. Rather, the question is whether the stories of the 11 storytellers give sufficient explanation of their world and themselves for us to understand them as socio-cultural beings as well as understand how they (within the given socio-cultural confines) develop a “who am I” identity which fits for them - i.e. how they used (or did not use) their schooling at the DSJ as an opportunity for change and transformation.

3.3.3. THE OVERARCHING FRAMEWORK

The basic assumption that colours all my arguments regarding “texts of identity” is that human social systems in essence are paradoxical in nature.

And as the idea of the dialectic is central to this paradox, attention here is paid to apparently opposing poles of thought, which, when transcended, place Community Psychology formulations within a broader and more complex “postmodern” viewpoint of personhood or selfhood.

This viewpoint reflects the diverse, fluid and relative values of our rapidly shifting and changing world, with its crumbling certainties.

In the notion of “sense of self”, the transcendence of the notions of the collectivity of “One” and the individuality of “Many” leads to a flexible, multi-layered paradigm in which the notion of identity is interwoven with that of a

“psychological sense of community” - the latter being a key Community Psychology formulation.

While the notion of “human diversity” - another key Community Psychology formulation - the transcendence of the classical notion of cultural holism (a *status quo* sameness notion) and its counterpart of cultural relativism (a difference notion) leads to a broader framework in which the commonalities of human beings also can be interwoven with perspectives of cultural-pluralism.

The idea of “multiculturalism”, however, does create some difficulties for the study, in the sense that it is felt that the expansion of related cross-border “cosmopolitan” notions has become so multi-various and diverse that this then confuses the issue of multiculturalism, rather than helping it - the exception being that of the notion of “hybridity”.

That is, the notion of “hybridity” as well as the debates surrounding the notion - that “hybridity” may be seen as a “third space” - is particularly helpful when focusing on our South African coloured population’s struggle to find a meaningful identify for themselves in the context of post-apartheid South Africa.

For black South Africans, however, the formulation of a meaningful post-apartheid identity too seems to be problematic. Tending to look backwards instead of forwards, they still tend to identify themselves in terms of our colonial and apartheid past and the country’s struggle history.

But, as re-formulations of the self generally are seen to be problematic, it is argued here that the process of “rewriting the self” is helpful in transcending old perceptions and changing the way people articulate themselves, a process that rests on people becoming aware of choices of identification better suited to them and their specific situation.

For Freeman (1995) the process of creating such a revised self-vision necessitates an interpretive, subjective retrospection that is expanded on in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 4

ANOTHER LINK IN THE CHAIN OF THEORETICAL STEPPING STONES: MULTICULTURALISM IN SCHOOLS

Before entering the realm of narratives, the notion of multiculturalism is revisited, this time in the context of another key notion encapsulated in the title of the study - namely, that of “multiculturalism in schools”.

It is a context in which the notion of multiculturalism also is interwoven with a distinct educational identity, that of multicultural education - a comprehensive educational approach that recognises the need to redefine and transform educational discourses so that human diversity and cultural pluralism become central educational issues (Bennett, 1999; Gumbo, 2001; Osler, 2005).

Having gone through various phases of development, however, multicultural education still is in the process of defining and redefining its identity among a great deal of controversies and debates.

It, therefore, also needs to be seen as a “work-in-progress” (Bennett, 1999).

4.1. MULTICULTURALISM IN SCHOOLS: GLOBAL EXPERIENCES

One day, right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

(Martin Luther King, cited by Frankenberg, Lee & Orfield, 2003:7)

Multiculturalism has become synonymous with the 1970s desegregation of formerly segregated white schools in the USA and the promise of change for “little black boys and black girls” - a promise that for Martin Luther King meant that black children would become an integral part of a generation of integration and intercultural harmony (Frankenberg, *et. al.*, 2003).

The progress of King’s dream of moving from desegregation to integration, however, has clearly regressed. In fact, Frankenberg, *et. al.*, (2003) even question whether Martin Luther’s dream has become a nightmare, as educational trends in the USA (since the 1980s) are moving to less desegregation and more segregation, and not the other way round.

For other Western countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland, tackling the integration of black and other minority groups (whose presence was brought about by the increasing diversification of their immigrant and refugee populations) into their predominantly white schooling systems, too has had its problems (Osler, 2005; Vandeyar, 2003).

As a starting point for exploring the shortcomings - and successes - of multiculturalism in schools I here use Van der Merwe's (2004) global forms of multiculturalism as guiding metaphors.

In brief, it is a framework in which the pros and cons of affirmative multiculturalism, liberal multiculturalism and that of cultural relativism are discussed, before exploring how their shortcomings can be remedied (*a la* Van der Merwe) by implementing a critical form of multiculturalism.

4.1.1. Affirmative Multiculturalism

The origin of affirmative multiculturalism lies in the 1970s "cultural wars" that resulted in marginalised groups such as Afro-Americans and feminists getting recognition for their ways of thinking and living (Van der Merwe, 2004:150).

As a critique of the suppression of minority group cultures, its important contribution is the deconstruction of the "Other", not only in America, but also in other parts of the world. But, although affirmative multiculturalism has helped shift attention to marginalised groups in other parts of the world, it presently remains mainly focused on the forms of diversity that are typical of American society (Van der Merwe, 2004).

Within an educational context, research on affirmative multiculturalism, therefore, even today is dominated by USA studies on Afro-Americans as well as immigrant groups such as Latinos and Asians (Bennett, 1999; Frankenberg, *et. al.*, 2003; Orfield & Lee, 2005; Wells, Holme, Atanda & Revilla, 2005).

One such study is an “Understanding Race and Education Study”, a five-year research project conducted by Wells, Holme, Atanda and Revilla (2005). They argue (among other things) that much of the research on school desegregation shows a trend toward higher Afro-American student academic achievement during the peak years of desegregation, as well as long-term academic and professional gains for Afro-American adults who attended racially mixed schools.

Their own research also shows that the black participants in their study attributed being more comfortable around people of different backgrounds and being less racially prejudiced to having graduated (in the late 1970s) from one of the six racially diverse high schools that they used in their case study.

Using the 2000-2001 data submitted by most USA schools to the Department of Education, the research of Frankenberg, *et. al.*, (2003) regarding school desegregation shows much the same positive trends. They reported that they found that students’ integrated class experiences had enhanced their learning, heightened their aspirations and strengthened their social interaction with members of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Thus, Frankenberg, *et. al.*, (2003) believe the abandonment of the movement for school integration had little to do with the results of desegregating American schools and much more to do with changing circumstances, which include changing racial compositions of communities and school-aged population as well as changes in the desegregation plan brought about by policy reversals and more and more of the still-standing court orders and plans for desegregated schools being terminated or challenged in court.

Without disputing that for the last decade-and-a-half such changes did result in a process of continuous resegregation of American schools, other researchers, however, point to other circumstances that also contributed to the demise of desegregated schooling in the USA.

For Darder, *et. al.*, (1998), the inability of desegregated schools to achieve the educational equity and racial integration envisaged by the 1960s civil rights activists is interconnected with the state implementation of naive social experiments that failed to take cognisance of the interplay of complex social processes.

To illustrate: The belief that bussing Afro-American students to white (better) schools outside of their neighbourhood and accommodating them in the same building as white students would make them perform better academically, was naive. Evidence later showed that not only did this social experiment fail to improve the academic performance of Afro-Americans as well as Latinos, it also was detrimental to their communities (Darder, *et. al.*, 1998).

For example, black schools were closed down and black teachers were removed from their posts - all in the name of an equity-minded state desegregation policy. Additionally, black and Latino students often found themselves alienated from their own communities - an alienation possibly exaggerated by a lack of black and Hispanic educational role models in the formerly white schools (Wells, *et. al.*, 2005).

For Wells, *et. al.*, (2005), the reason school desegregation only went so far and no further was also the failure to take cognisance of the interplay of complex social processes. They thus argue that the school

desegregation policies and efforts simply were not enough to single-handedly change the larger society, which still remained segregated in terms of housing, social institutions and often employment. Ultimately, therefore, (quoting Franklin, 2005:2144) they argue that the problem in the USA was “not that integration failed but that it was barely tried” - by not including other social policies, the struggle for racial equality and integration never went to the next level.

Orfield and Lee (2005), too, take up the argument that school desegregation should have occurred hand-in-hand with attempts to address other social problems. Particularly important for them are the detrimental effects of the unequal schooling that black and Latino students received prior to desegregation and the higher unemployment and poverty rates of their families.

For them (and for Bennett, 1999) there is thus a strong relationship between the social problems of unemployment/ poverty/ educational inequality and the over-representation of minority group learners in special education, as well as the disproportionately high rates of suspension, expulsion and dropout rates in minority group learners.

However, Orfield, *et. al.*, (2005) and Wieviorka (1997) argue, what also comes into play here is a further strong link between the social problems of minority group learners and the double social and racial segregation by those learners who are better off - a double segregation that often becomes a triple

segregation for immigrant children, also isolated by language in their schools. For Orfield, *et. al.*, (2005), such a triple segregation explains why the students who are at most risk to dropout of high school are Latinos, a minority group that is segregated not only both by race and poverty, but often by linguistic segregation.

To conclude this section with the “bigger picture” gleaned from all the American affirmative multiculturalism studies named here: The studies “paint” a picture that it is false to assume that simply desegregating a school will eliminate the complexities of problems that go hand-in-hand with the affirmative action policy of creating special opportunities for members of disadvantaged minority groups.

In fact, Wieviorka (1997) says affirmative action policies in themselves can even complicate and not simplify matters. For example, these may well even introduce internal cleavages in the disadvantaged minority groups themselves, i.e. between the small number who benefit from them and the remainder who remain deprived.

Affirmative action outcomes also prompt Wells, *et. al.*, (2005) to say that the effect of desegregation undoubtedly is complicated, and sometimes even contradictory, especially when one takes the personal perspectives on school desegregation into consideration (the personal perspectives of most of the graduates they interviewed from the six racially mixed high schools made them conclude that on a personal level school desegregation was worthwhile).

Shortcomings of the research literature on affirmative multiculturalism too are perspectives on school desegregation that complicate the American school desegregation story even further. For example, what is missing is the stories of minority groups who have succeeded without the help of affirmative action policies - the best success story being that of Asian minority groups.

Not only do Asians on average now live in integrated American communities, they also have affirmed themselves in ethnic pluralistic school communities by becoming the most highly educated racial group in the USA (Frankenberg, *et al.*, 2003).

4.1.2. Liberal Multiculturalism

The term refers to a conventional Western educational stance, in which the relevance of multiculturalism is acknowledged, but the acknowledgement remains intentionally or unintentionally Eurocentric.

It thus is a Western educational stance in which the natural superiority of the white culture is assumed and the “Other” is accommodated only from a position of assimilation - one in which (simplistically seen) the cultural differences of ethnic minority pupils are reduced to become interesting varieties of the Eurocentric, white culture (Van der Merwe, 2004).

Defined by Van der Merwe (2004:152) as “a crude, imperialistic form of Eurocentric chauvinism”, in its baldest form it is an assimilation response that is based on the premise that integration is achieved when a minority group can no longer be differentiated from the white majority in terms of education, economic status and their benefits.

In its baldest form, therefore, liberal multiculturalism places itself in direct opposition to affirmative multiculturalism. And as such, liberal multiculturalism has come under strong criticism and pressure since the 1960s. However, it still remains a pervasive approach to education, the dominant features of which nowadays are more complicated than the bald assimilation form of liberal multiculturalism.

For example, attempts nowadays are made to acknowledge the cultural diversity of minority group learners within a Western assimilation set-up, either by means of additive approaches to a school curriculum in which ethnic content then merely becomes an appendage, or by means of having a “cultural day” or “cultural evening” at school.

However, such strategies only provide a veneer of multiculturalism rather than the transformation of institutional structures and educational processes required to meet the needs of culturally diverse schooling.

A less conspicuous assimilation approach, however, is the “colour blind” one (Bennett, 1999:21) - an approach in which Western educators do not want to consider race or colour in their dealings with diverse learners.

Their understanding of cultural differences, therefore, remains guided by their belief that the Western and white culture is superior to all others, instead of considering that their perceptions and expectations also colour the manner in which they teach learners from different cultural and racial backgrounds.

This approach then not only allows a denial of cultural diversity as a salient feature of human experience, it also paradoxically creates what Orfield, *et. al.*, (2005:4) call the “soft racism of low expectations”.

That is, USA and UK research show that white educators’ ethnocentric prejudices frequently lead to them having lower expectations of black learners and tend to be more supportive and stimulating with their white learners. This then contributes to learners of ethnic minority groups underachieving, a central concern voiced by Bennett (1999) in the USA and Osler (2005) in the UK.

Other related concerns raised in the UK are fears that the denial of differences by Eurocentric teachers could influence the personal growth of ethnic minority pupils negatively, creating problems for their individual as well as collective identity construction.

For example, Gaganikas (1999) mentions that there were concerns in the UK that black minority learners could internalise views of themselves as inferior.

Wells, *et. al.*, (2005) also show that (among other things) ethnocentric prejudices of Western educators contribute to the method of grouping learners in the USA.

For example, sorting procedures of learners often are related to a teacher’s recommendation and support to get white students - but not black or Latino students - into the best classes.

In fact, Wells, *et. al.*, (2005:2150) describe how practises such as tracking (so-called ability grouping) create a “same schools, different classes” situation, which not only promote the belief that the top-level classes are only for whites, but also contribute to a within-school segregation.

At its extreme, a within-school segregation can even lead to a situation that there are “schools within schools” and little attempt is made to encourage learners to mix. Sagar and Schofield (cited by Bennett, 1999:21) even describe a situation in which

The principal tolerated almost complete informal resegregation of the students, to the point where there were considered to be “two schools within a school”.

The school’s annex, for example, became known as a black area, or the “recreational study hall”, while the library served as a white area, or “non-recreational study hall”.

But, in spite of highlighting such manifestations of white privilege in racially mixed American schools, Wells, *et. al.*, (2005) also document in the findings of their five-year research project that not only the majority of the black graduates they interviewed said that they socially benefited from attending a racially mixed school, but so did the majority of white graduates from the same racially mixed schools.

In fact, the majority of white graduates added that they had noted that their experiences in racially mixed schools had made them different from most whites who had not had as many opportunities to interact with people of other racial backgrounds.

Therefore, the stories Wells, *et. al.*, (2005) captured from one of the first cohorts of students to go through desegregated schooling after the federal courts forced American schools to desegregate in the late 1960s, could be seen to show that it was a move that was beneficial to individuals, in spite of some the racially mixed schools having an assimilation approach that Bennett (1999:21) calls “pluralistic co-existence”.

Such findings then help highlight another complicating (and contradictory) factor that goes to show that there is no standard recipe for socially integrating learners in a desegregated school. Neither are there specific requirement practises.

As Bennett (1999) says, however, there are conditions necessary for positive intra and inter-group contact that schools can use as a guide in making decisions about specific practises (the social contact theory, developed by Allport (1954) and cited by Tredoux and Finchilescu (2007: 668), mentions intimate contact, equal status, a common goal and institutional support, as four necessary conditions).

For example, in one school some form of tracking (ability grouping) could create an equal-status environment but not in another. For Bennett (1999), what is important is that the tracking by itself does not produce racially visible differences.

4.1.3. Cultural Relativism

According to Van der Merwe (2004), the shortcomings of both liberal and affirmative multiculturalism have made many educators opt for some variety of cultural relativism as the alternative answer to multiculturalism in schools.

What makes cultural relativism a popular alternative is its premise, which is based on the acknowledgement of the equal rights of all cultures in society. It, therefore, also recognises that each cultural community has its own unique rules and traditions (Jones, 1994; Van der Merwe, 2004).

On this basis, cultural relativism, therefore, opposes all discourses that

- affirms monolithically conceived identities - e.g. on the basis of a monolithic race or ethnicity; and
- presuppose that cultures are “authentic” - i.e. uncontaminated, pristine and homogeneous.

In this way it serves as a critique of the liberal multiculturalism ideology of Eurocentric superiority as well as the affirmative multiculturalism counter-ideology of the repressed “Other”, which needs affirmation in racist, ethnic ways (Gresson, 1992; van der Merwe, 2004).

Cultural relativism discourses instead argue that notions of race and ethnicity are socially constructed and subjectively differentiated into a complexity of racisms - a perspective that then approximates the complexities of real-life much more accurately (Wieviorska, 1997).

It is an argument in which the differentiations of “We” and “Other” too are complexified - an argument based on the real-life complex cultural crossovers and mixtures spawned by the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of present-day societies and personal identities (Modood, 1997; Wieviorska, 1997).

In the dynamic process of borrowing and lending across porous cultural boundaries, communities and groups as well as individuals, nowadays, therefore, have choices of how to define themselves - evidence of which is given by Modood (1997).

He gives the example of white British working-class youths, who negatively discriminate against Asian culture as being effeminate and middle-class, while, on the other hand, they adopt aspects of the Afro-Caribbean subculture as it exhibits for them a macho, proletarian style. “Such boys experience no sense of contradiction in wearing dreadlocks, smoking ganja and going to reggae concerts whilst continuing to assert that ‘Pakis stink’,” says Cohen, cited by Modood (1997:160).

Thus, within discourses of education, cultural relativism is an approach that justifies respect for the complexities of 21st century living. It, therefore, potentially is an approach to education that can help transform traditional course contents that are primarily monoethnic and Eurocentric into contents that reflect the human diversity and cultural pluralism of the 21st century.

Furthermore, by rejecting thinking in terms of monolithic essences, cultural relativism also opens the way for the new theoretical language advocated by Darder, *et. al.*, (1998) to be incorporated into the reconstruction of education programmes.

For example, from a cultural relativism perspective the significance of the differences of “Others” no longer needs to be distorted into a definition that is the sole way of defining differences - e.g. by means of race. Rather, from a cultural relativism perspective, the significance of differences needs to be inflated to the point of being a peculiar variation.

Therefore, from a cultural relativism perspective, cultural evaluations and judgements should be left to the insiders or proponents of that specific cultural group - a feature that makes Van der Merwe (2004) call it a descriptive, uncritical approach to multiculturalism.

However, its radical approach has led to a number of concerns in education, of which the most pertinent is that voiced by Bennett (1999:32) - a concern she bases on its radical move to deconstruct the common ground people share to nothing. To quote her:

The concept of radical cultural relativism, or the notion that anything goes, is a frequently voiced concern. Many adults who have school-age children, for example, see multicultural education as requiring students to accept abhorrent socio-political practices. These objectionable practices may include news-making events such as the stifling of political dissenters within ethnic communities, and physical violence such as female infanticide, or the mutilation of the genitalia of young women.

For Baumann (2002:124) this puts multiculturalism into the context of the most common “politically correct” answer given nowadays by the learned and opinion-making classes to the world’s uncertainty. To this time quote him:

In a nutshell, the invocation of “multiculturalism” when made by the learned classes, that contemporary incarnation of modern intellectuals, means: Sorry, we cannot bail you out from the mess you are in. Yes, there is confusion about values, about the meaning of “being human”, about the right ways of living together; but it is up to you to sort it out in your own fashion and bear the consequences in the event you are unhappy with the results. Yes, there is cacophony of voices and no tune is likely to be sung in unison, but do not worry: no tune is necessarily better than the next, and if it were there wouldn’t at any rate be a way of knowing it - so feel free to sing (compose, if you can) your own tune (you won’t add to the cacophony anyway; it is already deafening and one more tune won’t change anything).

With such concerns (and criticisms) in mind, Van der Merwe (2004), therefore, argues that cultural relativism cannot ultimately meet the challenges that the appropriation of socio-cultural diversity entails for education.

Rather, it should simply be seen as a naive “celebration of differences” (Van der Merwe, 2004:154).

4.1.4. Critical Multiculturalism

For Van der Merwe (2004), the basic premise of critical multiculturalism is similar to that of cultural relativism - both are premised on the belief that cultures have value in their own terms. Cultural diversity in both discourses thus is regarded to be a positive value - an asset and a source of social enrichment - rather than a social problem.

In a critical multiculturalism discourse, however, individuals and communities do not remain untransformed through the encounter with the “Other”, as is the case in cultural relativism. Rather, the encounter with the “Other” is regarded as a necessary prerequisite for an enhanced critical reflection of self and society.

Ultimately, therefore, in a critical multiculturalism discourse a process of acculturation is encouraged, whereby peoples’ cultures are shared and become modified and enriched through interaction. Unlike cultural relativism, critical multiculturalism in essence fosters an appreciation of both human similarities and ethnic diversity.

In this manner, individuals and communities also become conscious of the way in which their identities have been formed by socialisation within cultural forms of life and asymmetrical power relations - a historically contextualised social constructionist viewpoint.

Additionally, the development of an understanding of the conditions and practises that inhibit, suppress or distort a meaningful and equal encounter with the “Other”, allows people to learn from their differences - be it by resolving them or tolerating them, or even by agreeing to disagree (Van der Merwe, 2004).

Critical multiculturalism, therefore, in comparison to cultural relativistic, does not refrain from normative evaluation and substantive judgment of cultural differences. The evaluations and judgements, however, are done via a self-reflexive and interpretative engagement with the “Other”.

Within an educational context, this means that in classrooms freedom of expression and fair-minded critical thinking is nurtured, but they are not value free. That is, educators and learners also simultaneously need to be able to identify and challenge the biases and assumptions of all information presented to them.

They, for example, need to learn to become critical thinkers who can gather, analyse, synthesise, and assess information - hallmark features of critical thinking - as well as learn to enter sympathetically into the thinking of others so that they can consider alternative viewpoints and be able to examine (their own as well as those of others) values and assumptions.

But to develop attitudes of critical multiculturalism in schools, Bennett (1999) proposes the following components be incorporated into the teaching of traditional subject matter:

In history classes the understanding of multiple historical perspectives can be incorporated, which includes emphasising that real-life cultures also possess opposing values and alternative traditions.

In literature lessons, the development of cultural consciousness could be emphasised. For example, literary themes could be used to get learners to become aware that they have a view of the world that is not universally shared and differs from that held by many members of different nations and ethnic groups.

In language and communication courses, intercultural competence too could be included. Emphasis here is on the development of empathy and communication skills. However, Bennett (1999) mentions that it would be impossible to develop an intercultural competence, such as empathy, without also developing learners' sense of self and security.

Business economics, on the other hand, could emphasise the development of social action skills, which include developing the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours needed to help resolve major problems that threaten the well-being of humanity.

Also, social studies lessons could be based on visions of humans living in greater harmony with each other - for example, by people respecting and accepting other peoples' human dignity and universal human rights such as the right to equality.

According to Baumann (2002), the possibility of people living a meaningful and harmonious life, amid all the insecurities they face within a 21st century world, in fact, can only be obtained if people plan and orientate the management of cultural pluralism to serve a higher common cause - the cause of humanity.

Looking to the future, this includes for Osler (2005) educating youths for a universality of citizenship in which they become members of particular cultural communities as well as members of other communities, including a global one. He, therefore, maintains that in the Republic of Ireland educators and society as a whole need to have a more committed approach to citizenship studies, which require reforms in training, resources and structures at school level - reforms that were successfully monitored,

recorded and evaluated as part of an action research project at Gaelscoil, a multi-denominational, co-educational primary school.

On a personal level, however, individuals too have to learn to focus on understanding and learning to negotiate cultural diversity among nations, as well as within a single nation. By becoming multicultural in this sense, they become more aware of multiculturalism as “the normal human experience” (Bennett, 1999:12).

Additionally, they avoid divisive dichotomies between local and mainstream culture and therefore do not reject their cultural identities to function in a different milieu - e.g. the school.

But to develop such a sense of multiculturalism, multicultural people needed to rewrite their sense of self via experiences that challenged their own cultural assumptions (i.e. create a culture shock) and that provided insight into how their view of the world was shaped by their culture.

Additionally, they have to develop what Bennett (1999:21) calls a “third-world perspective“, which enables them to interpret and evaluate intercultural encounters more accurately and thus to act as a communication link between two cultures.

However, for youths to learn how to function in the mainstream macro-culture as well in their own micro-cultures, their multiple worlds need to be bridged by school-community partnerships, resulting in common messages regarding the development of a multicultural identity being sent out from all sources (Taylor & Whittaker, 2003).

4.2. MULTICULTURALISM IN SCHOOLS: LOCAL (SOUTH AFRICAN) EXPERIENCES

Cultures are equally important and true education is one that develops learners to perceive the world from their cultural point of view. But this may make them see only the island if they are not also developed to try and perceive the world as other cultures perceive it.

(Gumbo, 2001:240)

Even though South African educational discourses often are based on American discourses, they have been adapted to fit within the South African context (Gaganakis, 1990; Soudien, 2004).

They, therefore, reflect a thinking that recognises the need to rewrite or redefine the South African educational identity in such a manner that the new educational identity also stretches across boundaries of the past and re-identifies itself within the new boundaries defined by the post-apartheid multicultural dispensation.

Discourses related to the process of transforming the South African educational identity from the old to new - one in which the South African cultural diversities are integrated in a mutually beneficial manner - thus are explored here.

But, as South African schooling systems in practise still reflect the social and political divides created by colonial rule and apartheid policies, the exploration also includes looking at how dominant discourses of the past regarding race and culture cloud the way forward.

4.2.1. Social Realignment

The opening up of previously separate education systems in 1994 resulted in migrations across the previous apartheid divides. The major migration, however, is that of learners and not so much that of educators.

Soudien and Sayed's (2003) study, for example, shows that South African schools mainly retained their pre-1994 racial profiles as far as educators were concerned. That is, former white schools remained largely white with respect to their educators, former Indian schools largely Indian and former coloured largely coloured.

On the other hand, studies of Sekete, Shilubane and Moila (2001) and Vally and Dalamba (1999), show that the major migration of learners is that of black students, with no parallel movement of Indian, coloured or white children into former black schools.

This has much to do with the history of turbulence within the black educational system itself as well as the black perception of higher standards in the other systems - features which created a "flight of students out of former black schools", to quote Soudien (2004:89).

However, (according to Soudien, *et. al.*, 2003) the assumption that the strongest movements occurred from former black to former white schools is questionable, as the movement from former black schools to former Indian and coloured schools probably is stronger - a movement that is part of a domino effect, in which coloured and Indian students also moved "up the transport line to former white schools", to again quote Soudien (2004:89).

Soudien, *et. al.*'s (2003) study, however, shows that the high enrolment rates of black students in former Indian and coloured schools (Soudien says that some of the former Indian and coloured schools have an enrolment rate of up to 50% of black pupils) has more to do with practicalities than anything else.

For example, the former Indian and coloured schools to which black students moved were those closest to their homes and convenient for purpose of travel. Also, school fees have been a major determinant in guiding black parents' decisions of where to send their children.

What limits the movement of black students into former white schools, therefore, is the perception that they are expensive - a perception that often influences poorer black families to not send their children to former white schools. According to Sekete, *et. al.*, (2001), the trend has been exaggerated by children of poorer black families not wanting to attend former white schools, as they do not want to risk the kinds of embarrassments that go with being poor in a more wealthy school.

In contrast, the trend among black middle-class families is to move (or aspire to move) into former white middle-class areas - a move which Soudien (2004: 108) describes as a social "drift towards a new middle-class alignment". As part of this co-option, therefore, black middle-class families have been much more willing (and able) to send their children to former white middle-class schools, an aspiration that hinges on black middle-class families wanting a better quality education for their children, so that they later can become successful in the world of work (something that during the apartheid era was denied them).

The desire for a better quality education for their children, however, has also resulted in black families sending their children on a daily trek from the former black townships to schools in former white areas. Within this scenario are a group of black learners, who tend to be treated as a very particular kind of learner migrant group - namely, they are the black (and to a lesser degree, coloured and Indian) children, who on a daily basis trek to private and formerly white schools.

What adds to them being seen as a very particular kind of learner migrant group, is their ambiguous status with their own communities, which has to do with their community members' tending to see them as people who have been given a privileged position. They are considered by many in their own communities to be part of "islands of privilege" (Cross, cited by Gaganakis, 1999:14).

Therefore, black children who attend private and formerly white schools often are no longer perceived to be "comrades", the affectionate term that black youngsters once used to express camaraderie and a sense of common goals. Rather, they tend to be seen as part of a rising "amabujwa" (Zulu for bourgeoisie) class, as "cheese boys" and "cheese girls", who not only have the luxury to eat cheese, but (in comparison to those who school at former township schools) also travel to former white suburbs for their privileged education (Mtshali, 2002:17).

Another derogatory label, namely that of "coconuts" (black on the outside; white inside) - a label that accuses them of thinking that they are better - best highlights a new kind of apartheid that is emerging, this time based on class divisions rather than race divisions (Mtshali, 2002:17).

To conclude: Important patterns of South African learner migration are tracked by a number of South African studies. They show that the learner migrations across the previous apartheid divides have mainly been that of students from former black schools moving either into Indian, coloured or white schools situated in areas outside of their former township areas. As part of a domino effect, however, Indian and coloured children too have moved to former whites schools in former white areas. This all has led to a growing complexity of the South African school population mixes.

The common denomination in all these movements, however, is that they have been inspired by a desire for a better quality education. But, as not all black (and Indian and coloured) families can afford to send their children to former white schools in former white areas, this contributes to a reformulation of the old apartheid race divides into a new kind of social and economic class divide (e.g. between poorer and middle-class blacks).

Diversity too, therefore, is re-interpreted by means of stereotyped, homogenised and generalised notions of class identities rather than opening up new possibilities of how to interpret the diversities within South African schools.

4.2.2. Educational Realignments

School responses to the growing complexity of the South African school population mixes have not necessarily been a rejection of multiculturalism as the appropriate approach to teaching increasingly culturally diverse classes.

For example, Vally, *et. al.*, (1999) say that some schools already in 1999 had begun to espouse a multicultural perspective. Tihanyi (2003) in her study also categorises two of her case study schools as “deracialised multiculturalism” - a category, she says, denotes that the two schools use the language of multiculturalism and inclusivity to describe their process of racial integration (Soudien, 2004:103).

Most of the forms of multiculturalism adopted in South African schools, however, in the end effect were found to be variations of assimilationism. The predominant approach to multiculturalism thus still remains that of assimilation (Lemmer, Meier & Van Wyk, 2006; Naidoo, 1996; Vally, *et. al.*, 1999).

To achieve a better understanding of how school assimilation works in real-life South African schooling environments, Soudien (2004) identifies three different kinds of assimilationism.

The most prevalent form of assimilationism he identifies is what he calls benign assimilationism, which mostly is found in former white schools (Lemmer, *et. al.*, 2006, call it a contributionist stance). It is a form of assimilationism that looks like multiculturalism, but the acknowledgement of the cultural diversity of the school’s learners is only given via a symbolic representation of cultures - e.g., via external modes such as fetes, costumes and cultural events.

Then there is the assimilationism that Soudien (2004) refers to as assimilationism by stealth interfaces with what Lemmer, *et. al.*, (2006) and Bennett (1999) call a “colour blind” approach. According to

Soudien (2004) it is a form of assimilationism that is most evident in schools with political histories, such as former Indian and coloured schools, where issues of race are seldom addressed.

The third form of assimilationism that Soudien (2004) identifies is based on the work of Tihanyi (2003), his own work on black children in a former coloured school (1996), as well as the work of Naidoo (1996), Vally, *et. al.*, (1999) and Soudien, *et. al.*, (2003). It is called aggressive assimilationism, as it is a kind of assimilationism that is characterised by high degrees of intolerance and often violence towards newcomers.

It is a form of assimilationism that also in 1999 led to a study of racism in schools by the South African Human Rights Commission. The report, entitled "Racism, Racial Integration and Desegregation in SA Public Secondary Schools" includes details of incidents of racism in South African schools and explores the lack of racial integration in many schools (Vally & Dalamba, 1999).

The manner in which diversity is being dealt with in South African schools thus makes it difficult to put into operation the tenets of the 1996 South African Constitution, the founding principle of which is the affirmation of human dignity, equality, freedom, non-racism and non-sexism (Lemmer, *et. al.*, 2006).

For Le Roux and Moeller (2003), part of the problem is that teachers have not been professionally prepared to effectively teach multicultural content and work effectively with ethnically diverse learner groups.

Therefore, the first battle is to persuade teachers to teach in a new way. That is, many of them are even unconvinced of the importance of teaching “rights” as they believe that “the government puts too much emphasis on human rights, which leads to problems in our classroom” (Pretorius, 2001:20).

According to Pretorius (2001), another of the most pressing problems undermining true diversity in South African schools is the unchanged character of staff rooms and school governing bodies.

For example, the Vally and Dalamba Human Rights Commission 1999 study found that, in former white schools, 78% of teachers were white and 73% of school governing body members were white - statistics that probably still apply today.

For black parents, the main reason for their lack of participation in suburban school governing bodies was a practical one. They either did not have their own transport or could not access public transport to travel from former townships to attend midweek meetings at 8pm in suburbs (Pretorius, 2001).

Soudien (2004), however, argues that the failure to deal adequately with multiculturalism in South African schools relates to the dominant approach to differences still being that of race and social class, an interpretation that is attributed to

- race and social class still being used to construct the major groups of people in the South African society; and
- the complex legacy of colonialism and apartheid (Soudien, 2004).

For Vandeyar (2003) it still is a power issue in which the dominant (Western, white) group protects their material interests and subjugates the “Other” or disempowers marginalised cultures.

To conclude: The South African democratisation process (since 1994) has resulted in educators being faced with teaching increasingly culturally diverse classes and implementing school reform programmes that aim at changing the nature of teaching and learning so that the needs of all learners can be met.

However, there still is no true equity (fairness) in education, despite the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 providing for the democratic transformation of schools to redress past injustices in educational provision and provide education of progressively high quality for all learners (Lemmer, *et. al.*, 2006).

This can be due to multiculturalism in South African schools being practised in such a superficial manner that it ultimately is an assimilation approach instead of a multicultural approach - assimilation in any case being the most pre-dominant approach to education in South Africa.

It, therefore, stands to reason that schools generally create a conformist culture, instead of being change agents. As such, they add to affirmative action policies having to be implemented from the top-down and not from bottom-up.

That is, the management of diversity requires reforming the entire school system environment so that the learning environment supports a positive

intercultural contact between all cultural groups and cultivates positive expectations of all learners (Narsee, 2003).

The need for positive intercultural contact conditions in educational environments also is substantiated by South African social contact studies (Tredoux, *et. al.*, 2007). For example, a study recently conducted by Rohleder, Leibowitz, Bozalek, Carolissen and Swartz (2007) shows that most black, coloured and white students, if left to their own devices, still avoid intercultural contact and, therefore, still tend to remain stuck in old apartheid race/class prejudices and stereotyping.

4.2.3. Curriculum Realignments

The democratisation process that was started in 1994 also has provided for greater opportunities for marginalised voices and knowledge systems to be heard.

For example, a fundamental constitutional right stipulated in Section 30 of the 1996 South African Constitution is that minority group learners' home language and culture should be recognised and protected. This includes the right of minority groups to receive education in the language of their choice (Lemmer, *et. al.*, 2006).

For Mochwanaesi, Steyn and Van der Walt (2005), the best way to achieve this is to educate minority group learners in their own schools and in their own language - an argument that they base on their case study of the cultural and educational needs of the Griqua population.

For Viljoen and Van der Walt (2003), the issues involving the recognition of diverse knowledge systems are similar to those that led to the “cultural wars” between liberal and affirmative multiculturalism in the USA. Within a South African context, however, the conflict is between

- a liberal stance that coincides with consecrated notions of THE (English or Afrikaans) Language - an overstatement of a language identity that then intersects with other colonial and Eurocentric socio-political “fault lines” such as status and power, as well as race and class (Painter, 2006:1); and
- an affirmative stance that intersects with that of Afrocentrism, a discourse that attempts to shift knowing centred within a Eurocentric cultural construct to one that is centred within an African cultural construct.

For Vandeyar (2003) an African cultural construct is formulated out of the indigenous knowledge systems embedded in the experiences and struggles of South Africa’s colonised (black) people as well as the indigenous knowledge systems embedded in African philosophical thinking and social practises that have evolved over thousands of years.

Based on the same premises, the Indigenous Knowledge Systems movement, therefore, asks questions that are central to the question of multiculturalism, among which are questions around the universality and diversity of knowledge systems (Vandeyar, 2003).

For Le Grange (2004), the premise that Eurocentric and Afrocentric discourses are competing perspectives and worldviews from which to make

sense of phenomena - a premise that then places educationists in separate camps of universalism (the Eurocentric camp) and multiculturalism (the Afrocentric camp) - is based on a false dichotomy as the two camps can be seen to be complementary rather than competitive.

Le Grange's (2004) argument is based on the heterogeneous manner in which knowledge is produced - i.e. in knowledge production different viewpoints are constantly being adduced and reconciled. Relating this then to the field of science, Le Grange (2004:215) cites Turnbull as saying that

Each actor, site, or node of a scientific community has a viewpoint, a partial truth consisting of local beliefs, local practices, local constants, and resources, none of which are fully verifiable across all sites. The aggregation of all viewpoints is the source of the robustness of science.

For Le Grange (2004), therefore, the common element of all knowledge systems is their localness. However, differences lie in the way the systems are assembled. Some are assembled through art, ceremony and ritual (the African way); while (Western) science does it through building instruments, standardisation techniques and writing articles. Le Grange (2004:216) again quotes Turnbull as saying that

In both cases, it is a process of knowledge assembly through making connections and negotiating equivalences between the heterogeneous components while simultaneously establishing a social order of trust and authority resulting in a knowledge space.

On this basis Le Grange (2004), therefore, contests that science education can incorporate a universalist position as well as a multiculturalist position, an argument she bases more on science/knowledge as performance rather than science/knowledge as representation - as a human construction. That is, knowledge production as performance enables space to be developed in which Western science and indigenous knowledge systems can work together in mutually beneficial ways. For example, South Africa San (Bushmen) trackers are being equipped with digital devices to record animal sightings - a local development that has been expanded and is being successfully used to track criminals.

On a more philosophical level, Viljoen, *et. al.*, (2003) propose an inclusive view of africanisation that (according to them) will be able to rally all South Africans to formulate a vision of a common educational identity.

It is a proposal that rests on their concern that taking the route of afrocentrism could lead to an alienation of South Africans of non-African descent and could lead to an alienation of those of African descent who have since become fully Westernised. According to them, afrocentrism, therefore, could be quite detrimental to the ideal of a shared South African educational identity.

They back themselves up by citing Makgoba (1998), for whom africanisation is inclusive and non-racial, in the sense that it is an African mind-set that involves incorporating, adapting and integrating other cultures into and through African visions and interpretations to provide an adaptation that is essential for the survival and success of peoples of African origin in the global village.

They also allude to Vorster (1995), who has made an in-depth analysis of the notion of africanisation, and his conclusion that it primarily concerns Africans, or blacks of African descent, and Europeans, or whites of European descent in Africa, or in relation to Africa. What is significant for Viljoen, *et. al.*, (2004), though, is Vorster's (1995) conclusion that africanisation was primarily an appeal to Africans to uphold the African cultural tradition and, secondly, an appeal to Europeans in Africa to respect and accommodate endeavours to that effect.

To conclude: The democratisation realignments that are taking place in South Africa are not simply a racial or a class (or a gender) realignment. Dominance, too, is being re-interpreted as individuals and communities re-evaluate and re-position themselves in relation to the range of social differences and in relation to the problem of having to work out new positions of power and authority.

This involves debates regarding a reconfiguration and, in some instances, a reworking of hegemonic Eurocentric practises in education. More specifically, it involves issues of equality of culture and knowledge systems. Therefore, debates revolve around how best to give a voice to minority groups as well as how best to incorporate competing perspectives and worldviews from which to make sense of phenomena - e.g., in a multicultural science education. On a more philosophical level, it also includes debates regarding the indigenisation of education as well as the significance of Afrocentric or africanisation identity for education.

4.2.4. The Way Forward

The local focus (like the global focus) in education nowadays is very much on understanding and learning to negotiate cultural diversity. As previously indicated it is not a process that happens by merely opening up schools (desegregating schools) so that there is a mixture of cultures, nor does it happen by chance. It invariably requires a concerted effort to make significant changes in the entire schooling system.

As part of their reform agenda, the national government has devised an outcome-based educational system that they believe (among other things) will change outdated school cultures by including education in human rights, values and inclusivity in all areas of learning (Lemmer, *et. al.*, 2006).

The government in 2001 even produced a Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy that provided pointers to help schools develop a democratic culture in young South Africans. In the manifesto, 10 values were highlighted as having relevance in education: democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu (human dignity), sustaining an open society, accountability, the rule of law, respect, and reconciliation (Pretorius, 2001).

The introduction of new symbols in line with the Bill of Human Rights (Chapter 2 of the 1996 Constitution) into a post-apartheid educational system, for Viljoen, *et. al.*, (2003), however, not only contributes to a reformulation of the South African education identity, it also contributes to the development of a new shared national identity.

But Soudien (2004) disagrees that the symbols that characterise the dispensation before 1994 have been replaced. Rather, he argues that a new educational identity can only be developed for South Africa when the dominant grand narratives of apartheid - especially the discourses of race - that still persist in discourses on education are addressed.

This includes addressing the presumptions upon which discourses on integration in education are premised. Namely, according to Soudien (2004), they still are constrained by predefined assimilation descriptions of the dominancy/subjugation of races - a description in which subordinate groups are promoted into a hegemonic educational system at the cost of their ways of being, speaking, and conducting their everyday lives (the old language).

Therefore, instead of race becoming an almost unchallenged “lens” through which integration in education in South Africa is interpreted, a new language of integration, according to Soudien (2004), needs to be developed. This includes replacing the power/knowledge couplet of race (and even class) with a new theoretical language that is not reductionistic. Rather, a new space needs to be opened in which recognition is given to multiple ways of understanding and describing social differences.

In the same vein, Vandeyar (2003) argues that an anti-racist educational stance (which he says is the preferred choice of some educationists) simply will not suffice to create a new South African educational identity, as its focus on race exacerbates the very stigmatisation that anti-racism aims to destigmatise. Also, it places blame on “institutional racism” for minority disadvantages in education, thereby blinding itself to other causes of inequality such as group-specific histories and traditions.

For Vandeyar (2003), therefore, what is much more meaningful for developing a new South African educational identity is examining the dynamics of oppression and power and how individuals participate in these dynamics, so that new theoretical premises that can arrest continuing forms of racism and cultural inequality can be formulated.

With the same aim in mind, Green, Sonn and Matsebula (2007) open up a dialogue that questions whiteness as a space of taken-for-granted dominance and privilege. It is a questioning of discourses on white superiority and hegemony that already have been taken up by Stevens (2007), Steyn (2007) and Ratele (2007). For example, Ratele (2007) expresses concern regarding the shift away from focusing on marginalised group issues.

To create new conditions for the reconstruction and healing that needs to be undertaken across cultures in education, for Vandeyar (2003) and Green, *et al.*, (2007), the power relationships of the past cannot be transcended by the confines of “sensitivity training” and “celebrating diversity”. Rather, what needs to be created is an equality of cultural trade, which fosters an appreciation of other peoples’ ethnic diversity and human similarities - a critical multiculturalism viewpoint.

On a more personal level, for Gumbo (2001) the cultural trade is between learners, who then learn how other learners interact with their environment from their own cultural background (another critical multiculturalism viewpoint).

Education thus should take into account the way society operates and should aim at educating the child about

- similarity and difference - i.e. a child must be taught to appreciate the unity and diversity of mankind; and
- the nature of society - i.e. children must be taught how to cope with life in a multicultural society (and in a multicultural employment sector) in a fair and just manner.

To achieve this it becomes vital (to go back to the quote at the beginning of the section on local experiences) that a viewpoint is upheld in education that says that

Cultures are equally important and true education is one that develops learners to perceive the world from their cultural point of view. But this may make them see only the island if they are not also developed to try and perceive the world as other cultures perceive it (Gumbo, 2001:240).

Ultimately, it is a viewpoint that coincides with that of Van der Merwe (2004) - that the shortcomings of other forms of multiculturalism only can be remedied by implementing a critical form of multiculturalism in education.

4.3. AN OVERARCHING FRAMEWORK

The perspective on multiculturalism in schools explored here represents a continuum of possibilities in which there are degrees of multiculturalism in schools, locally as well as globally.

The continuum also includes different approaches to education *per se* - for example, that of assimilation, multiculturalism and anti-racism. As part of a continuum, in my exploration, these different approaches to education are not seen to be competing with one other. Rather, they have overlays of similarities as well as differences.

Although my exploration of the global and the local experiences of multiculturalism in schools also has shown a great deal of similarities between the two experiences, I have avoided belabouring the point, as there are many differences too.

For example, I have avoided trying to draw parallels between Afro-American and black South African children who attend former white schools, as they too have differences as well as similarities.

To illustrate: Black South African children who attend former white schools (like Afro-American children) tend to perceive themselves to be a part of an oppressed and excluded group - a perception that makes them part of a minority in a subjective sense. But (unlike Afro-American children) they numerically are part of a majority group within their larger society.

One similarity, however, that is important for my study and therefore still needs to be highlighted here, is that in both the local and global spheres Western education presently is still driven and fuelled in large parts by an assimilation agenda.

This similarity thus suggests that the DSJ schooling scenario is simply just one of many examples of an assimilation educational stance that I could have used for my exploration of narratives of ex-learners - but of course there again are the differences.

Similar theoretical threads also run through all three of the key notions in the title of my study (“Texts of Identity: Rewriting the Self within A Multicultural School Community”) - these being “texts of identity”, “rewriting the self” and “multiculturalism in schools”.

In this chapter, for example, educational identities are discussed very much within the same theoretical genre as individual and collective identities are discussed in Chapter Three.

The process of rewriting the self that was discussed in Chapter Three also is discussed in similar terms to the process of redefining and rewriting education in South Africa. The way forward for the rewriting of the self, individually or collectively, and rewriting education in South Africa, are described similarly.

Namely, the process of rewriting the self and rewriting education in South Africa hinges on a social constructionist viewpoint in which individuals (including educators and pupils) learn to critically reflect on and re-interpret their experiences (including that of the past), so that they then can transcend old perceptions and change their viewpoints.

Such links then theoretically link not only Chapters Three and Four, but also (as mentioned at the end of Chapter Three) help link with Chapter Five.

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**CONSTRUCTING “WHO AM I” NARRATIVES
WITHIN A “POSTMODERN” DISCOURSE:
THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY STORY**

The self, and this is a crucial point, is essentially a being of reflexivity, coming to itself in its own narrational acts.

(Kerby, cited by Hamilton, 1995:57)

5.1. THE “POSTMODERN” NARRATIVE PARADIGM

5.1.1. Introduction

In the 1970s, “postmodern” thinking also led to a renewed interest in narratives as central to understanding human beings, an interest which reaches back towards very old cultural traditions of healing practices, of storytelling and storytellers (for the purpose of this study the notions of “narrative” and “story” will be seen as coterminous).

It is a renewed interest that culminated in the adoption of the narrative as a root metaphor for the human sciences in the 1980s, i.e. as a useful method of organising and viewing, understanding and explaining, human nature (Sarbin, 1986).

To Sarbin (1986) the choice of the narrative as a root metaphor is particularly fruitful for the field of Psychology, as it helps bring to the surface underlying principles that naturally govern people's psyche and behaviour - such as that human beings naturally (and therefore often unwittingly)

- think and perceive in narrative structures;
- impose structure on the flow of everyday living via narratives; and
- attempt resolution of their predicaments (often an act of transformation) via narratives.

The first section of this chapter, therefore, will explore and expand on such (and similar) perceptions by initially discussing the notions of "narrative knowing" and "narrative thinking", i.e. before looking at how "postmodern" narratives have shifted the storied nature of Psychology as well as that of Psychotherapy.

But as stories also play a very important role in helping us discover who we are (Widdershoven (1993) even speaks of a narrative identity), this topic too is woven into the fabric of this chapter - the theoretical part of the "method" chapter, which then has to be added to the theoretical equation of the study.

5.1.2. “Narrative Knowing”/“Narrative Thinking”

Jerome Bruner (1986) distinguishes between two ways of knowing - namely, paradigmatic knowing, which is rooted in scientific/propositional knowledge, and “narrative knowing”.

But, although paradigmatic knowing is essential for the understanding of matters scientific/technical, says Jerome Bruner (1986), it is “narrative knowing” that ultimately helps further knowledge regarding human affairs.

The acceptance of “narrative knowing” as an appropriate way of understanding human affairs also is linked to a general disillusionment in the social sciences with scientific/propositional knowledge and the renewed interest in hermeneutics.

For Geertz (1986), it is a re-figuration of social thought, that often is referred to as “the new hermeneutics” or “the interpretive turn” - a “turn” that postulates that knowledge regarding human affairs ultimately is interpretive.

Within such a refigured framework of social thought “narrative knowing” in essence is underpinned by the supposition that what people know they know through lived experience (and not through logical empiricism). A further supposition then is that people make sense of themselves and their worlds by interpreting/scripting their own experiences into sequences and plots, i.e. narratives (and definitely not through a fixed “truth”).

From a hermeneutic point of view, life thus is a process of interpretation in and through stories. However, according to Jerome Bruner (1986), the relationship between lived experience and narrative is a two-way process. For example, just as narratives reflect human experience, so human experience reflects the dominant cultural narratives that operate in a particular time and place.

Human beings, as “the authors of (them)selves” (Myerhoff, cited by White & Epston, 1990:16), thus are seen to be proactively involved in an ongoing process of telling and re-telling, writing and re-writing, editing and re-editing, their own idiosyncratic stories - as well as interweaving these with those common among a group, i.e. community narratives, and those communicated through stereotypes, i.e. dominant cultural and historic narratives.

In fact, Parry (1991:37) contends that human beings live in a multi-storied world, a “universe of stories”, in which they only can develop a sense of themselves through ongoing conversations with others, including the larger stories of culture and humanity itself.

And it is this flow of ideas between ourselves and others, between ourselves and larger society, which makes Lynn Hoffmann (1993) see the construction of our personhood as an integral part of a moving history, like a river or a stream - a viewpoint which she illustrates via the myth of the Australian aborigine “songlines” or musical roadmaps.

That is, as an aborigine is born into only a section of a songline, he needs to go on periodic “walkabouts” to exchange sections of songlines with other aborigines, an exchange that includes important social and cultural knowledge.

Ultimately, therefore, the “postmodern” narrative paradigm places human beings in a socially constructed world that is organised through a network of narratives, stories which act as bridges or conduits between self and culture, between historical moment in time and the context in which they are told, as well as between the particular and the general in human experience.

But, as the transmissions occur in the experiences of social life, the tellings themselves not only are context sensitive, but also are alive and always in production.

We can only begin with the last picture show, the last performance. Once the performance is completed, however, the most recent expression sinks into the past and becomes prior to the performance that follows (Edward Bruner, 1968a:12).

However, although Robinson and Hawpe (1986) agree that stories are a natural way to account, or explain and understand lived experiences, they go a step further by maintaining that people firstly need to go through a heuristic process of “narrative thinking”, a type of causal thinking, before they can construct their stories.

In essence, it is a reflective process in which people cognitively connect and organise information so that they can create a coherent and plausible account for themselves of how and why something happened, i.e. a new meaning, a new story.

By “scientifically” illustrating how cognitive principles organise the process of “narrative thinking” similar to acts of comprehension and problem solving studied by cognitive psychologists, Robinson, *et. al.*, (1986) give the “postmodern” narrative paradigm more “scientific” weight, with which to counteract criticisms of the narrative model (especially the criticism that the use of the imagination in narrative processes implies a certain naivety and playfulness which should remain the exclusive property of childhood).

But, even if Robinson, *et. al.*, (1986) break the process of “narrative thinking” down into more scientifically familiar components such as cognitive “strategies”, “schemas” and “procedures”, ultimately they too argue that the narrative is a more fruitful and flexible root metaphor for examining and interpreting human thought and action than those that flow from a rigid mechanistic world view. This end conclusion for them and many others is based on viewing

- “reality” as being depicted through the particular filter of consciousness of the storyteller (a depiction which Freedman and Combs (1996) dub “The Social Construction of Preferred Realities”, the title of their book), rather than through an omniscient eye that views a timeless reality; and

- a story as ambiguous enough to give a multiple perspective - one in which the world is not seen univocally but simultaneously through a set of prisms, each of which catches some part of it (Jerome Bruner, 1986).

Therefore, narratives are not simply tellings of a story. Nor are they simply economical releases of a pre-existing meaning that lies dormant in the text, even though each story tends to follow familiar, prototypal storylines to varying degrees.

In fact, Jerome Bruner (1986) says that one of the qualities of a good narrative is that it subjunctivises reality, thereby setting a mood of “maybe”, “might be”, and conjecture, which even encourages people to become open to new possibilities and new ways of interacting with the world.

Rappaport (1995) even says that when a setting is created to help people actively discover their stories or even to create new ones for them, the activities are consistent with the notion of empowerment - an observation that is in line with his belief that narratives do not just exist, but are important resources that have a powerful effect on human beings.

5.1.3. Re-storying Psychological Discourses

In Psychology, like in other social sciences, there is still a strong trend to view traditional, mainstream theories as being able to dictate the dominant discourses or the storied nature of Psychology.

But, as their power lies in the fact that they often are taken for granted and therefore mainly go unexamined, “postmodern” psychologists have taken it upon themselves to interrogate and challenge them, while simultaneously offering alternatives.

Particularly the narrative paradigm, as one such prominent alternative, has been actively used not only to question various traditional “texts”, from cultural icons to stories told in therapy, but also to produce alternative ways of accounting for everyday human life.

For one, Gergen and Gergen (1986) question the underlying narrative structure which dictates viewpoints held in traditional Developmental Psychology, be it that of Piaget or learning theorists ranging from Watson to the more recent social modelling theorists.

Being within a progressive narrative mould, it is a dominant narrative structure that dictates that an individual’s development has to be seen on a trajectory pathway in which there are stages of growing maturation, a variation of a “happily-ever-after” story, while a contra-story of the possibility of an opposing regression also is built into this narrative.

Adolescence, therefore, is traditionally seen as a stage of “impulse and storm” (Goethe, 1776) or as a stage that involves an “identity crisis” (Erikson, 1968), which either leads to a resolution (and therefore as a step further on the road towards maturation), or to further confusion and possible regression.

By viewing discourses simply as yet another genre of storytelling and challenging this prototypical and iconic developmental narrative, which sees a person's life as one continually evolving story, Gergen and Gergen (1986) thus have helped open the door for new developmental stories, which shift the account of human development into the framework of

- a unique richness of stories, i.e. of “many world, many selves” (Parry & Doan, 1994:12) rather than comparing a story to a normative structure such as a standard “true” narrative or fixed reference point;
- people being seen not only to be able to organise their lived experience through stories, but also possessing the capacity to monitor their experiences, reflect on them, and therefore being able to “re-write” or “re-author” or change their told self-narratives over time; and
- a lifestory not only being able to generate a description about a person, but being fundamental to the emergence and experienced reality of the self.

But the interrogations and challenges of the way traditional, mainstream Psychology is storied do not stop there. On a more “scientific” level, “postmodern” psychologists even question the dominant narratives which colour the way researchers gather their information and report findings, a point which is best elaborated on by Edward Bruner (1986b), an anthropologist.

He argues that even in the science of ethnography (the description of the customs, habits, and differences of races of humans) the starting point of a mainstream research project is often determined by a fixed and invariant dominant narrative that already contains a beginning and an ending. Traditional researchers thus tend to rely on a narrative in their heads to structure their observations in the field, rather than opening their eyes to changing circumstances or changing historical contexts.

It is an argument that Edward Bruner (1986b) illustrates via the need for ethnological researchers to be aware of the changing circumstances of the American Red Indians over time.

That is, in the 1930s the Red Indians (and ethnologists) saw the American Red Indian culture being close to extinction and, therefore, them needing to assimilate into the dominant American culture to survive. In the 1950s (as part of a growing resistance movement in America) a new Red Indian narrative, however, evolved which emphasised the ethnic resurgence of Red Indian culture (i.e. changing circumstances which have to be taken into account by ethnological researchers).

To Lynn Hoffmann (1993) and White, *et. al.*, (1990) (who use Foucault's dictum of "knowledge is power" as a base for their criticism), the issue is also complicated by the "colonial" hierarchical approach in traditional Psychology - an approach that makes researchers "study down" and practitioners (who traditionally are seen to be the "experts", with the power of knowledge) "practice down".

It is a criticism of Applied Psychology that also is echoed by Parry (1991). For example, Parry argues that, although Freud generally is accepted as the initiator of storytelling in Psychotherapy (theoretically an empowering experience), the two-tiered approach in psychoanalysis *per se* ultimately is disempowering.

That is, the psychoanalyst is still seen to be the power figure who has the right to over-ride a client's own story with a "scientific" theory (the psychoanalyst's own picture of the world).

Ultimately, therefore, says Parry (1991), the therapeutic relationship needs to be free from reproducing the same oppression many people have experienced at the hands of a dominant culture. Rather, it should be perceived to live in a "postmodern" universe in which

the story is set free to perform as simply a story that allows for re-invention as the storyteller finds a voice rooted in the person's own experience and in the connection of her story to those of others, and to larger stories of culture and humanity (Parry, 1991:37).

According to Edward Bruner (1986b), in a "postmodern" world the definition of the relationship between study group and ethnographic researcher too needs to be re-storied into one in which the relationship is established and determined by the people studied, and not by the theoretical frames of the researcher. Ultimately, therefore, a researcher's story simply should be seen as subjective interpretations of how people interpret themselves.

But, as “postmodern” ethnographic researchers still have an active role to play in the way the world of the people studied is presented, they need to replicate events and tell their story as authentically as possible - an end-goal which makes good “postmodern” researchers include snatches of personal narrative, bits of biography, or passages from field notes, to make their stories about other people’s stories even more authentic, more real and alive.

For Soederqvist (1991:157), therefore, what is important is an “embodied” character of ethnographic knowledge-making, in which the researcher’s “embodied reflexivity” also allows the reader to get a picture of the researcher’s personality.

There, however, is a dispute regarding the extent to which a researcher’s “embodied reflexivity” needs to go. Some even reject reflexive texts as mere self-indulgence.

Yet, as Soederqvist (1991) says, the issue is not whether the researcher’s personality and own pictures should appear in the text, but rather how it appears, covertly or overtly.

5.1.4. The Story Analogy and Psychotherapy

Foremost practitioners of “postmodern” narrative therapy, Michael White and David Epston, take a step further the basic belief that human beings need to “story” their experiences to make sense of their lives, i.e. they utilise the story as a “narrative means to therapeutic ends” (White, *et. al.*, 1990).

This includes a reflexive process with which to expose the effects of dominant stories and their “thin” conclusions, so that “rich” and “thick” alternative stories can be fleshed out, based on experiences that have been previously been denied, concealed or played down (Morgan, 2000).

In narrative therapy people thus are encouraged to tell their own stories in their own voices, instead of simply accepting other people’s descriptions of their experiences and themselves - an empowering process in which people are encouraged to develop a sense of authorship and re-authorship of their lives.

The ultimate aim, therefore, is to get people to come to the realisation that they themselves indeed are the main protagonists in their own story/drama, while others simply are secondary characters.

It is a process, which, for example, makes Miguel Ruiz question the dominant story he had been living and realise that what he believed about himself is not true - that it’s simply a story. As he says in his Toltec Wisdom Book called “The Voice of Knowledge” he comes to realise that

I create the character of “Miguel”, and it’s just an image based on what I agree to believe about myself. I project my image to other people in society, and other people perceive that projection, modify it, and react to me according to their stories (Ruiz, 2004:61).

To help people achieve such a realisation, narrative therapy should be deconstructive, says Michael White (1990), so as to enable people to challenge and distance themselves from cultural narratives that are oppressive and subversive.

For example, by deconstructing authoritarian cultural narratives regarding knowledge and power, a space is opened up for a re-reading and contradiction of such cultural narratives, as well as for people to see themselves and their life stories in a newly liberated and evolved light.

Ultimately, therefore, deconstruction is a particularly important component of narrative therapy, insofar as it allows people to actively re-author their lives and create a new self-image, while simultaneously encouraging people to understand the social constraints which limit their identity (White, *et. al.*, 1990, are pioneers of using the dual narrative/social construction metaphors for organising therapeutic thinking).

But, in the process of encouraging people to liberate their lives from limiting narratives and to construe their lives from a different viewpoint, the narrative therapist also plays an active and interactive role.

For example, even though the client's perceptions, experiences and reactions take centre stage, narrative therapists usually contribute to the "client-centred conversations" by means of

- a “not knowing” stance - one which vacillates between that of curiosity, amplifying and elaborating (Andersen, 1987);
- asking questions - especially circular questions which are intended to facilitate new connections in people, i.e. make them re-evaluate their perceptions and entertain new views (Tomm, 1988); and
- making statements - that hopefully not only lead to experiencing the therapist as a real person, who takes a position on certain issues, but also as someone who is accountable for (mis)understandings and actions (Tomm, 1988).

However, as Tomm (1988) points out, the outcome of such contributions is unpredictable, i.e. the therapist mainly works in the dark.

Therefore, it is important for a narrative therapist to engage in an ongoing activity of monitoring the immediate reactions and revising input as the conversations unfolds, in the sense that when one question does not work, the therapist then has to search for another that is more likely to open up a space for a particular person to evolve.

Encouraging people to become the “privileged authors” of themselves and their own lives (a quest which Epston and White, 1992:24, dub an “archaeology of ... alternative knowledges”), ultimately is done in a co

-evolving manner - one in which the therapist actively participates in the process of opening space for individuals to see new possibilities and to evolve more freely of their own accord (Robinson, *et. al.*, 1986:123, describe this process as “narrative repairing”).

But, within such a co-evolving, co-authoring narrative framework there is no set of qualities defining a good story. Rather, a good story is defined as one in which aspects of a static or unhelpful story is transformed into a helpful story. A good story, for example, is the transformation of a story in which the narrator is a passive participant or a victim to one in which the narrator is an active agent.

For Epston, *et. al.*, (1992) it is a transformation process that is analogous to stages found in traditional rituals of “rites-of-passage”.

Yet, while the first two stages of separation (a stage of detachment from the familiar) and liminality (a stage of disorganisation and confusion) fit neatly into the rite-of-passage metaphor referred to by van Gennep (1960), for Epston, *et. al.*, (1992) the last stage does not correspond with traditional therapy’s “termination-as-loss” metaphor.

Rather, Epston, *et. al.*, (1992) devise a last stage of re-incorporation based on old cultural ceremonies held at the end of a “rite-of-passage” to welcome a person back into the community - albeit at a different position in the social order.

The aim of this re-incorporation phase for Epston, *et. al.*, (1992) thus includes encouraging persons to pass on the alternative knowledges generated in therapy to others in their communities.

For example, such persons – Epston, *et. al.*, (1992:11) call them “consultants” - are encouraged to transcribe their alternative and preferred knowledges into popular discourses and other forms, such as documenting their new status in a “news release”, which then is sent to “significant others” and those in their familiar social world.

To summarise: In comparison to the micro-world of traditional “therapies of isolation” that are based on the dominant individualising conception of personhood in Western culture, narrative therapy, therefore, ultimately becomes a “therapy of inclusion”, in which the sense of “*communitas*” established in therapy furthermore is transferred to the macro-world - be it a family network or community in a wider sense.

In this sense a story altered in narrative therapy ultimately has the power to change not only a person’s world knowledge and beliefs, but also a group’s shared knowledge and belief systems.

5.2. A NARRATIVE RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Life consists of retelling.

(Edward Bruner, 1986a:12)

5.2.1. Introduction

Freedman, *et. al.*, (1996) point out that each guiding metaphor has pros and cons. Apropos research, a well-known disadvantage of narrative studies is that the data collected is vast.

Despite this, the basic social construction/narrative principles described previously will continue to be adhered to as they give guidelines for a procedure that allows

- the fullness of experiences and richness of accounts of people's experience of their world(s) to be captured in a more natural process;
- sufficient room for storytellers to interpret their own experiences as well as for them to construct their own texts of identity; and
- conceptualisation of personal stories in interaction with socially offered/shared narrations.

In short, the selected narrative research procedure entails studying people with all their human complexities and contradictions rather than simply as variables, listening to people talk in their own terms about themselves and their lives rather than testing them (and constraining them) in a controlled set-up, and allowing their own meaning-making to be at the forefront rather than using preconceived psychometric scales to test pre-conceived hypotheses.

In this study, however, the stories of the black and coloured ex-DSJ learners were developed within the agenda of an Action Research approach - one in which their stories were developed as part of an evolving journey, with myself as a type of “fellow traveller”.

The end-destination of the journey, nevertheless, was not simply that of story making. In the true spirit of Action Research, it was a journey that also simultaneously aimed at helping the ex-DSJ learners make sense of how their school experiences influenced their identification - more specifically re-identification - of themselves as individuals as well as collectives.

In general, however, it was an evolving (and bumpy) journey developed in three ever-widening and interlocking stages.

But, before describing how the three stages were structured, this section takes a look at my own role in the study process as well as the selection of modes of storytelling and the storytellers.

5.2.2. The Researcher as Embodied Reflexivity

The specific framework in which I chose to operate was that of an ethnographic researcher, a description that first and foremost defined my role in the study process as that of a participant-observer.

As an ethnographic researcher, who focused on the “case studies” of the ex-DSJ learners (my units of analysis), I thus observed them as a kind of member or quasi-member of their own “psychological sense of community”.

What, however, contradicted my taking a “not-knowing” stance in the study was the fact that the ex-DSJ learners initially got to know me as the “school psychologist”, a role which in their minds included me being called into their classes when things went radically wrong.

To counteract such a perception, I, therefore, this time entered their lives on a very different level, which included meeting them in informal social settings away from the school (e.g. my “office” at the University of Johannesburg was on the university entrance steps) and giving a great deal of self-disclosures about myself and my opinions and my own human foibles.

Additionally, on each step of our journey into their past, I emphasised that the project was about them and what they could gain from the study, and not what I could gain.

A promise of confidentiality too was given by emphasising that no full names would be used when I told my story. They also were given permission to stop participating in the study at any time if they so wished (none did).

As an observer, however, I became well aware that my perceptions at times were constrained by the social beliefs and myths created by a white South African discourse.

For instance, my white guilt made me feel embarrassed when I impulsively said that I would take one of the black ex-DSJ learners to a taxi rank but not the one in Bree Street, in the centre of Johannesburg. It was a relief to discover that taking a taxi from Bree Street was very much the exception for the ex-learner and in no ways the rule, as her own family in Soweto deemed it too dangerous for her.

I, therefore, had to acknowledge to myself that my participation in the story-telling process was in a white, and not a black or coloured voice, in a grown-up and not an adolescent voice as well as in a therapist and not an ex-student voice.

However, as the process of telling a story itself should be an empowering experience, rather than a disempowering one, I did take care to

- represent the ex-DSJ students' social reality to the best of my ability;
and

- listen attentively and give respect to their stories.

My own history, however, does intersect well with theirs.

I too have grown up living in two worlds - a German and a South African one. In fact, knowledge of both worlds, I believe, has enabled me to understand both sides of the story, the German as well as the South African side.

It also strongly links with my choice of study, a choice that not only created an affinity with the ex-DSJ learners but also could be transposed onto a personal level. That is, it helped give meaning to my own multicultural issues.

Also, what intersected well with having a better understanding of the world from which my storytellers came, is my experience from 1990 to 1996 as a part-time consultant for another private Johannesburg school, St Barnabas College in Bosmont, a school that prides itself as being in the forefront of independent, multicultural education as well as committing itself - since 1963 - to educating disadvantaged students.

During that time I also had the privilege of running their little outreach programme that catered for the disadvantaged of the surrounding coloured and black communities.

5.2.3. Embodied Reflexive Narrative Modes

My study follows a trend in which writing is added to conversations in therapy as an alternative way of accelerating the discovery of new voices and

consequently the discovery of alternative narratives. Such forms of writing include journals, letters to people both dead and alive, autobiographies, poetry, dialogues and dreams.

As writing, however, generally is viewed as a format that allows for more open spaces in which to reflect and recollect, the main emphasis in my study initially is placed on writing, while conversations are secondary, in the sense that they stem from the written material.

More particularly, for the “archeological digs” of episodic narrative memories (Phase One), I decided to use a diary format of writing - a format that not only is familiar to most people, but also

- naturally reflects the segmental and episodic nature of stories;
- indicates in its “stream-of-consciousness” manner what type of information is selected as important/non-important;
- helps make “inner” speech also “outer”, a reflexive use; and
- has integrative benefits which potentially can transform the diarist (Wiener & Rosenwald, 1993).

In the process of writing about the self, therefore, the “diary-diarist relationship” (in which a diary functions as a part of the self, yet also as another person) not only opens up a new space for self-dialogue and self

-conversation, but also for viewing experiences in a different light (Wiener, *et. al.*, 1993:32).

It is a function which Epston, *et. al.*, (1990: 1992) maintain can be invoked in the separation stage of therapy, i.e. by getting persons to externalise the presenting problem, a way of distancing from original perceptions and dislodging persons from the dominant internalising discourses that guide their lives.

And as Epston, *et. al.*, (1992) say that this initiates the experience of liminality, a space in which persons' worlds automatically is subjunctivised, it was decided to get the storytellers to attempt to thread the evoked narrative memories into an over-riding story format (Phase Two). This was a way of seeing whether they eventually had

- made sense out of all the impressions and images evoked in diary-writing; and
- reflected on how their DSJ experiences helped, or did not help, them re-formulate their "texts of identity".

To try and transcend the limitations of subjective, self-referential experiences and expressions, however, Stage Three of story generation was developed in which all the individual storytellers were brought together to try and articulate an inter-subjective, shared experience, with which to construct a bigger picture/story.

Loosely designed as a re-incorporation phase, the three-hour session was planned to be a group discussion (see Phase Three of story generation).

The overall aim of all storytelling modes was to give the ex-DSJ learners sufficient room to interpret their own experiences, as individuals or as a group, in familiar expressive forms.

All storytelling modes, therefore, established the storytellers as an “authority” on themselves and their own lives.

5.2.4. The Storytellers as Knowledge-makers

To recruit black and coloured ex-DSJ learners, I initially resorted to contacting those I knew where to find (three worked part-time at known addresses).

Recruitment, however, very quickly “snowballed”, in the sense that those who were contacted either recruited others themselves or gave me contact numbers. In a few cases I even used contact data given on career guidance biographical inventories when they were matric students at the DSJ.

In this manner 16 black and coloured ex-DSJ learners were contacted, of whom 12 readily agreed to participate in the study. Those who declined were all males. One even declined because he said he “already had forgiven them”, thereby implying that he did not want to rake up old feelings of anger and hurt (he was one of the participants in the “pilot study”).

The reason why I call these ex-DSJ learners “storytellers” is to draw attention to the active role they play, not only as protagonists, but also as resourceful tellers of their own tales - a “slice” of a life-long process in which they shape their lives.

It is a “slice” that I expected to be framed as a transitional phase of life as they

- (like so many other South Africans) then were confronted with anomalies and tensions created by living in two diverse worlds; and
- (like many other adolescents) socially and educationally then were encouraged to think and experience themselves as going through a developmental phase, an identity crisis, which traditionally is seen to be fraught with turmoil and tension.

Furthermore, to follow Edward Bruner’s (1986a) train of hermeneutical thought: I expected in this study that the circular process between what the ex-learners experienced as pupils at the DSJ, and their expression thereof, would constitute contradictions or tensions.

In brief, I expected this to be created by inevitable gaps between elements such as

- cognitions, feelings and expectations evoked by a lived experience;
- words and images evoked by a story, be it spoken and/or written; and

- the interpretive tellings themselves, and how the listeners/readers in turn interprets these stories with their own stories (Turner, 1986).

And possibly - also because the black and coloured ex-DSJ pupils already in the initial stage of story generation found it difficult to deal with such tensions and anomalies on their own - they themselves developed an unexpected (and unforeseen) additional role for themselves.

That is, in the process of “archeological digging” for memories regarding episodic “happenings” (see Phase One of story generation), individuals spontaneously resorted to consulting with each other. In this way they then pre-empted the sharing of their narratives with one another in a group situation (Phase Three of story generation).

The role of “consulting your consultants”, as described by Epston, *et. al.*, (1992), however, was most prominent when the ex-DSJ learners interacted with me. That is, although I, for example, was there to encourage them to reflect or expand on certain episodes they had written, they, on the other hand, became knowledge-makers for me, thereby creating for me a sense of “fair exchange”.

For example, one of the first “lessons” I learnt from them was that throughout their schooling they referred to themselves as POCs (“People-Of-Colour”), an acronym which I then henceforth used, i.e. with the exception of a letter which was written before knowing about the abbreviation (it is quoted in full in the discussion of Phase One).

5.2.5. Generating Knowledge-making Narratives

To re-iterate: In this study I generated storytelling in three ever-widening and interlocking phases. It is a design of data-generating that recognises that even the most private narrative (to a greater or lesser degree) is suffused with, and constructed in terms of publicly and socially available narratives.

The study thus aimed to elicit “texts of identity” while simultaneously drawing out socially offered/share narrations.

5.2.5.1. Phase One: Episodic “Archaeological Digs”

My short introductory letter given to each storyteller was as follows:

Dear ex-DSJ learner,

Although you have moved on, either to studying on a tertiary training level or to working (or both!), I need you to go back to the past so that I can gather personalised stories of what it was like being a black or brown student at the German school. I am interested in your experiences not so much as a psychologist, but rather as someone who is writing a doctoral dissertation on the subject.

Of course your participation in my research is purely voluntary. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that you too could benefit from participating, especially if you

see it as part of developing a better understanding of yourself. Also, as the results of the research could be of interest to you, I could organise a feedback session for you, if you so wish.

For the first part of my research I envisage you diarising your DSJ experiences in strings of episodes. By meeting with you on a weekly basis for a month, I will be able to gently “nudge” you into thinking more about certain events, highlight specific points, and so forth. Still, I need to emphasise that your DSJ story remains your own unique story, expressed in your own unique manner (maybe, you would even like to draw or illustrate something?).

Once this phase has been completed, I hope to meet with all participants, so that you all can share your experiences with one another. But please note: as sharing here too is on a voluntary basis, I beforehand will check, whether you are willing to share all or some of the experiences with the others, or not.

Also please note: If you at any stage change your mind and do not want to continue with the above-mentioned process, you will be able to withdraw. And although I will be publishing some of what you share with me, I will do so in such a way that your identity will not be revealed.

As predicted by Tomm (1988) putting the Phase One guidelines into operation, however, quickly made everyone, storytellers as well as myself, aware of how we all had to “rock-and- roll” with the process.

For the storytellers it mainly meant that their full lives suddenly became even fuller, an additional stress factor which each handled in their own way.

Some of them studying at the University of Johannesburg, for example, decided it was more convenient for them to meet with me in a cluster, instead of in their individually allocated and staggered times, thereby making the meetings rather chaotic, to say the least. Others, also studying at the University of Johannesburg, made the meetings more of a “slip-one-knit-one” process than regular.

In fact, one of them in particular tended to chat away merrily during her meetings with me - but, when questioned, reluctantly admitted that she had not had time to write anything during the week (it became an “in-joke” that my favourite refrain was “but have you written that down”).

Another person, again, who was working fulltime, lost her diary when her car was stolen, and although she promised to catch up in a replacement diary, never managed to do so (she however did pitch for the group session).

For me too, it meant in-between working at the German school in the mornings and running a private practice in the afternoons, finding time to meet with ex-learners

- at Sandton City where one worked;
- in Parkview where two worked part-time on certain days;

- at Rosebank Mall where another worked part-time one day a week;
- in Braamfontein where one had a business course one day a week;
- at Wits University, where two studied; and
- meeting the rest at the University of Johannesburg.

But, in spite of all the “ups-and-downs”, at the end of Phase One I was left feeling humbled and privileged, feelings which were attached to already realising at that early stage that each one in their own way had enriched me with their stories and the knowledge they imparted.

5.2.5.2. Phase Two: Subjective, Self-referential Narratives

As mentioned before, at the end of their diarising the ex-DSJ learners were asked to write their own personal story, in which they depicted how they made sense of themselves and their experiences at the DSJ.

In hindsight, it is not surprising that this proved to be the most difficult part, particularly as I suddenly recollected that quite a few, when meeting with me, tended to say “is this what you wanted?” - indicating that they still saw me as an authority figure, whom they had to please.

In fact, so many expressed confusion regarding what they needed to do and failed to write their own story for such a long time, that I again resorted to letter-writing, which is as follows:

Dear ex-DSJ learner,

RE: WRITING YOUR OWN STORY

“Postmodern” psychologists (amongst other things) see humans as interpreting beings, who constantly need to explain or make sense of their experiences as they live their lives.

As South African People-of-Colour (POCs), who attended a predominantly European school, therefore, how do you explain or make sense of your experiences at the DISJ?

More specifically: How do you think the DSJ experiences have affected or shaped the way you identify yourself today? Do the experiences even have implications for your future?

Take into consideration that the beliefs, ideas, and the practises of the culture in which you have grown up could colour the meaning you give to your DSJ experiences.

Hope these brief guidelines are helpful when you write your own unique story – one in which you are the main character.

Instead of helping clarify what was needed, the letter unfortunately only seemed to contribute to the confusion. And at the end of the day, I found myself wishing that I simply had put it in the terms one of the POCs used when telling the others what she thought was needed.

She simply said, “Man, write it so that it has a beginning, a middle, and an end!”

However, it needs to be mentioned that part of the problem, of course, could have been that the POCs resented doing more than stated in the original letter.

5.2.5.3. Phase Three: Inter-subjective, Shared Narratives

As stated in the original letter, the group session was organised, so that the POCs could share their experiences with one another. It was a session that was conducted both informally and formally.

The informal aspect was created by providing “eats and drinks” and letting the 10 POCs socialise for a while before going into the more formal aspect of the session. The latter entailed breaking the 10 up into two groups of five and asking each group to discuss three questions, one specific one relating to themselves and their experiences at the DSJ and the other two broader ones relating to the DSJ *per se*, as well as to its broader South African context.

The questions (which it was hoped would stimulate both personal and social stories) were:

- How would you define the positive and negative effects of your DSJ experiences on your lives?

- How successfully (or unsuccessfully) do you think the DSJ has adopted aspects of both the German and South African cultures/societies?
and
- How well (or not well) has the DSJ adapted to the many political and demographic changes in South Africa?

Although it was envisaged that once the two groups had discussed a question, their respective spokespersons would summarise for the other group what they had discussed, this procedure sparked off a great deal of side-discussions and comments, to the extent that there was a tendency to go back into the informal.

Be that as it may, the contents of the information shared generally remained more cerebral than emotional, more global than personal.

Overall too there seemed to be a reluctance to share personal experiences and stories with one another, i.e. in spite of them being told that their answers to the questions definitely could be illustrated via their own personal experiences and stories.

It was a reluctance that reminded me of something many of the POC learners at the German school told me in confidence. Namely, they said that they tended to keep their guard up even when they were with their own circle of friends.

For me, however, a “bigger picture” indeed was achieved, one in which a macro-world was reflected in the micro-world of the POCs.

It is a picture, in which POCs, who relocated to the German school in about 1994, definitely had their identities strongly shaped by the political changes that then took place, while those who relocated later generally seemed to be practically apolitical and identified themselves simply as “typical” teenagers, who socially were shaped by a global image or by others in their respective communities.

Additionally, it needs to be mentioned that, although I originally wanted to videotape the Phase Three group discussions, I decided against this. The rationale was

- the “pilot group” either playing up to the camera or simply “freezing”;
and
- my wanting the experience to be an informal “fun” rounding-off of a journey I and the ex-learners had embarked on.

However, during and after the group session I did make notes, while the “scribes” of both groups also jotted down notes of what was discussed in their specific groups.

5.3. THE OVERARCHING LINKAGE OF NARRATIVES AND STUDY

Based on the premise that “the self ... (comes) to itself in its own narrational acts” (Kerby, cited by Hamilton, 1995:57), in this chapter I firstly introduced narratives as a kind of epistemology, before I explained how they were used in this particular study.

It is an epistemology that social scientists such as Sarbin (1986), Edward Bruner (1986a) and Jerome Bruner (1986) used as an organising metaphor for a number of years before it was used in the field of Psychology.

It, therefore, is their ideas that have helped reconstruct Psychology within an alternative “postmodern” narrative/social constructionist worldview. Most pertinent for this study, however, are the shifts in the fields of Research and Applied Psychology.

A shift in Research Psychology that was particularly helpful for the study was that of perceiving both the participants as well as the researcher as actively, and not passively, participating in a research process. The shift not only enabled me to view the storytellers (as I have dubbed my participants) as resourceful tellers of their own tales, but to view them and myself as being involved in the Action Research process in a co-evolving and co-authoring manner.

In fact, it is Kelly, *et. al.*, (2001), who point out that the research stance I chose for my study, namely, that of ethnography, not only determined

that I saw myself as a participant-observer, but also as a “learner”. The black and coloured ex-DSJ learners then became my knowledge-makers, *a la* Epston, *et. al.*, (1992).

But, what also was particularly helpful for the study was the acceptance in the field of Applied Psychology of the dual narrative/social construction metaphors, an acceptance which led to narrative therapists not only thinking about people’s lives as stories, but also working with people to re-story themselves - i.e. change their perceptions so that they could re-author themselves via a process of self-reflexivity. As Edward Bruner (1986a:12) says, “Life consists of retelling”.

A process which Steier (1991) described as recursive looping back - a turning -back of one’s experience upon oneself, that makes people conscious of how they see themselves - it, therefore, is a reflective process that was used in my study to aid the black and coloured ex-learners gain a better understanding of their DSJ experiences as well as perceive what happened to them in a new way.

Having ultimately in this chapter told my story of my choice of research methodology, I, therefore, in the next two chapters relate how the black and coloured ex-DSJ learner’s dialogues and stories weave in and out of this story.

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**DIALOGUES GENERATED IN PHASES
ONE AND THREE: ARTICULATING
COMMUNAL/PERSONAL VIEWPOINTS**

We are required to walk our own road – and then stop, assess what we have learned and share it with others. It is only in this way that the next generation can learn from those who have walked before them

(Albertina Sisulu, quoted by Rampele, 1996:Preface).

As the POCs' personalised narratives generated in Phase Two (dubbed subjective, self-referential narratives) lend themselves much more to being explored via Chapter Five's storytelling theories, they are explored separately in the next Chapter. What here is used to explore the dialogues generated in Phases One and Three are understandings developed via my "pilot study" (described in Chapter Two) as well as those developed in Chapters Three and Four about "texts of identity", "rewriting the self" and "multiculturalism in schools".

The dialogues themselves are those generated via the retrospective recollections of the POCs, which in Phase One (dubbed episodic "archaeological digs") they shared individually by means of diary writing, or in Phase Three (dubbed inter-subjective, shared narratives) they shared collectively in the organised group session. Apropos Phase One: A distinction is made here between what was originally written (*diary entry*) and what was written after a discussion with me (*diary reflection*).

Before turning to the findings themselves, however, what needs to be clarified is the following: Extracts from the POCs' written or verbal articulations used in this chapter to illustrate a point, are in italics. In cases where these have been reduced, the excluded material is indicated by quotes ("...").

Whatever appears in square brackets are my comments, which could help to clarify or amplify a point. The extracts themselves mainly are given as they were written, including spelling and grammatical errors. Corrections were made only when it really was difficult to understand what a POC meant to say.

Also what needs to be clarified is that the POCs refer to the DSJ and their status there in different ways, thereby indicating name changes that over time have taken place. For example, some still refer to the South African branch at the school as the Foreign Language branch ("F" branch), a label that later was changed to the New Secondary School branch (NSS branch), while the classes themselves subsequently were dubbed the "D" (and not "F") classes.

6.1. ARTICULATING COMMUNAL VIEWPOINTS

Most POCs start their diaries with a description of their first day at the German school. One even starts with "it began with an aptitude test", followed by a detailed recall of that day in 1991, including a drawing of an abstract sketch that she says she recollects developing into a drawing of a giraffe.

Be it a description of their first day, writing the aptitude test, or (as one POC describes) attending the year-long orientation course to academically prepare candidates for their entrance into the world of the DSJ, all descriptions contain recollections of the bewilderment and uncertainty about what it was all about.

M(1) [diary entry]: Since this is the first page I might as well start with the first day. I was late, lost and scared. I was only nine years old and my stomach ached at the thought of what was about to happen (even though I had no idea what that was).

K [diary entry alluding to the orientation course]: We go there on Tuesdays and Thursdays. That's what we'd tell everybody who asked us about the German school in 1994. We didn't know then why we were actually going to the German School. Was it because we were smarter than the other children? Was it maybe because we got good grades which might not have [been] an indication of how smart we were but how hard we worked?

Most of the coloured POCs emphasise how their parents put pressure on them to attend the DSJ.

D(1) [diary entry]: I personally think that in terms of coloured people at the D.S.J., 99% of them would rather go to a local Government school than at the D.S.J.

Reluctance to be schooled at the DSJ, however, also had to do with their image of themselves.

M(1) [diary entry]: My first two years at the German school were mostly horrible. ... The reason I hated it is because I went from the cleverest girl in class, who all the teachers adored and who everyone wanted to be friends with to being a timid mouse.

On the other hand, most of the black POCs relate how their parent(s) inspired them to succeed. This especially is emphasised by those POCs, whose family constellations are headed by a single mother.

G [diary entry]: I was not going to give up. I must have learnt from my mother, who raised me by herself after my father left her while she was pregnant with me. She had to leave high school, got a job as a domestic worker at a German church. She then went to night school in order to complete her matric at that time I was about 9 years old. So you can imagine what kind of a strong woman she is & has taught me to be as courageous like her.

In general, the black POCs relate how their parents saw “the whole DSJ thing (as) a blessing in disguise”, to quote one of them - an articulation that helps support the opinion that the common denomination in all the migrations of

black pupils to former white schools is the desire for a better quality education (in the instance of the coloured POCs, however, it would appear to be their parents' desire and not their own).

K [diary reflection]: On the evening of the 9th July, the day of my first meeting with Inga Klugkist, I sat down with my parents and posed a couple of questions about what they experienced as DSJ parents. Mother: You see at the time, there was this craze about sending children to model C schools and schools outside Soweto. We had not been part of this craze and were not really prepared to follow the trend, especially financially.

*L(1) [diary entry]: K, my sister, plaited my hair (probably in a horse-shoe kind of design). I wore my new uniform, had a new backpack and was excited: I was going to a "white" school. There was no way that my mother would have been able to take me to the kind of school that the DSJ was, or anything moderately close. Yet here I was, purely because I was a "gifted child" –
Really?*

As part of the first generation of South African children to have experienced multicultural education, there generally seems to be a marked difference between the black and coloured attitude of POCs being schooled at the DSJ - a difference which also could be attributed to young black (and not

coloured) South Africans perceiving themselves to be in the hub of creating a new African society for the country?

That is, while black POCs generally describe their DSJ schooling as “an opportunity of a lifetime” (again to quote one of them), a great deal of the experiences related by coloured POCs centre around typical teenage activities such as having “fun and games” at school (creating some excitement, as one of them puts it) and partying after hours. This is in spite of their parents also saying to them “that (they) should be lucky that (they) have such an opportunity” or “It’s good for you, you don’t know what your getting” (to quote two of them). (Incidentally, via the “grapevine”, I was told that some of the coloured POCs, who now are at university, still party up a storm over weekends).

C [diary entry]: As I understand it it wasn't just us that was being corrupt but many confused, hormonal teenagers. When I mentioned what we did at school to my friends at home, it was minor to them compared to whatever rubbish they caught on. Like our small time bravado ment nothing to them.

The picture of them simply wanting to be teenagers, more than anything else, is a picture that is contextualised at the end of the next level (the first of four often overlapping levels) of communal dialogues within the socio-political transitions taking place in South Africa.

6.1.1. Neo-colonial Dialogues

To a greater or lesser degree, all the POCs emphasise a resistance to being assimilated into a form of European “neo-colonialism”, a perception of the school that the black and coloured learners of my “pilot study” made me aware.

D(2) [diary entry]: Orientation. To put it bluntly, I hated it. The purpose of this endeavour I could never understand. Why did I need to be orientated? I was South African, was I [being] indoctrinated into a new culture? It made no sense at all.

This definitely is complicated by the legacies of the South African apartheid era and tacit expressions of dominance and power.

For example, (like the black and coloured learners of my “pilot study”) many POCs attribute their rebelliousness to perceiving themselves to be part of an artificial stratification, in which the “upper-class” - often seen to be Eurocentric “missionaries” (to put it in their terms) - made them feel that they were overly disadvantaged and thus had to feel overly grateful for an opportunity which they thought was being shoved down their throats.

Z [diary reflection]: There were incidents where one would ask oneself why the school bothered to head-hunt us from our previous schools because everything that was done for you was always thrown in your face by the school. We were grateful for all that the school had done for us but we were removed from a situation where we were all equal and there was no segregation. The constant reminder that the school has done so much for us was always hanging over our heads. Sometimes you'd be hesitant to speak your mind because you don't want to jeopardise the opportunity you had been given. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't extreme but it made things awkward at times.

Such tacit expressions of dominance and oppression for some POCs is a result of a stereotypical colonial mind-set, particularly one in which the POCs (a la Fanon, 1967;1968) find themselves trapped in neo-colonial European prejudices and unwillingness to understand their particular predicaments - an explanation that Vandeyar (2003) additionally connects to Western assimilation models of education.

K [diary entry]: Often when we were reluctant to participate in certain group activities especially sports activities, they would remind us of the "poor" backgrounds from which we came and tell us that we were wasting our opportunities What made me angry about these teachers' attitudes was that they based their comments on other people's perceptions of our group.

They had not known our backgrounds but had chosen to impose their own preconceived notions of where we came from and thus use them to coerce us into participating out of sheer guilt. The fact that many of us could not afford badminton racquets let alone proper gym shoes, did not seem to register in their heads as they continually penalised us for not having the right sports gear.

One coloured POC, however, even admits that she discovered her own neo-colonial prejudices, which not only extended to her (and others) not showing their one black teacher as much respect as they did their white teachers, but also her initially assuming that a black lecturer at the university where she is studying was a technician.

But in spite of adding that maybe the POCs pushed the limit more with their only black teacher because he was a soft-natured man and an inexperienced disciplinarian, she goes on to relate how her neo-colonial prejudices even extended to the use of language.

Such prejudices thus support the viewpoint that coloured people still tend to see themselves as appendages of the white population, and not the black - a perception of themselves which Adhikari (2004) attributes to the artificial apartheid grouping of coloured as a sub-category of the white population.

L(2) [diary entry]: A prejudice that I must admit (although I wish it weren't the case) is that I assume that people who speak accented English, specifically a black or coloured accent are not as competent as non-accented or white accented (for that matter) people. I believe this is a backlash from having white teachers and authority figures, among other issues.

But, as the group discussions showed, it particularly was the three - L(1), K, and Z - who entered the DSJ around the time of the 1994 political change in South Africa (and matriculated in 2002 and 2001), who were the most sensitive regarding issues of neo-colonialism and most influenced and motivated by the transitions then taking place in the country.

For example, because of the end of apartheid, they said their expectations of making their mark were bigger, an expectation which they said even today includes wanting to earn recognition, rather than just being another BEE or affirmative action token - a self-expectation which substantiates the importance of Jones' (1994) plea for an affirmative diversity policy (one in which people earn recognition) to replace the tainted affirmative action one (one in which people notoriously are seen simply to be "yet another token" appointment in a numbers game).

In contrast, those who matriculated in 2004 - C, L(2), G, D(1), and D(3) - mainly painted a picture of simply being teenage students, whose close bond continued after they left the DSJ - a picture which not only overrides the

other pictures they painted (e.g. that the early years at the DSJ were tough; that they were misunderstood at the DSJ) but also corroborates that “times are a’changin” and that today’s South African teens generally are not interested in socio-political issues.

On the other hand, the POC who matriculated in 1999 - D(2) -, gave the impression that when he attended the DSJ the “Foreign Language” students still were a bit of a novelty (his favourite story being that of having to sit in a special “underachiever” row in his mathematics class when he, as the only “Foreign Language” student in the class, did “A” levels at the school). Again, the description (like that of the “pilot study” group) gives the impression of POCs being schooled in a “foreign country”.

6.1.2. Dialogues of Race

A reverse picture of what it was like being the only POC in a German-speaking class, who also subsequently did “A” levels at the school in 2002, was given by one POC, who grew up in Switzerland before moving permanently back here. Her Swiss experiences show that racism is not only a South African problem.

M(2) [diary entry]: When I moved to South Africa with my mother in 1992, I was convinced that my days of being an outsider were over. I was convinced that it was not possible to be an outsider in South Africa, mainly because of my skin colour. When I joined the std. 1 class I was not expecting to be called

a “Negerlein” [a little nigger] – but I was. The only difference this time, was that I could tell them to go back home. When growing up in Switzerland that was the only thing that they told me. I didn’t belong there because I was not white and therefore not Swiss so I should go back home where I came from. In South Africa, at the German School, my classmates only called me a “Negerlein” once. I retaliated by telling them that they weren’t South African, didn’t belong here and should go home. Being able to tell them felt good, but only for a little while. The fact was, that I still felt like an outcast. I was in a country in which I could speak and understand the language (English) but I was shy to speak it because I had a Swiss accent. Although I was “more” South African than my fellow classmates, they could all read and write English, whereas I had never learnt how to read or write English. Again there was something that separated me from them. Despite all these things, however, it was easier to make friends than it was in Switzerland.

To a greater or lesser degree, the other POCs also depict their lives at the DSJ as inevitably permeated by racial tensions which not only affected them but also their parents.

Z [diary entry]: One time when the “d” class was done away with in grade 10 we watched “Sarafina”. I have never experienced such insensitivity in my entire school career. It was a very sad movie and most people in my grade were disgusted. We were asked to discuss it in one of our lessons and the teacher had said that we need to get over ourselves. We can’t hang on to the past forever. We should just forget everything. More was said but I cannot remember exactly.

K [diary reflection]: Mother: We noticed, rather I noticed that the white parents seemed uncomfortable with the presence of the Black and Coloured parents. It was really tense in some of the parents' meetings in the beginning, it was if the other parents felt as if we wanted to takeover the school or something like that. Mother: We also felt that there was a lot that we were not being told by the teachers and by you about what was really going on. This made one feel as if there was some kind of fear that if certain news about racial tension or conflict reached us, there would be negative outcomes. Mother: Was everything OK though? Myself: There were times when the tension and conflict got out of hand and we feared that the news would reach you but nevertheless we and I chose not to tell you because I was scared that you would take some kind of action [e.g. taking him out of the school]. Eventually I swallowed most of my experiences and hoped for the best.

But race often was used as a weapon. Sometimes it was used for legitimate reasons, and sometimes not (for instance, although racial taunts of “Swarzen” (blacks) from white pupils could get a whole POC class up in arms, the POCs among themselves regularly addressed each other playfully as the “Schwarzen” - and as the “disadvantaged ones”). But, as one POC put it, “it was something we had gotten used to, it was ALWAYS about race”.

Z [diary reflection]: I remember my German teacher and I had a minor confrontation. He had asked the class to suggest colours for something and I suggested we use black. [He] said black is boring but I then turned everything around to make what he said seem like a racist comment. We argued for 2 days. He wanted to clarify what he meant & I wanted him to look like a bad guy.

M(1) [diary entry]: Whenever there was any dispute between a teacher and a f-class student or a f-class student and a white student some-one would scream racism! I never really understood this racism that was apparently taking place. Anyway if my fellow colourful students [her terminology for P.O.C.s] got angry about some racism that was taking place – I got angry with them.

One particular black POC, however, indicates that the frequent use of the “race card” also could have been due to feelings of inadequacy created by the fact that “academically, Bantu Education had done little to prepare [them] for the challenges at the Deutsche Schule”.

L(1) [diary entry]: Our swimming lessons were always embarrassing. There were no swimming pools at our schools in the township and usually, there would only be a single swimming pool for 2-3 townships, So I was not only afraid but also embarrassed by having to listen to Mr S’s “Just lie on the water!” while the other german children were happily frolicking in the deep end of the 25 m pool.

The school's sorting procedure, that (unintentionally) creates a "same school, different classes" situation (Wells, *et. al.*, 2005:2150), however, could contribute to making POCs feel that their racial disadvantages now have been replaced with a new kind of social and economic class disadvantage (a point made by Soudien, 2004) - one in which the white classes are for those who are better off, while the POC classes remain the class for the socially and economically disadvantaged.

6.1.3. Cultural Differences

Cultural conflicts often led to Germans saying, "But this is the German School", and the POCs responding in chorus, "But it is the German school in South Africa!" Cultural issues thus often became the battleground and could reach ludicrous proportions.

D(1) [diary entry]: Sitting in Frau B.'s class, waiting for the bell to ring, I know myself and the other 6 boys in class have only one thing on our mind, and that is the soccer game that we are going to play during the break. Looking at the class clock, which has been set to exactly the time when the bell will ring, we also know that the moment the bell rings, we have to sprint as quickly as possible to the soccer field to book our soccer poles and our field. Yesterday we took longer than expected, and the Germans got there before us.

Yesterday's break was a mess because of that.

Today that is not going to happen. 5..4..3...2...1... Ding, Dang, Dong. J.-C. picks up the ball, M. runs first as usual out of class, L. is just worried about his lunch, and in a row we run down the corridor, down the stairs heading for the first soccer poles we see.

“OH CRAP” A. shouts, “the poles have been scattered across the field”. We all run for the one soccer pole. The other one is on the other side of the soccer field. Three of us stay by our one soccer pole, while four of us sprint to the other one on the other side of the field. Our sprint is in vain, the Germans get there first. A. shouts out “Give us our poles back”.

“We got this pole from yesterday” the German replies.

“But its ours!”

“This is the German school, the Germans bought these poles”.

“This is South Africa, this is our land. You Germans mos don’t know how to make soccer poles with shoes”.

“Why must we, when the Germans bought these poles!”

“We will moer you Germans”.

“Heinen hinen ...” [a German taunt].

“Come we sort this out once and all, blacks against whites for the poles”.

Ja, we will show you Germans”.

These Germans don't know who they are messing with. Where did you here that Germans can play soccer. All of us 7 boys laugh at these monkeys pushing there poles towards ours. They are going to get a hiding! We decide to play the match with there soccer ball because it looks nice. Ding, Dang, Dong.

Aish, no match now. Of course, the Germans are the first to run to class because they are mos scared of been naughty. They are bangbroeke!

In fact, (like the black and coloured learners in the “pilot study”) the POCs attribute a great deal of their reactions and actions to being stereotyped as lazy and prone to steal - stereotyping which they then furthermore attribute to there never really being a proper cultural exchange at the school. To them it simply was a façade - a description that then places the school within the benign assimilation model described by Soudien (2004).

C [diary reflection]: Like cultural week, the school simply ignored our Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa, the white Afrikaans/English aspects of our school. When the school tried to explore these factors, it was in the year book but again they

failed dismally. It was written about different homelands, e.g. Austria, Switzerland, but never the cultural differences within our own school, or society. A simple misunderstanding of our different backgrounds that seemed to be ignored completely.

However, it needs to be mentioned that the POCs in the group discussion themselves did their fair share of stereotyping.

For example, one group delighted in describing German culture in terms of a technocratic work ethic, beer drinking, Kartoffelsalat (potato salad) eating, while they said that the German stereotypical outlook on South African culture was that of gumboot dancing, and eating pap and Mopani worms - a way of retaliating and releasing pent-up frustrations and anger regarding a perceived disregard of them and their backgrounds?

One specific event which best highlights the perceived disregard of their cultural backgrounds is that of an ice-skating day organised as a get-together for one white and one POC class, which had clashed over a racially-loaded slur.

It is an event that also indirectly highlights the perceived ignorance of the circumstances of the black and coloured families, as parents of most of the black and coloured children either did not have the transport to get to the venue or had to work that Saturday morning.

L(2) [diary reflection]: The “racial-integration mixer” was in my opinion a flop because classes stuck to each other and hardly mixed. In hindsight, the venue also did nothing to promote mixing. Most of the 6F children couldn’t skate, whereas the 6A class could.

And it is this perceived lack of respect, a not wanting to know about others and their viewpoint, which for some led to POCs sticking together.

C [diary entry]: I tell you its sort of uneasy, because there is [this] lack of discussions about our differences [which] can be unsettling especially when you know you have your cultural viewpoint not just being black and white but a need of knowing each others values, background, our own inherent society. That’s why as a group of colour, we decided to stick together to show ourselves that we do have a face, a place to discuss [our] diversity. The POC’s People of Colour. A unique group where we could laugh at ourselves, a place [where] we could understand were we came from.

One POC even relates how her sister’s son was taken out of the school because her sister felt that her son in his grade one class was expected to position himself in a “German” space, rather than allow him room for self-determination and self-expression.

L(1) [diary reflection]: As such, there was a lot less understanding of the “clash in” cultures – of the need to understand all of him and everything that made him the person that he was from an African background. Maybe our expectations were too high & unjustified – or maybe, with the NPS, the DSJ was not trying to embark on a cultural exchange as much as they imposed one (???)

6.1.4. “Them”/“Us” Divisions

The “them/us” divide observed in the “pilot study” class is a theme that is amplified by the POCs. For example, for some the school’s bus system most starkly illustrated the divide between “us-and-them”.

L(2) [diary reflection]: You could always tell which buses belong to the “schwarzen” [Black] kids, the black and coloured children of the German School . In the long row of buses that lined up in the afternoon after school, our buses stood out, they were the ugly ones. Sometimes on Monday morning the buses would be filthy. Sometimes with the mix-ups we got buses with cockroaches. The excuse the school gave was that it was cheap, despite the bus fares now being incorporated into our school-fees.

But, although the dichotomy between German educators and the POCs definitely exists, this division is not described in global terms, but rather is qualified by provisos, the main one being whether an educator fitted or did not fit typical stereotypical images.

D(2) [diary entry]: Mr H fitted the typical stereotype of a German to me at the time. In summer he wore sandals with socks. Sandals with socks? What type of person wears sandals with socks? Germans were a strange race to me. He was like a cartoon character come to life. A Roald Dahl character in human form that was pure entertainment for a young boy with an overactive imagination.

L(2) [diary reflection]: One teacher who stands out was Mr P. As our senior biology teacher, he could barely speak English, which was in no way helpful towards our matric biology. He never got our names right, especially the D-students, perhaps it was a case of "all blacks look the same" We were glad when he left.

On the other hand, German-born teachers who had lived in South Africa for many years are depicted as far easier to get along with.

M(1) [diary entry]: Mr R on the other hand was very approachable for most of the students due to his enthusiasm for black culture. The fact that he always went to Soweto and discussed his excursions with us meant that he had experiences that we could identify with and thus we could identify with him. Not only that he was passionate about his colourful people [her own term for P.O.C.].

L(2) [diary entry]: Not all Safari-suite wearing teachers were terrible. Mr R, who had lived in Botswana and spoke Tswana fluently was always fair to all the D-students and in fact often came to our defense.

Special bonds definitely were formed with those educators, who always stood behind them, i.e. teachers who defended and believed in them.

To quote one POC: "As D-students, this was important as it often felt that we were just dismissed as delinquents or tolerated as token students - as the saying goes, 'it's always the Ds/Fs!'"

But sometimes the bond with an educator went much deeper, still today evoking a strong sense of gratitude and appreciation for what an extra-special teacher could do for them.

L(1) [diary reflection]: Perhaps the greatest need to which she responded was our need for validation. Our need to know that despite our different backgrounds and sometimes financially unstable homes, we were special and could chart paths to our lives that defied even our expectations. Mrs M was interested in the fullness of our personhood - interested in us not just as her students but also as emotional, intellectual and spiritual beings. For her, we were not just there to be taught things about school but we were to teach her things about ourselves, our homes, our communities ... There was an honest and valuable exchange that helped me to want to become all that I could be ... After all, I was made to feel that I was an indispensable part of a whole. She tried to help us to understand that there was a lot that we could give to the school, our communities and ultimately to our country.

What, however, made L(1)'s "perfect" DSJ-world crumble was the suicide of a classmate, a life-changing experience about which she writes "made us grow up too early, too quickly. It was brutal".

6.2. ARTICULATING PERSONAL VIEWPOINTS

Under the heading "Identity at the Deutsche Schule", one POC uses the Oxford Dictionary's definition of identity as his springboard, which he says defines the notion of identity as 1) the state of being identical and 2) the condition of being a specified person or thing.

His exploration of the question of identity at the Deutsche Schule thus covers both the collective and individual aspects. Concentrating on the school environment, the sense of “Oneness” he maintains was fostered primarily in their participation in sporting events and other cultural events, where he says the interaction was based on equal participation, especially in team sports.

In this sense the contact fulfils all four of the conditions Allport (1954) in his social contact theory stipulated for positive inter-group contact - namely, intimate contact, equal status, a common goal and institutional support.

K [diary entry]: In terms of inter-racial relationships, soccer tournaments and basketball tournaments were a unifying factor between the NSS children and the German-speaking children. We got to know each other better as friends even amongst each other. A greater sense of belonging also is created by the POCs being integrated with the other classes from Grade 10 onwards.

For some, the integration of the POC class with the German classes also helped heighten a sense of community identity.

Z [diary entry]: I won't forget the friendships I made from grade 10 onwards. The sad thing was that even though we were integrated in certain subjects it was never as good as when they did away with the “d” class. I had never felt

so popular in my life. They were genuinely interested in me. We all realized that the "d" class prevented us from getting to know each other. We were acquainted but not like the last three years.

In spite of the integration, most POCs, however, still consciously identify with their POC peers, albeit in a less-pronounced in-group/out-group fashion - a phenomenon that is viewed as evidence that adding a dimension of conscious identification to McMillan, *et. al.*'s (1986) definition of a "psychological sense of community" (a proposal made by Obst, *et. al.*, 2002), would be helpful.

It is a bonding which often has been built around being "the most corrupt class" (a term used by quite a few of the POCs), notorious for incidents such as stealing the fire extinguishers to "wash the windows", stealing the classbook and throwing it away, reading a "Hustler" magazine in maths class, and so forth.

K [diary entry]: The early years i.e. the higher primary school years at the German school were years of individual anonymity but of collective infamy. And as our numbers dwindled due to failures, expulsions, failure to pay school fees, we became individuals and our journeys split into pathways and no longer a multi-lane highway.

POCs, however, generally do not seem to adhere to a “Western” over-commitment to a philosophy of individualism, i.e., in spite of many of them, to a greater or lesser degree, describing themselves as outsiders within their own communities - a finding, which suggests that the POCs indeed do identify themselves both as individuals and as part of a social community - a prerequisite for a “postmodern” sense of self identification.

6.2.1. Gender Dialogues

One female POC says she experienced the black boy as a very rare feature and as a “non-organ” at the school, a description that implies that black boys found it very difficult to identify with the school in a positive way.

This difficulty also is attributed to an element of competitiveness with girls - an indication that Van Vlaenderen, *et. al.*'s (2003) assertion is valid, namely, that educated black South African women are in the vanguard of creating a much more independent and assertive new identity for female black South Africans.

K [diary entry]: I noticed that girls were more determined especially academically than boys were and to a large extent the old teachers i.e. the black teachers from our home town schools and the new teachers i.e. the teachers at the German school: fostered this attitude that made it possible for the girls to do well in school. The boys on the other hand seemed

to lack the “edge” that could have made it easier to succeed in school. I think my observation sounds heavy and I probably am not explaining myself clearly but the fact that I am the only black boy that matriculated in record time from class of 1995 grade Fives goes to show that a number of things were missing in the overall schooling of the black boy at the German school.

But, although such observations ostensibly also indicate that the myth of THE black man, as described by Ratele (1998), still is “alive and well” among young black males, the same observations also seem to apply to the coloured learners.

D(1) [diary entry]: Days have gone where I often sit and wonder if the D.S.J. has changed us NSS scholars, mostly coming from a typical coloured or black background. Let me start and look at the 7 NSS boys who started with me in grade 5. B. and myself often call each other survivors as out of the 7 boys, we were the only two to complete matric without failing a single year at the D.S.J. All of the other five left the school. Myself only knowing about the other two coloured NSS boys, can only elaborate further about them. One of them has become a typical “Florida” coloured, and is currently in matric at a former model c school. The other one joined an Elderado Park public school after leaving the D.S.J. on his own will. He now dropped out from school after failing grade 10, and is currently a ganster who often steals cars. So much for a school that is supposed to show you the German way of life.

Black or coloured, the boys seem to have been the main players in creating a contra-identity for a class, which included that of being labelled “unruly”, “wild” and “troublemakers”.

C [diary entry]: but as soon as we got to Standard 6 the real “colouredness” came out. We all of a sudden became very naughty. But I can say that the boys were the big players in this game. The girls were more like back-up support or observers most of the time. Especially me. I want say I had a cruel sense of humour but I enjoyed the boys tactics of making fun or letting teachers cry. But I suppose I can say it was all about leaving a mark we don’t want people to forget.

In Foucault’s terms, it is an evocative way of “taking back one’s power”, albeit in a way which in Chapter Three was defined as a choice-making that is not conducive to “rewriting the self”.

6.2.2. Local/Universal Dialogues

One of the two POCs, who literally lives in “two worlds”, never seems to have had any major difficulty adjusting.....

D(3) [diary reflection]: My family situation when I actually think about it, it is exactly like being an NSS student. I was introduced into the German culture and lifestyle at quite an early age and I had to learn to speak German and still not lose my own culture or language. Everybody did actually expect my speaking to change but it didn't change that much. I mean in a day I have to at least speak 3 languages. German to my Foster Mother, English to my friends at school and Tsonga or Tswana to my original family. It has been like this for many years and I have actually become accustomed to it and it has become a part of me and not because of choice (I was too young then to know or choose) but because of circumstances. And if I was given the choice now, I would not change a thing.

As such, she is a good example of someone who genuinely identifies herself in the context of a "postmodern", "shades of grey" multiculturalism - a self-definition which Arnett (2000) more specifically defines as a blending of an encultural "local identity" with a more accultural "global identity".

However, her contention that this also applies to the "average" NSS student simply does not ring true and possibly is her own projection onto the situation?

D(3) [diary entry]: An average NSS student would come to school (German school, cultures, language ...) and then go home to their own culture and language. And at the beginning it might have been weird but they soon become accustomed to it and it was their way & part of their life.

For example, the other POC, who has one white parent and one black parent, and grew up in Switzerland, again found herself apart from everyone when her mother returned to South Africa.

Seen as a snob, who not only attended a white private school, but lived in a white neighbourhood, her dilemma seems to have been two-fold.

On the one hand, her mother's friends' family would criticise her for not really being South African because she did not speak a black language and knew little about the black culture; while, on the other hand - much like the immigrants, mentioned by Fisher, *et. al.*, (2002), who found it difficult to identify with their new Australian community - she could not quite understand their mentality.

M(2) [diary entry]: I would not find their jokes funny – not because I was being stuck-up but mainly because I didn't understand them. When I got to std 3 and met the kids of the "F-class" what probably keep me from approaching them, was a fear that they would judge me and call me a snob and a coconut just like all the other kids.

To answer their own questions of "who am I", "where do I belong", two POCs relate how they originally tried to identify with white people, only to find that they were missing something - a process reminiscent of Fanon's

(1968) description of how colonised Africans, who initially tried to emulate their colonial masters, had to find out that they had to identify with their own race, their own culture, to feel good about themselves.

C [diary entry]: I was constantly depressed. No-one knows about this, as I hide myself behind laughter and smiles. Bouncing between different cultures was confusing for me. I lost track of me or what was I suppose to be. The more I started hanging out with my own, the more settled I felt.

Z [diary entry]: But when I reached grade 10 I just had to fix myself. ... I went from one extreme, to the other. I was into this black consciousness (but not like an apartheid activist) poetry and being aware and conscious of who I am. Making others conscious of who I am and what I am about. It felt good!

6.2.3. Sameness/Differences

Identifying with their own minority group often serves to bring school life and home life together - another “third perspective” that helps resolve the dilemma of conflicting worlds.

C [diary reflection]: The good thing that came from being isolated was a common bond we formed amongst each other. Like I said, our backgrounds played a huge or central role amongst why we coloured/black bonded. You cant exactly talk about how ones yard cant fit a pool into it or how everyone had the exact same Sunday lunch with white people. They wouldn't understand as they never experienced or had the past that we had. That basically filtered into our class atmosphere where I felt like we all had something in common. An understanding of our problems, issues of what we had at home. Like if we were broke, like complete [lack of] funds. A fellow coloured person would understand that as we know of the expenses at home or hard times we had to face. It seems the majority of our white classmates always had cash on them. As we would say lets "campri" which means lets all put money together for something. Its like a hidden bond that brings one together not like white people where everyman was for himself. That pulled us together. And its not like we were permanently broke or strapped for cash. But to say we are all going to share in the fun together. That went like that right through school.

On the other hand, Z says that in her opinion the D-class must be done away with sooner to overcome the misunderstandings, miscommunication, prejudices, and stereotypes that arose out of fear and ignorance.

Yet, in spite of the D-class's isolation, POCs in their own ways at times did overcome the separateness, either by sharing a commonality, or by sharing teenage experiences such as parties and classtrips - evidence that they indeed have internalised what Berger, *et. al.*, (1967) call partial realities, including that of a teenage sub-culture.

D(3) [diary reflection]: I remember that at some stage, I think it was in Grade 5 or 6, me and this girl, S. B., realised that we had the same birthdate and birthyear. And when we discussed it further, we discovered that we were both born in the afternoon and so we officially became birthday sisters and this bond lasted till our matric year.

D(1) [diary reflection]: Who would of known that we would actually even start going to the Germans parties and sometimes even visit their houses! One of the places where we really experienced what it is like to have good times with each other was at our class-trip to Camp David [definitely not the American president's holiday home!].

Being open to differences also results in self-expansion and growth.

M(1) [diary entry]: If there is such a word like de-myth then that is wat happened after I reached grd 10. Many of my "truths" were not so true after all. You discovered a number of things that were contrary to wat you believed. For example, there are white people that can dance!

D(2) [diary entry]: At the same time I relished the opportunity to let myself grow. I learnt about art and german culture, I became obsessed with the german language and it was there that my love for literature grew and escalated to the point that I ended up pursuing studies in this subject after school. I even grew to find an appreciation for rock music.

D(1) [diary reflection]: [My parents] said I should make the most out of the opportunity, and join in as many extra-mural activities as possible. Always having a liking for chess, and having been playing guitar for two years before attending the school, I decided to join the chess and guitar extra mural. [D(1. also was the only NSS in his class to take add maths, now is studying a combined course of IT and Engineering].

K [diary reflection]: Differences - this is the first word I can think of, to describe my experience of the German school. The differences between myself and others, our backgrounds as individuals, as race groups In my experience, the German school has availed to me the space to make very good friends and the space to find an identity.

These are gains similar to those mentioned by the majority of the black graduates who attended desegregated schools in America in the 1970s and who participated in the five-year research project done by Wells, *et. al.*, (2005).

6.2.4. The Past/Multiple Pasts

Social embeddedness definitely determines how POCs interpret and re-tell their stories. For example, one POC says she lives by the Zulu saying of “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” - a person is a person through others - the African collective value that she presently is struggling to balance with the Western counter-values she learnt at the school.

G [diary reflection]: I have noticed that after matriculating at a private school and getting a job at one of the top recruiting company, life becomes hard. I personally feel that my mother/family rather expects one to “pay back their share”. I mean it is part of the black culture, that your first pay cheque should be given to your parents. I also don't want to sound snobbish or arrogant but I personally think that one works for your achievements, whether its getting a promotion at work, winning a sponsorship or getting an increase.

On a socio-political level the past too can produce quandaries, which make it difficult for POCs to extricate themselves from dominant narratives and to articulate new ones.

One POC even describes how her identity still is “besieged” by discourses and images of superiority/inferiority. In this sense, her identity thus has become the battleground of voices of Western ethnocentricity and voices of the “New South Africa”.

L(1) [diary entry]: Violence to our personhood? How? When you grow up in a community that uses difference as a tool and justification of oppression and exclusion, a community that does not want to homogenise (which is ok!) yet presents one kind of image about beauty, cleanliness, success, intelligence, sophistication etc, you buy into those representations. You believe the underlying messages – the tacit expressions of dominance and power. White people were a novelty. They were special, smarter, the spitting image of God, all things good and pure. All things to which a young black person should aspire to become – speak like them, eat like them, learn to think like them. Yet there is a tension because on some level, you despise them, are afraid of them ... as an 8 year old girl in Soweto, there are conflicting emotions. But most of all, you are in awe of them (and their hair) and often, you say a prayer that will hopefully help you to wake up in a white skin one day soon because being black is a sin, a form of punishment, a painful and dammed reality. I really did believe that I was inferior to white people and there are many times still when I am aware of these same insecurities – less forceful now but vestiges remain still. We grew up creating hierarchies amongst ourselves – the lighter your skin colour the more beautiful you were because you were closer to whiteness than the darker counterpart. ... And suddenly, we live in an age that says Jesus was inherently African, our languages are just as poetic, dynamic & literarily rich. An age that says Africa did not experience education for the first time through its encounters with Europeans, but that there were great centres of knowledge in Zimbabwe and Northern Africa even before the birth of Christ. Our difference (?) # our reason for being dominated. It is a new source of our pride. “Dreadlocks” are actually not dreadful and Alek Wek is just as much an icon of beauty and femininity as Anna Kornikova. But these things have not sunken deep enough. Franz Fanon & Biko have not fully articulated their ideas into our psyche ... There is a lot of work to be done, much more difficult than affirmative action, black economic empowerment and rhetoric of the African Renaissance.

6.2.5. Human Agency/Empowerment

Some of the POCs have come to realise that they collectively made a difference at the German school. On the one hand, they emphasise that they used their natural talents of being loud and “colourful” to excel in drama, in music, in singing, and other art forms.

On the other hand, two say they actively went out of their way to prove they could be high achievers and in this way stand out - the one by being the only POC in a higher grade maths class (L(2)), the other by achieving high grades (L(1)).

L(1) [diary entry]: I started making it my personal responsibility to become an achiever in order that I might be a reflection of my race's true abilities. I started to slog academically, moving from one of the children needing extra-English lessons to getting A's and B's for English, Afrikaans and German.

Both L(1) and L(2), therefore, are examples of people who were determined to counter the black and coloured negative identifications and take charge of their own lives.

Another POC transcends the trap of simply being one of a herd via reading literature, which he says gave him tools with which to create his own singular identity.

A tool he seems to have developed is the ability to reflect critically, an important critical multiculturalism resource (Van der Merwe, 2004).

K [diary entry]: I read these books in the year 2000 [1) Roots by Haley 2) The African Trilogy by Achebe. For a good four or six months I remember spending a lot of time alone at school Trying to build a character that I felt I had been robbed off in my primary and high school years. The books aided my transition into myself as they had a common theme of consciousness of self running through them. I did not need to be in a dilemma about anything because I had the choice to stand or make a decision about what I wanted and when I wanted.

Another resource used by another POC - D(2) - is that of avoiding being described by others. Rather, he defines himself in his own terms, in his own private world of irony and humour, which makes for entertaining reading, especially as his descriptions are given in very comical terms.

D(2) [diary entry]: Orientation. This funny German man would try and teach us strange words like "Itch" ["I" in German is "ich"} and "hai ... haisse" ["my name" in German is "ich heisse"] with that funny s that I would later discover was called a "schafes s" [a sharp s] although it didn't look like a sheep at all.

D(2) [diary entry]: First day. Why do I have to wear these funny shorts and shirt. I look like one of those old Englishman trolloping through the jungle in search of the “natives” plus its grey. They called it a safari suit but later we would rename it the suffering suit as the fashion consciusness kicked in. ...

And let me say again I absolutely despised that suffering suit, it was an absolute fashion faux pas!

As he says, because he and other POCs at the school were weird [outsiders], they thrived at the school, thereby implying that the school in more ways than one did provide them with a space in which to be “different”.

D(2) [diary entry]: I think if I had gone to a different school that I would probably have been persecuted for going against the grain and for thinking out of the box. The school gave me the chance to be an individual and celebrate my uniqueness.

Thus, despite the DSJ's assimilation educational stance (one that is criticised for subjugating or ignoring minority identities and ancestries), the school paradoxically managed to promote the individuality and uniqueness of the POCs - a major theme highlighted in the personalised narratives of the POCs generated in Phase Two.

The paradox thus helps substantiate Bennett's (1999) conclusion that there can be no standardised consequences of an assimilation school policy. Rather, within an assimilation framework there often are complicating or even contradictory factors that then have positive outcomes, which can (or cannot) outweigh the negatives.

6.3. AN ECOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Steier's (1991) ecological constructionism is based on an ecosystemic approach, in which (through reflexivity) various dialogues help co-construct a world, one that here is analysed in a collaborative way - i.e. the material in this chapter includes a combination of the storytellers' as well as my analytic work.

In the instance of the POCs, the world they helped co-construct is very similar to the one that the black and coloured learners of the "pilot study" depicted.

That is, both groups tend to see the school in terms of European colonialism, a vision that is intermingled with legacies of the South African apartheid era. Both groups also tend to withdraw into their own little tight-knit community and create a contrary identity for themselves. Also, in both groups it is young males, who ostensibly act out the most (mostly to their own detriment).

However, compared to the learners of the "pilot study", who continued to use stereotyped discourses of neo-colonialism to substantiate their contrariness, the POCs were able to rise above it all and make the best of their situation.

One way they achieved this was by seeing their situation in a humorous light and “turning the tables” on the “whities” - e.g. by playfully calling themselves the “Swarzen” (the Blacks) and the “disadvantaged ones”.

Another way was to embrace their sameness and differences with others, thereby to some extent creating a sense of “Oneness” with students of the German classes, by relating to them as teenagers, as sportspeople, or (after integrating in grade 10) as students in the same class.

The POCs even managed to overcome academic obstacles and excel or do well, or make their mark in the arts field.

And, as people, they learnt to take charge of their own lives and empower themselves - either by learning how to use the skills the school equipped them with, or simply by “doing their own thing”.

Also, while the black and coloured pupils of the “pilot study”, with one exception, saw all educators as the “enemy”, and went out of their way to rile them, the POCs in certain circumstances overcame the “them” and “us” divide, particularly if they perceived a teacher to be on their side (for both the “pilot study” and the POCs’ relationships with the South African teachers, however, overall seemed to be better than that with the German teachers).

But, some resentments, however, do remain for the POCs. For the POCs - like the black and coloured students of the “pilot study” - these mainly are connected to the universal human needs of being heard and understood, as a person and as a collective.

Ultimately, however, the dialogues of the POCs not only were selected to highlight their personal viewpoints apropos their experiences at the DSJ, the dialogues also were selected to help open up the understandings regarding themes of identity and change introduced in Chapter Three and Four.

Placed within the South African context, they are themes that run parallel with the country's socio-political changes as well as changes made at the DSJ as well, while the difference between the way black and coloured POCs perceived being schooled at the DSJ I attribute to the possibility that the black (and not the coloureds) POCs see themselves to be in the forefront of creating a new African society for the country.

On the other hand, the racism the one POC experienced while growing up in Switzerland helped illustrate that racial prejudice (and counter-prejudice) is not exclusive to South Africa and is to be found in other countries in the world as well.

Apropos their own identities: Each POC in their own way illustrated how they individually had to face their own quandary and make decisions of how to best identify themselves while "living in two worlds", be it via the "old" (e.g. an African collective identity) or the "new" (e.g. Western values of individualism) or a fusion of both.

As Albertina Sisulu says "We are required to walk our own road"

CHAPTER 7

NARRATIVES GENERATED IN PHASE TWO: THE PERSONALISED STORIES

An important part of any process of transformation has to be the transgression of social boundaries which made sense in the past but which stand in the way of creative responses to a changing environment.

(Mamphela Ramphele, 1996:220)

To recap in brief:

Phase Two of storytelling, more specifically story-writing, was envisaged as an opportunity for the POCs to make sense of how their particular DSJ experiences had affected or shaped the way they identify themselves today.

Essentially thus it was developed as a way of giving the POCs the space in which to make sense of themselves and their worlds by interpreting/scripting their own experiences into sequences and plots - i.e. narratives.

In their quest to make sense of themselves and their experiences at the DSJ, only one POC said she had done a great deal of introspection beforehand and thus had not gained much from “the exercise”.

The others, to a greater or lesser degree, indicated that writing their stories had helped them examine their DSJ experiences anew and gain a greater (and often fresh) understanding of what it all meant for them.

In this way their stories did become “narrative means to therapeutic ends”, *a la* White, *et. al.*, (1990).

Although each POC approached their story-writing in a very individualistic manner, thereby attesting to Parry, *et. al.*'s (1994:12) observation that there are “many worlds, many selves”, together they nevertheless do represent a set of prisms, each of which reflects some part of a multi-storied world, a universe of stories, including larger stories of culture and humanity itself (Parry, 1991).

And as part of this specific universe of stories, I too have added my own annotations in the right-hand column next to each story.

But, compared to the discussions in the previous chapter where I personally was engaged in selecting, extracting and re-arranging from the storytellers' dialogues, my annotations here mainly concentrate - in a simplified, economical fashion - on illuminating aspects of narrative discourses that relate to their stories, while preserving the integrity of the POCs' contributions.

7.1. THE PERSONALISED STORIES

<p><u>STORY ONE: “OF DUST AND DREAMS” **</u></p> <p>The township is often a hostile place for the growth and nurturing of young people. It is dry, often arid and plagued by the social ills that some only experience from their interaction with the print and visual media. For some of us it is a reality that advances only two life choices: 1. break the cycle, somehow; 2. resistance is futile, bow to pressures of township life.</p> <p>My biography has largely been charted within the limited scope of the former – when only the dust around consumes your reality, your DREAM. Dream beyond the possibility of getting through each day – strive only to find success outside the dust, at whatever cost. For me, the fight will probably never be over, for the dust sometimes remains, a thin, invisible crust that fogs and sometimes tarnishes the dream. Full clarity comes – and remains momentarily – when I create modes of surprises that propel me into more aspirations.</p> <p>But I owe the township all that I am – destiny will not forgive me if I never share some of what I have come to know. I have to remain for as long as possible in the township, to share with others our common</p>	<p>(L1)</p> <p>L(1)'s autobiographical diary entries and reflections not only gave insights into her world at the DSJ (she was the first black headgirl at the school), but also gave an understanding of her personal liberation struggle. It is a story of a liberation struggle in which she, a young girl growing up in a township, in a single-parent household, aspired to escape her circumstances (including massive family hardships due to violence and poverty) through individual excellence, while still valuing her roots and her cultural values of ubuntu.</p>
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<p>dreams and to evidence the distant possibility of hope. HIV/AIDS may not be allowed to kill us all; unemployment should never steal from us our civil rights, poverty must never be allowed to eat away at our bodies and minds. We have to work, and hard, at re-membering all that is good and beautiful and possible about who we are.</p> <p><i>** Taken from a poem written by Steve Mokwena.</i></p>	<p>L(1)'s story, therefore, is in the same vein as the one told by Van Vlaenderen, <i>et. al.</i>, (2003) regarding the changes in aspirations of educated black South African females. Namely, the new identity to which educated black South African females aspire is one in which they develop their own identities, while still remaining strongly committed to their roots and cultural values (a "plotline" that also is interwoven into G's main story).</p>
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STORY TWO: THE BUS RIDE OF MY LIFE

When first approached, I wondered how different my school days would be from any other teenager who had gone to an ex-“white school” after Apartheid ended. How different would my experiences have been if I had stayed in Eldorado Park? I was sure that I would still be the same person I had always been. Hadn’t I always been an outsider within? Even at school in Eldorado Park, I had been different, but still the same. Different because I spoke differently and had a slightly different background, a different home structure to the “average” and sometimes my aunt braided my hair in patterns that would also have been different. But at the same time, I was from the same area, played in the same streets, liked the same things, was the same race and spoke the same languages; in more ways than non, part of the in-crowd.

But to shelve my experiences at the German School as the average High School experience would be to over-simplify it. Firstly, I joined the school a year later than usual. I joined the school in Grade 6 in 1998. After being the proverbial star pupil at Cavendish Primary School in Eldorado Park with the possibility of head girl in Grade 7, I was thrown in the deep end of an unknown pool. I was the newbie in a class of people who had adjusted to their new

L(2)

Although L(2)’s story is called “The Bus Ride of my Life”, it is a story with a “main plotline” (her own personal journey) and “sub-plots” or “sub-stories”, which again deal with specific issues.

One specific “sub-plot” is L(2)’s recognition of her own polarities of sameness (e.g. being part of the in-crowd) and differences (e.g. different background, different home structure, different looks, and so forth), a polarity which at times is bearable, but at times made her life difficult and even put it into “crisis mode” when the difficulties were exacerbated by external circumstances (e.g. by the death of her father).

surroundings as a unit. Admittedly, adjusting to the new surrounding was difficult, sometimes even daunting. I was faced with a curriculum very different to what I had done at Cavendish. The teachers were white, different, and with the exception of Mrs B., unapproachable in the first few months of being there. In addition, my Father – to whom I was very close – had died less than a year before changing schools. But as the saying goes, what does not destroy me, strengthens me. My experiences at the German School have definitely strengthened me as a person in vast array of areas from academically to socially.

I was forced to make friends fast and interact with people, albeit in the same race group as me, from different backgrounds. That I was young and relatively confident made making friends easier. In fact, I still have the friends I made in the F- and later D-class. I didn't struggle too much with the academics, and with the help of Mrs M. and the hands-on encouragement from my mother (who still understands very basic German because she studied with me) I had caught up with the German in no time. I did have problems with bullying though, from children in my own class.

However, in terms of Freeman's (1992) "crisis plotline" L(2)'s recognition of her own dilemma in itself constitutes the beginning (Phase One) of its resolution.

<p>One incident was during Project Week in Grade 6 (my first year). I had joined the birdcage project and was with a group of girls who were not my friends. They were the typical bossy, nasty girls who resented me for not following them unquestioningly. As revenge, they reported me to Mrs B. as lazy, despite having done most of the work myself. Mrs B. gave me a “talking to” and that was the first and last time that I went home and cried. I vowed that no one at school would ever make me cry, and they never have.</p> <p>As the standard integrated more and more, we mixed with the students more and more. Although we remained in the friendship groups that we had forged as the D-class, there were and still are white students that I still call my friends. Talking to a university friend, she had said that white people were in fact easier to get along with. I agreed and do believe it. Genuine white friends were not judgemental about where I came from and didn’t have the silly social hang-ups and hierarchies that coloured people often have. If I did leave the German School scarred by any racial conflict, it would not be racism at the hands of white people, but rather at the hands of “my own people”, coloured people. Being integrated with coloured students from different areas, I quickly</p>	<p>A related “sub-plot” deals with the issue of L(2)’s outsider status, not only in her own coloured community, but also at the DSJ, where for her the internal racism in her class ironically was the worst. The internal racism of L(2)’s own class, however, can be explained via Fanon’s (1967) contention that in communities of typical people, differences have to be excluded, as a way of justifying their own norms – a contention which also helps explain L(2)’s outsider status in her own specific coloured community.</p>
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became aware of what a disadvantage I was at being dark, with *kroes* hair from Eldorado Park. There were never any direct incidents, except for remarks about how dark someone is (a negative thing as being dark was equated in this context with being ugly), how uncultured, stupid and how “flat” people from Eldo’s spoke (as an outsider there wasn’t much of a difference to how someone from Bosmont as opposed to someone from Eldo’s spoke). There was also the “keep-you-white” criticism which was quite bad to be accused of. Those who “kept-themselves-white” were criticised for emulating the white students and white culture. This was ironic, especially regarding the hierarchy that existed and still exists to a certain extent among coloured people. Even today, I tend to avoid “typical coloured people” because I fear being patronised for being dark and from Eldo’s or being criticised for being weird because I don’t exactly fit into the “mould”. However, I must stress that despite any in-fighting that may have existed among the D-students, my class of the P-O-C’s (people of colour) as we called ourselves, we remained a tightly knit group that stood together in the face of “external” threats.

The German School also allowed me to broaden my surroundings in ways that staying at an Eldo’s school

The main “plotline ” of what L(2) has gained

<p>would never have. Apart from having a superior education, we were exposed to different ways of thinking, to questioning the accepted and our teachers (in fact a teacher who refused to have their beliefs questioned was seen as autocratic and often un-liked). Our teachers, despite being white and from a different generation, were not imposing, infallible disciplinarians who stood at the head of the class only tolerating the black students as part of a quota system. They became our friends to a certain extent, mentors who encouraged us and saw the potential in us that we often didn't see. In the end, I didn't just want to score a distinction or just do well only for myself, but also as a token of appreciation for the teachers who did so much. Many of the D-students often don't realise it, but despite any sacrifices I may have made (whether it be a more gruelling school day or even the loss of some friends "back home"), the education, insight and experiences I gained were worth it many times over.</p> <p>The world we were bussed in and out of was very different, and sometimes quite depressing. Personally, this was especially so in winter when the few trees Eldorado Park has are grey and naked, the grass is dry and brown, the pollution carried up by the autumn winds and to top it, as we entered Eldo's the</p>	<p>from being schooled at the DSJ is developed via a description of how most of the school's educators encouraged her to think for herself and have her own opinion (important benefits for practically all the POCs).</p> <p>L(2) (who wants to be a writer) here starts elevating the main "plotline" onto a symbolic level, with a "Scott Peck moral"</p>
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pungent smell of the local sewage dam (which was within a kilometre radius of residences) welcomed us home. This was a far cry from the overgreen suburbs we had left behind, on the other side of the highway. But Eldo's was home, and I am always happy to be home.

Perhaps that bus-ride could be quite symbolic of my experience at the German School: I was taken out to experience a world often so alien, but a world that taught me that there were more opportunities, more to aspire to, to dream of, to live for. At the same time I was able to remain part of my own culture as we had separate classes, separate busses, and yet still kept part from our peers at home who walked along the roads taken by the bus. The bus-ride home was a time for reflecting on the day, where we laughed and cried, listened to each other and sang along with each other (even German folk songs!), and most of all, where I have created lasting, honest bonds with people who will always be a part of the bus-ride of my life. I honestly believe that my experience at the German School has had an irrevocable impact on my life as I know it. Wherever my journey may take me, those bus-rides and all the experiences between the morning and afternoon bus trip have prepared me for life in whatever shape it may take.

attached to it. Namely, the lesson to be learnt from travelling on the "road less travelled" (Scott Peck's metaphor for taking life's difficult routes), is that this road leads to a point where people are able to reflect and incorporate all their experiences in a broadened vision of themselves and the world - a re-vision that fits for them.

STORY THREE: CONCLUSION

When many people who come from a coloured background, attend a European school, they usually end up as a typical stereotype, as someone who “twangs” and someone who listens to rock music.

The difference between the other private schools and the D.S.J. is the coloured to non-coloured ratio is much higher at the D.S.J than at other private schools. Another big difference is that we are still kept together as P.O.C. for 5 years, and even after that still see each other up to matric in DaF lessons, so that in most occasions we still remain together as a clique. The result is that many coloured people at the school do not forget their beliefs. I personally think that the whole NSS thing is an excellent method of slowly introducing people to a multicultural environment, and without forgetting one’s roots. This is unlike other private schools, as coloured people who usually go to other private schools often end up completely forgetting their roots. This is also an advantage over people who would go to a coloured school, as they often end up only associating with their own race, and thus find it difficult identifying with other cultures when they enter the real/working world.

D(1)

In its own way, D(1)’s “story” corroborates Freeman’s (1995) contention that hindsight creates the distance needed to see things differently - a contention which also is linked to the “postmodernist” vision of people being able to construct and re-construct visions of themselves and their society on an ongoing basis. That is, D(1) is an example of a coloured student, who rather would have gone to a local school, but, with hindsight realises that being schooled at the DSJ was a “good” and not a “bad” thing - especially as it gave him the

Thus through my experience at the D.S.J. I find myself to be more accepting to other cultures, and thus learn to adapt yourself to the group that you keep company with, and to be more open minded. Not only do you learn so much about other cultures, but you also realise that coloured people do not actually have a fixed strong sense of their own culture.

Another skill that this has taught me is the willingness to accept change. People also identify with you more if you actually can somehow identify with their culture and show interest in their culture. This is obviously an advantage in meeting new people.

opportunity to develop his own identity (and not a stereotypical one), while still remaining connected to his roots (the importance of roots being another common thread that runs through many of the POCs stories).

STORY FOUR: NOW

4 years later and what do I know about myself? I know that school played a huge part in shaping the person that I am today. I learnt that I can have my own unique interests and be myself and still be socially interesting. I learnt to get to know the person who I am better. I learnt that you don't have to fit in a particular mould to be successful and I learnt to associate with any type of person and not just feel comfortable when mixing with my people.

D(2)

D(2) already in his diary writing acknowledged that the DSJ had given him the chance to be an individual and (to put it in his words) "celebrate (his) uniqueness" (D(2) is well known for "doing his own thing"). Here, however, D(2) expands on this by including in his "story" other benefits that the school gave him.

STORY FIVE: THE ALPHA OF MY LIFE

Having attended the German school for 6 years I have realised that we as NSS students were living in a different world. A world where one is focused to realise that they are either Black, Coloured/Indian. Having been in a class of just people of colour (POCs) as we would call ourselves, we noticed as previously disadvantaged pupils that we are different and we need to fight through out our school career in order to prove to ourselves & others that we will make a success out of ourselves.

Highlights of my school career are memories that will always be with me (e.g.: being nominated as prefect, class representative & eventually as Head Girl) because of these episodes in my life have determined my future. However I have noticed that after matriculating at a Private school and getting a job at one of the top Recruiting Company, life becomes hard. I personally feel that my mother/family expects one to “pay back their share”. I mean it is part of the black culture, that your first pay cheque should be given to your parents.

I am not fully for this idea, because I feel that I should contribute to my family because I would like to thank them for supporting me over the previous years. Because I am aware of the hardship that my mother

G

Although G starts on a serious note, her story generally reflects her bubbly and very positive nature.

G’s main story is a “success story”, that unashamedly expresses how proud she is of what she has achieved - a “main story” which interweaves secondary threads of gratitude for the opportunities she has had.

Possibly due to us reflecting together on what the implications of a clash of Western and

<p>went through raising a daughter all by herself on a domestic worker's wages. I also don't want to sound snobbish or arrogant but I personally think that one works for your achievements, whether its getting a promotion at work, winning a sponsorship or getting an increase. It is all about your efforts that you put in. I am grateful that I am doing my Internship at one of the best recruiting company. As well as the feeling that I am gaining working experience and studying part-time. Having attended the German school I have realised that the stereotyping of coloured, blacks and whites is something that I am no longer doing. I remember how my friends and I would sit on the grass during break time and discuss how narrow minded black guys are or how white people's parties are so boring simply because they don't know how to dance or to mingle with others with out having to think how will the others react. My friends and I used to mock at our own race, because sometimes they just over do it when they buy a car and tint windows, insert bling bling mags. Oh and lets not forget the sound system. I think we were just acknowledging the fact that we are black/coloured, and we have been placed in a school which is giving us an opportunity to learn a foreign language and to excel. However we were separated/isolated made aware that we are different from the others. It didn't really bother me so much, because I attended the school because of my mother's employer who saw this as an</p>	<p>African cultural values meant for her, another thread which runs through G's main story is her own dilemma regarding this issue.</p> <p>G here does express gratitude for the opportunity the DSJ gave her to develop a more nuanced way of seeing colour/race, which includes seeing her own race through other people's eyes.</p>
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opportunity for a brighter future. What I am trying to say is that I have no grudges towards the whites, because all my life I have been around white English & German speaking people. So my aim at the German school was not to fight the whites, but to use this as an asset for myself. I think that is when I got myself involved in a number of school activities.

For example I took part in the Eistedford and recited a German poem. To my surprise I got an awesome 90% for the way I presented the poem. Perhaps it could have been because of my pronunciation, my talents in acting, people skills etc. or simply because I was this young black girl who speaks German and proud to show off what she is capable of doing to the community. That moment encouraged me to persue everything I put my mind to. My friends and I received an award for the best ad presented at the Eistedford. Then we got involved in theatre plays such as Grease where most of the students who sang in the choir were black. I wonder why.. maybe because we are naturally loud, outgoing and have talent in singing. The actors were mostly white, the one's who played the instruments by piano, guitar, violins were also white.

So we continued involving ourselves in school activities, but not swimming as such. Then in class 10 choices that I made determined my future,

G also indirectly implies that the DSJ gave her the opportunity to experiment, thereby enabling her to discover and develop her own resources.

because this is when I was nominated as class representative. It was an awesome achievement, but yet a difficult one to hold on to and strive in. This is when I learnt to listen to people of different races and background in order to represent them, voice their opinions and still not be biased.

It was a challenge for me but I enjoyed it so much that I got nominated as prefect in grade 10 and still was the class prefect/speaker in grade 11. This could have been that people were satisfied with my work. Or simply because I enjoy working with people, I am outgoing, hands on type of person and creative and can adapt to different crowds. This achievement was a stepping stone for me. It might sound cliché but it really opened doors for me. I knew then that doing all these activities and achieving so much at school will look good on my C.V. I said it yes, but I have really seen how true it is. In my final year I was nominated as Head Girl of the school, but I was not just a Head Girl, I was the second black Head Girl of THE German school. For me this was great. I had worked hard for it. I was not very academic at school. I would consider myself as the average student. But I made sure I put my efforts else where. I build on relationships between myself and the students, teachers and my friends. I was not only involved in the school activities, but I lead the youth group at our Sunday school. My friends new

(G was the second black headgirl after L (1))

<p>that, this is who I am and I believe Umuntu Umutu Ngabantu – A person is a person through others. This is an African saying that some might not believe in, but it works for me. I work in harmony with my colleagues, because in a environment like ours at work. Its not about you, but teamwork and achieving our goals. I enjoy every moments of my internship, it has made me realise all these things I got involved in at school are slowly paying off, but in an extremely great way. Back in high school I was seen together with all the other POCs as an asset for the school (“because we are giving the previously disadvantaged a chance in life”). However, today I am an asset for not only my company but for our economy in South Africa. I am proud to say that I am part of the EE/BEE ratio.</p> <p>This is all great, but as I said that in high school we were living in our own world. Could have been glamorous at times such as I was the MC for UNICEF’s – A thousand wishes for the children of the world initiative, YOTV etc. But it was a continuous battle that we as people of colour had to fight for. Yes indeed we fought and have won, but have not conquered yet.</p> <p>Some of my friends are studying either in Joburg, Capetown, or Grahamstown. But we will choose to continue making it for ourselves, our</p>	<p>Here G’s “success story” almost becomes a “liberation story” with a “dream ending”, in which ALL people-of-colour rise above their circumstances and ALL become successful.</p>
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parents have worked and struggled for us and now is our chance to say. It is not about colour. I have realised its about you, and the choices we decide to make in life. So I think the German school gave me a chance to go over seas for holiday, interact with other races and learn about different cultures. At times they seemed to be strange, confusing, but that's what makes us unique and proudly South African.

My memories at the German school will forever play a role in my life whether there were good or bad, hardly bad. I am grateful I got the opportunity to attend a Private school, learn a foreign language which has helped me in my life. I am going to make the best of it.

My journey has begun!

STORY SIX :

As a little girl growing up in Switzerland, with one white parent and one black parent, I was an unusual sight in our small village and even when we went to town. The kids teased me, the grown ups looked at me funny. Although I knew that that shouldn't be happening, I didn't know anything else. It was the norm. Then I came to South Africa and the DSJ. I no longer looked strange. The school put me in a similar situation like I was in Switzerland (Again I was almost the only person of colour. My class in Std 1. consisted out of mainly white kids). There was however one difference: we were in South Africa and the kids were used to it because once they left school they saw people from all racial backgrounds. Besides, most of the kids were in a foreign country.

In later years the DSJ exposed me to many more racial and cultural backgrounds. The experience allowed me to be an individual. I grew to appreciate and be proud of my own cultural background. I also learned to appreciate other people's different backgrounds. Although the integration process in the beginning may have been difficult and tense for all of us at the beginning – for whatever reason – we all eventually appreciated the opportunity we had been granted, and learned from

M(2)

In comparison to the other POCs, M(2) did not grow up in South Africa. She also was part of a class where she was the only person of colour (until all classes were integrated in grade 10 and she and L(1) became best friends). Therefore, M(2)'s story is seen as an "alternative story" to those of the other POCs.

But M(2)'s story also is a story she shares with the other POCs. It also is a story of "taking back her power" and discovering an identity for herself, instead of allowing the racial prejudices of others define who she is.

one another and about one another. Friendships that were formed across the barriers that once existed have grown and strengthened. The friends that I made at the DISJ come from various different backgrounds. Some I never would have imagined to become so meaningful and valuable.

STORY SEVEN: TRANSITION

Introduction [to a novel he since has started writing].

The following story is an extract from a work in progress. Essentially the extract is in two parts, the first depicts the protagonist's life as an adult and the second part depicts his life as a young man. The transition between the two phases forms the larger portion of the story which is not included here. This is a work of complete fiction but relates the experiences of a previously disadvantaged black boy who being educated at a private school similar to the DISJ realises that he is different from his peers in some regards but is also similar in others. His journeys after his high school career sees him battling with issues that he thought he had dealt with already: race, gender and sexuality. He comes across old friends and realises that the differences between them that he overcame back then, have come back to haunt him – a recipe for alienation and a severing of links that once led the path to his youth.

K

At the beginning of his diary writing K (who was a vice-headboy) set himself the task of exploring the causes of his class's behaviour and in retrospect, to understand some of the occurrences of the major part of his school career - a task which he indicated in his diary he had accomplished. However, K is someone, who (I predict) will continue to question life, humanity and himself - something which he aims (yet again) to do via a novel, the inspiration for which he says was his own reflections while writing his diary.

STORY EIGHT: THE LONG JOURNEY TO UNDERSTANDING

The DSJ was like a peep show of how the post modern RSA is or will be. It's a place where European cultures fused with African cultures.

It made me get used to being surrounded by different cultures and resulting in my being interested and accepting towards other cultures. So when I came to university, where there is wide varieties of cultures, nations and races, where a south African would be "distant" towards foreigners from Africa, I am more open to them.

I also think that the DSJ has made me be more experimental in terms of traditions and foods of foreign countries. I also feel that I will have the German culture and language in my future and career due to the DSJ and because of my home life.

Perhaps it's more than just the DSJ that has made me open to other cultures. Maybe because I was a foreigner when I went to live in Mozambique. I have been on both sides of the story. Although I was a foreigner, I felt comfortable and at ease because most of the people there were also foreigners. That was actually my first exposure to different races and

D(3)

Being a person, who grew up "living in two worlds", D(3)'s story is a "multicultural story" in which her DSJ experience was only one of the experiences that helped to expand and broaden her multicultural outlook on life and herself.

cultures living together in a small city. Because I enjoyed it, I have actually become more open and accepting to other races, traditions, etc.

I feel that the DSJ is a gateway to learning about different cultures but the cultures are very limited.

I see german in my future and in my family because german was not just part of my school life but is still my home life. So I do see my children also attending the DSJ and german being part or one of their home languages.

STORY NINE :

At the end of all this I look back and wonder wat does it all mean.

Firstly we will always be us. You can take a coloured out of his community but you can't take the coloured out of him. Furthermore where you put a whole lot of colourful people 2gether you get a new community.

Looking back I realise that the colourful people at the german (school) where way more loyal to each other than the white children were.

Personally being at the German school really tested a lot of who I am today. Wether or not people say there are differences between people of different races and when you [are?] a child it is both confusing and intriguing.

Yet it is these very differences that shape you. I xzperiened how two different cultures operate and through this I had the opportunity to compare and contrast.

In the community where I grew up @ home big emphasis is placed on status – how much money you have, what car you drive and how you dress.

M(1).

M(1) was the one POC, who put great store in writing independently, i.e. without active input from my side (M(1) is the POC, who said she had done a great deal of intro -spection beforehand, even before starting the diary writing for the study). I, therefore, present her story, without any additional annotations.

Many coloured people within the coloured community just rise to the occasion. You find that even those who cant afford it go and make credit to purchase material things so that they can have that status.

A(t) the german school I really cant remember there being any poor whites. Although I was never part of it there was always a display of who had the best shoes, mini disc player, latest cellphone. In the beginning the competition was between the white children but soon the coloured people joined in. For me, there was no contest! I felt under NO obligation to show my stuff. For me when there was holes in my uniform I conveintly used the excuse that I was from a “previously disadvantaged” area and that I simply couldn’t afford anything.

In my matric year my school shoes broke. Instead of buying a new pair, I simply tooke masking tape and wrapped it around my shoe and wrote “Cinderella” on the tape. With out knowing it I really embarrassed a number of people.

Many student asked me why I didn’t buy a new pair and I simply told them that I was “previously disadvantaged” and if they want to see me in a new pair, they can buy it. Even some of my close friends refuse to walk with me. Yet I really couldn’t care. By that time I had established for myself that I am not my

shoes. M. exists independently from other peoples money and her own material possessions. Wheras many people where embarrassed and felt pity[,] I really could not be bothered.

Whe[n] you have to spend every day of your life in a society that is different to your norm, eventually you are absolutely ok with being YOU!

Although having dark skin and kroes hair meant that you'd stand out it also meant that you will have to deal with it!

The German School also gave my first hand xperience on how other people operate. Equiped with this xperience I could go home and be part of my home town but make better decisions. You become equipped with knowledge which really gives you the advantage because you can now dream bigger.

You become aware of possibilities bigger than your definition of big.

By knowledge I mean that I have other norms with which to compare my situation at home. I mean, that I have become aware of other options and possibilities that I ordinarily would not have known about.

What I have learnt at the German School in terms of social skills still seems to find application in my daily life and will probably continue for the rest of my life.

Growing up in an exclusively coloured community at home means that you get to see how adult coloured persons often have trouble adapting to the work environment due to its multicultural dimension.

Having already been in such a multicultural environment I now find it easier to adapt at university in that I can freely interact with anyone while having the benefit of not having preconceived ideas of how things and people are. What I know about people from different backgrounds comes from my schooling. And it has thus given me a platform on which I can use as a starting point and in years to come expand and grow.

STORY TEN:

I am eternally grateful to the school because I feel that I am the person that I am today because my school had a role in moulding me into the person I am. My value system and other like things. I was exposed to the good and bad & I could make my decision about which route I wanted to take.

Not only what I was taught but how I was taught. The German school gives you the platform and its up to the individual whether or not they use the opportunities presented to them. I always ask myself how I would've turned out if I was at a different school. All the things I have lived through at this school played a role in make the Z. I am today! But on the other hand, it could also be a personality thing. I am afterall an individual.

Z

Z, who describes herself as someone who automatically rounds off everything or sums up everything, here presents a "rounding-off story".

7.2. STRETCHING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

Although many of the POCs use well-known metaphors such as a journey, a busride, a platform, a gateway, a peepshow, they are not simply telling an over-learned story of an identity crisis - e.g. the over-learned story of a teenage identity crisis, à la Erikson.

Nor can their stories be forced into prescribed formats such as Freeman's (1995) four prescribed phases for crisis resolution (recognition, distancing, articulation and appropriation), in terms of which D(1)'s new understanding of what his DSJ experiences meant for him, should have been described as him having "seen the light" (Phase Two).

Rather, their stories are contextualised personal stories formulated by a group of individuals, whose identities (like Ramphela and many other South Africans) have been transformed by their having to transgress the social boundaries that made sense in the past and re-identify themselves within the new boundaries defined by a specific multicultural environment.

What their stories have in common, therefore, is (to a greater or lesser degree) an awareness that their DSJ experiences very much were part of a process of "stretching across (their) boundaries".

That is, by having to function in a milieu different to their home environment, they acknowledge that they were forced to go through experiences that

challenged their cultural assumptions and created a culture shock that they then resolved by developing a “third-world” perspective with which to rewrite their sense of self (Bennett, 199:21).

They developed a “third-world” perspective that enabled them to reflect and incorporate all their experiences in a broadened vision of themselves and the world, a revision in which they learnt to identify with their own micro-cultures as well as one that includes that of the mainstream macro-culture - in this instance, that of the school.

Ultimately, therefore, their personalised stories (to a greater or lesser degree) are multicultural stories of pupils who grew up living in two worlds, in which their schooling experiences helped to expand and broaden a multicultural outlook on life and themselves.

The POCs, however, do give recognition to the role the school played in this process. They acknowledge that the school gave them the opportunity to discover and develop their own resources, including an opportunity to develop their own identity, while still remaining connected to their roots. The importance of roots is a common thread that runs through many of the POCs’ stories.

For Puddifoot (2003) this means that the school gave them an opportunity to develop a sense of community identity that reflects the complexities of real life and that allows for multiple psychological senses of community as well as multiple layers of identity within a community setting.

For Modood (1997) it means that the school gave them an opportunity to make choices of how to define themselves in the dynamic process of borrowing and lending across porous cultural boundaries, communities and groups.

The POCs, however, mainly attribute their ability to make such choices to the school's educators encouraging them to think for themselves and develop their own opinions. As one POC said, it is "not only what I was taught but how I was taught" - a "how" which is attuned to a critical multiculturalism way of thinking.

In this manner the POCs indicate they were enabled to take back their power and discover an identity for themselves, instead of allowing the stereotypical prejudices of others define who they are.

For some, it even is a story of liberation in which they, as People-Of-Colour, managed to rise above their circumstances and become successful.

However, such personalised stories are best-case scenario stories, told by POCs who successfully matriculated at the DSJ, and not worst-case scenarios, told by those who left the school, either because they were disgruntled or failed to make the grade.

Therefore, their stories are stories of creating identities within the new boundaries of inclusion and not exclusion, of widening and not closing horizons, of expansion and perceiving the self and the world differently as part of an ongoing life story.

Yet, even these best-case scenario stories are chequered, telling how each of the 11 black and coloured ex-pupils - *a la* Scott Peck - had to walk their own "road less travelled".

On a more personal level: As another resentment voiced by one of the POCs was that no-one before had taken the time and effort to try to see them and their experiences through their eyes (and learn from that), I hope that narrating their stories here has helped dissipate the resentment.

Hopefully too, the POCs have come to realise that their personalised stories have social value - not only in the context of multicultural schooling, but also in a wider South African context.

CHAPTER 8

REFLECTING ON THE STUDY AS A WHOLE

*Trying to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling.*

(From East Coker - T.S. Eliot, 1963:202-203)

In the study, the stories of 11 black and coloured ex-pupils were used to explore how their experiences at the DSJ transformed the way they identified themselves, a rewriting of the self in which they had to make sense out of “living in two worlds”.

The theoretical stepping stones for the exploration were laid via discourses relating to the three key notions encapsulated in the title of the study (“Texts of Identity: Rewriting the Self within a Multicultural School Community”) - “texts of identity”, “rewriting the self” and “multiculturalism in schools”.

Narrative discourses were also introduced as a related epistemology, those of narrative therapy being the most pertinent for the development of the research procedure.

The premise of the research procedure was based on narrative therapy discourses that not only ontologically maintain that peoples’ lives are storied, but also that peoples’ perceptions of their life stories can be reconstructed (and possibly changed) via a process of self-reflexivity.

In the study it is a vantage point that was achieved by means of the ex-learners deconstructing their stories as part of a series of reflexive conversations, which included their own internal dialogues, as well as dialogues between themselves and me.

In the process of re-telling, however, the storytellers themselves gained self-knowledge - i.e. from rewriting with hindsight their personal stories in a more evolved light they became aware that their DSJ experiences very much were part of a process of them “stretching across (their) boundaries” and re-identifying themselves anew.

8.1. REFLECTING ON THEORETICAL COMPONENTS

The exploration was articulated in an overarching “postmodern” Community Psychology framework, with a more specific social construction “lens” attached to it.

Based on Community Psychology theories regarding social issues, an ideological framework was used that included notions such as empowerment and social change as well as social theories that follow an argument that reality is socially constructed - in brief, an argument based on a belief that reality, as people know it, is entirely constructed by them.

The excesses of the social construction “lens” (such as “anything goes”), however, were countered by defining the key notions of “texts of identity” - that of a “sense of self”, “human diversity” and “multiculturalism” - within the collapsed boundaries of sameness and differences, global and local, as well as personal and collective notions of the self.

Seemingly opposing poles of thought, therefore, were synthesised and transcended to place a Community Psychology formulation of selfhood

within a broader and more complex “postmodern” viewpoint - one that I believe more accurately reflects the diverse, fluid and relative values of a rapidly shifting and changing 21st century world, with its crumbling certainties.

Thus the basic assumptions that coloured all my arguments regarding “texts of identity” - a metaphor borrowed from Shotter and Gergen’s book titled “Texts of Identity” - were that 21st century human social systems in essence have become so paradoxical and complex in nature, that they can only be explored within a “postmodern” continuum of possibilities.

My perspective on “multiculturalism in schools”, too, was explored within a “postmodern” continuum of possibilities, which again are overlaid with similarities between them as well as differences. Here, however, it is a continuum that not only included degrees of multiculturalism in schools, locally as well as globally, it also included different approaches to education per se - e.g., that of assimilation, multiculturalism and anti-racism.

As it was shown that both locally and globally Western education still is driven and fuelled in large parts by an assimilation agenda, the DSJ school scenario also, therefore, was contextualised as simply one of many examples of an assimilation educational identity - of course with its own brand of overlaid similarities and differences.

Discourses connected to “rewriting the self” as well as the debates surrounding them were explored as part of the overarching “postmodern” social construction discourse.

Contextualised as part of a process of “rewriting the self” formulated by Freeman (1995), my study formulated it as a social process that was illuminated by means of discourses of the past and human agency/empowerment, as well as those related to the South African history of colonisation and apartheid - namely, discourses of race and culture.

Regarding discourses of the past, I used Freeman’s (1995) contention that the most important aspect of reconstructing the past is a “re-membering” of the past as the basis for my own argument that a pre-occupation with the past also can become a “stuckness”.

The way out, therefore, would be a remembering of a multiple past or a re-telling of the past that gives an alternative perspective - a remembering that involves the capacity to be critically aware of both the past and the future.

Regarding discourses of human agency, I also argued that not any discourse regarding human agency would do for “rewriting the self”, especially those in which people no longer have the “free will” to determine their own way forward.

In the context of “rewriting the self”, human agency in my study, therefore, was seen to be better conceptualised as the capacity to choose freely after having explored alternative - and often conflicting - ways of looking at things.

Related discourses of empowerment, however, again were reformulated in my study as a part of the overarching Community Psychology social construction viewpoint - one in which discourses of empowerment not only become subjectively defined but also are inter and intra-actionally defined.

In the broader context of the study, it is a viewpoint that interfaces with notions such as a “psychological sense of empowerment” and a “psychological sense of community”, as well as that of a “psychological sense of identity”.

This also included a proposal made by Puddifoot (2003) that the original notion of a “psychological sense of identity be redefined as a “psychological sense of community identity” - a proposal based on an assumption that the complexities of real life involve not only multiple psychological senses of community but also multiple layers of identity within a specific community setting.

However, discourses of race and culture remained problematic for the study. Still pervasive in the South African context as dominant stereotyped discourses, there are suggestions that the way out is to develop a “common humanity” discourse.

Another way out is to develop a “third space”, as suggested by Bhabha (1994), in which “hybridity” ideally becomes the cultural identity that integrates and bridges all polarities and fragmentations. “Hybridity” also would appear to be a solution to the current educational impasse in South Africa.

Darder, *et. al.*, (1998) also argue that yet another way out is for the old distorted race/culture discourses to be replaced by new theoretical discourses that, for example, can reconstruct education programmes to more accurately reflect and address the different forms of social inequities that shape the lives of students from minority groups.

8.2. REFLECTING ON RESEARCH COMPONENTS

The construction of my research procedure too was articulated within another inter-related “postmodern” social construction discourse - that of narratives.

The objective of my narrative research procedure was to get the ex-DSJ learners to re-tell events at the DSJ in a way in which I not only could record their stories but also could understand how their experiences at the school had affected the manner in which they identified themselves.

Ultimately, this meant trying to understand how their identifications had been shaped by having to live in two worlds - one defined by the school, the other by their home environment.

The research stance I chose for myself, that of ethnography, not only determined that I saw myself as a participant-observer, but also as a “learner”, while the black and coloured ex-DSJ learners then became my knowledge-makers (Epston, *et. al.*, 1992).

As a participant in the construction of their narratives, therefore, my own story of exploration and interpretation - as well as understanding - was also included in this study. It is a co-construction that evolved out of an Action Research mode, formulated in three ever-widening and interlocking phases.

As a way to get the ex-learners to remember past experiences, in the first step of the procedure (Phase One) they were asked to write down their DSJ experiences randomly in diary format, as well as reflect on their written experiences with my help.

In the second step (Phase Two), the ex-learners were asked to write a personalised story, an exercise primarily developed as a way of getting them to individually make sense of their own diarised DSJ experiences.

The third step (Phase Three), a group session organised as a way of getting them to construct a collective viewpoint of their DSJ experiences, was pre-empted by the ex-learners already consulting each other in the first step of the procedure.

What differentiated my accounts of the data generated in steps one, two and three, was the extent of my engagement.

In the analysis of data generated in steps one and three, I personally was engaged in selecting, extracting, and re-arranging the ex-learners' dialogues according to understandings acquired from my "pilot study" group as well as from theoretical discourses about identities, be they individual, collective or educational.

I, on the other hand, preserved the integrity of the ex-learners' personalised story contributions generated in step two of my narrative research procedure. I commented only as a way to illustrate aspects of narrative discourses, as well as discourses of "rewriting the self", that I thought related to their stories.

The pictures "painted" by the ex-learners (like those "painted" by members of my "pilot study" group) showed that they still struggled with legacies of South Africa's colonialism and apartheid, of dominance and oppression - a struggle that interacted with their perception that they needed to resist being assimilated into a form of European "neo-colonialism" at the DSJ.

But, despite "painting" such pictures (compared to members of the "pilot study"), none of the ex-learners remained "stuck" in the past. In fact - again compared to members of my "pilot study" - the ex-learners were able to rise above it all and make the best of their experiences at the DSJ.

One way they achieved this was by seeing their situation at the school in a humorous light, which included seeing themselves through the eyes of others or playfully making fun of other people's racial prejudices. Related to this too was the paradoxically empowerment of themselves by proudly calling themselves "the colourful people" as a special identification.

Another way was to minimise lines of "them" and "us" divisions, either by relating to others as teenagers, as sportspeople, or (after integrating in grade

10) as students in the same class. Also, while most the black and coloured pupils of the “pilot study” saw all educators as the “enemy” and went out of their way to rile them, the ex-learners in certain circumstances overcame the “them” and “us” divide between themselves and teachers - particularly if they perceived a teacher to be empathetic and not ignorant of their (and their families’) circumstances.

Minimising such “them” and “us” divisions thus also enabled the ex-learners to benefit from living in two worlds and to expand and broaden a multicultural outlook on life as well as on other human beings. For example, what the ex-learners benefited the most from was the encouragement they received from educators to develop their own way of thinking, of being - an individualised, unique self-identification along the lines of a “common humanity” discourse, that in no way excluded them from remaining strongly committed to their roots and cultural values.

In respect to empowerment the ex-learners were enabled to take back their power and discover a multicultural re-identification for themselves that included new as well as old identities, instead of allowing the stereotypical prejudices of the past to define who they were.

In this sense, their personalised stories have social value, not only in the context of multicultural schooling, but also in a wider South African context.

That is, the contextualised stories formulated by the 11 ex-DSJ learners in the wider South African context, were seen to be stories similar to those told by other South Africans who also took back their power in a similar manner - e.g., a process embodied in the autobiographical story Ramphele (1995) tells.

The insights yielded in this manner, hopefully, also will inspire South African community psychologists to move towards looking at similar issues - those related to South Africans transgressing the social boundaries of their past and taking back their power by re-identifying themselves within new boundaries.

8.3. REFLECTING ON GENERAL CONCERNS

In reflecting on my study as a whole, it may be argued that - pertaining to the empirical work - giving the ex-DSJ learners a voice (as Rappaport, 1995, says) in itself constitutes empowering them.

Nevertheless, I am fully aware that my own biases could have influenced my analysis and interpretation of the data generated from the ex-learners' responses in such a manner that I may no longer have fully represented what they wanted to say. Similarly, I also am aware that my description of the DSJ's attempts at integration in no way can be seen as a definitive depiction of their efforts, particularly as

- the school has implemented other changes since my study was formulated;
and
- there was no intention on my part to be a spokesperson for the DSJ.

Another awareness is that the data could have been analysed from a number of perspectives, as the data generated was very rich indeed (often seen as the major disadvantage of a narrative research procedure). For example, the generated data could have been approached from the perspective of Developmental Psychology.

At the theoretical level, too, I am aware that the range of theories used in my study is very wide. Some, therefore, provided better entry points and analytical tools for my study than others. For example, the notion of multiculturalism created some difficulties for the study, in the sense that it is felt that the expansion of related cross-border “cosmopolitan” notions has become so multi-various and diverse that this then confuses rather than helps the issues of multiculturalism - the exception being that of the notion of “hybridity”.

But to end my concerns on a positive note: Using T.S. Eliot’s words, my exploration of how living in two worlds affects the way people identify and re-identify themselves, was to me “a new venture” ... “that in the new beginning, was a raid on the inarticulate “ – this then stretched my own boundaries, as a person as well as a psychologist.

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