

**PERCEPTIONS OF BEING A LEARNER: AN INVESTIGATION INTO HOW FIRST
YEAR JOURNALISM STUDENTS AT A SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY
CONSTRUCT THEMSELVES AS LEARNERS**

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Abstract

The aim of the research reported in this document was to explore the ways in which first year Journalism students at a South African University construct themselves as learners. The research adopted a case study approach of purposively selected first year journalism students. In exploring this area, focus group and individual in-depth interviewing were employed which illuminated important aspects of learner identity construction. In order to make sense of these self-constructions, the research was located in the larger debates on discourse as espoused by Michel Foucault who argues that discourse constructs subjectivities.

The research demonstrated that there were various discourses at play which influenced how these learners spoke and behaved. The influence of these discourses on learners' experiences varied at different times of the year. For example, the awarding of the Duly Performed (DP) certificate for students who met the minimum attendance and work requirements of a particular course, the giving of tests, exercises and examinations were some of the technologies that 'forced' students into compliance. In terms of identity formation, the heterogeneous nature of 'being' a journalism 'student' revealed that the different discourses at play influenced learner behaviour and that their identities continued to change over the year. Doing additional subjects such as Sociology, Drama, Art History and others at the same time as Journalism and Media Studies also meant that the learners had to negotiate the differing role requirements.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Dedication.....	viii

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Motivation.....	1
1.2 Research questions.....	2
1.3 Focus and rationale.....	3
1.4 Potential contribution.....	5
1.5 Overview of the thesis.....	5
1.6 Conclusion.....	6

Chapter 2: Context of the research

2. Introduction.....	7
2.1 The higher education context- conceptualisations of the university of the 21 st century.....	7
2.2 The South African university context.....	10
2.3 Understanding the first year experience.....	13
2.4 To be a student: being and becoming.....	15
2.5 Conclusion.....	20

Chapter 3: Discourse, subjectivity and identity

3. Introduction.....	22
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3.1 Definition of discourse.....	22
3.2 Governmentality.....	24
3.3 Discourse, power and knowledge.....	25
3.4 Panopticism.....	27
3.5 Identity.....	28
3.6 Locating the subject.....	29
3.7 Conclusion.....	29

Chapter 4: Research methodology

4. Introduction.....	31
4.1 Research orientation.....	31
4.2 Participants	34
4.3 The sampling process.....	34
4.4 Data collection/generation.....	35
4.5 Pilot study.....	35
4.6 Focus group interviews.....	37
4.7 Individual in-depth interviewing.....	40
4.8 Data analysis: critical discourse analysis.....	41
4.9 Document analysis.....	43
4.10 Validity threats.....	43
4.11 Ethics.....	44
4.12 Conclusion.....	45

Chapter 5: Presentation and analysis of findings

5. Introduction.....	47
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5.1 The Institution.....	47
5.2 The Faculty of Humanities.....	52
5.3 The Department of Journalism and Media Studies.....	54
5.4 Discourse and subject positions.....	57
5.5 Learning as knowledge transmission and the making of subjects: constructions of the student and lecturer.....	57
5.6 Approaches to learning.....	62
5.7 The continuously evolving nature of identity formation and multiple identities.....	65
5.8 Conditions within which discourses were negotiated or resisted.....	74
5.9 Conclusion.....	75

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Contribution, limitations of study and recommendations for future research

6. Introduction.....	76
6.1 Summary of key findings.....	76
6.2 Limitations of the study.....	78
6.3 Recommendations for future research.....	78
6.4 How I have benefited from the research.....	79

Reference materials

Appendix 1: The South African institution.....	80
Appendix 2: The Faculty of Humanities.....	83
Appendix 3: Department of Journalism and Media Studies.....	85
Appendix 4: Interview questions before pilot study.....	88
Appendix 5: Interview questions after pilot study.....	89

Appendix 5: Extended studies.....	90
Appendix 6: References.....	91

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late grandmother Regina Maposa who instilled the value of education in me. To Catherine Bako, my fiancée Adiele Dube, our daughter Gugulethu Cadiele-Precious and all first year students, this thesis is for you.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter introduces the research, my motivation for doing it which was largely based on my personal experiences of working with first year students. The focus and rationale of the research on learning and how students construct subjectivities as informed by Foucault's (1972) notion of discourse is also discussed. The chapter also discusses its potential contribution to research on the first year experience in higher education and outlines how this research report is structured.

1.1 Motivation

The research project explores the ways in which first year Journalism and Media Studies students at a South African university constructed themselves as learners. The motivation for this project came from my involvement with first year students at the specific South African institution in which the research is situated. I felt a compelling drive to explore what it meant to be a first year learner of journalism and media studies (JMS).

Having been a student of journalism and media studies myself for six years, the research indirectly became a way for which I questioned the assumptions I had about learning. My exposure to literature for a course on teaching and learning in higher education which I attended in 2011 and the practical involvement I had with students further challenged the assumptions I had about teaching and learning. While the area of first year learning is one that is well researched, I felt that the area of being a learner warranted research such as this one in its endeavour to explore the concept of learner subjectivities, looking at ways students construct themselves as learners.

While tutoring first year JMS students, I was fascinated by how students responded to their learning and sometimes wondered about the same. I noticed that they were sometimes very proactive and took charge of their learning and at other times they appeared to become passive recipients of knowledge in the classroom. When it came to the handing in of assignments, for example, I noticed how some felt ‘under pressure’ to submit their work on time because of the fear of missing deadlines. They were also under a great deal of pressure to get to, for example, tutorials on time, fearing that missing a tutorial might result in the student not being awarded a DP certificate. A DP certificate is certification that a student has met the minimum attendance and work requirements for a particular course and constitutes permission for whether a student can write their examinations at the end of the year or not. These and other situations are explored further in the study. The next section provides the research questions that guided the study.

1.2 Research questions

This section provides the questions that guided the research. In investigating these questions, I anticipated that the students would critically reflect on their learning experiences and gain insight into how they positioned themselves in the teaching and learning processes.

How do first year journalism students perceive themselves as learners (being)?

Sub questions:

How do students understand their roles and responsibilities as ‘learners’?

How do they understand the roles of their lecturers and tutors?

What kind of transformation, if any, occurs in the students' perception of themselves as learners (becoming)?

Sub question:

What kind of changes (in relation to their perception of their positioning as 'learners') might students undergo in their learning journey?

What are the conditions affecting students perceptions of themselves as 'learners'?

Sub question:

How do students' experiences of 'learning' (how do they become engaged or alienated in the course of learning) contribute to their understanding of who they are and who they are becoming as 'learners'?

The questions above guided me in my analysis, in Chapter 5, where I explore approaches to learning, the constructions of the lecturer and that of the student and the nature of identity as an on-going process. The following sections, approaches to learning, constructing the expert and the learner and identity formation as an on-going process summarised these sets of questions as will be shown in Chapter 5.

1.3 Focus and rationale

"Foucault's (1972) early work building on the Lacanian position, argues that the particular discursive formations or orders of discourse, of a particular domain position the subject in a particular way" Mann (2001: 10). I sought to investigate the ways in which identities were formed amongst these first year students as a result of the various subject positions that students found themselves as a result of discourse (Mann 2001). Mann further makes the

point that individuals are “positioned as students and lecturers in such a way that constrains how they may behave in relation to each other and the discourses they may engage in” (ibid).

In her research on alienated or engaged experiences of learning, Mann noted that

the person who registers as a student in a higher education institution enters a pre-existing discursual world in which they are positioned in various ways- (as a student, learner, competitor, debtor, customer etc.) in which the more powerful others (lecturers, more experienced students etc.) have greater facility, knowledge and understanding of higher education discursive practices (2001: 10).

This understanding was important in this research as I sought to understand the discourses which positioned students in various ways together with how these discourses positioned them in relation to their lecturers, tutors, other students and the administrative staff in the journalism and media studies department. I explore these issues in more detail in Chapter 5 where I analyse text pertaining to the institutional, disciplinary and departmental contexts and the student data generated in the research project.

Foucault’s (1972) focus on the relationship between knowledge and power and how power operates within institutional apparatus and its technologies (Hall 1997) informed this research. In order to understand how knowledge and power operates, this research explored the discourses used by the university’s public bodies and the technologies used in the regulation of these first year students in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at this institution as the students spoke about their experiences.

For Foucault, apparatus of punishment include a variety of diverse elements which are both linguistic and non-linguistic. These include discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulations, laws, administrative measures, scientific elements, philosophic propositions, morality, philanthropy and others (Hall 1997). For the purposes of this research project, I was interested in the *significance* of how elements such as the giving of tests,

assignments, tutorials and examinations were used as technologies of power and control on the students' experience based on their accounts of learning. In addition, the grading, marking of registers and the awarding of the DP certificate were considered in terms of the role they play in 'forcing' students into compliance. Such technologies of power and how they influence conduct of the students are explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

1.4 Potential Contribution

This research project is intended to add to a steadily growing and valuable area of research 'the first year experience' in higher education. This is based on the importance of this stage of the students' learning process and how it has impact on the cumulative years. Furthermore, the research aims to contribute to decision-making, at the level of teaching, curriculum or policy formulation and improve students' learning engagement and hopefully success. The contribution of such empirical research findings, which focus on the contextual disciplinary aspects of a professional degree, such as journalism and media studies, is intended to further enrich this area of research and perhaps inform pedagogy.

1.5 Overview of the thesis

In order to establish the various contexts within which this research is embedded, Chapter 2 discusses the key understandings of the university in the 21st century in order to locate the research in the broader context. I then discuss the South African higher education context and the first year experience in order to explore various issues on what it means to be a first year. The discussion on being and becoming is important for illuminating key aspects of identity and how they are linked to learning. Chapter 3 is devoted to a discussion on discourse as espoused by Foucault (1972) and how it constructs subjectivities. Foucault's (1972) notions of governmentality, panopticism and the concept of identity are discussed in order to

understand the way they influence the ways in which students construct themselves. Chapter 4 discusses the research paradigm in which this thesis is located and the methodological framework that informed this qualitative research. I discuss the process and rationale for the data generation methods employed, with the results presented and analysed through the use of critical discourse analysis in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the ways in which the institution, the Faculty of Humanities and the Department of Journalism and Media Studies choose to present themselves to the public and the discourses implied by such representations. Chapter 6 provides the conclusion, summarised as the contributions and limitations of this study together with recommendations for further areas of study.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided the motivation for the research which was largely inspired by my experience with working with first year students and the exposure I had to teaching and learning theories which challenged the assumptions I had about what learning entailed. I also discussed how Foucault's (1972) notion of discourse informed the research approach I took, with a consideration of how students' behaviours are influenced by discourse and how this makes them to take on particular positions. The potential contribution of the research in informing teaching and adding to literature on the first year experience was also discussed. Lastly, the chapter provided the thesis overview in order to outline how the entire research is structured.

Chapter 2

Context of the Research

2. Introduction

This chapter presents a picture of the context of the research. In it, I consider the context of higher education, with a discussion of key understandings of the university of the 21st century in order to locate the research in a broader context. I discuss how factors such as globalisation and massification have brought about a focus on the teaching of technical and practical skills in order for students to be competitive in the global market. I discuss how this focus influences the ways in which learners are expected to behave in the university. I then go on to discuss the South African university context as this is the particular context of this case study research. In addition, I discuss the first year experience as this relates fundamentally to what it means to be and to become a first year learner for the purposes of attempting to understand various learner constructions.

2.1 The higher education context: conceptualisations of the university of the 21st Century

The importance and influence of higher education continues to be an area of great significance in the 21st Century. The influence of factors such as globalisation on the university's systems and policies has brought about internationalisation, mass enrolments and an emphasis on technical knowledge and skills which are required in industry today. Globalisation, one of the factors associated with influencing some of these changes, "is understood both as a set of economic imperatives as well as an ideology" (Singh 2001: 8). In addition it involves "the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness" (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton 1999: 2). As a result of

globalisation, traditional responsibilities of universities, particularly in terms of constructions of knowledge, are increasingly being located within the demands of economic productivity and its requirements for particular kinds of knowledge and skills (ibid). Important for the subject of this research project is the influence of globalisation on teaching which promotes the acquisition of practical skills.

It has been noted that global marketisation is influencing education particularly made visible with the 'training' of executives and technicians for global businesses (Marginson and van der Wende 2007). Implied here is a kind of education which is concerned with performative skills required for tackling global competition. Most universities are influenced by globalisation in various ways, as objects, victims or key agents. (Scott 1998). Embedded in the globalisation ideology is a globalisation discourse and others such as objectification, subjectification and victimhood vs. autonomy. The globalisation discourse is identified later when I analyse the texts of the institutions and the interviews in Chapter 5.

The university is being understood from various vantage points today. Apart from being centres where knowledge is produced, they are also places of cultural enhancement and consumption (Barnett 2000). As argued by Barnett (2000) and Graham (2005), most universities in the world have become increasingly characterised by mass enrolments though issues of who has access still remain critical. While the influence of globalisation is inescapable, Marginson and van der Wende (2007) assert that globalisation plays out differently in various localities depending on the area, nation and region where the institution is found, academic cultures and language of use.

The ‘new university’ has brought about a shift of emphasis in its purposes and values. The argument made by Cowen in Barnett (2000: 14) is that

in its contemporary situation, the university is circumscribed in all kinds of ways. The state has boxed it in through its intrusive evaluative procedures, the world of work has subtly and indirectly brought about a shift in emphasis of the purposes of higher education, such that knowledge is no longer its own end (as Neuman urged).

The university is also seen to have lost autonomy while academics’ freedoms have also become very limited. Barnett (2000) points out that some of the conceptions of the university today, as earlier argued have to do with performativity, development of the quasi market and a new management concerned with limiting academic freedoms. Such factors have influence on the amount of time teachers devote to teaching and learning.

In one of his other books on higher education, Barnett (1994:178) in Mann (2001) argues

to reduce human action to a constellation of terms such as performance ‘competence’, ‘doing’ and ‘skill’ is not just to resort to a hopelessly crude language with which to describe serious human endeavours. In the end, it is to obliterate the humanness in human action. It is to deprive human being of human being.

The quotation by Barnett (1994) above implies that emphasis on skills only destroys the human being’s full natural ability or constrains the full potential of being a human being. Universities are being required to be more efficient and effective in the current context. Evans (2004: 3) argues that universities have become “a distortion of the values of academy” in which they are required to fulfil the values of the market and the economy. Such higher education institutions, driven by business, promote a consumer discourse largely driven by commercial imperatives.

The internet, one of the key agents of globalisation promotes collaboration between academic faculty, stimulates more face-to-face electronic meetings, cross-border e-learning (OECD: 2005 in Marginson and van der Wende 2007). It has not displaced existing educational institutions but continues to grow resulting in the creation of new kinds of pedagogy and access (ibid). For the student, globalisation presents new ways of learning and interaction with faculty and fellow students which potentially has impact on the students' experiences of learning. Chapter 5 will explore the ways in which this context and factors discussed above were experienced by the specific students participating in this research project.

For a more holistic understanding of the present university, the section above has explained the key influences on the university today and the multiplicity of roles for which the university is being judged in this information communication technology (ICTs), post modernism and globalisation era. "What it means to be a student has been broken open in the light of massive changes in higher education worldwide, the neo-liberal turn, the marketisation of higher education and the repositioning of higher education in the learning economy" (Barnett 2007: 9). It is then to be seen in Chapter 5 how changes in higher education influence students' experiences of learning. The next section analyses the South African context in order to show how globalisation affects local higher education contexts on which this research focuses.

2.2 The South African university context

In the African context and more specifically in South Africa, local universities are not immune to the influence of globalisation. Due to the influence of globalisation and internationalisation, the student body of most South African institutions is becoming increasingly diverse with a mix of international students who come from mainly

neighbouring African countries such as Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), sometimes France, the United States of America and various other countries. In South Africa, various types of universities have been established namely universities of technology, comprehensive universities, contact and distance learning universities and various kinds of colleges (Badat 2007). These go as far back as the 1900s with a few having been founded in 1800s. These have been differentiated especially in the post-apartheid era with the intention of being responsive to local challenges and global needs.

Apart from globalisation, South African universities have also been influenced by a wide range of “transformation oriented initiatives on, policy, academic structure and programmes, restructuring” and other areas in order to address the problems brought by apartheid (Badat 2007: 5). Education is therefore being seen as providing a space for social transformation which will accommodate class, race and gender diversities. For example, in support of this notion of broadening access, Leibowitz, Van der Merwe, and Van Schalkwyk (2009) note that the increasing enrolments witnessed in South Africa are fuelled by ideas around widening access to the previously marginalised groups. In the South African institution under study, there is a unit which has “produced graduates who otherwise would not have had access to university” as seen in Appendix 6. This is as a result of the institution and that particular unit’s mission to support transformation and equity. Many South African universities have various kinds of academic support programmes to support the same.

Pre-apartheid era higher education was extensively shaped by the socio-economic and political demands of the apartheid separate development programme (Badat 2007). On the other hand, post- apartheid higher education is expected to address and respond to the development needs of a democratic South Africa (Badat 2007). These development needs

include human resource development, building the economy and the democratisation of the state (Badat 2007) which implies research and teaching activities anchored in skills development.

In South Africa, the valorisation of research among academics is being witnessed. As Scott (2009: 18) argues “in the last century or two valorising research over teaching has become embedded in academic culture and identity”. This is as a result of rewards, both material and reputational which researchers receive when their articles are published in specialised journals (Scott 2009). This valorisation of research has an effect on the amount of time and effort teachers devote to their teaching requirements and the kinds of academic and intellectual competencies that they emphasise to students. Even the personal relationships that they develop with these students are affected, as teachers have little time for the students and all this concentration on research activities affect the students’ learning experiences.

In light of this national context, it can be argued that a more holistic understanding of the university’s identity and the key players in it calls for a multi-faceted approach from academics that will address current learner needs. This research project falls within a tradition of research that is concerned with developing such a holistic understanding. However, as discussed above, the South African context is characterised by the need to be responsive to local challenges like democratisation, promoting access to previously disadvantaged groups, skills development and boosting human resources. Global influences have brought about internationalisation and massification together with a huge skills focus in order to ‘produce’ graduates who are globally competitive. As has been discussed above, globalisation promotes mass enrolments and a kind of teaching that focuses on imparting technical skills, in which students are supposed to see themselves as global citizens who can apply their skills

anywhere in the world. First year students are among this group of students who are learning in such a globalisation context and it is to be seen how their experiences of learning are influenced by globalisation. The next section is on the first year experience.

2.3 Understanding the first year experience

The first year stage continues to acquire increasing relevance in higher education in South Africa and the world over, with scholars focusing on various issues concerning the first year experience. Scott (2009) focuses on the first year experience as a platform for failure or development and demonstrates that many students fail at the first year level due to a number of factors including a lack of confidence, personal and financial problems. The failure of first year students in South Africa is also attributed to factors which include problems with the current curriculum which, as Scott (2009) argues, has not been adjusted to match student diversity.

In addition, first year students are seen as failing to grasp adequately the areas of their study, which contributes to failure in subsequent years and an increase in attrition rates (Scott 2009). McInnis (2001) argues that students' vulnerability in the first year, in terms of academic failure, is common due to various social, health and financial problems among others.

Another contributing factor to high failure rates at first year in South Africa, is as a result of the "continuing emphasis on what prior learning experience entrants ought to have gained which disadvantages even the most talented students from different realities" (Scott 2009: 29). This points to a "pressing need to treat the first year as a special but not a discrete stage of the educational process as it is the foundational year" (Scott 2009: 24). The first year

curriculum, as Scott (2009) argues, needs to be Janus faced, that is, it should look backward and forward in order to ensure that disadvantaged students learn what they should have pre-first year level.

In an Australian national study, it was noted that first year students spent little time on their studies (Kuh 2003 cited in Tinto 2005). This was caused partly by the fact that teachers expected little from the students or they did not create educational settings which required them to study enough (ibid). This promoted failure and did not provide the students with the impetus to succeed. Arguing further

students are more likely to succeed when they find themselves in settings that are committed to their success, hold high expectations for their success, provide needed academic, social and financial support, frequent feedback, and actively involve them, especially with other students and faculty in learning. The key concept is that of learning and educational community and the capacity for institutions to establish educational communities that actively involve students in learning (Tinto, 2005:5).

For Tinto (2005) students are not actively involved because departments are usually dominated by faculty talk and learning for most first years is separate or cut off from the other courses the students do. The construction of the learner by the universities in this context is that of one who is lost and at the same time not being assisted to find direction. In addition the student is constructed to do less which gives prominence to a discourse of few expectations embedded in that of failure.

An important reason for why we should focus on first years has to do with the “overwhelming influence of schooling which socialises students into particular approaches to learning and responses to educational institutions” (Mann 2008: 90). These approaches, as she argues, “do not always create an environment that is conducive to fostering an open

minded, creative and critical approach towards knowledge and learning that is desirable for higher education” (ibid).

In addition, students are expected to be active and focused on their learning for them to be successful which begs the questions-what does learning entail and what are the roles of the teachers and the students in higher education institutions? In order to substantially improve student learning, there is need for a concerted effort from both students and faculty. As Tinto (2005) argues, teachers should be beginning the conversation about learning by asking themselves how they can help students learn and not how they should be teaching. The idea of asking oneself how to help students learn implies that teachers have a role to play in enabling learning. The role of the teacher in the learning process will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 when students speak about how they understood the roles of the lecturers and tutors.

The above section discussed the first year experience, including the problems and challenges faced by first year students which result in failure and high attrition. As it is integrally related to these challenges, the next section focused in more depth on the ideas of being and becoming a student.

2.4 To be a student: Being and becoming

Barnett (2007) provides a useful analysis of how the student’s being as a human being and the pedagogical being cannot be looked at separately considering that they influence one another. The discussion on being and becoming indirectly is a discussion on learning as key elements of identity illuminated important aspects of learning. For this reason, ideas on

learning by Lave and Wenger (1991), Dall'Alba (2009), Mann (2001), Marton and Saljö (1976) in Mann (2001), Henkel (2010) in Allen-Collinson and Brown (2012), Marquez (2006) and Usher, Bryant and Johnston (1997) were important in providing a more comprehensive discussion.

The nature of identities within higher education generally has formed a recent topic of research enquiry (e.g. Whitchurch 2008), and as Henkel (2010: 10) in Allen-Collinson and Brown (2012: 498) notes, relating to academic identities, identity development can be portrayed as a “continuous process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction”.

Dall'Alba (2009) sees professional education as a process of becoming. She argues that learning to become a professional involves not only what we know and can do, but also who we are (becoming) thus integrating knowing, acting, and being in the form of professional ways of being that unfold over time. She points out that a professional education program which focuses only on the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills, falls short of facilitating their integration into professional ways of being. As such, epistemology and ontology need to be looked at.

Barnett (2007: 101) makes the point that we are in an era of “ineradicable ontological uncertainty” in which students take on different identities at different points of their being. This follows then that students take on different identities at various points of their learning. Without particular dispositions or character and qualities, learning might be difficult (Barnett 2007). Barnett's point of argument is that before the epistemological is the ontological and those students need to be taken more seriously first as beings in the world before what they are studying for (Barnett 2007).

Furthermore, the students' experiences of learning are always changing and are shaped by various factors including the relationships they have with their lecturers and tutors and work expectations (Barnett 2007). The student's sense of herself, "fluctuates, depending on whether she is just about to embark on an assignment or has completed it; on whether a tutor made complimentary remarks or her marks fell short of those she was expecting" (Barnett 2007: 27). "Feelings, attitudes, worries, anxieties, hopes, understandings, priorities, values, capabilities and felt certainties, are all bound up in the student's being and many of these carry over across all her studies" (Barnett 2007: 27). The student's personality has influence in how the student will behave in their studies (Barnett 2007). Barnett indicates that a student who is normally optimistic and lively will behave in the same manner in response to their studies. In addition, if the student is usually anxious, the same will follow for how they approach their studies (ibid).

Marquez (2006) argues that in the 21st century, we find ourselves in a problematic position in which students are mainly shown how the world *is* and then sometimes are told how it *should be* without addressing the gap between description and prescription is. As he points out,

Few of their teachers help them to inquire into the possible ways one can actually engage in a process of change or becoming, both individually and collectively, that will take us from what we are to what we should be....In fact, many university professors and students operate with a discourse that presupposes a clear (and naïve) demarcation between description and prescription. This discourse vows for the purity of certain so-called descriptive languages and relegates prescriptions to the subjective realm of incommensurable personal existential choices (Marquez 2006: 150).

This shows that there might be a disconnect in how students see themselves as learners and who they are becoming and how their professors see them.

In relation to assessment, Barnett argues that the writing of a word like ‘nonsense’ on the margin of a student’s essay, for example, may destroy the student’s educational sense of who she is (Barnett 2007). This is because the pedagogical being is not as robust or forceful as it may appear to be. Instead,

if students sense that the forms of assessment are calling for factual knowledge or for descriptive accounts of situations, students will mirror those perceptions in their knowing accomplishments and their learning will be a matter of assimilating items of knowledge for subsequent recall (Barnett 2007: 32).

This exemplifies the “banking” idea of learning, in which learning is a matter of banking in a deposit so many items, which may then be brought to light (Freire 1978, in Barnett 2007: 32).

The banking idea of learning links with Foucault’s notion of governmentality and the idea of confessional practices, explained in Chapter 3, in which the exam marks that which is known, which students are supposed to reproduce in the exam making them active participants in their self-formation (Usher et al 1997). In addition the ‘banking’ idea of learning can be said to be linked to the idea of ‘memorisation’ associated with surface approaches to learning. Marton and Saljö (1976) in Mann (2001: 7), for example, found that many students adopted a surface approach to their study characterised by learning strategies which included rote learning, memorisation and reproduction. A lack of reflection and being preoccupied with completing the task at hand is among the strategies of learning adopted by students who adopt surface approaches. Other scholars argue that students adopted a strategic approach in which they focused on assessment requirements, careful management of time and effort in order to get good grades (Ramsden 1992, Biggs, 1993, Prosser and Trigwell, 1999) in Mann (2001: 7). Mann (2001) sees both cases as showing that students are alienated from the

subject and the study process through such approaches which do not engage the critical being.

In addition, higher education calls upon students to be their own agents (Barnett 2007). While a student may feel that there is too much workload,

lots of new terms, ideas, concepts, theorems, procedures, situations, experiences, all of which come out of lectures, books, seminars, papers, the laboratory, the studio, the workplace, she may feel that she is drowning, yet she is called upon to make her own interventions, creations, propositions, offerings of one kind or another (Barnett 2007: 34).

In this instance, the student is called upon to be responsible, independent and to effectively manage his/her work.

Marquez (2006) sees universities as places of developing human potentials. He argues that

moving from an almost exclusive focus on knowledge of being to a more balanced one that dissolves the dichotomy of knowledge of being and practice of becoming, functionally integrating both as necessary moments of a single process would allow us to recognise universities as places where people are given the tools and are trained to become somebody and to become actors in their lives and in the bigger social contexts.

In higher education the transformation of being is experienced when students go through a formation process. According to Barnett (2007: 53) “when a student says that her time at university has changed her as a person, she confirms her own self-transcendence, that she has moved herself into another place, a place in which she not only understands the world anew but understands her world anew”. This “movement into another place” speaks to students’

shifting identities which became prominent in this research when students reflected on their learning experiences as will be seen in Chapter 5.

Lave and Wenger (1991: 53) make the point that “learning involves the whole person: it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities- it implies being a full participant, a member”. They go on to say that

“often incidentally, learning implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and function, to master new understandings” and these activities, tasks, functions and understandings do not exist in isolation as they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning (ibid).

Like discourse, discussed in depth in Chapter 3, Lave and Wenger (1991) make an observation that systems of relations are born and developed within social communities which define and are defined by individuals. In this instance, learning implies being a different person (Lave and Wenger 1991) which makes learning “an evolving form of membership” (ibid). Accordingly,

a genuine higher education puts the student on the spot. It does not let them evade themselves. It not only merely encourages the student to develop her own point of view, but requires the student to state her reasons for her point of view. The student is pressed relentlessly and ultimately the pressing is done by the student herself. She internalises the interrogative voices and in the process takes on her own voice (Barnett 2007: 54).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the higher education context and more specifically how globalisation, internalisation and massification have influenced a kind of education in the university today which promotes the acquisition of skills and competencies needed for the market in the world today over knowledge. The discussion on the South African university context demonstrated

that universities are facing local and global challenges. Locally, transformation oriented initiatives are at the fore with research and teaching, in post-apartheid higher education, extensively shaped by the attempt to address and respond to the development needs of the country and to address issues of equity. Globally, South African higher education is not immune to the influence of economic pressures and the need to produce graduates who are ready for the global market. The first year experience provides light on the issues affecting first years. Being and becoming and learning were discussed in this chapter in order to provide context to how students are constructed and construct themselves in their experiences of learning. Chapter 3 discusses the Foucauldian notions of discourse, power and subjectivity and the ways in which they contribute to how students are constituted as learners and in turn construct themselves.

Chapter 3

Discourse, subjectivity and identity

3. Introduction

This chapter is concerned with discussing the notion of discourse from a Foucauldian perspective which is the overarching concept informing this research. Discourse and how the operation of power constitutes people as subjects is important in this research to understand how it shaped the identity of students, in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at the South African institution under study. I also discuss the relationship between discourse, power, governmentality and knowledge. Panopticism is discussed to show how the mechanisms of disciplinary power functioned within various spaces in the university together and how these influenced the ways in which the students constructed themselves as learners. The discussion on the location of the subject brings about a discussion on identity.

3.1 Definition of discourse

In defining and understanding discourse, scholars such as Hall (1990; 1997), Young (1981) and Usher et.al (1997) in various articles they have written about Michel Foucault made my understanding of discourse much easier. I also make reference to scholars who have used the Foucauldian notion of discourse such as Mann (2001). Foucault defines discourse as “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about, a way of representing the knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment” (cited in Hall 1997: 44). In his writings, Foucault (1972 and 1995) looked at knowledge, compliance and self-regulation and how these intersected with power in constituting people as subjects within a particular discourse. According to Foucault (cited in Hall 1997: 44), “meaning and meaningful practice is constructed within discourse”. In relation to this study, it is understood that meaningful learning takes place within discourse. The Faculty of Humanities and the

Department of Journalism and Media studies at the purposively selected South African institution positioned students as learners to take on various subject positions through various discourses. I present an analysis of this context in Chapter 5.

Hall (1990) argues that discourse produces forms of knowledge, objects, subjects and practices of knowledge, which are radically different from period to period with no continuity between them. As such it has to be understood that discourses are historical and culturally specific. In addition, Foucault in Hall (1990) argues that discourse does not consist of one statement, text, action or source. Instead, “the same discourse appears across a range of texts, and as forms of conduct, at a number of different institutional sites within the society” Hall (1997: 44).

In his early work, Foucault (1972 cited in Hall 1997: 44) building on the Lacanian position, that the subject, the ‘I’ arises out of being born into existing language and culture, or what he referred to as the symbolic, argues that “the particular discursive formations or orders of discourse, of a particular domain *position the subject in a particular way*” (my emphasis). Discourse “constructs a topic, defines and produces the objects of our knowledge and governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about and also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others” (Foucault cited in Hall 1997: 44). With regards to learning in higher education, discourse defines how students talk about a specific topic in that discipline, ways in which they write their work, and the ways in which they come to understand how they should conduct themselves appropriately for those disciplinary norms.

Drawing on Foucault, Mann (2001:10) argues that “individuals are positioned as students and lecturers in a way that constrains how they may behave in relation to each other and the discourses they may engage...one’s identity as a student is thus formed by the particular rules of discursive practice relevant to that order” (ibid). In Chapter 5, I explore further what it means to be a learner in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies and ways in which these students are expected to understand how they should ‘behave’ in their journey of learning to becoming journalism and media studies graduates. Furthermore I explore the continuously evolving nature of identity.

3.2 Governmentality

Foucault’s concept of governmentality helps us to understand how practices are governed and how it contributes to the constitution of individuals as subjects. Foucault notes that practices are sanctioned by everyday or routine acts of self-authorisation and not by an external authority (Usher et al. 1997). The effect of such everyday acts of self- authorisation is how it sustains the practitioner as one who is compliant and self-policing (ibid). In relation to first year learning, as discussed in Chapter 5, students contribute to their subjectivity through self-policing and compliance.

Governmentality “is manifest in all routine activity, even at those points where one might as a practitioner question the operation of specific rules for appropriate conduct; it is part of a practice’s own self-consciousness” (Usher et al. 1997: 54).The effect of governmentality is that “it constitutes the subjectivity of the individual practitioners and one becomes the way one is identified and identifies oneself” (ibid). In governmentality, individuals are understood as contributing to their own ruling. For Foucault, practices are not presided over or administered from externally but from within and are driven continually by a circulating

capillary power (Foucault in Usher et al. 1997). Governmentality is seen by Foucault as having the power to constitute individuals.

It is governmentality that constitutes subjects as ‘competent’, ‘deserving’ ‘credit worthy’ or ‘experienced’. The operation of governmentality is apparent through programmes of conduct which have both prescriptive effects regarding what is to be done... and codifying effects regarding what is to be known (Foucault 1991: 75 in Usher et al. 1997: 56).

It can be noted from the quote above that governmentality has significance for how individuals constitute themselves. In Chapter 5, I explore this notion further in order to understand how governmentality played a role in constituting the first year students who participated in this study.

3.3 Discourse, power and knowledge

As Foucault’s work developed, he became concerned with how “knowledge was put to work through discursive practices in specific institutional settings in order to regulate the conduct of others” (Hall 1990: 47). For Foucault, power operates within a range of institutional apparatus and techniques. The apparatus of punishment include diverse linguistic and non-linguistic elements which include discourses, institutions, architectural arrangements, regulations, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophic propositions, morality, philanthropy and others.

The apparatus is thus always inscribed in a play of power, but it is also always linked to certain co-ordinates of knowledge...This is what the apparatus consists in: strategies of relations of forces supporting and supported by types of knowledge (Foucault 1980: 194, 196).

In relation to learning, the research explored the perceptions the students had on elements such as the giving of assignments, grading of tests and tutorial exercises with strict deadlines in order to see if they were used as apparatus of power by the lecturers, tutors and administrative staff over the students. As Foucault argues in Hall (1997) the investigation between, knowledge, power and the body saw knowledge as always entangled in power relations since it was forever being applied to regulating social conduct in practice. This makes knowledge a strategy of constraint, regulation and discipline (Hall 1997). Young (1981) argues that this regulation of power ensures that the social system is reproduced through forms of selection, exclusion and domination.

With regards to power, Foucault argued that power is not unidirectional and monopolised by one centre but it circulates (Foucault 1980). He also saw power as not only negative but productive.

It doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but... it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be thought of as a productive network which runs through the whole social body (Foucault 1980: 119 in Hall 1997: 50).

According to Hall (1990) without denying that the state, the law, the sovereign or the dominant class may have positions of dominance, Foucault shifts our attention away from the grand, overall strategies of power, towards the many localised cultures, tactics, mechanisms and effects through which power circulates. Foucault calls these 'meticulous rituals' or the 'micro-physics' of power and that these power relations 'go right down to the depth of society' (Foucault 1977: 27 in Hall 1997: 50).

3.4 Panopticism

A discussion of Foucault's view of institutions is critical for an understanding of how the mechanisms of disciplinary power function within a given space. In this research, panopticism contributed to an understanding of how university architectural spaces are designed as mechanisms of control which I discuss in Chapter 5. The concept of panopticism was built on Bentham's conceptualisation of the panopticon, whose ideas originated in the 18th Century, to explain the function of disciplinary mechanisms in a prison and how discipline was an apparatus of power (Foucault 1979, 1980). In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault, noted that

he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power, he makes them play spontaneously upon himself, he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection (1979: 202-203).

In addition, Caputo and Yount (1993) argue that institutions must be analysed from a place of power. These institutions should be analysed to comprehend the ways in which they have controlling power. In Chapter 5, I discuss how, for example, the lecture theatres provided a gaze for the lecturers to control students. The design of lecture rooms, with all students visible to the lecturer and sitting arrangements in the classroom (as students sat in a circular way facing the tutor/lecturer) and other elements were explored to see how they influenced the positions that these students were 'forced' to take and how they constructed themselves in the learning discourse. However in some lecture theatres, it seems as though the half obscured students are gazing down on the fully visible lecturer, as if they are the prison wardens and the hapless lecturer is the prisoner with nowhere to hide.

3.5 Identity

This section is concerned with discussing the concept of identity which is important for this research in understanding the ways in which individuals identify themselves and how this identification comes about or the “names of the ways in which we are positioned and position ourselves within the narratives of the past” (Hall 1990: 225). Identity sums up the ways of being in the world (Addison 2007). Identity refers to the

meeting point, the point of suture, between, on the one hand, the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be spoken. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us (Hall 2000: 19).

Hall further argues that “identities are increasingly fragmented, unstable, fractured and are not unified. They are never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions” (2000: 17). Drawing on Foucault, Hall (1997) argues that identities are produced within specific discursive formations and practices, through strategies which show that discourse and identity operate together. Subjects take up particular subject positions ‘knowingly’ (Hall 2000: 19). Individuals occupy discursive subject positions unproblematically (McNay 1994: 76-7 in Hall 2000). Because identity is a complex concept, the conception of identity I use in this research is that which explains the discourses and strategies which contribute to who the students see themselves as.

3.6 Locating the subject

For Foucault, the subject is produced within discourse because for a subject to be a subject, it has to be subjected to discourse (Hall 1990). Discourse according to Foucault is the factor that produces knowledge and while discourse is enmeshed with power, it is not necessary to find the subject for power/knowledge to operate (Hall 1990). Hall (1990: 55) argues that it is discourse which produces knowledge and not the subjects who speak it. The subject's role is to submit to that discourse's rules and conventions as well as its power/knowledge dispositions (Hall 1990). While the foregoing argument presents a somewhat linear notion of discourse, that it acts on the subject while that subject has no agency to resist it, this research explored how, for example, disciplinary discourses provide possibilities or conditions within which they may be negotiated or resisted (Foucault 1979; 1980). For example Mann's (2001) paper outlining perspectives on alienation and engagement in higher education describes how students may choose not to participate in a discourse by standing outside it.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the Foucauldian notion of discourse which is one of the overarching concepts that informs this research. It provided lenses through which we may come to consider the ways in which power operates and its significance for education. In relation to this study, it provided me with lenses to understand the ways in which systems such as education and assessment act as a means of control and how they constitute students as subjects. Governmentality offered me lenses to understand ways in which it constituted the subjectivity of individual practitioners through self-policing acts which 'forces' them into compliance. In addition, panopticism presented lenses of understanding ways in which individuals end up becoming instrumental in their own control through mechanisms of

observation like the prison. The concept of identity offered me lenses of understanding its nature and the ways in which subjects take up various subject positions at different times of their lives due to the influence of discourse. The next chapter, Chapter 4, is on the methodological approach and methods employed in this study (focus group, individual in depth interviews and a critical discourse analysis of the data).

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology for this research project. I discuss the research design and give reasons and justifications for important research design decisions I made throughout the entire research process. Using a case study of first year journalism students, I explored what they understood, or considered to be their roles and responsibilities as ‘learners’. This was through focus group and individual in depth interviewing which I used to explore how various constructions manifested itself in practise and the ways their perceptions were influenced by their earlier education and home experiences and adapted or entrenched in the space of being a first year student at this purposively selected institution. As discursive positioning informed my theoretical understandings, I explored their perceptions of the conditions that affected their understandings of themselves as ‘learners’ and how these are perceived to have influenced the students’ understanding of their experience. I also used critical discourse analysis to analyse the text on the website of the institution under study in order to show the kinds of discourses at play and how these discourses relate to how the students constructed themselves as learners.

4.1 Research Orientation

This section is a discussion of my research orientation and the belief I had in multiple truths. My research was carried out within an interpretivist research paradigm. As a constructivist who believes that individuals construct knowledge and meanings from their experiences, I believe that there are many truths/constructions of reality which are subjective and value bound (O’Leary 2004). There are also instances when individuals have shared experiences or realities. In this research, I was interested in how first year students understood who they

were as learners and how they made meaning of their learning experiences. My concern was not to come up with a generalisable understanding of how these students constructed themselves as learners but to understand their individual and unique constructions of themselves as learners (O’Leary 2004). This focus on meaning is central to what is known as the “interpretive” approach to social science, one of the key tenets of qualitative research (Bredo and Feinberg, 1982; Geertz, 1973; Rabinow and Sullivan, 1979 in Maxwell 1998).

In going into my research field, I was forced to confront my subjectivity as a former tutor of these students. I was therefore uncertain of my positionality since I had been at this institution as a student and therefore had been subjected to similar discourses which I may not have had sufficient distance from to notice with criticality or see afresh. While my position had changed, I was uncertain about how these students would take me to be and so I had to assure them that I was not standing in the position of tutor but that of a researcher. I therefore had to constantly consider myself, the students and the integrity of the research process (O’Leary 2004).

While the research was about the students’ meaning making, it became also about my own practice in the sense that there are times when I reflected on my own experiences and how they affected the teaching and learning processes and the subject positions I took at different times whether as researcher, tutor or friend. Following Reason (1988) I raised my subjectivities to consciousness so as to use them as part of the inquiry process. I have retained aspects of this in the representation of the analysis such as when I related the different aspects of my experience to those of the participants in Chapter 5.

In order to establish ways to deal with these subjectivities, I read research which had been carried out in the same constructivist/intepretivist research paradigms in order to see how other researchers had dealt with issues as the position of the researcher. For example Allen-Collinson and Brown (2012) in research carried out on first year identity construction in the United Kingdom (UK), acknowledge how the fact that the researcher revealed her Christian identity might have had influence on the responses they thought she wanted to hear and how this requires one to be reflexive throughout the entire research process. This idea of reflexivity was important in my research to talk about how my identity as their former tutor might have had influence on the responses.

As a qualitative researcher, I sought to understand the breadth and to learn the subtle nuances of first year students' learning experiences in their learning context (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001; Golafshani 2003). This entailed illuminating the participants' subjective meanings and actions as understood by the participants and my own as discussed above.

As a qualitative researcher, I was not looking at generalising to find regular, causal relationships within a wider population, but to explore and understand the meaning individual students make of their experience of learning (Costley and Gibbs, 2006). Maxwell (2008) argues that qualitative research, is not concerned with eliminating variance between researchers in the values and expectations that they bring to the study but understanding how a particular researcher's values influence the conduct and conclusions of the study and how they become reflexive in the process.

4.2 Participants

For this research project, I chose to focus on first year students as they were the ones who experienced the learning process based on the focus of the research project on learner subjectivities. In 2011, the school of journalism and media studies at the South African institution under study had a total of 18 first year tutors each with groups ranging from 12 to 16 students. My group initially started off with 13 students but by year end only 11 remained with one having dropped out of the journalism class and another having passed away. The population of my study were these 11 students of which six only chose to participate. This research study sought to acquire the self-understandings of how these purposively selected participants constructed themselves as learners.

4.3 The sampling process

The sampling technique adopted in the choice of students was purposive based on the fact that the students were my tutorial group and I had a history and close relationship with them in 2011. However, I only did the actual research much later when I was based in Zimbabwe in which only six out of 11 students chose to participate. Researching students I had previously worked with was advantageous in offering easy access and an opportunity to talk openly about their learning experiences due to familiarity. However I was cognisant of the disadvantage of interviewing students I previously worked with in that they might have told me what they thought I wanted to hear, or thought they should say leaving out important aspects of how they perceived their 'learning' while they were in first year. I therefore had to look critically at what they stated and prompt them in our interactions which revealed various discourses about what the students perceived they should be like as will be seen in Chapter 5.

4.4 Data Collection/Generation

I employed focus group and individual in-depth interviewing as the two methods of data collection to explore my research questions and provide the data that I needed (Maxwell 2008). Focus group interviewing was followed up with individual in depth interviews in order to first identify a range of experiences and perspectives, and then drawing from that pool to add more depth where needed (Morgan 1996). I discuss in detail the two in sections that follow.

4.5 Pilot study

In order to test if my interview questions would produce the data that would contribute to answering my research questions (Maxwell 2007), I carried out a pilot study with a group of 8 second year students doing journalism and media studies at an institution in Zimbabwe, where I was based.

The pilot study was useful as it allowed me to go back and adjust the questions, see Appendix 4, made up of questions before the pilot and Appendix 5 with questions after the pilot, and to avoid those questions that were loaded with assumptions and adding new ones. Piloting my questions was also useful in helping me become conscious of how I asked the questions. I discovered through the pilot study how my non-verbal communication, for example, nodding, led the students to answer the questions in a way that they thought I wanted to hear. I was therefore faced with another task of doing a second pilot study with a different group of students to ensure that I avoided the mistakes that I had made in the first pilot study. This did not end up working in practise since I ended up doing electronic based interviews.

I started off the pilot focus group by telling the students what the research was about. I emphasised to them that they were not the research subjects but I was doing a focus group with them in order to test my questions. I also sought their permission to record the focus group. I explained to them that recording was important for me to go back and analyse, which I did several times and each time I went back to the recording, I discerned more (Wengraf 2001). I had to ask the services of a colleague and friend, who recorded the focus group for me as I could not have managed to record and do the interviewing at the same time. The problem of using a friend who had some background knowledge about my research was that she interfered with the interview by sometimes whispering questions and also pointing at students to pick on especially those who had been quiet throughout the interviewing process. At first, I thought that I could take down notes as the students were responding to the questions but it proved impossible as I could not keep pace with the rate at which they responded to questions. This decision was an important one to make as Wengraf advises that “taking verbatim notes stalls the whole thing and involves on the spot selection that may be doubtful; and writing up afterwards can also miss key elements” (2001: 67) which could have happened if I had continued taking down notes and this I avoided when I did the actual research.

The piloting experience was very relevant for me when I did my focus group interviews in directing me on what to do and what to avoid in the actual research. It also provided the opportunity for me to see how “the data collection strategies actually worked in practice” though the real focus groups were very different from the ones I had done during the pilots (Maxwell 2007). I had to make my questions more focused, context specific and diverse than the broad, general research questions. To establish rapport, during the pilot interviews, I was actively listening to what they were saying which was shown when I made follow up

questions. Because of the sensitivity of some of the responses that I was getting from the students, I assured them that the interview was only a pilot study and that I was going to protect their identity by not mentioning their names.

As the facilitator, I conducted the interviews in a focused but unobtrusive manner (Wengraf 2001). My approach was non-threatening and non-judgemental as I showed that I was interested in what they were saying through nodding and laughing with them when someone gave a 'funny' response. I also uttered statements like "that's interesting, another question I wanted to ask you was..." and this enabled me to get more out of the questions. "Prompts like 'what about' enabled me to know which aspects need to come up and probes like 'that's something I hadn't thought of'..." (Wengraf 2001: 69) were also very useful for eliciting information. By so doing, I put aside jargon which could have been confusing and unclear to the students. In doing the actual interviews, through electronic communication and more specifically on the social networking site, Facebook (which I discuss in a latter section), I uttered statements like "that's interesting", and another question I wanted to ask you was..." and this contributed to me getting more out of the questions. In addition, the piloting process helped me to avoid jargon when I did the actual interviews.

4.6 Focus group interviews

I chose focus group interviews based on their ability to produce rich qualitative material, being well suited to detailed interpretive analysis, and having the potential to offer a space in which the students would ideally discuss their views and actions in their own words and terms. Litosseliti (2003: 1) argues that focus groups are "small structured groups with selected participants, normally led by a moderator, set up to explore specific topics". Such

interaction allowed for in depth discussion of issues in relation to how these students perceived themselves as learners, the kinds of discourses which influenced their actions and behaviour among others. Those partaking in focus groups should find the discussion comfortable, enjoyable and should be able to express themselves freely (Litosseliti 2003). According to Litosseliti (2003: 2) “participants respond to and build on the views expressed by others- a synergistic approach that produces a range of opinions, ideas and experiences, and thus insightful information”.

The advantages of using focus groups are that “they present a more natural environment than individual interviews as focus group participants are influencing and influenced by others just as they are in real life”, (Krueger 1994, 19 in Litosseliti 2003). Focus groups also aim to obtain multiple views and attitudes and often require complex negotiation of the ongoing interaction processes among participants (Litosseliti 2003).

My taking too long to do my research worked negatively in that I was unable to access all the 11 students who were in my tutorial group due to busy schedules which meant that I could not carry out the kind of focus groups described above. The 6 whom I could access were very co-operative and more than willing to be part of my research. 3 had promised that they will let me know when they were free but did not do so while 2 did not respond to my communication via email, which became the only channel through which I could easily carry out my interviews and I depended on it more due to geographical differences.

I had envisaged being able to conduct one focus group with most students but due to our separation geographically I was unable to do so. Some students had moved to other cities after they dropped out after first year while others were still at the specific institution and others inaccessible so it was difficult to do a focus group like the one I had initially proposed.

I had to think about alternative ways to do it and this led me to opt for a focus group on Skype, a software application that allows one to have a spoken conversation with two or more people over the internet, frequently also viewing by webcam. Through Skype we would all log in at the same time and then I would ask the questions and get responses. Skype would allow me to pick up on the non-verbal communication and to see instances in which students felt in the same way or in different ways about a topic. In a nutshell Skype would give me the opportunity to do the focus group that I envisaged on an electronic based platform.

I sent out emails to some of the students and 4 agreed but the challenge was in finding the most suitable time in which they would all be online. I conducted a small focus group with two students but it was not as effective as I had initially planned and I had to abandon it prematurely due to connectivity problems. Again 2 students was too small a number for an effective ‘group interview’ since focus groups generally have more participants. I then scheduled another one which also had similar problems. Regardless of the focus group not working out as I intended, I was able to generate rich data based on how students elaborated, followed up and told the stories of their learning. Morgan and Krueger (1993) in Morgan (1996: 139) also emphasised how such interaction offers valuable data on the extent of consensus and diversity among the participants. They argue that “this ability to observe the extent and nature of interviewees' agreement and disagreement is a unique strength of focus groups” (*ibid*) which I observed on the two participants. A further strength comes from the researcher's ability to ask the participants themselves for comparisons among their experiences and views, rather than aggregating individual data in order to speculate about whether or why the interviewees differ (*ibid*).

Morgan (1996: 139) argues that the “weaknesses of doing focus groups, are linked to the process of producing focused interactions, raising issues about both the role of the facilitator in generating the data and the impact of the group itself on the data”. Such weaknesses can be strengthened by complementing the use of focus groups with individual interviewing as was done in this study. The challenge of doing Skype interviews was that it relies heavily on internet, so with network interruptions, it would not be possible to do an effective focus group. In addition, unlike physical focus groups in which participants sit together in one location with the facilitator present, a focus group on Skype meant that participants would log in all at one time from their different locations, looking at each other on their screen and giving each other turns to speak and this process happens in real time. With connectivity problems, this arrangement did not work out as planned.

4.7 Individual in-depth interviewing

Individual interviews for this study were done online through Facebook and e-mail platforms. These individual interviews became very easy to do and I went ahead with them at the time the students told me they were ready for the interview. Online interviews (on Facebook and e-mail), social networking platforms on which I am connected to the research participants had the advantage of in-depth answers and I asked for clarifications on multiple occasions on issues I did not understand. These platforms allowed for interactivity with the participants and were convenient as I contacted the participants whenever I felt that there was an issue I needed to follow up thereby yielding very rich and detailed insights on the participants’ experiences as they sent back responses immediately. Another advantage of doing interviews online was that I received the text of the interview in writing which I referred to as I went along and I did not have to transcribe after the event.

Using in-depth interviews allowed me to elicit rich data and also get expressions about how they felt about various issues. The use of individual interviews allowed myself and interviewees “more scope for the exploratory and collaborative co-construction of meaning and knowledge, including the ability to home in on issues of special interest and to challenge and develop each other’s hypotheses and insights” (Henning 2004: 66). I did not necessarily strictly follow my interview guide but responded to issues as they came up.

The advantages of doing interviews are that they allow for the discovery of new aspects of the problem (Bless, Higson-Smith, and Kagee, 2006). The researcher can also ask for elaborations on issues which are not clear in order to acquire full information and the researcher has access to body language, facial expressions and tone of voice which allow for unexpected data to emerge. Bless et al (2006) however note that the information is usually biased since it’s based on individual experiences.

The disadvantages of doing the interviews online was that some interviews were not conducted in real time since I had to email the questions and wait for the responses to come later. As such there was lack of information on non-verbal cues.

4.8 Data analysis: Critical Discourse Analysis

To analyse my data, I utilised critical discourse analysis (CDA) to thoroughly interpret interviews. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) stems from a critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice (Janks 1997). Language formed a critical unit of my analysis since it is the conduit through which discourses are put across (Janks 1997). While Foucault (1991) argues that discourses can be found also in forms of conduct, I

chose to focus only on the text which constituted a large part of the website text. All social practices are attached to specific historical contexts and provide the way through which existing social relations are reproduced, contested and different interests are served (*ibid*). It is the questions pertaining to interests that relate discourse to relations of power and the ways in which the text or the ‘learner’ understands him/herself as positioned.

Fairclough's (1989, 1995) in Janks (1997) model for CDA consists three inter-related processes of analysis tied to three inter-related dimensions of discourse. These three dimensions include 1. The object of analysis (including verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts). 2. The processes by means of which the object is produced and received (writing/ speaking/ designing and reading /listening /viewing) by human subjects. 3. The socio-historical conditions whose role is to govern these processes. For Fairclough (1989, 1995 in Janks 1997) each of these dimensions requires a different kind of analysis 1. text analysis (description), 2. processing analysis (interpretation), 3. social analysis (explanation).

In this research, I analysed two different written texts: descriptions of the context in the form of the institutional webpage (Appendix 1), the faculty webpage and that of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies and the student data from the interviews which can be found in Chapter 5. Interpretation of the vocabulary, structure and grammar ‘patterns’, choice of words and framing in these texts helped me to identify discourses influencing the perceptions of how these students constructed themselves as learners.

Through an understanding of the ways that ‘students’ use language, I identified which roles different students took on and how discourse positioned them to enact these roles in particular ways. I considered their experiences in relation to the conditions of their. I did this by naming

the discourse and exemplifying it. Through analysis of what the students said, I made some inferences about the ways in which they positioned themselves or felt positioned. Thus the voices of the participants were significant in this research.

4.9 Document analysis

In order to understand the kinds of discourses operating at the level of the institution under study, I analysed the text on the web pages. The webpage, which is the text that has been produced by the institution to present itself to the public, showed how the institution presented itself and wants to be seen locally and globally. By analysing this text, my intention was to illustrate the kinds of discourses at play and how they might contribute to the ways in which the research participants take on various subject positions. Firstly, I analyse the text and present an interpretation focusing on the institution itself, the Faculty of Humanities under which the Department of Journalism and Media Studies is found and the Department itself.

4.10 Validity threats

My research journey presented validity threats due to the long time that had elapsed before going to my field. The idea for this research project was born in 2011 when I was a tutor to a group of first year students as previously indicated in Chapter 1. However due to pressing financial problems, I was forced to locate to Zimbabwe to look for a job. This meant that my position as a student was greatly affected as I changed from being a full time to a part time student and from a course work and half thesis to a full research thesis. During this time, managing work and studies proved extremely difficult. However, I was able to develop my idea into a research proposal in 2012 and at the end of the year it was passed by the Higher Degrees Committee. Due to work pressures, my work became very slow again until in

October when I had to sit down and think carefully about whether I wanted to continue with my research or not. I was forced to think very seriously about how I was going to ensure that my research was credible in order to help those who would read my research to understand how first year students constructed themselves as learners.

In order to ensure that my findings were credible and valid, I followed Maxwell's (2008) advice of repeated and intensive interviews, validation of participant responses through a process of member checking, rigorously examining data for discrepancies and the application of triangulation. For example, I went back to the research participants several times seeking clarifications on issues I did not understand and to ask further questions in order to ensure consistency of responses. The records of email interviews I had from the participants were advantageous in that I had their experiences and subjective meanings written down in their own words and I used these records as they were.

4.11 Ethics

Ethical issues are of great consideration in any kind of research and are key in the entire research design, from the selection of participants to working with data. As a researcher in the social sciences, I followed Israel and Hay (2006: 3) who argue that "if we act honestly and honorably, people may rely on us to recognise their needs and sensitivities, and consequently may be more willing to contribute openly and fully to the work we undertake." To interview my former tutorial group of first year students in the school of journalism, I sought permission from the head of department and approval from the Higher Degrees Committee. Since my research participants were my former tutorial group of first year students, a number of ethical issues arose about how much they could open up.

I was open in my communication with the participants from the initial stages that the research was for academic purposes and that they were free to withdraw at any stage of the research process. However my position of power had changed since I was no longer their tutor so I hoped that they would open up and feel freer in talking about their experiences. Orb, Laurel, and Dianne (2001: 94) argue that the intention of the researcher is to “listen to the voice of participants or observe them in their natural environments and that they would share information willingly and that a ‘balanced’ research relationship will encourage disclosure, trust, and awareness of potential ethical issues”. The potential advantage of this kind of research to the students was that it ‘encouraged’ them to look back and become more critical and reflexive about their ‘learning’. The potential disadvantages were loss of memory and confusing experiences since they had gone through their second and third years.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research process I undertook in order to explore the topic of the research. It discussed the research paradigm which was interpretivism whose strength lies in how individuals play a key role in constructing knowledge and meanings from their experiences. Different individuals had different experiences of learning, which I explore in Chapter 5 thus showing that there are many constructions of reality. In addition, I discussed the purposive sampling procedure I adopted due to my previous relationship with participants and focus group interview I undertook and the individual interviews which gave me rich insights about the students’ learning experiences. The discussion on data analysis was important in showing the value of critical discourse analysis in my research to identify discourses through the interpretations I made and exemplified the discourses through the students’ experiences. The research was under threat as a result of the long time I took to go

to the field. Potential loss of memory and confusion of experiences were factors which threatened my research since the students were in third year when I did my data collection and this required me to be rigorous in my interviewing and analysis of data. Ethical considerations were useful in ensuring that I was open about the intentions of doing the research and practising integrity throughout the entire research process. I discuss the findings in the next chapter informed by the concepts of discourse, power and identity formation earlier discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5

Presentation and analysis of the research findings

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is concerned with providing analysis of different texts used in this study. I analysed three texts of the following webpages- the institutional, the Faculty of Humanities and that of the Department of Journalism and Media studies. I also analyse the interview transcripts of the students. The webpage, which is the text that has been produced by the institution to present itself to the public, shows how the institution presents itself and wants to be seen. An analysis of this text is intended to illustrate the kinds of discourses operating and how they might contribute to the ways in which the research participants take on various subject positions. Firstly, I analyse the text and present an interpretation focusing on the institution itself, then the Faculty of Humanities under which the Department of Journalism and Media Studies is found and the Department itself. The analysis of student accounts of their experiences follows after the analysis of this text.

5.1 The institution

The text of the webpage of the institution, Appendix 1, shows that the institution chooses to present itself in a positive light which is part of the institution's marketing efforts and as such employs the type of "we have something valuable to offer you" marketing discourse. This marketing discourse accounts for the vocabulary, structure and grammar which emphasise doing in order to present the institution positively. The text is made up of 12 paragraphs with sentences ranging from three to eight. The headings such as "unique character", "world-wide reputation", "an ideal environment" and "special situation" demonstrate how it addresses itself to a global audience as a place to be in order to attract students from across the globe which buttresses ideas of internationalisation seen to be influencing the university today, as

seen in Chapter 2. Research participants however did not reveal if this positive portrayal of the institution to the global audience influenced the ways in which they constructed themselves as learners. As will be seen later in the analysis of the students' interview transcripts, some students' choice of the institution resonated with how the institution presented itself, since they sought an institution with a 'good reputation' and one that will enable them to acquire practical skills required in industry at local and global level. This 'good reputation' is what they heard about the institution from former students. To make this link, I discussed the performative skills being emphasised in the university today in Chapter 2.

When the institution puts emphasis on how its staff-student ratios allow for "close contact" between students and their lecturers, a discourse of collaborative learning emerges in which the role of the teacher and that of the student are important for learning to occur. This was also revealed as being important by some of the participants, as will be seen in the interview transcripts analysed below. A contradiction however surfaces when, in the students' transcripts, they construct themselves as passive receivers of knowledge while the institution assigns agency to the students when it sees learning as collaborative. This shows the varying nature of perceptions and identity construction. The sentence in the institutional webpage which says "small classes mean more personal attention and encourage greater involvement of students in their work" (see Appendix 1) further buttresses Nothedge's (2003) idea of the role of the teacher in facilitating knowing. The role of the teacher as understood by the students will be elaborated later in the analysis of the students' transcripts.

The statement made on the first paragraph of the text of the institution that "graduates have had an influence on southern Africa and world affairs out of all proportion to their small

number” presents the institution as highly competitive and producing graduates who are successful regionally and globally. A global success discourse is also evidenced by the use of such phrases “found in leading positions”, “high quality education”, “internationally recognised” and “worldwide reputation”. A small numbers but big impact discourse emerges from how the institution chooses to present itself, showing that the institution wants to be seen as punching above its weight. It can also be noted that the institution is being marketed particularly to anxious parents, which explains the emphasis on how small, friendly, relaxed and pleasant the entire campus is, and how “caring” it is.

A discourse of natural beauty is prominent when “the university's landscaped grounds and flower-filled gardens invite students to study outdoors and often tutorial groups are seen under the hundred-year-old trees on campus” again persuading parents to send their children to the institution. When reference is made to tutorial groups, the institution prefers to show the world the importance of tutorials in promoting learning. This is further supported by the presence of “an academic development centre which co-ordinates an excellent tutoring system within academic departments” as stated on the institutional webpage. Later, in the students’ transcripts, they acknowledged the importance of tutors in promoting their learning.

The cosmopolitan nature of the university is shown when “students come from all over southern Africa, including Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe” (Institutional homepage). A strong discourse of the rainbow nation is evident in the website as shown when the institution “has students from rural and urban settings, from private and government high schools, and from families at every economic level”. This shows the institution’s current position in addressing the racially divided past and its efforts towards transformation and equity, as seen in Chapter 2 on the South African university

context. Moreover, the institution's all inclusive ideology produces a discourse of equal access directly linking with the transformation activities of South African institutions in the post-apartheid era.

Global attraction is shown when the webpage expresses that "a number of overseas students enhance the cosmopolitan character of campus life" thereby showing that the institution chooses to present itself as a global brand as a response to efforts at internationalisation due to the pressure and demands of globalisation which I discussed in chapter 2.

Recognition is made by the university of various personal, emotional and vocational problems which affect students during their course of study. This is seen through the presence of "an active counselling and careers centre which offers comprehensive and confidential counselling to students to assist them in dealing with a full range of personal, emotional and vocational problems". The institution's webpage shows that it wants to be seen as a caring institution which is aware of various student needs in which "some students know where they are headed" while "others want to find out". However through the exposure to study and career opportunities offered by the institution, lost students are guided in matching their interests and abilities with career options. In addition, the institution has strong industry linkage signified by the institution's "well-subscribed graduate placement programme which brings national and international employers to recruit students" further emphasising the importance of education in preparing students for the world of work and again its efforts to position itself as an international university.

Moreover, the institution portrays students as powerful and influential in various aspects of campus life including curriculum, sport or student welfare which promotes a democracy discourse. The text on the webpage states that

student representatives sit on administrative advisory committees, on Senate and other bodies which discuss campus issues and concerns. The university's Students' Representative Council, led by elected representatives, gives students the responsibility for governing themselves, communicating student concerns and effecting change on campus. Through the Hall and House Committees, students establish and enforce the rules of social conduct necessary for living together (Institutional homepage).

A discourse of leadership and equal involvement is demonstrated through the presence of student societies which “give ample opportunity for all to develop leadership experience and contribute to campus life”. In this instance, students are expected to construct themselves as leaders, which is yet to be seen in the analysis of the students’ transcripts, if they constructed themselves as leaders. In addition, the institution presents itself as promoting diversity as shown by the varied societies such as “political organisations, a campus radio station, a student newspaper, a chamber choir, a debating society, religious groups, cultural groups, etc” which are present at the institution through which students are seen as participating.

Overall, the institution presents itself in good standing. Absent in the text are, for example, issues which could potentially have a negative effect on how the public views the institution. This includes information on the number of students who drop out each year due to various reasons. There is no information about students who have been excluded because they failed to meet certain requirements for them to pass and proceed to the following year. Nothing is said in the text concerning politics of race, gender or class at the institution and how these potentially have effect on learner performance or how students feel positioned in their learning. Thus, it can be argued, the omission of negativity by the institution in presenting

itself to the public was a deliberate move to avoid portraying itself negatively to anxious parents of prospective students and the students themselves and how this could potentially damage the institution's global brand.

The above section discussed ways in which the institution under study chooses to present itself in a positive light on its homepage so as to be seen by parents of prospective students, prospective students and potential employers of graduates in the same light. The text employed vocabulary and grammar that reinforce its global appeal and the fact that its graduates are successful and influential across the world. The next section is an analysis of the faculty webpage, under which the Department of Journalism and Media Studies is found.

5.2 The Faculty of Humanities

This section discusses the Faculty of Humanities webpage (Appendix 2). The text includes faculty news, departments, schools, institutes, centres, alumni news and the Land Research publication. The webpage of the Faculty of Humanities at the institution under study indicates that it

offers an excellent liberal arts education which provides students with critical reasoning skills, in particular the ability to analyse and evaluate arguments, to probe for hidden assumptions, to organise complex material in coherent ways; with an ability to understand the views of others; the ability to communicate well; a capacity to cope with ambiguity and uncertainty; and an acknowledgement of one's own ignorance (Faculty of Humanities homepage).

When the faculty offers "excellent liberal arts education", a discourse of excellence is implied, this is supported by how it provides students with important skills of the 21st century emphasised in Chapter 2 on the section of the university and the influence of globalisation. The discourses of self-criticality and coping with ambiguity are implied

when the faculty seeks to provide students with “critical reasoning”, “analysis”, “organisation” “communication” and “coping with ambiguity and uncertainty”. This sets a framework for the intellectual competencies which students are supposed to possess and how they are expected to behave. Students are expected to be responsible, adapt to change and make decisions with available information even if it does not provide the entire picture.

The website text states that “specialised degrees in journalism or fine art or music are career oriented, offered within the context of a broader rather than a technical education” (Faculty of humanities homepage) which is an attempt by the faculty to show the broad nature of the curricula for its programs. Soft pure sciences, such as journalism, according to Neuman and Becher (2002) tend to be more free ranging and qualitative, with knowledge building a formative process and teaching and learning activities largely constructive and interpretative. In assessment, emphasis is on knowledge application and integration, usually in an essay form and is subjective and the intention is to test out the candidates’ level of sophistication, to indicate the degree of understanding of a complex qualitative domain, and to elicit their own judgements on debatable issues (Bazerman 1981 in Neuman and Becher 2002). In essence, knowledge is understood as the interplay between theory and everyday life.

A discourse of opportunities is implied when it is claimed that the faculty “opens worlds” thus making the programs offered in the faculty attractive by “providing students with critical skills important for individual and national development” (Faculty of Humanities homepage). An educational discourse contrasts with that of professional practice seen

when the faculty “provides an education and not training” but still goes on to provide “critical skills important for development”.

The above section has attempted to show how the Faculty of Humanities chooses to present itself to the public. Prominent discourses in the text included excellence, opportunities, ability to deal with ambiguity, self-criticality among others. These reinforce the faculty’s claim to “open worlds” through the provision of its graduates with broad and diverse education.

5.3 The Department of Journalism and Media studies (JMS)

The Department of Journalism and Media Studies at the South African institution under study has been in existence for more than 40 years. Indicated on the text of the department’s homepage (Appendix 3) is its prominence as Africa’s outstanding media education institution as a result of its “holistic” education which combines media theory with hands-on application, imparting insight, knowledge and “world-class skill sets” like “excellence”, “critical thinking” and “analysis” among others (Departmental homepage). It was discussed in the section on the Faculty of Humanities above how these understandings, now being seen in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies imply discourses such as self-criticality, excellence, professional practice and analysis described above. Part of this discourse of excellence is demonstrated in the department’s homepage, where they advertise their alumni and their prominence in various contexts around the world as a marketing and a branding strategy further implying a discourse of global influence (Departmental homepage), the purpose being to attract students to join the department.

According to the department, the undergraduate curricula are a mix of television, photography, radio studio, health journalism, design and new media to prepare students for professional practice while the postgraduate program is largely theory based and encourages students to be both critical and analytical thinkers (Departmental homepage). The mention of the various departmental specialisations serves to attract students of diverse interests in the media spectrum. A discourse of qualities and attitudes is made prominent by the school which seeks to “produce self-reflexive, critical, analytical graduates and media workers, whose practice is probing, imaginative, civic minded and outspoken” (Departmental homepage). The emphasis on media workers whose practice is “probing” and “outspoken” directly links with the qualities required of journalists in the real world.

In relation to professional practice, graduates, according to the text of the department “are equipped to act as thoughtful, creative and skilled journalists and media practitioners, who are able to make meaningful and technically proficient media productions” which shows a direct link with the real world for which journalism graduates are expected to contribute. In addition, students are prepared for after study through “compulsory internships throughout their studies, as well as working the JMS owned publishing and online media house” (Departmental homepage) which give JMS students a strong taste of what to expect after graduating, powerfully preparing them to enter the media industry with tried and tested ability and aplomb” (Departmental homepage). “Powerfully preparing them with tried and tested ability and aplomb” carry strong discourses around self-confidence, experience, assurance and ultimately success.

The department has developed itself as a global brand with an international appeal impacting on professional communities of practice in addition to academic disciplinary communities. This is evidenced by “some of the major initiatives” that the school is involved in which are “dedicated to the development of African journalism and which hosts the largest annual media conference on the continent with delegates coming from countries across the world” (Departmental homepage).

The department produces a newspaper, online television station, website and radio programming which are devoted to an event run annually at the institution. These present the department to a global audience and students play an active role in the operations of these media which provides them with practical experience which is emphasised in the texts of the institution, the Faculty of Humanities and that of the Department. The school’s media institute ‘trains’ media managers through the provision of both postgraduate diplomas and short courses in various facets of media management. Implied here are discourses such as success, prestige and high performance seen when students are positioned to behave in ways that show that they are being nurtured to become leaders and managers.

In addition, the Department of Journalism and Media Studies

strives to contribute to the commitment expressed in the South African Constitution to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights, [and to] lay the foundations for a democratic and open society (Departmental homepage: Appendix 3).

The discourses implied here are democracy, social justice, equality and that of human rights which directly support higher education’s transformation oriented initiatives discussed in Chapter 2 on the South African context. The next section focuses on discourse and subject

positions as data collected from the interviews indicated were experienced by the participating students.

Again, like the institution, the department chooses to present itself in a positive light. Absent from the text is information on students who fail to make it to either second or third year due to various reasons which could impact negatively to prospective students and the parents of these students. The department does not provide statistics to show where their alumni are and what they are doing in order to address the notion of their alumni's global presence. The next section provides a discussion on discourse and subject positions.

5.4 Discourse and subject positions

This section provides the presentation and an analysis of the student data. The data, which was constituted of student narratives on their learning experiences as first year students in the journalism department at the purposively selected South African institution showed that student experiences were not static but always changing and that discourses of globalisation, democracy, qualities and attitudes among other discourses stated above might have influenced the ways in which these students constructed themselves as learners.

5.5 Learning as knowledge transfer and the making of subjects: constructions of the student and the lecturer

This section is an analysis of the accounts of the ways in which students indicated they took on various positions. The spatial arrangements, the examinations and the university's electronic learning system are also analysed. This research explored the ways in which first

year students constructed themselves as learners. My data is constituted of participants' narratives on their learning experiences and the limitations of the approach which need to be taken into account. Following Goffman (1974) cited in Allen-Collinson and Brown (2012), I am "cognisant of issues surrounding memory and retrospective accounts, and very much aware that participants were choosing to present themselves in a certain way, just as researchers choose our own 'presentation of self'". This interpretation is thus based on the data as provided by the students. I discussed in Chapter 4 how issues such as memory and confusion because of passage of time and taking on new experiences had potential threats on the research's validity.

A view of learning as knowledge that is transferred from the teacher to the students became apparent through the use of such phrases as "my lecturers provided me with the necessary knowledge" (Student 4) and "they give you as much information as you are willing to receive" (Student 4). A discourse of passivity is evident here when students "received necessary knowledge" which constituted them as subjects for the purpose of reception. It became apparent from the interviews that both the less successful and successful students constructed themselves as passive though the successful students also exhibited some form of agency if compared to the less successful ones. This became evident in the students' interviews and the prior knowledge the tutor had about who the more and the less successful students were. It can also be argued that the role and capabilities or the construction of the lecturers as knowers became apparent. As Northedge (2003: 170) argues, "the teacher's capabilities as a subject expert are a resource vital to their students".

This transmission model of knowledge can be seen in how learning spaces for the lecturers and tutorials were structured in a way that constructed teacher learner relationships in a top

down fashion thereby implying a knower (hero)/ learner (victim) discourse. In other words, both the lecturers and students took up subject positions in which lecturers were positioned as towers of knowledge while the students were positioned as receivers waiting to be filled with knowledge. The design of the lecture rooms being theatres, gave the lecturers more power over the students as lecturers are constructed to perform because they are positioned as experts while the students are spectators and non-experts. On the other hand, this design made the more powerless always visible to the more powerful resulting in the students policing themselves to be acceptable or appropriate for the gaze of the more powerful lecturers. This operates similar to the panopticon explained previously in Chapter 3, under the section on panopticism. Lecturers could see the students clearly if they happened to distract the flow of the lecture because of the layered sitting arrangement that makes students visible to the lecturer.

The writing of exercises, tests and exams demonstrated how the students were “active accomplices in their own self formation” (Foucault in Usher et al. 1997). Participants indicated that during the course of their first year, they were required to submit tutorial exercises regularly which contributed to their overall course work marks. Failure to do so resulted in penalisation and failure. For example, Student 1 indicated that “tutorials had more work which I worked hard to do”. “In first year I was studying with the intention of passing so that I won't be excluded” (Student 4). Discourses of time management and self-management are evidenced by how these students felt they were expected to balance their time for all the subjects they took in order to meet each subject's course requirements and to achieve their own goal of passing.

Linked to the writing of exercises and tests, students also sat for exams at the end of the semester which required them to reproduce what they had learnt during the course of the semester resulting in them acquiring a pass. All six participating students indicated that they studied hard towards exam times, “memorising and mastering concepts learnt in the course was what I and most of my friends did in preparation for the exams” was a common phrase from the students. The writing of exams, it can be argued, served as a way of disciplining students and forcing them into compliance. For example, Usher et al. (1997: 56) argue

The idea of examinability joins dividing and confessional practices. The examination reveals and marks what is ‘known’; it is a technique that is not, just divisive, but one which works to constitute subjects’ own selfhood in the guise of a confession- this includes even the apparently liberating and progressive use of the idea of ‘reflective’ practice as self-examination.

Hoskin (1990: 51 in Usher et al 1997: 58) remarks that “Foucault himself named examination as the key that simultaneously turns the trick of power and knowledge in the modern epoch”. The examination possibly provided the lecturers with an opportunity to see hardworkers and non-hardworkers. The set up of the exam put individual students at the centre of constant observation which brought about a change of behaviour. It also introduced individuals into the field of writing, making students cases which could be analysed and described since the exam mark would possibly distinguish the successful from the failures. Most students took the exam more seriously as they “needed at least 50% in order to make it” (Student 4).

Strategies of power and control were also employed by the administrative staff over the students when they indicated “late” on an assignment submitted after the deadline upon submission. Such a late assignment would have marks deducted and this would affect the students’ overall performance. This act forced students into compliance in handing in future

assignments. All six students indicated that the university's online learning platform put pressure on them to hand in assignments on time. For example Student 3 said that "the system would close on the due date therefore we all were under pressure to make sure we handed in all our work on time" and similar remarks were made by the other five students.

In addition, the DP, acted as a strategy of control and it was a university regulation which was meant to force students to meet all course requirements. Tutorial attendance was compulsory and arriving five minutes late when up to a total of 3 tutorials had started resulted in a student being marked absent which could result in the loss of the DP and the student not being allowed to sit for their examinations. As a tutor in charge of the students and positioned to enforce university regulation, I emphasised punctuality and marked absent all late comers.

Lectures were not compulsory and as such some students chose to absent themselves from them. According to the students, the 45 minute lectures provided little time for discussion of concepts to take place. Student 2 confessed

I did not really benefit much from the lectures which lasted 45 minutes long each. There wasn't much we were expected to do so I just stayed at home sometimes (Student 2).

It can be seen above that there were various strategies, rules and regulations used on the students which they had to follow and abide by in order to 'fit in' or to become compliant journalism students' and these practices put students into submission. Failure to meet these requirements was characterised by penalties such as loss of marks, loss of the DP and being excluded from the programme. It can also be argued that defiance is shown by Student 2 who chose not to attend lectures as she felt that there was nothing much to benefit from them. As

their tutor, my own understanding of learning was that it was participative so I took it upon myself to encourage students to attend all lectures.

In summarising the above, Mann's (2001) illustration of how students' and lecturers' identities are formed is very useful. She argues that individuals are positioned as 'students' and 'lecturers' in a way that constrains how they may behave in relation to each other and the discourses they may engage. She says that the rules of discursive practise form one's identity.

5.6 Approaches to learning

Being proactive and independent learning became important elements in the ways in which students constructed themselves as learners partly because it provided those students who persevered in their studies with the challenge and impetus to do well in journalism. These students had to invest in the position of being a journalism and media studies learner which shows how they constructed themselves.

You must be a driven person. Writing articles and reporting on campus news requires someone who has drive. Also, passion, determination and hard work play an important role as a first year student. You need be a hard worker to learn and acquire the skills of a writer/reporter. When you're reporting and you lack passion, it will show on your article... My responsibilities as a first year were that I must be an independent learner. I understood very well that about 80% of the work is self-study. So you have to create your own notes, do your own readings and create a self that you would like to see prosper. No one can do that for you (Student 2).

As a first year student, I had to manage my subjects and try giving equal attention to all of them, which wasn't always easy since I didn't enjoy all of them equally. I had to keep up with work, hand in work on time, and attend all tutorials

and (most) lectures. I had to participate. I don't have a student loan, so how I show my appreciation to my parents is by working really hard and getting the absolute best marks I can. Diligence, thoroughness, good listening skills, willingness to learn and improve, creativity, outspokenness, confidence are important (Student 1).

My roles and responsibilities as a first year student I believe were to be focused on my studies and also to know what I wanted to achieve and to not get distracted (Student 5).

When they participated as members in the communities of practice, “identity, knowing and social membership entailed one another” (Lave and Wenger 1991: 53).

For 4 students, their approach to learning journalism was strategic. By adopting a strategic approach to learning, “the learner could be said to be actively undertaking perceived requirements in order to fulfill their own desires for success” (Mann 2001: 7).

Penny (1979) brings our attention to what Biggs (1970) points out that students who adopt rote learning do well just like those who read widely and integrate their work. Two of the participating students expressed how strategic pressures to succeed well so as to be accepted in the second year of studies strongly influenced their learning

Working hard was a choice I needed to make. My failure to do well in first year would have affected my application for second year (Student 5)

My role as a student was to attend classes throughout the year in order to gain sufficient knowledge to write and pass the subject exam. First year responsibilities include going to lectures, handing in assignments, attending tutorials and passing the exam (Student 4)

In order to 'fit' into the Department of Journalism and Media Studies' 'culture' of hardwork and also the pressing demands of a professional course like journalism and media studies, students performed tasks with two main goals in mind. Firstly they adopted a strategic approach to learning the course in order to pass their exams and proceed to the next year but more importantly they wanted to relate what they were learning to the practise of journalism which they would continue with until 3rd year. For example, Student 1 mentioned that

Journ was a good choice for me, so I worked hard and continued with it until I got to 3rd year (Student 1).

Student 1 also worked hard in Journalism and Media Studies to please her parents since they were responsible for paying her fees. As such the way she constructed herself as a learner had to do with showing appreciation to parents and not being influenced by prevailing institutional, disciplinary or departmental discourses.

I didn't have a student loan, so how I show my appreciation to my parents is by working really hard and get the absolute best marks I can (Student 1).

It is also interesting to note that what students learnt was not only the knowledge confined in their heads but it transformed who these students were becoming. "It involved integrating ways of knowing, acting and being within a broad range of practices" (Dall' Alba and Barnacle 2007). A discourse of awareness emerged from a student relating to political awareness and a sense of social and environmental responsibility that she was able to connect with her identity as a law major.

Doing Journalism developed in me a sense of awareness. Firstly, I think it's fitting to say that even though I didn't carry on with JMS, I still report for the university newspaper, matter of fact I'm now a Features Editor. This proves that as an LLB student, JMS created a strong culture of awareness. That is the one

thing I can't let go of. I am constantly aware of my environment and all that goes on around it so much that I report on/about it (Student 2).

Mann in her research on engaged or alienated experiences of learning, is of the view that “although in higher education we may be aiming for the development of critical beings for personal engagement, inclusion and lifelong learning, we may not always be achieving this since students are isolated from an activity which they should belong” (2001: 8).

Some students made interesting reflections about how they understood the importance of journalism and the skills which they developed in doing various courses

I was never under any illusions I could change the world, so luckily I avoided that disappointment. I actually got more creative writing than I expected, which is why I loved the writing course so much and am so glad this year's first years will have it back again. For me it was about getting a good basic set of skills which I still use and build on today, so interviewing (asking good questions, listening, asking good follow-ups, being prepared), finding good sources, using them well and appropriately, headline writing, formatting, editing, appropriate writing for different genres and so on. These are things I take totally for granted and I am really shocked when I see my peers still getting it wrong. It always did come naturally to me which I guess I am lucky with. That's why I decided to take Design in my third and fourth year because I know I can always go back to writing (Student 1).

5.7 The continuously evolving nature of identity formation and multiple identities

This section discusses the nature of students' identities as it related to their learning experiences. The research established that the ways students identified themselves as journalism learners was not homogeneous but it was differentiated and fractured due to the fact that students experienced the course differently as required by the discipline and

department and their own identities as learners. As illustrated above, students had differing reasons for doing the course and this had implications for how they constructed themselves.

Disciplines according to Becher (1989 in Mann 2001:11). “form boundaries which include and exclude, and position and support identities”. “The student who stands on the edge of a discipline is an outsider who is faced with the decision of whether to join or not and at what cost”. The implication of this is that student agency is shaped by the discourse or discourses that the learner finds themselves in and this may affect the student’s experiences of learning together with the approaches that they will adopt. For student 4, fear affected the relations she had with her lecturers and tutors.

I wouldn’t approach my lecturers and tutors with every problem that I came across. It’s only now that I realise the importance of having to speak to your lecturer if you’re experiencing difficulties in understanding the course work. In first year, lecturers and tutors are really scary but as you progress, you realise that they are under obligation to assist, if you go to them (Student 4).

Learning to these students was not experienced in the same way. The meanings they attached to what they learnt, the approaches they took in accomplishing tasks, which they were becoming and whether they felt part of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies or not were different confirming Lave and Wenger (1991) who see identities as always evolving. This evolution was evidenced by the various methods and strategies that students adopted in their learning due to reasons such as, why they had enrolled for the programme in the first instance, prior information about the programme, current experiences for example how they managed the tests, assignments and tutorial submissions.

An aspect of this variation relates to their internal motivation for initially choosing the subject. Some students chose journalism and media studies as a subject to study because they

were very passionate about it and so their entrance into the journalism and media studies discourse was easy

I took Sociology, which I hated. I thought it was a waste of my time. I loved my other 3 subjects (Journalism, English, Art History) so much that I wanted to do a triple major because I couldn't give one up ...I came to this institution because I chose Journ. I came here to major in Journ, so I always knew I would take it through to fourth year. I did a whole bunch of those career assessment things, but that was more to confirm my interests (Student 1).

The discourse of passion is prominent in this case influencing the students' success in journalism in first year and in subsequent years as she indicated in the interview that she continued with journalism and continued to do well in the course.

Student 1 chose the institution under study due to the stories she heard from other students about the goodness of the institution and more specifically the department producing successful alumni. For example,

I knew about this institution's reputation and came all the way here for that, and it has not disappointed (Student 1).

Student 2 revealed that she enrolled for journalism and media studies because she was pressured to do the subject after it had been chosen for her and so she lacked the external motivation to do it. While they were subjected to the rules and practices of the journalism and media studies degree, she took the subject not of her own choosing

I never continued at that institution or with Journalism because after my first year I came to realise that it was not for me. I did not choose Journalism myself it was chosen for me. (Student 2).

Furthermore, the students pointed out that the extended studies programme, meant to broaden access to previously disadvantaged students which they belonged to, contributed to why they did a course of not their own choosing and also made them feel discriminated and deciding to remain outside of the discipline

I was part of an institution's Bachelor of Arts Foundation (BAF) which I found unfair and degrading and because I was not doing what I wanted to study at this university. The university's Foundation in certain Bachelors I believe is a degrading platform for students because they don't study what they want and also it limits them. And also the university should make it simple by accepting people who qualify to be there and people who don't simply reject them and not do these special foundations that don't benefit them because for me personally I did not benefit (Student 2).

Student 2 indicated that her learning was affected by the other activities which happened in the university, especially socially, which resulted in them adopting a surface approach to learning

Being focused on my studies called for me being disciplined in myself and having positive people around me and also to be grounded and not to be distracted by varsity life because it can be very distracting to an individual who is easily tempted. To be honest, I did not do much because I fell into the temptation of varsity life whereby a good time was my priority and my studies came last at certain times. I did now and then do my work. I always finished my work on time but did I do it to my best ability? No, I did not (Student 2).

When students, such as Student 2, adopted a surface approach to learning, they chose to alienate themselves from the course of study which confirms (Saljö 1982: 197 in Mann 2001) who argues that "one cannot avoid observing the almost perfect way in which a surface orientation meets the criteria of alienation".

A discourse of priorities is prominent when students indicated what they made more important than the other. This further showed that they had agency and had the power to make decisions and choices about their learning. Some of the participating students stated that journalism and media studies was the subject they chose to do as they felt that it aligned with their career goals and their personality

My other passion is Art History, and I feel that Journalism is a good way to profitably further this interest, perhaps in the line of an art critic later in life or something along that line. Having a varied schedule that allows flexibility, the possibility of working overseas, flexi hours (I work better at night) and/or working from home all were very important for me. Plus my strengths lie in writing and editing and most importantly it is something I enjoy. I am by nature a very inquisitive person with a good bullshit radar, so Journ was a good choice which I have enjoyed (Student 1).

While Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gould (2005) note that becoming a learner is about constructing a new identity and having a sense of belonging, the notion of constructing a new identity was challenged, for example, by Student 2, who failed to belong because she did not like the subject and preferred to remain outside the discourse as shown when she did not continue with journalism in second year.

The research demonstrated that student learner identities were diverse and that the discoveries of who these students were becoming were not really something all the students were happy with. Indications made by 4 students showed that they felt a sense of belonging to the course and discipline while the 2 who did not, chose to stand outside of the discipline.

Statements such as, “I chose journalism and continued with it” by Student 1 find support in Barnett’s (2007) assertion that “the student ventures into a new place, which she discovers for

herself, but in doing so discovers herself. There is a personal satisfaction to be obtained here. This is not just a new beginning, it is becoming itself". On the other hand statements such as "I discovered that journalism was not for me" (Student 2) show an example of a student who did not belong.

Students self-identified not just as a journalism learners but also carrying Drama, Art History or Sociology identities which played out in reality in very complex and multifaceted ways such as when it demanded that they manage their time well in order to do well in all three subjects. Some students spoke about how they encountered pressure as they sought to achieve balance among all the subjects.

Doing 3 subjects all of which I loved was a bit pressuring as I wanted to perform well in all of them. I had sleepless nights during certain times in the course of the semester in order to meet all my deadlines (Student 3).

Such identity work continued as students continuously had to negotiate a balance of the multiple identities for the different communities of practice they belonged to which came with work demands. Multiple discourses co-exist and can be negotiated in various ways

I did not use specific methods to study as I have always been more focused studying under pressure and because of that I pushed a lot to get things done (Student 2).

Journalism definitely had more responsibility than my other majors. There were a lot more assignments with due dates every week, lectures our times a week instead of three, and tuts were an hour long and always required lots of prep. I also knew I would major in Journalism so I put in extra work (Student 2).

From the data, it can be seen that journalism was more dominating in terms of the time that it required of the students and the structural demands it made. 4 students indicated that when

they worked hard, they did well on their assignments and were able to enter the disciplinary discourse and ‘doing well’ symbolised how they acquired epistemological access to the program. In his book *Learning to teach in South Africa*, Morrow (2008) argues that teacher education’s ultimate aim is to enable epistemological access, which refers to the gaining of access to particular forms of knowledge, in the modern world. To use Bourdieu, these students acquired “cultural capital” which refers to educational credentials, technical expertise and abilities (Benson and Neveu 2005).

Kirk and Wall (2010) in Allen-Collinson and Brown (2012) further emphasise that we compose and articulate ourselves in an inter-subjective, dialogic relationship with what are perceived to be dominant narrative resources and modes, legitimated by mainstream culture. In this instance, these are the dominant discourses such as performance and success. This ongoing nature of identity construction and the fact that identity can never be finalised was signalled during the interviews when students constructed their identities in ways in which they aligned their past and present selves, and articulated these constructions in relation to their future experiences, the tutor, lecturers and fellow students

The tutor is a facilitator, marker, supporter, advice-giver and the lecturer can only give as much info as you’re willing to receive, i.e if you go to lectures and take good notes. Provides foundations for you to build on with tutorials and extra readings. Admin staff play minor background role, only major role if you get into trouble with DPs or need help with marks. Second and third year was more practical; we did radio shows/production and then chose specialisations. Tuts are more enjoyable. Theory seems more relevant in older years, ties more closely to practical. More repetition, so things start to make more sense and are easier to grasp (Student 1).

In Journalism and Media Studies, my tutor’s role was to guide me through my studies, to make me understand my work and also to keep track of my progress

or lack of it. My lecturers provided me with the necessary knowledge regarding the subject we are studying and enough resources to understand and to interpret what's in the textbooks (Student 4).

The construction of tutors and lecturers by the participating students as experts or mediators in the disciplinary discourse seen when they “guided the students”, “made them understand” “provided with the necessary knowledge”, “giver of as much information as you are willing to receive” constructed the students as passive beings who are meant to be controlled or patronised. When Student 1 spoke about the “major role played by the administrative staff if you get into trouble or need help with marks” it called on students to police themselves, thus indirectly being forced into compliance because of fear of losing the DP.

Moreover shifting identities became more apparent when students entered a new discursual world (Mann 2001). For example, when students spoke about their learning experiences, they made reference to high school.

My university was exciting! High School has a fixed set of rules that don't allow you to experience total freedom. My university, on the other hand, is a liberal university. You are allowed to be free and discover and enjoy yourself in the most outrageous of ways (Student 4).

Reference to high school by, for example, Student 4 was symbolic of the transition in identity from secondary school to tertiary institution and how this transition was symbolised by new opportunities and ways of being. In addition, when 3 of the students spoke about, for example, “being free” and “discovering and enjoying oneself”, they exhibited a discourse of autonomy. This autonomy is directly linked with the kinds of dispositions required of tertiary students in being able to manage their time as independent learners in order to be successful. Different students for example exhibited varying degrees of autonomy.

Student 1, for example, made reference to her second and third year

Second and third year were more practical, we did radio shows/production and then chose specialisations. Tuts are more enjoyable. Theory seems more relevant in older years, ties more closely to practicals. More repetition, so things start to make more sense and are easier to grasp (Student 1).

Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld (2005) in Allen-Collinson and Brown (2012: 497) highlight “students must negotiate between the old life they have partially left behind, with home, family and friends, and the new student life upon which they are embarking”. This negotiation may require considerable ‘identity work’.

According to Mann (2001: 10) “human beings are brought into being through discourse and do not stand outside it”. Similarly students are brought into being within the higher education discourse which in itself is made of other competing and overlapping discourses and these ‘take away’ student agency or set the boundaries for what ‘students’ can or cannot do. The section that follows discusses the conditions within which discourses were negotiated or resisted.

5.8 Conditions within which discourses were negotiated or resisted

This section is concerned with discussing the conditions within which discourses were negotiated or resisted. Some students were not satisfied with what they were doing and chose to remain out of the journalism and media studies course and out of higher education:

I never continued at the institution or with Journalism because after my first year I came to realise that it was not for me. I wish I could have been more focused

and sure about what I wanted to study and also not to have lost the passion to study in general (Student 2).

“Not for me” suggests that the student either felt alienated from the identity constructions she understood from discourses within the institution, or realised that she would rather not conform to those expectations. It is such students who tended to construct themselves as passive and who were less successful in their studies.

Similarly Student 6 dropped out of journalism and media studies as she felt that she could not handle the demands of the course and felt alienated from the identity constructions she understood from the department

I could have committed myself more in terms of amount of time I allocated to studying and completing assignments but I didn't so I dropped it after the first semester (Student 6).

Student 6 constructed herself as not committed which is the reason why she dropped Journalism after the first semester.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter was devoted to a discussion on the institution, Faculty of Humanities and the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at the South African institution under study. I analysed the text of the home pages of those contexts in order to unpack the discourses implied and the ways in which they influenced how students constructed themselves. I then went on to discuss student data which provided a conduit to identify the discourses that constituted students as passive in relation to their lecturers whom they constructed as more

powerful and knowledgeable. Various technologies for example, the exam, the design of the lectures, submission of exercises and tests regularly forced the students into submission thus making them participants in their own self formation. Lastly I discussed instances in which discourse was negotiated or resisted. The next chapter concludes this representation of the research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Contribution, limitations of study and recommendations for future research

6.0 Introduction

The research project sought to find out how first year students at a purposively selected South African institution constructed themselves as learners. The research was carried out within the qualitative research paradigm. Focus groups and individual in-depth interviews were useful as students spoke about their first year experiences. The analysis of the web page text of the institution, the Faculty of Humanities and the Department of Journalism and Media Studies together with the data from the participant interviews illuminated important insights about the discourses that constitute students as subjects. I provide a summary of these findings in the next section.

6.1 Summary of the key findings

What emerged from the data was that first year learner identity was not homogenous for all the journalism student research participants but fractured and differentiated due to various factors including personal differences and varying approaches to learning. Participants either adopted surface or strategic approaches to learning in order to pass and continue to second year. The conditions as experienced by the participants of this study were not enabling of deep approaches to learning. The research also revealed the fluid nature of identity witnessed when students were exposed to new concepts, had to do more easy or difficult tasks as part of their course work component and whether they were satisfied with the subject that they were doing among other factors.

Students constructed the tutors and lecturers as more powerful others while they constructed themselves in positions of passivity and those who constructed themselves as passive were less successful than those who constructed themselves as active. This was highlighted by how they constructed themselves as passive recipients of knowledge in the classroom together with how they saw their lecturers and tutors as knowers who transmitted knowledge to them.

The research also revealed that students constructed their identities in ways in which they aligned their past, present and future selves seen through explanations of their first year experiences in relation to high school, second and third years. The discourses projected from within the institution were not necessarily as influential on students' identity formation as the discourses and positioning previously experienced in their education.

A skills discourse became very prominent in the Department of Journalism and Media studies, a professional degree, designed to provide students with practical skills in order to be relevant to the demands of the industry at both local and global level.

As the students spoke about their experiences, they gave more focus to journalism and media studies due to the fact that it demanded more of their time. This called on students to be more responsible in order to be able to meet deadlines for journalism and media studies than their other subjects.

The notion of identity as an on-going process was also very visible and it was interesting to understand how the context and disciplinary cultures influenced the formation of these identities. The first year student identity did not remain the same across the one year of being a learner due to changing experiences, new challenges and doing new courses. The first year

student identity was littered with new disciplinary terms, concepts and ways of being which the students acquired through immersion into a new discourse which they all experienced differently.

6.2 Limitations of the study

The research faced a number of limitations. Due to the focus on learning only, the researcher did not go into other aspects of student identity which potentially could have enriched the findings of a research on first year experiences of learning. For example, gender, race, class and experiences outside the classroom were beyond the scope of this study. Although the research focused on learning particularly, I found it almost impossible not to include discussion of other aspects of the life as students, for example, in instances when they referred to high school.

The time lapse from the proposal to do this research and the actual time I did the research meant that I depended on their memories which had potentially effect in affecting the validity of the data from their accounts of their learning experiences.

6.3 Recommendations for future research

Possible areas of future research might be to explore the structural elements like gender and race and how they contribute to an understanding of the diversity of who first year students are and are becoming which was beyond the scope of this research project. This will contribute to an understanding of how the other aspects of student identity affects influence their learning since learning is embedded in a complex interactive condition (Penny 1979).

In addition, the research was limited to student narratives of their experiences. Further research might consider course documents, notices and policies and how these constitute students as subjects.

6.4 How I have benefited from the research

The research has been an eye opener with regards to understandings on learning and identity though conceptualisation of identity still remains a complex process for me as it was in my research. It has deeply enriched my understandings of doing research, the importance of time, rigour, honesty and truth especially when I consider how I struggled in the process of doing the research, from the context and conceptual frameworks, the methodology and data gathering stages.

I was on and off in terms of the time I committed to my research due to other pressures I experienced after I had changed from being a full to a part time student. To present this research report, took several instances of reflections and continually having to prove myself to my supervisors and my department that I was committed to completing my work. This is because I am passionate about higher education and an understanding of first year student experiences and how they construct themselves. In addition, the research partly became about my own identity as I had to continue to understand and present an account to my supervisors on how I constructed myself as a researcher.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: The South African Institution

APPENDIX 2: The Faculty of Humanities

APPENDIX 3: The Department of Journalism and Media Studies

APPENDIX 4: Interview Questions before pilot study

APPENDIX 5: Interview Questions after pilot study

APPENDIX 6: Extended Studies

APPENDIX 1: The South African Institution

Why Choose X

Unique character

X owes its unique character among South African universities to a combination of factors some historical, some geographical, some cultural and some architectural. An important influence in this respect is the university's size which, together with its residence system, allows unusually close contact between students and their lecturers, in surroundings that foster fellowship and learning. Small classes mean more personal attention and encourage greater involvement of students in their work. The end result is that successive generations of X graduates have had an influence on southern Africa and world affairs out of all proportion to their small number.

World-wide reputation

Former students are to be found in leading positions, in many different fields of endeavour, all around the globe. The university has earned a world-wide reputation for the high quality of its education and all its degrees are internationally recognised. In fact, the institution has produced a disproportionate number of international scholarship winners.

An ideal environment

Over the years the campus has grown. Graced with lovely grounds, an abundance of sports facilities and nestling in the hills of the beautiful and historic city where the university is located, the university offers an ideal physical environment for studying. The university's landscaped grounds and flower-filled gardens invite students to study outdoors and often tutorial groups are seen under the hundred-year-old trees. A year-round moderate climate lures students outdoors for jogging, walking and cycling as well as for a large variety of sports, art classes or recreation.

During winter, in the residence common rooms, you may find students playing a game of pool, lounging in comfortable armchairs, moving to the beat of a band coming from the campus radio station, tuning in to their favourite television shows, or visiting over coffee.

Special situation

The university lies in what is historically one of the most important areas of South Africa - at the first point of major contact between black and white. The challenge of poverty, urbanisation and education providing invaluable material for scholar and humanist alike. The city is also situated at the meeting point of four different climate zones, offering botanists, geographers, geologists, hydrologists, entomologists, zoologists, and limnologists an amazingly wide spectrum of conditions right on their doorstep.

Students

Students come from all over southern Africa, including Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A number of overseas students enhance the cosmopolitan character of campus life. At the same time, the university could also be described as a most 'South African' university, drawing students from all the provinces of the country. Size has much to do with the warmth and friendliness at the university. The lecturer-student ratios ensures that friendships develop easily - over breakfast in one of the nine dining halls, during a conversation in a professor's office, or while taking a late night study break at Kaif (the student cafeteria).

The university has students from rural and urban settings, from private and government high schools, and from families at every economic level. The characteristic these individuals hold in common is the ability to achieve. Many have already proven themselves outside the classroom as well: on the sports field, in music and drama and in student affairs. About fifty-five percent of the students live on campus in residences. But even those who live off campus experience the community atmosphere for which the university is so well known. Both those in residence and students who live in town participate in common events sponsored by the University and the Students' Representative Council.

Counselling and career services

An active Counselling and Careers Centre offers comprehensive and confidential counselling to students to assist them in dealing with a full range of personal, emotional and vocational problems. A well-subscribed Graduate Placement Programme runs during the third term where over sixty national and international employers visit to recruit students. There is also

an Academic Development Centre which co-ordinates an excellent tutoring system within academic departments. Some students know where they are headed; others want to find out. Either way, students get wide exposure to study and career opportunities with professional guidance to help match interests and abilities with career options.

Sport

More than thirty sports are played at social, inter-house, inter-hall, league, provincial or national level, with over eighty-five percent of students taking part.

Religions

Most religions are represented at the university and dining halls offer a variety of diets to accommodate religious needs. There are various Christian, Far East, Hellenic, Hindu, Muslim and Jewish societies on campus

Self-Government

By voice or vote, students influence every aspect of life on campus, from planning to curriculum, from sport to student welfare. Student representatives sit on administrative advisory committees, on Senate and other bodies which discuss campus issues and concerns. The University's Students' Representative Council, led by elected representatives, gives students the responsibility for governing themselves, communicating student concerns and effecting change on campus. Through the Hall and House Committees, students at the university establish and enforce the rules of social conduct necessary for living together.

Cultural and extra-curricular activities

There are over forty societies affiliated to the Students' Representative Council, giving ample opportunity for all to develop leadership experience and contribute to campus life. The societies are varied: there are political organisations, a campus radio station, a student newspaper, a chamber choir, a debating society, religious groups, cultural groups, etc.

APPENDIX 2: The Faculty of Humanities

The **Faculty of Humanities** is by far the largest Faculty at the university. Comprising 11 Academic departments, 2 Schools and 3 Institutes, the Faculty is largely responsible for growth in student numbers at X university over the past few years.

The Faculty offers a rich variety of courses within four broad categories:

1. Arts (Fine Art, Drama, Music)
2. Languages (isiXhosa, English, Afrikaans, English Language and Linguistics, French, German, Latin, Greek)
3. Professional Offering (Journalism and Media Studies)
4. Social Studies (Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Political Studies, History, Philosophy)

The Faculty of Humanities offers a very wide range of possible degrees and course combinations. Students can major in Journalism and Politics, Classics and French, German, isiXhosa, Afrikaans or any other language offered, or Management and Industrial Sociology or Organisational Psychology, or Fine Art and History, or Information Systems and English or Philosophy and Anthropology, or Computer Science and Music, or Mathematics and Drama or Linguistics.

The Faculty offers an excellent liberal arts education - an education for life and an education which is formative for almost any career choice. A liberal arts education provides students with critical reasoning skills, in particular the ability to analyse and evaluate arguments, to probe for hidden assumptions, to organise complex material in coherent ways; with an ability to understand the views of others; the ability to communicate well; a capacity to cope with ambiguity and uncertainty; and an acknowledgement of one's own ignorance. It is an education that introduces students to the formative moments of their histories, their societies and their identities. It allows students to enjoy the worlds of music and drama and literature and languages.

It opens worlds. It provides an education and not training. As such it provides students with the critical skills and characteristics which are so important for our individual and national development. All of the above may be combined with degrees or courses which are more

immediately career oriented than the liberal arts education. Specialised degrees in Journalism or Fine Art or Music are offered, but all within the context of a broader rather than a technical education.

APPENDIX 3: Department of Journalism and Media Studies

Vision statement of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies

The Department of Journalism and Media Studies strives to contribute to the commitment expressed in the South African Constitution to "heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights, [and to] lay the foundations for a democratic and open society".

Our vision is informed by the following understanding of the media:

The media constitutes one of the powerful institutions that mediate our relation to, and experience of, the world.

The nature of such mediation is conditioned by the media's particular political, economic, technological and historical contexts.

Consequently, these mediations contribute to the production and reproduction of the dominant relations of inequality that structure social life, and are implicated in questions of gender, class, culture, race, geography, sexuality, etc.

The department aims to produce self-reflexive, critical, analytical graduates and media workers, whose practice is probing, imaginative, civic minded and outspoken. Such graduates are equipped to act as thoughtful, creative and skilled journalists and media practitioners, who are able to make meaningful and technically proficient media productions.

The department seeks to make valuable intellectual contributions to the broader African media environment, to research, and to facilitate the integrated and ongoing education of media practitioners.

Convergence statement

As an addendum to the Department of Journalism and Media Studies vision and mission, the convergence statement outlines critical and responsive approaches in our teaching, research and community service, which acknowledge the influence and the challenges of digital

convergence on the transformation of journalism practice, media production, distribution and use.

History and methodology

In its existence, the university Department of Journalism and Media Studies (JMS) has become internationally renowned as Africa's preeminent media education institution and one of the finest in the world. A large part of this success is due to the holistic education JMS provides, combining media theory with hands-on application, imparting insight, knowledge and world-class skill sets. More than anything, this seamless integration of intellectual study with media production allows the school to generate graduates that not only have the technical abilities to contribute to the media industry from the get-go, but also have the wherewithal to apply their minds to the bigger picture of the constantly developing role that media plays in society and its socio-economic context. In short, JMS graduates exude both an evolved level of thinking and superb technical prowess. It is no wonder then that some of Africa's most respected media scholars and industry practitioners are JMS alumni, working in newsrooms and institutions around the world, from major publications to some of the most respected broadcasters on earth.

Indeed, everything about JMS students' education is geared at not only promoting their academic development, but also accurately replicating the kind of professional environments they will one day work in, which is why the department is the most sophisticated journalism education environment in Africa, including television, photography and radio studios and editing suites, newsroom environments and a variety of computer labs. These spaces, coupled with compulsory internships throughout their studies, as well as working the JMS owned publishing and online media house give JMS students a strong taste of what to expect after graduating, powerfully preparing them to enter the media industry with tried and tested ability and aplomb.

Finally, combined with this environment of academic excellence and technical prowess, are a number of JMS projects and initiatives dedicated to the development of African journalism and which hosts the largest annual media conference on the continent at JMS, newspaper, online television station and web site, and radio programming, the department's institute is the JMS media management training arm, providing both postgraduate diplomas and short courses in various facets of media management; and a monitoring wing whose activities in

terms of public service performance monitoring also feed into the curriculum offered to students on issues such as national, provincial and local government reporting. Ultimately, all of these available resources to students and media practitioners create a dynamic space where media is studied, dissected, analysed and produced in a way that develops outstanding journalists, media workers and researchers that can truly contribute to their industry and the world as a whole.

APPENDIX 4: Interview questions before pilot study

- What is/are your role/roles as a learner?
- What are your responsibilities as a Journalism Student?
- How do you compare your passion for JMS with Drama, Psychology and Art?
- Why did you choose JMS?
- What are the various teaching methods used by your lecturers/and tutors?
- Which methods were most appealing to you?
- Which methods are the least appealing to you?
- In your opinion what is a journalism student?
- Is there a specific culture for Journalism students which distinguish them from students doing other courses?
- How are you different from a Drama or Psychology student?
- What methods/approaches do you use in your own learning and how often do you use these methods?
- Why do you use those methods?
- Are there any changes which have occurred from when you first came here to where you are now?
- Why did you attend lectures and how often?
- Why did you attend tutorials and how important were they for you to learn Journalism?
- What do you consider as the roles/responsibilities of your tutors/lecturers?

APPENDIX 5: Interview questions after pilot study

- What were your expectations before you came to the university and were they met?
- How was entering X university for the first time as a first year student different from your experiences as a grade 12?
- What were your roles and responsibilities as a first year student?
- Why did you choose JMS?
- In your opinion what is a journalism learner?
- How were these roles different from those of your other majors in First year?
- What personality traits or characteristics are required of a first year Journalism and Media Studies student?
- What did you understand to be the roles of 1. Your tutor 2. Your lecturers 3. The admin staff?
- How was your second/third year different from that of your first year?
- What do you think you could have done differently/could have been done differently in your first year learning?
- What strategies or methods did you use in your learning?
- Could you identify any common traits/ways of doing in Journalism students?
- What journalism culture developed in you as a first year and who was responsible for it?
- Why did you attend lectures and how often?
- Why did you attend tutorials and how important were they for your learning?

APPENDIX 6: Extended Studies

Welcome to the Extended Studies web site - a department which gives you an alternative access route to university study at our institution. A limited number of students who show potential to succeed and are from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, are exposed to a carefully designed supportive learning environment which enhances their ability to succeed at institution X. This purpose supports X university's mission statement with regards to transformation and equity. The department is specifically for students intending to join the Humanities, Commerce or Science faculties.

Many students, who would have otherwise not gained access to university study at X University, have completed their degrees as a direct result of the support from the Extended Studies.

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