"PORTRAITS OF RURAL SCHOOLING"

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A TEACHER IN A RURAL SCHOOL?

Sheeren Saloojee

A dissertation submitted in full fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree Masters of Education

Teacher Education and Professional Development

University of KwaZulu- Natal

Supervisor: Dr. G. Pillay

2009

PORTRAITS OF Rural Schooling:

What does it mean to be a teacher in a rural school?

ABSTRACT

This research presents an understanding of being a teacher and of teacher's work in schools which are defined as 'rural'. In asking the question, "What does it mean to be a teacher in a rural school?" I produced data of their daily practices and social realities that constitute the lived experiences of teachers within the context of rural education. Employing a critical, emancipatory framework, I documented the multiple identities and meanings that emerged, and drew attention to the teachers' need for change. The need to change what rural means, what rural schooling is, becomes the space to challenge and question oppressive practices and for opportunities of freedom.

Using a narrative inquiry approach, I produced data of the lives of four teachers who work in two high schools in the Vulindlela District. The data sources used to produce the data included four life history interviews, which were conducted as the main methodological strategy, critical conversations and collages. Through narrative analysis, four reconstructed teachers' stories were produced.

The storied narratives are reconstructions of lives told by two groupings of teachers: constructed by teachers that commute to the rural school from one rural area to another, and those that live in the same area as the school. Through the reconstructed teacher stories, the study makes visible how gender identities read against the history and traditional coding of rural settings. It also shows how these identities narrate these individual lives in particular ways, and how the teachers threaten these spaces to rework their meanings and practices for different ways of thinking, living and working as teachers in schools in rural settings. The study contributes towards an understanding of the relationship between 'school life' and 'whole life'.

The study concludes that these teachers' personal and professional identities are negotiated on a daily basis, shaping and being shaped by particular social spaces in which they live and work, and make sense of the kind of the teachers they are and want to be. The teaching and learning choices and judgments they made in their classroom are intertwined with other variables other than just teaching. Being a teacher in a school within this particular schooling context, they are challenged with conditions, and have to constantly confront them. Alongside this, teachers enacted certain practices to disrupt, and challenge stereotypical understandings and meanings that we have come to adopt about rural schooling.

This study shows that these four teachers in rural schools enacted certain practices 'within the school' and 'beyond the school'. They were able to cultivate commitment, connectedness and care. We see how the notion of "Engaged Pedagogy" (Hooks, 1994) plays itself out in rural schools by teachers who work there. They cultivate this type of pedagogy through constant reflection and by engaging in practices within the formal teaching time, during lunch breaks and beyond the formal teaching time. Through ongoing reflection in how they teach and what they teach they challenge traditional oppressive practices and establish better innovative ways of thinking and working as teachers. By making the change, rurality is transforming and, therefore, rural schooling too is being transformed.

The desire expressed by the four teachers to support, care and to express love for learners as a way of improving the life for the learners in the school opened up opportunities for them to excel. By learners feeling good about themselves, they were able to perform better and in this way changed the experience of rural schooling. So to answer my research question, what does it mean to be a teacher in a rural school? It meant to work 'within the school' and 'beyond the school'.

DECLARATION

This dissertation is my own work. It has not been submitted for degree purposes at any other University. All sources used have been indicated and acknowledged accordingly.

_____
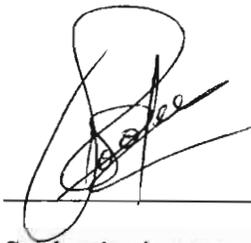
Student's signature

_____

Date   7 April 2010

_____
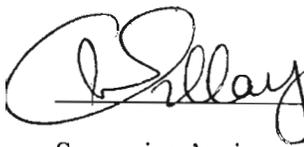
Supervisor's signature

_____

Date   7 April 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my exceptional supervisor, Dr. G. Pillay
Thank you very much for your dedicated,
challenging and excellent supervising!
and most importantly for your *friendship*.

To my generous teachers,
Thank you for so willingly sharing your narratives
about who you are!

To my extremely patient and loving family,
Thank you all for bearing with me throughout these stressful academic years.
The much needed support that you have given me, will forever be appreciated.

To my principal, Mr. H. Ally
Thank you for accommodating me so patiently when I had to attend to my studies.
Thank you for giving me the time to listen to my complaints even when my studies seem to have overwhelmed me,
Your words of encouragement were indeed an inspiration to me.

To all my friends at school,
 thank you for your support and understanding.

To a beautiful lady, Betty Govinden.
Thank you for editing my work.
May you always remain healthy and positive so you can continue to do a great job!

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DoE	Department of Education
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
MCTE	Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NP	National Party Government
NSE	Norms and Standards for Educators
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
RDP	Rural Development Strategy of the Reconstruction and Development Programme
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SATU	South African Teachers' Union
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Kyroon and late dad. You are the inspiration behind my success. You have inspired me to fulfil a dream, I hope that I have made you proud!

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Setting the scene: Context, Rationale and the Research Problem

1.1 Introduction

Centering its focus on teachers' first hand experiences of teaching and living in a rural context, this study engages critically with rural schooling as lived through the lives of teachers who teach there. While rural schooling is a widely researched field, the concern for this study is that much of the body of knowledge in this context does not draw directly from teachers' lived experiences in rural schools. Studies focus on teachers as sources of data, and the emphasis is usually on issues such as teacher qualifications and the prevalence of absenteeism (Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)-EPC (2005). Attention is hardly paid to teachers' day-to-day personal and classroom experiences, and the various practical considerations associated with teaching and living in a rural South Africa.

Such issues as rural teachers' challenges, pleasures, frustrations, hopes, and fears - all of which are faced on a daily basis - and the social realities that shape or define teachers often gets left out of the literature concerning rural schooling. It is in this context that this study wishes to theorise the concept of rural schooling from teachers' own perspectives. As will be argued in this study, focusing on teachers' day-to-day involvements will offer us a better understanding of the unique characteristics of rural schooling and education. Therefore, a more holistic description of teachers' personal and professional experiences in a rural environment will emerge.

This study is therefore significant because teachers in rural schools are usually marginalized stakeholders in spite of the frequent assertion that rural schooling is a very important part of the South African education system and that the legacy of apartheid is particularly evident in rural contexts.

1.2 Defining Rural

The first step is to explain what constitutes the term "rural". This is not simple. Defining 'rural' is a difficult undertaking as there is no common definition. From an informal survey of definitions of the term 'rural', I discovered that there is a wide range provided by policy makers and educational researchers (Rose, 1988). I also established that the term 'rural' has been used quite flexibly by different researchers. There is a multiplicity of definitions, some of which focus on historical and traditional meanings, while others indicate that the term is just as complex as the term 'urban'. It is salutary that even leaders across the world and in corporations cannot agree upon a uniform definition. In the South African context, Statistics South Africa Census (2002 and the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) do not agree on a standardized definition. Indeed, much ambiguity exists all round about what constitutes "rural" (Nachtigal, 1982; Rintoul, 1999; Wallin, 2003).

Although there is no uniformity of a definition, many studies continue to be conducted within the national and international contexts, with the term "rural" being generally understood in a fixed and essentialised way. 'Rural', according to Kozol (1991), generally refers to isolated, poor or traditionally administered areas. Miller (1993) uses the term to mean "any place where residents live in an unincorporated area or town of less than 2 500 people and over 30 miles from an urban centre". In South Africa, the Rural Development Strategy of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1997), the Statistics South Africa Census (2002), and the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005), generally bring a geographical perspective to an understanding of "rural". They define 'rural' in terms of population, distance to towns, topography (conditions of roads, bridges to schools), and access to services and facilities (electricity, water and sanitation). It is therefore reasonable to conclude that an area that is sparsely populated, without proper tarred roads and well structured bridges, and having no access to electricity, running water and proper sanitation, would fit the 'rural' profile (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

Other studies, however, have indicated that the term "rural" should not be understood in this historical, traditional, singular or fixed manner. Sherwood (2002:16), for example, asserts that

"we do need a better definition of 'rural' because of the different kinds of rural areas. He identifies 'poor rural', 'wealthy rural', 'rural' with no minorities, 'rural' with high minorities, 'rural' with high limited English proficiency, and big rural communities and small rural communities". He thus challenges the seemingly narrow way of looking at 'rural' and presents a broader perspective. Although he does not provide the nature of these different 'rural' perspectives, he proposes that the definition of 'rural' should be reviewed. This is because each rural area is unique and many rural places possess strengths such as:

- school and community interdependence (Collins et al., 2002; Herzog & Pittman, 2002) and

- salient attachment to place (Bauch, 2001; Haas & Nachtigal, 1998; Howley, et al., 1996; Kemmis, 1990; Porter, 2001).

Despite the difficulties accompanying the process of establishing some degree of universal meaning of the term 'rural', definitions matter and need to be taken into consideration when trying to understand how and why 'rural' has come to be defined in the various ways it has. We need to also interrogate these definitions. As researchers we are obliged in these contemporary times to ensure that our meanings and definitions are subjected to ongoing revision. As researchers we need to understand that our interpretation is one among many, and that there are no fixed realities. There is no one truth. Our paradigmatic location enables us to read and interpret the world in many different ways. This is the reason why this study pivots on flexible definitions. It includes a combination of socio-economic, geographical and personal perspectives. This inclusive orientation is chosen because it would provide a sense of the multi-faceted context of the lives of the teachers, and of the rural context as a social space. Given the various meanings attributed to this space, my purpose is to understand what meanings of "rural" the teachers construct.

1.3 Why the need for understanding rural education?

South Africa inherited a fragmented and racially divided education system. The policy of apartheid discriminated against certain racial groups and resulted in unequal education provision in terms of race and region (Ministerial Seminar on Education for Rural People in Africa – MCRE - 2005). This system was meant to segregate South Africans and breed suspicion, hatred, and violence. It was designed to prevent people of colour from obtaining a thorough education (COSAS, 1984). The policy of unequal education resulted in the neglect of rural schools.

According to Reviews of National Policies for Education South Africa (2008) the struggle against apartheid was reignited during the 1970s by secondary school students, forcing the government into a series of political and economic reforms that, however, were too little and too late. In an educational context of inadequate infrastructure, unqualified teachers, huge pupil/teacher ratios and a biased curriculum, and in the heart of the 1986 State of Emergency, the government was still spending "nine times more on each white learner than it spent on learners in the worst off Bantustans" (Department of Education, 2005a, p. 1).

In the period of negotiations between the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party government (NP) from 1990 to 1994, the economy stagnated and education continued to deteriorate. The newly elected Government of National Unity was faced, in 1994, with the mammoth task of completely restructuring and rebuilding the education system and redressing the inequities of the past. The Reviews of National Policies for Education South Africa (2008) read:

> *There were in 1994 nearly twelve million students, at 27 500 educational institutions, including 330 000 students at the 21 universities and 137 000 students at the 15 technikons. These learners were served by a staff complement of about 470 000 of whom 370 000 are teachers. The budget for this service for 1994/95 amounted to just under ZAR 30 billion, which represented 22.5% of the government's budget and nearly 7% of*

the estimated GDP (Department of Education, 1995, Ch.11, Sections 10 and 11).

The consequences of this neglect and inequalities are well captured in the research of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)-EPC (2005), where the effect on learners, teachers and the community is evident. These scenarios will be considered below.

1.3.1 The learners

According to research by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC –EPC, 2005), there was a high drop-out and failure rate amongst learners because of poor educational experiences and lack of encouragement from teachers. This policy indicated that We need to remember that teen pregnancies, absenteeism and poverty were interlocked, highlighting that many girls, for example, fell pregnant only to seek financial aid from social grants to help their poor families. It is in these circumstances that they missed months of school work and when they returned to school, they were overwhelmed with work. Under these circumstances, the easy option is to drop out of school. These challenges still face teachers in rural schools in particular, but also schools in South Africa in general. According to Hartshorne (1992) and Kallaway (1985), a review of black education in South Africa before 1994 showed that learners in rural schools were offered an inferior education in comparison to groups attending schools elsewhere. Many black students attended the least funded schools, with the least qualified teachers, poorest facilities and larger class sizes during the apartheid period.

1.3.2 The teachers

Many teachers in rural schools have their roots amongst the rural poor and are often unqualified. Most have a Matriculation certificate as their highest qualification (HSRC-EPC, 2005). The culture of under-qualified and unqualified teachers exist in many of the rural schools and this contributed to the poor teaching and poor management of education in rural schools. Teacher absenteeism were also evident in many of the rural schools which questioned their motivation and enthusiasm about working in rural schools due to the unfavourable conditions that came about from the apartheid policies (HSRC-EPC, 2005). Teacher absenteeism is often perceived as

5

a lack of commitment on the part of the teacher, and this leads to constant tension between teachers and parents. According to this study, the roles that teachers are expected to perform, alongside the expectation that they will implement a curriculum that will empower children, are extremely demanding. They place a burden on teachers in rural schools that simply cannot be borne. Little in their own educational experience and teacher training has prepared teachers for these roles and expectations. The situation in rural schools (including the working conditions) is not encouraging. It is little wonder that there is such a large gap between expectation and reality (HSRC-EPC, 2005). Instances of 'teacher bashing' are still mainly responsible for the negative public image of teaching in rural schools (HSRC-EPC, 2005).

1.3.3 The Community

According to the research of Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC-EPC, 2005), how involved parents feel with the teaching and learning of their children is partly reflected in the relationship they have with the schools and teachers. In rural schools there is a pressing need for sound relationships between the teachers, the learners and parents. However, low literacy levels, combined with embarrassment about financial status, poverty and health issues, which include TB, HIV and AIDS, impede the formation of these relationships. Teachers often feel that parents do not co-operate adequately with them (HSRC-EPC, 2005). An inadequate subsidy for Black education resulted in parents having to pay school fees for their children and yet the majority of these parents are living in poverty and are unemployed. On the other hand, all whites received free and compulsory education (Christie, 1987).

Hartshorne (1988:9) reiterates the deprived context of South African education as follows:

> ...the background and context is an inferior, discriminatory, politically-driven education system reflecting a political and economic system. Everything was based on racial segregation and class distinction, the purpose of which is to maintain the domination and the privilege of the white sector. Just as clear is that poor facilities, large classes, unqualified teachers, unsuitable curricula, disturbed conditions

in the school and community, poor socio-economic environment and unsatisfactory examining methods are all part the context.

Richmond (1953:22), for example, describes an assignment to teach in a rural area as "a dead-end job" requiring "a stout heart" and one that is likely "to break him". Likewise, Sinclair and Cairns (1980:32) refer to teachers "dragooned" into remote areas. These are examples of studies that have portrayed a very negative and biased view of rural schooling and education and it is these fixed and negative perceptions that have linked rural schooling to failure and lack of interest from many quarters, including potential teachers who could advance learners' lives in such contexts.

It is important to understand how teaching and learning is affected by education provisioning for the black and rural schools in South Africa. Since the new government came to power in 1994, it has embarked on an intensive national policy to redress the legacies of the past. Education, in particular, has undergone a dramatic change: a single unified system based on the principles of equity and redress have been built from the formerly fragmented and racially divided education system (MCRE, 2005). To address the legacy of a racially and culturally segregated system the new democratic South Africa established a new policy framework for education. But, how equitable are these policies to redress imbalances and provide quality teaching and learning is best understood from the teachers who work there.

1.4 Policies implemented to improve education in South Africa

Post 1994 policies and as indicated above, were implemented to improve education in South Africa. Its has an impact whether the teacher the teacher is from a rural school or urban school. The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education Development, the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) are, in the context of this study, key comprehensive documents emanating from South African policy makers after 1994. All teachers in South Africa are governed by them. For my study, I am

reading teachers' experiences against these policies, and this applies to any teacher, whether rural or urban.

1.4.1 National Policy Framework for Teacher Education Development

According to the input from the Education Portfolio Committee (2007), the Department of Education (DoE) explains that the objective of the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education Development is to ensure that sufficient numbers of well-trained, motivated teachers are attracted to the profession, and thereafter retained and further developed. This policy begins to look at teachers and attempts to bring about equity in terms of the policy and provision. This is one of the reasons the DoE has introduced the Advanced Certificate in Education programme to upgrade qualifications, knowledge, competence and skills of the teachers. More specifically, it is the Teacher Framework which was presented in 2007 that considered teacher development as a continuing process, from becoming a teacher to being a teacher. All of these initiatives requires a system that will ensure this realisation. For this to happen, the DoE initiated the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) (2006), a system designed to ensure that teachers teach, managers manage, and schooling, regardless of where it occurs, realizes what it was meant to. In the next section I have discussed the IQMS.

1.4.2 Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS)

According to the Report by the Portfolio Committee on the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) (2006), teachers in South Africa, especially in black schools, were not subjected to any kind of evaluation. What was found through the analysis, in term of staff attraction to the rural schools and their qualifications, is that there were many teachers that were under- and inappropriately qualified. It is very possible that this situation has led to the poor results that we see in learner achievement (IQMS) (2006). The classroom teacher is the central player in the process of educating children. It is for this reason that a performance-based teacher evaluation system is critical to improving teaching and learning (Report to the Portfolio Committee on the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) 2006). Hence, IQMS was born.

IQMS, furthermore, provides information and feedback to teachers regarding effective practice and offers a pathway for individual professional growth. It allows a mechanism to nurture professional growth toward common goals and supports a learning community in which teachers are encouraged to improve and share insights in the profession. To have developed a comprehensive system such as the IQMS (2006), currently administered to almost 360 000 teachers, is indeed an achievement. In order to address the problem of qualification and retraining teachers in rural areas, the DoE has offered bursaries and loans to attract teachers. The Fundza Lushaka bursary is one such bursary. Through this financial scheme, students who accept such a bursary would, upon qualifying in particular areas of needs, have to pay back their bursary in terms of service. The Department, in turn, would place them in schools, like rural schools - depending on their needs. In this way it would be able to supply the necessary quota of qualified teachers to match what schools needs.

However, the QMS has been critiqued for privileging managerial priorities as opposed to the needs of teachers (Gardiner, 2003). Gardiner argues that the IQMS is a tool to control teachers, sugar-coated to make it palatable to teachers. The teacher organizations that were interviewed felt that the IQMS is good on paper, but its problems arise in implementation. SADTU, for instance, pointed out some of the problems (the policy is confusing and it is too technical, for example) that teachers encountered in the implementation of the policy. The other important policy that impacts on teacher professionalism is the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS, 2005).

1.4.3 The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS)

In 1997, the democratic government introduced Curriculum 2005. This is based on the philosophy of outcomes-based education. The introduction of Curriculum 2005 signalled a shift from the apartheid curriculum. The policy was subjected to various criticisms, which included the fact that teachers were not sufficiently equipped to implement the policy (SACE, 2005). This resulted in the Chisholm Committee which reviewed Curriculum 2005 and made various recommendations, including the fact that there should be a comprehensive teacher development

programme if Curriculum 2005 is to be implemented successfully (Department of Education, 2005).

The issue of curriculum raises issues around teacher autonomy in the conception and execution of teachers' duties. The Revised National Curriculum Statement is very clear on its expectation of teachers to be able to develop materials and make professional decisions regarding the presentation of the curriculum. The fact that Curriculum 2005 allows teachers to exercise some judgment is seen as a move towards more professionalisation of teachers rather than deprofessionalisation of teachers (SACE, 2005). However, there are contradictions as Curriculum 2005 has resulted in more work for teachers, with teachers operating within the parameters of pre-specified outcomes, and teachers being forced to diversify their skills because of the principle of integration. Whilst diversification of skills is positive it can be problematic if it is imposed on teachers (SACE, 2005) and more particularly, if teachers are not effectively inducted into the new demands of a curriculum such as (SACE, 2005).

To summarise, the above post-apartheid policies, although they did some good, have contradictory effects on the nature of teachers' work in rural schools. Firstly, the policy framework which is critical to improve the quality of South African education has left out the voice of the human actors from its technical discourse, the teacher, and did not consider the contextual realities of rural schools, which are core to quality teaching and learning. As Hargreaves (1994, p.253) argues, it has ignored the "purposes and personalities" of individual teachers and the context in which they work. Secondly, these policies worked best on paper since the policies overloaded and intensified teachers' work in the rural schools and thus contributed to the loss of space for teachers to develop themselves. This has a negative impact on teacher professionalism because one of the central tenets of professionalism is knowledge and creativity (SACE, 2005). The policy framework has also tended to homogenise teacher identities (Carrim, 2003) and portray them as an image with which they do not identify with. According to Carrim (2003), portraying teachers in new images will not necessarily change the learning and teaching or their practices.

According to one of the teacher organisations, SADTU, spaces to engage the state on policy matters were increasingly being closed down. This is partly manifested in, what Jansen (2001) calls, centralisation of policy-making where experts, as opposed to those affected by the policies, increasingly play a major role in policy matters. The national Department of Education (DOE) relies more and more on review committees and ministerial committees in Policy making. The implication of this is that policies that affect teachers are conceptualised by the state, with the help of experts. The effect of this is that teachers are just treated as employees who have to accept the policies as presented to them by the state and are not encouraged to negotiate the policies with the state.

There is also a sense by the state that putting policies in place will somehow address the problems that teachers in rural schools face in their day to day practice (SACE, 2005). There is a need to make a comprehensive plan as to how some of the policy intentions will be achieved and what support will be put in place to ensure that the policy intentions are achieved. All these need strong co-ordination. The report from the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education points out, for instance, that at the moment Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) is haphazard and un-coordinated (Department of Education, 2005). The high learner-teacher ratios, shortage of learning materials and lack of basic infrastructure in rural areas are well-documented (Department of Education, 2005). Unless these issues, together with the contextual realities of rural areas are addressed adequately, it will be difficult for teachers in rural schools to exercise their professionalism in such an environment.

1.5 Rationale

I draw on my experiences as a teacher in an urban school in South Africa and my studies for my Post Graduate Certificate (PGCE) and Honours Degree as a student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I befriended teachers from rural schools either during my time in the library or whilst taking 'time off' during studying periods. I found myself confronted with teachers who come from different contextual realities, with those from rural areas and Black Townships especially presenting the most challenges. From my short personal encounters with the teachers, I have learnt that they face a very different set of challenges compared to teachers like me who

teach and live in urban schools. Hearing of their experiences with their learners and relating the conditions under which they have to work in these schools, I began to wonder how and why they "enjoy" being teachers. However, the opportunity to know of their lives on the ground was limited. To cultivate an understanding of these teachers, I wish to argue, is to gain a deeper insight into what rural schooling is all about. My research interest therefore arises from my lack of knowledge of rural schooling and life in rural contexts. As a teacher and as a researcher, I identify the need to research just who rural teachers are and how they perceive teaching in their locations. There is great need to research this field, because rural schools have become marginalized. Many rural schools are so small and isolated that teachers from rural and urban schools lack contact with one another. There are also fewer opportunities for professional contact through teachers' centers, in-service activities and social gatherings. Therefore, teachers in rural schools feel bypassed and forgotten by the profession. For those who are ambitious, there may be an added frustration of not being able to get their work sufficiently noticed and recognized by the Department. This is why teachers like me in urban schools are totally unaware of the complexities of this contextual reality. This is something hidden away, something invisible.

Even though I may be seen as an outsider to this context, with no insider knowledge, I believe that this very position compels me to pursue this study. I need to acquaint myself in an informed manner with conditions quite different from my own in which my counterparts live and teach. I believe that this type of effort to understand a different context will contribute, in some way, towards bridging the divide that has been imposed on us by our history. Such study will surely promote a better understanding of the legacy of the apartheid past as it continues to play itself out in the present moment. It will also inform transformation agendas in a grounded manner and encourage empathy and interventionist strategies.

Given the context of South African education and the dearth of literature surrounding teachers in rural schools, it is important to ask: if there is no improvement to the quality of education in these schools, what will happen to learners who still have to enroll at the same universities that many of the urban learners attend? If a question of this nature is ignored, then what kind of society are we becoming? As there are insufficient studies on the lives of teachers in rural

schools, this study explores the ways in which teachers may claim spaces in rural schools to critique and re-construct their identities.

While I am aware that the definition of "a teacher" is meant to describe all teachers, regardless of the context in which they teach, my study calls for a deeper exploration of the lived experiences of particular cohorts of teachers. This will challenge any fixed definition given to "teachers" and "teachers' work", particularly within the rural context. Without falling into the trap of reifying the teacher who teaches in a rural school, I want to open up the meanings of what it means to be 'teacher'. I wish to explore a more nuanced, deeper, and complex understanding by listening to and documenting their life histories and their daily lived experiences. It is in this way that this study will offer a platform for rural teachers to share the challenges, pleasures, frustrations, hopes, and fears that they face daily, and the social realities that shape or define them as teachers.

As already established, rural schools in South Africa face very different and unique challenges to those of their counterparts in urban/city schools. Teachers in rural schools also show great variety. It is common knowledge that some of the teachers do not live in the same area as the school. There are teachers who commute from one rural area to another whereas other teachers live in the same area as the school community. These factors need to be taken into account when examining their daily lived experiences. The experiences and practices of teaching in a rural school are realities about which we in the city know very little. By creating a space for teachers to voice their experiences of working in rural schools, this research hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the complexity and contradictions of 'being a teacher' and working within such a particular spatial reality. I hope to probe below the surface. By telling their stories in this study, I hope to contribute to understanding the visible and the invisible, the silences and less clearly articulated practices, desires, interests, anxieties and feelings of teachers who 'choose' to teach in rural schools (Pillay, 2003).

13

1.6 Research Question

The following research questions guide this study:

What does it mean to be a teacher in a rural school?

To answer the question above, I have chosen two sub questions which will help answer the research question.

1. How do teachers make meanings of the personal self within rural context?

2. What construction of teachers as professionals is constituted through practices in rural schools?

By responding to these questions, this study wishes to understand the portraits of rural schooling through teachers' own voices. However, if we want to understand rural schooling through teachers' own voices, we first need to understand the space termed 'rural'. We should not fall into the trap of homogenizing rurality. It is for this reason that I wish to ask the teachers what their meaning of 'rural' is, and to unpack the term 'rural' through the teachers who work in this context.

In this study, such a process begins with an attempt to understand how the self and the rural, and then the self as teacher in rural schools emerge. If the definitions are taking on particular meanings from the geographical and economic perspectives, this study wishes to see how they plays themselves out through the teachers, firstly in terms of their personal self, and then in terms of their professional self. This approach is in accordance with Social Identity Theory, which balances the personal and professional dimension of teachers' identities.

Critchley (2001) states that teachers define themselves according to the contexts in which they work. Teachers, he states, see themselves as people who are willing to negotiate skills; confront institutional barriers in socially appropriate ways; turn constraints into opportunity for change; reflect on the teaching process and environment; and engage in lifelong learning to the best of the individual's capacity. It is in this context that teachers define themselves in relation to the

context in which they teach. How the teacher negotiates the personal and professional within this context of rurality is also what I wish to explore through this study.

I am aware, furthermore, that a rural school is contextually different from the urban school in its geographical features, its practices, ethos, economical status, in addition to the issues and challenges that research have raised. While I argue that these issues and challenges are not unique to rural schooling and to teachers in rural schools, we are compelled to disrupt and challenge the stereotypical understandings and meanings we have come to adopt about the topic by listening to real stories of real teachers working in rural schools. Are the experiences and practices adopted by teachers in a rural school dramatically different to those of an urban teacher?

1.7 Methodology

In order to best capture these teachers' daily experiences in their rural schools, narrative inquiry was considered. This was seen in the study as the appropriate research method because it has the potential to offer teachers opportunities to reflect on the diversity, richness and complexities involved in their personal and professional experiences as teachers within a rural context. According to Tamboukou et al (2008) self-narration allows the narrator to relive, reclaim and construct chosen identities. It therefore allowed the teachers to give an account of their personal lives themselves from all dimensions, and thereby give a holistic approach to understanding teachers' lives in rural settings.

O'Donoghue & Dimmock (1996: 3) assert that "experiences are also likely to be the same in important ways to others in the same culture", but the interpretation and the meaning-making may differ. That is why narratives convey the impression that teachers working in two completely different rural schools experience either similar or dissimilar moments at their schools. Furthermore, life itself might be considered as a narrative inside which we find a number of other stories (Polkinghorne,1989). We come to appreciate that we are dealing with a landscape of rugged terrain – of fear, frustration and struggle, combined with patches of

creativity, desire and dreams. Finally, the reason for choosing narrative inquiry is that the study wishes to foreground teachers' voices for opening up our understanding of rurality. This will be achieved through exploring teachers' practices. The purpose is to excavate different understandings of rural schooling.

1.8 The thesis overview

It is in the context of these concerns that this study describes the personal and professional experiences of teachers who commute to rural schools and reside in the same area as the schools in which they teach in.

Chapter 1 has introduced the research topic; the definitions of rural has been clarified, and the background, rationale, purpose and significance of the research are explained.

Chapter 2 provides a synthesis of the literature and research on rural schooling discussed under international and national studies. Section B of this Chapter describes some of the research conducted on teachers and teaching in rural schooling. Section C outlines the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology used in this study. I describe the set-up of this study, the methods used to produce data with the commuting teacher and the residing teacher within a rural space, and how the data is analyzed. Ethical considerations will also outlined in this Chapter.

Chapter 4 details participant narratives and their lived experiences as commuting and residing teachers and rurality.

Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the data about the 'teacher self' as it exists in a rural space against the discourse of gender. I then give a description of the multiplicity of identities that were fore grounded.

Chapter 6 provides an analysis of the data about the 'teacher professional' teaching in a rural school within the themes: 'Within the school': Practices and Rural Constraints and 'Beyond the school'.

In the final Chapter (7), the research question is answered and recommendations are highlighted, questions are framed for future research, and a final reflection is presented.

Chapter 2

Review of related literature

Imagine for a moment a developed nation which regarded its rural schools as its elite and as models to be envied and emulated by metropolitan schools. Imagine a system in which rural schools were the prime beneficiaries of educational research, the recipients of a steady stream of the nation's best teachers, and the bastions of the education world's power prestige, and resource. (Hartshorne (1992:89)

2.1 Introduction

This Chapter provides an overview of studies related to rural schooling conducted by several national and international scholars. The first section of this chapter thus focuses on research findings on rural schooling. Such findings are discussed within the context of their impact within both national and international communities. As the Chapter attempts to show, research conducted within the international context focuses on patriarchy, the teacher and community, masculinity, femininity and "on becoming a teacher". Local studies on rural schooling, on the other hand, focus mostly on the relationships and challenges facing rural schools. The second section describes the research conducted on teachers and teachers in rural schooling. Finally, the third section outlines the theoretical framing of the study.

2.2 Section A: Research on rural schooling

While the general attitude and tendency among researchers and educationists is to view rural schooling as the only terrain in education that requires urgent scrutiny and attention, Smith (2002:220) rightly points out that "all schools are by implication subject to......critique". Indeed, as Howley (1997:136) points out, literature on rural schooling is abundant, and includes, for example, "rural sociology, rural community development, history, and, especially literature ... (literary fiction)". This, however, need not be viewed as an indication that rural schooling necessarily has more problems than urban schooling. Just like urban schooling, rural schooling in international countries has challenges and dilemmas peculiar to it. Indeed, as Harmon et al

(1996) maintain there has been an increased interest in rural education research and there are several areas that may be regarded as representative of studies in this area:

- overall effectiveness of rural schools;

- curricular provisions;

- school and community partnerships;

- human resources;

- use of technology;

- financial support and;

- governance.

Hathaway (1993) adds economies of scale, leadership styles, programme enrichment, student achievement, student grouping, and transportation. With regard to this focus, Theobald and Nachtigal (1995:132) rightly point out that "the work of the rural school is no longer to emulate the urban or suburban school, but to attend to its own place". Bauch's (2001) work indicates clearly the validity of this assertion, for he argues that this entry into the debates is important because much of the research on current reform efforts has been directed toward urban schools, and that rural and urban schools are not the same, because factors beyond the school play an important part in shaping these institutions. It is within this context that the next section discusses an international perspective on research conducted around rural schooling in many countries such as the United States of America, Canada, Portugal and Kenya, focusing on themes such as patriarchy, the teacher and community, masculinity and femininity, and "on becoming a teacher".

2.2.1 Patriarchy

According to a study conducted by the *History World International* (1992), individual families within the African context were normally set up on a patriarchal basis. In this context, the husband and father determined the direction of fundamental family decisions. This state of affairs means there has to be humble obedience to male authority. This is the reason De Beauvoir (2006) believes that Africans are still living in patriarchal societies. Patriarchal family

19

structure generally rests on men's control of most, if not all, property rights, starting with land itself. In this context, marriage was based on property relationships. It was assumed that marriage, and therefore subordination to men, was the normal condition for the vast majority of women. After marriage, predetermined societal roles further restricted what women can do, be, and act (Bruns, 2001). According to Blackmore (1993), the roles assigned to women, such as caring for families, keeping a home, have a low prestige in African culture.

According to Kariuki (2006), in rural contexts, male leadership is validated at all levels as the only legitimate role for an African man. This extends to the consideration of who gets what level of education, if there are male and female siblings in one family. Given the patriarchal nature of these societies, male dominance is clearly evident. According to Abanyie (2002), families see the education of the girl child as a waste of money, in fact, an unnecessary luxury. In many respects, this is a reflection of the conventional, entrenched wisdom on appropriate roles for women, as well as a response to the mainly agricultural societies, where feminine skills and labour are not dependent on literacy. In contexts where female children do get opportunities to attend formal schooling, education offers them an improved opportunity, for it serves as an eye opener and an empowerment exercise. Where this occurs, women have come closest to equality with men. It is for this reason that Abanyie (2002) argues that no one will disagree that education is a powerful influence on the lives of individuals and has an almost mythical hold on our imaginations.

2.2.2 The Teacher and the Community

Every teaching experience is a product of enculturation and membership of a particular culture (Tolley, 2003). The type of experience a teacher has within the classroom is dependent upon how well the teacher understands the culture of the community (Preston, 2006). In other words, classroom instruction and activities are negatively affected when teachers know little about the community in which they teach. Research indicates that teachers teach more effectively when they understand their students' home lives and home communities and utilize this information within their curriculum and teaching pedagogy (Asselin, 2001; Taylor, 1993). Theobald (1997) emphasizes that the curriculum is not simply synonymous with information. There needs to be linkage between the school and the purposes of the broader community, and a way of grounding

curriculum and instruction in the civic and economic life of a community (Howley & Howley, 2005).

According to Parkay et al., (2005), successful teaching is determined by the relationships the teacher has with learners, parents, colleagues, administration, and other members of the school community. It is for this reason that, in order to create and sustain effective relationships with these groups, teachers need to be attentive to beliefs, norms, and practices of the communities within which they teach (Preston, 2006). As the data analysis section will show, positive relationships and interactions between the school and the community are vital components of a quality education (Preston, 2006). Chance (2002), furthermore, emphasizes that when a school and community collaborate, a "greater" community becomes an undisputable outcome.

This greater community is about a group of people who share similar values regarding its youth and their potential future. The concept of greater community, for Preston (2006), is also a reflection of geography, membership, and affiliation. It is in this context that the school and community represent a shared sense of belonging and community focus as parents and community members partner in the educational process of their children (Preston, 2006). In Chance's (2002:233) view, this means that "teachers and parents do not exist in separate worlds, but are united with others in the community into a milieu of common purpose and direction".

Preston's (2006) study, for example, indicates clearly that strong school-community relationships are an integral part of the Deweyian philosophies. Dewey (1899) believed that the school is a representation of society; democratic citizens are the result of quality education, and a student's social needs to be the basis for his or her learning. It is within this context that this study argues that a democratic country can only thrive when its citizens are engaged in the continual process of education (Chomsky, 2000; Giroux, 2005; Fullan, 1999).

2.2.3 Masculinity and Femininity

A survey conducted by UNICEF (2003) on constructing gender differences describes versions of masculinity and femininity that often were created in relation to each other and played off

against each other. Under such constructs, males are strong physically, emotionally, intellectually and sexually, and females are weak in these areas. In Phendla's (2004) study, the leadership roles in the lives of the Black women participants is likened to persons holding the sharp edges of knives: "*Musadzi u fara lufhanga nga hu fhiraho*", where women are cut without mercy. In this context, women are expected to play caring, mothering roles to children, their own and others. At the same time they must display efficiency, responsibility and deal with the numerous challenges of managing a school.

Within the context of South Africa, While the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa signalled the end of the apartheid government, it may be argued that some of the most significant issues central to the oppression of women in general, and black women in particular, remained unchallenged and insignificant to society. This may indicate that policy makers still ignore them. therefore still continue to be perpetuated in some contexts because they are still ignored by policy makers. For instance, the *Bill of Rights* provides two contradictory clauses: first, the demand that an equality clause should enjoy priority in the *Bill of Rights* in order to pave the way for gender parity to be equal to Affirmative Action, and that traditional and customary law to be democratized. Whereas the first clause frees women from gender discrimination, the second one imposes customary and traditional laws, which ironically disadvantages them. Rural or any groups of women are at the intersection of a number of factors, which constitute their identity. They navigate across many tensions; they wrestle with many social constructs, all of which form their daily existence (Phendla, 2004). All of these social aspects affect much of school policies regarding management, teaching and extra-curricular activities. Most importantly, the role that gender plays in the process of becoming a teacher must be critically considered. The next section deals with this.

2.2.4 Becoming a Teacher

Contrary to the general belief, Ritchie and Wilson (2000, cited in Preston, 2006), argue that it is not post-secondary preparation courses that are most influential for beginning teachers. For them, it is more likely that prior pre-school to grade 12 school experiences determine what students do as teachers and who they believe themselves to be in their role as teachers. For Goodson (1992:

13), furthermore, "the teachers' own experiences *as pupils* are not only important training periods, but in many cases *more* important" (italics in the original). It is in this context that this study argues that student teachers learn a great deal about pedagogical practices, not so much by what they are taught, but by observing their own teachers' behaviours and instructional methods (Goodson, 1992).

This is the reason Ritchie and Wilson (2000, cited in Preston, 2006) label teacher preparation programmes as a "deliberate apprenticeship". For them, it is during this "deliberate apprenticeship" that teacher candidates *supposedly* acquire the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to be effective teachers (Preston, 2006). So, then, an "accidental apprenticeship" plays a much more significant role than "deliberate apprenticeship" in determining how teacher candidates perform in the classroom environment. According to Preston (2006: 20-29), "accidental apprenticeship" is longer, extending from preschool to young adulthood. It is more pervasive and involves almost every class these students have ever attended, almost every teacher with whom they have interacted, and countless media representatives of teaching and schooling. It is on these bases that this study sees "accidental apprenticeship" as more powerful.

The above implies that teacher identity is as important as the qualifications they hold. Crucially, not only is the educational background important, but so is the personal background (Preston, 2006). As Goodson (1981: 69) points out: "In understanding something as intensely personal as teaching, it is crucial we know about the person the teacher is". This is the reason Knowles (1992, cited in Preston, 2006) argues that the biography of a teacher has a significant bearing upon the classroom behaviours and practices of teachers. He further argues that understanding the origins of a teacher perspective on education is largely a product of understanding his or her biography. To put it in Goodson's (1992: 243) words: "Teachers' previous *life experience and background* help shape their view of teaching and are essential elements in their practice" (italics in the original).

Furthermore, it has to be pointed out, that teachers need time to reflect upon their beliefs about teaching and determine how their biographies affect their ideologies of education (Preston, 2006). Ritchie and Wilson (2000) assert that if teachers are not given time to engage in self-analysis, they will not be able to see the pros and, more specifically, the conflicts within their own perspectives on what constitutes teacher identity. It is such omissions that cause most teachers to resist new theories and pedagogical practices in times that require re-thinking and re-envisioning (Preston, 2006).

From a national perspective, a survey of literature that covers issues concerning rural schooling within the context of South Africa literature, reveals that studies under this subject have either been written from learners' perspectives on rural schooling (Budge, 2006), or from pre-service teachers perspectives (Hudson, 2008). Generally, such literature has been selective, with the focus on understanding issues in rural schooling to the exclusion of the core elements concerning teachers themselves, the positives about rural schooling, what makes rural schooling interesting, and why teachers choose to teach there. This, I want to argue, is the contribution my study offers. I hope to promote understanding of rural schooling from the perspectives of the teachers who work there on a daily basis. It is my hope that, by attempting to understand rural schooling from the perspective of a teacher's life, a gap in understanding rural schooling will be filled, and the pervasive bias against rural schooling would be challenged.

Studies on rural schooling from a national perspective focus on themes such as challenges and relationships. These themes are discussed as follows:

2.2.5 Challenges

Research concerning rural schooling within the South African context tends to portray it in a negative light. Research findings by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005), for example, has been summarised as follows:

- Lack of basic services (water, electricity, roads, sanitation) affect access, and quality of schooling;

- Inadequate physical and infrastructural conditions of schools – buildings, toilet facilities, telecommunications and equipment are a problem;

- Distances travelled to school – children walk long distances, and no adequate transport provision is available and;

- Quality of education in rural schools - lack of qualified teachers, irrelevance of curriculum, large classes, lack of teaching aids, high Learner/Teacher ratios are a major challenge.

Historically, research in rural education in South Africa has been a marginalised body of knowledge and, as a result, continues to face the challenges of offering quality education through teacher retraining programmes, making available quality resources and developing infrastructure. Hartshorne (1992, in Jessop, 2000) argues that rural education in South is considered the 'Cinderella of the system', neglected and exploited. The typical picture of primary education in rural areas is one of neglect, as Hartshorne describes it:

> *The primary education system still compares very unfavourably with other levels as far as buildings and facilities are concerned. All over the country there are dilapidated buildings, crowded classrooms, broken windows, leaking roofs, a lack of adequate sanitation facilities, blackboards – all of which contribute to both teachers and pupils feeling that what they are doing is not regarded as important. (Hartshorne, 1992:54)*

According to a report issued by the Development Bank of Southern Africa (Retrieved 17 November, 2009), the very structure of the relationship between the national education Department responsible for policy, and provincial departments responsible for delivery, is leading to highly unequal and inconsistent outcomes. Schools at provincial and district levels, for example, are mismanaged and mal-administered, and contend with poor infrastructure. Learners in rural and poorer provinces such as Mpumalanga, Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) remain at a disadvantage and continue to perform worse than more urban provinces such as the Western Cape and Gauteng.

The formerly white Model-C schools uniformly produce better results and their governing bodies are able to raise substantial private funds. Rural schools, on the contrary, survive on the commitment of their teachers. These second economy schools see fewer on-the-job hours from staff. Over half of the candidates entering the education stream never get to the end, with Grade 9 being the major drop-out point. These bleak and hostile environments see high rates of both student and teacher desertion. Research findings, furthermore, indicate that more money or increased physical infrastructure has surprisingly little impact on the poorer schools in these contexts. These failures are due to the ways in which the education process is ordered, managed and translated into classroom practice.

2.2.6 Relationships

According to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)-EPC (2005), many communities are characterised by a deep rift between teachers and the guardians of children in their care. According to *Emerging Voices* (2005), while some communities are proud of their school and teachers, others have serious concerns. Criticisms of teachers encompass a complex set of issues related to their lack of qualifications, level of subject knowledge, commitment and sense of vocation. As one of the parents in *Emerging Voices* (2005:119) points out: "There is a pressing need for a sound relationship between the teachers, learners, and parents. However, the reality is that many parents do not set foot on the school premises". This study, furthermore, showed that parental involvement seems confined to uniforms and fees, and teachers and some parents often feel that parents do not co-operate adequately with the school. This contributes immensely in the straining of the relationships between parents and teachers. "Teachers are the key agents in the quality of the education system. They should be treated and conceptualised as members of a profession (as opposed to service 'workers')..." (Department of Education, 2005: 18). This view is echoed internationally as there is a growing acknowledgement that the teacher is the most important factor in learning and teaching (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

2.3 Section B: Teachers

According to Preston (2006), to be a teacher means to enter a profession that involves the acceptance of many roles. Cook-Sather (2006:118), for example, points out that "A role is a part, a function, a prescribed piece in a performance, or the expected behaviour or participation in a social interaction". For Skidmore (1975), the concept, "role", connotes a set of duties as defined by a system in which a person acts. Harden and Crosby (2000) identifies some of the formal roles of a teacher as being a learning facilitator, role model, curriculum planner, resource developer, and assessor. As an attempt to broaden the discussion, Harden and Crosby (2000) assert that through these roles, the teacher is engaged in instructing, disciplining, monitoring, assessing, and interacting with many students, all of whom have diverse personalities, interests, and academic abilities.

It is important to note, as Preston (2006) reminds us, that the roles of the teacher listed above are multidimensional and extend outside the classroom. To be a teacher, for example, is to serve students, the school, and the community (Parkay et al., 2005). It is within this context that teaching has to be understood as an activity that is about building relationships with various members of the school and community (Clandinin, 1986). For Preston (2006), furthermore, teachers are counsellors, coaches, career advisers, after-school tutors; they also serve on community committees. All these roles and responsibilities, I want to argue, are an integral component of the teaching experience and assist in nurturing and ensuring positive interpersonal relationships with learners, parents, and fellow colleagues. It is for this reason that it remains difficult to describe what the exact duties of any given teacher are. Teaching responsibilities differ according to needs and wants of the school and community. However, whether a teacher commutes to school or resides in the same area as the school, it does have an influence on the teaching and learning experience.

The teacher development process – the understanding of what precisely we need to do if we want to develop teachers, most crucially, remains unclear (Evans, 2002). As Russell and Munby (1991:164) point out:

> *Ask any teacher or professor, 'How did you learn to teach?' As likely as not, the response will be 'by teaching or 'by experience', and little*

more will follow, as though the answers were obvious and unproblematic. While there is an implicit acknowledgement that actions and performances can be learned through or by experiences, there is little understanding of how this comes about.

According to Evans (2002), teacher development is a process of two distinct aspects of teachers' professional lives: professionalism and professionality. She defines teacher development as an ideologically, attitudinally, intellectually, and epistemologically based stance on the part of the individual, in relation to the practice of the profession to which s/he belongs, and which influences her /his professional practice. She also states that her interpretation of teacher development further reflects her views that it may enhance the status of the profession as a whole, exemplified by the evolution of an all-graduate profession, and it may improve teachers' knowledge, skills and practice. Within her definition of teacher development, Evans (2002) identifies two constituent elements of teacher development that relate fundamentally to individual teacher development: *attitudinal development* and *functional development.* She defines these terms in very specific ways. For her, "attitudinal development is the process whereby the teachers' attitudes to their work are modified, and functional development is the process whereby teachers' professional performance may be improved", Evans (2002).

She argues that those who are concerned about teacher development - the government, school leaders and managers and governors, and the teaching profession itself – need to know the dynamics and various possibilities of teacher development. Some strategies - sending them on courses, imposing reforms on them, mentoring them, placing them within a particular professional culture or climate, or presenting them with problems and challenges – are all worth trying. She further argues that the relative success of each of these and other policy decisions will depend on individual circumstances. Identifying what constitutes teacher development, will contribute towards understanding what works with one kind of teacher and what works with another, and why. For Nieto (2003:125), "Excellent teachers don't develop full blown at graduation; nor are they just "born teachers." Instead, teachers are always in the process of "becoming".

According to Lieberman & Mace (2008), all teachers go on professional development courses, where they most often learn how to follow a script that they will use in the hope of raising their students' scores. They say that this approach ignores the needs of the students and the experiences of the teacher. Instead of building a culture of professional learning, teachers are faced with "a culture of compliance". Lieberman & Mace (2008), furthermore, insist that we must come to understand that learning happens through experience and practices. In plain terms – people learn from and with others in particular ways. This includes learning through practices (learning as doing), through meaning (learning as intentional), through community (learning as participating and being with others), and through identity (learning as changing who we are). They further argue that professional learning is rooted in the human need to feel a sense of belonging and of making a contribution to a community, where experience and knowledge function as part of community property (Lieberman & Mace 2008). It is in this context that they argue that districts and states can support professional learning communities by providing teachers with continuous blocks of time devoted to teachers teaching other teachers the strategies that have been worked successfully for them.

2.3.1 Teachers in rural schools

According to the HSRC (2005) study commissioned for the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), 55 % of teachers in rural schools in South Africa would leave teaching if they could. This finding became public for the first time in the paper prepared for the South African Council for Teachers (SACE) by the Wits Education Policy Unit. Workload stress, low salaries, low levels of discipline and lack of career advancement opportunities were mentioned as the main factors that largely contributed to this pessimism (Hall, et al, 2005). Their study also found that the attrition rate among teachers was at 9.3% in 1997/1998, declining to 5.5 % percent in 2000/2001, and then rising again to 5.9 % in 2002/2003. Contract termination, massive resignations and high mortality rate remain the factors that led to these figures (Hall *et al*, 2005). The high attrition rate in 1997/1998, furthermore, could be attributed to the DoE's voluntary severance package plan. All these challenges have resulted in the nature of teachers' work becoming an area of focus for the (ELRC) and (SACE). The issues raised above speak directly to

the nature of teachers' work, and central to the nature of teachers' work is the notion of teacher professionalism.

Howley and Howley (2005, cited in Barter, 2008) point out that an understanding and commitment to the cultural meaning that pervades life in rural places, is highly relevant to the experience a teacher will professionally and personally encounter in a rural community. Such cultural meanings include attachment to place, strong commitment to the community's well-being, connection to the outdoors, and concern for the stability of community (Theobald, 1997). Teacher education programmes and professional development, however, places little emphasis on understanding the "cultural" demands of teaching and its lifestyle. This being unfamiliar with a community's customs and beliefs, may cause problems for teachers entering a new community (Theobald & Howley, 1997).

To this point, the literature has portrayed a historically negative and biased view of rural education. Lately, several studies have been selectively choosing specific understandings of rural schooling, often leaving out core elements that inform us about the teachers themselves. They do not dwell on the positive aspects about rural education, what makes rural education interesting, and why teachers choose to teach in these areas. This is why this study is critical. Indeed, while some teachers consider teaching in rural schools to be demanding and difficult, they persist in remaining in these schools. Against these considerations this study challenges biased understandings and perceptions that exist and get popularised in literature. There is thus a need to disrupt and challenge the stereotypic understandings and meanings we have come to adopt about rural schooling. In the context of this study, rural schools teachers' stories will be used to achieve this.

Given this purpose, the study had to select a complementary theoretical framework with the potential to anchor the research in the literature referred to above. Such complimentarily is crucial if the literature is to be used in the production and the interpretation of knowledge (Henning, 2002). Huberman (1993, cited in Preston, 2003) argues that the way teachers approach

teaching is grounded in their backgrounds, biographies, and past teaching experiences. Together, all factors constitute their identity. Identities tend to reflect various facets of our lives, and this is the reason Connelly & Clandinin (1999) argue that each person has several identities. For example, a man would be identified by his daughter as "dad", but by his students as "teacher" (Preston, 2003).

Bitzman (1992: 23) defines identity as constituted by "how the self is produced and reproduced through social interactions, daily negotiations, and within particular contexts that are already overburdened with the meanings of others". Sumara and Luce-Kapler (1996) believe that experiences, past, present and future, shape teacher identity. Britzman (1994) argues that a teacher's identity describes who they are, who they are not, and who they can become. It is for this reason that it is important to stipulate that identity is not fixed but complex and fluid. Because teachers must constantly reinvent who they are as they develop insights into their teaching (Meyer & Nore, 1999), "identity must be forever re-established and negotiated" (Sachs, 1999: 155). Britzman (1992), furthermore, argues that it is impossible to discuss teacher identity without exploring teacher experience and reflection on the meanings the teachers give to these experiences. The teachers in this study, for example, constantly negotiated their personal and professional identities in relation to the social context, which happens to be rural in this investigation. It is for this reason Social Identity Theory was deployed in the process of understanding the participants in this study.

2.4 Section C: History and Orientation of Social Identity Theory

Tajfel's (1981) and Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell's (1987) work on Social Identity Theory constructs identity as embedded in a social group or category. For Tajfel & Turner (1985, in Ashforth & Fred 1989), people tend to classify themselves and others into various social categories such as organizational membership, religious affiliation, gender, and age cohort. As these examples suggest, different individuals may utilize different categorization schemas. For Tajfel and Turner (1985, in Ashforth & Fred 1989) categories are defined by prototypical characteristics abstracted from the members.

Looking at social identity from a sociological perspective, the notion of social identity is defined as the way that individuals label themselves as members of particular groups (nation, social class, subculture, ethnicity and gender). It is in this sense that Social Identity Theory assumes "that human beings have a basic need for positive self-esteem" which is found in both personal and social identity (Turner, 1987:58). According to Smit & Fritz (2008:93), social identity is shaped and forged within socially constructed categories of people (teachers), or the position within a social structure, such as a school environment. Furthermore, they explain personal identity as that which "involves the uniqueness of the individual such as name, personal history and personality" and that individuals "reveal personal identity depending on who the audience is".

In this study I draw from a sociological perspective because it allows me to look at teachers as social beings. I want to understand the social being, using the teacher in his or her inter-related personal and professional capacities within this particular social space of the rural. Sociology looks at Social Identity Theory as a social construct. 'I am who I am' in relation to the context. For the study I am arguing that the self cannot work alone but in relation to a broader context. Social Identity Theory thus reveals that the teacher's self is a fluid one. There is no fixed teacher 'self' within the category "teacher". A teacher images different identities during different moments of the day and there is no autonomous self. The teacher in the classroom is always in relation to the teacher on the playground. From a psychological perspective, the self tends to be viewed as fixed and autonomous. However, Social Identity Theory grounded, in a sociological perspective, analyses dominant discourses that teachers adopt in constituting who they are and how they make sense of their lives as teachers. It considers particular practices enacted through these discourses, and the way they give meaning to notions of identity in relation to the space/context.

In this study I am reading Social Identity Theory through a rural lens. What does it means to be a teacher in a rural social space? My overarching framework revolves around the question: what does it mean to be a teacher personally and professionally within the particular social space of the rural? My study is looking at teachers from a sociological perspective and I am trying to

understand this particular individual's personal and professional identities, and how they both within the social space of the rural.

In the context of this study, the focus is on a particular category of teachers who taught in schools within rural settings, those teachers who commuted to school, and those who resided in the same area as the school. The investigation is focused on how they saw and expressed themselves as teachers in a particular context of rural schooling. Palmer (1998) points out that identity is an evolving nexus where all forces that constitute a person's life converge in the mystery of self and has as much to do with our shadows and limits, our wounds and fears, as with our strengths and potentials. Drawing from Social Identity Theory, I was able to explore and understand the complex and multiple dimensions of teachers' lives as negotiated daily within a range of forces and factors. It is precisely for this reason that Social Identity Theory is potentially useful in understanding the ways in which teachers actively construct, and simultaneously are constructed by their world. Social Identity Theory thus has value in this study as it enables me to engage in a critical manner with the way participants' responses represent different meanings (Hargreaves, 1994).

The choice of the Social Identity Theory in this study stems from an acknowledgment that identity is not fixed and that there are different moments in our lives where we are pulled and pushed by different forces (Samuel, 1998). We make choices that give meaning to our lives and shape who we are. In a rural context or space, as everywhere else, there are different choices and judgments to be negotiated on a daily basis. As teachers share their stories, it becomes possible to obtain a three-dimensional perspective – that of space, time and place. This also related to their childhood days and community experiences. Thus, I was able to understand how they consciously and unconsciously constructed "a life" through the telling, and how it created opportunities for me to explore teachers' professional and personal lives in all their complexities, ambiguities and contradictions in a rural space.

After reading the different frameworks and theories that anchored other studies in my literature review, it was apparent to me that my study is located within a critical paradigm. Employing a critical paradigm to document the multiplicity of identities and meanings that emerge draws

attention to the teachers' need for change. This need for change becomes the opportunity to challenge and question oppressive practices. From these emerge moments of a new freedom, a space for the teacher's 'voice', and the knowledge that every voice will count for a better understanding of teachers who teach in rural schools.

Chapter 4

Stories they tell us: Portraits of teachers

But this story is not told in a vacuum; the story is constructed in a context: "a life as told, a life history, is a narrative, influenced by the cultural conventions of telling, by the audience and the social context."
(Bruner, 1984:7)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to reconstruct the storied narratives that emanated from the data yielded by the participants in the study. This approach is in line with Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) assertion that researchers also need to tell their stories. In the process of telling their stories, researchers observe the need for their stories to merge with those of the participants. In this process new stories that are collaborative and reconstructed in nature are formed. In the context of this study, the stories presented by the teachers set the agenda. They also provided critical and reflective elaborations on their lives, an aspect crucial to the purposes of this study. Most importantly, these stories exposed aspects of assumptions about identities as they emerged in the various contexts, and across various relationships with others.

4.2 Politics of representation

In the process of writing and re-writing my narratives, I encountered many dilemmas which might prove instructive for other researchers. I wrestled with the issue of writing in the first person or third person, for instance. There are both advantages and disadvantages related to the choice one makes in this regard. After persistent reflection on the matter, I decided to represent my narratives in both the first person and the third person. I assumed the role of the first person narrator in the storied narratives of Simon and Hilton. I have referred to these as Portrait One and Portrait Two, and this is presented in Section A. In a first-person narrative, the narrator is always a character within his/her own story. While writing Simon's narrative, which was originally in the third person, by the second page of writing, I switched over to writing in the first

person. This began when I found I was assuming the role of Simon with alacrity. The switch seemed natural and compelling. Hilton's narrative followed thereafter.

In Section B, I assumed the role of the third person narrator in the storied narratives of Zandile and Nikki. I referred to these as Portrait Three and Portrait Four. In the process of writing these teachers' stories in the third person - where there is a reporting of the teacher's "voice" and an interpretation of the words and message of the teachers by the narrators - I was able to create scenes, and represent the thoughts, intentions, perspectives, motives and desires of the teachers in detail (Pillay, 2003). While I endeavoured to fulfil all "the ground rules" in writing up narratives, I must admit, like Pillay's (2003) findings that experimenting with the nuances of narrating the stories was challenging.

4.3 Member checks

Once I completed writing up the teachers' narratives, I then sent the completed copies to them for their comments. I felt that this would protect the participants from being alienated from the story telling (Sikes 1992:211). Allowing the teachers to read "their story" proved to be a very valuable activity because it enabled teachers to add, alter, and delete any information from the story as they saw appropriate. This further served to confirm the validity of the stories narrated. Member checks, as Lincoln and Guba (1985:236) put it, confirm that the stories capture "lives" as told, experienced and constructed by the tellers; they provide them with the space to correct, amend or extend their narratives. To acknowledge that the stories were indeed theirs, and to authorize their release and circulation, the teachers signed a written consent (see Appendix 2).

Below is an example of the way in which collages can function to construct a story that could otherwise not be communicated effectively.

4.4 Section A: First person narrative

4.4.1 Portrait One: Simon
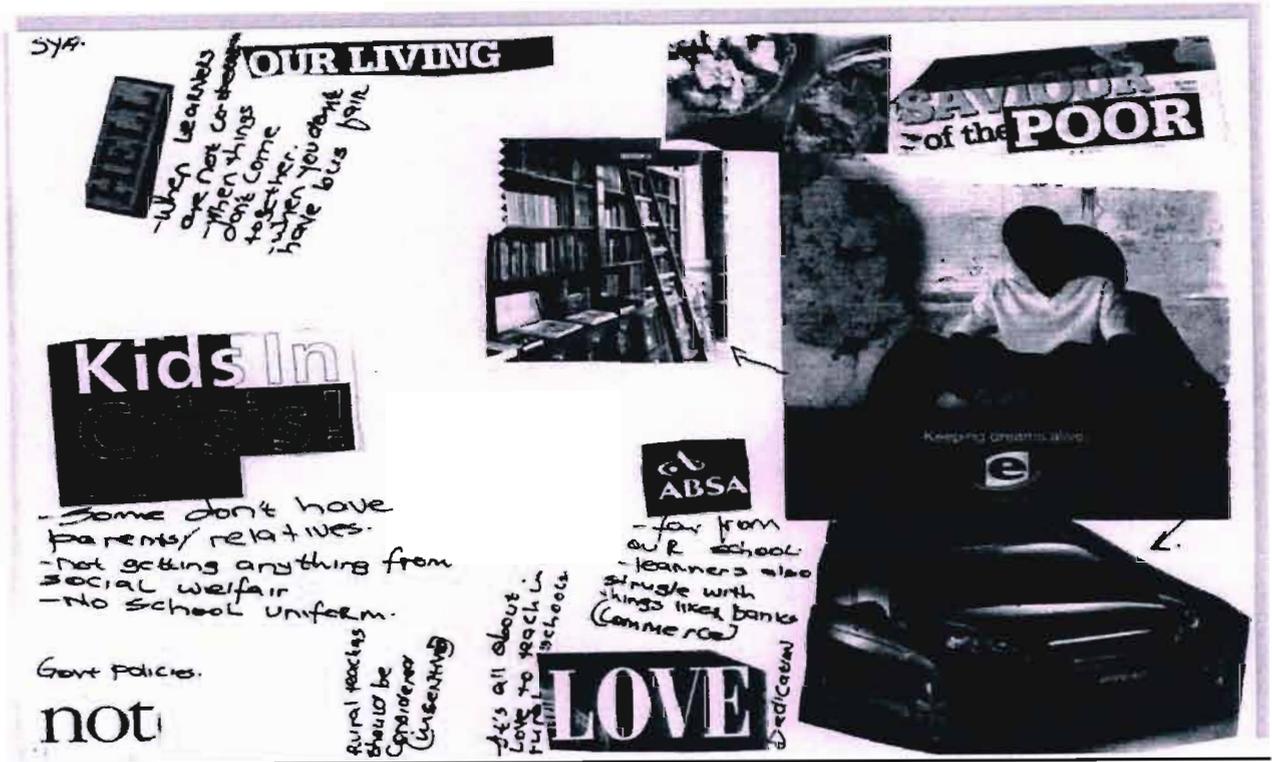
What the above collage indicates, among other things, is the extent to which Simon's life is intertwined with the lives of others (such as those of his particular learners), and with aspects that are part of all our lives in society, such as advertising, media, and so on. This constitutes his complex identity as a teacher in a rural context.

Family Ties

I am the last-born boy in a family of seven children. I grew up in the rural area of Bizana in the Eastern Cape where I stayed with my mother in very poor conditions. When my mother had to find work in the towns, I stayed with my four brothers and two sisters in my grandmother's home. When my mother eventually found a 'well-paid' job in KwaZulu-Natal, in the sugar plantations, I was forced to stay permanently with my grandmother until I was in standard three.

Up to this time, I had never really bonded with any of my siblings and I constantly felt lonely. Because I was the youngest, they still considered me a baby and therefore excluded me from many of their activities and outings. This exclusion, together with my mother's absence, and the fact that I have never seen or met my biological father, added to my misery and loneliness. I was born into a very poor family, with a very poor, sparse background.

At the end of that year, I passed standard three. It was when my mum returned home and, this time, it was for good. I was thrilled and overjoyed. Even though at times I would blame her for my loneliness and would sometimes describe her as a 'horrible mum', in retaliation for leaving me, I could not deny the fact that when she was around, she was indeed a caring and loving person. After a month my mum found us a new home. But things didn't get financially better; in fact it only got worse and I had to continue my education in circumstances of dire poverty.

Primary School Years

I attended a primary school in my area. To me this school reminded me of home because it was also round in shape and made from mud. I remember having to go to school in the rain, walking long distances after having taken the livestock to the pastures. The livestock that I tended to belonged to the man who married my mother after my biological father left us. It was more problematic for me during the dipping season when I had to round up the cows and the sheep and drive them to the dip. During this time it was not possible for me to get the animals to the dip and attend school at the same time, and this was the time when most of us in the village missed classes.

I remember struggling to go to school in winter. I had no warm clothing and was grateful to my primary school principal when she came to my assistance. She noticed that I was terribly cold and shivering, and she instructed her son to go home and fetch me a jersey. She then gave the garment to me so I could warm up. Although my principal was very strict, and even beat us, I loved her. She showed us a lot attention and support, and cared for us in many ways. This is one of the fond memories I have of a caring person during my primary schooling. During my

primary school years' I wanted to become a lawyer. I noticed that other children had their fathers to defend them and to speak up for them. I had no father around, and I had no one to speak on my behalf. So becoming a lawyer seemed to be to be a logical choice at this time.

Father-Son Reunion

When I passed standard seven, my mum announced that my dad wanted to meet with me. I was surprised and excited, but also somewhat nervous. I obviously did not want anyone to witness the scene. A few days later I made the trip to visit my biological father. I stayed with him and my step-mother (my father's new wife). I stayed in Port Shepstone with my father's family over the Christmas holidays. I must say I did enjoy these holidays. When the holidays were over and I was preparing to leave to go back home, my father asked me if I would like to stay with him and continue my schooling at a nearby high school. I thought this was a brilliant idea. The school here was much closer to the house than the one at my mum's home. I would not have to walk long distances to school. However, when I decided to stay with my father, things changed between me and my step-mother. It was certainly no longer nice staying with my step-mother.

High School Years

Of the seven siblings in my family, I was the only one who managed to further my studies into high school. Most of my siblings dropped out at standard seven and went to look for jobs to support themselves and their families. In my new school I had to learn isiZulu, which was the vernacular. This was a challenge for me because I was actually Xhosa-speaking. I remember how some of the students in grade 8 used to tease me when I tried to communicate in isiZulu. I was not very fluent in it. They would laugh at me and say, 'hey look at him how he speaks'... They somehow enjoyed the way I spoke.

My teachers at the new school were very supportive and tried to assist me with my isiZulu. They even made sure that in the classrooms they communicated in a way that would make it easier for me to grasp the content. Two teachers stand out in my memory from high school. I can't seem to forget these amazing teachers who taught me English, History and Biology. They motivated us

and constantly boosted our confidence to be the best we could. Mr. Gubo, my Biology teacher, would give me a chance to teach the other students in class because he could see how well I performed in his subject. He used to say, "Wena, you are a good teacher..." This is when my love for teaching was born and I forgot all about becoming a lawyer.

I seriously started thinking of attending a Teachers' College but I was confronted with a financial problem. Neither my father nor mother could afford the fees. One of my teachers arranged for me to attend an open day at the University of Natal, where I had a chance to ask about scholarships and bursaries, and about the application process. I decided then to apply to the University of Natal during my Matric year. When my matric results were released, I was excited to learn that I was accepted at the University on a full bursary. I remember asking them at the university, "What should I bring? And they said, 'Nothing, except your sleeping material and clothes. Do not worry about money'..." I was elated! The first year went smoothly. Then, in the middle of my second year, my mother passed away. Oh! Was this not a painful experience? I never really got over my mum's death. Then, during the final year of my HDE, I received news that my father has passed away. I suppose that's life!

After completing my studies at the university, I found it difficult to find a job. I eventually got employed at a private finishing school where I could only teach Biology. I spent three years in this school and subsequently found a job in my present school, where I started in 2005. My intention of teaching in a rural school was to be able to instil in my learners that, even though they live in rural areas, they must keep their dreams alive. They can achieve anything, just as long as they keep the dream alive that they can become someone...I just wanted to encourage them to open their eyes and see that it's not the end of the road for them.

My first days in the new school were indeed a great challenge - adapting to a school with few resources, adapting to the different levels of knowledge that the students had, and learning what the government policies were in relation to education in rural areas. Despite these handicaps, the

teachers, learners and members of the community were very welcoming, and made me feel very comfortable in my new role.

It is about Love and Dedication

I think that I had been blessed to have formed a good relationship with the community, in spite of the fact that I did not stay in the rural village where the school was located. I believed that because I was on good terms with the students it made it easier for the parents in the community to accept me as a good teacher. Being second parent to the children while they are at school strengthened the bond between parents and teachers. I can clearly remember the days when I would have to dig into my own pocket to buy lunch to the many students who were hungry and whose parents could not afford to provide for them. YES, I have a big heart and I am too kind, but that's just me. But nothing could have touched my heart more than the response I received from one of the learners and his mother when I surprised her son with a new pair of trousers and shirt.

Whilst on duty, I spotted this learner with a torn grey pair of trousers and a torn shirt. I called for him and said, "Hey, wena, this is not your school uniform and why is your clothes torn? He replied, "Sir, this is the only trouser and shirt I have." I said, "Ok", and then quickly glanced at him to estimate what size I thought he would wore. That same day I made a stop at Jet's Stores and purchased a new pair of trousers and shirt for this learner. The next day I called the learner to my classroom and gave him the packet. He was so happy that he even brought in his mum the next day. She said, "Thank you, you don't know how much you have done for me". . . I always maintain that if you do something for a needy child then the parents respond positively.

Many times I sacrificed my lunch breaks and even holidays to give my learners extra tuition for the matric examinations. This eventually paid off when they received top English matric results and then they began to see their dreams come alive! But sadly this achievement was not appreciated by the management of the school and at times I wanted to leave because of their attitude. There were also transportation costs that were getting too expensive for me. I only

55

persisted because of the strong relationships I formed with my colleagues, the parents and the learners at this school. I felt apprehensive at the thought of leaving my children behind because I had come to love them and they had come to trust me. This made it difficult for me to leave the rural school and move to another school closer to home.

Known for keeping bad records

At this moment in time I'm very disappointed with management. In spite of the excellent English results produced by my matric learners, the free holiday lessons I provided for the learners, as well as my using my time to respond to learners' personal needs, they did not respond in an affirming way. One form of appreciation would have surely been a recommendation for promotion – not that I was doing anything for the learners out of selfish motives - but it never came. My trust in the principal and in the language HOD diminished when they kept harassing me and calling me into the office. They questioned me about why my Matric learners only obtained top English marks. Do they think that I'm incapable of teaching in their school? I think they all are jealous. There were days when things deteriorated so badly that I wanted to quit. My learners sensed that something was remiss between management and myself, and they began to plead with me not to leave the school. This management has a bad practice of only recording the negative information on the teachers, and using it to threaten them. For example, because I don't live in the same area as the school, I am forced to use public transport, which is always delayed. Thus, I am 20 minutes late every-day. On my arrival, I find that those teachers who had come before me had not starting their teaching. Yet, I am the only one who is verbally lashed. One can clearly see that the teachers who live in this area enjoy special treatment from the principal. They are also allowed into his office at any time. And when they emerge, they seem to talk in subdued tones.

Kids in Crisis!

I love teaching in this rural school. But sometimes it can be HELL, teaching out here. There are some learners who just don't give a damn about the teachers, the school property or their education. They find it more a thrill to be hooked into drugs and to get involved in gang-related fights on the school property. Just the other day, two senior boys were highly drugged, and got into a violent row, where the one boy stabbed the other in the head. He was rushed to hospital and treated for severe head injuries. In other cases, boys smoke their drugs in the toilets in the morning and sit in for the lessons, only to cause havoc.

In desperation for a mere social grant offered by the government to young girls who fall pregnant, many of our poor learners fall pregnant, thinking they can use that money to support their homes and families. What a catastrophe! It is hard for me as a teacher to watch those young girls getting pregnant just to get the social grant money to support themselves and their families. It is hard, as a teacher, to see your learners so drugged out of their minds; but at the same time it's very hard for me to just throw these kids away. But who do we tell our struggles to? There is no platform for the teachers in rural schools to tell the government or the public about our daily struggles. I think that the government is very insensitive towards us rural teachers, and this adds to our hardships as teachers in rural schools. They seem to have a one-policy-fits-all approach, regardless of whether they are dealing with an urban or a rural school. But we believe we should be considered, and even compensated for the struggles we have to endure. We don't even have proper facilities to answer the call of nature! This is not FAIR!

Keeping Dreams Alive

Instead of abandoning my rural school, I think it would be better to try and improve the situation so that the working conditions are improved. I would like to see my school being renovated and security employed day and night. Having projects in the school that can promote the community's sense of ownership of the school would go a long away in preventing vandalism of the school property by the community members. Such projects could include having a school hall that can be used as a community meeting place, and also having a gardening project, where

the school gardens are used by the community to produce vegetables. Community involvement in the school would also curb the use of drugs, unplanned pregnancies and violent behaviour among the students. I'm of the view that if teachers of different races could come to my school and instil in these learners motivation, care and support, together with book knowledge, these learners would succeed in being the best they can.

4.2 Portrait Two: Hilton

Hilton is in his mid-forties, married and a father of six children. He was born and raised in a rural area. At birth he was diagnosed with Albinism, a disease causing whiteness of the skin which had a profound influence in his life. The collage below depicts that of a very sad and troubled individual.

The sadness on the face of the lady portrayed above, for example, can in many respects be read as reflective of his experiences as an albino child and teacher at this point in time. The community, for example, believed that he was 'cursed' or 'bewitched', and the children thought if they ever touched him they would get these 'white things' on their hands.

Hilton tells his story

I can still remember those lonely nights when my family would get invited for meals and the neigbhours' children would not dare to sit next to me. I would hear them whispering to each other, "Let this creature eat alone". At primary school, my classmates would sometimes beat me up and lock me up in a cupboard until my siblings and teachers would come to my rescue. My teachers were my guardian angels. They knew about my condition and were very supportive. They would make me sit in the front of the class so I would be able to see the writing on the chalkboard more clearly. They knew that my eyesight was deteriorating. Those days, in my community, teaching was regarded as an honourable job. It earned you a lot of respect from the parents and the learners. I remembered so clearly that my teachers showed a deep sense of care and commitment towards the disadvantaged learners in our community. This made a deep impression on me very early in my life. I wanted to serve my community and, hopefully, become a teacher like them, one day.

Imaginary girlfriends

In high school, there were times when I longed for a girlfriend. But every time I made a 'pass' at one of them, they would run, lift up their dresses, show me their 'bottoms' and shout back, using vulgar language. I lost hope in them and began to take on imaginary girlfriends. Did they not realize that it hurt so much to feel rejected? It was so painful not to have girlfriends to share tender moments with, or have friends to have fun with. Worst of all was the lack of support from the community, especially when you needed this above all. This discriminating behaviour was too difficult for my poor mum. On the other hand, my dad was very unconcerned about my condition. To him I was just a normal member of the family. He would explain to them that what I had was simply a medical condition called Albinism, a skin disease which I developed from birth.

After a few years in high school, while I was doing my standard 7 (Gr.9), the financial situation at home, worsened. My dad, who suffers from diabetes, lost his job and this meant that I could no longer attend school. My dreams of going to college and becoming a teacher had to fade away and the embarrassment of sitting at home for a year began to seep in. I must admit that the

combination of not being at school and not even being allowed to play outside or push a wheelbarrow in the sun depressed me. Then one day I could not take it any longer. I tied a rope around a piece of wood, placed my head through the rope and began to swing. Just then my mother walked in and saw what I was up to. She untied the rope and gave me the spanking of my life. My aim, in fact, was to commit suicide. But I was only twelve years old and I didn't know how to do it!

The situation was getting unbearable for me. I then plucked up courage to go and look for my elder brother. We only knew that he was working as a gardener for some white people in Howick. Eventually I found him and pleaded with him to fund me for the year, so I could return to school. After a long deliberation with him on the street corner, he finally agreed, and so it was the start of new things for me, even if not good though.

Keep the fires burning?

The poor circumstances in my home forced me to leave home and stay with my dad's brother. In this way I would avoid transport costs, as there was a school close to his home. Living there was hell. My cousins ill-treated me, and my uncle expected things from my parents in return for providing housing me. So, in no less than a month, I fled to my aunt's house which was near the mountains. My aunt was struggling financially, but this struggle made me work harder because I knew eventually it would lead to brighter things. It did! I managed to complete my matric (final year of high school) in 1989 with fairly good results and I then returned home to my parents. Although I had to deal with grinding poverty and its harsh challenges, I knew I had a responsibility towards my parents. I felt especially indebted to my mum, who stood by me as I was growing up and who endured much physical and emotional pain. Once at home I opened a small business selling beer in order to survive. It wasn't the best option, but my dad knew that we were struggling and that I had to do something to keep the fires burning at home. The money that I made I gave to my mum to buy maize, mealie meal and meat; she was most appreciative and humbly received my earnings. The dream of going to college and becoming a teacher was now completely out of my mind.

The Calling

After selling beer for 3 years I was approached one Sunday whilst in church by our pastor. As a child I attended the church every Sunday not because it was a major source of inspiration but because my mum would practically drag me to the church doors. But I have to thank my mother for doing this. The pastor noticed me, told me that he thought l would make a great leader someday, and that I should join the church to become a pastor. My dad was outraged. Firstly, because I had passed matric, he wanted something better. Then, this was an unpaid job. However, my aunt convinced him, and I began my studies in Theology at the Bible College, and the church paid my fees. But the most amazing thing happened while I was in my second year of Biblical Studies. I received a calling to become a teacher. I thought this dream was dead but it seems it was keeping itself alive. I then began to apply to the University of Durban Westville, and worked extra hard to complete the Biblical Studies course. I firmly believed this was God's work and that I could not just leave without completing the whole course. After 3 years, I completed Biblical Studies and then set out to start my first year teaching course at University of Durban Westville the following year.

City life is a 'jol'

Studying in the city opened a whole new world for me. The night life was great and there was always someone having parties, so it meant that there was always food available. I had access to proper toilets and showers. It was good. However, the year I qualified as a teacher [this was the best year of my life], I was broke, and in desperate need of cash. I could no longer stay on campus, so I decided to return home to see if I could earn some money before returning to the city again.

Grips of despair

After spending a few days at home I witnessed things that really churned my stomach. The area that I once lived in had now fallen into the grips of despair. The sight of poor children suffering without food; of girls and women being raped by their own family members; of children hanging around corners and not attending school during school times; and of parents not being

interested in their children and in themselves - all this was too unbearable. I deliberated for many long nights as to whether I should stay in this set-up, or leave to chase my own dreams in the city, a place that was making an impression on me in recent times. I decided to stay in spite of the ugly things I experienced here while I was growing up. There was no turning back for me now. My community needed me. Fortunately, a teaching post became available not far from home and, without any hesitation, I accepted it. My first teaching post was to a school where I became the Economics teacher. I have been at this same school for the past eleven years.

Lots of sympathy

When I qualified as a teacher I proved my worth as a male and for all the Albinos in my area. At first the teachers at this school made me feel comfortable, but I soon realized that, in their eagerness to please, they were treating me differently. As an adult I did not find that my skin condition placed any challenges on the choices I had made in my life. Step by step, I came to accept my condition and believed that I was not abnormal but a normal human being. At this school, teachers began to do things for me that I was quite capable of doing myself. For example, they would come into my class and settle the learners before I arrived. They assumed that I was struggling to get the learners to respect me. Soon I began to feel ashamed of myself. Although I had good rapport with the teachers, there was an element of sympathy in their attitude to me. This, in all honesty, while appreciated, made me feel uncomfortable. I knew they thought they were helping me. But did they not realize that dark skin people are not perfect too?

I'm not the "Informer"

After a few months some teachers got tired of doing things for me, and some even resented me in the end. They felt envious because the principal and most teachers on staff got along well with me. Those that were envious soon began to spread rumours that I was an "informer". They saw me frequently in the principal's office. But I managed to convince them in the presence of the other teachers that the reason why I was in the office so often that particular week was related to my work. I was actually discussing my workload and the idea of including Business Economics as another teaching subject. The principal soon confirmed this to be true. But it was still very

difficult to maintain a pleasant relationship with all the teachers. Whilst some teachers are genuinely helpful and supportive, others just discourage you and make you feel inexperienced. This is especially when you are a young teacher working under the mentorship of an older teacher. I was fortunate to be living in the same area as the school because, for some reason, both parents and learners trusted and respected the local teachers far more than the teachers who travelled from other areas to the school. I felt sorry for my colleagues who travelled distances to school because, although they were excellent teachers and promoted the school, they just didn't get the acknowledgment from management they deserved. Many of them left when parents and learners made it unbearable for them to stay.

My school

My school faces many challenges every day. We don't have the many resources that other schools have, our student numbers are very high and therefore the classes are overcrowded. But despite these challenges, I come to school daily to teach, to make a difference in the learners' lives, and I try not to compare ourselves to township and city schools. I think that, in spite of being situated in a rural area, this school is doing an exceptional job. So, after eleven long years, I am proud of the fact that I have just been promoted to the position of HOD. I see this achievement as something great for myself and for others. We are all propelled towards a bigger dream. In this position I would be able to and tell the people that there are schools out here that are doing well in these rural areas. I hope that businesses will hear of us and give us something. I began writing letters to our businesses in the area and to some 'high' people I know in the department. I asked them for their help in improving our school and it was amazing and encouraging to see them responding so favourably.

School is not how I remember my school days to be. I feel de-motivated and frustrated with teaching. Many learners smoke drugs and drink liquor on the school premises and disrupt my lessons. Yet no punishment is meted out to them; many female students fall pregnant and are forced to drop out without completing the year's study. But when they return after giving birth, they are no longer interested in schoolwork and are often absent. Finally there are those learners who steal the school's electricity cables. Do they not realize how this impacts negatively on their education? In my thinking and in mind that if we can talk to the learners properly and make them

understand that the school is theirs and that they should own the school as a community, this will make a huge difference. But man! You should see the look on the learners' faces when I surprise them at their homes in the evening to inform them of their progress or to complain to their parents about their misbehaviour. They stare at me with such 'nasty eyes', as if they were casting an' evil spell' on me. It's a wonder I'm still alive today. But I do this because I care for them and treat them as if they were my own.

My school is in the same area where I live and the children coming to this school come from homes where many parents are unemployed. So they often come without breakfast or lunch. Many of their parents are also sick. There is a lot of HIV/AIDS in my area. But at this point in time my strengths are being directed to being in a rural school. I still want to teach in these schools to improve them and not just hide in them…Yah! I'm happy. I won't accept another post elsewhere. I enjoy being at a rural school.

4.5 Section B: Third person narratives

4.5.1 Portrait Three: Zandile

Zandile is a thirty-eight-year old African female. She is presently teaching at Zamkhle High School, which is situated in a rural area. The collage below, which is divided into two, is depicting on the left hand side what challenges Zandile's community is facing and on the right hand side what good things she sees for herself and her community for the future.
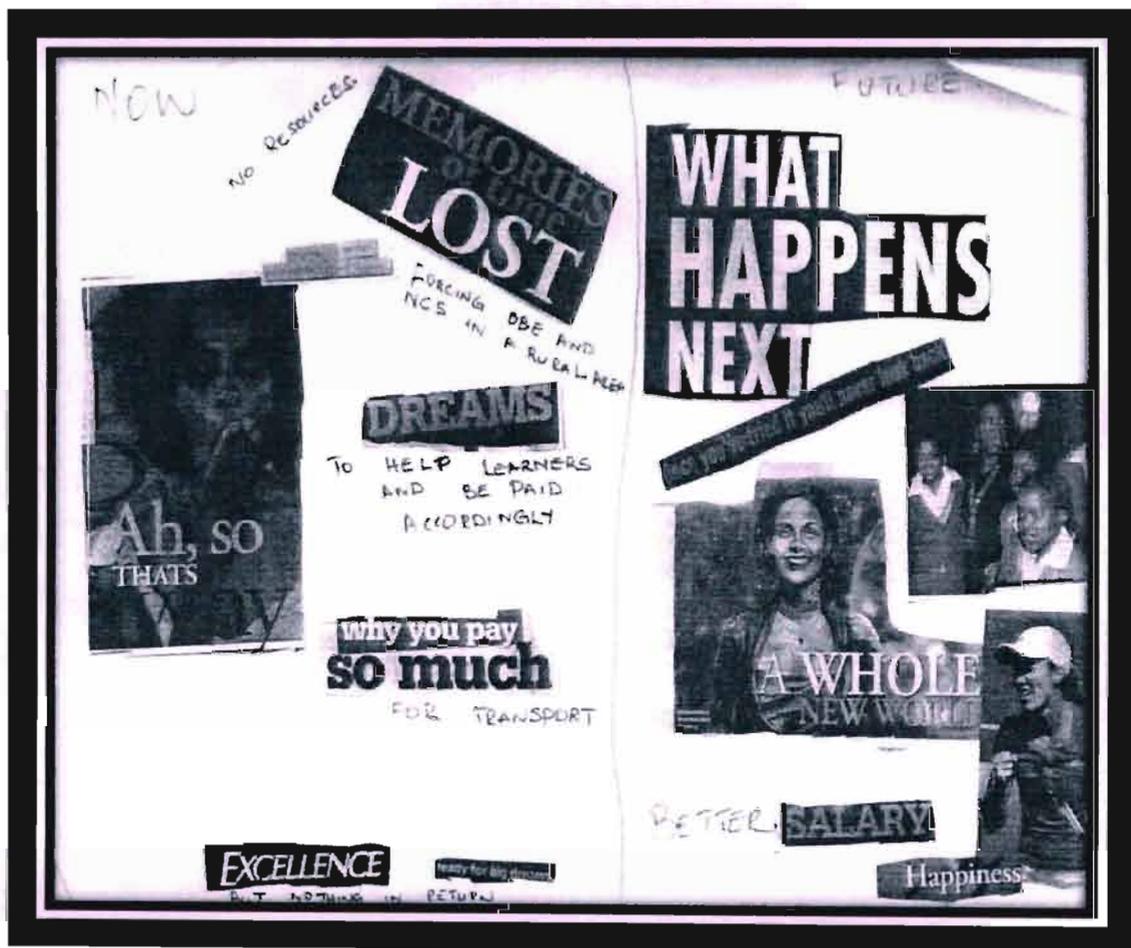
Early childhood

Zandile was born in March 1970 in a rural area called Ntunzini. She is the third child of a family of six siblings. She describes her family as a close knit one. Her dad was a teacher and her mum served as an unqualified teacher for many years. Her family enjoyed living in this area as all the

neighbours got on very well. They shared much and everyone did many things together as one big family. Even though both her parents were professionals she and her siblings did not think they were above the rest. "We did not think we were special, no we not, we are living the life, yes, just like the others in the neighbourhood." As she was growing up she found herself to have a close bond with her dad. She would speak to him about her problems and he would understand her better than her mum. Although she described him as being kind, she always felt he was a very straight forward person and would tell you if you were right or wrong, irrespective of who you were. 'He would call a spade a spade.' Because the school that he taught in was a distance away he rented a room nearby and she only saw him on weekends.

During this time she missed him as she felt that her mother was very harsh towards them. "My mother saw us sisters as inferior to the brothers. This is something she got from her mother". Her granny, who showed a clear preference for boys, did not like her mother to work. That's why her mother did not study towards completing her teaching qualification. "Granny," she said, "believed that in the Black culture a woman was not supposed to work." Her dad, on the other hand, opposed this form of gender stereotyping. He often told her that when he died, he wanted all his children to get an equal share. Even if they were married or not, they were still his children. The boys were not going to be treated in any special way, just because they were boys. This statement didn't go well with her granny. Her attitude reminded all once again of her bias in favour of boys. 'I think it's the way she herself {granny} was treated by her parents. It's a circle... a cycle of life,' observed Zandile.

Primary School Years

Zandile attended a local primary school. This school was a long distance away from home and she and her friends had to cross a river to get there. Sometimes when it rained heavily the river would flow over, preventing them from attending school. Being quite young at this stage, she couldn't recall any fond memories of her teachers or the time spent in this school. However, she recalled the year she failed standard five (Gr.7). She described it as being the most embarrassing and humiliating moment of her life. It was as though she had brought dishonour and shame to the

family, especially when both her parents were teachers. The following year she was transferred to a school in Richards Bay, where she completed her standard five (Gr.7) and six (Gr.8).

At this school, she recalls how strict and rigid the teachers were. The pupils, she said, "were beaten left, right and centre, regardless of whether they were male or female". Everyone received the same punishment. There was, however, one teacher in particular that Zandile would not forget. This female teacher would make her angry and, at times, Zandile felt 'suffocated' by her remarks. She would degrade her and tell the class that the girls had no nerves, no power. Zandile said that she preferred a beating for being rude, rather than for simple misdemeanours such as not wearing a school belt or having their hair plaited in a certain way. She described their plight in vivid terms. "We had no say in the classroom. Our bums used to be green." This went on until she was about thirteen years old, when Zandile managed to pass standard six (Gr8), and move on to high school.

High School Years

"Down syndrome"

As there was no high school available in Ntunzini, Zandile home town, she was forced to leave home and stay with relatives in Ntuzuma, which was a township in Durban. Here she attended a high school called Zwelebansi, which was located in a rural area. As she matured, she was able to remember things better. She described the female teachers in this school as being far more rigid and forceful than the male teachers. "They would beat us without even listening to why our homework was not done", she recalls. "What if there were no candles at home?" she hissed. In spite of these incidents, she still believed that attending schools in rural areas were the best decisions her parents made for her. Her favourite subjects at high school were Biology and Geography. Zandile said, "The only reason I liked these subjects was because both the subject teachers were males. I found them more accommodating and flexible than the female teachers. Female teachers had this "Down syndrome" attitude - they want to let you down."

This encouraged the sexism of the boys. "At this school I felt that the boys did not respect the girls and the girls were terrified of them," she recalled. She relates an incident when, as a young

girl on her way to the shop to buy something, a boy she did not know beckoned her and forced himself on her against the church wall. Luckily for her, the choir group had just finished practising when they heard her screams. Zandile states, "It was very hard for the girls to say no at that time."

In the Heat of Passion

During standard nine (Gr.11) Zandile fell pregnant. She recalls the day her boyfriend invited her to his home. She said she did not intend to go that far but, as usual, the boyfriend did not listen to her and, in the heat of the passion, she kind of let things happen. When she found out that she was pregnant she did not tell anyone. Her mother, however, became suspicious, and soon realized that she was having a baby. Not being able to cope with the pregnancy and schoolwork, Zandile failed matric and was forced to return home.

Although her mum did not hit her, Zandile says it was torture living there. Day in and day out it was the same story. Her mother would remind her, "I sent you to get an education, but you came back pregnant". She described her nine months at home as living hell. "It was liked being locked up in a prison cell." Her dad, on the other hand, was equally disappointed, but kept quiet about it.

School and Motherhood

The following year Zandile gave birth to a son. Her mother insisted that she stay at home and breastfeed her baby. In 1990, Zandile decided to get married to the school boyfriend who fathered her first child. She moved in with him and stayed in Umlazi G Section in Durban. Then in 1991 she went back to school to complete her Matric. She sat as a private candidate but, sadly, failed. At the end of 1992, Zandile gave birth to her second child. She attempted her Matric again, and her second effort was successful.

First Teaching Job: "An Apprentice"

Zandile, at this point in her life, felt very uneasy about her future. She felt lonely and deserted. There seemed to be no one - not even her husband – she could rely on for any form of support or guidance towards a career choice. Thus it was with great anxiety and confusion that she decided to leave Umlazi to return to Ntunzini, her hometown. She did not realise at the time that this 'trek' from the township area back to the rural area was to set her on the path to teaching here. She had barely spent a few days relaxing at home, when she was approached by the principal of the local primary school to act as a substitute teacher for a class of Standard Two (Gr. 4) learners. Overwhelmed with excitement at this unexpected offer, she agreed readily. She became nervous when she realized that she had never taught before. However, the principal reassured that all would go well. Because she did not have any relevant teaching qualifications, the school employed her as a privately paid teacher.

With only the completion of her matric, Zandile found that she had to learn how to be a teacher. With the help of the principal and staff, she learnt how to mark the register, conduct the morning prayers, and mark books. Working through these mundane tasks, she developed a passion for teaching. She then remembered that her dad had predicted since her 11th birthday that she would one day become a teacher. It was at this school that she discovered her love for teaching. At this point she recalls the fond memories of her dad and his love for teaching. Her dad's love for teaching was revealed to them on a daily basis, when he would share his school experiences. Unlike her mother, who was unable to qualify as a teacher, Zandile had a burning desire to pursue a career as a qualified teacher.

I'm q Qualified Teacher

Finally, in 1996, Zandile completed her Bachelor of Pedagogics at the University of Zululand. Her love for Geography and isiZulu as a learner in high school is what propelled her to complete her majors in these subjects. In that same year, she accepted a position as a qualified teacher in a rural school in the Vulindlela district. She was to spend eight challenging years at Kamabuhle (pseudonym). There she had both good and bad times. Zandile remembers her first days of

teaching at this school as quite a challenge. It was her first experience of working in a racially-mixed group. Never before did she work so closely and interact so freely with white, indian and coloured teachers in a rural school. However, as time went by, and as she began getting used to teaching in this school, negative memories of her past began to haunt her. The old grudges she had held so strongly against white people, developed when she was growing up, slowly began to resurface. She tried desperately to suppress these memories, but the powerful manner in which the white teachers at this school exerted their control over everyone else, greatly affected her.

The manner in which white teachers displayed their authority on every aspect of teaching, and the grip they had over the schools, sidelined and isolated the black teachers in their own schools. "That's what they did best," she recalls. "In staff meetings, they would make us, the black teachers, look foolish and feel uneducated when they spoke, using very high and complicated words... It was as if they owned the English language." It was these actions that brought back painful memories of earlier discrimination she experienced at the hands of whites. She recalled an instance when, as a young girl, she was humiliated and belittled among her peers by the white shop owners in their area. A simple trip to the shop to buy bread became her worst nightmare.

In those days, they were not allowed to enter the shops owned by whites. When they needed to buy bread they had to peep through a hole in the door and wait for the white man to help them. Sometimes they waited for up to three hours before being helped. She expressed her deep feelings towards such behaviour: "It was hurting. It's even hurting now. It was as if they owned the land too." It was all these negative memories, together with the superior, "know it all" personalities of the white teachers at the school that contributed to the dysfunctional relationship she had with the teachers in this school.

Her principal (a black male), however, believed that the white teachers were God's gift to the school, and showed great deference towards them. "You know our principal had that mentality that, ah, white teachers are better than black teachers", she observed. He would rather treat her badly, than offend the white teachers. She related an incident when a white teacher barged into

her classroom and removed all her chairs. Zandile said that she got these chairs, with the permission of the principal, from the library. However, when the matter came to the office, he denied this and sided with the white teacher. This left her feeling humiliated. But this treatment did not discourage her from what she set out to do. In some important ways she appreciated her own strengths in this particular context. Above all, she knew rural life and the background of the learners - something of which the white teachers knew very little.

Apart from the challenge of dealing with the superior attitude of the white teachers, Zandile felt that she needed to tap into the mindsets of the female learners in this school. During lessons she would notice that the girls had the tendency to be quiet in class. When they were asked a question, they would not readily respond. But then she was amazed at how much potential these girls had when they presented their written work. "So why are they displaying this inferiority complex about themselves?" she wondered. She knew from her own schooling days in a rural school what she and other female learners were subjected to in the classroom. More importantly, Zandile felt that being a female teacher in this school, she needed to take the initiative in changing a system that placed girls below boys. As she pointed out, "I want to stop girls from being the followers and I want to make them into leaders. I want them to believe in themselves, so they don't end up being victims." She knew that this was no simple, overnight task.

Boys are Da Boys

The preference and status given to boys was just not a school thing. Zandile said it stemmed from the home and the community. In a family, the boys were valued and treated with more respect than the girls, even though the boys sometimes ended up being hardened criminals. If a family had only girls, it was as if there were no children. Girls were treated as if they were non-existent. So to change these attitudes, she believed that she first needed to try and change the mindset of the males in the school. This turned out to be a difficult task for her. All in all, teaching rural learners in the 1990's proved to be a great challenge for her.

These learners were deemed to be of a 'different kind'. Although there were a handful of dedicated learners, who showed a positive attitude towards their schoolwork, sadly, this group was somehow lost in the system. The majority were uninterested in school and they constantly displayed violent and unruly behaviour. Their involvement in drug activities made Zandile's task of teaching in this rural school even more difficult and frustrating. She relates incidents when male learners will 'rock up' at 10 'o clock for classes, highly drugged. This was a norm at this time in rural schools. The learners became unruly, and would continue to cause 'havoc' during her teaching periods.

The high rate of teenage pregnancy was another major problem that added to her frustration at this school. "It just irked me that these girls could give in so easily to a boy's demands and that they showed no power or courage to say NO," she said. Witnessing this was like reliving her own past. She remembers how she and her friends could not stand up to the boys when they took advantage of them emotionally and sexually. She remembers how they feared to question teachers who bullied them into believing that they were of no value. Now, as a teacher herself, she felt powerless as she watched her own female learners being drawn into a web of abuse. She was even more disgusted when she realized that there was no help for them. There was no protection from elders in the family or from the police. As in her own case, these girls accepted their role as victims. "These girls were being sexually abused by the male learners in the school," she observed. Yet they were reluctant to report the abuse for fear of being violently hit or being blamed as "trouble-causers". Many of the girls fell pregnant and dropped out of school.

It was at this point in her teaching career that Zandile resolved that she was going to change this system to one that recognized the importance of females in the home and community. This emerged from her being so passionate about teaching in a rural school. As she recalls: "I used my lunch breaks and spare time to talk to girls who were the victims of abuse and to instil in these learners, both male and females, the value of respect for each other. I even changed my teaching tactics and methods and this seemed to have made a slight difference with the learners in the class, especially the girls. The girls began to challenge the boys in lessons." Zandile prodded the girls to express themselves in the class even though some would not put up their

73

hands. She would literally force an answer out of them. "I want to see girls being involved in things; I want to see girls expressing themselves," she said.

Staffroom Affairs

After a hectic morning in the classroom, dealing with a drugged learner or trying to stop a fight between two girls, Zandile looked forward to the sound of the lunch bell. Even though her school had three staffrooms - one for the 'rigid' males, one for the white teachers and the one for "the others" - she managed to make herself comfortable in this rather strange set-up. Thus, in time, other teachers began to feel comfortable around her. A Coloured teacher in particular made her feel extremely at ease and still teaches in a rural school. They have become friends, and even regularly visit each other in their homes, where they engage in animated discussions on rural issues.

Love Is Not There…Anyone

But as the days, months and years went by, her passion for teaching slowly dissipated. She found she was performing her tasks mechanically, and was enduring the tedium of teaching because it was a source of income. Teaching in a rural school soon took its toll on her emotionally and financially. Transportation costs and the dependence on public transport to and from school made life difficult for her. The taxi she used would drop her off on the main road. She then had to walk a long distance to get to school, and this left her exhausted before she had even started her teaching. She also experienced stress as she had to often walk alone on roads that were not safe for women. On rainy days, the situation was worse. She would arrive at school soaking wet, with her shoes all covered in mud. This reduced her morale for the day.

The Walk Out

Her constant conflicts with the principal and the unruly learners added to her emotional breakdown. When the situation with the principal became unbearable she and some other teachers illegally declared themselves as "excess" and left the school. All the neighbouring schools came to hear of their illegal move, and many principals refused to place them in their

schools. But luckily for Zandile, one of the inspectors, who appreciated her plight, requested a principal to accommodate her in his school. She is presently employed as a permanent teacher at this school. But even here, she continues to face new problems. Teaching in a rural school is far from plain sailing.

The Stigma

At first she encountered a lot of resentment from the staff because of what she did at her previous school. "We were carrying that stigma in the first place and when they saw me I knew that they won't accept me," she said. Secondly, because she was not was from the area, they really made her feel like an outsider. *"Keep away from the foreigner,"* they would frequently say. It was at this point that Zandile realized that she had to win them over. To fit in she offered to do favours for them. *'Oh! don't worry I will do your playground duty and I can mark your class examination scripts",* she would offer, even though she had her own work to contend with.

But things were no better here compared to her previous school. Learners were still ill-mannered. Female and male teachers had separate staffrooms, and there were hardly any resources. To make matters worse, the parents were far from helpful. She believed that the learners' unruly behaviour and their lack of interest in their schoolwork were due to the parents' lack of co-operation. They didn't bother to come to school when they were repeatedly summoned to see what their learners were up to. They just kept away and expected to see good result from their learners at the end of the year. "They expect wonders," she observed. She soon realized that the parents ignored her status as a teacher and did not heed any advice she gave them regarding their children because she was seen as an outsider. She was not considered as 'one of them'; they made her feel like an outsider and did not take her seriously. Yet, great respect was showed to her colleagues who lived in the same area as the school. Zandile really felt despondent.

Wow! They See Something in Me

As time went by, she noticed that the teachers forgot about the 'stigma' and a relationship of trust began to develop between them. She came to see their overtures as being genuine when the

majority of the staff voted for her to be the staff representative on the Governing Body. This really boosted her ego, and she concluded, "...maybe there are qualities they are seeing in me." The position as a staff representative of a Governing Body lighted up her spirits to the extent that she began to get more involved in many school activities. She even taught matriculants on weekends, without expecting tuition fees, and felt a growing sense of connection with the learners after a very long time.

A whole new world

In spite of the successes of her rural school experiences, Zandile still harbours lingering doubts. She questions herself as to why she remains in a rural school when everything around feels so negative. The salary is pathetic. The parents are not co-operative. There are so many disobedient learners around. Many are involved in drug activities. To exacerbate matters, an autocratic style of management persists, and this constantly puts her down. When she is overwhelmed by the negativity around her, she tries to rise above it all. Her favourite book, during times of stress, is *The power of a praying parent*, and this seems to motivate her to carry on in a rural school. She knows that her intimate and sympathetic understanding of rural life is her strong point, and that she could contribute to changing the stigma associated with rural areas. She also says that this book gives her hope. She is able to look forward to a whole new rural world - one that would one day be transformed, and which would offer better prospects to all.

4.5.2 Portrait Four: Nikki

Nikki is an African female teacher in her late forties (she was born in 1970), and is the middle child of eight children. She grew up in a rural area. Her father started his career as a teacher but left for a nursing career after two years, when he found the learners in rural schools unruly. Since then he began working as a male nurse, until he reached retirement. Her mother was a housewife but, at a later stage, opened up a business from home. As the collage attempts to indicate, Nikki's school life was characterised by limited access to resources which are deemed central for teaching.
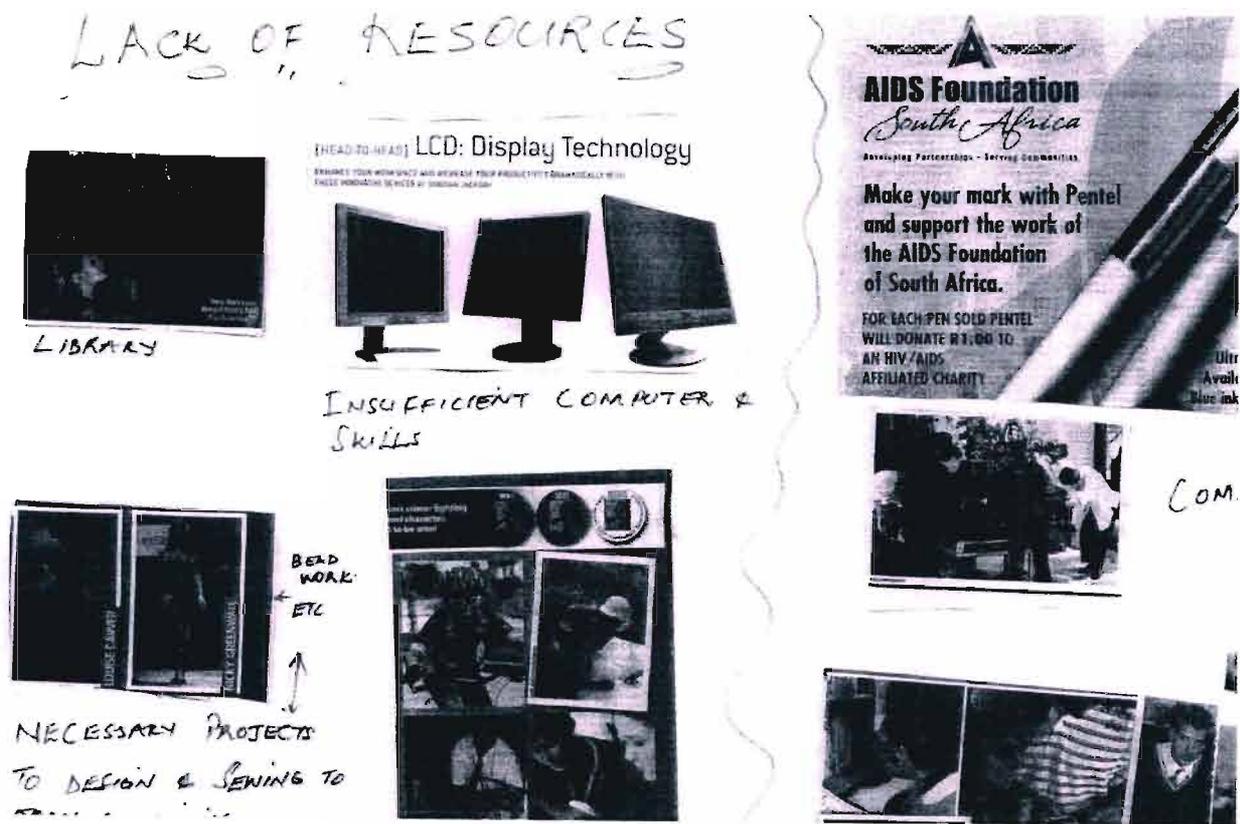
Her thoughts and desires, for example, indicate clearly that she never intended to pursue a career in the teaching profession. Below are her direct words:

Firstly it was not my intention to become a teacher, I wanted to become a nurse, but because of the shortage of jobs those days, I ended up being a teacher. Now I enjoy teaching. I chose to become a

teacher in a rural school because I thought learners in these schools
would have more respect for teachers than those in urban schools.

Childhood Days

Living in apartheid South Africa, Nikki grew up in a poor neighbourhood. In the area that she grew up in, there were no schools available, and so her years of primary schooling [standards 1-3] took place in a church, which the community used as classrooms until a proper school was built. When the new school was built, she often had to use public transport, as it was a distance from her home. She recalls that she had to wake up early to catch the 5am bus to make it to school by 7.30 am. On many occasions the bus was delayed, and she would arrive late at school. The teachers would refuse to listen to any reason and would lock them out of the gate, where they were forced to remain until 3 o'clock. *"I didn't like those teachers. I was so scared of them because they were always beating you."*

High School years

When Nikki was in high school she had established a good relationship with some of the teachers, especially Mrs. Khubisi, who was her Math teacher. Mathematics was her favourite subject since standard eight (Gr.10), but it all changed when Mrs Khubisi left and she got a new teacher in standard nine (Gr.11). Her symbol dropped from C to D because she could not understand the teacher. It is not surprising that she decided: *"I won't do Math again."* She also developed a close bond with a group of friends that lived in the area. They all travelled together to school, which was across the river. Many times the river would overflow, due to heavy rainfalls. These were their lucky days. They had a good excuse for not attending school. They were also sent home immediately, if they turned up at school soaking wet. She enjoyed high school because the teachers treated them in a mature manner, and didn't beat them up for silly things.

Nursing or Teaching

After completing Matric, Nikki fell pregnant and stayed at home to raise her baby. Whilst at home she applied for a seat at a nursing college, but her application was rejected because of her poor Biology results in her Matric examinations. Feeling rather sad, she took the chance of applying to College of Education, and her application was indeed successful. Nikki spent three years at this college and thereafter graduated with a secondary teacher's diploma. Equipped with this diploma, Nikki still did not secure a teaching position near her home. Instead, she was posted out to a deep rural area. She was forced to stay in the school area during the week and return home only on weekends. She felt very unsafe in this community because there was continual violence and senseless killings. There were days that she would be dressed and ready to leave for work when, suddenly, there be would gunshots and loud screams that could be heard in the streets. It was then understood that no one, not even the learners, would be attending school for that day. The community also dictated how the school should be run and what lessons should be taught to the learners.

Get Permission!

Although her life as a child was affected by apartheid, Nikki and her family were not politically aware. So she found it difficult teaching in this school, given that it was controlled by a particular political group. She felt stifled because she was not allowed to teach without a strong controlling hand from outside. She recalls how she had to get permission beforehand from the parents when she wanted to teach a lesson on Nelson Mandela. If she didn't, and the parents learned that their children were dealing with such a topic without their permission, she could be dismissed immediately

Time to leave

But all was not unrelieved gloom. When she was having a bad day, she knew she could always go to her principal, who was also someone from outside this area. But this advantage did not last. Due to a shortage of teachers in a neighbouring high school, she was transferred to teach isiZulu and Biology. From the time she got there she didn't get on with the new principal, who

was a female. Nikki felt that she was constantly rude to her and that she displayed a lack of respect just because she did not come from the area. Nikki also complained about the learners, who were ill-disciplined. The irony of her situation did not escape her. As she remembers, *"I decided to teach in the rural schools because I thought learners in the rural schools are more disciplined than urban areas."*

Nikki did her best to stay at this school from 1998 to 2005, until she quit and applied for a post nearer home. Her application proved successful. She was posted to teach Geography at a high school located in the rural area that she grew up in, and in which she presently resides. However, her new colleagues felt that her application was successful only because the principal knew her and was from the same area. So her welcome at her new school was very cold and unpleasant.

Stranger

Although Nikki belongs to this community, she still did not feel part of the staff because they tended to isolate her. Many teachers who commuted to the school disliked her because they felt that the principal showed her preferential treatment because they were both from the same community. She also sensed resentment from teachers who lived in the same community as her. Many felt that she was responsible for blocking an appointment of another local teacher as the principal took a special liking to her. She admits she did not enjoy the atmosphere at her school, and had to pretend that all was well. As she says, *"... many times I had to fake an experience of trying to get on with them."*

Insider

When staff issues were weighing her down she could count on the parents for support. As she observed, *"I've got a good relationship with the parents and because I know most of my learners' parents it is easy for me to discipline them."* In this way she did not seem to have a problem with the learners in this school. Although the learners are ill-disciplined, they are forced to respect Nikki because she lived in the same area as their parents, and they knew what serious trouble they would be in if she complained to their parents. For Nikki, the parents were her

trump card. Many teachers resented her for this. They notice that when the Management could not deal with a certain learner they would call her in to mediate between the learner and the parent. As she notes, *"Management appointed me to communicate with the parents about their children."*

Stop the Bickering!

There were many days when Nikki sits back and thinks of the trivial things that the staff members bicker over. When they could all rally together and try to solve many of the school's major problems that are destroying their learners - like teen pregnancy or drugs – they are consumed by petty squabbles. It is at these times that she becomes frustrated with teaching. She has to remind herself that even though it was not her original intention to become a teacher, deep in her heart she has come to love and enjoy it. She describes how the male teachers would not eat their lunch in the staffroom with the female teachers because the female teachers apparently 'talk too much'. Since then there was no mingling of any male teacher in the now all-female staffroom. How petty! And then there was the end-of-year staff party, when all the members should have been together, but the male teachers decided to have their own party on the same day at school. Nikki felt this was so unnecessary.

Nikki complains that besides dealing with a staff of unfriendly people, trying to work with the minimum resources is most difficult. Her school lacks essential resources that could distract the learners from doing drugs and crime. It could have a library that would serve to empower learners. Sport facilities, if present, would surely strengthen talent on the sports field. Sadly, her school does not even have sufficiently skilled teachers to teach learners a skill such as bead work, so that these learners can go out and make a living.

Community in Crisis!

Her community is clearly in crisis! To help her learners, she formed learning programmes, where learners were trained, so they could help fellow learners with advice on numerous issues regarding teen pregnancy, HIV and sexual abuse. But many learners still fell pregnant in order to

cash in on the social grant. 'The girls don't want to take care of themselves,' she bemoans. When they give birth, the babies are looked after by the grannies so that they could return to school. However, when at school, they were no longer interested in schoolwork. Nikki says she tries her best to motivate them to work hard but, sadly, many still fail, while the others simply drop out on their own. The community is also hard hit by the HIV and AIDS pandemic. So many learners miss out on parental love as 'sick' parents, in their weak and fragile state, cannot respond with care. Her greatest challenge, however, has been teaching learners who have lost both parents and who are sometimes living on their own. As she says, "I lost a brother to this disease, so I knew that I had to make a difference to these learners' lives and I believe growing up with a strong Christian background has helped me cope with teaching in my school and it has given me the strength to do things to help these learners." She continues: "it has helped me a lot because now I can help them. I invite people from Non Government Organisations and whoever can come to speak to the girls and boys and maybe try to motivate them to learn and become better."

We can do it together!

Nikki says that it is the responsibility of every teacher to support their school and community for the benefit of the learners and encouraging this support will indeed erase any negativity that the township and suburb people have towards their learners. As she says: "I hate them treating the kids anyway like that because you are in rural areas, you are born here and some teachers coming from the suburbs, they look down on you when you are born in the rural area".

She remembers her dad in moments of despair. If her dad were alive today, she knows he would have told her: "You stick as a teacher in a rural school."

4.6 Conclusion

Narrative accounts of teachers' lives and careers can a serve as tools for self-reflection (Cole & Knowles, 2000). The four teachers' stories presented in my study can provide readers with an instrument for reflecting upon their own beliefs and practices. By actively weighing the teachers' experiences against their own life stories, readers may gain deeper insights into their practices and experiences that shape their teaching. Engaging in this kind of self-reflection has been

shown to be an essential part of teachers' professional growth and development (Cole & Knowles, 2000).

After constructing the narratives, readers can gain understanding of how the teachers – Hilton, Simon, Zandile, and Nikki - consciously and unconsciously constructed "a life" through the telling, and how they made sense of their lives in particular contexts.

Chapter 5

Choices in story telling: a critical engagement with 'gender'

5.1 Introduction

The stories referred to in Chapter 4 are a classical example of Gee's (2000) assertion that our identity - that is, who are we - is mainly a result of the experiences we have had before. Gee (2000: 99) defines "identity" as "a certain 'kind of person' in a given context". In the context of this study, all people have multiple identities which are connected to how they perform in society. For example, a woman can be identified as a parent, a counselor and a director. Identities are tied to historical, sociocultural, and institutional forces. In addition, a sense of identity is formed and re-formed over a life time, within individual contexts and through interactions within society. Each of us, however, has a "core identity", which reflects our basic character. Even this core identity, nevertheless, is always changing (Gee, 2000). These are the issues that the previous chapter reflected indirectly, as the participants' act of telling their own stories set the scene for this research. These stories set the agenda and provided the narratives on how they consciously and unconsciously constructed "a life" through the telling, and how they made sense of their lives in particular contexts.

In this chapter, I, as the researcher attempt to describe the complexity of a rural context. Through the analysis I wish to show how teachers make meanings of a personal self within rural context and how dominant discourses operational within rurality narrate individuals like Hilton, Simon, Zandile and Nikki and how from within the critical paradigm they resist those narratives. In this chapter, I am reading rurality from the discourse of gender. The reasons why I singled out the discourse of gender in the stories told by the teachers is because gender is powerful as it is shaped in many particular ways within the discourse of rurality and it impacts on what work men and women do.

The discourse of gender that shape peoples' lives in rural areas, has certain traditional meanings. According to a report by the Gender and Land Compendium of Country Studies (2005), the development of agriculture has been strongly associated with women's endeavours, and the division of responsibilities and of labour within households and communities tended to place

farming and nutrition-related tasks under the women's domain. Men, on the other hand, tended to become progressively involved in activities that required temporary migration, such as hunting and fishing, or other activities related to public and community organization and off-farm responsibilities. This, therefore, meant that being of a specific gender has a direct relevance for what work one does, given the traditional division of labour in a rural area. Hence, the individuals who tell us their stories here show how they use the discourse of gender to disrupt and challenge these traditional definitions.

5.2 Teachers meaning of rural

Rurality as a space means different things to different people. As alluded to in Chapter 2, multiple definitions of the concept 'rural' exist. Miller (1993: 86), for example, uses the term to mean "any place where residents live in an un-incorporated area or town of less than 2 500 people and over 30 miles from an urban centre". In this study, for the teachers, Simon, Hilton, Zandile and Nikki and, who told their stories, the place 'rural' represents different meanings to them in which they were able to connect and perform in this environment. It is therefore clear that the multiple definitions indicate that the term rural must be explored beyond the geographical definition if the true meaning of rural is to be understood.

In the next sections - which is divided into Section A: Commuting teachers and Section B: Residing teachers - the teachers' lived experiences are represented as vignettes of their selfhood. Here, multiple identities - of their gendered selves are revealed which add complexities, ambiguities and contradictions in their lives. These identities offer Simon, Hilton, Zandile and Nikki the space to make sense of who they are as individuals, as they make sense of the world and as members of rural communities. In this chapter and the next, I rely on the 'reconstructed stories' of chapter 4 for my analysis. I draw on the same data to illustrate various 'categories' of interpretation, My intention is to show how the same 'storied' moment can have multiple interpretations and be open to other interpretations ..

5.3 Section A: Commuting Teachers: Zandile & Simon

5.3.1 Vignette One: Zandile

5.3.2 Family life

Sisters as inferior beings

Since childhood, Zandile's experiences as a female reflected an ongoing struggle of coping as a female. She felt constrained as a female in her home space.

"My mother saw us sisters as inferior to the brothers, something she got from her mother".

According to Blackmore and Kenway (1993), not only are gendered roles assigned by society, their value is also defined as well. Blackmore and Kenway further noted that the role assigned to women, such as caring for families, keeping a home, and so on, have low prestige in African culture. Miller (1986) agreed, noting that in other cultures 'serving others' is for losers; it is low-level stuff. Yet serving others is a basic principle around which women's lives are organized.

In Zandile's home the patriarchal system was still alive, but it was being accommodated and resisted at the same time. It was resisted in that both parents were working. Yet, the granny was opposed to this, when she said: *'That in the Black culture - a woman was not supposed to work.'*

But, even though the granny felt like this, Zandile's mother still became a teacher. Even though she was unqualified, she still taught. As a woman choosing to work while being a mother disrupts existing structures, and signals a threat to the patriarchal system. The irony is that at home her brothers were treated differently from her. Although her parents were educated and wanted her to be educated, we see how contradictions still exist. More importance was being placed on male siblings in rural areas.

A survey conducted by UNICEF (2003) on constructing gender differences describes versions of masculinity and femininity that were often created in relation to each other and played off against each other. Males were commonly constructed as strong physically, emotionally, intellectually and sexually, precisely because females were constructed as being weak in these

areas. Thus, Zandile, growing up in a household where her granny and mother became 'the victims" of socially-constructed feminine roles, chooses an alternative, oppositional stance. In the process, this actively shaped her own life and redefined the meanings and practices that the category "woman" signified. She began resisting standard roles from a young age.

5.3.3 Schooling life

Down syndrome and affirmed student

When Zandile failed a year at school, she felt very bad. In her family, where both her parents were teachers, failing was not seen in a favourable light. Instead of her enhancing the status of her family, her failing in school brings embarrassment to them. This makes her feel like an outsider. Failure thus becomes a mark of exclusion. A school in a rural space means a place where boys and girls can be educated and prepared for a career. However, in Zandile's story, we see how schooling can be both enabling and oppressive.

Female teachers' practices: *"Down syndrome" attitude,*

In telling her story, Zandile remembers that some of the female teachers treated the female learners in very violent ways: *"They would beat us without even listening to why our homework was not done. We had no say in the classroom. Our bums used to be green."* Even though these teachers were women, it was as if they were not happy that these girls wanted to be educated. It was as though they were tipping the patriarchal system at school. In that rural space there was a certain understanding of what it meant to be a woman or a man. Even though there were female teachers at this school, they were instrumental in maintaining the patriarchal system.

Male teachers' practices: *Feelings of affirmation*

Males teachers offered Zandile some sense of worth and the platform for her to feel affirmed. She therefore appreciated the male teachers for having being more supportive and encouraging towards the female learners. This was something that her mum and the female teachers neglected to display in her life.

> *The only reason I liked these subjects was because both the subject teachers were males. I found them more accommodating and flexible than*

the female teachers. 'Female teachers had this "Down syndrome" attitude;
they want to let you down.

Zandile rebelled against anyone who was not allowing her to make informed decisions and who wanted her to conform to socially-constructed roles. Her mum, who saw her as inferior to her brothers, and her female teachers who had this *"Down syndrome"* attitude, represented people whose behaviours diminished the value of being a woman. They conformed to conservative, socially-constructed roles. She was becoming a person that did not buy into the meanings that society prescribed for a woman. Rather, she was aspiring to unpack and redefine these meanings, so that her life as a woman would be more meaningful.

School drop out mum

When Zandile fell pregnant during her matric year she was forced to return home because she could not cope with both the pregnancy and school work. Subsequently she failed matric. Her mother said, *"I sent you to get an education but you came back pregnant".* This is a very telling sentence. Education is viewed as a sign of progressive development, and becoming pregnant is seen as being opposite. This line sums up the contradictions and complexities that had to be negotiated in Zandile's life. Her family wanted her to be educated out of that rural space. But she succumbed to the norm of the rural identification of women when she fell pregnant. Although she did not want to be portrayed in the image of being woman that was prevalent in a rural space, she did just that. When she was sent to the township to get an education, she negated this intention by becoming pregnant. Her subsequent life and her achievements worked to neutralize the polarities and assumed contradictions that these two worlds signified – she could be both educated and be a mum.

Since I am reading these teachers through Social Identity Theory, I, as the researcher want to know what meanings of self are coming through from these individuals who are relating to a particular spatial reality. Therefore, from a Social Identity Theory point of view, read from a critical perspective, how then is Zandile making meaning of who she is within rurality? Is she

accepting the dominant discourses operating within rurality within the category of women? Yes, to some extent from Zandile's vignette, she is resisting the traditional category of being a girl and the meanings that go with it that is, operational within this rurality and she uses the same space of gender to threaten those particular narratives of women. Like any discourse there is a contradiction where Zandile is complicit in also retaining this tradition. The time when she has opportunities to get educated she falls pregnant.

5.4 Vignette two: Simon

5.4.1 Family life

Being the youngest sibling: *loneliness and exclusion*

As was shown in the previous chapter, when Simon was growing up, he was never in contact with his biological dad. His mum was not always present and his seven siblings always excluded him from their activities at home. This made him feel miserable and lonely as a child. In the traditional family space, key elements that offer care and protection-father and sibling relationships -were missing in his life. Dreaming of becoming a lawyer was an imagined space for acquiring strength and power as a male, in order to protect and defend himself. He says:

> *During my primary school years I wanted to become a lawyer because*
> *the other children had their dads to defend and speak up for them and*
> *my dad was not around, and I had no one to speak on my behalf so a*
> *lawyer was a perfect choice.*

Lawyers speak up for a person and so he believed that if he could become a lawyer he would be able to stand up and speak for himself. This was another unusual career choice for an African male. Traditionally, rural men tended to become progressively involved in activities that required temporary migration, such as hunting and fishing, or other activities related to public and community organization and off-farm responsibilities (Gender and Land Compendium of Country Studies, 2005). The place where he lived with his grandmother and siblings and then his

biological dad and step-mother was not a nurturing space. As a male in his grandmother's house he felt lonely. At his dad's home it was never comfortable with his step-mother. He says: "However after not so soon since I decided to stay with my father, things changed between me and my step-mother. It was certainly no longer nice staying with my step-mother".

5.4.2 Schooling life

Being a Student: *Feeling of affirmation and inclusion*

Simon's resolve to stand up for himself is made visible when he was chosen to teach other learners.

> *Mr. Gubo, my Biology teacher would give me a chance to teach the other students in class because he could see how well I performed in his subject. He used to say "Wena, you are a good teacher…*

The support that was absent at home he managed to receive from school. While family members, especially his father, were not offering him care, school life became a more affirming space for him. Through the teachers' practices he felt a sense of care and love because the teachers in the school made him feel wanted and protected. As he recalls:

> *I remember struggling to go to school in winter with no warm clothing and clearly being grateful to my primary school principal. She noticed that I was terribly cold and shivering and so she organized her son to go home and fetch me a jersey, which she gave to me so I could warm up. Although my principal was very strict and beat us, I loved her because she showed us a lot attention and support and cared for us in many ways.*

Simon values the support he received from the principal and the other teachers. Through this example of his teachers, Simon forgets about becoming a lawyer: "This is when my love for teaching was born and I forgot all about becoming a lawyer".

Becoming a lawyer as a potential identity through which his voice can be heard or he can defend himself because as a loner he felt defenceless, there is a certain meaning of self which plays itself in relation through others. In relation to his family his feels lonely and powerless but in relation to himself this imagined space of lawyer, gives him some sense of self and power.

5.5 Section B: Residing teachers: Hilton & Nikki

5.5.1 Vignette three: Hilton

5.5.2 Family life

The Albino son: *Feelings of isolations and self worth*

Hilton is a Zulu. According to Zulu culture, there are certain physical features that constitute your make-up. But, sadly, for Hilton, he was born with Albinism, "a rare genetic disorder condition that affects the pigmentation of the retina, hair, and skin". Because Hilton did not look "normal" in terms of his facial appearances, he was automatically excluded from the community: "I can still remember those lonely nights, when my family would get invited for meals and the neigbhours' children would dare not sit next to me and I would hear them whispering to each other "let this creature eat alone".

This condition posed a challenge to him in all aspects of his growing up. Wan (2003), who conducted research with people with albinism, says that "they recount the negative social repercussions they face in societies that marginalize and stigmatize people with an unconventional physical appearance and impairment, and the strategies they develop to cope with such discrimination and prejudice" (Ibid., p. 277).

He recounts his near death experience, when he wanted to commit suicide because he could not attend school due the poor financial state at home where his parents could not afford to pay his school fees.

I must admit that the combination of not being at school and not even allowed to play outside or push a wheelbarrow in the sun depressed me until one day, I could not take it any longer, I tied a rope around the wood and placed my head through the rope and began to swing...My aim in fact was to commit suicide, but I was only 12 years and I didn't know how to!

Hilton gradually finds the strength to resist the prescribed norms that his community had for people living with albinism. He decided that he was not going to allow these negative experiences to dictate the rest of his life. So he began to focus on his future and tried to find money to pay for his remaining school tuition fees. We see in Hilton a desire to be a free person and the resolution to get an education.

After successfully completing his Matriculation, Hilton returns home to pursue his dreams of going to college to become a teacher. But at home he witnessed his family suffering in poverty. He was reminded of his responsibility towards his parents, especially towards his mum, who stood by him as he was growing up.

It was at this point that he decided to quit pursuing his dreams and open a small business at home, selling beer to survive. In this we see a caring, responsible son, eager to create an environment of hope for his parents. Although his ultimate goal of going to college was delayed, he accepted his circumstances, and acted in a way that would address problems at hand.

It was depressing for him to deal with the prejudice against albinism. The community believed that people with albinism had limited opportunities in life. But he decided to challenge and resist societal and communal expectations, when he enrolled at university for a teacher's qualification. For Hilton, eventually qualifying as a teacher meant victory over his circumstances. As he says: "When I qualified as a teacher I proved my worth as male and for all the albinos in my area."

5.5.3 Schooling life

The albino student: *Feelings of rejection*

Wan (2003) reports how persons with albinism were physically harmed by their classmates. Objects were thrown at them and they were spat at, ganged up on and punched on many occasions. Similarly, Hilton, in his early childhood days, encountered many social problems at school. He was beaten by classmates. As he recalls: "At primary school my classmates would sometimes beat me up and lock me up in a cupboard until my siblings and teachers would come to my rescue". He was hurt when he was rejected by girls when he made a 'pass' at them:

...but every time I made a 'pass' at one of them, they would run, lift their dresses, show me their 'bottoms' and shout back using vulgar languages. I lost hope in them and began to take on imaginary girlfriends. Did they not realize that it hurt so much to feel rejected?

In keeping with Social Identity Theory, how is Hilton making meaning of who he is as a person within rurality? Is he accepting the dominant discourses operating within rurality within the category of a male living with albinism? From his vignette, we see like any discourse there are contradictions. On one hand, Hilton is complicit in retaining this tradition when he gives in and tries to commit suicide because he can't cope with his medical condition anymore. On the other hand, he is resisting the traditional category of being male living with albinism and meanings that are operational within this rurality when he decides to remain positive and further his education.

5.6 Vignette four: Nikki

5.6.1 Family life

Being a girl: *Against the norm*

Nikki came from a family where her dad was a teacher and her mum was self-employed, selling different items from home. In a rural area, being a teacher was seen as an honorable and respected position. This means that her family occupied a certain occupational status within this rural space. As Blackmore and Kenway (1993) states, in a rural area gender roles are assigned by society, their value is also defined as well. She noted that the roles assigned to women - such as caring for families or keeping a home - have a low prestige in African culture. Miller (1986) concurs, noting that in "other cultures serving others" is for losers, and is deemed low-level stuff. Yet, serving others is a basic principle around which women's lives are organized. However, this was not the case with Nikki's mum. As a woman, choosing to work, or better still, opening up her own business while she was a mother, disrupted existing structures. It threatened the norms that prevailed in the rural areas around being female and working. Her dad, who began a career in teaching left teaching and then decided to become a nurse. This is a profession which, like teaching, requires care, love and support. This was an unusual career choice for a male living in a rural area. Traditionally, men tended to become progressively involved in activities that required temporary migration, such as hunting and fishing, or other activities related to public and community organization and off-farm responsibilities (Gender and Land Compendium of Country Studies, 2005).

Interestingly, the members of Nikki's family did not conform to norms and stereotypes prevalent in a rural area.

5.6.2 Schooling life

Being student: *pain and joy*

A school in a rural space means a place where boys and girls can educate themselves and prepare for a career. However, Nikki's experiences as a student showed a negative side. Apart from opening up opportunities in rural spaces, schools could be quite oppressive. Corporal punishment has a long history in South Africa, and it was particularly common and vicious in

black schools, where it was applied to girls and boys (Morrell & Epstein 2008). In telling of her experiences, Nikki speaks of the way some of her primary school teachers would beat her for coming late: "I didn't like those teachers. I was so scared of them because they were always beating you."

However, when Nikki entered High School, she managed to establish good relationships with some of the teachers especially Mrs Khubisi, who was her Math teacher. Nikki said: "She enjoyed high school because the teachers treated them maturely and didn't beat them up for silly things".

Nikki the negotiator

When Nikki fell pregnant, she succumbed to the norms of rural identification of being a female and living in a rural community. In the rural space, a particular discourse for women prevails - women are seen as child bearers. As Blackmore and Kenway (1993) state, in a rural area, gender roles are assigned by society, and their value is also defined. She noted that the role assigned to women, such as caring for families, and keeping a home, have low prestige in African culture. However, Nikki makes the choice to raise her baby and still pursue a career in teaching. By wanting to study and pursue a career, she resists the traditional cultural value placed on women in rural areas.

What is surprising is that although members of Nikki's family did not conform to norms and stereotypes prevalent in this rural space,,Nikki makes meanings of self by taking up certain meanings that are assigned to this space by falling pregnant. But, at the same time she tries to resist the very same meanings that oppress women in rural areas by not seeing herself as only a child bearer but someone who wants to pursue a career.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter describes the complexity of a rural context and explains the reasons for my choice of singling out gender to read the stories told by the teachers who commute to the schools and those who reside in the same area as the schools. When these teachers challenged the cultural role of being male and female and what type of work they did in a rural area they changed the

meaning of rural. By each of the teachers showing through their lives by either taking up certain meanings that is operational within this rurality or resisting them, we see how rurality as a space is transforming. This sentence is in keeping with the generative theory which is based on Marsden (2006) assertion that rurality as a signifier is transformative, capable of changing behaviour and affecting the motivation of teachers, community workers and learners (Balfour et al, 2008). This study shows that when the teachers resisted certain meanings or category of gender, then the work meaning shifted and changed where being teacher was not just something been occupied by man and so whilst rural narrates teachers, teachers narrate rural too. It thus shows that rurality is not a fixed space but fluid and whilst the teachers that lived in rural areas did things that were unique to this particular rural setting, it transformed who they were as people and at the same time it began to change the meaning of that rural setting giving it a more social definition. The teachers thus see rural as a social space and that their lived reality within this social space is what shapes their lives.

This chapter thus revealed how through the teachers a rich nuanced complex definition of rural is created. Their definition pointed more to a social meaning of rural, despite the different definitions such as the geographical and economic factors that has emerged through the literature in chapters one and two.

The stories referred to in this study point to the role the historical, sociocultural, and institutional forces play in what constitutes the study participants' identities as rural school teachers. It is clear from this chapter, furthermore, that a sense of identity is formed and reformed over a lifetime within individual contexts and through interactions within society. These are the issues that the next chapter discusses and further explores.

Chapter Six
Representation of teachers' practices

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 indicates clearly that the two schools studied in this research, Langelihle and Kambukle high schools in the Vulindlela district, have different characteristics. Difference manifests itself in aspects such as routines, ethos, practices, infrastructure and cultures, and these influence much of what goes on within the institutions. It is within the context of these cultures that the teachers' stories are read. This chapter represents ways in which teachers in rural schools work their way up to becoming part of a community of professional practice (Morrow, 2007). This community of practice is reflected in two groupings - teachers who commute daily to the school and those who reside in the community. It is in this context that the representation of teachers' practices is critically linked to being a commuting teacher or a residing teacher within this space of rural schooling.

What is common about both types of teachers, however, is that they are all governed by a normative framework for all teachers in South Africa. Against this general framework, they work in a particular spatial reality, which impacts on who they are. Some live in rural settings and opt to work there. Others choose to work in schools outside their places of domicile. It is against this background that this study wishes to understand ways in which their meanings of who they are translate themselves into their professional practice as teachers. In the previous chapter, the emphasis was on understanding Simon, Hilton, Nikki and Zandile as people who live in a rural space. This chapter asks the following question:

- **What constructions of teacher as a professional are constituted through practices in rural schools?**

This chapter is divided into two sections:

Section A: 'Within the school':

Within the school offers an exploration of the practices that teachers enact to make a difference to their learners and their school environment.

Theme one: *Teacher Practices* and Theme Two: *Constraints of working in rural schools.*

Section B: 'Beyond the school':

Offers an exploration of the practices these teachers engage in and the particular social relationships they form outside the normal routine of schooling which enhance their learning experiences and lives in a rural school.

Theme one: *Relationships with the learners* and Theme two: *Relationships with the Parents.*

6.2 Section A: 'Within the school'

Theme one: Teacher Practices

As the teachers positioned themselves within their schools they enact practices that allow them to make a difference to their learners and their school environment. The teachers enact practices that create opportunities that challenge and change traditional ways of thinking and working as teachers. These practices show teachers' desire for openness, care and support that goes beyond book knowledge. The themes that I have selected as part of this story with regard to teacher practices are:

Zandile -' space for voice': her teaching strategies create opportunities for girls to speak up for themselves and challenge the boys in the classrooms.

Simon -'blurring boundaries': teaching with love and care, that went beyond the text book knowledge.

Nikki - 'extending the subject': creates new learning programmes on subjects to empower her learners.

Hilton - 'promoting ownership': creates opportunities to reaffirm the learners' status as valuable members of the community so as to take ownership of their school.

Theme Two: Constraints of working in rural schools

Whilst they enact particular practices in their teaching, both the commuting and resident teachers, Simon, Hilton, Zandile and Nikki respectively are confronted by different challenges as teachers working in rural schools . The themes that have I selected to foreground teacher constraints are:

Zandile the foreigner – Being a commuting teacher, she is seen as an outsider.

Simon the late-comer – Being a commuting teacher, he is always reprimanded for coming late to school.

Nikki the faker – As a residing teacher, she found herself alienated from the teachers and to fit in she chose to 'fake' her experiences with the teachers.

Hilton the informer – As a residing teacher, he is accused of being an informer, when he is seen too often in the principal's office.

In the analysis below, I offer an understanding of what these practices and constraints are and how they work to break the traditional barriers that block new ways of thinking and working as teachers.

Theme one: Teacher practices

Zandile: 'space for voice'

According to Kroll (2004), teachers must be well prepared, both in the subject matters they teach and in the ways they transform that subject matter into meaningful learning opportunities for

their students. They must be acutely aware of the moral nature of their work and of their responsibility to act in the best interests of their students, the students' families, and their communities. Given the complexity of their work and its inherently political nature, they must be prepared to work productively in schools, and participate in creating them. We see below how Zandile, as a teacher, uses her past experiences of being a girl to create innovative strategies in her teaching methods, thus opening up opportunities for her learners in her classroom.

Zandile relates an incident when, as a young girl on her way to the shop, a boy forced himself onto her against the church wall. Luckily, for her, the choir group had just finished practicing and when they heard her screams, she was saved. She states: *"It was very hard for the girls to say no at that time"*. This personal, gendered experience influences her teaching methods. She resists the dominant view that girls should be quiet and obedient. She encourages them to speak up in class. She calls for a voice in the midst of physical and emotional abuse experienced by girls. All this contributes to countering the culture of gender discrimination that takes place in the school in which she teaches: "It just 'irked' me that these girls could give in so easy to the boy's demands and that they showed no power or courage to say NO."

Her own experiences created in her a burning desire to challenge and change gendered stereotypes in her school. Now that she is educated, she uses her teacher position to help her female learners from falling prey to gendered stereotypes. Her own meaning of gender is brought into this teaching role. As a teacher in this school, she noticed that during lessons the girls had the tendency to be quiet in class and would not respond to her questions. But, amazingly, they did very well in their written work. From her past experiences as a student in a rural school, she knew what she and the other female learners were subjected to in the classroom. This is implied in what she says: "at this school I felt that the boys did not respect the girls and the girls were most terrified off them". She decided to change her teaching tactics and methods where she could to empower these girls: "I even changed my teaching tactics and methods, I want to see girls being involved in things; I want to see girls express themselves".

100

She creates a classroom space that is dynamic, by allowing boys and girls to challenge each other: *"the girls began to challenge the boys in lessons"*. This seemed to have made a difference with the girls in the class. The girls got a little braver. As a teacher in her classroom, Zandile felt like an insider because she was in total control of what she wanted to achieve. We thus see how Zandile uses her past negative experiences as a girl to create innovative strategies in her teaching methods, thereby opening up new opportunities for female learners in her classroom.

Simon - 'blurring boundaries

Respect, trust and care, we learn, are earned through a committed and supportive relationship. They go beyond book knowledge. They rest, among other things, on the conception of care is synonymous to mothering (Vogt, 2002). This is closely connected to the fact that the caring role has, for so long, been regarded as suitable and natural for women. This conception has been challenged by several current empirical studies on teachers and care (Noddings, 2001; Barber, 2002; Tirri and Husu, 2002; Vogt, 2002; Gomez, Allen and Clinton, 2004). We see how Simon, a male teacher, moves 'beyond the boundary' of prescribed teaching, and constructs a language of parenting as the basic metaphor for his teaching.

Simon's formulation and particular version of being a male teacher offers him certain meanings of who he is and how these meanings inject themselves into his relationships with the learners in his school. As someone who experienced the teacher as protector and caregiver as a learner himself, his definition of being a teacher extends far beyond just teaching the curriculum, it goes beyond the text book. For him, teaching means also attending to the emotional demands and pastoral care of the learners.

> *Being second parent to the children while they are at school strengthened the bond between us. I can clearly remember the days when I would have to dig in my own pocket to buy lunch to the many students who were hungry and whose parents could not afford to give them lunch.*

The love and care that Simon received from his teachers seem to be blurring the traditional teacher-learner boundaries when he uses his teacher role to offer comfort, support, love and care to his learners. In this way, Simon enjoyed a connection with the learners, and this connection underpins the care and support that he gives. As a non-traditional male teacher, Simon is able to focus on providing care and support, and on building a relationship of trust and respect amongst his learners in his school in a rural setting.

Nikki - 'extending the subject'

The notion of 'extending the subject' in this study refers to the tendency to take the subject beyond what is prescribed by the policies, to being "engaged". According to Thich Nhat Hanh (cited in Hooks, 1994), in "engaged pedagogy" a teacher must be focused on a holistic approach to teaching. He believed that a classroom was enhanced if students and professors regarded one another as a 'whole human' being, striving not for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world. Teachers promote their own well- being if they teach in a manner that empowers students.

Like Zandile, Nikki uses her teacher position to make changes by going beyond her prescribed subject matter. She introduces new learning programmes on subjects to empower her learners, especially her female learners about issues on teen pregnancies, career choices, HIV and sexual abuse.

At this school she found that many learners fell pregnant during their early high school years because "the girls don't want to take care of themselves". Below are her actual spoken words during her interview.

Interviewer: Do you think that girls get pregnant because they are too scared to say no to the boys?

Nikki: No at all, they are partners in it. The girls don't want to take care of themselves.

Her concern was that when they returned to school after they gave birth, many were no longer interested in schoolwork. They either failed or dropped out. She began to form learning programmes where she trained learners and, in turn, these learners could help fellow learners with advice on numerous issues regarding teen pregnancies, career choices, HIV and sexual abuse. We see here how Nikki uses the teaching position she holds as a place for activism, and how progressive gender role is brought to the fore in her teaching.

Hilton - 'promoting ownership'

Rural community schools foster "a stable pattern in the web of social life that binds individuals together. It is what makes a community something more than an aggregate of people" (Monk & Haller, 1986, as cited by Miller, 1993:92). Theobald and Nachtigal (1995:133) suggest that "healthy communities require schools that are guided by an ethic of responsibility to the people and the places they are intended to serve". According to Wotherspoon (1998), schools in rural areas can provide basic training for children and youth, extend skills for work and leadership, and offer a focal point and physical infrastructure for the social and political life of the community.

Like Simon, Hilton also formulates a particular version of being a male teacher suffering with albinism. The formulation that he makes for himself works itself in relation to his learners. Teaching in a rural space also shapes these formulations. When Hilton saw that his learners were not getting appropriate educational support from home and, as a consequence, were venting their frustration on the school, he decides to change their attitudes:

> *Finally there are those learners who steal the school's electricity cables. Do they not realize how this impacts negatively on their education? In my thinking and in mind that if we can talk to the learners properly and make them understand that the school is theirs and that they should own the school as a community.*

He decides to try to communicate with them to show them that he cares for them. As he tells them, "I do this because I care for them and as if they were my own". In this way he affords the

103

learners the opportunity to reaffirm their status as valuable members of the community and, hopefully, take ownership of their school. Each of the teachers, in a unique way, uses his or her teacher position to adopt certain practices, either through their innovative strategies, relationships or by creating new learning programmes. Simon, Zandile, Nikki and Hilton are able to enact these practices in spite of many constraints. They reconfigure constraints, and see them as challenges, as the following section points out.

Theme two: Constraints of working in rural schools

The discussion of constraints in this section relates to commuting teachers, Zandile and Simon, and residing teachers, Nikki and Hilton. It covers the key theme of 'Insider/Outsider'. The commuting and the residing teachers experience their own complexities and unique constraints teaching in a rural school.

Zandile the foreigner

Poor conditions in the rural areas have led many teachers to seek posts in urban areas (Gordon, 1997). Others, who work in rural schools, prefer to live in urban areas and commute to their schools. They often feel alienated from the school community, who label them as "foreigners" (Gordon, 1997). Conflict has arisen when preference has been towards unemployed teachers from the local community over those considered "foreigners" (Gordon, 1997). In this study, we see how Zandile is made to feel like a *foreigner* because of her commuting status and how this impacts on her teaching experiences in a rural school.

Although Zandile felt like an insider in her classroom space, in the school space she felt like an outsider. *"Keep away from the foreigner,"* her colleagues advised each other. The fact that Zandile did not live in the same area as the school in which she teaches, alienated her from her colleagues. At first, her colleagues made her feel that she was not 'one of them', and she felt like the 'outsider'. Her fear of being "locked in" this unhappy and distressing situation was in contrast to her positive expectations of teaching in this rural school. To overcome feelings of exclusion and ostracism, a different tactic was considered. She decided not to 'resist' but to

'conform' to certain things. We see in these moments how identities are complex and fluid. Whilst she conforms to certain collegial and supportive practices to gain entry, her intention to be part of this community of teachers on her own terms means that she is still in control. This signifies her potential to change and succeed in her work environment. *'Oh! Don't worry I will do your playground duty and I can mark your class examination scripts"*, she says, even though she had her own work to do. She seeks to gain entry in this school, and erase her foreigner status, in different ways.

Simon - the late comer

Simon commutes to school daily. He travels from one rural area, where he resides, to another, where the school is located. This, of course, creates problems. As the Report on Education in South African Rural Communities (2005) points out, there are teachers in rural areas who experience practical problems. The problem of transport is beyond his control, but affects his performance as a teacher:

> *For example, because I don't live in the same area as the school, I am forced to use public transport, which is always delayed. Thus, I am 20 minutes late every-day. On my arrival, I find that those teachers who had come before me had not starting their teaching. Yet, I am the only one who is verbally lashed. One can clearly see that the teachers who live in this area enjoy special treatment from the principal. They are also allowed into his office at any time. And when they emerge, they seem to talk in subdued tones.*

Apart from the transport problem, he is confronted with resistance from the Management of the school. As he complains:

> *At this moment in time I'm very disappointed with management. My trust in the principal and in the language HOD diminished when they*

kept harassing me and calling me into the office. They questioned me
about why my Matric learners only obtained top English marks. Do
they think that I'm incapable of teaching in their school? I think they
all are jealous.

The need for an approachable management team, one that would work collectively, is sadly lacking in Simon's school. In spite of the recognition that he enjoys among his colleagues for the excellent Matric English results he produced, he did not receive any positive affirmations from Management. He had used his holiday time to give extra lessons to the learners, and had given many learners individual attention, but his efforts were not recognized.

And despite my excellent English results produced by my Matric
learners , the free holiday lessons I provided for the learners, as
well as taking my personal time to respond to learners personal
needs - it was never appreciated by Management and I was never
promoted.

He was often at odds with the principal and management team at the school, whom he found to be unfeeling and cruel. Simon always knew that because he commuted to school and was not from the same area, his colleagues did not regard him as one of them by the management team. Sadly, in his case, commuting contributed negatively to his relationship with management. This obscured his positive contribution to the school and learners.

However, Simon felt some compensation. Within his classroom space, Simon was happy with the learners and they were excelling in his subject.

But, then there are days when things get really bad between them
and I and I want to quit. My learners sense that something is

happening between management and me and they cry, pleading with me not to leave.

While he makes the decisions in the classroom, outside of the classroom other contextual forces were negotiated. So, even though he is a good teacher, the fact that he commuted from one space to another makes his teaching life challenging and hard in this school. One could see how this factor shaped his relationship in this social space in this school.

Nikki - the 'faker'

Many inhabitants of rural settings have a salient attachment to place (Bauch, 2001; Haas & Nachtigal, 1998; Howley, et al., 1996; Porter, 2001). However, at the school where Nikki was teaching, there were teachers who commuted and resided in the same area as the school. This made working in this rural school complicated for her as she found herself alienated from both groups of teachers. To fit in she chose to 'fake' her experiences with the teachers. Nikki made this viewpoint quite clear when she said, "the *teachers isolate me and many times I had to fake an experience of trying to get on with them."* Her position was complicated on another score. The teachers, many of whom travelled to the school, saw her relationship with management and the parents as a threat. They noticed that when management could not deal with a certain learner, they would call her in to mediate between the learner and the parent/s. *"Management appointed me to communicate with the parents about their children."*

Nikki was quite tired of the internal politics among staff members of the school. She saw this as hampering the development at school. She decided to become a change-agent, and to work towards a positive vision for the school. Nikki then initiated a discussion with the staff on the vision of the school. They agreed that it is the responsibility of every teacher to support their school and community for the benefit of the learners. They agreed that such support would erase any negativity that the township and suburb people have towards their learners:

107

I hate them treating the kids anyway like that because you are in rural areas, you are born here and some teachers coming from the suburbs, they look down on you when you are born in the rural area.

In taking this stance, in spite of the negative reactions of the staff towards her, Nikki shows her determination. She refused to be intimidated, to do things just to fit in, and was serious about bringing about a positive change and making herself part of this school.

Hilton - the 'informer'

According to an article written by Hortaleza (2004) that appeared in the Star Sun entitled, "53 teachers rap principal for various 'offences' ", some principals show favouritism. They may form a group of teachers, called by their fellow teachers as 'untouchables', and give them special attention and privileges. There is a rift between those seen as informers and those outside the inner circle of favourites. Hilton, in this study, is made to feel like an outsider even though he resides in the same area as the school. His colleagues accuse him of being an informer, when they see him too often in the principal's office. The fact that Hilton resided in the same area as the school, contributed to a positive relationship with the management team and staff members. But, this did not go well with the rest of the staff and they began to suspect him of being the informer to the principal:

They felt envious because the principal and most teachers on staff got along well with me. Those that felt this envy soon began to spread rumours that I was the "informer" to the principal because I was constantly seen in the principal's office.

In spite of these handicaps, Hilton proceeded to improve the profile of the school:

108

*I began writing letters to our businesses in the area and to some
'high' people I know in the department asking them for their help
in improving our school and it was amazing what they are doing for
our school.*

Although he is promoted to HOD, it was not a reward he consciously sort after. Hilton found it difficult to maintain a pleasant relationship with all teachers in his school. As he says:

*But, it was still very difficult to maintain a pleasant relationship with
all teachers. Whilst some teachers were genuinely helpful and
supportive, others really just discouraged you and made you feel
inexperienced especially if you were a young teacher working with
an older teacher.*

We thus learn that a complex picture of rural schooling emerges. Much good is happening in these schools., Teachers deal with many constraints working in rural schools, and transform them into challenges. Commuters and residents have different experiences. Being an insider or an outsider, as defined in rural settings, is directly linked to the status and identities with which teachers are attributed. In these circumstances, teachers have to deal with perceptions, hidden agendas, prejudices, contradictions, and feelings of belonging or of alienation.

Although Zandile and Simon experience feelings of exclusion from the management and teachers, they do things to manage this position. Zandile offers to do other teachers' playground duty and Simon focuses on forming close bonds with the learner, parents and colleagues.

Living in the same area as the school, Nikki and Hilton were able to establish positive relationships with the management and the parents of their school. But, whilst they enjoyed this insider position, they also experience being outsiders from their colleagues.

All of the above shows the complex dynamics that commuting and residing teachers' experience.

6.3 Section B: 'Beyond the school'

To work beyond the school, these teachers engage in particular relationships and practices outside the normal routine of schooling. This happens because the teachers are reflective practitioners. As agents of change teachers question who they are and what they have to do to improve the learning experience of learners in their schools. They are not only concerned with what pertains to work as prescribed by policy. They are also concerned with learners' well-being. They practice what Hooks (1995) refers to as "engaged pedagogy". This is very crucial for teachers in rural settings as these teachers assume the role of caregivers. They are obliged to assume this role due to parental absenteeism, inaccessibility to health facilities and the relationship between poverty, HIV and AIDS.

Section A described the practices that teachers engage in through their subjects. This section focuses on what teachers did outside of their formal teaching time, during the breaks and beyond the school to care and support learners. Two themes selected to foreground teacher practices beyond the school are Relationships with the Learners, and Relationships with the Parents.

Theme One: Relationships with the Learners

According to a HSRC study (2005), if there are bad relationships between the teachers and learners there can be no progress. The study further indicated that the cause of bad blood between teachers and learners is the lack of respect between them. According to Søreide (2006), in addition to a kind and caring attitude, this identity construction also positions these teachers as people with patience, encouragement and hope. This image of the teacher helps teachers in various ways in their encounters with the pupils, as the following exchange highlighted by Søreide (2006) reveals:

Gunn: What is the most important thing you do as a teacher in your current class?

Grethe: I have good communication with them, with a lot of hope. Yes, and they must feel safe when they sit there. If you have insecure pupils who are afraid of the teacher, they don't work very well.

As Søreide (2006) indicates, good relations and cooperation with the learners are important in making sure that the children feel safe and experience a good social environment in the school. A safe, social environment is considered essential for meaningful learning (Søreide, 2006). In my study I found that the teachers, Simon, Hilton, Zandile and Nikki enacted practices that had diverse outcomes.

Zandile - the gendered activist

Although narrative resources might be shared by the institutional members, the way teachers understand and use narrative resources to construct possible identities might vary within circumstances, from person to person and from situation to situation (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Davies & Harré, 2001). To understand identity construction as a process of narrative positioning is useful, because it opens up an understanding of teachers as active agents in their own lives and the construction of teacher identity as a dynamic and changing activity (Davies & Harré, 2001). Zandile, as a teacher, uses her gendered identity to enact certain practices that bring about change within her teaching environment.

As a teacher teaching in a rural school, Zandile came face to face with the challenges of being a girl: "These girls were being sexually abused by the male learners in the school."

Although Zandile was not qualified on a professional level to give counselling, she gave up most of her spare time after school to counsel and listen to sexually abused learners. She said "I used my lunch breaks and spare time to talk to girls whom were the victims of abuse and to instil in these learners, both male and female the value of respect for each other".

111

We see how Zandile uses the teaching position that she holds as a place for activism. It is these gendered experiences that serve to develop a sense of mission in Zandile's teacher life and which are used as a platform for change among female students.

Simon - the caregiver

Few would dispute the value of warm, supportive and caring pedagogical relationships. In some quarters, particular emphasis on sensitive, "tactful" relationships in the classrooms is encouraged, almost as a counterweight to the excess of prescriptive national frameworks and testing (Van Manen, 1991). For Simon, we see how the rewards of teaching were to be found within a loving and caring relationship with the learners.

When Simon noticed a learner walking around with torn pants and shirt because he could not afford a new one, Simon did not hesitate to go into town after school to purchase a new set for the learner.

> *Whilst on duty I spotted this learner with a torn grey trouser and a torn shirt. I called for him and said "hey wena, this is not your school uniform and why is your clothes torn? He replied, "Sir this is the only trouser and shirt I have." I said ok and quickly glanced at him to estimate what size trouser and shirt I thought he wore. That same day I made a stop at Jet's Stores and purchased a new trouser and shirt for this learner.*

Just as his teachers gave him a jersey when he did not have one, he did the same for his learners. When Simon expressed qualities of 'caring' and 'support' towards his learners, they reciprocated, and this added complexity to the educational experience.

But, nothing could have touched my heart more than the response I received from one of the learners and his mother when I surprised her son with a new trouser and shirt. Lastly I'm of the view that, if we instil in these learners motivation, care and support, together with book knowledge, these learners would succeed in being the best they can.

This incident wants us to reconsider how teaching and learning happens. We see how Simon continually negotiates school space, enhancing his teaching and learning experiences.

Nikki - the Motivator

According to Kroll (2004), one could say that our charge extends beyond making sure that teachers have the wherewithal to desist from "giving up and giving in" to the overwhelming challenges that they face, especially in poor, rural schools. We are responsible for making sure that students, as a result of the very thoughts, feelings, actions, and words of their teachers, live in a more equitable and just society (Kroll, 2004). This is the fundamental principle according to Kroll (2004) that guides our practice. As with great orators and public speakers, Nikki has the ability to encourage and make the discouraged have hope again. Motivating others seems to be her greatest strength.

Another challenge that Nikki faces in her school is the HIV and AIDS pandemic is that parents are too weak and fragile to give their children parental love. Her greatest challenge is to respond to the learners who have lost both parents and who sometimes end up living on their own. Having herself lost a brother to this disease, she knows she has to make a difference to these learners' lives: "I lost a brother to this disease, so I knew I had to make a difference to these learners' lives".

This is why she began writing to NGO's, inviting them to her school, so that they could speak to both the girls and the boys, to try to motivate them to learn and become better people. She

113

believes that growing up with a strong Christian background has helped her cope dealing with the learners in her school.

> *I invite people from NGO and whoever can come to speak to the girls and boys and maybe try to motivate them to learn and become better. I believe growing up with a strong Christian background has helped me cope with teaching in my school and it has given me the strength to do things to help these learners.*

By engaging herself with activities outside her normal prescribed schooling routine, she shows her determination to see her learners progressing to become better people. In the context of this study, my intention was to illustrate how teachers working in rural schools work beyond the conventional classroom demands. This is achieved through building up a relationship with the learners or with the parents. We learn how personal experiences can impact on teachers' professional lives and how rural schooling can become an enriching experience for all.

Relationships with Parents

Canter and Canter (1991) point out that parent involvement is an important factor in effective schools. Good relationships with the parents are necessary to facilitate teaching and learning in schools. However, what this study found is that not all the teachers experienced positive relationships with the parents. This added complexity to teaching in a rural school.

The teacher, Simon, who commuted, and Nikki, who resided, both enjoyed positive relationships with the parents as explained below.

Simon maintains that although he does not live in the same area as the school, he was able to form close bonds with parents because he connected with learners beyond the book knowledge. By adding qualities like caring and support, which added complexity to the educational experience, the parents reciprocated positively. This was necessary to facilitate teaching and learning in his school: "I always maintain that if you do something for a needy child then the parents respond positively".

Regardless of his dysfunctional relationship with management, he was still able to sustain a positive relationship with the learners, and created opportunities for meaningful learning to happen. This, in turn, helped him to maintain a good relationship with the parents.

> *I think that I had been blessed to have formed a good relationship with the community despite the fact that I did not stay in the rural village where the school is located. I believed that because I was on good terms with the students it made it easier for the parents in the community to accept me as a good teacher.*

Nikki on the other hand, enjoyed a good relationship with the parents because she lived in the same area as the school, and she grew up in this area. She said: "I've got a good relationship with the parents and because I know most of my learners' parents it is easy for me to discipline them".

In this way, she did not seem to have a problem with the learners in this school. Although the learners are ill-disciplined in school, they were forced to respect Nikki because she lived in the same area as their parents. The learners knew what serious trouble they would be in if she complained to their parents. For Nikki, the parents were her trump card. As the excerpts above underline, good relations and cooperation with parents are also considered important in making sure that everyone experiences a good social environment at school. It is considered essential that a good social environment is necessary because teaching can become impossible if relationships are strained (Kebeje, 2004). It is something that Simon and Nikki do to change the working of school and home. They tried to create a link/partner between home and school. We see how these teachers create opportunities for that to happen through the parents.

115

6.4 Conclusion

So what does it mean to be a teacher in a rural school? The thematic analysis provided above, came from teachers who commuted to schools and from teachers who resided in the area as the school within the Vulindlela District.

Since I am reading these teachers through the Social Identity Theory, I as the researcher am exploring what construction of teachers as professionals is constituted through practices in rural schools. Therefore, from a Social Identity Theory point of view, read from within the critical paradigm, how then are these teachers making meaning or framing their professional identities as teachers within rural schools? Are they imagining themselves according to policies or are they becoming agents of change?

The study showed that the development of the teacher as a professional is happening 'Within the school' and 'Beyond the school' to improve the quality of education in rural schools that has been subjected to, to much negativity and is now highly challenged for all sorts of reasons.

Within the school

As active agents in a rural school, the teachers, , Simon, Hilton, Zandile and Nikki were able to enact certain practices within the school. Nikki develops learning programmes so that girls and boys do not subject themselves to further abuse and it allows them to feel differently about themselves. Zandile comes up with innovative ways in terms of her teaching methods to bring about change with regard to the girls in her classroom. Simon humanizes the profession with love, support and care. In this way love, support and care becomes part of his teacher responsibility. Hilton instils a sense commitment to his learners by trying to motivate them to take ownership of their school.

Through an attitude of care and love, creativity and commitment, they were able to make that attitudinal shift to their functional responsibilities that assist in improving their classroom practices in ways that enhances the quality of teaching and learning and the lives of their learners in schools in rural settings.

At the same time whilst these teachers enacted the above professional and attitudinal practices constraints from the managements, colleagues and parents confronted them.

116

To be a teacher in a rural school was to be a part of a family community. However, what the study showed that one of the difficulties associated with teaching within a rural school was with teachers who commuted and those who resided in the same area as the school. Whilst a commuting teacher like, Simon, from Langelihle High School, enjoyed a positive relationship with the parents, the commuting teacher, Zandile, from Kambukle High School did not enjoy the same relationship with the parents. Yet, Simon, did not enjoy a positive relationship with the management team whereas Zandile did. At times both the teachers that commuted and those that resided in the same area as the school like Nikki, were made to feel as insiders and outsiders. These issues of commuting and residing adds complexity to teaching in rural schools.

This study also found that whilst teaching in particular contextual reality and irrespective of whether these teachers commute or not, there is a normative framework that these teachers work under in order to be known as a professional teacher. This means that the work and responsibility of teachers in rural schools are no different to their counterparts in urban schools. An uniform normative framework and policies govern all teachers who work in South African classrooms. Interestingly though, teachers working in schools in rural settings, and who commute far distances to teach in these schools also work outside of this normative framework to be agents of change.

Beyond the school

As teachers in the rural school, these teachers can be seen as activist who use their teacher position as a place for actitivism by enacting certain practices that go beyond the normal routine of schooling hours. Zandile, being female, uses her gendered experiences as a platform for change when she uses her lunch breaks, and spare time after school to talk to girls who were/are the victims of abuse so that they were not made to feel alone. Simon uses his position as a teacher to instil a sense of support and care towards his learners. This is evident when he is constantly giving cash, food and buying new uniforms to poor and needy learners. He reaps the rewards from teaching when he expresses the qualities of caring and support to learners. Nikki uses her brother's death to motivate learners about the dangers of HIV and AIDS, teen pregnancies and the different forms of abuse. She gives up her afternoons to write letters to NGO's inviting them to come to her school to speak to the learners so hopefully they could become better people.

What is new about my study is that it is showing that these teachers in rural schools were able to cultivate commitment, connectedness and care. They do it by working within and beyond formal teaching time and they achieved it. We see how the notion of "Engaged Pedagogy" (Hooks, 1994) plays itself out in rural schools by teachers who work there. They cultivate this type of pedagogy through constant reflection and by engaging in practices 'within the school' and 'beyond the school'. Through ongoing reflection in how they teach and what they teach they challenge traditional oppressive practices and establish better innovative ways of thinking and working as teachers to assist learners. In improving their classroom practices' they assist in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and the lives of the learners in schools in rural settings.

This research indicates that as a rural teacher commuting or residing in the same area as the school, making meaning of one's life, is both challenging and inspirational.

Chapter 7

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter indicates the extent to which the research question is answered, the implications of the research findings and possible future research based on this study. A personal reflection regarding the overall success of the study concludes the report.

7.2 Answering the Research Question

The key research question which drove this study was: What does it mean to be a teacher in a rural school? In attempting to answer this question, two further sub questions asked:

- How do teachers make meanings of personal self within a rural context?
- What construction of teachers as professionals is constituted through practices in rural schools

To respond to the questions, I chose a particular methodological approach: Narrative Inquiry. Using this innovative approach for understanding teachers who work in rural schools, the study indicates what researchers, like Elbaz (1993), Clandinin (1986) and Goodson (1992), emphasized - that the personal dimension in teaching interacts with the professional. To gain a nuanced insight of the phenomenon of "teacher-as-person as well the "teacher-as-teacher" (Goodson, 1992) in a rural context, I categorized them as commuting and residing teachers. Through collages, life history interviews and critical conversations, the participants, the commuting and the residing teachers, expressed their individual experience of schooling, their personal biographies and family histories. This resulted in the evocation of a variety of elements, themes, trends and counter-trends in rural school settings. My study focused on the dynamics for commuting and residing teachers. Different kinds of stories foregrounded living and working in a rural setting. All told, the complexities and realities of living and teaching in a rural context were exposed.

My study found that, through their teachers' personal narratives presented in Chapter 5, the participants owned a multiplicity of identities. The teachers, Simon, Hilton, Zandile and Nikki negotiated these on a daily basis. These identities gave us an understanding of how their experiences of living in this spatial reality of the rural were different from one another. The range of rural experiences encountered varied. This is to be expected as each rural space/area is unique in terms of dynamics, geographical features, practices, ethos, and economic status. Within the uniqueness of this space, certain discourses played themselves out. Through the discourses of gender and work, we saw how these teachers living in a rural context used their gender identities - being 'boy and 'girl' or 'mother and son', for example - to manage complexities, ambiguities and contradictions in their lives. Thus, these identities offered Simon Hilton, Zandile, and Nikki the space to make sense of who they are as individuals, and to make sense of both the world and the rural context in which they reside and work.

From their personal narratives, I was able to explore and excavate the personal identities of Zandile, Hilton, Simon and Nikki. This constantly shaped, reshaped and opened up a multifaceted understanding of their teacher/professional identity. Understanding this connection gave me a particular understanding of what it meant to work in rural schools. Within this particular schooling context, which is historically deprived, many tendencies emerge. Some are productive and some counter-productive. The challenges of inadequate physical and infrastructure conditions, lack of qualified teachers, irrelevance of curriculum, large classes, and lack of teaching aids are obvious. Teachers cannot escape these conditions, and constantly confront them. Alongside this, teachers enacted certain practices to disrupt, and challenge stereotypic understandings and meanings that have come to be associated with rural schooling.

The practices enacted went beyond their professional practices. Even though they were fulfilling their functions in the classrooms prescribed by policy, they enacted certain practices *'within the school'* and *'beyond the school'* that went beyond these policies. So to provide a very simple answer to my key research question, 'what does it mean to be a teacher in a rural school?' It means to work *'within the school'* and *'beyond the school'*.

'Within the school'

Alongside creating learning programmes, building relationships, and devising innovative teaching methods, the teachers in my study were able to cultivate commitment. They challenged traditional oppressive practices, and established better innovative ways of thinking and working as teachers. Teachers' attitudinal shifts to their functional responsibilities assist in improving their classroom practices in ways that enhances the quality of teaching and learning and the lives of the learners in schools in rural settings. Through care, love, creativity and commitment, they were able to effect change. Nikki develops learning programmes so that girls and boys do not subject themselves to abuse. She allows them to think differently and feel differently. Zandile comes up with innovative ways in terms of her teaching methods to bring about change with regard to the girls in her classroom. Simon humanizes the profession with love, support and care. In this way, love, support and care become part of his teacher responsibility. Hilton instills a sense commitment in his learners by trying to motivate them to take ownership of their school.

The practices enacted by the teachers, for example: Zandile created devising innovative teaching methods; Simon created a comforting place of love and care for his learners; Nikki created new learning programmes to raise her learners from abuse and disease; and Hilton created in his learners a motivation to take ownership of their school. This combined personal commitment and professional practices within their teaching.. Teachers were able to bring in an attitudinal dimension to their classroom practices. The professional and the attitudinal dimensions conflated in their classrooms.

Constraints within the school

Besides having to deal with the challenges that their schools faced, these teachers - Zandile, Hilton, Simon and Nikki - were confronted with constraints from their management, and from fellow colleagues from within the school. For example, Simon, who commuted to school, worked very hard with his learners who produce good matric results. However, his management team did not recognize this achievement. Instead, they reprimanded him for always being late. Nikki, on the other hand, who resides in the same area as the school, feels like an outsider by her fellow colleagues because of her relationship with the principal. This study shows that working

in a rural school comes with hidden tensions, beyond the obviously anticipated problems usually connected with rural settings.

'Beyond the school'

Teachers have extremely busy lives. So many teachers put their lives into their profession, working long hours, above and beyond the call of duty. Zandile, Hilton, Simon and Nikki enacted practices that went *'Beyond the school'* - beyond the call of duty. Teachers used their private time after school hours to continue being proactive, to create a supportive and caring relationship with the learners.

Relationships are at the heart of teaching (Clandinin, 1986; Cummins, as cited by Tolley, 2003). Among these *'relationships with the parents'* are key to building a sense of community both inside and outside the school. As reflected by this study, what was interesting to note is that the commuting teacher, Simon experienced a positive relationship with the parents. Parents are drawn to teachers who treat their learners with respect and who connect with them beyond the borders of "book knowledge". Parents responded positively. In the case of the commuting teacher, Zandile, she felt like an outsider by the parents because they (parents and teachers) felt she was not from the community. She did not enjoy a positive relationship with the parents. Both the residing teachers from the two different schools enjoyed positive relationships with the parents.

Engaged pedagogy in South African schools

The teachers work to enhance the commitment and cultivate care to improve the life of the learner and they achieve it within the school and beyond the school. We see how the notion of "Engaged Pedagogy" (Hooks, 1994) plays itself out in rural schools by teachers who work there. They are able to engage with commitment, care and connectedness through their subjects within the school and beyond the school and all these experiences results in an enhancement of rural schooling.

Finally, in this study, the category 'teacher' has opened up new meanings – meanings that have been re-worked, re-named and re-imagined. Instead of framing the fluid and multiple identities of teachers as a problem, the teachers in this study recognised themselves as powerful, re-creative agents of change. Openness to change formed the basis of how teachers moved from 'what is' to 'what could be'. When the teachers constantly re-arranged and re-negotiated both their personal and professional identities, they became freer agents.

7.3 Recommendation

In this qualitative study, several implications have emerged pertinent to how the teachers' personal identities connect to their professional identities; I turn to them in the next section.

A teacher's prior experiences and "accidental apprenticeship" affects his or her classroom practices as a teacher (Knowles, 1992). By not accommodating personal narratives and the individual school experiences of teachers, and by not allowing teachers to reflect on these experiences, teachers are bound to become teachers who teach in a manner they were taught (Knowles, 1992). Preparation modules for teachers need to harness the broad life experiences of a teacher. This means teachers should write and tell their own life stories. It is from here that teachers can pick out what Evans (2002) refers to as the attitudinal dimension. Caring is not something that you can learn in a three-day workshop. My study therefore recommends that workshops must encourage the attitudinal part, but teachers must be constantly given the space to make meaning of their personal identities by telling and re-telling their stories.

7.4 Suggestion for Further Research

Based on what my study is highlighting and exposing, the following are possible additional avenues for future research. This study reflected the lived experiences of teachers in only two schools in the Vulindlela area. As noted, the definition of "rural" varies according to region. It would be interesting to do this same study with participants from other national and international rural settings. The participants of this study fell into two categories - teachers who commuted

and teachers who lived in the same area as the school. A comparative study would be interesting, to explore similarities and differences of various kinds.

The relationship between the teacher and the parent was an integral part of this study. Participants talked about the impact of their relationships with the parents had on their teaching in a rural school. This could be an area for further research. A possible question may be: What are the expectations of rural teachers from a community or a student perspective? According to Parkay et al., (2005), teachers' responsibilities at an early stage in teacher educational programmes should be recognised.

7.5 Reflection

Perhaps one of the most important components of this study lies in a final reflection. From my engagement in this research project, I have come to recognize my hidden rural bias. Although I identified some of my rural biases at the beginning of the study, I didn't realize, until the end of my study, the extent of these biases. Many times I am reminded of my 'pathetic behaviour' when I made my first trip to a rural school. I recall the night before the big day, when I secretly wrote out a will, in the event of not returning. I made sure I did not put on any make-up as I wanted to look the least attractive, for fear of something nasty happening to me. Instead of taking down field notes, I silently prayed for my safety. I feel it is necessary to share these experiences, as it shows how negative images in the literature and the media about rural life can influence a person.

However, after many visits to the schools, and personally meeting with the teachers, I felt privileged to collect invaluable memories, develop lasting friendships, and inculcate new awareness and greater concern for rural life. I think this is where we need to start to change public perceptions of the rural world. We need to look beyond surface impressions. We need to appreciate that identities are not fixed, but that they are fluid and multiple. This study shows that there are two dimensions to teacher identity, the personal and the professional. This is, of

course, an established view in the literature in this field. But, my study dramatized in no uncertain terms for me - in the microcosm and particularities of rural school settings - how this general principle may manifest itself in different and diverse forms. Therefore, I wish to thank the teachers – Simon, Hilton, Zandile and Nikki - for this seismic shift in my own development and awareness. Through their stories, I have gained deeper insights into my own teaching practices and assumptions. They have changed me beyond my expectations.

I therefore conclude with

"Thank-you",

"ngiyabonga", and

"enkosi".

References

Acikigos, F. (2005). A study on teacher characteristics and their effects on students' attitudes. The Reading Matrix, 5(2), 104-105.

Ashforth, B.E. & Fred, M.A.(1989). Social Identity Theory and the Organization .*The Academy of Management Review, 14*(1), 20-39.

Asselin, M. (2001). Home-school connections. *Teacher Librarian, 28*(4), 59-61.

Balfour, R., Buthelezi, T., & Mitchell, C. (Eds). (2005*). Teacher Development at the Centre of Change: Rural Education*. Durban: UKZN Press.

Balfour, R, Mitchell, C, & Moletsane, R. (2008). Troubling Contexts :Toward a Generative Theory of Rurality as Education Research *Journal of Rural and Community Development* 3(3) *95–107*

Barber, T. (2002). A special duty of care: exploring the narration and experience of teacher caring. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 23*(3), 383 – 395.

Barter, B. (2008). Rural education: learning to be rural teachers. *Journal of Workplace Learning, 20(7/8)468-479*. Retrieved 18 August 2008 from http://www.emeraldinsight.com/Insight/ViewContentServlet?Filename=/.../pdf/...

Bauch, P.A. (2001). School-community partnerships in rural schools: Leadership, renewal and a sense of place. *Peabody Journal of Education, 76*(2), 204-221.

Blackmore, J., & Kenway, J. (Eds). (1993). *Gender Matters in Educational Administration and Policy*. London: Falmer Press.

Britzman, D.P. (1992). The terrible problem of knowing thyself: Toward a poststructuralist account of teacher identity. *The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing, 9*(3), 23-46.

Britzman, D.P. (1994). Is there a problem with knowing thyself? Toward a poststructuralist view of teacher identity. In T. Shanahan (Ed.), *Teachers thinking, teachers knowing: Reflections on literacy and language education* (pp. 53-75). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meanings.* Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J. (1984). The Opening up of Anthropology. In E.M. Bruner (Ed.), *Text play and story: The construction and reconstruction of experience.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Budge, K. (2006). Rural leaders, rural places: Problem, privilege and possibility. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 21*(13).Retrieved 18 September 2008. http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/21-13.pdf

Carrim, N. (2003). Teacher identity: tensions between roles. In K. Lewin,, M. Samuel & Y. Sayed (Eds), *Changing patterns of teacher education in South Africa: policy, practice and prospects* (pp.306-322). Johannesburg: Heinemann.

Chambers, R. (1983). *Rural development: putting the last first.* London: Harlow.

Chance, E.W. (2002). School-community collaborative vision building: A study of two rural districts. In D. M. Chalker (Ed.), *Leadership for rural schools: Lessons for all educators* (pp. 231-242). Boston Way, ML: Scarecrow Education.

Chomsky, N. (2000). *Chomsky on miseducation.* New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Christie, P. (1987). *The right to learn: The struggle for education in South Africa.* Johannesburg: Ravan Press.

Clandinin, D.J., & Connelly, M.F. (1986). Rhythms in teaching: The narrative study of teachers' personal practical knowledge of classrooms. *Teaching & Teacher Education, 2*(4), 377-387.

Clandinin, D.J., & Connelly, M.F. (1987). Teacher personal knowledge: What counts as 'personal' in studies of the personal. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 19*, 487-500.

Clandinin, D.J., & Connelly, M.F. (1995). *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes.* New York: Teachers' College Press.

Clandinin, D.J. (1986). *Classroom practice: Teacher images in action.* Lewes, UK: The Falmer Press.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2004). Taking stock: Teacher education in dangerous times. *Journal of Teacher Education, 55*(1), 3-7.

Cohen, L., Maninon, L., & Morrison, K. (2001). *Research Methods in Educations.* (5ᵗʰ ed). London: Routledge.

Cole, A. L., & Knowles, J. G. (2000). *Researching teaching: Exploring teacher development through reflexive inquiry.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Cole, A.L., & Knowles, J.G. (2001). *Lives in context.* Walnet Creek, CA: AtraMira.

Collins,T., Flaxman, E., & Schartman, L. (2001).Perspectives on urban and rural schools and their communities. *The ERIC Review 8*(2), 1-44. Connelly, M. F., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19*(5), 2-14.

Connelly, M.F., & Clandinin, D.J. (Eds.). (1999). *Shaping a professional identity.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Cook-Sather, A. (2006). The constant changing of myself: Revising roles in undergraduate teacher preparation. *The Teacher Educator, 41*(3), 187-206.

Critchley, S. (2001). *Continental philosophy: A very short introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

de Lange, N., Bhana, D., Mitchell, C., Moletsane, R., Balfour, R., Wedekind, V., et al. (2006). *Every voice counts: Teacher development and rural education in the age of AIDS.* National Research Foundation (South Africa) Proposal.

Davies, B. & Harre, R. (2001) Positioning: the discursive production of selves, in: M. Wetherell, S.Taylor & S. Yates (Eds) *Discourse theory and practice* (London, Thousand Oaks, CA & New Delhi, Sage).

Deacon, R., & Parker, B. (1993). The curriculum and power: a reconceptualization with a rural dimension. In N. Taylor (Ed.), *Inventing Knowledge: Contests in curriculum construction.* Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.

De Beauvoir, S. (2006). The second sex. In E. Hackett and S. Haslanger, *Theorizing Feminisms* (pp. 157-159). New York: Oxford University Press.

DeFord, D. (1985). Validating the construct of theoretical orientation in reading instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly, 20*, 351-361.

Department of Education. (2005). *A National Framework for Teacher Education in South Africa, Report of the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education.* Pretoria: DoE.

Department of Education. South African Council for Educators (SACE) (2005). The State of Teacher Professionalism in South Africa. Pretoria; Wits Education Policy Unit.

Development Bank of Southern Africa: Township and Rural Schools continue to be marginalised as inequality in the education system. Retrieved 17 November, 2009 from: http://www.dbsa.org/Mediaroom/.../DBSA%20education%20article.doc

De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B., & Delport, C.S.L. (2002). *Research at Grass Roots.* (2nd ed). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Dewey, J. (1899). *The school and society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Education Portfolio Committee (2006). Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). Retrieved 16 November, 2009, from http://www.pmg.org.za/

Education Portfolio Committee (2007). National Policy Framework for Teacher Education Development: report-back by Department. Retrieved 16 November, 2009, from http://www.pmg.org.za/

Elbaz, F. (1993). *Teacher Thinking: A study of practical knowledge.* London: Croom Helm.

Evans, L (2002). What is Teacher Development? *Oxford Review of Education, 28*(1),123-137

Faraday, A., & Plummer, K. (1979). Doing Life histories. *Sociological Review, 27*(4), 773-798.

Fullan, M. (1999). *Change forces: The sequel.* Philadelphia: Falmer Press.

Gardiner, M. (2003). Teacher appraisal: a tale in two parts. *Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa, 10*(4), 27-29.

Gee, J. P. (2000). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. In W. G. Secada, *Review of Research in Education* (Vol 25), (99-105). Washington, DC: The American Educational Research Association.

Food and Agriculture Organization of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2005). Gender and land compendium of country studies. Retrieved 19 November, 2009 from http://.fao.org/docrep/fao/008/a.0297e/s0297eoo/pdf

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick descriptions: toward an interpretive theory of culture. In *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays* . New York: Basic Books.

Giroux, H. A. (2005). *Border crossings* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

Gomez, M.L., Allen, A.R., & Clinton, K. (2004) Cultural models of care in teaching: a case study of one pre-service secondary teacher. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20,* 473 – 488.

Goodson, I. F. (1981). Life history and the study of schooling. *Interchange, 11*(4), 69-76.

Goodson, I. F. (1992). Studying teachers' lives: Problems and possibilities. In I. F. Goodson (Ed.), *Studying teachers' lives* (13-16). New York: Teacher College Press.

Gordon, A. (1997). *Multiple inequalities: Challenges facing South African rural schools.* Paper presented to Developing Quality Schooling in rural areas Conference, Mpumalanga.

Haas, T., & Nachtigal, P. (1998). *Place value.* Charleston, WV: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc.

Hall, E., Altman, M., Nkomo, N., Peltzer, K., & Zuma, K. (2005). *Potential attrition in education: the impact of job satisfaction, morale, workload and HIV/AIDS, Report presented to Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) by the Human Sciences*

Research Council (HSRC) and the Medical Research Council of South Africa (MRC). Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Harden, R. M., & Crosby, J. (2000). AMEE Guide No 20: The good teacher is more than a lecturer – the twelve roles of the teacher. *Medical Teacher, 22*(4), 334-347.

Harmon, H.L., Howley, C.B., & Sanders, J.R. (1996). Doctoral research in rural education and the rural R & D menu. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 12*(2), 68-75.

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teacher changing times: teacher's work and culture in the postmodern age.* London: Cassell.

Hartshorne, K. (1992). *Crisis and Challenges: Black Education 1910-1990.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Hathaway, W.E. (1993). Rural education: Challenges and opportunities. *The Canadian School Executive,* 12(10) 3-9.

Herzog, M.J.R., & Pittman, R. (2002). The nature of rural schools: Trends, perceptions and values. In D.M. Chalker (Ed.), *Leadership for rural schools: Lessons for all educators* (pp.11-24). Kent, England: The Scarecrow Press Inc.

Hogg, M.A., Terry, D.J., & White, K.M. (1995). A tale of two theories: A critical comparison of identity theory with social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 58*(4), 255-269. Retrieved 26 April 2008 from http://www.jstor.org/stable/2787127

Hogg, M.A., & Vaughan, G.M. (2002). *Social Psychology* (3rd ed.). London: Prentice Hall.

Holstein, J.A., & Gubrium, J.F. (2000). *The self we live by: Narrative identity in a postmodern world.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Hooks, B. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: education as the practice of freedom.* New York: Routledge.

Hortaleza, R, (2004, 13 July). *53 teachers rap principal for various 'offenses':* The Star Sun. Retrieved 31 August, 2007
www.sunstar.com.ph/static/pan/2004/07/13/oped/rhee.fer.hortaleza.html

Howley, A., & Howley, C.B. (2005). High-quality teaching: Providing for rural   teachers' professional development. *The Rural Educator, 26*(2), 1-5.

Howley, C. (1997). How to make rural education research rural: An essay at practical advice. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 13*(2), 131-138.

Human Sciences Research Council-Education Policy Centre (HSRC-EPC). (2005). *Emerging voices: A report on education in South African rural communities.* Commissioned by the Nelson Mandela Foundation. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Jansen, J. (2001). Image-ining teachers: Policy images and teacher identity in South African classrooms. *South African Journal of Education, 21*(4), 242-246.

Jessop,T. (1997). *Towards a grounded theory of teacher development: A study of the narratives of rural primary teachers in KwaZulu-Natal,* Unpublished PhD thesis, King Alfred's University. College, University of Southampton.

Johnson, S., & Monk, M. (2000). Teacher development and change in South Africa: a critique of the appropriateness of transfer of Northern/ Western practice. *Compare, 30*(2), 179-192.

Kallaway, P. (2001). The need for attention to the issue of rural education. *International Journal of Educational Development, 21*(1), 11-18.

Kallaway,P. (1985). *Apartheid and education: The education of Black South Africans.* South Africa: Ravan Press.

Kant, I. (1959). *Foundations of the metaphysics of morals* (L. W. Beck, Trans.). Indianapolis. In Bobbs-Merrill. (Original work published in 1785)
faculty.virginia.edu/.../haidt.2002.dialogue-between-my-head-and-my-heart.pub023.doc
Kariuki, W. (2006). She is a woman after all: Patriarchy and female leadership in Kenya. Online journal. Retrieved 6 September, 2009 from
http://*www.africanstudies.uct.ac.za/postamble/vol2-2/woman.pdf*

Kebeje, A. (2004). *Quality Teaching and Learning in rural schools: How teachers and schools mangers manage with quality teaching and learning in three rural primary schools in KwaZulu-Natal:* Unpublished dissertation (DEd). Durban, South Africa: University of Durban- Westville.

Kemmis, S. (1990). *Community and the politics of place.* Norman, OH: University of Oklahoma Press.

Khattri, N., Riley, K.W., & Kane, M.B. (1997). Students at risk in poor, rural areas: A review of the research. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 13*(2), 79-97.

Knowles, J.G. (1992). Models for understanding pre-service and beginning teachers' biographies: Illustrations from case studies. In I. F. Goodson (Ed.), *Studying Teachers' Lives* (pp. 99-152). New York: Teacher College Press.

Kozol, J. (1991). Savage inequalities, Children in America's schools. Retrieved 14 march 2007 from *oregonstate.edu/instruct/ed419/kozolb.html*

Kroll ,L,R, (2004) Teaching and Learning to Teach as Principled Practice. Retrieved 02 June, 2008 from http:// 01-kroll.qxd

Labov, W. (1972). The transformation of experience in narrative syntax. In W. Labov (Ed.), *Language in the inner city: Studies in Black English vernacular* (354-396). Philadelphia, PA: University of Philadelphia Press.

LeCompte, M.D., & Goetz, J.P. (1982). Problems of Reliability and Validity in Ethnographic Research. *Review of Educational Research, 52*(1), 31-60.

Lieberman, A., & Mace, P. (2008). Teaching learning: The key to educational reform. *Journal of Teacher Education,*59(3);226-234

Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry,* California: Sage.

Loughlin, J. (1997). Rural schools in the 1990s.*University of Montana, 14*(3), 34-35.

Marcos, E. (2006). Paradigm education research. Retrieved 16 June, 2009 from http://www.eduquo.com/.../paradigm-education-**research**.html

Marsden, T. (2006). Pathways in the sociology of rural knowledge. In P. Cloke., T. Marsde & P. H. Mooney (Eds.), *Handbook of Rural Studies* (pp. 3–17). London: Sage.

Mcmillan, J., Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in Education*. (5[th]ed.). U.S.A: Priscilla McGeehon.

Mertens, D.M., & McLaughlin, J.A. (2004). *Research and evaluation methods in special educations*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

Meyer, R. J., & Nore, J.(1999). Transforming identity. *Primary Voices K-6, 8*(2), 37-42.

Meyers, M. (2000). Qualitative research and the generalizability question: Standing firm with Proteus. *The Qualitative Report, 4*(3/4), 39-56.

Miller, B.A. (1993). Rural distress and survival: The school and the importance of 'community'. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 9*(2), 84-103.

Ministerial Seminar on Education for Rural People in Africa (MCRE) (2005, 7-9 September). *Policy lessons, options and priorities.* Paper presented by the Government of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Morrell, R. & Epstein, D. (2008). Material effects: race, class and masculinities among South African teachers. Retrieved 12 March 2009, from http://www.darkmatter101.org/.../2008/.../material-effects-race-class-and-masculinities-among-south-african-teachers/

Morrow, W. (2007). *Learning to teach in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Muchmore, J. (2002). Methods and ethics in a life history study of teacher thinking. *The Qualitative Report, 7*(4). Retrieved 27 September, 2007 from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR7-4/muchmore.html

Nachtigal, P.M. (1982). *Rural education: In search of a better way.* Boulder, CA: Westview Press.

Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005,7-9 September). Emerging voices: Policy considerations. A working document presented at the Ministerial Seminar on *Education for rural people in Africa: Policy lessons, options and priorities*. Paper presented by the Government of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Nieto, S. (2003). *What Keeps Teachers Going*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Noddings, N. (2001). The caring teacher. In Richardson, V. (Ed.). *Handbook of research on teaching*. (98-105). Washington: American Educational Research Association.

Oakes, P. (1987). The salience of social categories. In J. C. Turner, M. A. Hogg, P. J. Oakes, S. D.Reicher, & M. S. Wetherell (Eds.), Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory (pp. 117-141). New York: Basil Blackwell.

O' Donoghue, T., & Dimmock, C. (1996). *Innovative school principals and restructuring: life history portraits of successful managers of change*. London: Routledge.

Palmer, P. (1998). *The courage to teach* (1st ed). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Parkay, F. W., Hardcastel-Stanford, B., Vaillancourt, J. P., & Stephens, H. C. (2005). *Becoming a teacher* (2nd Ed.). Toronto: Pearson Education Canada Inc.

Phendla, T. (2004). Life stories of Black women leaders in South Africa. *Perspectives in Education, 22*(1),117-128

Pillay, G. (2003*). Successful teachers: A cubist narrative of lives, practices and the evaded.* Unpublished dissertation (DEd). Durban, South Africa: University of Durban- Westville.

Polkinghorne, D.E. (1989). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Porter, M. (2001). "We are mountain": Appachain educators' responses to the challenge of systematic reform. In M. Sutton and B. A. U. Levinson (Eds.), *Policies as practice:*

Towards a comparative sociocultural analysis of educational policy (pp.265-294). Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing.

Preston, J.P. (2006). *Rural and Urban Teaching Experiences of eight Prairie Teachers*, Unpublished dissertation .Cananda.University of Saskatchewan.

Reviews of National Policies for Education South Africa, (2008). Retrieved 19 September, 2009 from *www.sourceoecd.org/education/9789264053489*

Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (523-527). London: Sage.

Richmond, W.K. (1953). *The rural school: Its problems and prospects.* London: Alvin Redman.

Rintoul, H. (1999). Violence in rural schools. *Orbit, 29*(4), 22.

Ritchie, J. S., & Wilson, D. E. (2000). *Teacher narrative as critical inquiry: Rewriting the script.* New York: Teacher College Press.

Rose, D,R. (1988). *"Rural" – A concept beyond definition?* Retrieved 17 June, 2007, from http://www.ericdigests.org/

Rubin & Rubin. (1995). Interviews and the Philosophy of Qualitative Research. Retrieved 5th April, 2009 from www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&se=gglsc&d=5002071446

Russell, L., & Munby, H. (1991). Reframing: the role of experience in developing teachers' professional knowledge. In: D. Schon (Ed.), *The Reflective turn.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Sachs, J. (2001). Teacher professional identity: Competing discourses, competing outcomes. *Journal of Educational Policy, 16*(2), 149-161.

Samuel, M. (1998). Words, Lives and Music: On becoming a teacher. Unpublished DEd thesis. Durban: University of Durban –Westville.

Sarantakos, S. (1993). *Social Research.* Australia: Macmillan Education.

Sharplin, E. (2002). Rural retreat or outback hell: Expectations of rural and remote teaching. *Issues In Educational Research, 12*(1), 1-13.

Sherwood, T. (2000). *Where has all the 'Rural' gone? Rural education research and current federal reform: A report for the rural school and community trust.* Washington, USA:1-16

Sikes, P. (1992). Imposed change and the experienced teacher. In Fullan M. and Hargreaves, A. (Eds), *Teacher development and educational change* (pp.36-55). London: Falmer Press.

Sinclair, K.E., & Cairns, L. (1980). *Isolated schools: Teaching, learning and transition to work.* Sydney: Sydney University Press.

Skidmore, W. (1975). *Theoretical thinking in sociology.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Smit, B., & Fitz, E. (2008). Understanding teacher identity from a symbolic interactionist perspective: two ethnographic narratives. *South African Journal of Education, 28,* 91-101.

Smith, P. (2002). 'It's déjà vu all over again": The rural school problem revisited. In Chalket, D. M. (Ed.), *Leadership for rural schools: Lessons for all educators* (45-48). Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Education.

Sommers, R. (2003). "Real" middle school teachers. *The Qualitative Report, 8*(4), 530-538. Retrieved 16 August, 2008 from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/sommers.pdf

Søreide,G,E, (2006). Narrative construction of teacher identity: positioning and negotiation. *Teachers and teaching: theory and practice, 12*(5), 527–547.

South African Council for Educators (SACE). (2005). *Professional Development Portfolios,* SACE: Pretoria.

Statistics South Africa, (2002). Measuring *Rural Development: Baseline Statistics for the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy*. Pretoria.

Sumara, D.J., & Luce-Kapler, R. (1996). (Un)becoming a teacher: Negotiating identities while learning to teach. *Canadian Journal of Education, 21*(1), 65-80.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J.C. (1986). The social identity theory of inter-group behavior. In S. Worchel and L. W. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (7-24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Tamboukou, M., Squire, C., & Andrews, M. (2008). *Doing narrative research*. London: Sage.

Taylor, D. (1993). Family literacy: Resisting deficit models. *TESOL Quarterly, 27*(3), 550-553.

Taylor, S., & Yates, S. (Eds.) *Discourse theory and practice*. London: Sage.

Theobald, P. (1997). *Teaching the commons: Place, pride, and the renewal of community*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Theobald, P., & Nachtigal, P. (1995). Culture, community and the promise of rural education. *Phi Delta Kappan .77*(2) 132-135.

Thomas, D. (1992, April 9-11). *Putting nature to the rack: Narrative studies as research*. Paper presented at the Teachers' Stories of Life and Work Conference; University of Liverpool, Department of education, UK.

Tirri, K. and Husu, J. (2002). Care and responsibility in 'The best interest of the child': relational voices of ethical dilemmas in teaching. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, 8*(1), 65 – 80.

Tolley, M., F. (2003). *The induction experiences of beginning elementary teachers in the Northwest Territories*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Turner, J. C. (1985). Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group. In H. Tajfel (Ed.), *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (77-122). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Van Manen, M. (1991). *The Tact of Teaching,* Albany: State University of New York.

Vogt, F. (2002). A caring teacher: explorations into primary school teachers' professional identity and ethic of care. *Gender and Education, 14*(3), 251 – 264.

UNICEF. (2003). *Finding our voices*:: Gendered & Sexual Identities and HIV/AIDS and Education. Retrieved 23 march 2008 from http://www.*unicef*.org/girlseducation/index_documents.html

University of Utwente, Social Identity Theory. Retrieved 16 November, 2009 from *http://www.cw.utwente.nl/.../Theory%20clusters/.../Social_Identity_Theory.doc/*

Wallin, D.C. (2003). What does it mean to be "rural"?: Developing a typology of rural communities. *Journal of Educational Administration Foundations, 17*(1), 78-103.

Wan, N. (2003). 'Oranges in a world of apples': the voices of albinism. *Disability & Society,* 18(3), 277-296.

Wood, L., Olivier, T & de Lange, N. (2009). *Picturing hope in the face of poverty: as seen through the eyes of teachers* .Cape Town: Juta & Company.

Wotherspoon, T. (1998). Education, place, and the sustainability of rural communities in Saskatchewan. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 14*(3), 131-141.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A TEACHER IN A RURAL SCHOOL?

Long Life History Interviews were conducted with all the teachers to understand the complex and contradictory discourses teachers who teach in rural schools adopt in constructing their lives, told and experienced. The main themes that informed these open unstructured interviews included:

1. **BEGINNINGS....**
   - How would you describe your early life? Where were you born? / describe this area- How has this influence the person you have become?
   - How would you describe your different relationships within your immediate family (family life).What are your parents and siblings occupation. How did the issue of race, class and gender play itself out in your early growing up days? How does it shape you now?
   - How would you describe your different relationship within your immediate community? What impact did political affiliation and political activism play in your formation? Are the person you are today BECAUSE or DESPITE of your early upbringing. Do you think it might be different if you were born and raised in a different place, at a different time?

2. **SCHOOLING/ FORMAL EDCUCATION: Primary/ Secondary/ Tertiary**
   Describe these days.
   - What were your experiences as a learner in school? What did you remember about your teachers in your schooling days? What sense of self and the world was shaped during your schooling years? Who/ what were some of the main influences here...related to the history and context of the times?
   - When and why did you choose to become a teacher?
   - What was your college/university life like? How did the issue of class, race and gender play itself out in your schooling and college/university days? How has this shaped you now? How did this experience develop your ideas and desires/ interests and your life as a teacher?

3. **TEACHING EXPERIENCES** –contextual challenges, institutional culture, community relations, relationships with learners and parents
   - Describe the different responsibilities you have taken up in the school you work in? Reflect/evaluate your role, participation, leadership, agency etc

- Informal/community/religious etc formative influences. Marriage/children/other relationships. How have all of these shaped what you do as a teacher? What identity/identities are more visible than others in your daily lived practices?
- How would you describe the school community relationships and how does this impact on your work/
- How would you describe your relationships with the community –its people, organization (social, religious, political)

Appendix 2: Life Story Release Form

I, _____, have read the life story recorded and written with Sheeren Saloojee. As well as I have read, understand, and agree to the following points.

  1) I have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the life story as I see appropriate.

  2) I acknowledge that the life story accurately reflects the content of my person interview with Sheeren Saloojee.

  3) I authorize the release of the life story to Sheeren Saloojee to publish my story.

  4) I have received a copy of the life story for my own records.

_____

Date

_____

Participant

_____

Date

_____

Researcher