

WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES WHILE READING THE WORLD

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Universidad Francisco José de Caldas

School of Sciences and Education

Master Program in Applied Linguistics to TEFL

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A thesis submitted as a requirement to obtain the degree of M.A. in Applied  
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First, I want to thank my mother, a warrior woman who has always believed in me, her love is always a source of encouragement to make me be a better human being.

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Thanks to the five participants of this study and Piccolino Foundation they allow me to be a part of the adult learning program and changed my perception of education now I see literacy from a humanistic and social perspective, so I am grateful for this experience.

I hope to contribute for a better understanding of gender inequality in our country, but at the same time to give some recognition to those women who did not have a voice, in this study their description of life and narratives were an inspiration to evaluate the empowerment strategies which have increased alternative literacy skills to survive in a world that oppressed them and at the end of the day, memorable but painful experiences helped them to figured out who they were.

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### Abstract

The identity of women has many aspects to explore. In fact, there have been some studies on gender addressing women's role in society and how this role has shaped women's identity (Baxter, 2018; Beauvoir, 1970; Butler, 1990). In Colombia some of those studies shown that women have been affected by different social, cultural, economic, and political factors (Vera, 2015). This study aims to explore in depth this identity development via the literacy practice developed by adult women in the context of The Piccolo Foundation a nonprofit learning institution.

This particular fact reflects Freire's ideas about literacy defined as "reading the world" instead of simply the act of "reading and writing" (Freire, 1983). I decided to focus on understanding what these women's ways were of reading the world could tell me about their identities. My pedagogical intervention was based on the concept of feminist pedagogy and the principles of self-understanding and self-recognition from Hundertwasser in his book *The Power of Art, the Painter King with the 5 Skins* (1998). They both show how women's identity emerged as a significant referent in literacy development and therefore as a backbone of my research. Feminist pedagogy was also my approach to value what I consider is invisibilizing women.

Data collection was supported on oral and written stories narrated by the participants which were composed by personal life stories through drawings, worksheets, and narratives interviews were also important as a literacy learning practice that could highlight other ways to read and understand the world. I can reckon in the analyzed data how the identity created by women is based on empowerment strategies which have increased their alternative literacy skills

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these skills are genuine, original and have been underestimated by the general public and the academic literature.

To deliver a comprehensive account of the research I will take advantage on the resemble of the life cycle of butterflies, and the development of women's identities. Interviewed women faced significant experiences and went through several processes in the developing of their own – self, dealing with internal tensions (the inner self) and external tensions (the self-versus roles of different spheres society). Therefore, they start as an egg and coping with reality help them to become in butterflies, our women had to face a role inside the family, community, work, church. This interaction typecast them and their struggles to liberated themselves from those sociocultural oppressions and the influence of a patriarchal society.

**Key Words:** Women Identity as reader and writers, inner – self emancipation, outer social pressures, meaningful life experiences, narrative inquiry.

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### CHAPTER I

#### Introduction

Historically, women have had to struggle with sociocultural aspects that have put them at a disadvantage condition in society (UNESCO, 2018), additionally they have had to deal with imposed patriarchal schemes that condition them and determine how women should "be" and "behave" (Beauvoir, 1970). The female students of this study did not escape the reality described above. Therefore, this study addressed the construction of identity of mature women who were socially recognized as illiterate; however, their life stories show other types of unrecognized alternative learnings, which allowed them to transcend and realize their life projects.

The construction of identity from significant experiences was explored through the narratives of a group of mature female students, who in their adulthood were involved in literacy practices. These students represent a number of invisible women, who were born after the 50s of the 20th century in Colombia and did not have the possibility of becoming literate at an early age due to various circumstances such as geographic location, economic, cultural or family aspects. As a result of their experiences in relation to the family, the church, the state, tensions arose with themselves and with the roles they had to play as "women" in front of these and other institutions, Gee's vision in his four perspectives, that he names: "N-identity" corresponds to the natural, in this sense having been born biologically female; institutional identity, "I-identity" the institutional identity that is associated with the role of the woman in her community, in her home, etc.; "D-identity" the discursive identity which is recognized in the way of being of people and that does not correspond to natural aspects or as a consequence of institutions, is socially constructed and is a trait that and identity of affinity "A-identity", it is characterized by the

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identity of affinity, which is characterized by sharing similar tastes with a group of people. (Gee, 2000) these viewpoints make up the identity which are articulated, and which cannot be understood in isolation, but as a whole.

The role of sociocultural context seems to be a crucial element to understand women identity. For instance, gender studies are so broad and diverse that they are generally problematized from a binary male / female perspective (Beauvoir, 1970). However, other gender scholars have resorted to a gender vision that makes a distinction between sex and gender to open a discussion about the identity of the subject and its political identification that rejects the hegemony of biological taxonomy (Butler, 1990). The above issues exist even in our time and in our society and in our educational institutions, which I consider worth addressing, understanding, and visualizing.

In this way, the exploration of identity was addressed by claiming women through a narrative study focused on social justice as a concern of applied linguistics. Problematizing the concept of literacy in the sense of not reducing it to deciphering and coding linguistic codes (Freire, 2004) but defending a more humanistic literacy (Giroux, 1988; Kemmis, 1993) as Freire proposes in his work the Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 2000) and his philosophy of understanding reading as reading the world where human beings are able to understand their reality and the creation of a liberating and transforming consciousness.

The purpose of this research was to examine how these women developed knowledge strategies and thus built their identity to face social and cultural oppression, signifying the term literacy, moving it away from the classical meaning, where only the learning endorsed by a recognized academic community, nevertheless I understand literacy as all that non-academic

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knowledge that subjects have and that have allowed them to advance and realize their social, family, economic and political life.

This study consists of five chapters: chapter one, presents the justification and statement of the problem in which and describes the research phenomenon and contextualize the research question and the objectives that guided the research. In Chapter Two, a discussion of the literature that supported the study is presented. The literature focuses on the construction of mature female identity in a hostile sociocultural context, in the same chapter proposes the development of three subsections that account for the issues that theoretically and practically support the concept of identity construction. Chapter Three, describes the research design, including a description of the type of study, context, participants, role and instruments of the researcher. In Chapter Four, data analysis illustrates each of the stages and findings. The category and its components that emerged out of this process will be explained in detail. Finally, Chapter Five presents the study's conclusions and shows valuable connections for further research.

### **Justification**

This paper introduces the problematization of the development of a self – identity as a domain of applied linguistics aiming to clarify the role of the students as agents in their own education process as well as the teacher role of recognizing features on these identities to have a better opportunity to teach and learn within a social justice framework.

This study proposes a feminist perspective in the analysis of a series of interviews centered in a group of women who decided to begin an academic program as a mature student, in a learning process that includes writing in Spanish their first language, and communicative skills in English as foreign language EFL; they also have shown a remarkable interest in acquiring



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knowledge and the desire to excel in the learning community. These women are active agents in their own learning process and wish and demand attention on an educative process that will transform their lives.

Their motivation is self – evident in the accomplishment of academic tasks, attendance, commitment in curricular activities and class involvement. They said that this learning community has allowed them to feel alive, to share with others learning experiences without feeling ashamed to be "ignorant", to have a sound and safe space to learn a variety of contents that was too difficult or unknown. My research recognizes in these women the construct positioning of Freire's philosophy in relation to a compulsory self – literate process, due to childhood – related lack of opportunities and absence of power to decide. They are, nevertheless, in the process of learning writing and reading, so as Freire noted literacy goes way beyond the formal literate process and in absence of a structured learning process these magnificent women have learned to read the world (Freire, 1970).

To talk about the concept of critical pedagogy it is necessary to present Paulo Freire and his philosophy of education with his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) his work has developed a philosophy of adult education that established a principle of solidarity with the poor in the common struggle to survive by engaging them in a dialogue of self – awareness critical thinking, inspiring generations of educators and institutions. This proposal wants to conduct a similar point of view of education, carrying out a critical reflection, where as a teacher I can go beyond the classroom, analyzing the social and historical context as a major component of the student's identity development.

Kemmis (1993) explains that the educator must be sensitive, show an emphatic behavior and run and extra mile to the understand the ideal sense and responsibility of the teaching

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practice. So, considering Freire's perspective the goal of a critical pedagogy is emancipating from oppression through the development of critical awareness, which encourages individuals to affect and change their own world through social critique and political action. I consider that adulthood is conceived as a cultural discourse, individuals guide their personal and significant experience through a dynamic process of narrative engagement and at the same time a reflective moment that allow them to rediscover themselves. These women express their need to be heard and to socialize their experiences.

The description of this life experience shown how these women found alternative solutions to cultivate knowledge and awareness, this awareness leads them to live a worthwhile and wholesome life experience. This life experience also forged new and useful knowledge available to be grasped and shared for their classmates, families, and community. What is even more impressive is that these women struggle with illiteracy, and a flagrant lack of opportunities during their childhood.

In this study, better than being a teacher that supports her students to use the language as a way to express information or as a research teacher, I want to describe and understand how these women develop a particular identity from their varied cultural, economic, and family background but with a woman's perspective. The narrative processes emerge through a writing exercise consisting in the recreation of life histories this exercise provides coherence and social meaning as a woman.

The direct impact expected on the participants improving writing and reading skills, contribute to manifest their voices toward a social sensitivity and a proper reading of their own life experiences. This women voices should be understood as an opportunity to express and share

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a personal point of view, the narratives will be the key for a social understanding and self – reflection which let the students to empower themselves.

### **Problem Statement**

This section discusses the development, past and present, of the literacy practices in a group of mature women to understand how these women configure their identities as readers. These students have suffered from unprivileged social conditions and need to be problematized. To understand the problem, it is necessary to look back at Colombia in the mid-twentieth century to identify the cultural and social backgrounds of their youth and childhood. Afterwards, I will have discussed that despite the absence of educational opportunities and sociocultural factors, these women have found ways to generate their own learning, and now in their adulthood they have shown that they have built a way of reading the world. And it is at this point that my interest arises to understand and question other forms of literacy and how, amid the challenges of their time, they have had experiences that shape who they are, as Giroux (1988) suggested the importance of value students' stories, experiences, and knowledge.

Periods of time have had social and cultural circumstances in society. These periods of time have also raised generations that are faced with dealing with the contexts that individuals lived (Bonilla de Ramos, 1978). There are generational studies that show that a population can share identity qualities as a result of important events that affected the society of its time and contributed in some way to its worldview and the construction of identity (Robertson, 1998). This study attempts to address Colombia in the mid-20th century, observe how local events influenced the construction of the identity of the women who participated in this study, understanding that during this period Colombia experienced a predominant wave of violence (Vera, 2015). This is how the population of the time was affected and had to grow under the

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anguish of violence, displacement, and this had a greater impact on the rural population; women were not liberated from this reality and they also faced another problem of inequality in the position of society, since they had inherited a patriarchal system and domestic violence where the possibility of studying was not a fully established right (Roberts, 2012).

This is the background in which the students of this study were immersed, it is evident that the participants grew up in a crucial Colombian context that has affected our society for years. As a result, educational opportunities in Colombia have long been unequal for children, teenager, adults, and mature adults, especially women that has affected our society for years by inherited gender policies that according to Suárez (2014) in her work entitled *Representation of Women and the Ideals of Thought Colombian at the end of the century 19th and Early 20th Century: the Metaphor of False Inclusion*, she highlights it was a bet of the twentieth century nation that included women in state policies, however ironically it excluded them by decreeing their possibilities of training and work under "female" roles that responded to domestic activities.

Also, recognizing that the women in this study are from different rural regions of the country and that in the mid-twentieth century Colombia had a worrying out-of-school rate compared to urban regions according to Bonilla de Ramos (1978). In addition, the same author makes an analysis of enrollment and the time that the population remained in the educational system of that time, she also mentions the inequality of educational opportunities was due to social status. The above panorama is corroborated by the testimonies of the participants in this study, see appendix C in the initial interview. There, the students narrated their memories about a time full of violence and adverse situations such as forced displacement and labor exploitation, from that moment I began to understand social inequality and the abandonment of a patriarchal

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state, as well as the struggles that these women they had to face, to get ahead and that I will cover in detail in later chapters.

Despite in recent years the *MEN*, National Development Plan, Law of the (2014-2018) *All for a new country* (Todos por un nuevo país in Spanish) with this law the government has tried to create strategies to reach a better future for people, particularly new generations, children and adolescents that will have the opportunity to return to school. In this sense it is very positive for our society, but in the case of adult and mature adult men and women there is still a gap, there are no policies or programs to help them to have the right to have education, as a result numerous adults remain illiterate.

In this regard, Stromquist (1990), from the 90s, warned of the problem of illiteracy and emphasized the impact of this phenomenon on adult women, which the author affirms that the necessary attention was not paid by scholars and there is a lack of research in this field. In addition, There are large gender inequalities in education that still prevail worldwide UNESCO (2016) recognized that there are educational and social problems which girls and women still face in Latin America and Caribbean. The right to access to education is established as a fundamental human right, without distinction of race, age, socioeconomic background, or special condition. However, the government has not been able to guarantee full schooling processes for its entire population, some groups were not considered. This is the case of people in adulthood, they could not participate in a formal education model. This study aims to make a group of women visible who in their adulthood have not lost their purpose to become literate. Therefore, they have looked for and found alternatives for responding to their needs.

Some institutions have found a mission in this regard, this is the case of the Piccolino Foundation. In my exploration stage I tried to understand a different education offered by this

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Foundation I came across its principles, in which the founder José Antonio Torres summarizes it.

This is the text in his words:

In the school there is an understanding of pedagogical work from the recognition of the other as an equal, from the fact that teachers do not believe they are the owners of knowledge and will transmit it to students, instead, it is seen in the adult student a person who has read all their lives with codes that life has given them and now they come to school to qualify knowledge and acquire new knowledge. Teachers at school are facilitators of learning and mediators of a process that each adult has decided to undertake autonomously (Torres, 2013, pág. 38)

The words in this interview inspires volunteers and many others with his altruistic legacy of generating equality through education and literacy. They were an inspiration even for me, it was an additional argument for working there. I felt encouraged to work with adult education, so I started teaching Spanish and English as a volunteer at this institution since 2015. I curiously realized that mature women were a majority of the students that look for being literate. This caught my attention, and it triggered my interest in understanding their lives and how they have learned to fit in the world despite their lack of formal education in their youth.

I have noticed how, during the lessons, the students have demonstrated political, socio-cultural and economic knowledge that shows that their illiteracy (lacking of formal education) has nothing to do with their ability to generate their own understanding of their world. Mature women did not portray themselves as “empty vessels” as traditional approaches to literacy. (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Instead, they expose their own thinking of the context to which they belong to. In order to display the aforementioned ideas, I will begin by referring to a writing that a mature student describes, argues and defends about political events of the past with the present of the country (see original text in appendix B).

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*Writing essay by a mature female student (2018)*

## Literacy process: Maria's written exercise

*“Qué triste es saber que dios nos dió la enseñanza de amarnos los unos de los otros, donde no existen los estratos, donde la diversidad de raza género, edad son valorados. Yo a pesar de la edad que tengo, me indigna escuchar a personas que dicen “en nuestro tiempo no había tanta maldad como ahora”. ¿Qué pasaba con aquellos que hace muchos años atrás con la gente de color que los traían de África como animalitos para venderlos? los vendían y tenían como esclavos y a las mujeres las violaban, y sabiendo que engendraban a esas mujeres con hijos. A esos hijos los trataban como animales. ¿Eso no es una crueldad, igual o peor a lo que vivimos ahora? Tanta injusticia que se ha vivido en el mundo. Uribe por ejemplo nos tiene divididos, ¿Cuánto poder puede tener una persona y no se da cuenta? El poder es como un monstruo que carcome la mente del ser humano y hace que el hombre pierda la humanidad. Esas ansias de dominar y doblegar a sus propios semejantes ya sean empleados, familiares, a otros. Porque han existido. Un empleado es un ser vulnerable ante su patrón. A veces es tan grande la necesidad que es triste, pero es una realidad.” (María, 2018)*

*“How sad it is to know that God taught us to love one another, where strata do not exist, where diversity of race, gender, age are valued. Despite my age, I am outraged to hear people say, “in our time there was not as much evil as now.” What about those who many years ago with people of color who brought them from Africa as animals to sell? They sold them and had them as slaves and the women were raped and knowing that they (males) were begetting those women with children. Those children were treated like animals. Isn't that cruelty, the same or worse than what we live now? So much injustice that has been experienced in the world. Uribe<sup>1</sup> (Ex-President of Colombia 2002-2010) for example, he has divided us (Colombian people), how much power can a person have and not realize it? Power is like a monster that eats away the human mind and makes man lose his humanity. Those anxieties to dominate and subjugate their own people, doesn't matter if they are their employees, family members, others. An employee is vulnerable to his employer. Sometimes the necessity is so great that it is sad, but it is a reality.” (María, 2018)*

When I reviewed this student's text, who I'm referring as “María”. I noticed the great relationship between her values, her understanding about politics and her way of reading the world where she analyzed past and present and even denounces the injustices of race and gender

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<sup>1</sup> Álvaro Uribe Vélez (1952), Colombian politician who has held important public positions, such as mayor, senator, and president. His political life has provoked great controversies due to his extreme conservatory thought and his rejection of the peace process developed in the government of his successor to the presidency, Juan Manuel Santos.

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discrimination. She also reflected on power that has done a lot of damage in our country. The questions she asks herself demonstrated her critical capacity on reflecting about social injustice facts that she has evidenced throughout her life and now she materializes through writing. This fact made me think about the importance of writing as a mean of listening to the student's voices (Giroux, 1988), Students have a lot to say and are worth listening to.

This situation described above led me think that some literacy practices focus on teaching reading and writing by ignoring the subject and its context. In some cases, following a banking education (Freire, 1970), or simply mechanizing reading and writing by limiting students to learning linguistic codes. In this sense, knowledge is understood as a close relationship with experience (Kolb, 1997). In Kolb's words, he defines experience: "experience refers to the whole series of activities that allow learning" (p.69) in Alonso, et al. 1997. It is a field that has not been valued in society in the view of some countries they focused on directing literacy in a mercantilist way, after the concern of some scholars have another lens of literacy to a more humanistic perspective as is the case of (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2003) among others.

This is how I understand that literacy must consider the human being and the experience as a source of learning and development. The experience of these women revealed a rich political, socio-cultural, and linguistic understanding that it is worthy to be examined. Piccolino principles allowed me to understand the significance of mature women experiences as student. Likewise, it let me have the prospect to see education from another lens and made me rethink the concept of literacy. I realized that this concept goes beyond that limited view of literacy as the ability to read and write as Barton et al. (2000) literacy implies different literacies associated with different domains of life.



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These women face the challenge of generating alternative learning which was genuine for them. Those alternatives disclose who they were and how valuable their own experiences were. It also let them to consider themselves as a priority, as empowered human beings under equality conditions in society, and as conscious citizens of political reality.

The previous idea led me see the encounter between the identity of women and their reading of the world. Women who did not have a formal literacy in a classroom but who in their life trajectory have been collected and built as readers, readers not only of the written text but also of the different texts that life itself has given them through their meaningful experiences. With the above, I can conclude that the subject reads different types of text, that is, the “text” beyond the linguistic and textual, but as a “text” situated as a social practice (Chala & Chapetón, 2012). Which suggests that the human being relates, learns, configures him/herself with the texts (family, work, church, community, etc.) impregnated with cultural and social ideologies. In this sense, women’s voices might be understood as the opportunity to express and share personal views they have constructed about the world, thus, narratives were the key implications for social understanding and self-reflection that let the students to empower themselves.

In this way, this study understands reading a sociocultural act in which readers construct meaning from text through the lenses of culture and personal experience (Barton et al. 2000). Here, reading Identity is understood as readers are not limited to "decoding" or "unlocking" meanings encoded by the authors.

The event previously described made me ponder the importance of documenting those significant experiences from my students, and considering the literacy of these women from a more humanistic perspective, collecting meaningful life experiences through a pedagogical intervention based on the principles of Feminist Pedagogy (FP) that seeks to find out those

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aspects that oppress and empower women while read the world that I will exemplify in the instructional design in detail. Nevertheless, I want to highlight that Feminist pedagogy relies on Freire's philosophy of a liberating education. Its main foundation is to make the experience, a learning resource, which in this study can enable a social transformation that recognizes the voice of women.

### **Research Question**

How do mature women configure their identity as readers and writers in literacy practices grounded on meaningful life experiences and self-discovery at the Piccolino Foundation?

### **General Objective:**

To examine the strategies that mature female learners have developed to construct their own alternative knowledge and identity in order to understand better how they face their everyday life situations in a context that oppressed them socially and culturally.

### **Specifics Objectives**

To describe the factors that shape the construction of women as readers and writers of their own world in literacy practices through narratives to understand how these women survive in a social and cultural context that has oppressed them.

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## CHAPTER 2

### Theoretical Framework

#### Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the theoretical proposed to response the research question, how do mature women configure their identity as writers and readers in literacy practices grounded on meaningful life experiences and self-discovery? For this, there are three axes offered in order to support the discussion of women's identity.

#### Figure 1.

*Axe of analysis: Women as readers of the world and authors of their own text.*



Source: Own

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The above illustration portrays three outlines of theoretical work allowed me to connect and make sense of the identity of women as readers, understanding the act of reading (Freire, 1981) much more than decoding written codes, but understanding "reading" as reading the world in Freire's philosophy (1981). Therefore, women's identity is built based on Sociocultural framework, resistance patriarchal and totalitarian society and struggles and opportunity to self-empowerment. Therefore, this research shows a close relationship of sociocultural factors in Colombia in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, that frame female students live, meaningful experiences and their identity, time in which these women developed their childhood and youth, exercising resistance against the position of inequality in patriarchal society, and finally the resurgence and their way of reading the world has empowered themselves despite of living in a context that oppressed them socially and culturally.

For this study, I adopt a critical feminist position. I reject any type of inequality of women. I recognize the tough role and the historical struggles that women have had both at local and global context. Working with these women from the Foundation made me rethink and value the struggle that women have had to bear, sometimes as women we take for granted the rights and equitable spaces that we have today.

Currently, XXI century women have better conditions regarding to equality at all levels: educational, political, social, and cultural. Furthermore, this experience has made me understand the responsibility of making visible the narratives of women who have not had a voice, I intend in some way to vindicate and legitimize the role of women who have refused to dominate patriarchal behaviors. Next, the theoretical foundations that adhere to the core of this study will be discussed.

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### **Sociocultural Colombian Factors That Determine Women's Identity**

This study had in consideration a group of women who were participants in the research. They were born in the middle of the 20th century. Therefore, this study requires for its analysis to identify a series of aspects that begin by recognizing that Colombia was in the middle of the 20th century (it is necessary to understand the socio-cultural factors that these women had (been forced) to live in their childhood and youth), its characteristics are essential to comprehend Colombian society, its customs, aspects by which some socio-cultural behaviors of a patriarchal model are legitimized and adopted; the historical violence that has affected people since the colony and that in the country increased with the bipartisan clashes that began around 1925 and lasted until the middle of the century, this left open wounds in the population and these elements affected and constrained the construction of identity, as stated by Villaveces cited in (Vera, 2015); Although Colombia has tried to improve the conditions of women, violence continues to have a high impact on the construction of the identity of Colombian women, as is made visible in the doctoral thesis of Valero (2017) who also seeks to recognize the effect of Gender violence based on the historical recognition of the country to understand the stories of women in the Atlantic coastal area.

During the experience with the participants of this study, I have understood the anxiety that these women had to endure in their childhood and youth, where they remember the Colombia of the 50s, and how they have had to suffer domestic violence, early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence, displacement, unequal working conditions and also how the state has ignored them, how they have inherited a country that has left them in a position of inferiority and defenseless in the face of the positions of the institutions and how their rights were conceived in the face of the patriarchal social model. This made me inquired in first place,

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about how the Colombian state protected women's rights to understand better the context of that time. Then, I will try to break down the socio-cultural aspects of the state, to address more deeply private aspects.

To establish a general frame of reference, it is essential to check the Constitution of Colombia. This, to understand what was the constitution that governed the population, the constitution of 1886 was active for more than a century, this constitution is the result of the seizure of power by the conservative party with which the Constitution defines the Catholic religion as the religion of the Colombian state and the catholic church relations are defined that have a great impact on the freedoms of the population, as stated by the constitutional lawyer (Osuna, 2019). Also when making an analysis of the language used, it was written in the masculine genitive (without making observations in relation to women), as expressed by Facio, A, and Cook, R (1997) cited by (Acosta & Márquez, 2017), suggest that the Rights in the constitution were written up such a way that women were not taken into account, they were assumed as subjects without voice or vote, since the concept of universal suffrage<sup>2</sup> was not included in this constitution. The foregoing suggests that the states of law that should guarantee the equity of their citizens, exercise power mechanisms that subjugate some populations. In this way they position some above others, generating a totalitarian culture (Marcuse, 1964).

To the above, a local study carry out by Mazo (2019) invites us to reflect on how the Catholic religion has contributed greatly to shaping Colombian society in a patriarchal and

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<sup>2</sup> Sufragio: en el que tienen derecho a participar todos los ciudadanos, salvo determinadas excepciones.

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macho way based on stories of sacred texts that condition gender inequality. Consequently, this reaffirmed the hierarchies and inequities that affected women, not only in their rights as citizens but also in their status in society, an example that illustrates how women result a normalized discrimination, undervalued and inequality between men and women is since men were favored by the dominant patriarchal society in Colombia, as is also shown in (Cerri, 2010; Sanchez, 2001) these authors state that the culture of the peoples delegates the roles that correspond to men and women to be able to perform and carry out their behaviors will be accepted and rejected according to their social constructions, as Cerri exemplifies in this same study, "Until recently, women were relegated to the role of wives, mothers and housewives, while men were assigned the role of breadwinner, worker and owner of public spaces. "(p. 2)

The socio-cultural difficulties of the Colombian context and the experience of being a woman were defined by the social constructs which were normalized in urban and rural society, they were so ingrained that the woman herself in many cases accepted those acts that indicate them and themselves without thinking they were in the role of pointing out other women. This accounts for women in relation to public contexts, however, privately they were affected by other violence (sexual, economic and psychological) (Sanchez, 2001). Therefore, the roles of women at home and work were socially established indicating how they "should be" but were not structured from their own formulations based on equality and equity, but on the contrary from the patriarchal model. This aspect will be seen in the chapter on data analysis.

Despite the previous panorama at the end of the 20th century in Colombia, the struggles for gender equality occurred in two ways, public and private. Understand the public feminist movements that sought profound social transformations in terms of their rights as citizens and the workplace. And in the private sphere, mainly the struggles were carried out to resist domestic

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violence. The following axis of analysis will address more broadly the struggles of women to resist the hegemony of the patriarchal model.

### **Women's Resistance to Stereotypical Patriarchal Culture**

This axis attempts to expose how women have historically resisted inherited inequality that has painfully survived to this day. Some organizations, such as political parties, racist and anti-feminist groups, who present themselves as detractors may point out that those times are over. However, the theoretical review provides me with arguments to justify that this fact is still valid in today's society. Although it does not deny the collective and even individual struggles of diverse minorities that have fought for equality.

Resistance is multi-faceted, and in turn comes in multiple forms. Therefore, in my search for understanding how women resist the world around them; The analysis of the identity of women will be approached in a transversal way in two directions, the first one horizontal, which corresponds to external factors that fall on women and the second one, vertically from the inner being to the outside. According to Gee's perspective (2001), in relation to the view ways of identity, in which he establishes in his work titled, *Identity as an Analytic Lens for research in Education*.

As a first instance, women have resisted an inequality practices in their sociocultural context and even political aspect (Butler, 1990). As Corpas De Posada (2019) asserts, when women face their designated role as housewives, domestic workers, wives, daughters who must follow the submissive woman prototype and resist this characterization. Similarly, Baxter (2018) in her work affirms that the stereotype of women in purely domestic work pigeonholes women and restricts them from their leadership, so breaking with this vision has been a long struggle for women, even in the 21st century.



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The fact that the mentality that women has been visualized under the logic of a stereotype that conforms to feminine canons remains in force is based on the fact that the institutions (family, school, church and community) have been in charge of reproducing and normalize this ideology and even when times have changed, the discourses have also adapted to the realities to continue to perpetuate themselves under a "unseen" speech, in which men have dominated the public space and exercised authority in the private sphere, a system of hierarchies is generated that makes distinctions between the feminine and the masculine that has nothing to do with our biological differences. However, this male dominance has given rise to a system of hierarchies that extends to the cultural, political, and social spheres.

These facts led me to ask myself, what ideology are we dealing with? What has so much power to permeate all the institutions of society and penetrate the construction of the identities of individuals, finding a system of hierarchies that extends to the cultural, political, social and even educational fields; I understand the patriarchy model, as that macho ideology, which has become normalized and permeated in the culture, leaving women in a position of inferiority.

My concern in understanding gender equality struggles and efforts go back to the question posed in the previous paragraph, what ideology or ideologies are we dealing with in EFL context? and valuing local research efforts which have contributed to struggles over gender inequality that continue even today in our country. Among them I found (Benavides, 2017; Castañeda, 2008; Delgado, 2019), these studies have in common the concern of gender inequality, which helps to make visible the hegemonic discourses of interaction between students, students and teachers ; the exercise of power in the classroom, and more importantly, the construction of identity when students and teachers are interacting in the classroom.

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Teachers are driven to make decisions about ELT materials and their implications for students social gendered identities (Benavides , 2017). Ossenbach & Somoza (2001) highlight “the textbooks are also a mirror of the society that produces them, that is, a space in which values, attitudes, stereotypes and even ideologies that characterize what historians have called the imaginary of an epoch”, (p. 44). This implies that written and visual texts become a correlate of the collective mentality that function as simulations of the social memory of a community.

The school as a micro-society cannot be far from the concern of gender inequalities, which bring with them deep-rooted and socially validated cultural and social aspects, many times there are behaviors that transgress men and women without the actors being aware of it. On the contrary, it is necessary to continue taking actions on hegemonic discourses and power struggles from education.

Consequently, the struggle of women to struggle the macho mentality has been a challenge (Beauvoir, 1970). In this sense, resistance is the act that have had the task of challenging themselves, of reinventing themselves to try to get out from sociocultural traditional models of submission (Sanchez, 2001). The fact of reinventing themselves leads women to enter into conflict with themselves, to understand who they are, to enter into crisis to find other "self" and even challenging oppressive institutions.

Patriarchal social system draws on female body with the aim of reducing her to biological differences, putting her at a disadvantage. It seems that the biggest problem of female inequality and the way of configuring it is the biological aspect. In this regard, Beauvoir (1970) wrote: “WOMAN? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; she is a female – this word is sufficient to define her.” (p.11) This author helped me understand the impact of being a woman, her criticism and language without taboo brings to light hidden themes

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of macho society and its influence on culture, which is recreated in the actions and forms of behavior of the subjects. As consequences, behaviors are normalized and lead to pejorative descriptions of women based on their biological condition. Moreover, less appreciating the intelligence of women and the human capacities that it possesses, women with a human mind and only distinguishing ourselves by the biological ability to gestate or provide pleasure (Beauvoir, 1970; Butler, 1990) but not as a human being, but as an object.

I have learned that men and women are not the same, we have notable biological differences, and certainly recent studies in neuroscience, psychology, sociology have made contributions that point out precise differences that distinguish us in one way or another. All these differences generate a sum of potentialities that are in turn diverse. To go further, the woman herself is not equal to the others due to the fact that they share the same sex. Many feminists now argue that race, class, and sexual orientation make the notion of a common gender identity problematic (Butler, 1990) since a way of being is somehow excluded.

In addition, I defend the intelligence of women who leave the mold and the ways of reading the world that surrounds them, challenging the patriarchal model which has adopted a positivist and traditional positions towards women, insisting on merely biological differentiation. A sociolinguistic effort at the local study carried out by Castañeda & Soler (1998) suggests that gender research in Colombia should be qualitative rather than quantitative research, so as not to follow the differentiations between men and women proposed by positivist studies. This with the purpose of working the gender towards a sociocultural perspective. In this regard, Connell (2002) suggests:

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Gender must be understood as a social structure. It is not an expression of biology, or a fixed dichotomy in human life or character. It is a pattern in our social arrangements and in every activities or practices which those arrangements govern. (p.9)

Thus, I have understood that the social factor is crucial for the construction and reconstruction of itself. understanding that identity is dynamic and not static. Where classifications and labels are culturally permeated but, it can also be resisted by the subjects. In the case of women, they are the ones to break chains of oppression, they have seen and rejected social molds that exercise power over them (Butler, 1990). However, liberation involves agency skills and implies an ideological struggle of the oppressed, as Freire calls it in his work *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, as the same way Marcuse with his contribution to understand the concepts of one-dimensionality and multidimensionality from a critical perspective and how individuals are configured from these two aspects. Which I will address in more detail in the next axe.

### **Struggle Against Oppression as an Opportunity for Agency and Liberation Through the Act of Reading and Writing the World**

This study on the identity of women as reader of their own world conceives this concept as part of the transformation of identity that implies an insurrection of the self, due to its personal, social, and cultural implications. This transformation of the identity of women is seen as a crisis of the self and external factors. According to Marcuse (1964) oppressed communities have two options: accommodate or struggle established social patterns, that means that the oppressed reducing himself or herself to social functions or the oppressed break with the customs and beliefs imposed and socially accepted as "correct", while facing the oppressive institutions that surround them. This dilemma that humans face can also be understood as a

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challenge to the one-dimensional model and achieving an emancipation of itself, which suggests a multidimensional understanding of the self.

The one-dimensionality model is understood in this work as the alienation of human consciousness (Marcuse, 1964). Marcuse warns of the triumph of voluntary repression, adoption is so strong that the subjects accept the submission of this Capitalist system. In addition, this author criticizes the homogenization and standardization of the members of the community since they absorb them as voiceless subjects and they forget themselves and their interests, which suggests that their identity is poor and lacking in critical sense. In contrast, the vision of identity as multidimensional, (Short & Freire, 1987) appears with a liberating literacy philosophy where subjects, as human beings, can read and transform the world, their realities as agents of their own existence.

A recent local study carried out by Albarracín & Contreras (2017) visualizes the strategies of the women victims of the armed conflict that concludes to understand the resilience and self-recognition of capacities, this strengthened them with the purpose of moving forward from their dreams and goals of claiming their place in the world, which makes it clear that the subject has the ability to overcome the hostile world, learning from it but at the same time rebuilding it in its present and thus being able to continue its life project and generate expectations for the future.

When women show resistance or dissent on the suppose way they must "be" or "behave" by the pressure of sociocultural context, they exercise agency in which they account of their capacity for individualized choice and action (Giroux, 2003). Hence, women involve in reflective practices become aware of their own realities past experiences and transforming it as well (Freire, 1970), which implies that the subject can consider unlearn cultural norms and

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interpersonal relationship with others that long before were imposed, but discover that they are able to assess the desirability of these life-shaping influences.

The above idea suggests that the subject who is breaking out of the mold, struggles to rebuild himself or herself, which can lead to a crisis as an opportunity to reinvent themselves. The change of ideology could be an opportunity to self-discovery; it can be presented as an evolution and transformation of who one is, critically human gain her or his own voice for herself or himself as well as face the world.

It can be said that voice is generates his/her own discourses and reaffirms and negotiates with others. We could not do a full release in isolation, as (Gee, 2000) points up that identity “must negotiate it through a partly open, partly internal dialogue with others” (p,113) in this sense, women have had the need to liberate themselves and in part to make others know that they is someone who read the world, her own realities the texts; family, work, and the communities that surround them as someone who can reinvent themselves and being the authors of their own texts using skill that enhances women’s self-knowledge. Meyers (2002) proposes some skills to achieve self-determination, avoid overwhelming social demands, value one's wishes, values, and goals, and gain one's voice, in the same text the author claims, “when a woman speaks in her own voice, then, she is articulating what she knows as a result of exercising these skills<sup>3</sup>.” (p. 21) Undoubtedly, these emancipation skills as lifelong learning, alternative to academia, based precisely on the understanding that human beings have of themselves and the world around them.

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<sup>3</sup> Some skills proposed by Meyers: Introspection skills, Communication skills, Memory skills, Imagination skills, Analytical skills, Self -nurturing skills, Volitional skills, Interpersonal skills (p. 20-21)

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Now, the relationship of agency skills, Meyers (2002) calls self-determination, gains importance to the extent that the reader-writer is reflected in what they write or read in themselves, in their texts. like the old saying, "tell me what you read and I'll tell you who you are" or "tell me what you write and I'll tell you who you are". Well, reading and writing in this order of ideas, require not only linguistic skills, but also their grounded in the social and culture that the human being has acquired through their own life experience and therefore he or she reads and writes in an interaction of the self and the world. At this regard Meyers (2002) emphasizes:

skills that enable individuals to construct their own self-portraits and self-narratives and that thereby enable them to take charge of their lives. Construing self-determination this way demonstrates women's need for expanded agency, for it discloses how patriarchal cultures illegitimately interfere with women's agentic skills (p. 5)

To sum up the above, the oppressed are the ones who are challenged to dismantle these external social pressures, with the learning of emancipation that lead to transforming their realities (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2003). Women have had the task of freeing themselves from their own fears, to be themselves, to know themselves in all the contexts that the world offers, to recognize their bodies and sexuality without performativity (Butler, 1990), beyond their feelings, to believe in themselves to position themselves and facing the world, with their own voice. Which implies reviewing and assessing their own struggles, recognizing their ability to be an agent of their own existence. In other words, read and rewrite their worlds.

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### CHAPTER 3

#### Research Methodology

##### Research Design

This chapter describes the decision made for adopting a qualitative paradigm within a descriptive and interpretative approach with emphasis on the narrative inquiry, with purpose of tackling the research question: How do adult women configure their identity as readers and writers in literacy practices grounded on meaningful life experiences and self-discovery? In conformity with the question, the following objectives were established:

##### *General Objective:*

To examine the strategies that mature female learners have developed to construct their own alternative knowledge and identity in order to understand better how they face their everyday life situations in a context that oppressed them socially and culturally.

##### *Specific Objectives*

To describe the factors that shape the construction of women as readers and writers of their own world in literacy practices through narratives to understand how these women survive in a social and cultural context that has oppressed them.

To interpret how mature female learners have constructed their identities by reading (the world) in literacy practices through narratives to understand how these women survive in a social and cultural context that has oppressed them.

Consequently, the research design includes a description of the type of study, of the participants' profile and context, data Collection instruments and procedures, the teacher researcher role, and the ethical consideration.



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### **Type of Study**

My decision was adopting a qualitative stance in which women's narratives are the means to account to understand how the identity of a group of female students have lived from various cultural, economic, family through a narrative approach which provides coherence and social meaning. This qualitative perspective has helped me elucidate the diverse constructions people make of the world and the experience they have had in it (Merriam, 2009). The way adult women read the world provides information about how they make sense of their life experiences and social implications reflect in their oral or written narratives.

To understand social situations, observation is an indispensable mechanism, which allows the researcher from a qualitative research methodology to recognize and understand phenomena, focusing the study on the experiences of the participants. (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). I was in the process of describing and interpreting participants' thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and experiences while they are involved.

Qualitative research facilitates to describe how female learners develop the literacies necessary to survive and be successful while living in a society that oppresses them socially, culturally, and economically. In this sense this qualitative research viewpoint aims to understand the way women have constructed their knowledge and identity, and how they make sense of the world and their experience within it. Thus, one way to understand human experience would be to document these stories (Murray, 2009). Hence, this study is based on the narrative research approach as an alternative paradigm for social research (Lieblich et al. 1998); this methodological approach is very helpful for getting more detail about the students' written and oral narrations, as well it allows to answer the research question. How do adult women configure

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their identity as writers and readers in literacy practices grounded on meaningful life experiences and self-discovery at the Piccolino Foundation?

### **Narratives**

Narrative inquiry is chosen in this study because it offers numerous benefits; one of them is the variety of insights narrative and more specifically life history research can provide educators (Murray, 2009). One example of the benefits is that Narrative Inquiry allows individual voices to be heard, that it is the mayor indentation of this study (Benson, 2004), especially those who has been marginalized, minorities such as disabled people, LGBT community, ethnic and this specific study adult and mature women who for many reasons such us: economic, educational, political and social difficulties due to the violence, the male chauvinism and the Colombian armed conflict in mid-20th century. The women of this study could not study in the childhood or youth, now in this stage of their life they are in the search for literacy process. These voices from the margins have the potential to change theory by encouragement us to take a critical look at the existing canon or standard (Kouritzin, 2000)

Narrative is a way of understanding experience involving, as Clandinin & Connelly (2000) stated: “collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with settings” (p.20). Narrative processes were emerging adulthood occur through life histories that provides coherence and social meaning as a female, in other words, women who were immersed in inequality situation. Thus, I attend narratives were the key implications for social understanding and self-reflection that let the students to empower themselves. My study is closely related to the structure of three-dimensional spatial narratives proposed by Connelly & Clandinin (2006). See Table 1.

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**Table 1.***The Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure.*

Interaction		Continuity			Situation/place
Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	
Look inward to internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions.	Look outward to existential conditions in the environment with other people feelings, and their intentions, purposes, assumptions, and points of view.	Look backward to remember experiences and stories from earlier times.	Look at current experiences, feelings, and stories relating to actions of an event.	Look forward to implied and possible experiences and plot lines.	Look at context, time, and place situated in a physical landscape or setting with topological and spatial boundaries with characters' intentions, purposes, and different points of view.

Adapted from Connelly and Clandinin, (2006). Source: Mendieta, J. (2011). Teachers' Knowledge of Second Language and Curriculum: A Narrative Experience. Profile Issues in Teachers' Professional Development. 13. 89-110.

This figure clearly synthesizes the elements of interaction, continuity and location and place addressed in significant experiences. Narratives are the means by which individuals define and recreate themselves through the discursive that they reveal in the identities and narrative experiences of the language learner. The female students had the opportunity to write their own experiences, and at the same time, to position themselves. Consequently, the participants challenge themselves and keep learning in a formal way to put into practice the oral, and written literacy practices, taking as a source their own life story. In this sense, these female learners were able to feel free to speak and write their opinions, thoughts, beliefs and their point of view and at the same time it was using to collect data and the teacher could analyze their voices and see what female discourses emerge.

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### Participants' Profile and Context

This research project is implemented at Piccolino Foundation, a nonprofit learning institution committed to the transformation of adult education with 15 years of experience in Bogotá, which offers informal education to adult and mature people who did not have the opportunity to study in their early years.

The Foundation has three branches that are located in Suba; in a neighborhood called *Lisboa*, Chapinero; in *La Salle University* and Ciudad Bolívar in *Cadelaria La Nueva* neighborhood in an institution called *Colegio Distrital Rodrigo Lara Bonilla*. The last one is where this research takes place. The school is small but very comfortable. The students were divided in two groups, 10 to 12 students per classroom approximately. The school was equipped with televisions; it was an important aspect for the use of technology in the workshops.

The participants were 5 women between 47 and 70 years old, all of them are in elementary. Most of them started their educational process without knowing how to read or write a word. Others have literacy foundations that some time began in their youth, which, according to them, were no successful processes due to variety of problems such as, economy, large families that chose only their sons to go to school; the war at that time was decisive, because it left no other option than forced displacement. That is the main reason these female students are coming from different regions of our country. Currently, most of these women live in Ciudad Bolívar.

For this research project ten women are taking part in the instructional activities. As the research study is progressing, five participants from the group of ten have been selected since these 5 women have attend to the Foundation every single class and they have participated actively in constructing their own narratives. Using narratives can be fascinating, but they are

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also time consuming when the purpose is to gather rich and valuable data. Therefore, I had to recognize that teaching and gathering data with narratives has been a challenge and, that is necessary to think of strategies along the development of this implementation to avoid time constraints. One of these strategies for example: interviewing participants out of the context of the classroom.

Bearing in ethical considerations for the development of the study, the Foundation and participants have been informed about the pedagogical intervention and purpose of the study. In addition, I was granted with the permission to collect data by audio recordings and students' artifacts. I have explained the use of data will be confidential and I guarantee that it only will be used for research purposes. *(see Appendix A, Participant Consent Form and Appendix B, Certification: consent for the development of research project and data processing of the Piccolino foundation.)*

### **Data Collection Instruments and Procedures**

This research aims to document oral and written narrative life stories of adult and female learners who have developed the literacies necessary to survive and be successful while living in a society that oppresses them socially, culturally, and economically through narratives. To be able to obtain relevant and enough data to answer the research question and achieve the objectives there are two instruments that I have decide to consider. The first one is students' Personal life stories through drawing and worksheets and the second one is In-depth interviews with a narrative approach that were audio recorded.

### **Students' Personal Life Stories Through Drawings and Worksheets:**

The pedagogical intervention was space in the class in which the group of students were encourage keeping reading and writing in Spanish and learning some vocabulary in English.

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Each intervention had twofold intentions, the participants were able to keep improving the writing and reading skills in both mother, (Spanish), and foreign, (English), language, but more importantly, it is expected to contribute illustrated the dimensions proposed by the artist, Friedensreich Hundertwasser and *The 5 skins* (Restany, 1998).

In this sense this instrument allows students to explore and reflect who they are? What they have done? How their experiences have contributed to construct their knowledge? How they feel, think, and behave in front of their world? In this sense, students' personal life stories through drawings and worksheets for this study constituted an instrument for gathering meaningful data.

To reveal their literacies, would highlight the wisdom they have due to their experiences in a dynamic way. These women's voices might be understood as the opportunity for them to express and share personal point of view and narrative inquiry as a qualitative approach will be the key implications for social understanding and self-reflection.

This intervention was supported by visual material (Riessman, 2008), such as photographs, images made by the students that represent them and their understanding of the world. According (Chase, 2008) Visual turn is a new alternative that we as researchers must use as mechanism to challenge the assumption that the only way to gather information is through oral or written form. In this study the visual material will be use as a complementary semiotic element.

### **Interviews**

Through interviews, I generated a space in which participants were interviewed individually and in private way in order to offer confidence. One of the keys when we were interviewing is to create the environment the participants feel free and comfortable when

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speaking about their experiences. Just as Clandinin & Connelly (2000), I conceived important to avoid teaching hierarchy, instead both, my female learners and I established a relationship based on mutual respect and trust.

One important thing is that in this study the interviews were recorded. It was a useful component in order to gather important opinions and information about the students. Thus, qualitative researchers seek to understand the context or setting of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally. Audio recording also help in the process of interpretation because there are verbal and linguistics elements to analyze for instance, the tone of the voice.

Hood (2009) suggests that interviews might be more open-ended, giving his participants an opportunity to raise the issues that they feel are most relevant. Thus, during this study, the questions may become more structured when the researcher identifies specific issues that need to be understand more deeply.

I expected to contribute these women to manifest their voices toward a social sensitivity from their own life experiences to reveal literacies, would highlight the wisdom they have due to their experiences. These women's voices might be understood as the opportunity for them to express and share personal point of view and narrative inquiry as a qualitative approach will be the key implications for social understanding and self-reflection.

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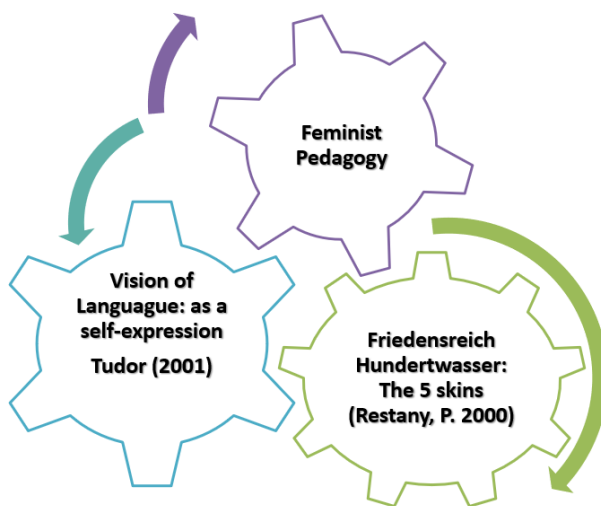
### CHAPTER 4

#### Instructional Design

In this chapter I am going to present the rationale and planning for the four workshops that aimed to explore the identity of five mature female learners as readers and writers of their world. They were designed with the purpose of expropriating the oral and written narratives of significant life experiences, involving the students in a narrative exercise where the critical pedagogy CP, the critical feminist pedagogy, CFP were taken into account and adopting Hundertwasser's proposal for explore being in their different skins. In addition, I am going to illustrate the philosophy of teaching that includes the methodology of teaching, the vision of language, the understanding of teaching and learning and the procedures that carry out this study and develop the innovative pedagogical intervention. The following figure illustrates the main elements of this section.

#### Figure 2.

*Instructional design chart*



Source: Own



## WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES WHILE READING THE WORLD

### **Vision of The Curriculum Based on Feminist Pedagogy**

First of all, this study challenge any forms of domination, oppression and subordination with the goal of allow the students emancipate themselves as Freire (1970) and many other authors associated with CP Critical pedagogy include, Wolfgang, Peter McLaren. However, this study comprises a population of illiterate mature women who were neglected by the state.

Learning about the oppression of women and the path to social justice led me to new ways of understanding teaching learning. Since these women have an accumulated knowledge and experiences that support them to face the challenges of life and the way of seeing the world, therefore I evoke Feminist Pedagogy as a fundamental element to vindicate the life stories of these women.

There is a connection in this investigation and the feminist pedagogy since its main value lies in providing a safe space for students, students' previous knowledge, experiences are valued, and the human being is rescued. The life stories of the students are taken as a learning and empowerment resource. Recognizing the school as a space that recreates a micro-society that can often fall into practices of gender inequality at times not visualized. In this regard, Jarratt (2001) highlights that feminist pedagogy characterized, though, is “its investment in a view of contemporary society as sexist and patriarchal, and of the complicity of reading, writing, and teaching in those conditions” (115). The previous notion makes me reflect on the importance that pedagogues and researchers have when bringing our gender prejudices to the classroom, so as not to proliferate inequality and oppression, on the contrary, this style seeks to use the principles of feminist pedagogy to carry out a process of equality and recognition of women immersed in popular education as a social transformation where the interest is focused on the popular classes. A dialogic interaction between students and teacher stands out. In this way, the narrative

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workshops were based on and adjusted to the principles of feminist pedagogy see table 2, inspired by the principles proposed by Hooks, as well as Webb, Walker & Allen. In this way, the narrative workshops were based and adjusted to the principles of feminist pedagogy, inspired by the principles of Hooks, as well as Webb et al. (2002).

**Table 2.**

### *Principles of feminist pedagogy*

<b>Some principles of feminist pedagogy</b>	<b>Some Critical Freirean Thoughts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Refute any level of hierarchy.</li> <li>✚ Value personal experiences.</li> <li>✚ Transformative learning.</li> <li>✚ Construction of community.</li> <li>✚ Privilege the individual voice as a form of knowledge.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Liberating and social practice in literacy practices</li> <li>✚ Oppressed learn to understand the social, political, economic, and cultural contradictions that undermine learning</li> <li>✚ Learning and being are inseparable</li> <li>✚ Literacy empowers students to change themselves and to take action in the world for justice, liberty, and equality.</li> </ul>

Source Own

The aforementioned principles are closely related to the non-formal popular pedagogy offered by the Piccolino Foundation. This Institution has adopted Freire's philosophy of education, in which considers the curriculum an emancipatory view and the value of the student's experience. Piccolino offers an environment where evaluation is not imposed, and its mechanism is not rigid; on the contrary the students participate of their own learning process. At the beginning of the literacy process students are asked what academic and personal students' goals propose for the year, so both, the teachers and students discuss and negotiate how the goals can be achieved.

The viewpoint that the Foundation has about the adult and mature students is understood in the foundation's motto, "we are among teachers" (*Estamos entre maestros*). It means teachers

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and students are equal and it is recognized that students not only learn from teachers, but teachers learn a lot from students who have enormous experience and knowledge that is worth highlighting and recognizing. On the other hand, the Foundation does not ignore the curricular guidelines, nor the basic learning knowledge. Nonetheless as an institution of non-formal education it adapts to the needs of the students. It focuses on literacy and implements transversal projects, and entrepreneurship training.

### **Vision of Language**

Regarding the view of language, (Tudor, 2001) states that language can be understood as self-expression, where language learners is an individual in the personal and affective sense of the term, which means that language is also a means of personal and affective expression. My population had the opportunity to express themselves and evoke their significant life experiences, beliefs and emotions without judging.

According to, Norton & Toohey (2011) consider language as practice that constructs and is constructed by how language learners understand their social surroundings, histories, and their possibilities for the future. As a teacher researcher I consider privileging student's voice and I did not want to focus in complex grammar that can affect the real intention in this study, to guarantee the opportunity led express students' feelings, experiences and at the same time to positioning themselves as a first step towards empower student and create a dialogical interaction between teachers and students, in this regard Akbari (2014) affirms "L2 readers do not need grammar knowledge for effective reading have also been heard".

### **Evaluation**

During the activities and discussions, the students will be involved in participating in oral and writing process focusing on meaning rather than the form. An important feature of these

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activities is that learners enjoy and feel free of expressing themselves; it means that the opinions the women provide there are not wrong or right answers.

### Pedagogical Intervention

The purpose of the intervention was to examine meaningful life experiences narratives to understand better how mature female students configure their identities as reader and writers of the world, and the strategies of alternatives knowledge led them survive in a social and cultural context that oppressed them.

Through adult literacy practice at the Piccolino Foundation. The exploration of the dimensions or the spheres of the societies allowed to orient four workshops that guided the themes based on the five skins of Hundertwasser. Each workshop took place on Sundays, in sessions of three hours, distributed as presented in the following table 3.

**Table 3.**

*Name of workshops, time distribution, language and learning objectives*

Workshops	Dates	Language Teaching and learning objectives
<p><b>1) Epidermis skin: (Yoga session and oral and written narratives.)</b>  <i>what can my body tell about myself?</i>  <i>Who I am as woman in relation to my body?</i>  <i>What are my strengths, weaknesses, fears, and dreams?</i></p>	<p>(May 20<sup>th</sup>,            May 27<sup>th</sup>,            and June 3<sup>rd</sup>,            2018)</p>	<p><b>Our body as a First Territory</b></p> <p><b>Yoga session:</b> Being aware of body.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ <i>Students take time to connect with their bodies and minds through breathing exercises and positions that promote relaxation.</i></li> <li>✚ <i>Students represent their bodies through drawings and highlight physical appearance character traits.</i></li> <li>✚ <i>Narrative time: orally narrates their significant experiences from the image of the woman made. previously (semi-structured interview)</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Contrasting Classical fairy tales with your personal Experience</b></p>
<p><b>2) Clothes and Houses skins: Cinderella tale: personal life stories through drawings.</b>  <i>(Exploring two versions of a famous tale, one</i></p>	<p>(June 10<sup>th</sup>,            June 17<sup>th</sup>,            and June            2018)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ <i>Discuss own opinions about the female and male roles in each version of the chosen story and identify the influence of the stories in gender equality.</i></li> </ul>

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<p>traditional one version and a new version name: "La Cenicienta que no <b>quería</b> comer <b>perdices</b>" Exploring the origin, Childhood, and family.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ <b>Narrative time- evoking past events:</b> Describe the events in a sequential way, for this, students design a plan to develop a narrative text of the story of my personal life.</li> <li>✚ Students discuss their own views on female and male roles in each version of the chosen story and identify the influence of the stories on gender equality. (It is suggested to use authentic material such as photos or own drawings to support the written text). <b>Critical analysis of traditional texts, myths, and legends</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>3) Colombian myths and legends:</b> "La Patasola" in English, the one-legged woman. Reaction to some readings that reveal traditions, customs, and ideological macho society.</p>	<p>(March 10<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> April 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> 2019)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Analyze the type of text, its message, and the cultural implications.</li> <li>✚ <b>Narrative time</b> Inquire about women's rights and contrast with significant events in your own life story.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4) Social environment and historical memory. Siervo sin Tierra.</b> Drawings representation about my hometown</p>	<p>(April 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and May 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ Propose a new version of one-legged <b>Social environment and historical memory</b></li> <li>✚ Representation drawings about my hometown</li> <li>✚ Take a stance in front of the text and carry out an investigation of the topic.</li> <li>✚ Understand the role of historical literary texts to understand the realities of my environment.</li> <li>✚ Produce oral, narrative, and graphic texts where I recognize my social, political, and cultural context of the country of my past.</li> </ul>

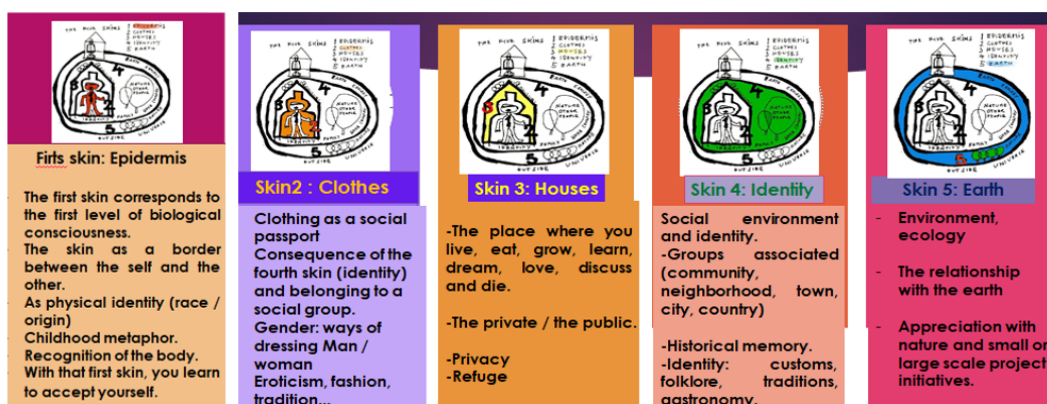
Source: Own

During the workshops I supported the narrative process of the participants, after the activities we had semi-structured interviews based on the themes of exploration of the five skins to understand the narratives in a dialogical way and guarantee the interpretation of the writings, drawings and in general the oral and written narratives. See the following figure, which explain each one skin proposed by Hundertwasser.

### Figure 3.

*Themes of exploration of the identity of women based on the five skins.*

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Note. Metaphor of identity through the five skins. Adapted from (Hundertwasser, 2018), Source [https://hundertwasser.com/en/applied-art/apa382\\_mens\\_five\\_skins\\_1975](https://hundertwasser.com/en/applied-art/apa382_mens_five_skins_1975)

### Workshop1: Epidermis Skin: (Yoga session and oral and written narratives.)

Workshop 1- Session 1 Yoga: This workshop aimed to explore the first skin, where the epidermis represents a fundamental part of being, since it is the first territory. With yoga the purpose of this part of the workshop was to connect the body, the breath, and the mind. The idea was first to have a relax time, this activity took 60 minutes. And then we took some time to talk about the experience of this session and each one expressed their feelings, acknowledged their emotions.

#### Figure 4.

*Photos: Taken at Lara Bonilla school. Workshop 1, session 1 yoga: exploring the body (May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018)*



Source: Own

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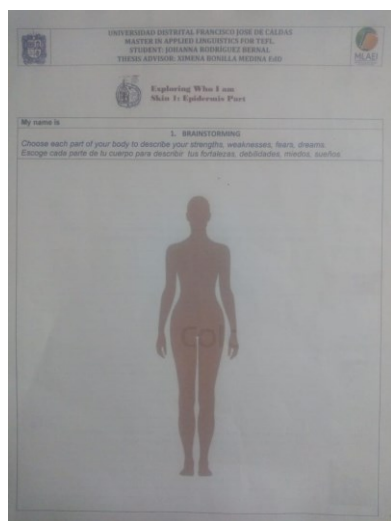
Workshop 1- Session 2: The purpose was to answer the following questions: what can my body tell about myself? Who I am as woman in relation to my body? What are my strengths, weaknesses, fears, and dreams?

Taking into account the female silhouette as a didactic and exploratory resource of the self, the importance of each part of the body was worked on. The students reviewed their physical features, strengths, weaknesses, fears and dreams through words, anecdotes of their scars. In addition, they included organs, clothes to analyze the semiotic meaning of their drawings.

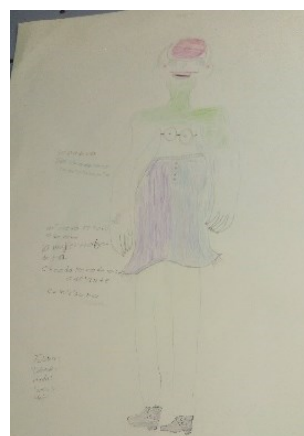
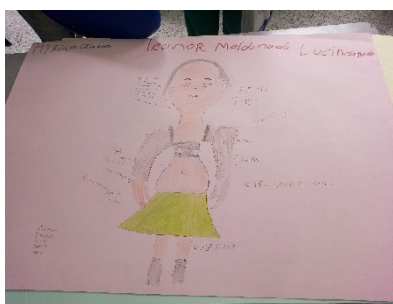
Workshop 1- Session 3: After having an exploration of the body, we took time to corroborate and expand students' worksheets throughout a semi- structure interview.

### Figure 5.

*Worksheet: exploring the first skin*



***Worksheet 1: To explore the first skin***



***Students' drawings to explore women bodies***

Source: Own

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### Workshop 2 Clothes and Houses Skins: Cinderella Tale: Personal Life Stories Through Drawings.

Workshop 2- Session 1: In this workshop we explore two versions of one the most known tales . I started this workshop asking previous knowledge of Cinderella tale, then they reconstructed the story of the tale by reconstructing pieces of scenes, to identify the chronology of the story in groups, then each group orally explained their version. See the puzzle made by the students.

#### Figure 6.

*Cinderella version 1, puzzle made by the students*



Source: Own



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After that, I presented another version of Cinderella called in Spanish *La Cenicienta que no quería comer Perdices* by, Myriam Cameros Sierra, through a PowerPoint presentation.

**Figure 7.**

*La Cenicienta que no quería comer Perdices*



Note. López writer and Cameros illustrator. Source from (López & Cameros, 2009)

This version breaks up with the social schemes of children's stories that somehow problematizes gender stereotypes, where the woman is rescued by a prince. Relationships with the couple and social precepts that require women to assume roles of submission. After reading the tale, and a discussion about the two versions emerged in class.

Workshop 2- Session 2: In this session it was proposed to tell the story of each one of the students. So, the students started a personal life stories through drawings in a narrative process focusing on the meaningful life experiences, See the illustration 8.

**Figure 8.**

*Illustration personal life stories by students through drawings*



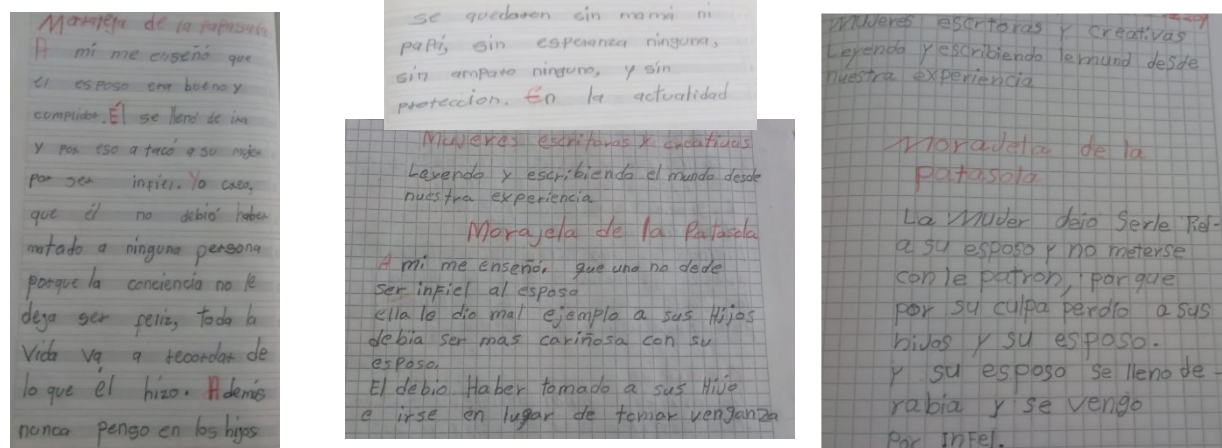
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We discussed that text and students brought their own versions and interpretations of that story. Despite the various versions and discussing the region in which this story, “La Patasola”, occurred, they came to conclude that the main character was a soul in pain whose husband had murdered her for being unfaithful. The female students began to analyze the context of the one-legged woman, some appreciations emerged. A student reflected on the fact of the man's ignorance for having killed the mother of his children, leaving the children orphaned and unprotected. Others replied saying that so much violence towards women was normal in the past due to the macho society they had to deal. They also remembered the lifestyle in the countryside. As the same as the one-legged woman, they also come from different rural towns, they remembered their trades and the arduous labor in the fields. Suddenly the class was full of students’ experiences that occurred in childhood and youth.

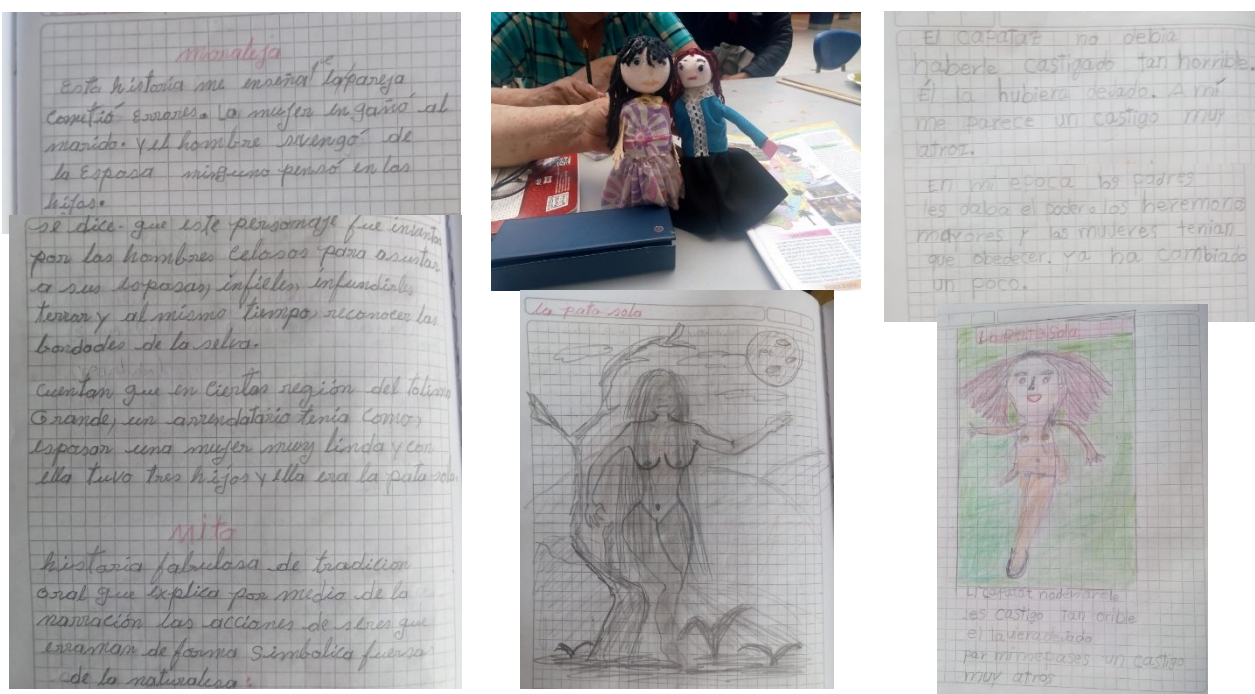
In this workshop the titles of different readings of myths and legends were analyzed. There was space for reflection on the role of women in this type of literature that deals with Colombian folklore, the message and perceptions, the purpose of the text, etc., were also analyzed. Then individually, he began a writing process.

### Figure 9.

*Students’ reaction to one-legged woman (La pata sola)*



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Source: Own

### Workshop 4 Social Environment and Historical Memory (Siervo Sin Tierra)

Most of the mature female students were from rural areas and lived in the 1950s in Colombia, it makes a lot of sense to approach a reading that despite being fiction, speaks of the historical, social and political context of Colombia from the experience of a young countryman who longs to have his own homeland that is “Siervo sin Tierra”. Through this reading the intention was to evoke memories and images about my students’ places of origin that could mark their childhood and youth with a look at the past as a retrospective exercise of their own life stories.

Some students counted with their own photographs that were inherited from their relatives, others opted for memory and recreated unforgettable moments, some moments were reconstructed by drawings. In both cases, photographs or just memory, the students made a contrast between the life of the main character, Siervo, and understand how literature is a mirror

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of our realities. As a basis, the text *Siervo sin Tierra* helped the participants to produce their own narratives where the purpose was to recognize themselves in the social, political, and cultural context. See figure 10.

### Figure 10.

*Personal life stories through drawings: My hometown*



Source: Own

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### CHAPTER 5

#### **Data Analysis and Findings**

This chapter explains the process in which data was collected, frame of analysis, the procedure followed, in order to provide detailed explanation of how the themes, the main category, and its components emerged. The study drew on narrative approach as an analytical tool to identify how female learners construct their identities as readers in literacy practice and to identify strategies that these mature female learners developed to construct knowledge to face their everyday life situations.

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

The initial step of gathering data was through four workshops based on Hundertwasser (2000) metaphor of skins, this strategy was to explore the student's identity construction and at the same time provided written and oral data. This written data emerged from the skin's metaphor which is explained in the chapter of the pedagogical intervention, however in this part I return to explain how the data were collected and treated. Consequently, each participant wrote in four moments making remembrance of their personal life stories that were meaningful to them, it was also making use of drawings, photographs and interviews allowing students to rediscover themselves and reflecting on their meaningful past experiences and their alternative learnings to survive.

The metaphor of skins suggests that identity is a whole and dynamic. In fact, the metaphors of the skins that Hunderwasser (2000) created are consistent with the identity perspectives that Gee (2001) proposes to understand the construction of identity. According to Gee (2001) human beings are who they are based on the "nature-identity" (p.100), "institutional-

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identity”, “Discourse-identity” and “Affinity-identity”. Meanwhile, the metaphor of skins is based on five skins that eventually encompass the same dimensions of being (see in pedagogical intervention) of the self and the with layers of existence mature female tackling the tensions between their own selves and outer social pressures: Resembling the life cycle of butterflies based on the experience in which human is immersed in different dimensions (Gee 2012).

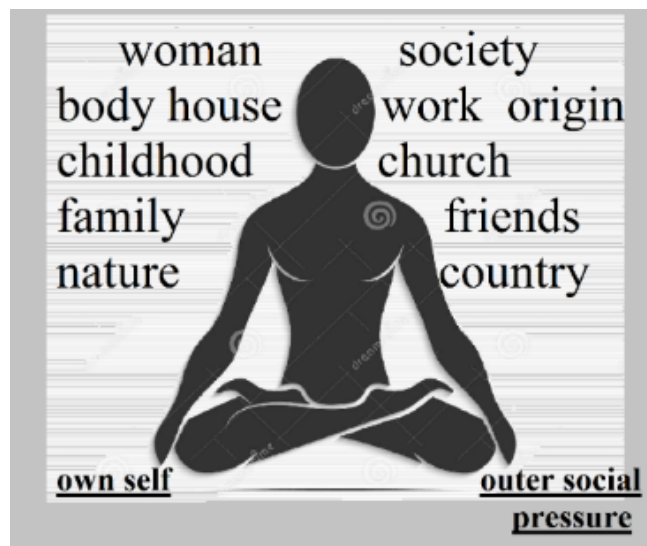
Remembering that dimensions refer to all those areas the human being fulfills a role, in the family for example, a woman is a daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother etc., but at the same time there are other segment such as job, the community, church among others.

In this study the first skin was called "the epidermis", it was developed, which allowed to explore the female body, which means to be a woman in a patriarchal context, likewise the childhood, stage of the human being that frames learning and understanding their world. The second skin consists of “clothing”, it has a lot to do with the way of dressing that includes its traditions, femininity and eroticism. This second skin also implies not only what you are but also positioning yourself in front of others, as a "social passport". Sometimes feel belong to a group. The third skin was "house", that private space of the home which consist to explore the self in the place human grow, dream and live in a private and intimate space. The fourth skin suggests understanding the relationship between the self and the world that surrounds them. “The social environment and identity”, this identity led explore not only determined who the students were, but also who they were in relation to others and the tension the participants faced with the social entities which surrounding them, such as family and friends being the smallest circle, expanding into the neighborhood, religion, government which represents the contextual context of a nation. the fifth skin explores the historical moment in which the self is immersed and the relationship with the environment, the natural and the homeland.

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**Figure 11.**

*Themes based on the metaphor of skins.*



Source: Own

The first phase to gather data was to get participants encouraged with the narratives process, starting with the writing meaningful life stories and subsequently interviews as a strategy to validate and contrast data. Thus, it was clarified at the beginning of the project that even though it was important to keep helping the students with their literacy project, the writing process of the workshops would not be limited by superficial grammatical or spelling errors that might occur. As a teacher researcher, I tried to motivate and encourage the women to go deeper into meaningful life experiences by following the themes based on the skins metaphor in order to reduce anxiety or pressure. The most important of the narrative process was guiding the participants. However, I tried to be alert about the semantic part of the writing as not to have difficulties with the meaning of students' narratives towards a spontaneous process where they felt free to write naturally. The narratives of some participants were included to illustrate the data collection procedure.



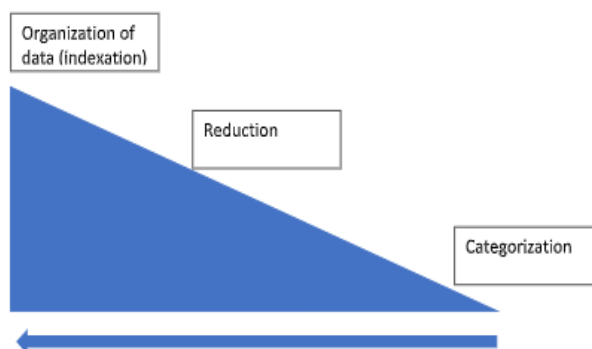
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### Framework of Analysis

There are numerous strategies to analyze narratives (Cole & Knowles, 2001) . Nonetheless, it was appropriate to adopt Garold Murray's (2009) method since he provides a way in which narratives, mainly life stories let to understand and value the student's voices in which my research attention was indeed interested, so it was suitable to comprehend mature female students' identity through meaningful experiences that were explored by using written and oral data that will be explained far along. Over the steps he proposes, I realized how consistent they were, since they involved comparing, contrasting, and classifying the data. Meanwhile it allowed me to be satisfied with handling the data with reliability. Consequently, succeeding his model, without duplicating it verbatim but following its general idea. The following figure shows the general process in which the data was organized and analyzed.

**Figure 12.**

*Process to organized data*



Source: Quintero (2020) a personal academic conversation, November 20<sup>th</sup>.

I started the analysis process by coding the data gathered along the following instruments: students' life stories through drawings, worksheets, and individual interviews. The use of images in series that were placed in order to show the process of the theme, draws and photos, I also used workshops that have explored students' identities. For example, were an ideal way to


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remember and give meaning to the female student's ways of seeing the world. Through photos also moments that contextualize their historical past came to light, for example, "Wow, I haven't seen this photo for so long ..., at this point in my life I ..." (Monarch June 17<sup>th</sup>) Through images, significant memorable and painful experiences were revealed, but both helped to build who the students were.

During the process of organizing the data it was suitable to code both the written and oral instruments labeling and giving names contrasting common patterns towards obtaining connections and reducing effective data. To do this, table 4 shows the scheme that was useful to identify themes and then figure 13 illustrates the emerging themes from coding. I organized the patterns in terms of commonalities that were recurring both among women's narratives and by instruments. The codes emerged to respond to research question and theory. For instance, when I coded if the segment suggested any meaningful experience that told me who the students were as readers of their own texts, that data was taken into consideration.

**Table 4.**

### *Theme Identification*

Research question: <b>How do mature women configure their identity as readers and writers in literacy practices grounded on meaningful life experiences and self-discovery at the Piccolino Foundation?</b>						
	Written data			Oral data		Commonalities/ patterns
	Personal life stories through drawings (Based on Cinderella tale)	worksheets Body Recognition	Reaction to readings of myths and legends and their influence on women	Narrative interview (photograph)	Validating interview	
Participant 1 Monarch						
Participant 2 Piedmont Ringlet						
Participant 3 Blue Morpho						
Participant 4 Wester Tiger						
Participant 5 Glasswings						
Commonalities/ patterns						

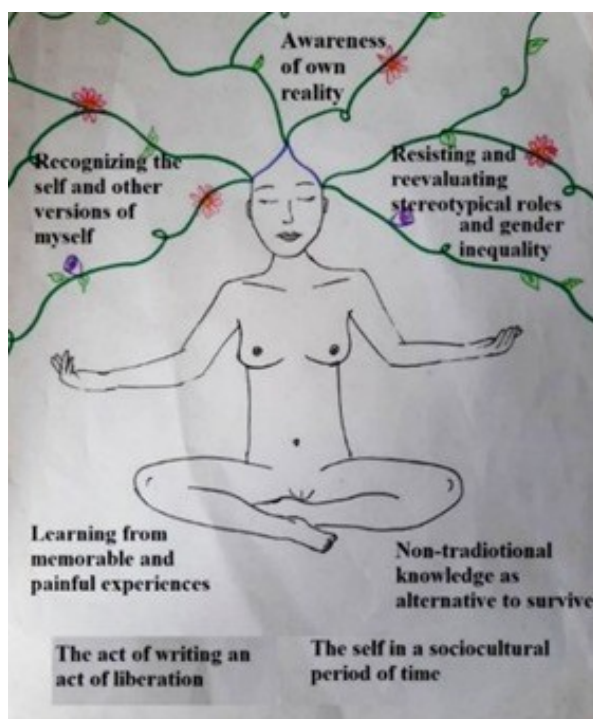
Source: Quintero (2020) a personal academic conversation, November 20<sup>th</sup>.

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After labelling the different patterns, I looked for connections between codes in order to reduce the data in categories. These themes emerged and were highlighted based on the chart above. For that, through the narratives of the students I began to contrast the data in which the participants showed in common how women faced gender inequality in a specific period of time in Colombia, sometimes the students just accommodate, and others they started to resist the pressure of the society that told them how women “should be” and “behave”. Thus, I could understand the alternative learning through life experiences and the personal struggles of women that allowed them to transform their lives resembling a metamorphosis. In the following figure presents the themes which were identified based on a general overview to comprehend students’ meaningful life experiences.

**Figure 13.**

*Emerging themes from the coding*



Source: Own

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During the data analysis stage another metaphor emerged which consists of the life cycle of butterflies, this relationship represents the general idea of how the women in this study built their identity throughout their lives. Starting from the premise that this study reaffirms that identity is dynamic, vulnerable to changes thanks to social and cultural aspects of the context (various factors converge to influence social patterns, beliefs, stereotypes of a society) where human beings are born and shapes themselves, determining their identity as Greertz (1992) understands culture as a "web of meanings" in which we as human beings are weaving around us, therefore we are immersed in it. This is how the tensions of the being with self and the external factors variable in time lead to the being in constant construction as Gimenez (2010) argues each human being is in a constant process of socialization, which means that She/he never ends up being definitively configured.

### **Findings**

The main category is called *Mature female tackling the tensions between their own selves and outer social pressures: Resembling the life cycle of butterflies*. This category represents an answer to the research question by revealing the link between the significant experiences of students who today in mature age are rediscovered and positioned as readers and authors of their own worlds.

Next, I will expose the main category, and its components see figure 14. I will explain the relationship between the life cycle of butterflies and the identity of these mature female students.

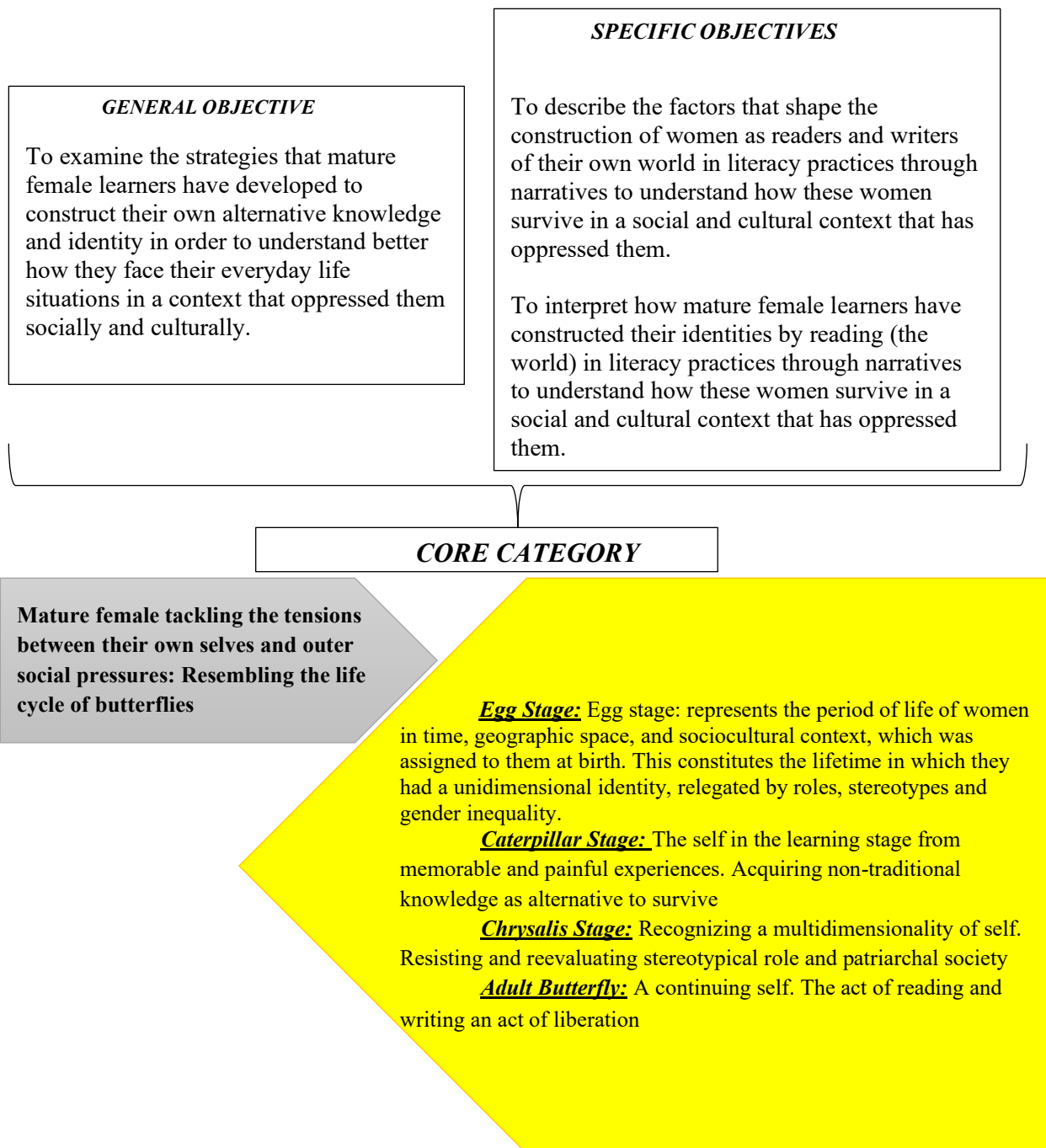
### **Figure 14**

*Core categories*

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### RESEARCH QUESTION

How do mature women configure their identity as readers and writers in literacy practices grounded on meaningful life experiences and self-discovery at the Piccolino Foundation?



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### **Mature Female Tackling the Tensions Between Their Own Selves and Outer Social Pressures: Resembling the Life Cycle of Butterflies**

A main core category implies four components emerged from all the students' narratives. Although each life story has diverse and unique experiences, at the same time they share a struggle of life that resembles a life cycle as a whole, as I have mentioned previously the cycle of butterfly. This cycle consists of four moments in which they make a transition in order to configure themselves; This study rescues and takes up a fundamental element in relation to the fact that the butterfly is the only living being that recognizes the world in two totally different moments of its life; The first moment is when it hatches from the eggs which have been deposited on a leaf which is tied to a branch and the tree. It is there when leaving it begins to recognize its context as a caterpillar in which vulnerability conditions from the context, predators lurk and the moment when it must feed enough to be collected back in its cocoon, its most significant transformation is in its development stage, in order to guarantee this process, the caterpillar had to have selected a good branch to cling to it. Thus, it achieves its final objective, to be able to develop its wings inside its cocoon. It means that the butterfly can return to the world in a totally different way, it must no longer be attached to its branch but now it can fly, explore and recognize magnificence of the world that it could not see from the branch, but at any moment the transformation of the being can take a step towards evolution, and when this happens, the butterflies can advance and show beautiful wings and also in the same way contribute again to the life cycle of the species.

The analogy between the identity construction and the life cycle of the butterfly is found in the development not only of its physical transformations, which involves the

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female body development and the implications that these changes entail from being born woman in a patriarchal society, but also deals with those changes of the self and the construction as a subject. These women were born in a sociocultural context and in a certain period and space that contribute to the formation of who they were, which were susceptible to transformations over time. Thus, the cycle of life is equivalent to four stages of development: the egg stage, the larva stage, the chrysalis stage and finally the adult stage.

The first stage represents the fetal phase in which a subject is born under certain factors of gender, origin, race, etc., While the social condition is represented by the leaf, the base that allows it to rest on it, while feeding its own and first skin, the eggshell to grow. The stage of the caterpillar consists of acquiring awareness of the social context, such as the caterpillar, women face the conditions of the context, facing the dangers that threaten them, and both the butterfly and the woman are in the process of feeding. The caterpillar biologically, While the woman feeds on her bank of experiences. Butterflies often shed their skin, they come to know and learn from their own experience and their relationship with the world around them, all that accumulation of experiences, both favorable and adverse, is the food they need to build their cocoon. The butterfly looks for a strong branch that guarantees its development, these women also base that cocoon on fundamental aspects of their lives. In such a way that this cocoon will be protected again and that all that food that was acquired in the caterpillar stage essential for the development of their wings. Those wings symbolized the emancipated identity of the external aspect (patriarchal model that was inherited, imposed to women) and now the woman like the butterfly extends her wings to fly. The self-acquired lessons that led it to create agency to read world with another lens that could not be seen from the tree branch. Are the wings that allow them to




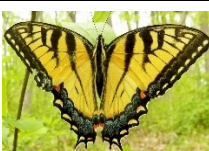
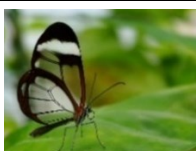
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live fully without fear of what the “others” might say, regardless of whether the self as a woman complies or not with the social canons, but how women as subjects of rights. As a result of the above, women change their vision of the world and in the process changes their role in relation to the social dimensions, renewing themselves in front of others and in front of themselves.

Next, I will present brief information about participants, see table 5, before starting with cycle the analysis of the data. The pseudonyms are related to the physical characteristics and the way of life that the participants share with their respective type of butterfly.

**Table 5.**

*Participants pseudonym*

<b>Woman 1</b>	<b>Woman 2</b>	<b>Woman 3</b>	<b>Woman 4</b>	<b>Woman 5</b>
<b>Monarch</b>	<b>Piedmont Ringlet</b>	<b>Blue Morpho</b>	<b>Western Tiger</b>	<b>Glasswings</b>
				
Age: 68 Origin: Boyacá	Age: 64 Origin: Cundinamarca	Age: 52 Origin: Cesar	Age: 49 Origin: Tolima	Age: 67 Origin: Santander

Source: Own

### **Egg stage**

The construction of identity of these women involve significant life experiences. Based on students’ stories shared, I could identify that one of the most significant moments in their lives was their childhood. As a fundamental part of the life of any human being,






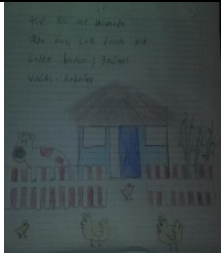


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dimension to explore the self as part of a first skin (Hundertwasser, 2018). Since the human being born is exposed to social and cultural conditions (Gee, 2000; Giménez, 2010; Greertz, 1992). In the time of childhood and of these women had to live in a violent Colombia where the guerrillas<sup>4</sup> were at their peak, and the rural area suffered great excesses of violence, poverty and forced displacement etc. The following table shows narrations how identity was permeated by the conditions in which my participant lived their childhood.

**Table 6.**





*Personal life stories by drawing: My hometown*

<b>Woman 1</b>	<b>Woman 2</b>	<b>Woman 3</b>
<b>Monarch</b>	<b>Piedmont Ringlet</b>	<b>Blue Morpho</b>
		
		
Yo desde que tengo uso de razón mi infancia trabajé en casas de familia. Ni padre, ni madre, por eso digo que ser criado solo es muy duro. Sé que soy de Güicán, pero parte de mi historia está, como le digo, mejor dicho, de lo que me cuentan algunas personas... Unos dicen que mi	Sumapaz es la tierra, donde nací, es una tierra muy bonita, hay frailejones y hace un frío. Aunque queda cerca no volví por allá... Yo vivía en casa de una tía, y nos tocaba ayudar, teníamos gallinas, nos tocaba cargar agua y ayudar en lo queaceres y duré ahí un	Mi recuerdos son en Pailitas, jugaba mucho con mis hermanas. Mi papá trabaja mucho en fincas y la pasé más en el campo que en el pueblo. Mi papá trabaja con máquinas grandes allá mi mamá criaba gallinas, allá se daba el platanó, la yuca el maíz, el pezcado, la

<sup>4</sup> Guerrilla: unofficial military groups that were born in the middle of the 20th century in Colombia; They were in conflict with the official Colombian army in order to transform government policies, but in their fight they carried out sudden attacks that unleashed violence even against the civilian population.

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<p>madre era tan pobre que me dejaron en una familia, pero no crea que era como la hija, me tocaba trabajar. Uno de niño no entiende muchas cosas, pero si me preguntaba, por qué me pasa esto a mí, qué sería de mi madre, sería verdad que era tan pobre...</p> <p>Los recuerdos de mi pueblo son bagos, ni una foto, ni nada. Eso no era como ahora que cualquiera toma fotos con el celular...</p> <p>¿Usted ha visto La Hija de Nadie? esa película para mí fue ver mi vida, la canción dice todo lo que me pasó.</p> <p>Yo comencé a tener un espacio, o sea que no era mío, pero me sentía bien, con la mamá de mi esposo, ella me trataba como una hija, con un cariño que nadie me dio, y aprendí por primera vez que le den un consejo, que le pregunten qué quieres, yo a ella la adoré, y ella crio a sus hijos tan bien, ella me trató como a una hija. Tenía una finca muy bonita para que, ella no me dejaba hacer nada de trabajo fuerte, es que a los hombres les tocaba muy duro, cargar bultos de tierra arar, yo apenas observaba, pero al poco tiempo nos vinimos con mi esposo a Bogotá.</p>	<p>tiempo pero, muy niña me volé, y no volví por allá. Es que me maltrataban tanto profe, ni para que le cuento, nos sentamos a llorar aquí las dos.</p> <p>Lo único que puedo decir es que mi vida fue terrible en esa casa.</p> <p>Pero miré como dios es tan maravilloso, cada tercer día pasaba el señor de la leche y me y yo siempre andaba triste, llorando, el también se dio cuenta como me trataban y me consolaba, me decia que cuando fuera grande el me ayudaba para ir a Bogotá. Pero yo ya estaba aburrida y le dije que por favor me llevara a Bogotá ya, yo no tenia nada que esperar, Entonces cuadramos todo y quedamos que el pasaba un día mas temprano y me recogía. Así fue profe. Me subí a su carreta el me cubrió con algo, ya no me acuerdo eso fue tantos años, pero me llevo a donde una familia y allí trabajé con la señoraa un buen tiempo. Nunca más volví a saber de él.</p> <p>Con el tiempo nos volvimos a ver con algunos familiares y me enteré que tenía una hermana, pero ya eramos grandes. Ella me contacto, y estuvimos hablando por teléfono.</p>	<p>ahuyama. Con mis hermanas jugabamos a la cocinita. Por allá es chévere. Mi papá sigue allá con una hermana.</p> <p>Lo que más extraño es la comida, la gente alegre, que uno sale al mar y ya se siente uno libre... Es que la comida no sabe igual, acá en Bogotá me ha ido bien pero uno anda con afanes, pero bueno uno se acostumbra a todo.</p>
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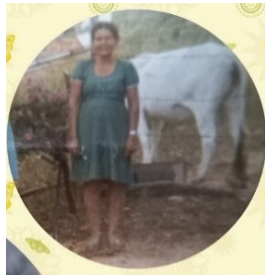
<p><b>Woman 4</b> <b>Western Tiger</b></p>	<p><b>Woman 5</b> <b>Glasswings</b></p>
	
	

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El recuerdo de mi tierra esta en una finquita de mi padre. Viviamos con mis cuatro hermanas porque mi mamá murió y nos dejo chiquitas. Yo soy la menor. Él (father) era muy trabajador, pero había mucha envidia... por ejemplo si alguno tenia ganado y sus cosechas entonces ya hablaban de uno... Mi papá nos escondía de la guerrilla. Pasaban ellos dando tiros al aire avisando que venian y mi papá nos decia, vayansen al monte que si me matan a mi no pasa nada, pero que no le pase nada a mis chitos. A veces tocaba matar una vaca y darles de comer, mi papá los atendía bien... A él no lo mataban porque ellos decian que el era buen hombre y trabajador... A otros campesinos por envidia o porque no les daban lo que pedian los mataban y los hechaban al río Magdalena.

Luego mi papá me dijo que no me podía tener más y me mando con mi abuela materna ella también tenía una finca, era mucho el trabajo que había que hacer, ella me enseñó a trabajar a recoger café. Pero a ella la discriminaban porque era indígena, decian que eramos los indios de Coyama.

Una vez salió mi viejita al pueblo y la cogieron y la aporrearon, a dos tíos los mataron por que les tenían envidia, ellos empezaron a tener progreso, y así aburrieron a la abuela y le tocó abandonar la finca, ya no sabemos quienes son los dueños. Mire esta es mi abuelita.



El recuerdo de mi tierra está en Santander. Finca de mi santa madre, ella nos crio allá, eramos muy felices. Todavía tenemos la finca. Mi hermana mayor vive allá y ella dice que no sale de ahí sino muerta.

Éramos muy humildes, pero teníamos cerdos, gallinas, nada nos faltaba, era un pueblo muy tranquilo y todos los vecinos nos colaborabamos... Hubo un tiempo en que la guerrilla iba a la finca, pero vea que la guerrilla se portó bien con nosotros, pues era pesadito pero de todas maneras la guerrilla nos ayudaba más a nosotros los pobres que no a la gente que tuviera... Llegaban ahí a la casa como Pedro por su casa y si decían matenme esa gallina, nosotros le haciamos caso y le haciamos el almuerzo les serviamos y ellos se iban y como a los 20 o al mes llegaban y nos traían algún mercado bueno, con ellos no la pasabamos así. Con ellos nunca hubo un enfrentamiento, porque era un pueblo tan, tan ...

Ellos se la pasaban por ahí pero mire que no era para hacerle daño a nadie. Como en la casa no era que tuviéramos mayor cosa... lo que sí era pesado era allí en Cimitarra, Puerto Berrío, ya eso sí era pesado. En Cimitarra sí fue pesado, porque allí ocurrió lo del 9 de Abril, y ahí se rebotó todo el mundo... Había una guerra que nadie se podía quedar en sus casas, los campesinos se metían a las cuevas y al monte, porque venían y quemaban la casa ... Acá con mi familia



Source: Own

Throughout these five voices, there were some relevant aspects to consider. It is evident that the identity of the participants is permeated with the experiences they had in their childhood, which was overloaded with social events of violence in the period in which they lived and that affected the course of their lives. Also, in each one of the narrative the contrast of the country is evident in the time in which each grew up, something that is clear

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is that some experienced violence with different intensity, some could have that innocence of a longer childhood when they had a family, on the contrary, others had a childhood marked by abandonment derived from orphanhood or a product of poverty that led them to have to face child labor and verbal abuse that also allowed them to understand their context and understand hostile world. They express their way of read the world and the performance they had in their own life story. As well as Giménez (2010), he affirms that the subject from birth is nourished by its social, political, and cultural context. He sees the subject as an entity that acts in consequence of all those named elements, but the "actor" determines how the human interprets the reality and I also consider that while my participants read the world, their identities are configured.

In addition to these narratives, I could analyze that despite the fact that each of the students has their lens of their past in a different and diverse way, there is something that unites them and it is their historical memory, as a group that shares the experiences of a time and space what which also suggests a collective identity (Gee, 2000). I understand these narrative as collective in the sense that these women lived and shared a period of their political and social historical context that reveal social issues, like uprooting, abandonment, poverty, child labor, violence, forced displacement, ethnic discrimination in an unequal society are part of the history of many peoples that these participants have had to face these social issues in different intensities, but not unfamiliar to them.

Each one emphasizes those images that have been saved in their memories, like an invariable imprint. These images that are memories can sometimes be recreated in oral or written words, as well as images drawn by the participants, which could be consider authentic and genuine texts that they have read for years and years and that here in this

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work can be revealed as witnesses of these women who are readers and writers of their worlds.

Consequently, to the aforementioned, the egg stage does not end in a homogeneous way for the participants, since despite these women sharing socio-cultural elements and the violence of the armed groups, each one has a family, a life that generated conditions, its own characteristics that came out into to very particular experiences and unique.

From the reflections on childhood and place of origin, women reflect on themselves in relation to their past and the context, those experiences in their reading of the world are texts of a book in which they are the main character and start reading from the beginning of their own story, dealing with social variables that they do not control.

Now I will analyze some extracts to show how the egg stage developed in each participant's life stories:

“Ni padre, ni madre, por eso digo que ser criado solo es muy duro”. (Monarch, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019), In the previous extract, she reads herself as defenseless because of her orphanhood, and the consequences that this led to her feeling unprotected and at the mercy of the will of others. Also, Piedmont Ringlet expresses “Es que me maltrataban tanto profe, ni para que le cuento, nos sentamos a llorar aquí las dos. Lo único que puedo decir es que mi vida fue terrible en esa casa.” (May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019), In this extract, she expresses that she was a victim of domestic and emotional violence, so great for her to express that reading herself is difficult, as if evoking those moments of her life were loaded with painful episodes to narrate.

On the other hand, Blue Morpho expresses: “Mi recuerdos son en Pailitas, jugaba mucho con mis hermanas. Mi papá trabaja mucho en fincas y la pasé más en el campo que

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en el pueblo” (May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019) This participant discloses her context by highlighting her gaming experience, which is synonymous with a childhood in more enjoyable and suitable conditions for the development of herself. She is the contrast with the two previous stories, which is also due to the fact that other "characters" were campaigning her story, such as her sisters, her parents. Thus an established family nucleus, which her vision of the world is so far from that of other participants. Además su espacio geográfico y su arraigo a la zona costera le evocó imágenes de su cultura “lo que más extraño es la comida, la gente alegre, que uno sale al mar y ya se siente uno libre” (May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019), evoking a territory familiar to her, which gives her well-being, a territory that is also part of her.

In the following fragment Western Tiger states:

Mi papá nos escondía de la guerrilla. Pasaban ellos dando tiros al aire avisando que venían y mi papá nos decía, vayansen al monte que si me matan a mi no pasa nada, pero que no le pase nada a mis chinitas. (May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

This woman highlights how the violence generated by the guerrillas affected her life and her family, that external factor marked her reading of the world that she remembers today, the feeling of fear and anguish of taking shelter in the countryside was a traumatic and anxiety experience. In addition, she was left in the care of her maternal grandmother, who was of indigenous descent and suffered ethnic discrimination, in this regard, she recalls “Pero a ella (her grandmother) la discriminaban porque era indígena, decían que éramos los indios de Coyaima.” (April 14<sup>th</sup> 2019) In this excerpt it is evident that being labeled as “indios Coyaima” This label was a type of aggression due to ethnic discrimination, in relation to identity emerges from interactions and the exercise of power (Hall & Gay, 2003) identity emerges from interactions and the exercise of power, in this

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case due to her origins and beliefs, she was placed on the side of the oppressed (Freire, 1970).

In another part of her narrative she expresses “Una vez salió mi viejita al pueblo y la cogieron y la aporrearon” (April 14<sup>th</sup> 2019) how her grandmother and her family were the victims of physical assault for being "Coyaima Indians", the tone of her voice and her words when referring to this part of her childhood and the ethnic discrimination she suffered, she exposed her feeling of helplessness, of awareness at in disadvantage because "others" saw her and her people as "others" in her words she says "ellos nos veían como animalitos"(April 14<sup>th</sup> 2019). Added to this, the dispossession of their territories when Western Tiger said: "aburrieron a la abuela y le tocó abandonar la finca, ya no sabemos quienes son los dueños.” (April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019) The territory is a fundamental part of being, as Hundertwasser (2018) exposes, it is like a third skin of the subject where you live, cry, coexist privately. As a Wester Tiger expresses: “A otros campesinos por envidia o porque no les daban lo que pedían los mataban y los hechaban al río Magdalena.” (April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019). The image that she evoked of this time was a reading of contrast between the beauty of the earth as a natural territory that belonged to her family, but at the same time the violence that surrounded them, as the figure 15, we can see the harvests, the woman in daily tasks, the beauty of the landscape and at the same time the death that the corpses in the river symbolize.

The previous narration was a forceful experience that marked her life and her destiny as an indigenous woman in Colombia, who did not escape the violence of the armed conflict, ethnic discrimination but who has her own lessons, inherited from her land, her customs and adverse situations. On the other hand, the government was as an entity that

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invisibilized some communities in the sense that it did not take them into account, that is to say, giving up an existence and rights to be "different" or better ethnocultural communities, which implied being included and valued in the Colombian territory.

### **Figure 15 .**

*Memories of my hometown*



Source: Drawing made by Wester Tiger as a reaction to the reading *Siervo sin Tierra*

By asking Wester Tiger more questions in an interview, she revealed her knowledge of painting, crafts, and medicinal plants, and mentions the power of prayer. Her maternal grandmother taught her to pray, a mix between traditional indigenous and Catholic prayers, however she said that is a pity that her children, as indigenous descendants do not recognize their legacy. Aspect that recognizes that apart from the forced uprooting of their territory and migrating to a city suggests a loss of culture in their family legacy. Nonetheless, she mentioned preserving that learning and spirituality in her daily life, at this regard Capera & Torres (2014) called this knowledge as "own education" which the authors roughly defines



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as the knowledge of a culture of her ethnic community, "are all those traditional practices typical of a culture that through them the individual acquires the knowledge, skills and values that identify her as a member of it." (p.81)

Which the way of reading the world of XXX is its cosmovision and ancestral learnings mixed with the spirituality that according to her mentions there was a fusion of indigenous and Catholic beliefs that has allowed her to value who she is and has put it into practice in her daily life.

Glasswings, for her part, recalls a pleasant childhood "El recuerdo de mi tierra está en Santander. Finca de mi santa madre, ella nos crió allá, eramos muy felices." (April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019) Based on the previous extract, the student reads her experience in the field and expresses it with a great connotation for her, it represents her joy, in addition to another factor that favored the concept of family was having lived with her siblings and her mother. However, she had to face the presence of a group guerrilla in her home for a while, in the following fragments, I was able to analyze a contradiction in her words:

Hubo un tiempo en que la guerrilla iba a la finca, pero vea que la guerrilla se portó bien con nosotros, pues era pesado pero de todas maneras la guerrilla nos ayudaba más a nosotros los pobres que no a la gente que tuviera... (April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

... lo que sí era pesado era allí en Cimitarra, Puerto Berrío, ya eso sí era pesado. En Cimitarra sí fue pesado, porque allí ocurrió lo del 9 de Abril, y ahí se rebotó todo el mundo... Había una guerra que nadie se podía quedar en sus casas, los campesinos se metían a las cuevas y al monte, porque venían y quemaban las casas. (April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

In this excerpt Glasswings shows that she has reading her childhood in a innocence lens. In her egg stage, she struggles between what she understands as good against the actions of a military group outside the law and the demands they made on her family, where the subversive groups through clandestine discourses justified their actions as fair and

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aimed at helping the most vulnerable people, however, she reflects again and realizes when comparing those situations of violence where some neighbors were victims of barbarity by the guerrilla. As a result, she and her family assumed a position of accommodation to preserve their lives and integrity.

The contradiction of the last two extracts taken from Glasswings reaffirms that the being in her speech, through the word rethinks, reevaluates her own discourse reaffirming that memories are not fixed, instead they can be transformed.

### Caterpillar Stage



The data revealed that the women dealt with patriarchal system in which they struggle their identity of a relegated in which they coped the social pressure for some period of their lives, in this respect Marcuse called one-dimensional identity of the subject (1964), thanks to the fact that they lived in a patriarchal society. These women acknowledged having followed stereotypical roles, especially for being women, which led to the question: what does it mean to have been born a woman in a socio-cultural context that places them in gender inequality? The following excerpts exemplify students' reflection on how the female body represents them in front of others but also how their bodies tell one part of who they were see table 7.

**Table 7.**

*Personal life stories by drawing: Reflection to be a woman.*

Monarch	Piedmont Ringlet	Blue Morpho
		
En el momento que me llegó la regla, no sabía nada	Llegué a Bogotá jovencita a trabajar en una casa de	La experiencia como mujer más grande ha sido tener a

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<p>de eso. Me asusté imagínese uno a los trece años... Me acuerdo tanto. Yo era una niña, que iba a saber de eso. No le quise contar a nadie lo que pasaba, pensé que estaba enferma y que me iba a morir. A mí, los cólicos siempre han dado fuertes no sé por qué, pero bueno... mi patrona se dio cuenta... Claro yo me manché y ella me cogió del brazo duro y me dijo que un poco de cosas, y me fui a cambiar.</p> <p>Mi patrona no me explicó nada, como si nada, pero yo sí sentí que algo había cambiado. Fue un sentimiento de angustia, de incertidumbre.</p>	<p>familia, llegué a lavar y aplanchar, eso tuve por muchos años hasta que el patrón me vio <b>bolontoncita</b> (<i>pretty</i>). y ya se quería aprovechar de mí. Le conté a la patrona las intenciones de su marido conmigo y no me creyó, me dolió mucho porque mi patrona fue casi una madre para mí, así que salí de ahí.</p> <p>(Bold fase added by me)</p>	<p>Karina, eso sí que me cambió la vida. Imagínese que me tocó muy duro porque yo todavía trabajo de interna, es incómodo profe una con todos los malestares y me tocaba hacer igual todos los oficios. Pero me tocaba aguantar. Eso hablaban de mí, que metí las patas, que, que bruta mejor dicho (laughs). Qué, que sería de mi vida con un muchachito. No en ese tiempo me llene de miedos, yo lloraba todos los días. Pero para que, Fredy me ayudó y ahí bien que mal estamos bien los tres.</p>
<p><b>Western Tiger</b></p>	<p><b>Glasswings</b></p>	
		
<p>Mi mamá falleció cuando yo tenía cinco años. Quedé a cargo de mi padre, pero él no fue así como, no sé. Él no era que me explicara cosas de mujeres. Ser mujer y descubrirlo fue tarde, cuando tenía 16 años. Por qué me comenzaron a mirar distinto los hombres, el cuerpo cambia. Yo cuando joven era muy bonita. Me hubiera gustado tener a mi mamá para hablar de esas cosas. Pero a cambio tuve muchas madrastras, no me trataron bien.</p>	<p>Era tanta inocencia a había que a uno le decían que si un hombre nos llegaba a tocar uno quedaba embarazada. Yo les tenía pavor a los hombres, las mujeres...no, no, eso que ni nos tocará una mano, eso mejor dicho nos tocaba lavarnos las manos... y uno decía ahí, será que estoy embarazada y empezaba uno con esa sugestión.</p> <p>Yo era muy insegura de mí misma, me sentía fea. Para mí tener la menstruación era como un castigo. Yo parecía un niño, ropa ancha, nada de maquillaje. Solo quería pasar desapercibida. Mi cuerpo lo empecé a conocer después de que me casé, tuve hijos y empecé a valorar mis ciclos con más naturalidad. A vestirme más</p>	

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	<p>bonita, minifalda, pero mi marido me celaba, si me arreglaba me decía que con quién me iba a ver. A veces se ponía furioso y me acompañaba al bus y era muy celoso... Figúrese que una vez me hizo cambiar de ropa, que porque "las mujeres casadas y con hijos no debían vestirse así... Sí claro, yo le hice caso, más bobita, es que en ese tiempo el hombre podía hacer lo que quisiera con su mujer y nadie la cobraba. Sí, haga de cuenta que ni la familia, ni vecinos hacían nada. Nadie se metía, no había ni autoridades que valieran.</p>
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Source: Own

The previous table shows how mature female students dealt with the personal life stories, in this exercise an exploration and retrospection of being a woman emerged. Just as the butterfly undergoes its biological transformation, the woman has a stage of development, this process is important for every woman. In their narratives, the participants agree that the stage of discovering their bodies had complexities thanks to the social and cultural context that placed them in a state of inequality, a bit vulnerable due to the pressure of the patriarchal society that told them, "how to be, how to behave ". Remembering that the childhood of these students belongs from the 50s to the 70s, in a patriarchal and therefore sexist Colombian society.

During the narratives the participants exposed one of the most important issues that serves as a source of the implications of being born a woman (Baxter 2010; Butler 1990; Beauvoir, 1970). This fact related the construction of women identity because the body has a cultural connotation in, where the female body is the victim of a biological stereotype. Next, some of the extracts will be exposed by the participants where they express their feeling of being a woman. The following excerpt includes a detailed reflection that shows

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what it means to be a woman for the inner-self and what it means to be a stereotyped subject validated from the culture of the macho society itself. To start, I will share Glasswings narrative reflection.

Yo era muy insegura de mí misma, me sentía fea. Para mi tener la menstruación era como un castigo. Yo parecía un niño, ropa ancha, nada de maquillaje. Solo quería pasar desapercibida. Mi cuerpo lo empecé a conocer después de que me casé, tuve hijos y empecé a valorar mis ciclos con más naturalidad. A vestirme más bonita, minifalda, pero mi marido me celaba, si me arreglaba me decía que con quién me iba a ver. A veces se ponía furioso y me acompañaba al bus y era muy celoso.... Figúrase que una vez me hizo cambiar de ropa, que porque "las mujeres casadas y con hijos no debían vestirse así... Sí claro, yo le hice caso, más bobita, es que en ese tiempo el hombre podía hacer lo que quisiera con su mujer y nadie la cobraba. Sí, haga de cuenta que ni la familia, ni vecinos hacían nada. Nadie se metía, no había ni autoridades que valieran. (Glasswings June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018)

In this way, Glasswings accounted for her struggle of her first steps toward discovering the sense of herself as a woman. She highlighted the fact of being a woman was a complex process at the very beginning of the body transformation, her insecurity led her to camouflage herself with wide clothes, just as butterflies of her type are transparencies to go unnoticed and to be able to hide from predators. With motherhood and sexuality, she discovered an attractive female body, worth valuing, her acceptance began with her wardrobe, but at the same time she was dealing with an external pressure which her husband represents, she expresses the discomfort of dealing with her inner self of " wanting to be ", with an external pressure of power. Although at the end of the narrative she says that she sometimes gave in to the manipulation of how she should dress, she also mentions the awareness of herself and her position that she now had of her own body, as a step towards self-determination (Meyers, 2002).

In fact, in her narrative interview, she developed the idea of a self-determined relationship. Reflecting on women in general, naivety as a synonym for ignorance of

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recognizing their own body, of loving it as it is. She stated that this task only depends on the woman herself, not on anyone else. The above denotes a great focus on liberation and empowerment.

On the other hand, in a macho context of a society it is overloaded with taboos, with issues related to sexuality, genital organs of men and women that are not approached naturally. What in women was a factor that put them at a disadvantage. In the narratives of the five participants, all without exception highlight the taboo of the female menstrual period. Below is clearly reflected in the women's excerpts.

En el momento que me llegó la regla, no sabía nada de eso. Me asusté imagínese uno a los trece años... Me acuerdo tanto. Yo era una niña, que iba a saber de eso. No le quise contar a nadie lo que pasaba, pensé que estaba enferma y que me iba a morir... Fue un sentimiento de angustia, de incertidumbre.

(Monarch June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018)

For this student, the fact of recognizing that something so natural had to be so complex seems unusual to her, but she recognizes that the innocence of a child is so pure that she blindly believes in whatever adults say. In this way, Western Tiger reflects on the fact that the biological subject was so taboo that men used to distance from these matters.

Mi mamá falleció cuando yo tenía cinco años. Quedé a cargo de mi padre, pero él no fue así como, no sé. Él no era que me explicara cosas de mujeres... Ser mujer y descubrirlo fue tarde, cuando tenía 16 años. Porque me comenzaron a mirar distinto los hombres, el cuerpo cambia. Yo cuando joven era muy bonita. Me hubiera gustado tener a mi mamá para hablar de esas cosas. (Western Tiger June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018)

In addition, in this extract I can analyze that in our culture it is often thought that it is women who can understand these female issues. Perhaps men and women are following the roles imposed by a macho culture, which sets limits between humans to set social norms (Butler, 1990). I can disable or denying men to understand women, or to understand each other men and women for a more just gender equality. Perhaps this way of

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understanding can explain why Wester Tiger longed for her mother's accompaniment as an intimate moment that only a woman can fully understand. Which can also be laudable, for a long-time woman as a social group have supported each other in various settings, which we can also feel affinity and empathy for what happens in our bodies, mind etc. (Cerri, 2010; Gee, 2000).

In same line, Monarch reflected on what it means to be a woman, she confessed that she had had the erroneous belief that the role of women in society should be disadvantageous, even that idea she had with her daughter, in the following excerpt

Monarch said:

Cuando nació mi hija, yo lloraba porque era una niña, tal vez de pensar que iba a sufrir tanto como uno, creo yo en medio de la ignorancia, otro porque me habían inculcado de que ese en tiempo la mujer que tenía un varón eso era mejor dicho... Es que le decían a uno, que el hombre, haga lo que haga... y yo decía, ¿será como un dios? (Monarch May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018)

This reflection only shows how difficult it has been to unlearn cultural beliefs and behaviors. At this stage in her life she reflects on how wrong she was, since her daughter is a professional, but more than that was her support.

Yo con mi hija aprendí a salir adelante, un día yo estaba tan triste, y ella me vio llorar, yo le dije, no te preocupes bobadas de vieja, y ella siendo una niña me dijo no llores más mamita, pase lo que pase yo me enfrentaré al mundo por ti y yo sé que vamos a salir adelante, y así fue. (Monarch May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018)

The human being is in a growth stage, she/he is constructing her /his identity from that imposed sociocultural reality, in this stage the person begins to discover how the world is becoming aware of reality. As expressed by Monarch, one of the students participating in this study. "As a child, you believe whatever others told" which corroborates what Vygotsky's (cited in Emerson, 1983) insight that our inner understandings begin in outer

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social interactions. There is an innocence, typical of childhood, the man and woman adapt and learn the instituted social values "male chauvinist" and take root in its social process of formation. At this respect Piedmont Ringlet reflects:

A mí me tocó vivir en un mundo de violencia. Teníamos una finquita con vacas y ganado... y perdimos todo. Mis hermanos y yo fuimos repartidos... Llegué a Bogotá jovencita a trabajar en una casa de familia, llegué a lavar y planchar, eso tuve por muchos años hasta que el patrón me vio bolontoncita (*pretty*). y ya se quería aprovechar de mí Le conté a la patrona las intenciones de su marido conmigo y no me creyó, me dolió mucho porque mi patrona fue casi una madre para mí, así que salí de ahí. (Student 1. Interview. Bold face added by me) (June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018)

In a patriarchal world, sometimes the same women support that the inequality practices toward women (Baxter, 2018; Beauvoir, 1970; Cerri, 2010) perpetuating inequalities. A man's word was worth more than a woman. Some theorists attribute this phenomenon to sexist stereotypes, such as violence against women. Some theorists attribute this phenomenon to sexist stereotypes, such as violence against women. A way to re-victimize her by not taking her word for it. So, it's a power struggle in which man was going to win. However, Piedmont somehow resists injustice and turned away from the subjection in which he could not have escaped.

The body as a fundamental part of being, and the fact of being a woman in a macho context, regains strength to accept submission. The five participants agree that their first experience as a woman was from girls to women which imply natural biological changes, but that in society it makes them feel insecure, "less than other" (man), "ugly", "as if to be a woman were a sin of sin". In these women voices I understand what Butler (1990) addresses about the performative.



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Throughout her life, the woman undergoes exceptional transformations, while she feeds on her experiences, her texts also build her performances, shedding the skin that discards her being, she also strengthens and configures herself as a human being in progress.

### **Chrysalis Stage**

Recognizing a multidimensionality of self. Resisting a reevaluating stereotypical role and patriarchal society. This category reveals that there are times of crisis in which the participants felt the necessity to change their live situations. Therefore, sometimes they had to make adverse decisions to achieve a change in the traditional practices that they had to live. They previously expressed that sociocultural in their time they were relegated to "obey" to "work", "to do domestic chores". In this way, they recognized their effort and their courage to make changes due to the fact that they could be marginalized by their families, neighbors or friends. Thus, they challenged in some way those roles imposed by society as the following sample illustrates:

The following excerpt Glasswing shows the self in conflict at home.

**Glasswings:** Mi marido llegó a tomarme en medidas sobre mi sueldo, cuánto ganaba, me disponía de mi plata. Cuando yo abrí los ojos... ¡Santísima! no se lo deseo a ninguna. Uno quisiera hasta matarlo. Uiiich sí, uno de esa furia, ese... crea un ego que uno se vuelve intocable, no permite nada...Yo pasé por eso. Cuando yo no me aguante más... Haga de cuenta cuando usted suelta una fiera que está "encarrolada" (mad). Ya uno no le importa ni la vida, se vuelve, pero una fiera. Así fui yo. Entonces empecé yo a tomar decisiones y a exigir, y cada día yo veía que eso se me daba yo crecía más en eso. Yo ya no miraba, del otro sus derechos (el esposo), sino miraba únicamente los míos... como que yo cobraba, ¿sí?, yo cobraba eso.

**Interviewer:** ¿...y cobrabas qué, ¿qué le cobrabas?

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**Glasswings:** Yo cobraba mis derechos, mi espacio. No fue fácil, mi marido me insultaba con toda clase de groserías, decía que yo era una vagabunda, qué si me iba a gastar el dinero con mi mozo, eso me hacía unos escándalos terribles.

**Interviewer:** ¿y uno cómo sale de eso?

**Glasswings:** me volví grosera, agresiva, nadie me reconocía, ni yo misma. Sabía que no podía volver atrás. Eso me criticaron, y yo hice oídos sordos o sino ahí estaría, en las mismas. (Glasswings, tape transcription of session June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018)

In the previous interview Glasswings expresses the change of her inner self. She recognized that external tensions could lead her to find "another self" that she did not know until she reached her limits of "tolerance", exhausted by her external oppressions. Thus, as a liberating transition similar to a chrysalis, Glasswings was capable of nourishing from painful experiences to understand her rights, hence, she challenged herself between the "must be" with the "being herself" (Corpas De Posada, 2019).

The empowering position of these women is evident when Piedmont Ringlet confront external pressures (her husband), as shown by the student where she decides to make a financial contribution, in some way she also negotiated with their sentimental partner that both she and he had responsibilities, and both as equals can make contributions to their home. It definitely proves that breaking the mold is a struggle that shows agency (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Also, the fact of telling the truth about her economic contribution at home, positions the inner self, but at the same time she also positions herself in relation to the other. As a social construction, which is built with the individuals that surround her (Gee, 2000).

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The self in the learning stage from memorable and painful experiences. Acquiring non-traditional knowledge as alternative to survive. Part of their learning occurred in their jobs, in economic independence, in feeling useful and in some way addressing responsibilities. The following student, Piedmont Ringlet, reveals a pivotal moment in which she gained the strength to position herself as a provider for her home.

claro que yo sabía que no le podía decir a mi marido que trabajaba, yo solo no le decía nada y trabajé así muchos años para poder tener mis pesitos, claro que se enteró pero para ese tiempo ya no me importaba, le dije que sí, que yo trabajaba que tenía todo el derecho, que se pusiera a pensar si solo viviéramos de su sueldo, y empecé a decirle yo compré la licuadora, muchas veces les he comprado ropa y lo que se ofrezca en la casa y usted no se dio cuenta, y así le fui enumerando lo que yo había aportado... Desde allí no me volvió a decir nada, él cambió mucho conmigo. (June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018)

The empowering position of these women is evident when Piedmont Ringlet confront external pressures (her husband), as shown by the student where she decides to make a financial contribution, in some way she also negotiated with their sentimental partner that both she and he had responsibilities, and both as equals can make contributions to their home. It definitely proves that breaking the mold is a struggle that shows agency (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Also, the fact of telling the truth about her economic contribution at home, positions the inner self, but at the same time she also positions herself in relation to the other. As a social construction, which is built with the individuals that surround her (Gee, 2000).

The losses, whatever they are, seem to be opportunities for the woman reader of her world to have the opportunity to rewrite herself, it is the case in the following excerpt by, Piedmont Ringlet:

Yo he tenido tantos tropiezos en la vida, que mi vida cambió cuando me separé. La verdad me di cuenta de que vivía con alguien que no conocía. Un día sin más se fue

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el que era mi marido. Yo no entendía por qué, pero me sentía culpable, me enfermé, el mundo se me vino encima. Sin embargo, una vecina me dio la mano. Me dio consejos, me dio trabajo... Yo estaba dedicada al hogar únicamente, y empecé a salir, volví a trabajar, a sentirme útil, sí esa es la palabra útil. Él después quiso volver conmigo y yo le dije que no. La verdad me hizo un favor, si nos vemos, es el papá de mi hijo, pero sabe que ya no más. Lo amé sí, y no lo odio. Hay un sentimiento, pero ya no es lo mismo y dejamos así, me cansé mami, y ya, estoy bien así.

... Lo que vino después, nada, yo igual siempre he trabajado, entonces no me preocupaba por eso, he hecho de todo además también empecé a salir más... Yo soy buena vendedora gracias a dios, entonces me va bien. (June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018)

The human being has the ability to reinvent the world, how transform the reality in a dynamic way, this is the way I also interpret Piedmont Ringlet, she had the opportunity to gain her own self-determination in the same vain Meyers (2002) emancipated some skills women could use to emancipate, in the facts she reevaluated her life, remember her capabilities, see possibilities. Meyers questions feminism about the voice as an agency that others call self-determination. She also develops the agency concept in what she understands the feminist voice theory. This is how I see my students when they question their past, evaluate the present self, and recognize the struggles they have given in different spheres of society. Speaking with our own voice and leading our own life is as invaluable as an emancipatory element. In the following excerpt, the reflection of Blue Morpho.

En esa época para qué ir a la escuela, nos decían (padres). Mi padre solo le permitió a mi hermano mayor estudiar, mis hermanas y yo ninguna pudimos salir de la casa a una escuela. El resto no teníamos opción, era lo que dijeran en la casa...y ahí que se pusiera uno a alegar. Yo tampoco lo vi necesario, ahora que uno es grande es que se da cuenta de eso, yo si me acuerdo de que veía a los niñitos con su uniforme y pensaba cómo será ir a la escuela, pero no igual nunca dije nada. Uno de niño no, solo lo que dijera los papás. Por eso cuando quedé embarazada de Karina si dije que ella tiene que estudiar para salir adelante. Eso ya las cosas son distintas y yo le digo, bueno aproveche el estudio. Yo dejo lo que más puedo arreglado y almuerzo para que cuando ella llegué del colegio se ponga juiciosa a estudiar. (Tape transcription of session June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018)

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In *Blue Morpho*, I see a significant reflection of an event that was not favorable for her, but now in a clearer awareness of her past, she sees and understands an element to change a pattern of behavior in her own family, as an agent capable of criticizing that patriarchal thought, where the voice of a boy or girl was not taken into account. Which she sees and understands and that is why she does not want to reply with her daughter. As mother *Blue Morpho* is aware the consequences when people make up their minds, influence the life and rights of others. The fact that she reflects on her own past, of seeing her voice silenced, is certainly an emancipatory change.

Therefore, these narratives exercise connects the voices of women with their lives, as well as with their emancipatory potentialities acquired under the responsibility of years and years of understanding their world. I clearly see in these women the capacities they have to read, understand, and write their world, with alternative learnings that each one self-managed allowed them to build their own self-portraits and thus allow them to make changes in their lives. Recognizing injustices, not to justify their past or lament for some event but to see themselves, as a critical dialogue with themselves and their realities.

The participants were critical and sensitive when they returned to their past experiences. Little by little, in the process of self-discovery, they were able to establish critical connections in their different roles in society. Together, as a learning community, they reconsidered their past as part of their lives, recognizing the sociocultural context of Colombia in the 50s, to 70s. They were discussing how the past influenced their paths, their decisions, their lives, and it shows that identities are constructing in response to historical and social circumstances.

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### Adult Butterfly

This last component continues the self. The act of writing an act of liberation. It's time to be who you are. In relation to the metaphor of butterflies, it would be the last stage where the development of itself allows its wings to open, showing their colors majestically. It should be clarified that this study recognizes, what diverse women were as types of butterflies. Also, this component emerged as a response to how the act of reading and write an act of liberation became a meaningful practice for exerting women' agency and empowerment. As Freire (1985) states, "the words that people use in order to give meaning to their lives are fashioned, created and conditioned by the world which they inhabit"

This study showed that these women were critical readers of their own world, they demonstrated that the fact that they were in the process of reading and writing in their adulthood did not affect their potential in contrast to other people who had the possibility to study when they were young. On the contrary, these women proved to have expertise that allowed them to develop strategies to face the world.



Here after, it will be presented the collected voices by the participants in the table 8, through a semi-structured Interview:

**Table 8.**

*Participants, semi-structured Interview*

Monarch	Piedmont Ringlet	Blue Morpho
		
<p>Mucha gente se admira de mí. ... Danielita, mi nieta, llegaba de estudiar y me ayudaba con las tareas ... la</p>	<p>A mí me ponían una tarea y yo decía si ahí miro si la puedo hacer, pero yo en la casa me ponía y hasta que</p>	<p>A mí me ha tocado duro, al principio confundía las palabras no, y todavía. Pero poco a poco me daba cuenta</p>

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<p>niña siempre ha creído en mí ... y está orgullosa de que su abuela, ella le contaba a su amistad y a mí me daba pena, pero después que caray, yo contaba y todos se quedaban sorprendidos</p>	<p>no terminaba no quedaba contenta. Yo decía esto no me va a quedar grande y para que no fue fácil.</p>	<p>de que sí, que ya podía escribir. Empecé a escribir canciones y luego decir que significaba para mí, eso fue un poco difícil. Pero así aprendí, me falta un poco más, yo si quiero aprender a escribir de corrido y que me entiendan. Me acuerdo que escuché hablar de una institución que daba clase para gente ya adulta y me fui a mirar solamente, no le dije nada a mi esposo ni a karina, me daba pena contarles, no sabia que podian pensar de mi.</p>
<b>Western Tiger</b>	<b>Glasswings</b>	
		
<p>La alfabetización es una bendición, es un desafío maravilloso. Mi diosito me dio la oportunidad de aprender. Yo pensé que no iba a poder. Pero siempre he sido muy estricta profe, muy persistente y yo para hablar he sido buena, no me da pena, yo pregunto, yo opino, nadie creía que yo no había pasado por una escuela. Carmenza me invitó, me dijo acompáñeme a estudiar, y yo me fui a ver qué. El finadito José Antonio me dijo una vez que le ayudará con un tema, que me veía que yo podía. Y yo acepté... no, yo no podía dormir, imagínese, eso para mí fue el momento en que aprendí más, es que yo nunca había preparado una exposición. Supe que podía, hice una cartelera profe, usted viera... ...Ahora es mi oportunidad donde me dedicó más tiempo a mí misma, uno de joven todo era el marido y los hijos... y por qué no, escribir tantas cosas, que poco a</p>	<p>Aprender a leer y a escribir para mí es lo más lindo que me ha podido pasar ... ¿Por qué? miya no sabe lo que uno siente, era mi sueño y nunca le dije a nadie ... siempre me decían "¿eso para qué?" ¿Qué quien me lo decía? Mis vecinas, mi marido, todo el mundo. Yo también pensaba que ya para qué, que son oportunidades para los jóvenes, ahora que sé lo bonito que se siente, no me canso de agradecer ... yo decía ahí diosito ayúdame a que pueda entender.</p>	

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poco me he venido acordando y conocer a mi gusta aprender.	
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## Own Source

Based on these excerpts, the transition to being mature women their identity became more evident, they realized that even those not enrolled in some youth school, have an inestimable knowledge of gratitude for their significant experience in which they were the actors of their own lives and at the same time contributed to the construction of its identity (Giménez , 2010).

The literacy experience that my participants have had, has allowed them to actively participate in the educational community as agents of their own learning processes, in their own learning commitments, it is interpreted that mature students struggle with the difficulties that they have faced in the literacy process, but at the same time realizing the rewards of feeling pleased with their progress. Western Tiger reaffirmed “Literacy is a blessing, it is a wonderful challenge. My god gave me the opportunity to learn. I thought I wasn't going to be able to ” (May 20th, 2018) Western Tiger's worldview had to do with the way she read her world while being part of an indigenous community. The ancestral learning mixed with the spirituality that according to her there was a fusion of indigenous and Catholic beliefs that has allowed her to value who she was. The spirituality that she found power and wisdom to face life and put it into practice in her daily life. She recognized her history and there was a feeling of pride for being indigenous.

When asking Blue Morpho about her learning process, she says “it has been difficult for me, at first I confused the words ... and still. But little by little I realized that I could write.” (May 20th, 2018). She did not only realize who she as a mature learner was,



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but also understands what her abilities and limitations imply for her, which also suggests that she takes on a challenge, what Meyers (2002) calls "good fit between their identity, their attitudes toward themselves" (p.25) Self-criticism of their learning barriers leads the women to understand themselves, to have a personal judgment of being real humans who know themselves and act to achieve their goals, their dreams as Meyers affirms in this regard: "self-knowledge is based on the dignity of the distinctive individual and the wonderful diversity of lives that individuals can shape for themselves." (p, 25) So, I can interpret that self-knowledge liberate these women regardless of the struggles fights they have had to give in their lives, which have been also part of their continuous repertoire of learning.

However, the empowerment they have today when they recognize their life experiences as learnings and that ultimately tell who they are. The students recognized that they were oppressed by the outer social pressures in several ways including their own literacy as a right that any human being should have, this phenomenon that Babbitt (1993) calls internalized oppression. What it means is that the person has no sense in himself or herself, does not know themselves and therefore did not recognize their own voice (Giroux, 1988, Meyers, 2002). Which suggests that the students had a hard journey with the inner self and outer social pressures to liberate themselves by transformative experiences (Freire, 1970).

A clear example of aforementioned is expressed by Monarch "Siempre quise aprender a escribir, pero incluso cuando yo era más joven me daba pena reconocerlo ante los demás... no sé porqué. Quizas porque pensarían que, que mujer tan ridícula querer ir al colegio ya tan grande" (May 20th, 2018). Similarly Glasswings says, "siempre me decían

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¿eso para qué? ¿Qué quien me lo decía? Mis vecinas, mi marido, todo el mundo. Yo también pensaba que ya para qué, que son oportunidades para los jóvenes” (May 20th, 2018)

These female students reflected on their ideological, cultural, and powerful barriers that vulnerated them. To this regard Freire emphasizes that it is the oppressed who must take charge of their own reading of the world and transform it into eventually freeing themselves. As a result, the judgments and accusations of others are no longer an impediment for having their own agendas. A student said, "I am beyond good and evil" (Estoy más allá del bien y del mal). what I asked her to better elucidate her previous words Piedmont Ringlet replied:

What does it mean? I already had my youth, I lived it as it was my time, I had my children, I worked hard, I already made an effort, I know what this life is, the good and the bad, at this age I already did everything I had to do (Piedmont Ringlet May 20th, 2018)

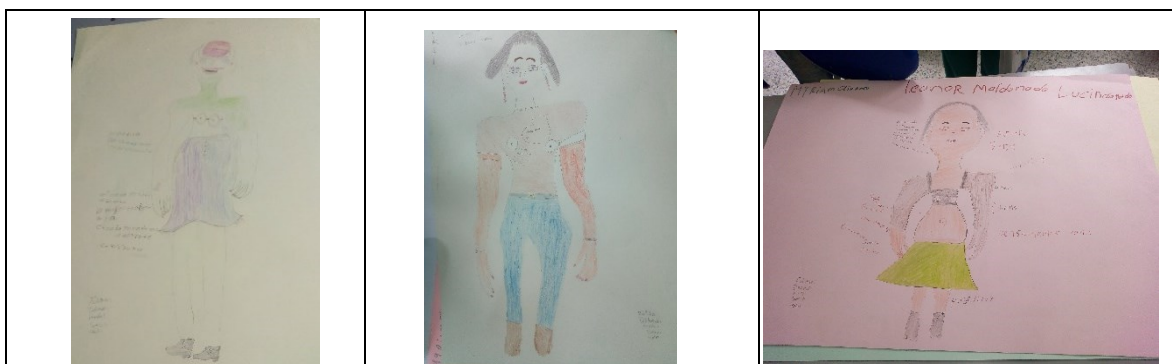
Undoubtedly, significant experiences were a resource to position herself as knowing her own life history, this is how Piedmont reflects that in her accumulation of experiences made her having the power to say about herself that she has learnings that go beyond. For me, this positioning is a double guide, positioning with the inner self and in front of others. Which shows the ability of the self-recognition

Subsequently, I want to continue the discussion of how adult women configure their identity while reading their worlds and writing through personal life stories through images in workshop one where we explore the female body as the first skin.

### **Figure 16**

*Students' drawings to explore women bodies: Group workshop*

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Source own

I want to highlight the capacities of women to construct themselves socially, in a respectful interaction, in the exploratory workshop our own bodies. There was a liberating environment in which they jointly built the body of a woman who represented them, with their fears, daring, strengths, weaknesses, dreams, so different among them, and on such similar occasions. Perhaps the most valuable thing was that they did not judge each other, they spoke without any taboo or prejudice at this stage of their lives so charged with significant experiences.

I highlighted the tummy and breasts because for me they mean motherhood. When I got pregnant my life split in two. I was very quiet and I used to follow others rules, I always did what my employers, my family ordered me to do, but for me Karina woke me up, I already started to become independent, leaving the house that I worked for many years, my employers were kind to me but I decided to go for my own. (Blue Morpho June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018)

In this excerpt, Blue Morpho's narrative, I can interpret that the woman's body has a special value that not only transforms biologically her, but also the mind, the way of reading the world. Being a mother for her "woke her up", I understand the word "woke up" is to realize something that she did not see before, it could be the perfect ingredient that she needed to go on her own, like a butterfly when it breaks the shell egg and leave it to explore the world by its own. The egg represents the family that welcomed her, protected

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her in somehow but Blue Morpho recognizes that she must transform her reality with everything what that implies. Finally, she started to live her life with her own story.

The act of writing appears liberating for mature female students. The data reveal that the life story was a process of transformation through which each woman, little by little, rebuilds herself. Barkhuizen et al. (2014) points out that narratives and life stories are the means by which individuals define and recreate themselves through discourse. Thus, ceasing to be the object of history, politics, and culture, they cease to be the objects of others to become the protagonist and subject of their own lives. In other words, it is a process through which each woman is empowered, emancipated, and develops the consciousness of having the right to have rights and to trust in her own ability to achieve her purposes. This process is necessary if one takes into consideration the constant internal and external tensions that these women deal with in order to train and feel valued and recognized.

Participants also reveal that despite of their lack of knowledge about traditional literacy, as a reading-and-writing skill, they seem to have abilities to survive in a daily life in alternative manners. This component is reflecting on Freire's ideas about literacy defined as reading-the-world instead of simply the act of reading-and-writing.

The fact that these students have decided to start their literacy process in adulthood seems to arise from the need to fulfill a goal that they had with themselves during the journey of their lives. They mention the benefits and gratitud of being part of the foundation and having a space for them. That space that was denied and unattainable is now a reality. Furthermore, it is a time in their lives in which they have the space to voice. In this regard Monarch says:

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Yo quiero pedirle a Dios que nunca se acabe Piccolino, porque Piccolino es como un bosque donde uno va por el oxígeno para nuestros pulmones, porque ellos con su abrazo y su sonrisa. Cuando una persona llega a Piccolino, llega con la autoestima baja, nos da fuerza. Me cambió la vida y estoy muy agradecida... (May 26<sup>th</sup>,2019)

Monarch appears very humble woman, in thanking that in Piccolino Foundation she has learned everything she knows in her life. However, this woman has always been a great writer, now her interest is doing essays, a desire, and an ability that she discovered in her adult literacy process, that's mean she comprehends that after decoding the written word she could go beyond, as in Freire's literacy philosophy. She had made a connection to the written word which, according to her, is a personal goal and a need to put her ideas and thoughts on paper. Her leaning process is a prove of liberation, that keep empower herself as the author of her own texts and an opportunity to continue shaping herself through written language.

In the same vein, Glasswings had the desire to demand more of herself, she was not a person who demands little in her learning process, she always evaluated herself and wanted to become a writer of her own memories. I saw how writing was taken as a privilege and agency of themselves, it could be said that this stage all the splendor of their wings were accompanied by their bank of experiences that continue to shine thanks to the literacy that has been an opportunity for the liberation of the oppressed and these women are valuable example of this.

In conclusion, the act of reading and writing liberates and configures the authors of this study. The need to literate as I interpret it as a possible sixth skin, where words, such as clothes, the house, contribute to the constitution of identity, since them reflect feelings and knowledge as if they portrayed themselves and show their different layers of skin without

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taboo. Very similar to what Virginia Woolf wrote in her most famous essay, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), she proposes an intimate space, which suggests the independence of women, it is not only about the economic part that is a determining factor and Woolf highlights, but a space of having an own intellectual freedom is given a place, the latter as a right of creation that in the case of the students in this study found this space in their adulthood. That is why the struggle to gain one's own voice and make use of one's own words is necessary to vindicate women and their knowledge. Each word makes sense according to our feelings. Erasing, correcting, reading, and look back over to corroborate the meaning of the texts becomes part of that endless search for being.

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### CHAPTER 6

#### Conclusions

Through this chapter the conclusions that emerged from this narrative inquiry will be socialized. This study aimed to describe and interpret meaningful life stories that allowed exploring the identity of women as readers and writers of their worlds, as well as the strategies to build women's own alternative knowledge and the socio-cultural factors that embedded them to better understanding how they face their every life situation in a context that oppressed them socially and culturally. This interpretation led me to answer the research question, how do mature women configure their identity as readers and writers in literacy practices based on meaningful life experiences and self-discovery at the Piccolino Foundation? In the same way, I will report the accomplishment of the research objectives will be shown by highlighting the significant conclusions resulting from the discussion of the main category and its components.

To answer the research question, I will take advantage of the resemble of the butterfly life cycle and the development of women's identities, a metaphor that came out in the process of analysis. The findings showed that women tackled memorable and painful but significant experiences that led them to go through various processes in their self-development: the self, dealing with internal tensions (the inner self) and external tensions (the self-versus roles in different spheres of society). For this reason, the biological, mental, and social transformation that they begin the journey of their lives like an egg and facing reality helped them to transform themselves into butterflies.

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Without a doubt, women's struggles stem from the fact that they were born a woman in a macho society and in a period of time when violence in Colombia was at the peak with outlaw armed groups. Therefore, from the women's narratives I was able to analyze socio-cultural factors that were significant elements framed in woman life stories, concrete facts observed in the analysis of this research showed that women from birth had to address a role in different social contexts in the family, the community, the church, etc. Even though sociocultural factors pigeonholed and established men and women how "being and behaving", women used agency strategies in their struggles to try to free themselves and resist those outer sociocultural pressures. However, the identity of women proved not only students struggle with external social factors and patriarchal system, but also, they were tackling with the inner self, their own prejudices, and fears. But once these women exercised their agency by recognizing themselves as critical agents of their reality, when they understood their rights were violated due to underground, hegemonic discourses of the macho culture inherited for decades and learned even by women, like the chrysalis women feed off their own significant experiences when creating alternative and genuine knowledge that allowed them, first reading their own text critically and surviving with which they rewrote their world. Regarding this, it can conclude that women in this study found the courage to be aware of their realities and resisted their sociocultural context by recognizing a multidimensionality of themselves and at the same time shifting to a more self-aware recognition, which is evidenced by the agency to transform their own world.

The five skins proposed by Hundertwasser were a useful resource for exploring identity. By adopting the metaphor of skins, mature women observed a resignification in the perception of their own skins and in how they understand and read the world. In the



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same way, this metaphor evoked their memories, explored their female bodies, their race, their origins, what will come to them to self-discover their inner self where their beliefs, fears, strengths, dreams are found, to face external tensions (patriarchal society).

Another important component for the construction of identity is to recognize that being is susceptible to rethinking itself. The human beings have the ability to reflect on the sociocultural elements that surround them, which although they influence and are part of their beliefs, traditions and despite external pressures such as being part of a historical period where a patriarchal society predominates. The women in this study found the courage to be aware of their realities and resisted their sociocultural context by telling a multidimensionality of self and at the same time changing to a more self-conscious recognition, which is evidenced by agency to transform their own world.

The narratives of their life stories revealed memorable and painful experiences, but at the same time, I reckon women's constructions of identity are based on empowerment strategies which have increased alternative literacy skills genuine to them which I also think society still has not really considered.

The study showed that the act of writing in this narrative study was meaningful to the participants. The act of writing constitutes an act of liberation in which, in the mature stage of the students' lives, writing is more than mechanically joining letters to show that they have learned to write, on the contrary, the written word emerges as an opportunity to reaffirm who they are and what they can do. This is how they showed not only to read their world but also to rewrite it as an act of vindication with themselves.

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### **Considerations for Further Research**

Mainly, with this study I sought to emphasize on exploring, examining and recognizing meaningful life experiences, highlighting how a group of mature women configured their identity as readers, which in our constant dialogue allowed me to explore, distinguish and in turn rediscover the evidence of human capacity for finding alternative resilience learnings and be agents who read their own worlds. In each of these life stories exist the importance of keeping ideals alive, of wanting to pursue their dreams as if those dreams were a chimera, and in despite of the socio-cultural external tensions and the inner-self the challenge the barriers of one-dimensionality identity to critically learn through their realities and act upon their own awareness to transform their oppressive realities.

In addition, I also explored the human dimensions in wide view (corporal, mental-cognitive, spiritual, family, communicative, social and cultural), which led me comprehend the concept literacy from beyond linguistic literacy, instead, I found an enrich manner to read and write the world. So, I can now identify the spectrum in a broader way, and on this basis I invite other researchers to identify those minority groups that still have been socially excluded or socially despised in Colombia and around the world like, indigenous communities within and outside their territories, LGBTI communities, black communities and very remote communities.

Another consideration to explore is the metaphor of the 5 skins by Hundertwasser, which includes a diversity of social dimensions of the human being, in addition to approaching narrative research from a broader perspective that includes art and other forms of graphic communication that complement the information gathering processes; that can provide exceptional information and is a little explored mechanism.

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Finally, I must emphasize that this study was carried out through a pedagogical intervention and relied on critical and feminist pedagogy, to which both suggested to deepen in psychological, pedagogical, anthropological, philosophical and sociological aspects; All these fields of the humanities could allow teacher researchers to obtain a better understanding of the reality of social groups and also to approach a wide, diverse and equal education.

On the other hand, for those scholars and concerned about working with communities or foundations, take into account other training spaces such as other settings: libraries, theaters, cultural centers, community rooms where anyone interested can have a closer contact with the population and find a variety of little-explored contexts.

Based on the above, I suggest the following questions which can be addressed by future researchers who are interested in continuing with the line of research:

1. How is identity configured in indigenous groups, how do these groups read and write their world from their philosophy of life?

2. How do the discourses in language in types of texts such as myths, legends, sayings, commercials, have a clandestine and hegemonic discourse that promotes gender inequality?

3. How do women position themselves in new groups such as subcultures, gamers, social networks, etc. in this new era of technology?

4. How in foundations like "Piccolino" it is possible to build knowledge that occurs in the encounter of people of different generations, some of which have been excluded from the traditional model of education due to characteristics such as age, special educational needs, etc. but with diverse cultural backgrounds that are worth exploring?

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## Appendices

## Appendix A Participant Consent Form



UNIVERSIDAD DISTRITAL FRANCISCO JOSE DE CALDAS  
 MAESTRÍA EN LINGÜÍSTICA APLICADA A LA ENSEÑANZA  
 DEL INGLÉS  
 WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY WHILE READING THE  
 WORLD



## Appendix Participant Consent Form

## CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo, LADY JOHANNA RODRÍGUEZ BERNAL, identificada con C.C N.º 52885148, estudiante de la Maestría en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Inglés, me encuentro desarrollando mi tesis de grado titulada: **WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY WHILE READING THE WORLD**. Me permito dirigirme a usted para invitarla hacer parte del trabajo investigativo. Antes de aceptar le solicito amablemente que se tome el tiempo necesario para leer cuidadosamente este formato, con el fin de que conozca de qué se trata esta investigación, cuál sería su participación y aclare cualquier inquietud o duda que pueda surgir.

Este proyecto trata de entender la identidad de mujeres estudiantes en la edad adulta como lectoras en las prácticas de alfabetización basadas en experiencias de vida significativas. Cabe aclarar que el acto de leer va más allá de solo leer el código lingüístico, pero también el acto de leer el mundo, basada en la filosofía de Freire. Este estudio narrativo se desarrollará a través de una intervención pedagógica, que busca explorar la identidad de las participantes indagando experiencias significativas de la niñez, juventud y adultez en el contexto sociocultural colombiano, donde usted participará en los talleres libremente y escribir narrativas de su propia historia de vida. Seguidamente, se le pedirá tomar tiempo para entrevistas y continuar el proceso dialógico de la investigación. En la aplicación de entrevistas, las preguntas estarán dirigidas a experiencias personales que serán grabadas. Dado que su historia de vida y las entrevistas pueden incluir información muy personal, se le garantizará el anonimato. Finalizada la investigación, haré un reporte donde se resuma los hallazgos y las conclusiones.

Mediante este documento le informo que los datos que usted aporte serán utilizados con fines académicos e investigativos. Basado en el principio de confidencialidad y en pro del derecho a la privacidad, su identidad o datos personales no serán expuestos a terceros sin consentimiento previo, y teniendo en cuenta que usted como participante está en total derecho de abandonar el estudio en cualquier momento y/o rehusarse a responder preguntas, sin represalia alguna.

## WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES WHILE READING THE WORLD



UNIVERSIDAD DISTRITAL FRANCISCO JOSE DE CALDAS  
 MAESTRÍA EN LINGÜÍSTICA APLICADA A LA ENSEÑANZA  
 DEL INGLÉS  
 WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY WHILE READING THE  
 WORLD



Agradezco su tiempo y disposición de leer este documento y espero tener la oportunidad de que sea participante de mi trabajo de grado.

Teniendo en cuenta lo anterior:

Yo \_\_\_\_\_ identificada con C.C N.º  
 \_\_\_\_\_ de \_\_\_\_\_, luego de haber sido informada sobre las  
 condiciones de la investigación autorizo a LADY JOHANNA RODRÍGUEZ BERNAL  
 identificada con C.C N.º 52885148, para aplicar los instrumentos pertinentes al desarrollo del  
 proyecto de Investigación **WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY WHILE READING  
 THE WORLD** en el cual seré entrevistada y grabada. Declaro que se me ha explicado cada una  
 de las actividades que realizaré, los beneficios y riesgos que estas conllevan y puedo retirarme  
 en el momento en el cual así lo decida.

Nombres y Apellidos

Firma de Autorización

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES WHILE READING THE WORLD

**Appendix B Certification: consent for the development of research project and data processing of the Piccolino foundation****A QUIEN PUEDA INTERESAR**

Yo, Adriana Garzón identificada con Número de cédula 52718431, de la ciudad de Bogotá representante legal de la Fundación Piccolino Nit 900053964-7, obrando como representante legal durante el periodo comprendido entre Marzo 2019 a Marzo 2021; Certifico que la docente Lady Johanna Rodríguez Bernal identifica con número de cédula 52.885.148 de Bogotá D.C., solicitó atentamente autorización para el desarrollo de su proyecto de grado de Maestría de la Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, quien desarrolló su tesis titulada WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES WHILE READING THE WORLD en la sede San Francisco, además se le autoriza hacer uso del nombre de la fundación para ser incluida expresamente en el documento de investigación si así lo desea. Finalizada la investigación, la docente voluntaria socializará los hallazgos y conclusiones con la comunidad educativa de la fundación.

Constancia que se expide a solicitud de Lady Johanna Rodríguez Bernal a los 12 días de abril de 2021.

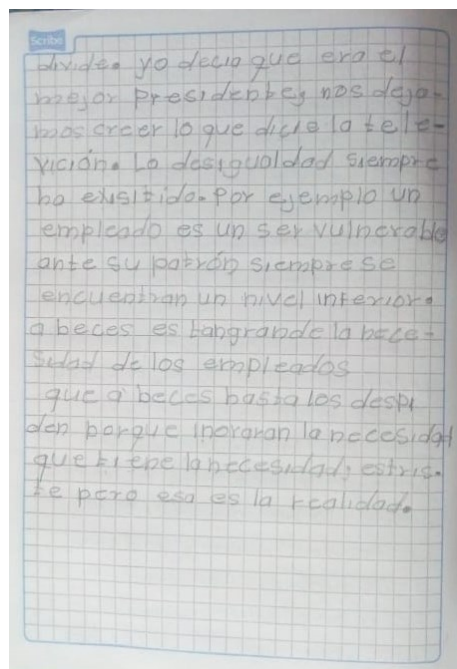
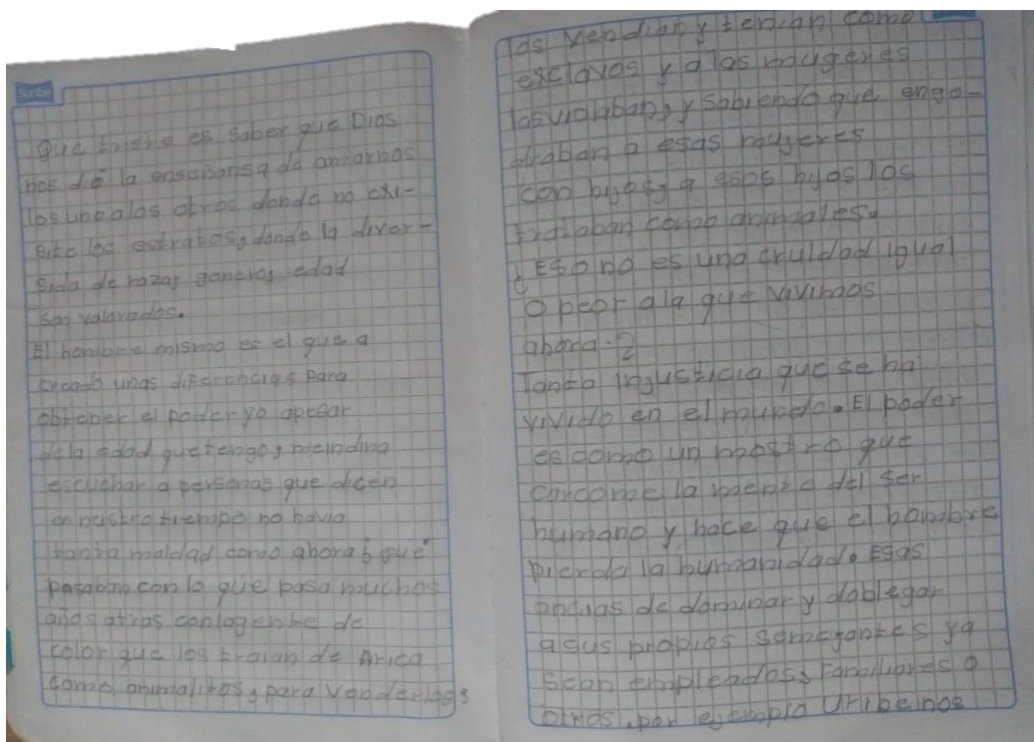


Adriana Garzón

CC. 52.718.431

## WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES WHILE READING THE WORLD

## Appendix C Writing essay by mature female student (Monarch)



## WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES WHILE READING THE WORLD

## Appendix D Inicial Semi-Structure Interview – English And Spanish Version



**UNIVERSIDAD DISTRITAL DE CALDAS**  
**APPLIED LINGUISTIC MASTER PROGRAM**  
**INITIAL INTERVIEW**



*This interview aims to collect specific information from students on a personal and educational level to understand their background as a starting point. Therefore, it is considered personal information, learning motivations, previous knowledge, experience, and perception before and after starting your literacy process at the Piccolino Foundation. The information provided in this interview is for research purposes only.*

- *What's your name?*
- *Where are you from, if you are from another city since when you arrived in Bogotá and why?*
- *What do you do or what did you do? How did you learn your trade?*
- *Please tell me more about you. (Childhood, family)*
- *How many children do you have?*
- *What do you do in your free time?*
- *Do you like to read and write? But because?*
- *What do you like to read?*
- *What do you think are your weaknesses to learn? ...*
- *Do you like to read and write? But because?*
- *What do you like to read?*
- *What do you think are your weaknesses to learn? ...*
- *Which are your strengths?*
- *What do you think you should work on more and why?*
- *Do you think that being a woman has brought you advantages or disadvantages to receive an education? Which? Explain to me more (circumstances).*
- *Why and when did you decide to start literacy?*
- *In what way has your life changed after starting your literacy process?*
- *How did you get to Piccolino?*
- *Why is it important to be here in this learning community? What motivates you?*
- *You have experienced difficult moments; how and why do you think you have overcome it?*
- *What have you learned?*
- *In what way not having had formal training (attending school has affected your work, family life, etc)-  
What is your name?*



## WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES WHILE READING THE WORLD



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**APPLIED LINGUISTIC MASTER PROGRAM**  
**PICCOLINO SEDE SAN FRANCISCO**



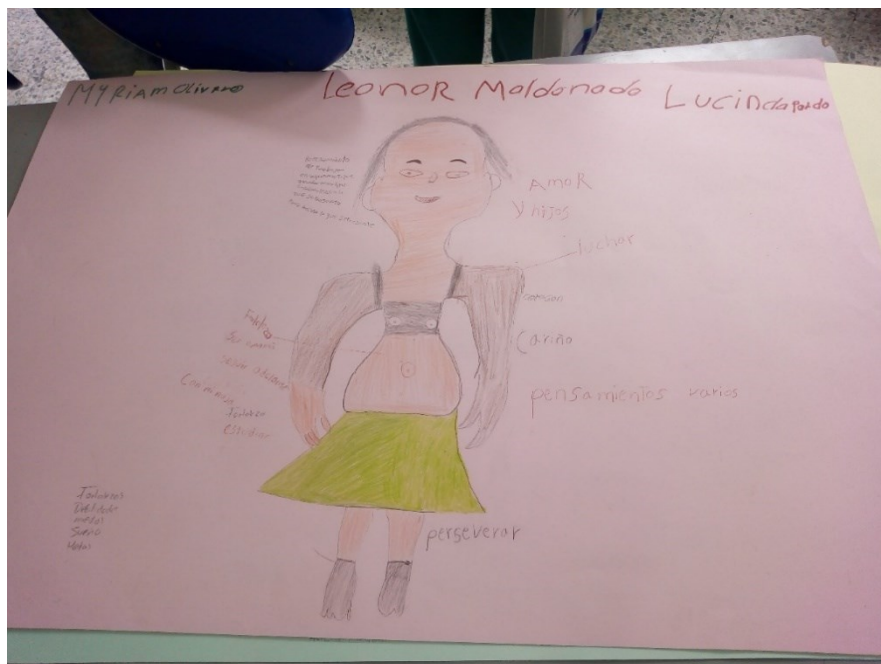
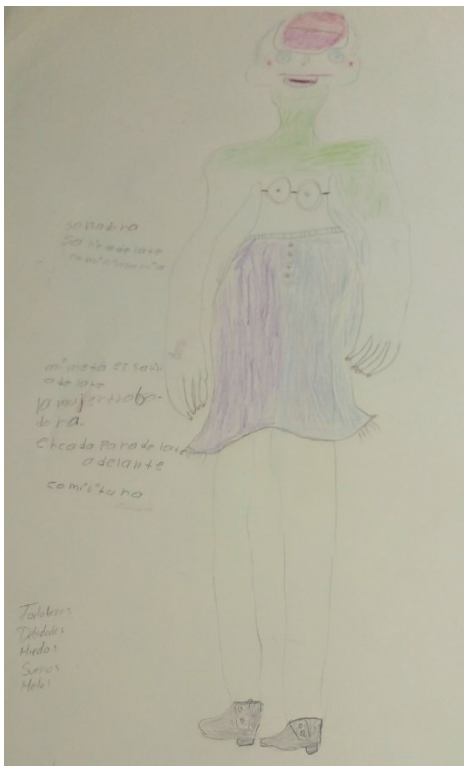
**INITIAL INTERVIEW**

*Esta entrevista tiene como objetivo recopilar información específica de los estudiantes a nivel personal y educativo para comprender sus antecedentes como punto de partida. Por tanto, se considera información personal, motivaciones de aprendizaje, conocimientos previos, experiencia y percepción antes y después de iniciar su proceso de alfabetización en la Fundación Piccolino. La información proporcionada en esta entrevista es solo para fines de investigación.*

- *¿De dónde eres, si eres de otra ciudad desde cuando llegaste a Bogotá y por qué?*
- *¿Qué haces o en qué te desempeñaste? ¿Cómo aprendiste tu oficio?*
- *Por favor dime más acerca de ti. (Infancia, familia)*
- *¿Cuántos hijos tiene?*
- *¿Qué haces en tu tiempo libre?*
- *¿Te gusta leer y escribir? Sí / No ¿por qué?*
- *¿Qué te gusta leer?*
- *¿Cuáles crees que son tus debilidades para aprender? ...*
- *¿Cuáles son tus fortalezas?*
- *¿En qué crees debes trabajar más y por qué?*
- *¿Crees que ser mujer te ha traído ventajas o desventajas para recibir educación? ¿Cuales? Explícame más (circunstancias).*
- *¿Por qué y en qué momento decidiste emprender la alfabetización?*
- *¿En qué manera a cambiado tu vida después de comenzar tu proceso de alfabetización?*
- *¿Cómo llegaste a Piccolino?*
- *¿Por qué es importante estar aquí en esta comunidad de aprendizaje? ¿Qué te motiva?*
- *Has vivido cosas difíciles ¿cómo y por qué crees que lo has superado?*
- *¿Qué has aprendido?*
  - *En qué manera no haber contado con una formación formal (asistir a la escuela te a afectado en tu vida laboral, familiar, etc.)*

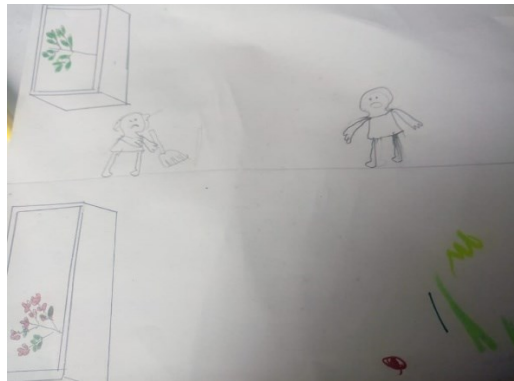
WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES WHILE READING THE WORLD

Appendix E First Workshop Evidence: Student's drawings



WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES WHILE READING THE WORLD

Appendix F Student's drawings



WOMEN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITIES WHILE READING THE WORLD

Appendix G. Literacy process and narrative production

