

## **“They came there as workers”: Voice, dialogicality and identity construction in textual representations of the 2012 Marikana miner’s strike**

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### **Abstract**

In August and September 2012, a mineworkers’ strike took place at a mine operated by Lonmin, a British producer of platinum metals, in the Marikana area of the South African platinum belt. The strike received international attention after over 70 Lonmin employees were injured, 34 of whom suffered fatal wounds. Drawing on a social constructivist view of language and discourse, this research critically investigates how social actors are represented in two contrasting text types; namely Lonmin Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports and transcripts of verbal testimonies given at the Marikana Commission of Inquiry. Van Leeuwen’s (2008) socio-semantic categories for the representation of social actors, as well as Bakhtin’s (1981) notions of ‘dialogicality’ and ‘voice’, are incorporated as key methodological tools. A critical analysis of the texts reveals that although the strikes were symbolic acts against a repressive economic and social system, during their testimonies, the mineworkers often adopt the same representational devices used by the corporate actors they are reacting against. Since linguistic and discursive features are representative of ideologies (see Wodak 1989, Wodak 1996, Fairclough 2003 and van Dijk 2006), the research highlights the dominance of neoliberal ideologies in the South African mining industry and comments on the implications this may have for future transformation in this sector.

**Keywords:** Marikana, critical discourse analysis, neoliberalism, corporate social responsibility, oral testimonies, Van Leeuwen, Bakhtin, dialogicality

### **1. Background**

The South African mining industry has long been criticised for unethical practice (see Crush 1994, Campbell 1997, as well as Hamann and Kapelus 2004, Simelane and Modisha 2008 and Bond 2013). Many of the problems in the mining industry have been identified by scholars such as Wolpe (1972), Simelane and Modisha (2008) and Bond (2013) as problems typically associated with a capitalist mode of production. These problems include: (i) the employment of foreign migrant workers as casual workers and the establishment of a formalised migrancy system stemming from the need for cheap labour (Simelane and Modisha 2008); (ii) enormous

wage disparities, which not only satisfy the need for cheap labour but also systematically control the conditions of production and consumption (Wolpe 1972:428); and (iii) the rise of debt among mineworkers as a result of their being targeted by loan sharks or *mashonisas*, an isiZulu word meaning “to impoverish” or “to sink” (Bond 2013).

In this context, mineworkers regularly engage in strikes as a mechanism to receive recognition and to achieve equal rights. The strike, as a form of protest, is a social practice<sup>1</sup> that has been understood by scholars such as Marcuse as a reaction against repressive capitalist class structures (see Marcuse and Martin 1979). This understanding of strikes is central to this study; however, the term “neoliberalism” is used rather than “capitalism” to more clearly articulate the spread of capitalist thought from economic realms into all aspects of political and social life. In addition, ‘neoliberalism’ articulates that capitalism (as an economic theory) and liberalism (as a political ideology) share a common history. While the idea of individual freedom remains a prominent concept in neoliberal thought, the term “neoliberalism” also encapsulates the idea that the ideology of capitalism has spread beyond the realm of economics into political and social realms and has become a dominant economic, social and political ideology.

Springer (2012), working within a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, has provided immense insight into how neoliberalism is not only a dominant social order, but also a global discourse. This discourse works to justify a global project in which elite social actors form class-based alliances and circulate a coherent interpretation of the world to others. In contemporary neoliberal discourses there is increased focus on privatisation, deregulation and governance processes in an effort to assign power and control to non-governmental and corporate institutions. The dominance of corporate institutions in this social order necessarily increases the maintenance of economic management systems, strategies and, more recently, technology, as a means of control. An important feature of this social order is that it is hegemonic and the masses willingly consent to these interpretations (Springer 2012:136-137).

This paper views the Marikana strike as emblematic and symptomatic of the mineworkers’ mistrust of the basic values of neoliberal society and an overall breakdown in the priorities and hierarchies established by the dominant economic and social order. This assertion is made not only on the basis of established economic inequalities and labour exploitation in the mining sector, but also with reference to a neoliberal agenda which dominates many other aspects of contemporary South African society (Williams and Taylor 2000, Narsiah 2002, Peet 2002 and Bond 2014). In fact, many scholars have noted that the transition from apartheid has been underpinned by corporatism, a term which is used here to refer to the socio-political organisation of society by corporations in an effort to achieve economic growth (Molina and Rhodes 2002). In this context social transformation is often equated with ‘good governance’, ‘corporate social responsibility’, ‘Black Economic Empowerment’ and other economic approaches to establishing social equity and redress (Naidoo and Veriava 2005:8).

Lonmin offers an illustrative example of the corporatist trend in South Africa. The company was started in London in 1909 and is now one of the world’s largest producers of platinum group metals (PGM), most of which are extracted from an area known as the “Bushveld Complex” in northern South Africa. The company is listed on the London Stock Exchange

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<sup>1</sup> The term “social practice” is central to this research. It is used to refer to conventionalised social activities that have established social actors, times, places and styles of dress (see Machin and van Leeuwen 2007).

(LSE) and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). In 2013, Lonmin reported US\$1,520 million in revenue; and in 2014, they reported US\$965 million in revenue. The decline in revenue was attributed to the impact of the 2012 strike on the company's operations (Lonmin 2014). Lonmin employs approximately 28,000 people, most of whom are mineworkers. Global corporate governance trends encourage companies to publically report on the remuneration of company directors. In this regard, the company's Executive Directors, Ben Magara and Simon Scott, earned a maximum of £462,150 and £334,650, respectively, for the year ending 30 September 2014. This excludes benefits such as a car allowance, medical insurance, income protection insurance and life insurance, which increase yearly in line with basic salary increases (Lonmin 2013a).

Global governance trends do not require companies to report on the remuneration packages of lower-wage workers; however, it is well established that the salaries of mineworkers are low and significantly less than those of CEOs and executive directors. The workers' revolt against Lonmin between August 11 and August 16, 2012, was a result of wage dissatisfaction; particularly amongst those mineworkers who operate rock drills ("rock-drill operators", or "RDOs"), who requested a salary of R12,500 – roughly three times their average salary at the time. The strike took place in spite of the fact that most of those who went on strike were members of trade unions such as the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

Trade unions have always had a specific role in anti-capitalist thought. For Marx, unions are a mechanism through which individual workers can make their existence more secure, but only temporarily (see Skeggs 2010:341). The Marikana strike indicates that mineworker unions were unable to meet the needs, or negotiate on behalf of the needs, of the people they represented. Naidoo and Veriava (2005) argue that the weakness of trade unions in South Africa is that they have been unable to escape neoliberal thought. Their role, which is essentially an alliance with corporations and government, has meant the adoption of corporate models of governance that seek to find the best solution for labour grievances, whilst remaining within a neoliberal framework. Alexander, Sinwell, Lekgowa, Mmope and Xezwi (2013:25) also point out that the strike threatened a system of labour relations that had, until the point of the strike, boosted profits for Lonmin and had protected the privileges of NUM, the trade union to which most of the protestors belonged.

The exact nature of the events that took place in August 2012 is still unclear. Media reports at the time of the strike presented varied opinions and perspectives, but they frequently constructed the workers as violent and dangerous, and as having acted in ways which prompted the company and the police to take appropriate action (see Chauke 2012; Paton 2012; and Steyn 2012). However, in their book documenting ethnographic research with mineworkers and trade union representatives, Alexander et al. (2013:16) state that "we learned that the workers were, and remain, disciplined, peaceful and very well organised". The Marikana Commission of Inquiry was established in order to uncover the truth about the incidents that had taken place. Hearings commenced on 1 October 2012 and ended on 14 November 2014. They were held at the Rustenburg Civic Centre, the Marikana Community Hall and then the City of Tswana municipal offices. Mineworkers, members of the South African Police Services, members of AMCU and NUM, as well as Lonmin executive Michael da Costa testified before the commission. On 31 March 2015, the official report of the Commission was delivered to President Jacob Zuma. This report has not yet been made public.

## 2. Methodology

This study aims to contribute to an understanding of the events of August 2012 and the reasons for the Marikana mineworkers' strike. It does so by presenting the results of a critical and in-depth analysis of two text types that surfaced after the strike had ended: the 2012 and 2013 Lonmin CSR reports and the oral testimonies of Xolani Nzuza, Shadrack Zandisile Mtshamba and Mzoxolo Magidiwana at the Marikana Commission of Inquiry in 2013 and 2014. Oral testimonies and CSR reports are two very different genres – they differ not only in terms of style and structure, but in terms of the discourse communities that produce them and their production processes, goals and target audiences. Taking these differences into consideration, the research does not aim to compare the genres, or to equate and contrast all the textual representations contained therein. Rather, it focuses specifically on the construction and representation of social actors in the texts, and aims to determine whether there are differences in representation in the two genres. The analysis was guided by the following research question:

*How do Lonmin, Nzuza, Mtshamba and Magidiwana construct themselves and others in their CSR reports and/or oral testimonies?*

### 2.1 Process of text selection

Corporate social responsibility reports are a relatively new genre of text, designed to provide an overview of a company's initiatives to address the "three-pillar" or "corporate" model of sustainable development. These pillars are (i) the people or communities that have an effect on, or are affected by, the company's activities; (ii) the environment; and (iii) the company's economic performance. Corporate social responsibility reports are published on a yearly basis and are typically only read by shareholders, investors and other actors and organisations that have a financial stake in the company. This influences the way in which the messages are constructed. Corporate social responsibility reports combine elements of the reporting and promotional genres, as well as narrative elements. The promotional features of the text include the use of images and photograph and the inclusion of a section about the company, a list of awards, highlights, and achievements, and a letter or statement from the CEO or chairman (see Bowers 2010; Mason and Mason 2012; and Bhatia 2013). The Lonmin CSR reports are freely available in electronic and portable document format (PDF) on the company's website.

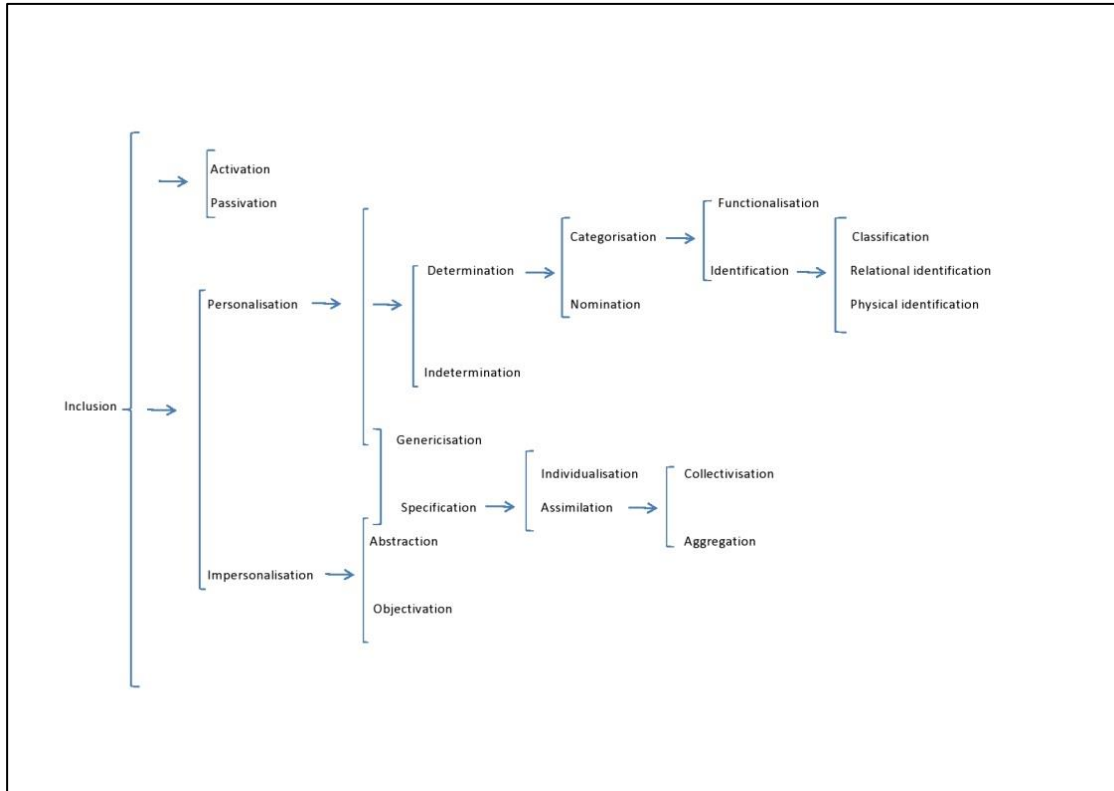
Testimonies are often considered to be unique representations of history and memory. A testimony is an account of the ways in which an event has influenced the life of an individual. As text types, testimonies are typically dialogic and rely on the guidance of another person who asks questions or guides the speaker in a particular direction. They also leave room for pauses, longer periods of silence and incomplete sentences (Assmann 2006:265). In an official judicial context, the accuracy and reliability of a testimony are important. The court witness is obligated to provide factual information that will help to uncover the truth and biographical details of the witness are invoked only if they contribute to the pursuit of truth or the validity of the testimony (Assmann 2006:266). The transcripts of the oral testimonies were obtained from the official Marikana Commission of Inquiry website. Mzoxolo Magidiwana testified in February and March 2013, while Shadrack Zandisile Mtshamba and Xolani Nzuza gave testimony in August 2014. The transcripts are in English and are often the result of a process of interpretation. Because of this, the testimonies as they stand cannot be taken as exact reproductions of what was said on the day. Furthermore, some of the information contained in the original testimonies

could have been lost in the process of transcription. However, the transcripts’ level of accuracy is sufficient for the type of analysis pursued in this study; that is, an analysis of the mechanisms used to include social actors in the texts. The approach to textual analysis adopted in this study is detailed below.

## 2.2 Van Leeuwen’s framework for analysing social actors

Van Leeuwen’s (2008) socio-semantic framework for analysing the representation of social actors is an important methodological tool in this study. According to Van Leeuwen (2008:23-54), social actors and agency are not only realised through grammatical roles, but through complex textual processes of *exclusion* and *inclusion*. *Exclusion* refers to the use of linguistic devices which work to *background* or *suppress* social actors in a text. This includes features such as passive agent deletion and ellipsis. *Exclusion* is significant in the critical analysis of a text because the choice to exclude social actors is ideological and is a result of specific goals and interests of the author. However, this analysis focuses on the ways in which social actors are *included* and assigned a specific role within the selected texts. Van Leeuwen’s (2008) framework encompasses 46 categories which account for processes of inclusion. This study focuses on 21 of these categories – those that are evident within the selected CSR reports and testimonies. These include *activation*, *passivation*, *personalisation*, *impersonalisation*, *genericisation* and *specification*; as well as specific subcategories of these. The paragraphs below elaborate on these categories. In addition, Figure 1 below offers a schematic representation of the relationship between these categories.

*Activation* occurs when social actors are presented as the active force in an activity, while *passivation* occurs when social actors are represented as undergoing an activity. The identification of agents and patients is a significant aspect of critical analysis, especially when considering the congruence between the roles of social actors in social practices and the roles they are assigned in a text (Van Leeuwen 2008:32). In addition to this, social actors can also be *personalised* or *impersonalised*. Representational choices which *personalise* social actors represent them as human beings by means of personal pronouns, proper names, nouns, or any other choice which has the semantic feature of “human” (Van Leeuwen 2008:46). *Impersonalisation* is a textual action in which human social actors are represented using words that do not have the semantic feature of “human”, such as abstract or concrete nouns that are typically used for non-human subjects. There are two categories of *impersonalisation*: *abstraction* and *objectification*. The former occurs when social actors are represented in terms of a quality that is assigned to them in the representation (e.g. describing employees in terms of “capital”). Conversely, *objectification* occurs when social actors are represented through metonyms which refer to a place or thing closely associated with the person or the activity in which they are engaging (Van Leeuwen 2008:47).



**Figure 1:** The representation of social actors<sup>2</sup>

Van Leeuwen (2008) also directs attention to the socio-semantic implications of presenting social actors as part of a generalised class or as having a generalised essence (*genericisation*), or representing social actors as identifiable individuals (*specification*). When *specified*, social actors can be further referred to either as individuals through a process of *individualisation*, or as groups, in a process termed *assimilation* (Van Leeuwen 2008:37). There are two subcategories of *assimilation*: *aggregation* and *collectivisation*. *Aggregation* quantifies groups of people through the use of statistics, while *collectivisation* does not.

*Indetermination* occurs when social actors are unspecified or made anonymous (for example, through the use of indefinite pronouns such as “some” or “someone”), while *determination* occurs when actors’ identity is specified. In this regard, social actors may be *nominated*, or represented in terms of their unique identity by means of proper nouns, or they may be represented in terms of the identities or functions they share with others (*categorisation*) (Van Leeuwen 2008:42). The two subcategories of *categorisation* that are relevant to this study are *functionalisation* and *identification*. The former refers to representations which characterise social actors in terms of what they do (e.g. “RDO” or “CEO”); while *identification* refers to social actors not in terms of what they do, but in terms of more or less permanent aspects of who they are. There are three categories of *identification* in Van Leeuwen’s framework, all of which are relevant to this study. These are *classification*, where social actors are referred to in terms of major classification systems defined by a society (e.g. race and gender); *relational identification*, which represents social actors in terms of their personal, kinship or work relations to one another (e.g. “colleague”); and *physical identification*, which represents social

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Van Leeuwen (2008).

actors in terms of a physical characteristic which is used to identify them in a given context (Van Leeuwen 2008:43).

### **2.3 Bakhtin's notions of 'voice' and 'dialogicality'**

This study adopts a neo-Marxist reading of Bakhtin and makes particular use of his notions of 'voice' and 'dialogicality'. The notion of 'voice' is intertwined with self-identity: "it is the process through which the developing child moves the external world 'inside' to form 'voices of the mind'" (Wertsch in Wetherell 2010:15). However, Farmer (1995:306) asserts that 'voice' is only able to express an unfinished project; a process, the origins of which reside in particular social moments, institutions and dialogues. Like Voloshinov, Bakhtin asserts that voices are social and are appropriated from those around us. However, he adds the notion of 'struggle', referring to "the challenge that ensues in the difficult process of appropriating someone else's words for one's own purposes and the corresponding struggle among the interior voices that vie for ascendance in consciousness" (Farmer 1995: 307). The notion of 'struggle' stems from the idea that language is not neutral, but is a conveyer of value judgments and ideologies. The process of prying the word free from these judgments is seen to be essential to the realisation of individual consciousness and freedom.

In Bakhtin's (1981) dialogical principle, texts are conceptualised as inevitably dialogical, since "any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances with which it enters into one kind of relation or another" (Fairclough 2003:42). The relationship between one text, discourse or utterance and another may be a relationship of one building on or problematising the other; or there may be an assumption that the idea expressed is already known to the listener or reader (Fairclough 2003:42-43). This is encapsulated in the notions of 'monoglossia' and 'heteroglossia'. Monoglossic statements are factual or categorical assertions that make no reference to other voices. While often contextual in nature, monoglossia can also be achieved through the use of modals such as "is", "are" and "will". In contrast, heteroglossic statements are those that show the speaker's awareness of other voices or viewpoints.

Considering Bakhtin's dialogical principle, it becomes clear that intertextuality may be apparent simply when a writer or speaker assumes that the listener or reader is aware of the idea expressed by an utterance. Because of this, Fairclough (2003:40) links intertextuality more explicitly to assumptions, where 'assumptions' are taken to include the type of implicitness that is generally distinguished in pragmatics, such as that involved in presuppositions and implicatures. Intertextuality is an important aspect of self-identity construction.

Fairclough (2003:41) also links intertextuality and assumptions to 'difference' (Benhabib 1996). 'Difference' refers to how particulars (in, for example, identities and interests) come to be represented as universals. 'Difference' can also be understood in terms of hegemony (Gramsci 1971). This perspective on 'difference' considers how social groups are able to project certain particulars as universals and how "the masses" consent to the validity of this representation (Fairclough 2003:41). Fairclough (2003:78-79) asserts that intertextuality, dialogue, difference and hegemony are of increasing importance in contemporary neoliberal contexts due to the fact that social powers are able to control the quality of the dialogue, or under the guise of 'dialogue' may lead people to believe that they are participating in a democratic system. However, in order to be truly effective, dialogues need, amongst other things, to permit everyone access; to allow people to decide whether to enter the dialogue; to

allow participants the freedom to disagree or to interrupt and continue the dialogue at other occasions; and to provide a space for consensus to be reached (Fairclough 2003:80).

### 3. Presentation of the data

#### 3.1 Lonmin CSR reports

Section 2 has established that CSR reports exhibit characteristics of promotional genres, which means that companies often use them as tools for positive-identity construction rather than as factual reports. The process of positive-identity construction makes use of linguistic features such as plural pronouns, adjectives such as “committed” and verbs such as “believe” and “understand”. These linguistic features not only work to construct the company in human terms, i.e. as a ‘corporate citizen’; they also represent the company as a good and moral corporate citizen. The front page of the 2013 Lonmin report clearly illustrates this:

- (1) We are committed to a process of fundamental change to rebuild trust with all our stakeholders (Lonmin 2013b).

The table below highlights that pronouns such as “we” and “our” are prevalent in the Lonmin CSR reports<sup>3</sup>:

	<b>Lonmin CSR 2012</b>	<b>Lonmin CSR 2013</b>
“we”	211	651
“our”	397	1074

The significant number of occurrences of “we” and “our” indicates that the use of these pronouns is a rhetorical strategy on behalf of the company. There are two primary reasons for the use of these pronouns. First, a “we-statement” has the power to make a statement on behalf of “all of us”, all the top management officials, and is thus a linguistic device that represents an uneven distribution of power (Fairclough 2003:171). Second, “we” and “our” make explicit reference to the company in a way that involves the reader in the text. According to Breeze (2013:40), the use of “we” in CSR reports “is a strategy through which the writer both signals solidarity with readers and attempts to involve them in the corporate agenda”.

Pronouns are also an important strategy in the construction of ‘self’ (in this case, the company) and ‘other’. In the Lonmin CSR reports, the speakers use plural pronouns to construct a positive identity for themselves. This is further achieved through the use of positive words that occur in close proximity to the pronouns. For example:

- (2) We understand that our approach is a journey, and that there is much that we still need to learn and implement. The devastating events in August 2012 at our Marikana operations have resulted in much investigation and reflection, as well as renewed determination and efforts to progress on this journey (Lonmin 2012:2).

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<sup>3</sup> Corpus linguistics was not used as a methodological tool in this study. However, the frequency of certain words was easily highlighted by using the advanced search feature in Adobe Reader.



Here, the pronoun "we" is followed by the verb "understand", which constructs the company as an entity that is empathetic and cognisant of the situation. This representation is repeated when the company constructs themselves as engaging in reflective thought processes and adopting a stance of "renewed determination". Words such as "committed", "aware", "awareness" and "recognise" appear in both the 2012 and 2013 reports:

- (3) We recognise that we have an impact on the communities around our operations. We have various mechanisms in place to assess the actual and potential impact on human rights (Lonmin 2012:13).
- (4) Lonmin is committed to ensuring that our working conditions are in line with our Human Rights Policy (Lonmin 2012:13).

The deliberate construction of an agreeable personality is an important rhetorical strategy for the company as it allows them to counteract criticism and negative publicity. It also masks more covert and negative other-representations. This is reiterated in the choice of the adjective "devastating" in (2) to describe the incidents that took place in August 2012. The choice of adjective minimises Lonmin's responsibility by framing the company as being overwhelmed and shocked by events. Further, Lonmin draws on the 'journey' metaphor as a way to conceptualise sustainability. This metaphor is common in CSR reports (Milne, Kearins and Walton 2006) and constructs corporate sustainability practices as a voyage or expedition, while constructing the company as brave and adventurous explorers. Doing so allows the company to reduce culpability should the "destination" (i.e. legitimate environmental protection and social equity) not be reached. This stance is reiterated by including the clause "there is much that we still need to learn and implement".

Adding to the persuasive function of "we-statements" is the subjective marking of modality in these statements (Fairclough 2003:171). This means that the quality of likelihood, ability, permission, or obligation (indicated through the use of a modal verb) is explicitly attributed to the company rather than to some other abstract participant. In the following extracts, "believe" is a marker of epistemic modality, or a marker of the company's confidence in the knowledge upon which the proposition is based:

- (5) We believe that we can make a difference. We believe that, through our resources, our skilled and committed teams, our partners and our Board Safety and Sustainability Committee and Transformation Committee we have the capacity to create long lasting value for all our stakeholders (Lonmin 2012:2).
- (6) We believe that mining plays an important, positive role in national and regional economies, particularly in developing nations, and this sector contributes to broad economic development and poverty reduction (Lonmin 2012:21).
- (7) We believe that we can have a positive impact on those around us and leave a lasting and valuable legacy (Lonmin 2013:48).

Drawing on the work of Bakhtin, "believe" is a heteroglossic resource because it signals engagement with other positions, rather than offering only a single viewpoint. By using the term "believe", the speaker assigns human qualities to the company and presents it as

reasonable. Nevertheless, the company frequently makes strong, monoglossic assertions about circumstances and the nature of the company's competitive position. In extracts (5) to (7), Lonmin expresses confidence in their ability to "make a difference", their "capacity to create long lasting value" for stakeholders and their ability to make "a positive impact" on those who are affected by corporate practices. In addition, Lonmin expresses confidence in the "positive role" that the mining industry plays in developing countries.

In contrast to the construction of the company as human, Lonmin draws on the metaphor HUMANS ARE CAPITAL when representing lower-wage employees such as mineworkers. In economic terms, "human capital" refers to the stock of competencies needed to perform labour for economic profit. However, it is a metaphor that represents humans as economic entities that are evaluated according to economic criteria and in a very crude sense are "sold on the market". This is also a form of *impersonalisation* through *objectification*, since "capital" does not have the semantic feature of "human".

Lonmin not only uses the term "human capital" in their reports (see, for example, Lonmin 2012:9; Lonmin 2013b:4), they frequently refer to employees as entities or resources that are needed to generate profit. In extracts (8) and (9), employees are described as a means to "maintain a profitable and sustainable business" and as a means to achieve the "human-resource needs of the business":

- (8) We strive to develop and retain a skilled, productive workforce drawn from the broadest spectrum of South Africans, particularly our host communities, to maintain a profitable and sustainable business (Lonmin 2012:8).
- (9) We need to ensure that competent people are recruited, developed and retained in order to meet the current and future human-resource needs of the business (Lonmin 2012:9).

Furthermore, the company constructs educational packages as an important part of their "human-capital pipeline" and a means to enhance loyalty:

- (10) The Lonmin Bursary Scheme is another important part of our human-capital pipeline – a valuable entry point into Lonmin which also enhances loyalty towards the Company (Lonmin 2012:9).

In extract (10), the possessive pronoun "our" in the phrase "our human-capital pipeline" is a powerful way of realising active and passive roles, as well as agency. The use of the possessive pronoun "our" in a text can activate a social actor or represent a company as an active, dynamic force (Van Leeuwen 2008:33). This is further illustrated by the phrase "our workforce" and "our people" in extracts (11), (12) and (13) below:

- (11) At the end of 2013 we had 47.2% HDSAs<sup>4</sup> in management, including white women, of which 36% HDSAs are in permanent management positions. Women made up 8% of our workforce at the end of 2013, with 5.1% being in core mining positions. Women at the mine increased by 1.8% (Lonmin 2013b:78).

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<sup>4</sup> Historically disadvantaged South Africans.

- (12) At the beginning of the year AMCU became the majority union at Lonmin. The rest of our workforce are represented by NUM, Solidarity or UASA or are not unionised (Lonmin 2013b:71).
- (13) Established shift systems and work practices across the industry do not best utilise the significant mining infrastructure in which we have invested. Neither do they maximise the application of our people and their human and intellectual resources (Lonmin 2013b:97).

Extracts (11) and (12) above also illustrate how Lonmin frequently *assimilates* social actors into groups through processes of *collectivisation* (“HDSAs”, “workforce”, “unionised”) and *aggregation* (“8% of our workforce”). In addition to this, Lonmin frequently *categorises* social actors in terms of what they do (“workers”, “Rock Drill Operators”) and through processes of *classification* (“women”, “black”, “white”). This is further illustrated in extracts (14) and (15) below:

- (14) Women represented 8.15% of our workforce, with 5.11% of our workforce consisting of women in core mining positions (2011: 7.45% and 4.33%) (Lonmin 2012:8).
- (15) Increased global investment in mining over the past few years has driven demand for skilled workers around the world. In South Africa, this is compounded by the requirement to increase the proportion of HDSAs represented in management to 40% by the end of 2014 (Lonmin 2013b:77).
- (16) On 10 August 2012, approximately 3,000 people, mostly Rock Drill Operators employed by Lonmin, embarked on an unprotected (unlawful) work stoppage and protest march at the company’s Marikana mine operations (Lonmin 2012:6).

The way in which health, safety and fatalities are addressed in the reports reinforces the image of employees as objects. Individuals are not only *assimilated* in the group of “fatalities” through a process of *collectivisation*, they are *aggregated* and represented as statistics. In some cases, the deceased employees are named, but only prior or subsequent to indicating the Frequency in Fatality Rate (FIFR) of the deaths:

- (17) Tragic events at Marikana claimed the lives of 46 people; Two fatalities at work (Lonmin 2012:3).
- (18) On the positive side, we have recorded an improvement in our overall safety performance. Our year-on-year Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate (LTIFR) improved by 11.7%, supporting our long term trend of safety improvement; over the last five years we have improved our LTIFR by 33.7% (Lonmin 2012:5).

In addition, the company frequently assimilates workers into the group of “stakeholders”. For example:

- (19) Lonmin is looking at improved ways to create more value for stakeholders within our geographical footprint and economic value chain (Lonmin 2012:7).

- (20) Our recovery after the tragic events that unfolded during the week of the 10 to the 16 of August 2012 depended on committing the business to a path of fundamental change, in order to rebuild trust with all of our stakeholders (Lonmin 2013b:12).
- (21) Stakeholder engagement cannot be done without openness, trust and mutual respect (Letter from the CEO, Lonmin 2013b:50).
- (22) Following this initial research we updated our stakeholder engagement plan, which considered what our approach to each issue and each stakeholder would be, how we were going to react to the various issues and what our methods of engagement would be (Lonmin 2013b:59).

By definition, “stakeholder” refers to people or institutions that have a stake in corporate activities. In terms of Van Leeuwen’s (2008) framework, use of the term “stakeholder” is a form of *assimilation by collectivisation*, where individual people are referred to in terms of the groups of which they are part. Use of “stakeholder” is also a form of *categorisation*, as it represents people in terms of the identities and functions they share with others. In this case, the identities and functions of the people referred to are strongly intertwined with the company’s identity and function.

In contrast to the representations above, Lonmin and their higher-wage employees are *personalised* and *individualised*. A photograph of the CEO can be found in both CSR reports (see Lonmin 2012:2 and Lonmin 2013b:50). In addition, in the governance section of the reports, the members of the board are all named. Each member’s age, nationality, gender and the committees of which s/he forms part are also indicated (see Lonmin 2013b:83-84). This mode of representation is common in CSR reports and it is not particular to Lonmin (see Bernard 2015). This reiterates that certain modes of representation are acceptable in particular discourse communities, which has implications for how identities are constructed and recognised.

### 3.2 Testimonies before the Marikana Commission

While CSR reports represent the Lonmin employees who were involved in the strike, the Marikana Commission granted the opportunity for individuals to tell their own story – to represent themselves. This section addresses the ways in which Magidiwana, Mtshamba and Nzuzwa construct identities not only for themselves, but also for representatives of the trade unions and their colleagues. It is important to reiterate that the reports and testimonies are restricted by their generic features and therefore allow for the use of certain linguistic devices and representations while at the same time excluding others. These generic features are not overlooked, but are incorporated into my analysis below. Given the sensitive nature of oral testimonies, the analysis was conducted with caution. I have not attempted to reduce personal narratives to a collection of features and categories, but rather highlight a limited set of the testimonies’ features that may shed light on the complexities of the strike and the subjective experiences of those who testified.

The first prominent feature of the testimonies to be addressed here is the use of singular pronouns. The singular pronoun “I” is hardly ever used in CSR reports, apart from in the letter

from the CEO or chairman. However, the nature of an oral testimony encourages singular pronouns and they are used frequently in the testimonies along with plural pronouns. The following excerpt from Mtshamba’s testimony illustrates this:

- (23) It is bad, I feel bad about it, especially me. I found that I was from leave, telling myself, I am going back to work, and I had to face with this situation that I found, I think Lonmin should have tried to come and talk to the workers. Because the workers on the koppie on numerous occasions indicated that they do not want to be at loggerheads or fight with the police, they only want to talk to the employer, explain what their problems are to the employer because taking it from me, people who work in the mines, there is still segregation in the mines, between white and black people. If you look at the issue of the RDOs right now, there is not a single white person who is an RDO, even on the koppie there was not a single white person who was demonstrating there because there is not a single person who is an RDO who is white. All the white people are given high positions like, chief or mine captain (Mtshamba 2014a).

Lexical features such as “should”, “is” and “are” contribute to meaning in the text. The verb “should” is a marker of deontic modality – an indicator of what the speaker commits himself to in terms of obligation and necessity, rather than a marker of what the speaker commits to in terms of truth. By stating “I think Lonmin should have tried to come and talk to the workers”, Mtshamba opens up a dialogic space for alternative viewpoints, because the relationship of control or compliance is not represented using the imperative. This statement reveals the individual subjectivity of the speaker, who creates a heteroglossic context for the text. In other words, the proposition is presented as one of many propositions that are available to the speaker. It also projects an audience that is potentially divided over the issue and, in doing so, the speaker signals his awareness and recognition of contrasting views of what was expected of the company.

Subsequent to this, Mtshamba shifts to the use of monoglossic or “bare” assertions when addressing the issue of race: “there is still segregation in the mines”, “there is not a single white person who is an RDO”, “there was not a single white person who was demonstrating there”, “there is not a single person who is an RDO who is white”, “all the white people are given high positions like, chief or mine captain”. The use of “is” and “are” presents the situation as fact, since monoglossic statements do not incorporate other voices or perspectives.

Apart from the use of singular pronouns and emotional words, the use of plural pronouns differs between the text types. The plural pronouns “we” and “us” are evident in both the CSR reports and the oral testimonies, but while “we” and “us” are used to connote collectivity in the testimonies, they are not used to make “we-statements”. Rather, statements in the testimonies describe actions directed towards those who testified, as well as their colleagues. For example:

- (24) It was at the time it was said to workers we must not run. We must just walk and go to our places of residence because we have not done anything (Magidiwana 2013c).
- (25) Because I was scared at that time because of a fight, I ran and there are rocks over there, so I hid between the rocks. There were other workers who were also

hiding there, quite a number of us, were behind the bushes, some between the bushes, because there was a big rock, we were seated there and from the other side of the rock, they could not see us (Mtshamba 2014a).

The use of the indefinite pronoun “some” (25) is illustrative of *indetermination*, since it anonymises the social actors who took part in the event and treats the identity of the workers as irrelevant. *Indetermination* is also evident in the exophoric reference “they”, which is used to refer to the police. In this case, when contrasted with the use of “some”, Mtshamba endows the police “with a kind of impersonal authority, a sense of unseen, yet powerfully felt coercive force” (Van Leeuwen 2008:40). In the testimonies, and in part due to the generic constraints of a verbal testimony, the mineworkers are assigned – and assign themselves – a passive role in the events that took place. This is in direct contrast to the agentive and active role that the company constructs for itself in the CSR reports.

The issue of collectivity, signified by means of “we”, is significant. What is immediately evident from a close reading of the transcripts is that Magidiwana, Mtshamba and Nzuzza repeatedly and consistently draw on the term “workers” to refer to themselves and their colleagues. Extracts (24) and (25) above, as well as (26) to (28) below, illustrate this:

- (26) He made a plea to the workers, he said to us he would us please to go away, to go off the mountain because he believes that we were going to be killed. He pleaded with us, he pleaded with us very much that day. The workers said they did not come there because of him, because of Mathunjwa, they have not gathered there on behalf or on the request of any union, whichever one. They came there as workers, they asked Mr Mathunjwa to leave them (Mtshamba 2014a).
- (27) Chairperson, what was happening, after he had left the workers were singing, going up and then coming down again, and going down and so on, singing. I was on top of the koppie there and then I saw Lonmin busses bringing police, and also the Midbank busses and Quantums. What I saw was that some papers were being given to the police. The policeman would be given a paper. He would take it, run to the Nyala, and take a gun and then they started pulling the razor wire. It was at that time that the workers started walking downwards towards Nkaneng (Nzuzza 2014b).
- (28) People who spoke after Mr Mathunjwa spoke were the workers, my colleagues (Mtshamba 2014a).

The term “workers” is a form of *functionalisation*: it represents social actors in terms of what they do. This type of categorisation is performed repeatedly and consistently, even when processes of *identification* are used. In other words, such representations (“workers”, “a man I worked with”, “RDOs” and “general worker”) occur alongside representations that construct social actors in terms of *relational identification* (“father”, “friend”, “next-door neighbour”) and *physical identification* (“old”). To illustrate:

- (29) When my father left the mine I was still a general worker (Nzuzza 2014a).

- (30) I have a friend who’s an RDO, he’s my next-door-neighbour; he told me that Mr Da Costa agreed to give them 750 allowance. That’s how I heard about it (Mtshamba 2014b).
- (31) The owner of the place where I’m staying, Sir, together with another old man are both RDOs of Sotho-speaking. I heard them talking and they were saying there was no, nobody was going to work (Nzuza 2014a).
- (32) I supported very much the actions of the RDOs because those people work very hard (Magidiwana 2013a).

In the following extract from his testimony, Mtshamba also refers generally to the “workers” whom he saw “going up and down”, before referring more specifically to “a man I worked with known as Booi”:

- (33) The 15th, Chairperson, I saw workers going up and down, some going to look for water because the place where we were did not have water. I also, in the afternoon, left the place together with a man I worked with known as Booi. We went to the shops in the vicinity to go and look for something to eat. We returned back to the mountain. People were just walking freely and the police were just standing around there (Mtshamba 2014a).

Like Lonmin, Magidiwana, Mtshamba and Nzuza represent their co-workers through a process of *classification*, with reference to the major classification systems defined by society, which include race and gender (“man”, “black”, “white”). In extract (34) below, this representation is in direct contrast to Mtshamba’s representation of Joseph Mathunjwa, the president of AMCU, who is constructed through a process of *nomination* rather than *categorisation*, through the use of proper nouns and the honorific “Mr”.

- (34) The workers said they did not come there because of him, because of Mathunjwa, they have not gathered there on behalf or on the request of any union, whichever one. They came there as workers, they asked Mr Mathunjwa to leave them (Mtshamba 2014a).

It has already been established that identity is a relational phenomenon – identities are never independent, but acquire social meaning in relation to other identities and social actors (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:598; Wetherell 2010:16). In this regard, Magidiwana, Mtshamba and Nzuza frequently construct themselves and their immediate colleagues in relation to members of the trade unions and Lonmin. In the following extract, Magidiwana makes a clear differentiation between the “workers” and “the employer”; between “us” and “him”. Thus, although “the employer” is constructed through *indetermination*, a process that anonymises social actors, the masculine pronoun is used rather than an indefinite pronoun:

- (35) He said to us, “Workers, the situation is bad. The decision has already been made about you that you are going to be killed. Move away from the place where you are because the situation is not encouraging, not good.” The workers then responded by saying, “We are not moving from where we are without the employer coming, because what we want is money. Let him come with a

response. We're waiting for him to come and tell us when he's going to give us the money, and after he had said that we would then go back, go back to work. We are not fighting" (Magidiwana 2013b).

The issue of 'value' as it relates to class is a key feature of the testimonies. To illustrate:

- (36) We were told that we are useless, we're killing police who have done nothing wrong, that we are killing government people. They said if it was in some other country they would pour petrol on us and set us alight. They were talking, Chairperson, as though they were competing. One was saying "I shot him from this side," one was saying "I shot him from this side." Thereafter we were loaded onto these vehicles known as Hippos, the Nyalas (Mtshamba 2014a).

In the above extract, Mtshamba relays how referential terms such as "useless" had been used at the time of the strike to refer to those engaged in the strikes. Mtshamba later adopts this dehumanised position when stating that "we were loaded onto these vehicles", a form of *impersonalisation* through *objectification*.

#### 4. Conclusion

This research investigated the representation of social actors in two contrasting text types: the CSR reports of Lonmin and the testimonies of three mineworkers before the Marikana Commission of Inquiry. The selected texts were constructed around the topic of the 2012 Marikana strikes, which were conceptualised from the outset as a social practice involving particular social actors. Since the textual construction and representation of social actors is based on choice and is therefore always ideological, an analysis of the ways in which social actors are included in the texts assists in disclosing the dominant ideologies which give privilege to and "naturalise" certain representations over others. The selected extracts of each text represented particular social actors: those who work in the mines, members of the trade unions, Lonmin (as a "corporate citizen"), the company's CEO and its top management officials. The application of Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic framework to the data revealed that there are significant similarities in the representation of these social actors across these texts, highlighting a similar "way of seeing" amongst writers and speakers. Where there are differences, the textual constructions foreground the power dynamics that gave rise to the unrest. The paragraphs below highlight the relationship between the representation of textual participants and social reality.

In their CSR reports, Lonmin construct themselves as being a concerned, committed and moral corporate citizen, who is an active force in society. Their use of heteroglossic resources such as "believe" work to construct the company as being able to engage with other positions and viewpoints. However, corporate reports are marked by strong statements of fact and other monoglossic resources. This is also true of Lonmin's CSR reports, and this feature works to represent the company as assertive. Such self-representations may work to legitimate the company's existence and continued dominance in the South African platinum industry – particularly in light of the fact that CSR reports are promotional texts, circulated globally to investors interested in capitalising on companies that show an awareness of environmental and social issues.



Lonmin is also a participant in the verbal testimonies of Magidiwana, Mtshamba and Nzuza. In line with the company's representation of itself, those who testified present the company as an active and dynamic force. However, rather than sustaining the representation of Lonmin as a concerned, committed and moral corporate citizen, Mtshamba constructs Lonmin as unconcerned for the well-being of those that went on strike: "I think Lonmin should have tried to come and talk to the workers" (23). The mental process "I think" in conjunction with the verbs "should" and "tried" represents Mtshamba as a speaker who is conflicted about the issue at hand; he is still open to alternative views about how Lonmin should have acted during the time of the strike. However, extract (23) from Mtshamba's testimony (one of the few extracts to incorporate a direct mode of speech rather than reported speech) also revealed anger regarding racial inequality, emphasised in the shift from heteroglossia to monoglossia: "there is still segregation in the mines", "there is not a single white person who is an RDO", "there was not a single white person who was demonstrating there", "there is not a single person who is an RDO who is white".

The excerpts above also highlight the similarities in the representation of social actors across the reports and testimonies: lower-wage workers are presented largely in terms of their shared attributes – they are frequently assimilated into groups through processes of collectivisation ("workforce", "stakeholders", "HDSAs", "fatalities") and they are frequently categorised as members of a group through processes of functionalisation ("workers", "RDOs"). This is a significant similarity – it not only highlights the dialogical nature of the texts but, like other forms of intertextuality, it reveals aspects of the speaker's identity. Particulars such as interests, desires and even names are disregarded and suppressed by generic representations and those that categorise individuals as belonging to specific groups. The adoption of these generic representations by Magidiwana, Mtshamba and Nzuza goes some way in revealing the extent to which dominant corporate discourses have been adopted by other social actors and groups. The similarities between the representations also highlight the extent to which those who testified have adopted the categories frequently assigned to them by corporate actors.

In section 2.3, I highlighted the importance of concepts such as 'intertextuality', 'dialogue', 'difference' and 'hegemony' in contemporary neoliberal contexts, and it is this point to which I return. In the context of corporate dominance, CSR reports permit companies to construct themselves as willing to engage in dialogue. Yet this may mask the power that such institutions have to control not only the message, but the range of topics and the terms used to construct those engaged and represented in the dialogue. Bakhtin (1981:345) argues that negotiating a voice and consciousness for oneself is a long process that, when successful, results in a notable distinction "between one's own and another's discourse, between one's own and another's thought". The shared representational devices across the texts, all of which were published after the Marikana strikes, are viewed as emblematic of the *struggle* for individual voices and consciousness, rather than the achievement of these. By conducting a close and critical linguistic analysis of the texts, this paper highlights that the right to speak does not necessarily equal 'voice'. Rather, the right to speak can lead to the recirculation of powerful social discourses.

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