

An analysis of the linguistic realisation of agency in the narratives of students on an extended degree programme

By

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

In the last decade there has been a proliferation of literature detailing the difficulties faced by first-year students as they navigate the transition to university. The increased diversity of the student population has led to a growing need to develop ways to meet the educational needs of the larger number of students entering higher education (HE) contexts. A consistent theme that weaves through the literature is that of deficit in dealing with diversity and difference. The research often documents the experiences of the students and their routes to access and participation in HE.

Research conducted on foundation programmes, defined as the provisioning of modules, courses or other curricular elements to equip students with academic potential to successfully complete an HE qualification, has found that the students who do the programmes are conceptualised and constructed in deficit terms. The problem with the constructions are that they suggest the following issues: a difficulty on the students' part to actively participate in university culture, that they are lacking in relevant skills and that they are unable to succeed in HEIs. It is thus due to these implied issues that the HE sector has a major issue to address: there is only one mainstream language (Lawrence 2000:1), meaning that language, literacies, and cultures that are different to that of the mainstream (more often than not, English) represent a deficiency on the part of the students who are unfamiliar with the mainstream.

Within this deficit discourse, the students who are unable to master the mainstream discourses are labelled as “underprepared” and are often held accountable for not adopting the norms of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). However, with the number of first-generation students' arrival to university increasing, this mindset will pose new challenges for students and the institutions. A similar attitude is aimed at students who come from low socio-economic backgrounds as they pose a problem in HE, often referred to as being “not traditional”, and

adding to the notion that anything other than the mainstream will cause problems. In the interim, the most devastating effect of this deficit discourse is that difference is replaced with deficit. There is another aspect of the problem that remains absent from the literature: the students themselves. Adjacent to the issue of deficiency that surrounds the students is the lack of focus on their agency. Therefore, there is a call to research issues of agency amongst students. One method through which this can be done is narrative analysis. One definition of narrative analysis is that it is a form of linguistic analysis that takes an individual's personal experiences as the object of investigation.

By drawing on narrative theory, using William Labov's method of structural narrative analysis, as well as thematic analysis, the study attempts to bring forth the views of students on an extended degree programme (EDP). This analysis thus attempts to find out how students construct themselves, based on their lived experiences and reasoning for attending university. It also attempts to assess if their narratives align with dominant deficit discourses about foundation programmes and the students who are on the programmes.

By detailing the students' experiences prior to attending university and giving credence to those experiences, the analysis reveals that students' narratives can offer insight into the way they view and construct themselves and the university. This then links to the concept of agency, a concept that is almost absent within the discourses that surround foundation programmes. Their voices, which can be viewed as their agency, has no foothold within literature.

The research, through the analysis of students' narratives in terms of structure, themes and linguistic devices, reveals the students as active agents, who actively make their own choices and decisions.

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“All the effort in the world will not be worth if you’re not inspired.” Chuck Palahniuk

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and rationale

Higher education (HE) is in a state of transformation across the globe. International scholars attribute much of this transformation to processes of globalisation – economic, political and societal forces that cause the migration of people – as well as the internationalisation of universities, which have led to the formation of a multicultural and multilingual student body (Altbach & Knight 2007:3). According to Lawrence (2003:2), such transformative processes result in two shifts. The first shift, as mentioned above, entails widening participation in HE. The second shift includes the redefinition of the parameters of responsibility for the participation. That responsibility will most likely fall on policy makers and interested parties from government and HEIs to ensure that individuals can participate in HE on the same level and with the same amount of agency. In South Africa the transformation taking place within the HE sector focuses on both shifts, with most of the attention being placed on widening participation across socio-economic classes and ensuring that the inequalities created by the apartheid regime are now addressed. South African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have thus, in recent times, developed policies and mechanisms that aim to promote equal access to HEIs.

Foundational provision can be defined as the “provisioning of modules, courses or other curricular elements that are intended to equip students with academic foundations that will enable them to successfully complete an HE qualification” (Nkonki, Ntlabathi & Ncanywa 2014:57). Within the South African context, foundational provision was developed as a means to provide access to HE for students from previously racially divided and disadvantaged educational backgrounds (Slabbert & Friedrich-Nel 2015:46). The first interventions attempted primarily to address the needs of black minority students who were entering white institutions,

with a focus on issues of language proficiency, numeracy and study skills (McKenna 2012:51). The programmes are often aimed at the increase of participation of the abovementioned groups, who are viewed as formally underrepresented in HEIs (Lawrence 2003:2). The widening of access and participation through foundation programmes has resulted in greater diversity within the student body.

Fast-forward a few years and foundational provision is an initiative on behalf of both government and the HEIs to grant broader and equal access to HE in South Africa, stemming from the need to address inequality and equity issues in HE (Nkonki et al 2014:58), provide alternative access routes for students (Wood & Lithauer 2005:1002), and provide support to students with potential to succeed but are not adequately prepared for university studies (Pearce, Campbell, Craig, Le Roux, Nathoo & Vicatos 2015).

As stated previously, wider participation has meant a consistent increase in the diversity of the student body. However, a secondary issue has risen from this. Students who are entering HE are not adequately prepared for its demands. Therefore, foundational provision has the additional purpose of developing curricula that aims to assist in increasing students' literacy, numeracy and critical thinking skills.

The idea of social justice could be linked here. The concept of social justice has “proliferated in education in recent years and is an umbrella term encompassing a large range of practices and perspectives” (Agarwal et al in Hlalele & Alexander 2012:487). It has become clear that students in some sectors of the education system experience negative and inequitable treatment. Social justice issues within HE, alongside a focus on access and widening participation, have become of increasing importance globally and nationally (Wilson-Strydom 2015:144). While the scope of social justice is extensive, at a basic level it centres on the application of justice on a social scale, seeking to ensure that everyone has equal rights and opportunities.

One of the most important challenges regarding foundation programmes is the balance needed to be given in relation to widening access and creating opportunities for success. Students originate from a diverse range of social and cultural backgrounds, portraying very different life experiences, education opportunities, expectations, needs and academic potential. While the need to expand access is one of great success, it needs to be balanced with appropriate opportunities and choices that will support selected students as well as guarantee their success in HE (Hlalele & Alexander 2012:491).

Much of the literature on foundational provision recounts investigations of how academic skills can be successfully developed in the foundation provision classroom (see for example Wood & Lithauer 2005; Parkinson, Jackson, Kirkwood & Padayachee 2008; Hlalele & Alexander 2011; Pearce et al 2015; Potgieter, Harding, Kritzinger, Sumo & Engelbrecht 2015). However, in a 2015 special edition of the *South African Journal of Higher Education*, authors draw attention to student experiences of such programmes and highlight issues of stigmatisation, social justice and agency within South African HEIs (see for example Ellery & Baxen 2015; Potgieter et al 2015; McGhie & du Preez 2015). The aforementioned research has found that students on foundation programmes are often conceptualised and constructed in deficit terms, and that this conceptualisation has become the dominant generalisation for all foundational provision students. Here, 'deficit' refers to a lack or impairment in a functional capacity (Merriam-Webster 2016).

This deficit construct may mask secondary constructions in which students are not seen as deficit, and that acknowledge a student's individual identity and capacity to overcome obstacles or to act with agency; that is, the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own choices.

Most important for this study is the idea that these dominant constructions about foundation programme students may prevent students from fully engaging in HE or even prevent them

from obtaining desired skills and qualifications. The most devastating brand of this type of thinking emerges when difference is mistaken for deficit. It is especially striking when students' lower SES and disadvantage – that is the fact that they are not white, middle-income and English – are put forward as the reasons behind their lack of achievement (Gorski 2010:1). Considering the findings of the literature review on foundational provision and the deficit discourse around foundational provision, as well Ellery and Baxen's (2015) call for further research highlighting issues of agency amongst students, this research project presents an analysis of written narrative tasks collected from first-year students on the Extended Degree Programme (EDP) – a form of foundational provision offered at HEIs –from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University. The exact aims and objectives of this project are presented below.

1.2 Research aims and questions

Based on the information given above on foundational provision and the deficit construction of students who are placed on these programmes, the aim of this study is to analyse the written narratives of students on a foundation programme at Stellenbosch University. The analysis will be conducted with the aim of identifying the structural components of the narratives, the themes that are recurrent throughout the narratives as well as the linguistic devices that feature within students' narratives. Ultimately, the research aims to investigate whether these features work to construct the students as active agents in terms of their choices and decisions, or if they appear as passive agents in a less agentive role.

Reflecting on the narratives in this way can offer insight into the lived experiences of the students and provide a platform for EDP students to be heard since their voices are an important part of the academic community, despite the fact that they are often not incorporated into texts and discourses about foundational provision as has been shown by previous research (Bernard

2015:248). The analysis will draw on methods of narrative analysis, as well as the notion of ‘agency’ in order to answer the following questions:

1. How do students construct themselves and others in their narratives about their lives and reasons for coming to university?
2. In what ways are these student narratives similar to or different from dominant deficit discourses about foundation programmes and the students on these programmes?

1.3 Methodological Approach: Narrative Analysis

The study employs a qualitative approach to analysing written narratives. Narrative analysis is a form of applied linguistic analysis that takes the story told by an individual as the object of investigation. It can also be described as a technique that seeks to “interpret the ways in which people perceive reality, make sense of their worlds, and perform social actions” (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010:5). However, an endeavour to propose a conclusive definition is problematic as there is no single narrative analytical method. Instead, there is a multitude of ways researchers engage with the narrative elements of collected data. This study incorporates both structural and thematic approaches to narrative analysis, and it includes a focus on pertinent linguistic devices within the narratives.

Texts are considered ‘narrative’ on the basis of their sequence and consequence. Events are selected, ordered, linked and evaluated as meaningful for a storyteller’s audience. The storyteller then interprets the world and experiences in it; sometimes they create moral tales of how the world should be. Thus, narratives represent storied manners of knowing and communicating (Riessman 2005:705). Stories are considered effective as a linguistic form through which lived experiences can be portrayed in a specific time sequence.

Narrative is inherently multidisciplinary, found within the fields of psychology, sociology, linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, amongst others. Due to this diversity, narrative research

in sociolinguistics and the abovementioned disciplines tend to employ a variety of data (this can include interviews, surveys, questionnaires, autobiographical and biographical writings) as well as a multitude of methodologies, such as autoethnography, ethnography, critical discourse analysis and conversation analysis, to name a few.

There have been an abundance of studies that focus on clinical elicitation techniques (see Chapter 3 for examples from Anderson, Goldin, Kurita & Cross 2004; Smith & Sparkes 2009; Smith & Sparkes 2004) and on narratives that consistently deal with personal experiences or past events (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008:377). The stories are often employed as heuristics for the inquiry into storytellers' representations of past events and how they make sense of themselves in light of these events. In short, the stories are taken as somewhat unmediated and as a transparent representation of the storytellers' subjective experience. From there, these narratives are interpreted as being able to provide key insights into the writer's and speaker's own identities (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008:377). More information on the methodology used will be given in Chapter 4.

1.4 Chapter Overview

The remainder of this chapter will provide an overview of key terms that are relevant to this study. Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the literature about foundational provision in South Africa as well as the literature that addresses dominant discourses about academic development and foundational provision in South Africa.

Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the literature on narrative analysis, with special attention given to the construction of a narrative, the types of narratives that exist and examples of how narrative analysis can be used across disciplines.

Chapter 4 will focus on the research methodology used in this study collecting and interpreting the data, the research aims and questions.

Chapter 5 will discuss the analysis of the selected narratives. The analysis will consist of a structural analysis, a thematic analysis – to examine the themes prevalent across the student narratives – as well as linguistic analysis. The analysis is linked to the primary aim of the research, which is to see how the participants construct themselves and others in their lives. The analysis will also attempt to answer the secondary research question by viewing the students' constructions and if their views of their selves are in line with the dominant view of foundation students: as lacking in skills and the ability to succeed.

Chapter 6 will bring together the findings of the analysis and interpret what the data has found. It will show whether the research aims, objectives and questions have been met and answered. It will also look at the limitations of the project and how it has affected the entirety of the project.

1.5 Key Terms

Below is an overview of the core concepts that feature in the study.

Agency: the capability of individual human beings to make choices and act on these choices in a way that makes a difference in their lives (Martin 2004:135).

Articulation gap: a mismatch or discontinuity between the learning requirements of higher education programmes and the actual knowledge and competencies of first-time entering students

Deficit: a lack or impairment in a functional capacity

Discourse: There is not a simplified definition for discourse. However, the following can be used as a basis:

- Discourse both constructs and represents the social world (social practices, processes and products). It can relate to language use, social identities, relationships and categories.
- Gee (1999:17) gives the following definition: “a discourse is an association of socially acceptable ways of using language, other symbolic expressions of thinking, feeling and acting that can be used to identify one as a member of a socially meaningful group.”

Extended Degree Programme (EDP): A form of foundational provision (see next term)

Foundational provision or foundation programmes: provisioning of modules, courses or other curricular elements to equip students with academic potential to successfully complete an HE qualification

Narrative analysis: a form of applied linguistic analysis that takes the story of an individual as the object of investigation; a technique that attempts to “interpret the ways in which people perceive reality, make sense of their worlds, and perform social actions” (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010:5)

Social justice: the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society

Voice: within the context of the study, ‘voice’ relates to the students’ own experiences

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the literature related to the research project. It situates extended degree programmes (EDPs) as one form of foundational provision in South Africa, and as a mechanism designed to widen participation in HEIs that have previously been exclusive. The chapter aims to provide an overview of the dominant constructions – often deficit – of foundation programmes. The study aims to contribute to a lack of existing foundational provision research by focusing on the gap – no study has focused on the students’ constructions of themselves, their experiences prior to attending university or in acknowledging these constructions and experience as agency. This chapter will give an overview of foundational provision, the EDP at Stellenbosch University as well as the deficit discourses that surround students on foundational provision. This will be followed by an overview of recent foundational research that forayed into the unknown territory of student agency. The research includes Case (2015), Marshall and Case (2010), Pym and Kapp (2013), and Ellery and Baxen (2015), whose study is particularly important for the present study as it attempts to replicate it.

2.2 Foundational Provision

In developing countries, a higher education is out of reach for most; it is an achievement only presented to exclusive groups within society. A higher education implies that an individual will receive substantial individual benefits in terms of personal development, social status, career opportunities and lifetime earnings (Bitzer 2010:301). Across the world HE traditionally accommodated an exclusive group of individuals, but since the second half of the 20th century, the face of HE has changed, and it has generally become more multicultural and multilingual. Case, Marshall and Grayson (2013:1) believe that due to this change in the student body, most

countries aim to have most of their youth completing HE and obtaining a higher qualification. This is largely because HE has the capacity to be transformative; for both individuals and for communities. However, the extent to which transformation will take place depends on many factors, including those related to academic interventions, student engagement, financial support and socio-psychological support (Vignoles & Murray 2016:1–2). Worldwide, there has been a massive growth in terms of those who have access to HE by widening participation to all groups. However, not all groups are equally represented in HE, especially those who come from lower socio-economic groups (Bitzer 2010:302). These students are viewed as lacking certain skills needed for HE, and foundational provision has been presented as the mechanism through which to communicate these skills to them. Thus, foundational provision was reduced to a remedial attempt at teaching, where only generic skills were taught, instead of calling on the learning and teaching approaches that would allow these students to understand and master the university's ways of constructing knowledge (McKenna 2012:51).

2.2.1 The EDP at Stellenbosch University (Arts and Social Sciences Faculty)

Most students, when applying to a university of their choice, do not always think of the possibility that they might not be able to apply for their programme of choice or that they might not meet all the necessary requirements for said programme choice. When applying to study at Stellenbosch University, all potential students must meet the minimum university entry requirements. However, there are faculty-specific requirements to be met as well. These depend on the faculty in which the programme is in. Where students meet the university requirements but not the faculty-specific requirements, they may be considered for the EDP. The following faculties at Stellenbosch University offer an extended programme: Arts and Social Sciences, Theology, Medicine, Engineering and Economics and Management Sciences, with each faculty having their own EDP requirements. Acceptance into the EDP depends on those requirements. The research project was conducted within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, where the

EDP was instituted in 2008. Thus, it has been running for the past 10 years. Acceptance, as stated above, is depended on the faculty's specific requirements. Below is the Arts and Social Sciences EDP overview and requirements:

- An Extended Degrees Programme entails that:
 - The first academic year is extended across two years;
 - You are given additional academic support; and
 - You follow specific compulsory modules that ensure you are better prepared for your graduate studies.
- If you have obtained an average final mark of 60% to 64.9% for the National Senior Certificate (NSC) (excluding Life Orientation), you must register for the Extended Degree Programme. Admission to the EDP is considered discretionarily. Your National Benchmark Test (NBT) results, socio-economic status and the availability of places are considered during admission.
- The EDP is not an option for the following degree programmes within the Arts and Social Sciences Faculty:
 - BA (Drama and Theatre Studies), BA (Music), BMus, BA in Visual Arts, BA in Political, Philosophical and Economic Studies (PPE), BA (Law); and BA (Sport Science).

There are a few models of foundational provision in HEIs in South Africa, each reflecting a specific understanding of student learning as well as the university's practices of knowledge construction (McKenna 2012:51). Foundation provision allows for more time, more teaching, learning and assessment, with the focus on basic concepts, content and learning (Nkonki et al 2014:57). The EDP in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences is based on the integration model. This model includes discipline-specific, credit-bearing modules that are introduced into the curriculum across several years. These modules' intention is to not only

induct students into the ways of their disciplines but to influence the established curriculum and impact on everything from content to assessment (McKenna 2012:54).

2.2.2 The Deficit Construction of Foundation Programme Students

Within the debate around foundational provision, a deficit discourse is used to describe the students who are placed in these programmes. They are almost always represented as having a deficiency or deficit, lacking relevant skills and having an inability to succeed within HEIs. Bernard (2015:248) examined South African media texts and noted that these texts highlight only a deficit construction of students who are accepted into foundation programmes. In other literature, notably from the United States of America (USA), this trend is also obvious (see Gorski 2010 and Shapiro 2014). It is important to note that these representations do not originate from the students themselves as their voices are often absent from textual representations of foundational provision. This study thus serves as a counter to the deficit discourse, in that students' voices become heard through the narratives that are collected and analysed. The deficit construction of foundational provision students has been attributed to long-held expectations about the nature, characteristics and abilities of the classic university student. It alludes to tensions inherent in the disparity between lecturers' perceptions of the traditional "elite" student, where the abilities of the "actual" student remain unexamined (Lawrence 2003:2). This mindset has implications for both the HE sector and the student who wishes to enter it. One of these implications is the recognition that HEIs are fundamentally conservative and unwilling to examine their policies and attitudes as a step towards initiating changes that could assist students in achieving success in HE (Lawrence 2003:2). From the perspective of this mindset, students who fail to master the mainstream academic discourses are branded as "underprepared" and essentially blamed for not adopting the norms of the HEI. However, the number of first-generation students that are being admitted to university is increasing and this poses a range of new challenges for both the students and the institutions

(Pym 2013:354). For students, one challenge that occurs frequently, and one that they are not always aware of, is the labelling of students as lacking or underprepared. And for institutions, they have the challenge of ensuring that the initiatives are adequate and responsive to the needs of the students. For many of these students, HE is a way out of their impoverished homes, placing arduous burdens on them to not only better themselves but to shift their families' circumstances.

First-generational students are diverse in terms of age and education, class, language and cultural backgrounds and are often from lower socioeconomic groups. For example, some might use English as a second language and in other cases, many may not yet have acquired the necessary literacy, numeracy and academic skills crucial for HE success (Smit 2012:370). Thus, students are often referred to in terms of what they are not: "not traditional, not prepared, not in a position of privilege or advantage" (Smit 2012:370). They are associated with low entrance scores, dwindling standards, academic struggle and failure. In addition, the media and existing research proposes that these challenges and failures are the fault of the students. Their backgrounds are then used to strengthen the deficit construction. Ford and Grantham (2003:217) found that the deficit construction has also been informed by educators who hold a deficit perspective of diverse students. If educators hold adverse, stereotypical and counterproductive assumptions about culturally diverse students, this may cause them to lower their expectations of such students accordingly. Few teachers have exposure to a multicultural educational experience, curriculum and instruction within urban settings (Ford & Grantham 2003:217). Thus, they misconstrue these cultural differences and perceive them as deficit. Pym & Kapp (2013:273), speaking from a local perspective, highlight that the psychological and social aspects of the transition from high school to university have previously been ignored in mainstream literature and ignores the challenges faced by these students. Instead, strong emphasis is placed on students' need to conform to HE with a "cultural literacy" model,

pushing upon them middle-class, white, Anglicised norms and values. The pressure to conform has encouraged passivity and dependence among students and stripped them of the agency that had empowered them to gain access to HE in the first place; an agency they displayed despite their home and school circumstances (Pym & Kapp 2013:273).

2.2.3 Recent Studies on Foundational Provision and Student Agency

In more recent years there has been an increase in literature on foundational provision. However, there is still a missing voice – taken as students’ agency in this study – in literature about foundational programmes. Research on foundational provision has focused on various aspects: curriculum reform (Shay, Wolff & Clarence-Fincham 2016), quality assurance of foundational provision, assessment of the measures that have been put in place (Akoojee & Nkomo 2007), and possible improvements of foundation programmes (Mckenna 2012). Even research that has been done on foundational provision at Stellenbosch University does not consider the students themselves. Louw, Bawoodien, Crous and Young (2013) have done a progress evaluation of the programmes themselves, while Julius (2017) has focused on discovering students’ perceptions of how well the foundation programmes have worked for them, whereas Louw and De Villiers (2015) focused on teaching first aid to high schools; the students being students on the EDP. None of these studies focus on the students’ agency and the construction of self or how either influences students’ choice to attend university. What this has caused is a gap in the literature that this study attempts to address by focusing on the students and their stories.

Below is a summary of research that present a significant, alternative view of these students, focusing on empowerment rather than deficiency. This includes work by Case (2015), Marshall and Case (2010), Pym and Kapp (2013), as well as Ellery and Baxen (2015).

2.2.3.1 Case (2015) & Marshall & Case (2010)

Case (2015) proposed a realist approach to student learning with the applicability of the approach established through an empirical study of engineering students at a South African HEI. Narrative analysis was used as the analytical tool to examine each narrative individually in order to understand the interrelations between the different features of the narratives (Case 2015:841). The study endeavoured to build upon proposed directions for student learning research. In researching student learning in HE, programmes need to address not only the learner and the problems they might experience in HE, but it must be able to locate the student in the broader context. The possibilities for student learning are, therefore, influenced by the context of HE.

This study validated that these possibilities are fairly constrained with the context of a typical engineering programme at university (Case 2015:849). Thus, the author argued for a vision of a university programme that allowed for the growth of student agency. The programme should, therefore, not only select the students who have the potential for success at university level, but it should have the ability to take on the role of allowing students to develop their skills and become the required kind of professionals (Case 2015:850).

In Marshall and Case (2010), the article explored the use of narrative analysis as a methodology for student learning research. The primary focus of this article was a narrative drawn from a study in which a series of individual interviews was conducted with a class of senior engineering students. It focused on students' personal and family backgrounds, and their overall experience of coming to university to study chemical engineering. The interview (and narrative) selected – the interview conducted with Mandla (not his real name) formed the focus – emerged as a “typical” case: it represented a rich case of student success against the background of disadvantage (Marshall & Case 2010:491). From his opening words, it was clear that Mandla came from what euphemistically could be called a disadvantaged background. But

Mandla was a young man with a well-developed awareness of his personal narrative and was very willing to tell his story (Marshall & Case 2010:491).

From his narrative, it can be said that Mandla's narrative represents an "ideal" of what HE can offer students from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, his resilience raises many questions about the commonly-held beliefs about what it means to be disadvantaged within the HE context. His experiences enabled him to persevere, provided him with resources to excel in HE; resources he also mobilised for attaining personal growth and academic success (Marshall & Case 2010:495).

In that same vein, students' construction of their identity could be beneficial for mobilising these resources (Marshall & Case 2010:491). This finding recognises the gap in the literature; not enough emphasis is placed on students and their agency, and this links to what the current research project is attempting to discover: how do students construct themselves in their narratives regarding their lives and reasons for coming to university?

2.2.3.2 Pym & Kapp (2013)

Pym and Kapp (2013) focused on a successful foundation programme. They consider academic development in the Commerce faculty at the University of Cape Town (UCT). They attributed the success of the programme to the fact that the programme had shifted its focus away from deficit models that focus on assimilating students into the university culture to a collaborative enterprise that engages the students' resources; what they bring with them (Pym and Kapp 2013:282).

The changes to the current programme have been gradual and are "the result of ongoing critical review and research on the challenges faced by students" (Pym & Kapp 2013:279). The programme needed to be transparent about its need to offer appropriate academic structures for students considered to be academically disadvantaged and underprepared. And, such provision

had to find ways of connecting to the students' home identities while catering for individual learning needs and strengths to allow students to invest in their learning and find a sense of belonging within the university (Pym & Kapp 2013:274). The data for their research was collected over a five-year period (2005–2010) and focused on the students that entered into the foundation programme. It consisted of 720 questionnaires, student–evaluations and 31 individual semi-structured interviews of first-year students. The authors illustrate how students' home discourses influenced their negotiations of institutional discourses and how the Commerce Foundational Programme attempted to address students' academic needs, while fostering their agency.

The authors argued that the improved model needed to be flexible and facilitators needed to be made aware of how the status of the programme is promoted in the faculty. Some form of academic and psychological support was needed and had to be provided throughout the entirety of the degree. Furthermore, the admission process was changed to allow a variety of access points to the programme, alongside opportunities for students to be able to apply for the programme rather than being forced into the programme (Pym & Kapp 2013:279). The coordinators and administrators are still exploring new ways to respond positively to students' realities and emphasise a particular knowledge and understanding of the students that enter the programme (Pym & Kapp 2013:280).

2.2.3.3 Ellery & Baxen (2015)

As is evident in this chapter, there is little research that has been conducted on foundation programmes that focuses on the agency of students rather than their deficiencies. Research by Ellery & Baxen (2015) provides one other example apart from those highlighted above. In their research, they claim that student agency needs a central position within foundation programmes and their structure.

The Science Extended Degree Programme (SEDP) at Rhodes University offered the context for Ellery & Baxen's research. As mentioned before, students that are placed in these courses are often viewed from a deficit mindset by both educators and policymakers. Ellery and Baxen's (2015:93) research argues that in such programmes, however, the students are seen only as passive and their agential powers are neither acknowledged nor considered. While there have been many accounts of foundation programmes set up within various HEIs around the country, many of them have been predicated upon this discourse of student deficit. Ellery and Baxen (2015) employed Archer's (2003) social realist ontology as a means to examine, understand and capitalise on the agency of students. Archer (2003, 2007), in her longstanding project of hypothesising agency, examines the relations between "the agent and their reflexive deliberation" (Ellery & Baxen 2015: 94). Using Archer's (2003) framework, which examines social and contextual circumstances and how it is represented through the agent, Ellery and Baxen's (2015) research endeavours to understand the agential journey of one student in the SEDP.

The study is based on the reflective responses of one student and is thus an "empirical, in-depth, in-context investigation" (Ellery & Baxen 2015:97). The study forms part of a larger study in which 29 students from the SEDP class responded to a questionnaire. They were asked to recount two or more events that played a major role in their lives before arriving at university, as well as to mention two or more significant persons in their lives and elaborate on their relationships with these persons. Based on the responses, one student was asked to do an in-depth interview, which then informed a greater understanding of his family, community and schooling, his perceptions and his own understanding of his extraordinary journey to Rhodes University. Ellery and Baxen (2015) employed Archer's (2003) three-stage model (see Archer 2003 for full details on her model) to examine the facilitation between the student's objective circumstances and his subjective experiences, including "his objective structural and cultural

circumstances ... his concerns that arise out of his subject responses ... and his actions based on his ultimate project ...” (Ellery & Baxen 2015:97). Archer’s (2003) reflexives were then used to understand and explain the student’s actions.

In Archer’s own research, the agent is central in all aspects. As with the students’ experiences and stories, it is easy to show that many have gone to astonishing lengths to follow a path they planned out for themselves, regardless of circumstances (Ellery & Baxen 2015:104). It is because of those very circumstances that they are able to push through and struggle through to achieve a better life for and better grasp of themselves and what they want. Their very actions and agency exhibit the problems with maintaining a student deficit discourse, in which students remain seen as deficit, irrespective of whether they achieve top marks. The very notion of being accepted in a programme such as the SEDP shows this presumption of students as deficit due to their rejection from the mainstream.

There have been calls for approaches that focus on students’ strengths that consider their agential resources and do not see them as deficient within the dominant norms of university life. There is an appeal for awareness of challenges that students have faced and the hardships they have overcome. The need also exists to view these past experiences as valuable resources for achieving success in HE. The capacity and determination to overcome their often dysfunctional and impoverished structural, social, cultural and economic obstacles to attain entry and be successful is remarkable (Ellery & Baxen 2015:92). Therefore, a well-constructed and all-inclusive foundational programme will achieve its core purpose of helping students, who otherwise would not have been accepted in HE, succeed in their academic courses and life.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1.Introduction

The previous chapter provided an overview on literature regarding foundational provision, and, foundational provision in South Africa. The following chapter focuses on the conceptual framework for the study, situating it within narrative analysis – including the following concepts; agency and identity, as well as a brief overview of sociolinguistics – within as a field.

3.2.What is Narrative?

Telling stories is a fundamental human activity. It is a means by which we represent ourselves to others as well as make sense of our lives. Our experiences are almost always communicated in narrative form: “when a person notes something of their experience, either to themselves or to others, they do so not by the mere recording of experience over time, but in storied form” (Clandinin & Connelly 1998: 154).

The complexity of narrative is found in what can be viewed as the simple convergence between the research *on* narratives – this is research where the stories are the object of the study – and research *with* narratives – this is where the actual narratives are used as analysing tools to explore something else (Bamberg 2012: 85). The *something else* usually refers to aspects of the storyteller’s memory and experiences. It is perfectly rational to collect narratives of individuals’ experiences and archive them in textual, audio or video format to be accessible for those interested in them.

Over the past four decades the study of narrative has expanded to raise a host of thought-provoking questions in a variety of fields, including development psychology, folklore, sociology to name a few. To say that narrative remains vague, challenged and unclassified as a concept is no controversy as the term is used in a variety of ways. Narrative resists straightforward and agree-upon definitions and conceptualisation, with its student tending to

be a minefield of multiple and at times, competing viewpoints in a wide array of humanities and social sciences fields (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2015:1). The study of narrative extends over a broad range of text types as well. These include novels, novellas, short stories, epics (both poetic and prose), movies, myths, interviews, oral autobiographies, chronicles, histories, comic strips, graphic novels and a multitude of visual media that are available (Labov 2011: 546). According to Labov (2011: 546), these text types draw upon the “fundamental human capacity to transfer experience from one person to another through oral narratives of personal experiences.” On a more abstract level, narrative is seen as a way of making sense of the world, equating it, at times, with experiences, history and life. Simply put, according to Georgakopoulou & Goutsos (2000: 64-68, cited in Georgakopoulou 2006), though, narrative could be seen as a specific kind of discourse with conventionalised textual features.

The study of narrative needs to pay more attention to the local level of interaction. By understanding what participants do with their narratives within their worlds and how they position themselves alongside each other in the process is a good idea for capturing the why and how their worlds work (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2015:3). Narratives are shaped by their contexts, but they can also create new contexts through highlighting fresh understanding of the world.

3.3.Features of Narrative

An attempt to offer a conclusive definition of ‘narrative analysis’ is problematic. This is because there is no single analytical method for narratives. Instead, there is a multitude of ways researchers can engage with the narrative dimensions of the collected data. Thus, it should be thought of in the plural, as narrative analyses, and not in the singular, as narrative analysis.

Narrative analysis, as an umbrella term, is a method that takes the story of the narrator “rather than simply accounts, reports, chronicles or a few brief words” (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes

2010: 5) as its object of investigation. Thus, narrative analysis refers to a family of methods for interpreting text (oral, written and visual) that have a common form, often that of a beginning, a middle, and an end. It can also be seen as a technique seeking to “interpret the ways in which people perceive reality, make sense of their worlds, and perform social actions” (Phoenix, Smith & Sparkes 2010: 5). The purpose then is to see how individuals in various settings impose order on the flow of experience and how they make sense of their interpretations.

In the human sciences, narrative analysis refers to a group of approaches designed to analyse an assortment of texts, whose commonality lies in the form. The diverse texts are made ‘narrative’ due to sequence and the causality between events. Events are selected, ordered, linked and evaluated as meaningful for a storyteller’s audience. Storytellers then interpret the world and their experiences in it; sometimes they create moral tales of how the world should be. Thus, narratives signify storied manners of knowing and communicating (Riessman 2005: 705).

3.3.1. Approaches to Narratives

3.3.1.1. Narrative as text type

Narrative as a text type involves commitment to straightforward criteria for defining what narratives are. As stated before, it is common across all fields that utilise narrative, it is a difficult concept to define. Narrative as a text type couples their criteria with a belief in the linguistic aspects a narrative as the key to those criteria. Thus, their viewpoint on narrative is as follows: narrative is a structure activity with easily identifiable units for analysis (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012:1-2). With strict guidelines on defining narratives, narratives are viewed as having textual properties that are applicable across all contexts and forces the analyst to uncover them and discover what could be culture-specific.

3.3.1.2. Narratology and the Issue of defining a story

Narratology refers to the study of narratives as a genre, with the aim of describing the constant variables and combinations that are characteristic of narrative. The focus is on the story as a text-type that can be distinguished from other genres (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012:1-2).

3.3.1.3. Narrative and Cognition

Analysing narrative as a cognitive activity is the main aim for this approach to narrative. An objective is to discover how people understand and remember stories as well as how which criteria they apply to others' stories and their stories' well-formedness (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2012:3).

3.3.1.4. Narrative as Method

The use of narrative methods and analysis within all fields of the social sciences started gaining momentum in the 1980s with narrative-based studies blossoming within sociology, history, psychology and anthropology. *Narrative as method* implies an approach to “view individuals within their social environments as actively conferring meaning onto objects ... including others and themselves” (Bamberg 2012: 87–88). The manner in which this happens – be it in everyday situations, interviews or surveys – is subjective as well as subject to interpretation.

3.3.2. Types of Narratives

There are also types of analysis that influence the approach used. One type is structural analysis, which will be explained in more depth below in a section dedicated to William Labov.

Another type is thematic analysis. In a thematic analysis of a narrative, the emphasis is placed on the content of a text. Here, the focus is on ‘what’ is said more than ‘how’ it said, the ‘told’ instead of the ‘telling’. Underpinning this approach is often an unacknowledged philosophical understanding of language: “language is a direct and unambiguous route to meaning” (Riessman 2005: 706). Thematic analysis is utilised for several cases. This can include finding

common thematic elements across participants and the events reported. As interest lies in the content, analysts infer what is said, focusing on the meaning that any competent user of the language would find in a story (Riessman 2005: 706).

Although diverse in its endeavours, narrative in sociolinguistics and other disciplines tend to employ specific kinds of data and methodology. These, in turn, produce a specific analytic vocabulary. Starting with Labov & Waletzky's (1967) influential model, there have been an abundance of studies that have focused on narratives as clinical elicitation techniques (see Anderson, Goldin, Kurita & Cross 2008 & Smith & Sparkes 2009 below as examples) (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008: 377). The clinical stories are often employed as heuristics for the inquiry into storytellers' representations of past events and how they make sense of themselves in light of these past events. In short, the stories people tell are often taken as somewhat unmediated and as a transparent representation of the storytellers' subjective experience.

3.4. William Labov

One of the most prominent figures in narrative theory, William Labov, is known across the human and social sciences for his work on narratives of personal experiences. Labov proposed an approach to personal experiences that was "both formal, in that it employed clause-by-clause linguistic analysis to describe the 'invariant structural units' of personal experience narrative, and functional, in that these units were described in reference to what personal experience narratives must accomplish if they are to seem 'normal'" (Johnstone 2016: 543). Here, Labov seems to view everyday language as 'normal' narratives that individuals take part in. Labov's work was quickly adopted into discourse analysis and sociolinguistics as it resonated with discourse analysts and sociolinguists who saw narratives as a core manner in which humans made sense of their world. Of particular interest to them was the creation of the self and social identity within discourse (Johnstone 2016:548).

For Labov, importance is placed on the telling, the way a story is told. Although thematic content does not slip away (see section 3.4.3 below), the focus remains on form – how a storyteller, through a selection of precise narrative devices, makes a story credible. Unlike the thematic approach, “language is treated seriously – an object for close investigation – over and beyond its referential content” (Riessman 2005: 706). The structural approach examines the function of a clause in the whole narrative and the communicative work it achieves. Structural approaches require the examination of syntactic and prosodic features of talk. That is why they are not suitable for large data sets but can be useful in comprehensive case studies and in comparing several narrative accounts (Riessman 2005: 707).

According to Labov (2006: 37), a narrative commences when a person is prompted to tell others about something. At times, the narrative is encouraged by external stimuli (what happened?), sometimes by internal stimuli (I’ve got to tell you what happened). When that something is an event – something that happened – the speaker will indicate to their audience that a narrative is about to begin. If the something is a state of being (I’m tired) or the location of an entity (Dad is home), this is, in turn, a simple report requiring no further turn of talk (Labov 2006: 37). The following is a condensed version of the construction of a narrative as set out by Labov & Waletzky (1967) as cited in Labov (2001: 65):

The abstract is the insertion of the narrative into the framework of conversational turn taking. It usually signals the beginning of the narrative. In *the orientation*, the speaker ensures that the audience is aware of the time, places, actors and activity within the narrative.

The next segment, the *complicating action*, is organised through temporal juncture. The concept of ‘temporal juncture’ articulates the difference between narrative and other methods of reporting the past. It refers to the before-and-after held between two independent clauses (Labov 2006: 37). The *complicating action* is the barebone structure of a narrative (Labov 2006: 37). From the *complicating action* onwards, “we begin with the understanding that a

narrative is ‘about something’ (Labov 2006: 37-38). The *complicating action* is the event order or the plot of the narrative and this usually deals with a crisis and/or turning point.

The *evaluation* segment of the narrative refers to the segment of the narrative where actions are evaluated by a comparison of the real and potential events. *Evaluation* takes place when the narrator steps back from the events he is telling and comment on meaning and communicate emotion. This usually takes place through irrealis predicates. The *resolution* recapitulates the final key event of the narrative, the outcome of the plot, and, finally, the *coda* concludes the narrative and returns the time frame and the audience to the present (Riessman 2005: 707).

In most cases any information that gives insight to the nature of the reported events is in the narrative itself: no independent evidence is available. At first glance, it might appear that the original events cannot be recovered. In other words, the narrative is considered as an entity and is detached from the real world. Nevertheless, there is good reasoning for effort to be made for reconstructing the original events from the narrative evidence (Labov 2001: 64).

Suggestions about the original events will lead to greater understanding on how narrators transform reality when reporting to others. By retracing these transformations, more is revealed about “the character of the narrator, the norms that govern the assignment of praise or blame and, in more serious cases, the narrator’s complicity in the events themselves” (Labov 2001: 64). A useful place to start is with the statement that narrators do not lie. Though incorrect, narrators often do lie and in ways that cannot be detected easily. The transformation of events is often incomplete. Linguistic devices used by narrators to affect the motivation, praise, blame and culpability within their audiences’ point of view will often change the semantic interpretation of the original events. In doing so, it will leave hints of the original events and this allows the analyst to reconstruct the narrative in its original form. This is largely true of the simplest and most common transformation: the omission of one or more events in the series (Labov 2001: 64).

3.5. Analysis of Narrative in this Study

The following section will give an overview on how the narratives within the current study will be analysed, based on what has been found while the analysis was being conducted. One of the most important discoveries, and one that was not part of the research aims and questions, was the concept of agency, and the way in which students have constructed their identities and their selves. Below is an overview of sociolinguistics, narrative analysis within sociolinguistics, and identity and how agency is manifested in the students' narratives through their identity construction.

3.5.1. Sociolinguistics

During the 1960s and 1970s, researchers from a range of theoretical and methodological viewpoints within language, culture and society came together to create a field that would place language at the centre of social and cultural life (Bucholtz & Hall 2008:401). What came about was a number of approaches to language, viewed as a sociocultural singularity – including variationist and interactional sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication, symbolic interactionism and the sociology of language – leading to a “rich interdisciplinary investigation of language, culture and society” (Bucholtz & Hall 2008: 401). It was during this era of re-innovation that the label “sociolinguistics” came to be used as an umbrella term for these and other disparate areas of research into language, culture and society.

Sociolinguistic research has thus now begun to concentrate on the relationship between language and social identity and this connection has been given much attention within the study of narratives of personal experiences (Vasquez 2007: 653). It has found, so far, that within telling one's experiences, there are many functions that an individual can use to express or construct their identity (Vasquez 2007: 657). Alongside this aim, we study language and society in order to find out as much as we can about what language is.

As stated above, sociolinguistics came about as an overarching term for an array of approaches to language, culture and society. There had been a substantial increase in sociolinguistic research that studied ‘identity’ and the language individuals used to represent themselves and to convey their individual identity (Zilles & King 2005: 74) and they highlight the fluid, multifaceted and locally constructed nature of identity by point out the various viewpoints that exist around the topic (see Eckert 2000, Schiffrin 1996, and Johnstone 1996). These different foci that research on identity has taken represents new areas of research that has meant greater attention could be given to individuals’ use of language (e.g. Bell 1999; Bucholtz 1999; Rampton 1995, Rampton 1999; Schilling-Estes 2004). In their 2008 article, Bucholtz & Hall illustrate two key paths of exploration for contemporary sociolinguistics research:

1. A concern with the linguistic construction of identity in social interaction, and
2. The relationship between individual speaker agency and larger social structures and processes.

To an extent, the current research project focuses on the second path. Individual speaker agency and its relation to larger social structures is addressed in this study’s first research question, which considers how students construct themselves and others in their narratives about their lives and reasons for coming to university.

3.5.2. Narrative within Sociolinguistics

The stories we tell about our own and others’ lives are a pervasive form of text through which we construct, interpret and share experience. Harding (1968:5) says that “we dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative.” And thus, the stories we tell about our lives and the lives of others are a pervasive medium through which we construct, interpret and share our experiences (Schiffrin 1996:167).

To illustrate the usefulness of narrative as a method, Schiffrin (1996) has used a detailed analysis of two Jewish women and their stories. Their stories are used to demonstrate how language is used in narrative can create a story world in which two selves are displayed; the epistemic self – this self is revealed when we state our beliefs and wants – and the agentive self, that shows itself when we report any actions that is directed at our goals (Schiffrin 1996:194). This can include actions that may have an effect on others. The epistemic and agentive selves thus positions the narrator within a mix of their actions and beliefs that bring forth their social identity.

In that light, the analysis of the student narratives can be said to show their agentive selves. This is due to the fact that, through their narratives, students have constructed an identity that insists on demonstrated that the students have agency and that they have made their decisions – or in Schiffrin’s words, actions – from a position that reflects their goals.

3.5.3. Identity within Narrative

So far, narrative analysis has always been connected to a broader area of linguistics, often unintentionally privileged works (see Labov 1967). While telling stories is a fundamental tool in the building of identities, the situated nature of identity construction processes are easily recognised within narrative analysis (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2015: 1-3).

In sociolinguistics approaches to narratives, the exploration of how individuals present their self through their stories has been at the centre of the narrative research endeavour. The student narratives has now revealed that through telling their stories, they have constructed a certain identity.

The general idea is that identities are not sets of characteristics that can be ascribed to individuals or manifestations of individual essences but emerge through semiotic processes in which people construct images of themselves and others (De Fina 2015:351). However, there

is still a division between scholars on the ways in which identity should be studied and theorised. One approach is to regard the life story and the narrator as source and target of narrative analysis. A different approach tends towards the actual storytelling as the focus of narrative analysis. For the current study, the first approach will be applied in that the narratives of the students on the foundation programmes are asked to write about their lives prior to attending university and the ways in which they detail those experiences is the data that will be analysed (De Fina 2015: 352).

3.5.4. Agency

When talking about agency, there is no set, clear-cut definition that scholars can agree upon. For Pym & Kapp (2013:2), agency is understood as “an individual’s capacity to act purposively to make choices about how they wish to live and to act upon those choices.”, Martin (2004:135) views agency as the capability of individual human beings to make choices and act on these choices in a way that makes a difference in their lives. Despite the lack of definition, but it has nevertheless become a widely used term across the humanities and social sciences. As a result, academics began to investigate how linguistic and social practice either replicate or transform the very structures that shape them (Ahearn 2010:28).

Ahearn (2010: 28) gives a provisional definition of agency as the sociocultural-mediated capacity to act. Therefore, it is imperative for academics to ask themselves how conceptions of agency may differ from society to society, and how these different conceptions are related to notions of identity and causality (Ahearn 2010:30)

Due to the lack of a solid definition, analysing agency in language is an important cause within sociolinguistics and one way is to look at how people talk about agency – “how they talk about their own actions and others’ actions, how they attribute responsibility for events, how they describe their own and others’ decision-making processes” (Ahearn 2010:41). Such

discussions about agency are found in ordinary conversations, in narratives, in politicians' speeches, and in many other oral and written genres.

3.6. Research on Narrative

3.6.1. Anderson, Goldin, Kurita & Cross (2008)

In this study, the authors conducted a linguistic analysis of autobiographical memories in order to provide a glimpse of experiences that have been assimilated into an individual's conception of themselves. These researchers assert that cognitive models of social anxiety disorder (SAD) support abnormal beliefs about the self and this works as an important psychological mechanism in maintaining a fear of negative assessment in both social and performance situations. The authors hypothesised that a distorted self-view should then be evident when individuals recalled painful autobiographical social memories, reflected in their emotion and avoidance, linguistic expressions and negative self-beliefs (Anderson, Goldin, Kurita & Cross 2008: 1119). To test this claim, 42 adults with SAD and 27 healthy controls were asked to compose autobiographical narratives of distinct social anxiety related situations. The results would then be used to expose negative self-beliefs and provided emotion and avoidance ratings (Anderson et al 2008: 1119).

The analysis revealed that those with SAD frequently used self-referential and negative emotion words and made less use of words and phrases that referred to other people. It provided a quantitative examination of the content of the memories and emphasised the impact of the social anxiety related biases on word choice. If the influence of such biases were to be revealed in the first hundred words of a personal narrative, it could be said that their influence was pervasive (Anderson et al 2008: 1123). The linguistic analysis found that the way individuals with SAD described their experiences may reflect a distorted balance between their cognition and emotions. To this extent, greater awareness of linguistic variables may be used to examine

any changes in the way the individuals represented themselves and could assist as a potential treatment measure in clinical studies (Anderson et al 2008:1124).

3.6.2. Smith & Sparkes (2009)

This research sought to develop an understanding of narrative and the analysis of narratives within the domain of sport and exercise psychology. Its intention was to describe how narrative analysis could be used by revealing a variety of ways in which sport and exercise psychologists might make sense of narratives (Smith & Sparkes 2009: 279).

Human existence is contained within a domain of meaning, and humans ascribe meaning to their experiences. We make sense of and endeavour to make our experiences meaningful. Therefore, within the study of sporting and exercise, the examination of behaviours should include an exploration of the meaning systems that form human experience (Smith & Sparkes 2009: 280).

One way to explore individual behaviours could be through the narratives people tell. The basis for this is found in the claim that narratives play a key role in establishing meaning, including how we make sense of experiences and how we communicate those experiences and meanings. Within sport psychology, it is suggested that a focus on personal narratives could likely provide in-depth data and reveal individual differences between participants. This can be done through seeking to interpret the meanings found within the narratives and the implications they may hold (Smith & Sparkes 2009: 280). For exercise psychologists, there too may be relevance in narrative analysis. Since humans attach meaning to the experiences in their lives, an exercise psychologist with an interest in physical activity and wellbeing could turn to analysing the meanings attached to physical activity, health guidelines and wellbeing via the narratives of the participants (Smith & Sparkes 2009: 280).

In doing so, these narratives could reveal what physical activity, health and wellbeing means to people and how these meanings are contextualised and created. The narratives could also uncover the ways that the meanings shape experiences, feelings and the ability to take on physical activity to “transform it into an embodied habit of thought, behaviour and taste” (Smith & Sparkes 2009: 280).

3.6.3. An Analysis of Metaphors: Smith & Sparkes (2004)

In this section, the linguistic feature of metaphor will be discussed within the context of sport psychology. The article focuses on how athletes who had undergone spinal cord injury (SCI) describe their lives after the surgery through narratives, particularly through the use of metaphor. The purpose of this section is to highlight how a linguistic feature such as metaphor, plays a role when analysing the stories of individuals across disciplines. According to Lakoff & Johnson (cited in Smith & Sparkes 2004: 599), metaphor is an ever-present and significant feature of everyday speech that affects the ways people perceive, think about and act on themselves, their relationships and their knowledge of the world.

If applied to lives that have been disrupted through traumatic events, metaphors can also shift attention to the narrative fabric of identity construction. This is where metaphor plays a central role, both as: 1) “a resource in the process of reconstructing selves following a disruption to the body-self” construct, and as 2) a cultural resource that shapes to life stories (Smith & Sparkes 2004: 599). Metaphor is, thus, vital to the ways individuals treat their bodies and how they begin to understand the multi-layered aspects of their embodied experiences. In this research the authors attempted to illustrate the most common metaphors used by 14 men who were disabled due to sporting injuries, in particular Spinal Cord Injury (SCI). There are a few guiding metaphors that are available to the men that are important with regards to how they perceive their lives in and as bodies following SCI. Significant differences were identified in

the metaphors used and how these metaphors influenced the reconstruction of the body-self relationship (Smith & Sparkes 2004: 610).

Three overarching narratives were found within the stories told by the 14 men. These narratives, the restitution, chaos and quest narratives, were partly the reason for the differences identified as shaping experiences after SCI, as well as the metaphors, in particular, used within the narratives.

Within the restitution narrative, sport and war metaphors dominate the stories. For example: “a fight to make a comeback”. These metaphors “revolve around the notion of a restored and entrenched self that has its reference point firmly in the restorable body” (Smith & Sparkes 2004: 611).

The chaos narrative, in contrast, uses metaphors in which life is “choking”, in “solid darkness” and is viewed by the men. Life after SCI is a fragile object and emotions are viewed as entities within a person. Any sense of self that the men try to reconstruct is made problematic as the individual believes himself to be trapped in chaos with limited opportunities for telling their stories, as well as to construct meaningful metaphors (Smith & Sparkes 2004: 611).

In the quest narrative, metaphors of life as a ‘journey’ abound and provide an opportunity for the men to restore the relationship between the body and the self. The restoration of the body-self relationship gives the individual a sense of progress and hope (Smith & Sparkes 2004: 611).

3.6.4. An Analysis of Modality in Narratives

One of the key elements of the research that will be discussed is the use of linguistic features within the student narratives and one such feature is that of modality.

According to Piqué-Angordans, Posteguillo & Andreu-Besó (2002: 50), modality is a linguistic feature in which modal verbs play an important role. Modality deals with the selection of words

to express how definite a speaker is about something, usually a statement or belief, ranging from being uncertain (low modality) to very certain (high modality). In that same vein, modal verbs and phrases that are used by speakers convey the state of the speakers' knowledge about the content of their statements (Byrnes & Duff 1989: 369).

Another important function of modals is within the regulation of behaviour. This is often used within statements made by those with authority, with the purpose of either placing restrictions on a listener or to give a listener permission for specific behaviours (Byrnes & Duff 1989: 370).

Within modality, there are two categories, namely deontic and epistemic modality. Deontic modality is concerned with the obligation or possibility of the acts performed by "morally responsible or socially regulated agents" (Byrnes & Duff 1989: 372). Statements of deontic modality often comprise of the regulation of these acts in terms of either giving permission for the act or placing restrictions on behaviour of the agent (Byrnes & Duff 1989: 372). Therefore, it can be said that statements of deontic modality allow the agent - in this research the students - to become aware of the norms or expectations of society.

The second category is epistemic modality. Epistemic modality highlights the degree of confidence a speaker has in a particular view or statement. Statements of epistemic modality emphasises the speaker's knowledge or belief with regards to certain states of affairs. As a speech act, a statement of epistemic modality represents speaker's beliefs about the way things are (Byrnes & Duff 1989: 372).

Through the use of narrative analysis, the project attempts to look deeper at the words and phrases students use when speaking or, in this case, writing about their own lives and experiences. It attempts to show that the students, though on foundational provision, are capable of agency.

3.7.Summary

This chapter discussed the conceptualisation of ‘narrative’ from a number of disciplines, including sociolinguistics, which is the discipline in which this study is situated. It provided an overview of the concept of ‘narrative’ before focusing on structural analysis, via an overview on William Labov, as well as thematic approaches to narrative analysis. This is important as these approaches were used to analyse the narratives that formed part of this study. Narrative analysis highlights the presence of linguist features that can be indicative of agency or a lack thereof. The remainder of the chapter highlighted research which also made a conceptual contribution to this study. In this regard, the linguistic devices of metaphor and modality feature as dominant linguistic devices in the narratives on behalf of the participants of this study. The following chapter focused on the methodological approach that was taken to this study.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

The following chapter will focus on the processes that were undertaken to collect and analyse the datasets. This will include the research context, participants, instruments and questions, the approach to the analysis as well as ethical considerations.

4.2. Research Questions

The study aims to contribute to more research on foundational provision, research which moves away from a focus on the academic skills, or lack thereof, of students in these programmes. Instead, it focuses on issues of voice, social justice and student agency. Thus, the data was approached with the following research questions in mind:

1. How do students construct themselves and others in their narratives about their lives and reasons for coming to university?
2. In what ways are these student narratives similar or different to dominant deficit discourses about foundation programmes and the students on these programmes?

4.3. Research Context

Globally, the number of students entering the HE environment from non-traditional backgrounds (including minority groups and low socioeconomic groups) has been steadily increasing (Thomas 2002:424). Along with the increase of student diversity, there is an increased awareness of student retention. It can be said that with the influx of new students, the retention rate has decreased and often, the new student constituencies are to blame for the decreased retention rate. As Thomas (2002:424) examined, the rate of non-completion has remained relatively stable and possibly even decreased following the transformations within HEIs regarding widening participation. However, there is the temptation to link the greater participation rates in HE with declining input standards. Similarly, it is tempting to blame the

incoming students for being ill-prepared for HE and/or having a deficit regarding academic ability.

4.3.1 Motivation

At the start of the project, I had just completed my Honours in Politeness through the Linguistics Department at Stellenbosch University and was searching for guidance on how to continue this area into my Masters. After a chat with my current supervisor, we agreed upon the following as a fantastic topic for my Masters: Across the country, and even the globe, students on foundation programmes are usually constructed in deficit terms, that is lacking the skills and the potential to succeed. Researchers who have commented on this have noticed that the problem with these constructions are that they might prevent students from succeeding. However, the very fact that I am currently doing my Masters shows that this understanding of students on foundation programmes is misinformed.

Thus, the topic is quite close to my heart and it made sense to change my field of interest to something that resonated me and that allowed me to attempt fill a gap in the literature regarding the students' experiences and how their agency played a pivotal role in their decisions.

4.3.2 The EDP at Stellenbosch University

This is a summarised version of the information given in Chapter 2, section 2.2.1. When applying to Stellenbosch University, all prospective students must meet the minimum university entry requirements. If they do not meet faculty-specific requirements, they are considered for the EDP. The research for this project was conducted within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University. Acceptance, as stated above, is dependent on the faculty's specific requirements.

4.4. Research Participants

Thirty-seven first-year students in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' EDP agreed to take part in the study. The first round of data collection took place during end May/June 2016, just before students began their first exams; 16 first-year students gave consent to use their written tasks. By then the students had been at university for approximately four to five months. The second round of data collection took place during April 2017; 21 first-year students gave their consent. The students had been at university for approximately two months. Of the 37 students who had agreed to partake in the study, 25 student narratives were intentionally selected to be analysed as they were emblematic of the data.

The second round of data collection was required as the first set of data did not have provide content for analysis. Moreover, the narratives that were collected during the first round were not all easy to read and, thus, understand. The fact that most of the students were second language users of English influenced the data. In addition, they were requested to write their narratives. Not everyone could express themselves well in writing, making their narratives difficult to understand.

Regarding the participants who agreed to partake in the study, it needs to be noted that two students, Michelle*¹ and Lisa* were first-year students academically but not historically. Within the EDP, students' first year is split into two years, with their third year at university serving as their second year academically. At the time of analysing the first set of data, Michelle was in her fourth year historically, having started in 2013. Because she had not completed all her EDP modules, she was still considered a "first-year EDP student". Lisa, on the other hand, was in her second year historically but also still had an EDP module to complete.

¹ * Names have been changed.

The initial intention was to use both first-year and second-year EDP students. The reason was that the first-year students had no proper information on how life truly was at university; they had not yet assimilated into the university culture and thus, they brought a fresh perspective, their constructions about themselves and, in part, the university, were newer. Whereas, the second years had that knowledge on their side; they had spent a full year on the EDP as well as at university and could correlate their experiences better. However, the second years had busier schedules and more classes; it would have been selfish to impose on them.

4.5. Research Instruments

A short questionnaire was handed out and students were asked to write about three events that had affected their lives prior to coming to university and three persons who had influenced their lives.

During the first round of data collection, the questionnaire was handed out with the instruction to answer the questions as best they could. During the second round, more detailed instructions were given to ensure that enough information was given, and students were required to fill the questionnaire out fully. We used a usual 50-minute lecture for data collection, spending a maximum of 10 minutes to explain. Most students finished within the allotted time given. The second question, which related to the influence of three persons, was ignored due to time constraints, as well as the abovementioned fact that not all students had given enough detail.

The questionnaire lacked the normal demographic details. This generally occurs within discussions of EDP students and often dominates such discussions and thus, we purposefully chose not to add the students' demographics.

4.6. Approach to analysing the data

The study takes a qualitative approach to analysing written narrative tasks by adopting the principles of narrative analysis articulated in the previous chapter.

As stated previously, narrative analysis is a form of linguistic analysis that takes the story told by an individual as the object of investigation. The research project will first take a structural approach to analysing the narratives of the students. Of the 25 student narratives selected, only 10 were used for an in-depth structural analysis. As the study attempts to find agency within the students, by focusing on the 10 students, the study could attempt to find elements of their agency in their experiences and through the way they spoke about their experiences. In addition to the structural analysis, a thematic analysis was conducted in order to identify the dominant themes within the individual narratives and in the process of the structural analysis. For the thematic analysis, all 25 student narratives were used as the themes were found across the board. As such, all 25 narratives were included in the Appendices.

4.7. Ethical Considerations

Conducting research ethically in social, behavioural, economic and education fields means that one aims to safeguard the dignity, rights and wellbeing of all actual or potential participants. I obtained ethical clearance for the study from Stellenbosch University's Research Ethics Committee as well as permission to collect data from students. In order to adhere to the conditions, put forward as part of the ethical clearance, the participating students had to complete a consent form.

During two EDP lectures, in 2016 and 2017, my supervisor and I met with the students. My supervisor explained the purpose of the study and what their participation would entail. They were assured that they were under no obligation to take part in the study and if they did decide to partake, they could withdraw at any stage. The written narrative task, along with the consent form were handed to each student who agreed to participate. I stayed with them for the duration of the one-hour lecture to assist with any questions they might have regarding the task.

The names of the students have been changed to keep the identities of the students anonymous. I opted for pseudonyms rather than numbers in order to retain the subjective nature of the participants' personal experiences. In addition to this, the narratives were kept exactly as they were in this study – retaining grammatical and spelling errors where applicable – in order to further retain the personal nature of individual experiences.

4.8. Summary

The chapter highlighted the steps that were taken in order to conduct the research, including a description of the research context, questions and aims, the approach to analysing the data and ethical considerations. The following chapter represents the results of the structural and thematic analysis of the students' written narratives as well as an analysis of the linguistic devices used in the narratives.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the analysis of the written narratives and will be structured as follows: Each narrative will undergo a structural analysis based on Labov and Waletzky's (1967) structural components of narrative, consisting of abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation and coda. Following this, an analysis on each structural component and how that component reveals an immense impacted experienced by the narrator, with the significance of the structure of narrative to be addressed subsequent to the presentation of the structural components. The narratives will then be examined in terms of three themes. The analysis will also highlight linguistic devices that have been incorporated into the narratives, and that work to construct the speakers in particular ways.

5.2 Structural Analysis

By examining the content and structure of narrative account, the researcher can illuminate the relationship that exists between meaning and action, which is useful when the focus is on how people make sense of their lived experiences (Ahmed 2012:233). A structural narrative approach that focuses on the plot allows for the “complexity of decision-making processes, actions, and experiences to be understood and placed in context” (Ahmed 2012:241). This is most useful when one wishes to understand agency, the motives of individuals and how they make sense of their lived experiences.

The following section presents a structural analysis of 10 narratives, selected from 25 written narratives that were collected from the students. The method for extracting and referencing from the narrative will be as follows: the first narrative will be divided up by each sentence that makes up the structure of the analysis and will be numbered from 1 and onwards. The text will remain verbatim, with errors included. Later on in the discussion I will refer to the original

number when speaking about a specific extract and when a particular extract is used again in a different section of the analysis, the number will appear again, this time sequentially, along with the original numbering in round brackets and with the student's name added.

5.2.1 Wayne's narrative

The following section presents a structural analysis of Wayne's narrative (Appendix A):

1. High school had a major impact on my life and shaping who I am today and what I'm currently studying. [ABSTRACT]
2. My last three years on school (Gr 10-12) was honestly confusing and instead of finding myself I just lost who I am and what I stand for. [ORIENTATION]
3. Everyone had a direction and an opinion on what should happen in life and I was still lost. [ORIENTATION]
4. Somehow I knew that university would be the place where I would find myself no matter what I get to study. [RESOLUTION]
5. High school and ended and my plan of studying never worked out. [COMPLICATING ACTION]
6. I was rejected by 5 universities and had to go and work everyday by hanging newspaper posters on lamp poles from 10pm-3am. [COMPLICATING ACTION]
7. It was hard to see myself in that situation because I had good marks and I was a prefect too but instead of studying I was working a job meant for an uneducated South African. [COMPLICATING ACTION]
8. Somehow I knew that I always wanted to help people and being out working on the streets everynight and seeing the destruction of poverty and prostitution. [RESOLUTION]
9. Nobody really sees what happens after dark and most people have this perception that its dangerous but if you really out on the streets each night you'll see that these people are struggling to keep warm, find food and a place to sleep. [RESOLUTION]
10. Hence that experience prompted me to apply for Social Work at SU. [RESOLUTION]

11. Everyone had something negative to say about my choice but I just remember the underage prostitutes and homeless people and finally finding a way to help them and give back.
[EVALUATION]
12. Back in gr 11 I had a job in Checkers, literally packing baked beans and being in that position where people treated you as if you nothing changed me. [ORIENTATION]
13. The whole situation of people having preconceived ideas about who you are and why you working in a certain place pushed me to work harder and find a better future for myself. [CODA]

According to Cortazzi (1993:44), the abstract section of the narrative is optional. When included in a narrative, it indicates that a narrative has begun by offering a summary of the point, or by highlighting the general point of the narrative, although these general points often extend beyond the immediate events offered in the narrative (Cortazzi 1993:44).

Wayne begins his narrative by focusing on the role that secondary school played in shaping who he is today, as well as the choices he made regarding his degree and subjects at university. Subsequent to this, Wayne orientates the reader to the details of the story – the persons, place, situation and time. The orientation is important because it provides the listener with the details that the speaker believes the listener will need in order to interpret the story. In the orientation segment of the narrative (2) and (3), as well as (12), Wayne focuses the reader’s attention on how he felt at high school, “confused” (2) and “lost” (3). He also draws a comparison to his perceptions of what others were experiencing in contrast to his own experiences (“everyone had a direction and an opinion on what should happen in life and I was still lost”).

Wayne’s complicating actions, his exposition of a turning point or crisis (Cortazzi 1993:47) tell of the time when he had just completed high school, when he “was rejected by five universities” and “working in a job meant for an uneducated South African” (5, 6 and 7). However, his evaluations of the event, as well as his resolutions are much more optimistic: In his resolutions he states that “somehow I knew that university would be the place where I would

find myself no matter what I get to study” (4) as well as “somehow I knew that I always wanted to help people and being out working on the streets everynight and seeing the destruction of poverty and prostitution” (8).

Wayne also evaluates his story by stating that “everyone had something negative to say about my choice but I just remember the underage prostitutes and homeless people and finally finding a way to help them and give back” (11). Finally, in his coda, Wayne states that “the whole situation of people having preconceived ideas about who you are and why you working in a certain place pushed me to work harder and find a better future for myself” (13). In this segment of the narrative, Wayne addresses his life story in the same way as many of the participants in this study in that there is a very strong emphasis on having a strong work ethic in order to overcome personal difficulties.

5.2.2 Felicia’s narrative²

The following is an analysis of Felicia’s narrative, detailing her struggles with high school and how failing Grade 10 made her more cognizant of her situation:

14. When I started high school in 2010 I found it difficult to study. I was not a slow learner, I just wasn’t raised under strict rules forcing me to sit with books and study hard to be part of the schools top achievers. [ABSTRACT]
15. This carefree lifestyle went on until grade 10 (which didn’t occur to me than that that was the most important year in high school). [ORIENTATION]
16. Grade 10 was where you decide on what you’d want to do with the rest of your life, whether it was becoming a doctor or a stay at home mom. [ORIENTATION]
17. I never really paid much attention in class and I always had a just passed rate. [OREINTATION]

² For ease of reference, the numbering continues from those in Wayne’s narrative.

18. Starting grade 10 I followed my friends and chose their subjects thinking I could do it.

[ORIENTATION]

19. I blindly held on to the subjects I only now realised was never made for me. [ORIENTATION]

20. I failed grade 10 in 2012 and went back the next year. [COMPLICATING ACTION]

21. The day I found out I was going to be held back a year it was like I had an epiphany.

[RESOLUTION]

22. I decided that I was going to have to do better and leave going out with my friends for a different time. [RESOLUTION]

23. I started paying attention more, studying my work, taking extra classes and stayed in when all my friends went out.[RESOLUTION]

24. At school I started becoming a top achiever in my grade and top student in my class.

[EVALUATION]

25. I received numerous diplomas and got chosen as a prefect two times. [EVALUATION]

26. I think the fact that I got held back a year really opened my eyes and that's why I decided I wanted to do great things with my future, starting at a university. [CODA]

Unlike Wayne, who focused on the role that secondary school played in shaping his time at university, Felicia begins her narrative by recounting the academic difficulties she had at school, that “she found it difficult to study” (14). She assigns accountability for this to not being “raised under strict rules”. In her *orientation*, Felicia refers again to “this carefree lifestyle” (15). She then identifies that she was not aware of the importance of Grade 10, but that this is the year “where you decide on what you’d want to do with the rest of your life, whether it was becoming a doctor or a stay at home mom” (16). The distinction that Felicia sets up between “a doctor” and “a stay at home mom” is an interesting one, as it seems to suggest a particular understanding of a limited set of social roles which are available to Felicia:

a starkly contrasted choice between a singular professional occupation and “a stay at home mom”.

Felicia’s *complicating actions*, her exposition of a turning point or crisis (Cortazzi 1993:47) is presented when she “failed grade 10 in 2012 and went back the next year” (20). However, much like Wayne, her *evaluations* of the event, as well as her *resolutions* are much more optimistic: In her *resolutions* she states that “The day I found out I was going to be held back a year it was like I had an epiphany” (21) as well as “I started paying attention more, studying my work, taking extra classes and stayed in when all my friends went out” (23). Felicia also *evaluates* her story by stating that “At school I started becoming a top achiever in my grade and top student in my class” (24) and “I received numerous diplomas and got chosen as a prefect two times” (25). Finally, in her *coda*, Felicia states that “I think the fact that I got held back a year really opened my eyes and that’s why I decided I wanted to do great things with my future, starting at a university” (26). In this segment of the narrative, Felicia assigns herself agency in the situation by framing herself as having potential as well as being able to decide the circumstances of her future. This is evident in many of the narratives in this research, along with the construction of the university as being a gateway to success.

5.2.3 John’s narrative

John’s narrative details the problems that occur when one does not have the necessary information or is not given the information needed to make an informed decision, and how he overcame that obstacle to make it to university:

27. Before coming to this university I went to the University of the Free State straight after matric in 2011. [ABSTRACT]

28. Prior to that I always knew that I either want to become a lawyer or a journalist. [ORIENTATION]

29. I grew up in a small town in the Eastern Cape, Craddock. [ORIENTATION]
30. We were never exposed to Universities and I certainly had no idea on what was expected of me to gain admission to a University. [ORIENTATION]
31. Only one groups of people came to our school at the end of our grade 11 year to advertise the University of the Free State then I decided the I'm going to apply to study there. [ORIENTATION]
32. They declined my application, claiming that my marks were to low but I could not understand why because I had passed matric with a B. [COMPLICATING ACTION]
33. So my mother and I decided to go there despite of their response and by the time that we got there only then were we told about the EDP programme. [RESOLUTION]
34. I wasn't keen on doing it because it made feel dumb and there was no academic support there at all. [RESOLUTION]
35. I was young and fresh from High School, studying something that I couldn't relate to so I ended up failing my first year and I decided to just drop out and look for a job. [RESOLUTION]
36. After four years of changing from one job to another I decided the I cannot spend the rest of my life on a salary of R4500 when I have a matric certificate and the potential to study. [EVALUTION]
37. That's when I decided to come and study here but this time I was still met by the same EDP programme but by this time it was thoroughly explained to me on how it is going to work and how it would benefit me. [CODA]

Unlike Wayne and Felicia, John does not focus too much on his time at school in his narrative but rather his time at the University of the Free State (UFS) after he matriculated in 2011 (27). Like Felicia, John also refers to established professions such as a “lawyer” and a “journalist” (28). John’s narrative presents a shift between pronouns. While he stated that “I grew up in a small town in the Eastern Cape, Craddock” (29), in his orientation he also associates himself

as a member of a group who “were never exposed to Universities” (30). Subsequent to this, after including the additive conjunction “and” in the same sentence, he shifts to an individual representation of events: “I certainly had no idea on what was expected of me to gain admission to a University” (30).

Excerpt (32) works as John’s *complicating action*, his exposition of a turning point or crisis (Cortazzi 1993: 47). It is similar to Wayne’s in that it tells of the time when he had just completed high school, when he was not “rejected by five universities” (as was the case with Wayne in Excerpt 5), but rejected by UFS. He writes that they claimed “that my marks were to low but I could not understand why because I had passed matric with a B” (32).

In his statements which work as *resolutions* (33) to (35) John does not present such an optimistic segment of his narrative as Wayne and Felicia. Rather, he tells of the EDP programme at UFS in ways which relate to the literature presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis: “I wasn’t keen on doing it because it made feel dumb” (34). As an *evaluation* of his story, John writes that “After four years of changing from one job to another I decided the I cannot spend the rest of my life on a salary of R4500 when I have a matric certificate and the potential to study” (36). Like Wayne and Felicia, John presents himself as having enormous potential which can be realised by going to university.

5.2.4 Joy’s narrative

Joy’s narrative explains her near-depression due to a horrible experience at university and how she realised that she was not alone in her situation:

38. This is not my first time being admitted in a University. [ABSTRACT]

39. I was once admitted to the University of Johannesburg in Gauteng but the experience over there was horrible that I had to drop out because my mom couldn’t afford it anymore and because I was failing horribly. [COMPLICATING ACTION]

40. Those events in those years had a major effect on my life, as I became very sad that I failed, disappointed everyone at home. [ORIENTATION]
41. It's very embarrassing as well among my peers when I have to explain to them the main reason I was at home.[COMPLICATING ACTION]
42. I often became very distant from everyone else. [COMPLICATING ACTION]
43. My mom often supported and encouraged me to apply at any university because she claimed I'm still so young, and I can always do whatever I wanted to do. [RESOLUTION]
44. Having my mom around really made me feel as though I can do anything that my mind to. [RESOLUTION]
45. The whole of 2015 I sat at home doing nothing except of course my driver's license which I obviously hated but I passed anyway. [ORIENTATION]
46. I was often very bored sitting at home doing nothing but I met a few friends which appeared to be in difficult situations than mine. [EVALUATION]
47. I realised that my situation is not so bad. [EVALUATION]
48. Everyone fails at some point but what matters is getting up and trying again until what you strive for is achieved. [RESOLUTION]
49. My dad often describe me as being useless and how I wasted his money, he was not very supportive as my mom was. [EVALUATION]
50. I kept on telling myself that when I get admitted to any university I'm going to get right and prove him wrong. [RESOLUTION]
51. Another event that had a positive impact on my life it is when I got admitted to several university but I had to choose only one. [EVALUATION]
52. Mom did not want me to go far as she was still afraid if I'm far from home I might fail again. I was in a bus the whole night to get here as I'm from Limpopo and I couldn't

book the flight ticket because it was expensive but although I travelled and I was very tired when I got here but I was very excited that my mom made it possible. [CODA]

Joy begins her narrative (38) by focusing on the fact that she had previously been admitted to a different university before attending Stellenbosch University. Following this, Joy's *orientation*, (40) and (45), provides small details about the situation, time and places involved in the narrative: in (40), she speaks about the effect the events had on her life and how the events affected her personal life. In (45), she focuses on that fact for 2015, she did nothing but her driver's licence. What is interesting in (45) are the phrases, "except of course" and "which I obviously hated." Both allude to the presumption that getting one's driver's license was a given, a social convention that all partook in.

Excerpts (39), (41) and (42) works as Joy's *complicating actions*, her exposition of a turning point or crisis (Cortazzi 1993: 47). Unlike the first three students, whose actions dealt mainly with high school, Joy's focuses on her time at the University of Johannesburg and how "the experience over there was horrible (39). Due to this, she was forced to drop out "because my mom couldn't afford it anymore and because I was failing horribly." (41) and (42) serve as her complicating actions as well as she felt that the embarrassment of not being able to attend university was too much to handle and thus, she became distant from everyone around her.

Her statements that act as *resolutions*, excerpts (43), (44), (48) and (50), showed that despite the problems, Joy persevered because of the support system she had, most notable her mother who "often supported me and encouraged me to apply" (43) and "made me feel as though I can do anything"(44). In (48), she believes that even the best can fail, "but what matters is getting up and trying again until what you strive for is achieved" and that despite her father's words in (49), she knew she was "going to get right and prove him wrong" (50).

As the *evaluation* of her story, statements (46, 47, 49 and 51) Joy writes that while being at home, she realised that there were many friends “which appeared to be in difficult situations than mine” (46) and that her situation might not be as bad as she had previously thought. Her father was not as supportive as her mother, often calling her “useless and that “I wasted his money (49). But as she said in (48), she wanted to prove him wrong and in (51), she might just do that as she “got admitted to several university but I had to choose only one.”

Finally in her *coda* (52), Joy retells the issues that surrounded her attending Stellenbosch University. In this segment of the narrative, Joy addresses the final step it took to get to Stellenbosch University, despite issues of her failing, having travelled throughout the night but she “was very excited that my mom made it possible.” Joy, like many students that partook in the study, showed to have a strong work ethic in order to overcome personal difficulties that could have prevented her from attending university.

5.2.5 Michelle’s narrative

Michelle details in her narrative how important her grandfather was in the overall decision to attend university and how his encouragement pushed her forward, regardless of pressure:

53. From a very young age, I was told that in order to become a success in life, I would have to go to university. [ABSTRACT]

54. Education is very important to my grandfather, because he had to leave primary school at a young age and become a breadwinner to his family when his father left them. [ORIENTATION]

55. He always told me that in order to be taken seriously as a coloured person in South Africa, I would need a degree. [ORIENTATION]

56. It was expected of me, as my generation was given the opportunities his or his children did not have. [ORIENTATION]

57. I am the first person in my family to attend such a prestigious university and the pressure to perform is so intense. [COMPLICATING ACTION]

58. I want to make them all proud, but I want to make my grandfather's wish come true, my goal is to make him proud. [EVALUATION]

59. A few years later while I was in high school my father left my mother, brother and I for another woman and her family, her children and that completely change my life and how I saw the world. [COMPLICATING ACTION]

60. I had to grow up faster than most and it affected me tremendously. [COMPLICATING ACTION]

61. I began to slide academically, but managed to pick myself up and start to focus before it was too late for me. [COMPLICATING ACTION]

62. I was more determined to show my father that I was smarter and more determined to make a life for myself without him. [RESOLUTION]

63. I wanted to make him ashamed of what he left behind. [RESOLUTION]

64. What gives me immense satisfaction is that people always tell him about how smart I am and how proud he should be of his children. [EVALUATION]

65. It gives me the satisfaction knowing that he screwed his life up and that the people he left us for are only giving him problems and stress. [EVALUATION]

66. It makes me proud that my mother and grandfather helped raise my brother and I and that we are okay and that we don't need him. [CODA]

67. My mother says that we are a success and that is all that matters to her and the family.[CODA]

Michelle's narrative begins in (53) by focusing on the fact that for her, success equated a university education. Therefore, her *orientation* in (54, 55 &56) details how important education was to her grandfather and that for her generation, who had been afforded the

opportunity (56) as well as being a coloured person in South Africa (55), a university degree would be the best option for success.

Extracts (57) and (59–61) serve as Michelle's *complicating actions*, her exposition of a turning point or crisis (Cortazzi 1993: 47). Michelle's crises were mainly personal, as in 57, where she states that she is the "first person in my family to attend such a prestigious university" and that placed both great expectations on her as well "the pressure to perform" was so intense. Her other complicating actions focused on the fact that her "father left my mother, brother and I for another woman" (59) and this caused her to "grow up faster than most" (60) and she began to "slide academically but managed to pick myself up and start to focus" (61).

Her excerpts that act as *resolutions*, statements (62) and (63), reveal a determination to oppose what had happened to her family through her academics as she was "more determined to show my father that I was smarter" as well as through making him "ashamed of what he left behind"(63).

As for the *evaluation* of her story, statements (58, 64 and 65), it is twofold. Firstly, she wants to make her family proud: "but I want to make my grandfather's wish come true, my goal is to make him proud" (58). Secondly, in (64 and 65), Michelle gains some satisfaction from knowing that her father was not faring well and that the "people he left us for are only giving him problems and stress." Finally in her *coda*, excerpts (66 and 67), Michelle brings it all back to her grandfather as the central point of her narrative and that she was "proud that my mother and grandfather helped raise my brother and I."

Michelle's narrative was quite personal and showed that better job opportunities and a tertiary education were not the only reasons that one would attend university. Her narrative showed that sometimes, personal circumstances help one to elevate oneself to do better.

5.2.6 Samuel's narrative

Samuel's narrative details his excitement for attending university, as well the possible shame and disappointment that might follow, should he be unable to attend:

68. Well the first time I thought about coming to University was when I started high school and actually each and every year that I passed my grade I got fully excited to being a university student, but when I started matric it was my main focus to pass and go to University by the time I got my results that is when I knew that my dream had come true. [ABSTRACT / ORIENTATION]

69. Another thing/event that made want to go to Varsity was because some of my cousins had already started university So I did not want to be the first one of our generation who won't have University education and shame my family and even embarrass myself. [COMPLICATING ACTION]

70. Lastly I knew that although you do get a job for having matric it is not usually stable and in the long run will not satisfy you to look after your family. [RESOLUTION]

71. University education gives you a sustained and stable job to rely on. [EVALUATION]

Samuel's narrative begins with both the *abstract* and the *orientation* in one sentence. First off, he begins the narrative with how excited he became with each year that passed in high school bringing him closer to "being a university student" (68). His orientation, much like other students focuses on his time in high school, in particular his matric year as "it was my main focus to pass and go to University" (68).

His *complicating action* however, dealt with an issue a bit more personal as "some of my cousins had already started university" (69). This made him more anxious to attend university as he did not want to be the only one "who won't have University education". His reasoning is that should he not obtain a university education, he would "shame my family and even embarrass myself".

In his resolution, (70), Samuel recognises that while having matric does allow for a job, “it is not usually stable and in the long run will not satisfy you to look after your family”. Hence, his *evaluation* at (71) brings across his opinion that “University education gives you a sustained and stable job”.

5.2.7 Bongi’s narrative

Similar to Joy’s narrative, Bongi’s narrative explains her depression due to bad results and how she realised that she was not alone in her situation and that there were ways to realise her dream of attending university:

72. I completed school in 2014, my matric to be precise. [ORIENTATION]

73. The following year, I did not get admission to any varsity because my results were not good.
[COMPLICATING ACTION]

74. I lost hope in myself and just wanted to sit at home and do nothing because all of my friends were at University at that time, My life was a mess I slept all day and did not want any food during the first few weeks after I was rejected in most of the universities that I had applied at.
[COMPLICATING ACTION]

75. I nearly got depressed and my mother saw it coming and then asked one of my previous school teachers to speak to me and at least persuade me to go to College but I did not want to go there because most of my friends were in the university and I also wanted to be there too.
[COMPLICATING ACTION]

76. My teacher did talk to me and advised me to go to College or go and improve my results instead of just sitting at home the entire year and doing nothing with my life it was February 2015 at that time [RESOLUTION]

77. I refused because I was afraid that people would laugh at me. [COMPLICATING ACTION]

78. I stayed at home and did nothing I had to wake up every day and prepare for my younger sister and my nieces for school since I was the oldest and my mom instructed me to do so since she had

to go to work early the lady that used to help us with that was told by my mom to stop coming at our house and doing that since I was always at home and doing nothing. [EVALUATION]

79. I cried myself to sleep everyday because I was feeling miserable and thinking that my mom had no faith in me as she did many years ago while I was still young. [EVALUATION]

80. But anyway to cut the long story short I later realised that this was not the way I wanted to live the rest of my life and decided to go and upgrade my results in a near by finishing school. [RESOLUTION]

81. I went to the school and I saw so many kids that were in my shoes and I started to also see purpose in my life and had faith in myself. [EVALUATION]

82. I studied hard and made sure that my results did improve so I can get admission to the university. [EVALUATION]

83. When the University of Stellenbosch accepted me I felt the excitement that I have never experienced before. [CODA]

Bongi's narrative does not have an *abstract*, and according to Cortazzi 91993:44), the abstract is an optional component of the narrative. Instead her narrative begins with her *orientation*, that she had "completed school in 2014, my matric to be precise." (72). Her *complicating actions* however span across four extracts (73, 74, 75 and 77). Her crises started with the fact that she "did not get admission to any varsity because my results were not good" (73) and due to the rejections, she "lost hope in myself...My life was a mess" (74). Because of this, she nearly became depressed as one of the major reasons for her wanting to go to university was that "most of my friends were in the university" (75). In (77), another reason appears as a *complicating action* and that is she had refused to go to college (75) and believe that "people would laugh at me" (77).

In excerpts (76) and (80), her *resolutions* dealt with the consequences of not having been accepted into a university. In (76), her teacher advised her to either go to college or improve

her results, while in (80), she extends this issue when she realised that despite her rejections, “this was not the way I wanted to live my life” and attended a nearby school to improve on her results.

In her *evaluation*, Bongi also realised that she was not alone at finishing school, and that there were many other children that were in a similar situation (81). Therefore, Bongi made the decision to study hard and make sure that her results did improve for admission (82). Finally her *coda* at (83) speaks of her excitement at finally being accepted to a university.

5.2.8 Tamara’s narrative

Tamara speaks about the fact that she is a first-generation student and that there were many challenges in being such a student but that she could carry on with God’s help:

84. My family had no students who went to go and study at a university, so that motivated me to make a difference in my family. [ABSTRACT]

85. I always had that goal in my mind from the time I started high school. Therefore, I became the first generation to go to university. [ORIENTATION]

86. It was not easy to keep up with that goal, because there were many challenges along the way. [COMPLICATING ACTION]

87. A few of these challenges includes when I was in grade ten and my godmother passed away and a few months later when I was in grade eleven I lost my grandmother as well. [COMPLICATING ACTION]

88. I felt like giving up on my dreams, but decide to pull through and to show the world that I am a stronger person. [RESOLUTION]

89. Each day I kept on motivating myself and asked God for strength. [RESOLUTION]

90. In the end I passed matric with two distinctions and received an opportunity to do a bridging course at Stellenbosch University, namely SciMathUs. [EVALUATION]

91. This then gave me the opportunity to apply for a degree course at university. [EVALUATION]
92. Another event which influenced me to go to university was when I was in grade eleven I participated in a radio CCFM youth competition. [ORIENTATION]
93. This was where all schools around the Western Cape had to send one learner to represent them in a radio competition.
94. I was at Malibu High School and I represented my school.
95. When I got to the studio I was really nervous and thought to myself that I cannot do this. [COMPLICATING ACTION]
96. They gave me a topic and it was about substance abuse. I had to speak for three hours on air about the topic and motivate the youth.
97. In the end I won first prize in the competition and realized that nothing is impossible if I only have faith. [CODA]

Tamara begins her narrative by stating that her family has had no students who studied at university and it motivated her to make a difference. Therefore, her *orientation* at (85) focused on her place as the first generation of her family to attend university.

The *complicating action* at (86) follows her orientation, revealing that she found that it was not easy to keep up with her goal of wanting to attend university; there were many challenges. Of these challenges, the most significant was the deaths of her grandmother and godmother (87).

Her *resolution* was not an easy discovery. After the deaths of those close to her, it felt as if she should give up on her dreams (88). Instead, she made the decision to pull through and prove that she was a stronger person for it, and that she just had to keep “motivating myself and ask God for strength (88 and 89). Despite her distressing circumstances, Tamara passed matric with distinctions and started a bridging course at Stellenbosch University (90) and this allowed her

to apply for a degree at the university (91). In the end, her coda reveals that she realised nothing was impossible if she had faith (97).

5.2.9 Melody's narrative

Melody's narrative speaks about her experience as a high achiever and how failing for the first time caused her to rethink her priorities and how to deal with such situations:

98. The first significant event that happened in my life is probably failing my first test in High School. [ABSTRACT]
99. This was significant because as a hard worker and high achiever accepting failure is not easy.[COMPLICATING ACTION]
100. Going through this experience did influence me in a positive way as it helped me to have an open mind about writing tests or exams. [RESOLUTION]
101. It also helped me grow into accepting failure and looking beyond it and how to overcome failure. [EVALUATION]
102. It helped me become more mature accepting everything does not work out in the way that you always want it to and you will only achieve success and greatness if you work hard for it. [EVALUATION]
103. The second major influence in my life was my past friendships. [ORIENTATION / COMPLICATING ACTION]
104. Growing up and realising who your true friends are influenced me positively as I started to see which friends had a positive influence on my life and which ones had a negative influence. [RESOLUTION]
105. It made it easy for me to realise my self-worth and easy for me to cut off anyone that is negative.[EVALUATION]
106. Cutting off my negative friendships helped me to grow socially and it also helped me to do some self-evaluation. [EVALUATION]

107. This influence also helped me realise that everyone is different and I should not have expectations. [RESOLUTION]
108. The last major influence that affected my life is passing matric and getting in University. [ORIENTATION]
109. This made me realise how privileged I am. [CODA]
110. It made me realise that hard work does pay off. [CODA]

Melody's narrative is divided up into three significant events. The first event acts as the *abstract*, starting the narrative off with how she had failed her first test in high school (98). The second event (103) was her past friendships and how they affected her life, either positively or negatively. The final event was passing matric and getting into university (108). These events presents well as her *orientation*.

Her *complicating action* at excerpt (99) deals mainly with her belief in herself as a high achiever and that due to having failed her very first test, it impacted her much harder than she had most likely imagined. Therefore, her *resolution* at excerpt (100) shows that as she made progress with her narrative, she made the connection that this experience allowed her to "have an open mind about writing tests or exams." Her second *complicating action* at excerpt (103) this time focuses on her friendship and how various friendships had impacted negatively or positively on her life. Thus, her *resolution* at (104) reveals that she had grown as a person in terms of knowing who was needed in her life, as well as that "everyone is different" (107).

In her *evaluation*, Melody, at (102), also makes the realisation that through failure she has become more accepting that "everything does not work out in the way that you always want" and that success and greatness was only achievable through hard work. In her second evaluation at (105 and 106), her past friendships allowed her to make the connection to negative friends and her self-worth. Making it "easy for me to cut off anyone that is negative." Finally, her coda

relates to excerpt (108). Through passing matric and getting admission into university, she realised just how privileged she was (109) and that her hard work throughout high school had paid off (110).

5.2.10 Clarissa's narrative

Clarissa explains her narrative in three events and how she used those events to better herself and re-evaluate her goals:

111. I had many obstacles and events in my life that could have prevented me from attending university. [ABSTRACT]
112. Right now I can proudly say that I have overcome these articles. [ABSTRACT]
113. The first event that had a major influence on my life was my final exam at school. [ORIENTATION]
114. I absolutely hated every moment of it.
115. I found it extremely difficult to focus on my exams and I hardly made any time for studying. [COMPLICATING ACTION]
116. I spent every day procrastinating and because of this I had the realisation that this could put me at risk of failing my final exam, that meant I would not be able to attend university. [COMPLICATING ACTION]
117. Luckily I received a rude awakening from my mother with regards to my future education.
118. The second would be my struggle with finding funds to attend university.
119. I had to get a holiday job in order to help my parents pay for my registration because I hadn't received any feedback from the bursaries that I had applied for. [RESOLUTION]
120. Both these events played a significant role in my life and the future of my education. [EVALUATION]

121. It made me appreciate the opportunities that I had been presented with. [CODA]

122. It also made me work harder so that I can achieve the goals I set out for myself. [CODA]

Clarissa begins her narrative by stating that her attendance at university could have been hindered due to many events and obstacles (111) but she is proud of the fact that she had overcome these obstacles (112). Her *orientation* centres on her final exams at high school (113) and she had “absolutely hated every moment of it (114). This is immediately followed by her *complicating actions*. Firstly, she had found it “difficult to focus”, she “hardly made any time for studying” and thus began to procrastinate (115). However, her complicating action expanded to include the realisation that this “could put me at risk of failing my final exam” (116).

Excerpt (119) acts as her resolution, in that as well as she had prepared herself for university, there was still the issue of funding for university and thus, she made the decision to “get a holiday job in order to help my parents pay for my registration”. These two events, her final exam and finding funds, she evaluates in (120) and highlights that they played a vital role in the “future of her education.”

Finally, her *coda* brings the narrative to a close through Clarissa’s appreciation “of the opportunities” (121) that she had been given and that through these opportunities, it made her work harder for the “goals I set out for myself” (122).

5.2.2.1. Abstract

According to Cortazzi (1993:44), the *abstract* section of the narrative is optional. When included in a narrative, it indicates that a narrative has begun by offering a summary of the point, or by highlighting the general point of the narrative, although these general points often extend beyond the immediate events offered in the narrative (Cortazzi 1993:44). Two of the

participants included an *abstract* which made mention of the influence and impact of high school on their decision to come to university:

- 123. ...the first time I thought about coming to University was when I started high school (Samuel, extract 68 above)
- 124. An event that had an influence on my life was my subject choices in Grade 10 (Bradley)

Many of the participants included an *abstract* that reveals their perceptions of university, and which also gives insight into the role that these perceptions played leading up to their application and enrolment:

- 125. From a very young age, I was told that in order to become a success in life, I would have to go to university (Michelle, extract 53 above))
- 126. My family had no students who went to go and study at a university (Tamara, extract 84 above)
- 127. I had many obstacles and events in my life that could have prevented me from attending university (Clarissa, extract 111 above)
- 128. I was not even sure I would make it into university (Troy)
- 129. My whole life it has been said that after school I would have to go to university (Linden)
- 130. I always wanted to come to university/attend university it was always my life goal or one of my biggest dreams so I had a major influence in my decision to come (Pauline)

Four of the participants refer to difficult family circumstances as their Abstract:

- 131. I was raised by a single parent and we lived in an informal settlement (Sive)
- 132. My mom had been a stay at home mom looking after and caring for for 4 children (David)
- 133. My father was involved in an accident (Amara)

In his *abstract*, John presents a picture of upward mobility, a theme that is also evident in his *coda*:

- 134. Prior to that I always knew that I either want to become a lawyer or a journalist. I grew up in a small town in the Eastern Cape, Craddock (John, extracts 28 and 29 above)

A similar narrative strategy is also evident in Thando's narrative, which begins by quoting Gandhi before moving on to statements about the role of university in aiding upward mobility:

135. I live by the quote "Be the change you wish to see in the world". Gandhi (Thando)

Three of the participants structured their narratives as they would an academic text: with an *abstract* that guides their readers through their narratives:

136. There were two major events that had a major impact on my life before I came to university – (Beverly)

137. Two major events that had changed my whole life and still do have a great impact on my daily life (Tia)

138. Multiple events had have left enduring effects on me and the way in which I see the world (Dumi)

5.2.2.2.Orientation

As stated in Chapter 3, section 3.3, the *orientation* typically offers the listener details of the persons, place, situation and time. The *orientation* is important because it provides the listener with the details that the speaker believes the listener will need in order to interpret the story. In many of their *orientations*, the participants refer to their family members, difficult family circumstances, and/or the role that their family played in their decision to come to Stellenbosch University:

139. ...the experience over there was horrible that I had to drop out because my mom couldn't afford it anymore and because I was failing horribly (Joy, extract 39 above)

140. Education is very important to my grandfather, because he had to leave primary school at a young age and become a breadwinner to his family when his father left them...A few years later while I was in high school my father left my mother, brother and I for another woman and her family, her children and that completely change my life and how I saw the world. I had to grow up faster than most and it affected me tremendously (Michelle, extract 54, 59-60 above)

141. I became the first generation to go to university (Tamara, extract 85 above)

142. She was never able to go and study due to financial reasons...my dad was also in a position where financially he also couldn't go to university (David)

143. I applied to different universities in 2012...started working after matric in 2013...baby sister was born in 2014 (Pauline)

Seven of the participants orientate the reader towards school and situate this as the prominent reason for some of their later decisions in life:

144. My last three years of high school (Gr 10-12) was honestly confusing and instead of finding myself I just lost who I am and what I stand for (Wayne, extract 2 above)
145. When I started high school in 2010, I found it difficult to study...Grade 10 was where you decide on what you'd want to do with the rest of your life...I failed grade 10 in 2012 and went back the next year (Felicia, extracts 14, 16, 20 above)
146. ...there no one really seemed to care about the future but atleast the school I went to or rather to say my high school class-mates gave me a challenge to strive for more and take my studies seriously (Sive)
147. ...when I started high school and actually each and every year that I passed my grade I got fully excited to being a university student... (Samuel, extract 68 above)
148. I completed school in 2014, my matric to be precise (Bongi, extract 72 above)
149. I was put into hostel at a young age (Bradley)
150. When I recieved my matric marks that was the even that influenced me before coming to Uni (Troy)

Three of the participants refer to a time period between school and university in order to *orientate* the reader to their story:

151. Before coming to this university I went to the University of the Free State straight after matric in 2011 (John, extract 27 above)
152. After matric I took a gap year because I felt that I wasn't at a right space in my life (Sipho)
153. These events happened at different times but they both took place in 2016 (Beverly)

The following participant orientates the reader by drawing attention to her own perception of her age and the place in which she grew up:

154. I am a young girl who grew up in a township (Nontle)

5.2.2.3. Complicating Action

According to Cortazzi (1993: 46), the *complicating action* always follows the *orientation* and “consists of a series of narrative clauses in the past simple tense, or sometimes in the present tenses, using the so-called historical present. This part of the narrative, the bones of it, gives the event sequence, which is often terminated by the result.” The *complicating action* exposes a turning point, or crisis, and presents an event of interest, as it is the content of the narrative (Cortazzi 1993: 47). Many students’ *complicating actions* include their experiences of gaining access to university, both in an academic sense as well as from an emotional or psychological perspective:

155. ...some of my cousins had already started university So I did not want to be the first of our generation who won’t have university education and shame my family and even embarrass myself”... (Samuel, extract 69 above)
156. The day I founded out our was pregnant had changed my whole perspective of not coming to university no more (Tia)
157. I was rejected by 5 universities and had to go and work everyday by hanging newspaper posters on lamp poles from 10pm-3am... I had good marks and I was a prefect too but instead of studying I was working a job meant for an uneducated South African (Wayne, extract 6 and 7 above)
158. We were never exposed to Universities and I certainly had no idea on what was expected of me to gain admission to a University...They declined my application, claiming that my marks were to low (John, extracts 30, 32 above)
159. He always told me that in order to be taken seriously as a coloured person in South Africa, I would need a degree (Michelle, extract 55 above)
160. I thought immediately after matric I will go straight to University but the only thing that was stoping me was I could not get funding... (Sive)
161. I did not get admission to any varsity because my results were not good. My life was a mess... after I was rejected in most of the universities that I had applied at (Bongi, extract 73-74 above)
162. I never got accepted because my marks weren’t that good (Pauline)

The following students’ *complicating action* dealt with how others, often family or their community, influenced their decisions to come to university:

- 163. Those events in those year had a major effect on my life as I became very sad that I failed, disappointed everyone at home (Joy, extract 40 above)
- 164. I chose to come to university because my parents have worked extremely hard and have come a long way in giving me and my three brother the best possible life (David)
- 165. I did not grow up privileged in some people's eyes but to me, it was enough (Thando)
- 166. The choice of my subjects was not exactly my choice, but rather that of my dad's (Bradley)
- 167. People there do not care about education. I was very concerned about this as I was hoping that people from our generation are the one's who are going to be future leaders (Nontle)

For the following student, it was the decision of subject choices for Grade 10 that created a crisis:

- 168. This carefree lifestyle went on until grade 10 (which didn't occur to me than that that was the most important year in high school)...Starting grade 10 I followed my friends and chose their subjects thinking I could do it. I blindly held on to the subjects I long now realized was never made for me (Felicia, extract 15,18,19 above).

5.2.2.4.Resolution

The *resolution* follows the *complicating action*. It describes the resolution that the speaker comes to as a result of the *complicating action*. The three students below credited the university for the positive outlook they had on their future.

- 169. Somehow I knew that university would be the place where I would find myself no matter what I get to study...Somehow I knew that I always wanted to help (Wayne, extract 4,8 above)
- 170. Another event that had a positive impact on my life it is when I got admitted to several university but I had to choose only one (Joy, extract 51 above)
- 171. Luckily I got accepted in Stellenbosch University in 2016 in a Social Work EDP (Sive)

For the six students below, a particular event or occasion played a vital role in their final decisions:

- 172. In a way, I feel like this influenced my average as I struggled with these two subjects (Bradley)
- 173. This instance allowed me to think beyond myself and my circumstances (Dumi)

- 174. Because of this I had the realisation that this could be at risk of failing my final exam, that meant I would not be able to attend university (Clarissa, extract 116 above)
- 175. Knowing that he would not live forever played an imperative role in my decision (Amara)
- 176. What inspired me was seeing how proud my parents were of my brother doing so well at UCT (Linden)
- 177. I felt my life was over. Because how could I go study and still look after a baby (Tia)

The *complicating actions* of the two extracts below resulted in a *resolution* that directly challenged their actions:

- 178. I decided that I was going to have to do better and leave going out with my friends for a different time. I started paying attention more, studying my work, taking extra classes and stayed in when all my friends went out (Felicia, extract 22,23 above)
- 179. I started to work very hard at school to obtain good results and be able to uplift the standard of living for my community (Nontle)

Some *resolutions* did not yield positive results:

- 180. I felt like giving up on my dreams (Tamara, extract 88 above)
- 181. As a hard worker and high achiever, accepting failure is not easy (Melody, extract 99 above)
- 182. I was extremely disappointed and upset because my matric average had the requirements of a mainstream programme (Troy)
- 183. I always felt that working in retail was not for me...I felt like a failure (Pauline)
- 184. However, even after I was accepted, I still felt like I was not academic enough person who would succeed at university, so I decline to register for the year (Beverly)

5.2.2.5. Evaluation

The *evaluation* commonly precedes the *resolution*. It is “the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative, its *raison d’être*, why it is told” (Cortazzi 1993: 46). It reveals the attitude of the narrator towards the narrative itself, emphasising the importance of particular components of the narrative as opposed to others (Labov & Waletzky 1967: 37). In the extracts below, the students’ main purpose is to better their futures through university:

185. Everyone had something negative to say about my choice but I just remember the underage prostitutes and homeless people and finally finding a way to help them and give back (Wayne, extract 11 above)
186. At school I started becoming a top achiever in my grade and top student in my class. I received numerous diplomas and got chosen as a prefect two times (Felicia, extract 24-25 above)
187. After 4 years of changing from one job to another I decided the I cannot spend the rest of my life on a salary of R4500 when I have a matric certificate and the potential to study (John, extract 36 above)
188. I later realised that this was not the way I wanted to live the rest of my life and decided to go and upgrade my results in a near by finishing school (Bongi, extract 80 above)
189. Dedicating to come to university was only last option to help my mother raise the other kids (Nontle)
190. The #fees must fall situation has made me appreciate and value my education a whole lot more (David)
191. I was accepted at both universities but I decided that Stellenbosch University would allow me to achieve all the goals I had (Sipho)

In the extracts below, the main purpose of the narrative deals with their personal growth as individuals:

192. ...but I met a few friend which appeared to be in difficult situations than mine. I realized that my situation is not so bad (Joy, extract 46 above)
193. Each day, I kept on motivating myself and asked God for strength (Tamara, extract 89 above)
194. I am grateful as it taught me to be independent and I also learnt a lot about myself (Bradley)
195. It was during my gap year and working with my dad...that I grew more confident and self-assured (Beverly)
196. It helped me to have an open mind...helped me grow in accepting failure...helped me become more mature accepting everything does not work out in the way you always want it to (Melody, extract 100,101,102 above)
197. All I really wanted was for my father to be proud of me (Amara)
198. I want to be best me that I can be and that I want to give my parents all the things they deserve (Thando)

The two extracts below show that not all of the narratives had a positive result:

199. ...although you do get a job for have matric it is not usually stable and in the long run will not satisfy you to look after your family (Samuel, extract 70 above)
200. I have been trying every year and just never got in and I didn't feel so good about myself (Pauline)

5.2.2.6. Coda

The *coda* signals the close of a narrative and returns listeners to the present. The group of extracts below point to the students' determination for a better future:

201. The whole situation of people having preconceived ideas about who you are and why you working at a certain place pushed myself to work harder and find a better future for my myself (Wayne, extract 13 above)
202. I think the fact that I got held back a year really opened my eyes and that's why I decided I wanted to do great things with my future, starting at a university (Felicia, extract 26 above)
203. Everyone fails at some point but what matters is getting up and trying again until what you strive for is achieved (Joy, extract 48 above)
204. It also made me work harder so that I can achieve the goal I set out for myself (Clarissa, extract 122 above)
205. Also because I want to invest into my child's life so that he can also become an excellent student one day. No matter the circumstance he might find him in one day (Tia)
206. I came to university to better my families life and my own (Thando)
207. The thought of giving back to her for her hard work made me decide on going to university (Nontle)
208. This made me more determined than ever to want to make something of my life (Pauline)

The four extracts below return the narrative to the students' personal reasons for coming to university:

209. I am the second youngest in my family and it is amazing knowing that I have set an example for my baby sister (Amara)
210. My brother being successful at university motivated me to study hard in matric...to achieve the marks that would help me get accepted into Stellenbosch (Linden)
211. If my parents can afford it, who would I pass at the opportunity of getting my degree (David)

212. I went to the school and I saw so many kids that were in my shoes and I started to also see purpose in my life and had faith in myself (Bongi, extract 81 above)

The *extracts* below focus primarily on Stellenbosch University as their closing and how the programme and university in general helped in their decisions:

213. ...this time it was thoroughly explained to me on how it is going to work and how it would benefit me (John, extract 37 above)
214. What was on my mind was I wanted to study get a job without any waste of time; but now I am enjoying the programme and see the signifact of it (Sive)
215. University education gives you a sustained and stable job to rely on (Samuel, extract 71 above)
216. In the end, I passed matric with two distinctions and received an opportunity to do a bridging course at Stellenbosch University namely SciMathUs (Tamara, extract 90 above)
217. Thus, when I reapplied at Stellenbosch University I had a firmer resolve to see through my choice (Beverly)

5.3 Thematic Analysis

Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1.3 highlighted that thematic analysis is used to emphasise the content of a text. The focus is on what is said, rather than *how* it is said. Thematic analysis can be used for a number of reasons, which include finding common thematic elements across narratives (Riessman 2005:706). Subsequent to the thematic analysis of the narratives, three dominant themes were identified. These themes include the university, education, and the theme of working hard. Each of these themes are addressed individually below, with extracts to illustrate how they are realised within the individual narratives.

5.3.1 Theme 1: The Construction of the university

One of the major themes found throughout the narratives of the students is “the university”. More specifically, the participants present a view of the university as authoritative and as having a determinate power in that it is capable of determining one’s entire life course. It is also constructed as an extremely desirable place. A pertinent example of this is evident in Wayne’s narrative:

Somehow I knew that university would be the place where I would find myself no matter what I get to study (extract 4 above), and;

...Somehow I knew that I always wanted to help (extract 8 above)

The excerpt above reveals a number of interesting linguistic devices. Some of these include the adverb “somehow”, the modal verb “knew”, the repetition of “would” and the use of the construction “get to”. These linguistic devices are significant as they highlight the role that the university plays in the student’s life and how he perceives it. The adverb “somehow” in conjunction with “I know” and “would” reveals that the participant conceptualises their path to university as a predetermined and desirable one. These features highlight the participant’s degree of confidence in the idea that that “university would be the place where I would find myself no matter what I get to study”. This assists in the construction of the university as a desirable place – there is a willingness and excitement to go there rather than a hesitance or avoidance. This construction occurred in multiple narratives, including (4) and (8) above as well as in the following excerpt:

218. It is instilled in me that when you pass matric you obviously go to university (Thando).

In the above three extracts, the view of the university as powerful and desirable is evident: in (218), (53) and (129) the students draw on markers of epistemic modality through their use of such phrases such as “it is instilled in me”, “from a young age I was told”, and in (53) and

(129), the phrase “I would have to go to university” is also a marker of epistemic modality as they indicate Michelle and Linden’s strong commitment to the truth of the statement. In these cases, it is clear that the students are also aware of the expectations placed on them by society to go to university. The university is constructed as a definite and expected route to take once one is done with high school and if one wishes to succeed. Expanding further on the view of the university, the students also placed the university at the centre of their goals, as both a stepping stone and as a hurdle to overcome in order to achieve their goals, success and stability. This is clear in the extracts from Siphon (191), Felicia (26) and Samuel (70) above. Again, there is strong modality displayed through the phrase ‘I decided’ in both (191) and (26). It highlights the students’ confidence in their decision and both extracts point to their belief in the idea that success lies in their decision to go to university. Similarly, in (70), Samuel makes the claim that higher education places the biggest role in finding a job that one can rely on. This emphasises the certainty he has with regards to the choices he has made and by making the decision to go to university, they are choosing their goals, a better future and a stable job. This is evident in excerpt (130) above from Pauline’s narrative:

I always wanted to come to university/attend university it was always my life goal or one of my biggest dreams so I had a major influence in my decision to come (extract 130 above)

What is important is the use of the adverb “always”. It occurs twice within the same sentence and shows that the idea of university has been a big factor in Pauline’s decision. Also, it indicates that for her, university was not just the next step.

In the above extracts, the construction of the university has been portrayed through the role the institution played in decision-making, the expectations that society placed upon students, and that university was a stepping stone to a better life. Pauline sees the university with bright eyes;

it is more than an expectation to her or a stepping stone. Instead, her construction of the university is one of excitement, and of fulfilling a dream.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Education

From the below extracts, another theme that resonates strongly through the narratives is that of education and the students' views on education and what a 'good' education entails:

219. Coming from a less privileged background were none of my siblings had a proper education, I needed to go out and get an education (Amara)

For example, in (219) above, Amara highlights that due to the fact that none of her siblings has had a proper education, she believed that it was necessary for her to attain this accomplishment. This stems from her less privileged background, and possibly portrays the fact that Amara believes an education would elevate her from less privileged to more privileged. In extract (7) from Wayne's narrative, Wayne writes the following:

It was hard to see myself in that situation because I had good marks and I was a prefect too but instead of studying I was working a job meant for an uneducated South African (extract 7 above)

Here, the situation is a bit different. Firstly, Wayne switches between additive conjunctions ("and"), contrastive conjunctions ("but") as well as conjunctions that establish clear cause and effect relationships ("because") in his attempt to understand why he was not studying. He offers the following reasons: "because I had good marks and I was a prefect too." The use of conjunctions here is ideological; in this instance the conjunction "because" in addition to "and" establishes the narrator's understanding that having good marks and being a prefect is something of value. This is also evident in the use of "but" later in the sentence when the student indicates that in spite of these achievements, he was doing something else, he "was working a job meant for an uneducated South African." And his view on education places him at the centre: he is not an uneducated South African and he is deserving of a better job and life

circumstances because of his achievements. Similarly, in extract (55) from Michelle, Michelle writes the following:

I was always told that in order to be taken seriously as a coloured person in South Africa, I would need a degree (extract 55 above)

However, in (55), Michelle places education on a different level as the previous two students. For her, having a university degree is seen as a means to achieve greater success based on her race. That view of education indicated strong modality and faith through the use of the adverb “seriously”. By using “seriously” to highlight her point, the point being that without higher education, the coloured community cannot elevate themselves and will not be taken seriously in any endeavours they might have. A university degree, therefore, was the only sure way for guaranteeing success as a coloured person in South Africa. In extract (16), Felicia writes the following:

Grade 10 was where you decide on what you'd want to do with the rest of your life whether it was becoming a doctor or a stay at home mom (extract 16 above)

What is interesting in (16) is the way Felicia has shifted from her frequent use of the pronoun “I” to that of “you”. By doing so, she has generalised people into a dichotomy that claims ‘this is how life worked, this is the way it is’. It is a good example of how social expectations have been placed on individuals within society, permeating as far back as Grade 10. On its surface, she speaks of a generalised and accepted view on those who have not gone on to study further. This view is that one is either successful, in the form of a doctor, or had to spend the rest of one’s life at home, looking after children.

In a different situation, in (69), Samuel places education quite high in terms of how having a good education will bring respect and honour to both his family and himself. Having a university education for him was not only a way to better himself, to finally head to university as he had been dreaming of, but it was also a matter of bringing honour, as opposed to shame,

to his family as his cousins already had. By incorporating the adverb “even”, the narrator shows that having a university education is also about ensuring he doesn’t do anything unexpected, like embarrassing himself as well. In (190) David claims that:

The #feesmustfall situation has made me appreciate and value my education a whole lot more...not everyone can afford tertiary education...”if my parents can afford it, why would I pass at the opportunity of getting my degree”(extract 190 above)

While in the following excerpt, Tia presents a similar account:

220. What had encouraged me most of all is that, there are students who badly want to study but don’t have funding or the necessary facilities to apply and who am I to take this opportunity for granted.

In both cases above, the view of education is rather similar. Both students had particular events that allowed them to see education in a different light. These events dealt with how other students might not have the same opportunities that they currently have, that is to attend university, and that made their understanding and appreciation of education greater. Both use the word “opportunity” as their way of understanding what higher education stood for and it forced them to realise that education was a privilege and it was one that should not be taken lightly or for granted.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Working Hard

An interesting theme that appeared throughout the narratives are the accounts of working hard. What has been found throughout the narratives is the idea of working hard to achieve one’s goals and dreams. It is seen an integral part of achieving the better education, through gaining admission to a university. The only way for them to have gained the admission would have been through working hard. At the same time, the notion of hard work also brings forth the difficulties the students faced during high school especially, both academically and personally.

Despite their difficult circumstances, they believed that through working hard they would get the education they deserved, at the university they wanted to attend. Therefore, working hard can be linked back to the previous themes of the construction of the university as well as the importance of education in the sense that due to their own construction of what a university could offer them, the only way in was through hard work. Students had many reasons for their work ethic. For example, in Tamara's extract (88):

I felt like giving up on my dreams but decide to pull through and to show the world that I am a stronger person (extract 88 above)

In Tamara's case, she had dealt with personal issues through the loss of loved ones and it had affected the family's decisions around the future they had envisioned for themselves. But through the metaphor of pulling through, alluding to an individual being able to survive a challenging situation, she made the decision to be better. By pulling through her difficulties, she came out stronger.

221. Despite the fact that I had a lot of household issues, I managed to pass matric, meet the minimum requirements and also obtain a distinction (Lisa)

For Lisa, there were many challenges at home ("household issues") that had an impact on her experience and performance at high school. In her narrative Lisa draws on the contrastive conjunction "despite" to indicate her ability to continue to work hard in the face of these difficult circumstances. In excerpt (128) Troy writes the following:

I was not even sure I would make it into university. When I received my results, it was physical evidence of the effort I put into my matric year (extract 128 above)

In (128), Troy points out what many high school students fear; they had not done enough to earn a place at a university. However, Troy refers to the "effort" he put into his final year of schooling in order to make it into University. In excerpt (122) Clarissa writes:

It also made me work harder so that I can achieve the goals I set out for myself (extract 122 above)

This construction is reiterated in Melody's narrative (102):

You will only achieve success and greatness if you work hard for it (extract 102 above)

In (122) and (102) above, the reasoning for working hard is highlighted through the achievement of goals, success and greatness. In (122), Clarissa believes that through her own hard work, she can achieve her goals. In (102), Melody uses the adverb "only" to indicate her perception that greatness and success is attained solely through hard work. This is reiterated in extract (13) by Wayne:

The whole situation of people having preconceived ideas about who you are and why you working in a certain place pushed me to work harder to find a better future for myself (extract 13 above)

Before, Wayne had, throughout his narrative, used the pronoun "I" recurrently in relation to his decisions and reflections about his life. He makes no mention of other persons in his life who helped him through his struggles but definitely regards himself as capable of achieving more than the average South African (see 7 above). However, in his last paragraph, there is a shift from "I" to "you" (13). This shift does not address the reader but rather, it points to how as a person, other people have judged him on the job he had. And this only encouraged him to be better and to work harder. In excerpt (222) below, Sive writes:

222. ...there no one really seemed to care about the future but at least the school I went to or rather say my high school classmates gave me a challenge to strive for and take my studies seriously.

With this particular extract, Sive's classmates were a reason for her work ethic. The "there" she mentions is the township she grew up in and to her, not many saw past their circumstances to elevate themselves or make a better life for themselves. However, the mentality of those

around her, particularly her classmates, made her strive for a better life for herself through hard work and focusing on her studies. The theme of “working hard” is again reiterated in Dumi, Bradley, and Bongi’s (82) narratives below:

I studied hard and made sure that my results did improve so I can get admission
(extract 82 above)

Being appointed as deputy head was not only an honour but it also validated my hard work and potential
– Dumi

223. It motivated me to work harder as the subjects were tough (accounting and physical sciences) (Bradley)

In the above instances, the narrator’s commitment to “working hard” was their best chance at excelling in their individual endeavours. In (224), working hard meant that Bradley could get through subjects that were equally hard and required proper effort and concentration, while in (223), the hard work was a way to ensure that Bongi’s marks improved enough to get admission to the university. In extract (48 and 203 above). Joy writes that:

Everyone fails at some point but what matters is getting up and trying again until what you strive for is achieved (extract 48 above).

There is a shift in pronoun use, from “I” to “you” and it is done to bring across the point that failure is not an individual occurrence. The pronoun “everyone” does the same job, grouping the student and the reader (“you”) under the same category in an effort to prove that her failure was not just a unique experience. It was a common mistake and she needed to learn and grow from it. Against the backdrops of these extracts, it is clear that the students knew what they were headed for, and how to achieve their goals. These goals would be met regardless of circumstances that might hinder their success, through hard work and perseverance.

5.4 Linguistic Analysis

5.4.1 Metaphor

Metaphor is a universal and significant feature of everyday language and it affects the manners in which people perceive, think and act with regard to their lives and the world around them (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Metaphor can also change the way people understand traumatic events, as stated in Section 3.4.3, and how they can begin to understand the various aspects of their experiences (Smith & Sparkes 2004: 599). For this study, metaphor is explored as a linguistic feature employed by the students as a means to display the way they understand and interpret their experiences.

In Wayne's narrative, he draws on conventional metaphors of the self, in particular; the loss of self. In excerpt (2) above, Wayne states that "instead of finding myself, I just lost who I was." This metaphor is also evident in excerpt (3), where he says that "everyone had a direction and an opinion on what should happen in life and I was still lost," and similarly, in (4), "...university would be the place where I would find myself...". In the constructions presented in (2) and (3), Wayne, through the use of the Loss-of-Self metaphor, constructs the self in the following ways: "(i) The Self is a possession of the Subject; (ii) Control of Self by Subject is possession; (iii) Loss of control is loss of possession" Lakoff (1996:104). By drawing on this conceptual map, it becomes evident that Wayne's experience during high school caused him to "lose" himself (which he constructed as an object capable of being lost), and by doing so, he constructs himself as not being fully in control of his circumstances. In this context, it is thus interesting that he constructs the university as the "place that I would find myself..." His statement on the university can be viewed as a way of putting the university in control of the task of finding him again.

Lakoff (1980:50) provides the metaphor: “Time is Money, and therefore Time is a Limited Resource and Time is a Valuable Commodity.” This is used by Sive, and this metaphor relates to the premise that, as a society, i.e. modern Western society, time is understood and experiences as something that can be spent, wasted, budgeted, saved, etc.

224. ...I got even more frustrated about the fact that I am on an extended programme thinking is just anything one thing that is gonna waste my time

225. I spent two years of my life in my home village...I thought I should find myself a job but could not find any either; these were the most depressing years of my life

In Sive’s extract, time is seen as exactly that; a limited resource that can be wasted, in her case. She uses this metaphor to demonstrate her views on how she experiences time in general. She had already spent so much of her time not really doing much (226). And while being in her home village for so long, unable to study and unable to find a job, it felt that the EDP, once she was accepted, was indeed “another one thing that is gonna waste my time” (225). Time is, therefore, something she feels she cannot afford to lose more of, a product that needs to be spent wisely. Hence, when she learns of how the EDP actually works, it goes against that very view she built up for herself:

226. What was on my mind was I wanted to study get a job without any waste of time

And because of its extended nature, the EDP did not allow for her need to “study get a job without any waste of time” (227).

Another student, Bongi, draws on the lost-and-found metaphor within her narrative. The lost and found concept works exactly as it says. An individual would lose something and usually, it is found by someone else who both keeps it and tracks the individual down to return the item, all dependent on various factors. In everyday life, someone else would typically find the lost item; in Bongi’s narrative, she is the one who lost and found the item, the said items are abstract, namely “hope” and “faith”. She gives the following statements:

227. I lost hope in myself...My life was a mess, I slept all day and did not want food... (see extract 74 above)

And near the end of the narrative, she gives the statement:

228. I started to also see purpose...and had faith in myself (see extract 84 above)

Though not a direct lost-and-found metaphor, it does work well within the context of her narrative. And in particular, it shows off the sequence of the narrative nicely. At the beginning, she had “lost” hope in herself and because of this, her life was a mess.

229. ...I later realised that this was not the way I wanted to live the rest of my life (see extract 75 above)

In the above extracts, (228 and 229), Bongzi closes the lost-and-found metaphor with the realisation that this was not what she wanted from her life and she “found” purpose and she “found” faith.

Another element that was found was the way in which particular notions were presented by the students. These are not necessarily linguistic devices, but rather opinions of the students and it is thus placed here as a medium to analyse. This is due to the way the students spoke about these concepts and that their opinions portrayed just how much agency, or lack thereof, they possessed at the time.

5.4.2 Modality

Another key linguistic feature that appears across the narratives is modality. This is a linguistic device that deals with the selection of words to express how definite a speaker is about a topic. Usually, this is in the form of a statement or belief, ranging from being uncertain (low modality) to very certain (high modality).

Within modality, there are two categories. Deontic modality: concerned with the obligation or possibility of the acts performed by “morally responsible or socially regulated agents” (Byrnes & Duff 1989:372). Statements of deontic modality often include the regulation of those acts – giving permission or placing restrictions on those acts – thus, such statements allow the speaker to become aware of the norms/expectation of society (Byrnes & Duff 1989: 372). The second category, epistemic modality, highlights the degree of confidence a speaker has in a view or statement. Such statements emphasises the speaker’s belief in the statement.

Somehow I knew that I always wanted to help (see extract 8 above)

Wayne draws on the phrase above to highlight the level of confidence he has in his viewpoint as well as his awareness of the expectations of society. While “I knew” would be a marker of strong modality, the adverb “somehow” establishes that Wayne is not sure of how his statement would come true.

I decided that I was going to have to do better (see extract 22 and 178 above)

I think the fact that I got held back a year really opened my eyes and that’s why I decided I wanted to do great things with my future, starting at a university (see 26 and 202 above)

In both statements, Felicia uses strong modality in the form of the epistemic modal phrases “I decided” and “I think” to place emphasis on her confidence in what she was meant to do with her life. “I think” has lesser strength than that of “I decided”, or “I knew”, but by pairing with the phrase “the fact that I got held back” points to her acceptance of the “the fact” and that it was meant to happen to help her overcome the distress from being held back a year.

5.4.3 Pronouns

The use of pronouns illustrates how connected the speaker is either to himself or others, as well as objects. More importantly, this is often used to identify or refer to someone. Below are two examples from the narratives:

I was not a slow learner, I just wasn't raised under strict rules forcing me to sit with books and study hard ... (see extract 14 above)

Throughout the course of her narrative, the pronoun "I" is used 23 times as Felicia writes about her time at high school, as well as her decisions. There is no mention of anyone who helped her, or advised her on her schoolwork.

Education is very important to my grandfather...became a breadwinner to his family when his father left... (See extract 54 and 140 above)

It makes me proud that my mother and grandfather helped raise my brother and I... (See extract above)

Michelle's use of pronouns reinforces the claim that her actions and decisions are a way of meeting expectations and not of her own agency. Her use of the possessive pronoun "my" should indicate her possessions of the subject/object in question. It rather shows her relation or belonging to that subject/object. She does use other pronouns, including "his", "we", "him", "he", "we", "them" and "us". In a sense, by mentioning others so much, it just emphasises the fact that her reasoning is not her own.

5.4.4 Social Norms

There are temporal norms in each society, that is events or social expectations that all members within that society are expected to do by a certain age or by a certain time, originating from human intervention and enterprise. Members of the society are not obliged to fulfil these norms, even if there might be consequences should they decide not to. But by choosing to conform, individuals reproduce those conditions of the norms as it is understood and accepted in their society (Flaherty 2012:251'0).

230. The whole of 2015 I sat at home doing nothing except of course my driver's licence which I obviously hated but I passed anyway. (see extract 45 above)

The above extract is from Joy's narrative and in her case, the norm that she speaks of is obtaining a driver's licence. Though she "obviously hated it", she passed the test because, though at home and doing nothing, she still abided by this norm ("except of course my driver's licence"). This links back to the paragraph above; though one is not obliged to fulfil such norms, Joy does so anyway to avoid any unnecessary consequences. The use of the phrase "of course" emphasises this point, as it is often used to introduce an idea or action that is expected.

231. Grade 10 was where you decide on what you'd want to do with the rest of your life, whether if was becoming a doctor or a stay at home mom (see extract 16 above)

Here is a good example of how social conditions, or expectations rather, is placed on individuals within a society, permeating even as far back as Grade 10. At the surface, Felicia speaks of a generalised and accepted view on those who have not gone onto higher education, in the sense that one was either successful or spend the rest of their lives at home, having achieved nothing. That is an assumption. However, looking deeper, it is an odd expectation of Grade 10 learners to know exactly what they wish to do with the rest of their lives at the age of 15 and 16 years.

5.4.5 Expectations vs. Personal Agency

Michelle's narrative provides a good example of how one's goals and in particular, one's voice, can be pushed aside to meet the expectations of society. In her case, it was to meet the expectations of being a coloured person as well as a child. Her actions and decisions are a way of meeting those expectations and not of her own volition. Instead, it appears as she is indeed fulfilling others' goals and not her own.

232. He always told me that in order to be taken seriously as a coloured person in South Africa, I would need a degree (see extract 55 above)

233. It was expected of me, as my generation was given the opportunities his or his children did not have (see extract 56 above)
234. I am the first person in my family to attend such a prestigious university and the pressure to perform is so intense (see extract 57 above)
235. I want to make them all proud, but I want to make my grandfather's wish come true, my goal is to make him proud (see extract 58 above)

It is important to note the significance of this particular student. While most of the students that partook in the study were first-year students who started in 2016 and 2017, based on the data set that was used, Michelle is not a first-year student. She began her university career in 2013 and by 2016, she was still considered a first year due to the fact that she had not finished the support modules. What is interesting to the researcher is the way her agency is portrayed within her narrative and it might just be the reason why she was still a first year.

In (234), she speaks of being the first of her family to attend such a prestigious university and the pressure to perform was intense. There is, however, no mention of how *she* felt about the situation. This is confirmed by her statement in (235), where she gives her (presumably) reasons as wanting to “make them all proud...I want to make my grandfather's wish come true, my goal is to make him proud.” Nowhere does she speak of her own goals or own expectations. This could be due to her statement in (233): “it was expected of me”.

Michelle's agency is displaced by a passivity that echoes throughout the literature on foundational provision. Though these are her own words and her voice will be heard, it still echoes of expectation and of conformity; not necessarily of her so-called deficiency as a foundational provision student, but of being one of the historically disadvantaged groups and, more importantly, what it means to be a member of that group in an elite university (234).

5.5 Summary

Chapter 5 presented the results of a structural analysis of the narratives. Subsequent to this, it highlighted three dominant themes across all the narratives. It also presented a linguistic analysis on the type of linguistic devices used and how they too showcased agency within the students' narratives. The conclusion in the following chapter will bring together the results of the analysis, considering whether the research questions have been answered.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

As articulated in the initial chapter of this study, the aim of the research was to contribute to literature on foundational provision that moves the attention away from the students' level of academic skills, or lack thereof, to a focus on the lived experiences of those students.

Adjacent to this aim is the intent to allow the voices of the students, often absent from literature regarding them, to be heard through their narratives.

The second research aim, which was to assess whether their narratives aligned with dominant deficit discourse about students on foundational provision, could not be assessed appropriately as their constructions of themselves offered a different view– that of students as active agents. What is revealed through the analysis was a great amount of agency among the students. Therefore, the following chapter discusses the findings highlighted in the previous chapter, focusing on how the structural, thematic and linguistic analysis proved to be a platform to showcase the agency of the students.

6.2 Agency and the Construction of Self

When commencing with the research study, I had the two research questions in mind as analysis was conducted. While the questions were indeed answered, and that will be discussed in the following section, the concept of agency was discovered within the narratives of the students. Students' constructions of themselves revealed, as Martin (2004:135) states, their capability to make choices and act on these choices in a manner that makes a difference in their lives. As Ellery & Baxen (2015: 104) discovered:

It is because of those very circumstances that they are able to push through and struggle through to achieve a better life and better grasp of themselves and what they want. Their very actions and agency exhibit the problems with maintaining a student deficit

discourse, in which students remain seen as deficit, irrespective of whether they achieve top marks.

While this was not the initial aim of the study, the fact that students, and especially those who are seen as disadvantaged or who are automatically labelled as underprepared due to their place on foundational provision, made the decision, and stuck to that decision so that they could rise above their circumstances.

Their constructions of themselves demonstrates a great deal of agency within the students, allowing them to be viewed as active agents, and not just conforming to social norms. Their constructions proved that they did not place themselves in or outside of the dominant discourse that surround foundational provision. Instead, they used their agency – their resilience to overcome their disadvantaged backgrounds – as resources for success within HE.

6.3 Research Question 1

- How do students construct *themselves* in their narratives about their lives and reasoning for coming to university?

This section examines the first research question and whether it had been answered sufficiently and effectively. As is clear from the narrative excerpts in the previous chapter, many students came from difficult and often stressful social conditions. Their conditions were of both a personal and community nature. The analysis, both thematic and structural, found that despite these circumstances, students persevered to create a better future for themselves. The three themes that were identified – the construction of the university, education, and working hard – proved that students were resilient and wanted to succeed. In relation, what was found instead was that students acted with agency, as stated in the previous section. The analysis brought across their agency through the themes, how they presented their narrative, and the way in which they spoke about their experiences.

The linguistic devices, particularly modality, give a good indication of how the students view themselves, their circumstances as well as university. Modality refers to the level of certainty an individual has in a particular statement. Thus, in this study, it can be said that the students had high modality. Most students were certain of what they wanted from the university and where they wanted to take their lives.

Metaphor was another strong indication in terms of the loss of agency experienced by some of the students. Students held high hopes for themselves and their lives after high school. For Wayne, it was a loss of self as he approached the end of his high school career and Bongi too lost herself, so much so that it pervaded her life with awful consequences (see extract 74 above).

Another device that featured often was pronouns, which illustrated how connected the narrators are to him-/herself, or others, or objects within the environment. More importantly, pronouns are often used to identify or refer to others. In Michelle's narrative, for example, her use of pronouns emphasises the assumption that her actions are a way of meeting the expectations of her family and not her own decision. The possessive pronoun "my" normally indicates the possession of the subject/object in question. For Michelle, it displays her relation or belonging to said subject/object. While she might use other pronouns within her narrative, by the frequency of mentioning others, it just highlights the claim that her decisions are not her own. She does use other pronouns, including "his", "we", "him", "he", "we", "them" and "us". In a sense, by mentioning others so much, it just emphasises the fact that her reasoning is not her own.

There were also two distinct concepts that students constructed within their narratives. And it was interesting to see how they spoke about these concepts and related them to themselves. The two concepts – social norms and expectations vs. personal agency – all show a unique point of view of the students. Again, these concepts revealed that though they are actively

deciding to attend university and better their lives, there are still social norms and, in the case of expectations vs. agency, expectation that are placed upon them that they adhere to and believe.

Through the linguistic devices mentioned above, the students established themselves as active agents and due to the recurrence of the linguistic devices, it can be said that student agency is not a rare occurrence and that students who display this have a grasp of who they are and what they want from university.

6.4 Research Question 2

- In what ways are these student narratives similar or different to dominant deficit discourses about foundation programmes and the students on these programmes?

To review, the literature that exists on foundational provision in South Africa focuses not only on the academic interventions themselves but emphasises the issues that arose with the deficit constructions of the students placed on the foundation programmes. These students are almost always viewed as deficit or lacking the skills needed to succeed at tertiary education. However, it is not often the literature focuses on the students themselves, and their agency and opinions are almost always absent from the research. The analysis proved that the students rarely reflected on their high school marks, struggles with language or the fact that they came from impoverished or difficult circumstances – all reasons cited in defence of the deficit discourse. Instead, for many students, HE is a way out of their impoverished homes. It is quite possible that the students who enter HE via foundational provision lack the necessary skills to succeed in HE. But that does not ring true for all students nor does it reflect an inability to persevere. Their narratives are neither similar nor different but offer a view that is often overlooked – that of students as active agents – when conducting tests and checking students against their backgrounds.

The aim of the second research question was to see if student narratives revealed alignment with the deficit constructions about foundation programme students. Or, if they have strayed away from what literature has said about underprepared students and their inability to succeed within H.E. Instead there is no correlation between their backgrounds and the deficit discourses nor do they assert themselves as such. Rather, they reveal that students are active agents, with a great deal of resilience and agency, and will do what they believe will better their lives.

6.5 Limitations

6.5.1 Reliance on Written Narratives

In the past few decades, there has been a substantial body of research in various fields (for example linguistics, psychology, philosophy, education), that dealt with the relationship between spoken and written language, especially the similarities and differences that appear between the two mediums (Pu 2006:37). The general consensus was that since they characterise different ways of communicating, they also offer different ways of knowing and reflecting.

Oral language is usually seen as informal, interpersonal and narrative-like while on the other hand, written language is considered formal and planned, with limited interaction between the writer and reader (Horowitz & Samuels cited in Pu 2006:38). When a discourse of the same genre, context and goal is used in different mediums, it exhibits substantial patterns of difference at various levels of structure (Pu 2006:37). For example, at the discourse level, the oral narrative is easily distinguished from the written narrative in terms of the speaker's active involvement with their audience.

The written narrative is more compact and flows smoothly as it lacks repetition and the excessive use of conjunctions that oral narratives are typically prone to (Pu 2006:37). However, we were attempting to find out how students construct themselves through their use of linguistic devices. With an oral narrative, it would have meant combing through transcriptions

filled with often irrelevant words. While not necessarily an issue, a written narrative allowed for direct analysis of the narratives. The second set of data collected meant that it allowed for more time to analyse the narratives with more depth and accuracy. The lack of oral narratives; in this case, it would have been interviews, could be seen as a limitation in terms of the type and amount of data that could have been produced for the research. However, the written narrative worked as a better medium of data for the linguistic analysis.

From the onset of the research, the data collection instruments had included both written narrative tasks as well as in-depth interviews with 10 selected students, based on their responses from the written tasks. Sixteen students had given their consent to their written tasks being used within the research. Interviews would then have taken place after selecting 10 students who stood out as emblematic of the research study. What was decided instead was to do a second round of data collection for which 21 students gave their consent. The second round of data collection was required as the first set of data did not have enough content. The main reason for this was that the narratives that were collected during the first round were difficult to read – most of the students were second language English users – and, thus, difficult to understand and influenced the data selected. As it was requested that students wrote their narratives, not everyone could express themselves well and their data was difficult to understand.

6.5.2 The Focus on First-Year Students

The data that was obtained came from the first-year students that arrived in 2016 and 2017, excluding two historically more senior students as mentioned in Chapter 4. Regarding those two students, both who were not first years to the university and EDP at the time of the data collection, the results that emerged from their narratives do show a difference in terms of those who were first years. Their narratives focused predominantly on their family circumstances before coming to university, a similarity they share with the other students. However, due to their exposure to the EDP at the time of writing their narratives, the excitement and

nervousness, and, in some cases, the disappointment of being on an EDP, did not feature in their narratives. Instead, the single most important difference was the way they represented their family circumstances and how that representation had impacted them.

The original intention was to use both first-year and second-year EDP students. One key reason for only using the narratives of first years lies in the fact that they have no true experiences, yet, of university life and culture, and importantly, of the EDP. Their first experiences with the programme will be those they experienced before they arrived: for most this would be being informed of their acceptance into the programme. Therefore, their narratives reflect a true, unbiased view of what they believe university life meant and offered a fresher perspective to the narratives. Conversely, second-year students have already experienced university and the EDP. Their views would be influenced as they have more knowledge and will instead focus on their experiences at university than those before attending university. However, the second years were busy with their own schedules and classes and it would have been inconsiderate to impose on them.

Thus, the focus on first-years only had the limiting quality of not having a more in-depth understanding of how EDP was benefiting them, if at all. It also meant that the views of the first-years might have brought across a newer perspective but the older student might have been able to align their experiences before and after university better for the purposes of the study.

6.6 Conclusion

Foundational provision is an initiative on behalf of both government and HEIs to grant wider and equal HE access. Public views and opinions on HEIs' plans and admission policies are diverse, and action from HEIs and government parties are interpreted in a multitude of ways (Bernard 2015:246). One theme that appears consistently is that of deficit when dealing with

diversity and difference among entering students. The manner in which the students are conceptualised and construed are in deficit terms, implying a difficulty in the students' ability to actively participate and succeed in HE.

Within the deficit construction, the students are labelled as “underprepared” and are often blamed for not adapting to the university's standards. And this attitude is aimed at students from low socio-economic backgrounds and are said to pose an issue within HEIs as they are not “traditional”, adding to the assumption that anything other than the mainstream will cause problems (see Lawrence 2003:2).

There is an aspect of the problem that remains absent from literature and that is the voice of the students. Adjacent to the issue of deficiency and a deficit discourse is the lack of attention on their agency as individuals. Reflecting on the narratives of students in this way will allow for conversations about the cultural and academic experiences of these students, providing a platform for the voices of the EDP students to be heard since their voices are important as part of the academic community.

The stories of the Extended Degree Programme (EDP) students are both interesting and illuminating. Their stories clarify the functioning of students who form part of this programme and how their lives and experiences impacted on their willingness to gain entry to, attend and succeed and at an institution of higher education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: WRITTEN NARRATIVES OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Wayne

High school had a major impact on my life and shaping who I am today and what I'm currently studying. My last three years on school (Gr 10-12) was honestly confusing and instead of finding myself I just lost who I am and what I stand for. Everyone had a direction and an opinion on what should happen in life and I was still lost. Somehow I knew that university would be the place where I would find myself no matter what I get to study. High school ended and my plan of studying never worked out. I was rejected by 5 universities and had to go and work everyday by hanging newspaper posters on lamp poles from 10pm-3am. It was hard to see myself in that situation because I had good marks and I was a prefect too but instead of studying I was working a job meant for an uneducated South African.

Somehow I knew that I always wanted to help people and being out working on the streets everynight and seeing the destruction of poverty and prostitution. Nobody really sees what happens after dark and most people have this perception that it's dangerous but if you really out on the streets each night you'll see that these people are struggling to keep warm, find food and a place to sleep. Hence that experience prompted me to apply for Social Work at SU. Everyone had something negative to say about my choice but I just remember the underage prostitutes and homeless people and finally finding a way to help them and give back.

Back in gr 11 I had a job in Checkers, literally packing baked beans and being in that position where people treated you as if you nothing changed me. The whole situation of people having preconceived ideas about who you are and why you working in a certain place pushed me to work harder and find a better future for myself.

2. Felicia

When I started high school in 2010 I found it difficult to study. I was not a slow learner, I just wasn't raised under strict rules forcing me to sit with books and study hard to be part of the schools top achievers. This carefree lifestyle went on until grade 10 (which didn't occur to me than that that was the most important year in high school). Grade 10 was where you decide on what you'd want to do with the rest of your life, whether it was becoming a doctor or a stay at home mom. I never really paid much attention in class and I always had a just passed rate. Starting grade 10 I followed my friends and chose their subjects thinking I could do it. I blindly held on to the subjects I only now realised was never made for me. I failed grade 10 in 2012 and went back the next year. The day I found out I was going to be held back a year it was like I had an epiphany. I decided that I was going to have to do better and leave going out with my friends for a different time. I started paying attention more, studying my work, taking extra classes and stayed in when all my friends went out.

At school I started becoming a top achiever in my grade and top student in my class. I received numerous diplomas and got chosen as a prefect two times. I think the fact that I got held back a year really opened my eyes and that's why I decided I wanted to do great things with my future, starting at a university.

3. John

Before coming to this university I went to the University of the Free State straight after matric in 2011. Prior to that I always knew that I either want to become a lawyer or a journalist. I grew up in a small town in the Eastern Cape, Craddock. We were never exposed to Universities and I certainly had no idea on what was expected of me to gain admission to a University. Only one groups of people came to our school at the end of our grade 11 year to advertise the University of the Free State then I decided the I'm going to apply to study there. They declined my application, claiming that my marks were to low but I could not understand why because I had passed matric with a B. So my mother and I decided to go there despite of their response and by the time that we got there only then were we told about the EDP programme. I wasn't keen on doing it because it made feel dumb and there was no academic support there at all. I was young and fresh from High School, studying something that I couldn't relate to so I ended up failing my first year and I decided to just drop out and look for a job. After four years of changing from one job to another I decided the I cannot spend the rest of my life on a salary of R4500 when I have a matric certificate and the potential to study. That's when I decided to come and study here but this time I was still met by the same EDP programme but by this time it was thoroughly explained to me on how it is going to work and how it would benefit me.

4. Joy

This is not my first time being admitted in a University. I was once admitted to the University of Johannesburg in Gauteng but the experience over there was horrible that I had to drop out because my mom couldn't afford it anymore and because I was failing horribly. Those events in those year had a major effect on my life, as I became very sad that I failed, disappointed everyone at home. It's very embarrassing as well among my peers when I have to explain to them the main reason I was at home. I often became very distant from everyone else. My mom often supported and encouraged me to apply at any university because she claimed I'm still so young, and I can always do whatever I wanted to do. Having my mom around really made me feel as though I can do anything that my mind to.

The whole of 2015 I sat at home doing nothing except of course my driver's lincese which I obviously hated but I passed anyway. I was often very bored sitting at home doing nothing but I met a few friends which appeared to be in difficult situations than mine. I realised that my situation is not so bad. Everyone fails at some point but what matters is getting up and trying again until what you strive for is achieved. My dad often describe me as being useless and how I wasted his money, he was not very supportive as my mom was. I kept on telling myself that when I get admitted to any university I'm going to get right and prove him wrong.

Another event that had a positive impact on my life it is when I got admitted to several university but I had to choose only one. Mom did not want me to go far as she was still afraid if I'm far from home I might fail again. I was in a bus the whole night to get here as I'm from Limpopo and I couldn't book the flight ticket because it was expensive but although I travelled and I was very tired when I got here but I was very excited that my mom made it possible.

5. Michelle

From a very young age, I was told that in order to become a success in life, I would have to go to university. Education is very important to my grandfather, because he had to leave primary school at a young age and become a breadwinner to his family when his father left them. He always told me that in order to be taken seriously as a coloured person in South Africa, I would need a degree. It was expected of me, as my generation was given the opportunities his or his children did not have. I am the first person in my family to attend such a prestigious university and the pressure to perform is so intense. I want to make them all proud, but I want to make my grandfather's wish come true, my goal is to make him proud. A few years later while I was in high school my father left my mother, brother and I for another woman and her family, her children and that completely change my life and how I saw the world. I had to grow up faster than most and it affected me tremendously. I began to slide academically, but managed to pick myself up and start to focus before it was too late for me. I was more determined to show my father that I was smarter and more determined to make a life for myself without him. I wanted to make him ashamed of what he left behind. What gives me immense satisfaction is that people always tell him about how smart I am and how proud he should be of his children. It gives me the satisfaction knowing that he screwed his life up and that the people he left us for are only giving him problems and stress. It makes me proud that my mother and grandfather helped raise my brother and I and that we are okay and that we don't need him. My mother says that we are a success and that is all that matters to her and the family.

6. Sive

I was raised by a single parent and we lived in an informal settlement, there no one really seemed to care about the future but atleast the school I went to or rather to say my high school class-mates gave me a challenge to strive for more and take my studies seriously. My siblings also had a positive impact in my life. My brother being my first mother's child to go to University and encouraged me to study hard and my sister not having much but trying by any means for us to have a better life. I thought immediately after matric I will go straight to University but the only thing that was stoping me was I could not get funding. I spent two years of my life in my home village after my mother passed on. I thought I shold find myself a job but could not find any either; these were the most depressing years of my life. Luckily I got accepted in Stellenbosch University in 2016 in a Social Work EDP. I did not understand what really meant when they said EDP I was just excited. When I got to Varsity I got even more frustrated about the fact that I am on extended programme thinking is just another one thing that is gonna waste my time. What was on my mind was I wanted to study get a job without any waste of time; but now I am enjoying the programme and see the signifact of it.

7. Samuel

Well the first time I thought about coming to University was when I started high school and actually each and every year that I passed my grade I got fully excited to being a university student, but when I started matric it was my main focus to pass and go to University by the time I got my results that is when I knew that my dream had come true.

Another thing/event that made want to go to Varsity was because some of my cousins had already started university So I did not want to be the first one of our generation who won't have University education and shame my family and even embarrass myself.

Lastly I knew that although you do get a job for having matric it is not usually stable and in the long run will not satisfy you to look after your family. University education gives you a sustained and stable job to rely on.

8. Bongi

I completed school in 2014, my matric to be precise. The following year, I did not get admission to any varsity because my results were not good. I lost hope in myself and just wanted to sit at home and do nothing because all of my friends were at University at that time, My life was a mess I slept all day and did not want any food during the first few weeks after I was rejected in most of the universities that I had applied at.

I nearly got depressed and my mother saw it coming and then asked one of my previous school teachers to speak to me and at least persuade me to go to College but I did not want to go there because most of my friends were in the university and I also wanted to be there too.

My teacher did talk to me and advised me to go to College or go and improve my results instead of just sitting at home the entire year and doing nothing with my life it was February 2015 at that time

I refused because I was afraid that people would laugh at me. I stayed at home and did nothing I had to wake up every day and prepare for my younger sister and my nieces for school since I was the oldest and my mom instructed me to do so since she had to go to work early the lady that used to help us with that was told by my mom to stop coming at our house and doing that since I was always at home and doing nothing.

I cried myself to sleep everyday because I was feeling miserable and thinking that my mom had no faith in me as she did many years ago while I was still young. But anyway to cut the long story short I later realised that this was not the way I wanted to live the rest of my life and decided to go and upgrade my results in a near by finishing school.

I went to the school and I saw so many kids that were in my shoes and I started to also see purpose in my life and had faith in myself. I studied hard and made sure that my results did

improve so I can get admission to the university. When the University of Stellenbosch accepted me I felt the excitement that I have never experienced before.

9. Tamara

My family had no students who went to go and study at a university, so that motivated me to make a difference in my family. I always had that goal in my mind from the time I started high school. Therefore, I became the first generation to go to university. It was not easy to keep up with that goal, because there were many challenges along the way.

A few of these challenges includes when I was in grade ten and my godmother passed away and a few months later when I was in grade eleven I lost my grandmother as well.

I felt like giving up on my dreams, but decide to pull through and to show the world that I am a stronger person.

Each day I kept on motivating myself and asked God for strength. In the end I passed matric with two distinctions and received an opportunity to do a bridging course at Stellenbosch University, namely SciMathUs.

This then gave me the opportunity to apply for a degree course at university.

Another event which influenced me to go to university was when I was in grade eleven I participated in a radio CCFM youth competition. This was where all schools around the Western Cape had to send one learner to represent them in a radio competition. I was at Malibu High School and I represented my school.

When I got to the studio I was really nervous and thought to myself that I cannot do this. They gave me a topic and it was about substance abuse. I had to speak for three hours on air about the topic and motivate the youth.

In the end I won first prize in the competition and realized that nothing is impossible if I only have faith.

10. Lisa

My stepmother and father were on the brink of divorce which impacted me emotionally hence the fact that my father and I don't have a relationship and he is the only one who supports me due to the fact that my mother is unable too and lives in Caledon. I had an interdict issued against my father after he assaulted me. Despite the fact that I had alot of household issues i managed to pass matric. meet the minimum requirements and also obtain a distinction. I also ranked amongst the top ten at my high school. This was great news to me and gave me a sense of hope for my future. Before coming to university I was under alot of stress due to the fact that I hadn't recieved any news about a bursary. I struggled to find ways to get into varsity all I needed at the time was money for registration and although my father could give atleast a portion off that money he was too selfish and didn't care. Eventually after coming to Admin A almost everyday I got funding in the second week of varsity. Although I was grateful I was in such despair that I missed out on the welcoming week which is where you actually find your feet.

11. Pauline

I always wanted to come to university/attend university it was always my life goal or one of my biggest dreams so I had a major influence in my decision to come. I applied to different universities from the year 2012 and I never got accepted because my marks weren't that good so that had a major influence on my life applying with the hopes of being accepted and then being rejected. I then started working after I completed my matric year in 2013, and I always felt that working in retail was not for me. I felt like a failure because it looked like that would become my life now having such high hopes for myself and then finding myself in a position where it was not becoming a reality, or where I was not where I wanted to be. That was my second major influence not being to reach my goals and feeling like a failure because of it. My third major influence was when my baby sister was born in 2014 and I just really wanted to play an active role in her life, and while I was working I always bought her stuff and I just felt I wanted to be able to give her the world without it influencing how much money I made and this really made me more determined than ever to want to make something of my life. My cousin got accepted into university after she matriculated and that just really made me upset because my whole family was so excited about her going and I have been trying every year and just never got in and I didn't feel so good about myself.

12. Tia

Two major events that had change my whole life and still do have a great impact on my daily life. The day I founded out our was pregnant had changed my whole perspective of not coming to university no -more. I felt my life was over. Because how could I go study and still look after a baby. This was in my final year of school thought I wouldn't pass my matric year but I actually did. I had some inspiring words from family and friends that I should make something good of my life no matter if I've have a child. After giving birth to my baby in 2015 I encouraged myself to apply at tertiary education's. The tertiary education I applied for I got rejected by all of them then one day I recieved an email from SU stating that I've been accepted in the EDP programme first of all I wasn't to keen of it but at least I got in somewhere. What had encouraged me most of all is that, their are students who badly want to study but don't have funding or the necessary facilities to apply and who am I to take this opportunity for granted. Also because I want to invest into my child's life so that he can also become a excellent student one day. No matter the circumstance he might find him in one day.

13. Melody

The first significant event that happened in my life is probably failing my first test in High School. This was significant because as a hard worker and high achiever accepting failure is not easy. Going through this experience did influence me in a positive way as it helped me to have an open mind about writing tests or exams. It also helped me grow into accepting failure and looking beyond it and how to overcome failure. It helped me become more mature accepting everything does not work out in the way that you always want it to and you will only achieve success and greatness if you work hard for it.

The second major influence in my life was my past friendships. Growing up and realising who your true friends are influenced me positively as I started to see which friends had a positive influence on my life and which ones had a negative influence. It made it easy for me to realise my self-worth and easy for me to cut off anyone that is negative. Cutting off my negative friendships helped me to grow socially and it also helped me to do some self-evaluation. This influence also helped me realise that everyone is different and I should not have expectations.

The last major influence that affected my life is passing matric and getting in University. This made me realise how privileged I am. It made me realise that hard work does pay off.

14. Bradley

An event that had an influence on my life was my subject choices in Grade 10. The choice of my subjects was not exactly my choice, but rather that of my dad's. However, I'm grateful that he had an impact on my subject choices, as it motivated me to work harder as the subjects were tough (accounting and physical sciences). In a way, I feel like this influenced my average as I struggled in these two subjects and would have preferred to do more theoretical subjects, rather than practical.

Another event was the fact that I was put into hostel at a young age (14). This was scary for me as I had always been dependent on my parents and the thought of them not being there made me anxious as I felt vulnerable. However, looking back after the 5 years, I am grateful as it taught me to be independent and I also learnt a lot about myself through the years. As a shy, introverted person, it forced me to come out of my shell and experience life outside my comfort zone.

15. Beverley

There were two major events that had a major impact on my life before I came to university. These events happened at different times but they both took place in 2016.

In February of 2016, I made the decision not to go to university. I had been accepted the year before, but I had little faith in whether or not my marks would be good enough in my final exam. I had become despondent and depressed after writing my Mathematics exam and this led me to try and forget about my application to study at Stellenbosch University. However, even after I was accepted, I still felt like I was not an academic enough person who would succeed at university, so I declined to register for the year.

It was during my gap year and working with my dad in his photography business that I grew more confident and self-assured. There were days when I still felt depressed, however I started to enjoy the repetition of working with people. Thus, when I reapplied to study at Stellenbosch University I had a firmer resolve to see through my choice.

16. David

My mom has been a stay at home mom looking after and caring for for 4 children. My mom has always wanted to be a nurse but unfortunately she was never able to go and study due to financial reasons. Growing up, my dad was also in a position where financially he also couldn't go to university. My mom and dad have together built a life for their children, a better one compared to what they had. I chose to come to university because my parents have worked extremely hard and have come a long way in giving me and my three brothers the best possible life. The #fees must fall situation has made me appreciate and value my education a whole lot more. It made me realise that not everyone can afford tertiary education and that made me ask myself "if my parents can afford it, why would I pass at the opportunity at getting my degree"

17. Siph

After matric I took a gap year because I felt that I wasn't at a right space in my life and I wasn't also sure of what I wanted to study. I then decided that a degree in education or language and culture would be a safer option as I enjoy working with people. I had applied to both The University of the Western Cape and Stellenbosch University. I was accepted to both universities but I decided that Stellenbosch University would allow me to achieve all the goals I had. Being the first person to attend university in my family felt like a big achievement and burden at the same.

18. Thando

Okay, so I live by the quote “Be the change you wish to see in the world” – Gandhi. It is instilled in me that when you pass matric you obviously go to University. I did not grow up privileged in some peoples eyes, but to me it was enough. I do not have major events that influenced me to come to university only reasons. And the reasons are that I want to be the best me that I can be and that I want to give my parents all the things they deserve. So I came to university to better my families life and my own.

19. Dumi

There have been multiple events that have left enduring effects on me and the way in which I see the world; these events have had a major effect on the way I prepared myself for university. The first of these events was being awarded the position of deputy head girl in my school in 2016. This instance allowed me to think beyond myself and my circumstances. In December last year, I visited family in the Eastern Cape, which brings me to the impactful event; during this time I visited my grandmother's grave-site and poured myself to what I felt was her palpable presence. Both of these events have built me and emptied me well enough for university.

The two aforementioned events were vital for my university preparation. Being appointed as deputy head was not only an honour but it also validated my hard work and potential, it allowed me to believe that perhaps I have in me just enough to reach university and excel. Visiting my grandmother's grave-site was an opportunity to unload numerous burdens that had been holding me back, which was essential for the undertaking of new university loads.

20. Troy

First event: when I received my matric marks that was the event that influenced me before coming to uni because I was not even sure I would make it into university. When I received my marks it was physical evidence of the effort I put into my matric year. I was happy and disappointed but [unable to decipher word] happy.

Second event: Being accepted to Stellenbosch for EDP. I was extremely disappointed and upset because my matric average had the requirements of a mainstream programme. I got accepted to Wits and Uj for mainstream programme but I decided I wanted to come to the Western Cape anyway. Being accepted for EDP made me angry and disappointed because I felt that my matric efforts went into the drain.

21. Clarissa

I had many obstacles and events in my life that could have prevented me from attending university. Right now I can proudly say that I have overcome these articles.

The first event that had a major influence on my life was my final exam at school. I absolutely hated every moment of it. I found it extremely difficult to focus on my exams and I hardly made any time for studying. I spent every day procrastinating and because of this I had the realisation that this could put me at risk of failing my final exam, that meant I would not be able to attend university. Luckily I received a rude awakening from my mother with regards to my future education.

The second would be my struggle with finding funds to attend university. I had to get a holiday job in order to help my parents pay for my registration because I hadn't received any feedback from the bursaries that I had applied for.

Both these events played a significant role in my life and the future of my education. It made me appreciate the opportunities that I had been presented with. It also made me work harder so that I can achieve the goals I set out for myself.

22. Amara

The first event that influenced my life before University was when my father was involved in an accident. Coming from a less privileged background where none of my siblings had a proper education, I needed to go out and get an education because after my father's accident I realised how dependent my whole family was on my father, knowing that he would not live forever played an imperative role in my decision.

Secondly,

All I wanted was for my father to be proud of me, It showed after I received my matric results, and I wanted it to continue. I am the second youngest in my family and it is amazing knowing that I have set an example for my baby sister, who is trying her utmost to make me proud.

23. Linden

My whole life it has been said that after school I would have to go to university. Personally, there was not a specific event that influenced me; however what inspired me was seeing how proud my parents were of my brother doing so well at UCT.

My brother being successful at university motivated me to study hard in matric in order for me to achieve the marks that would help me get accepted into Stellenbosch.

24. Nontle

I am a young girl who grew up in a township where by people there do not care about education. I was very concerned about this as I was hoping that people from our generation are the one's who are going to be future leaders. I started to work very hard at school to obtain good results and be able to uplift the standard of living for my community, that is one of the main driving factor which influenced me to come to university.

I am coming from a middle class family and my mother is a single parent due to some circumstances. She works very hard to make sure that me and my sibling's needs are satisfied even though it's very hard for her. Dedicating to come to university was my only last option to help my mother raise the other kids. The thought of giving back to her for her work made me decide on going to university.

25. Noma

Finished my high school studies and the next final step was a university degree as a degree is portrayed as a stepping stone to obtaining a better and professional job.

During my gap year, I realised how much I missed learning.

My parents put pressure on me to finish my studies.

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Challenging the Deficit Construct of Foundational Programme Students: An Analysis of the Linguistic Realisation of Social Agency in the Narratives of Students on an Extended Degree Programme

You are asked to partake in a research study conducted by Melissa Martin (*BA Language and Culture and BA (Hons) Linguistics*) from the *Department of General Linguistics* at Stellenbosch University. The results of this study will contribute to a Master's thesis in Linguistics. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are part of the Extended Degree Programme (EDP) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to analyse the narratives of students who are on the EDP in the Arts and Social Sciences. These narratives will include the experiences of the students before they arrived at Stellenbosch University and the journey they took to arrive at the institution. By conducting a close, linguistic analysis of their narratives, the researcher will identify the linguistic resources that are markers of agency, or markers of the student's ability to act independently regardless of social constraints. Such an analysis will draw attention to dominant discourses about EDP students and how they might be misrepresentations of the student's lived experiences.

2. PROCEDURES

If you grant permission for your participation in this study, the following will occur:

- (i) You will complete a short questionnaire. It has two open-ended questions pertaining to your experiences before entering tertiary education.
- (ii) Once the questionnaire is complete, you will be asked if you are willing to partake in an in-depth interview. The interview portion of the research will require you to elaborate on answers you gave in the questionnaire. The interview will take no more than 1 hour.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are minimal identifiable risks and/or discomforts associated with participation in this study. Students may find it difficult to relay aspects of their histories that they may have found traumatic or troublesome. If this is the case, students may withdraw from participation at any stage of the study without any consequences whatsoever. Such students will also be referred to the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD):

The **CSCD** (Centre for Student Counselling and Development) Contact Details:

Academic Counselling: 021-808-4707

Psychotherapeutic and Social Services: 021-808-4994

Physical Address:

CSCD

Central Reception

37 Victoria Street

Stellenbosch

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There is no direct benefit to you, but your involvement in the research will assist the researcher in obtaining a clearer picture of the lived experiences of EDP students.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participation is free of charge and you will receive no monetary payment or course credits for participation.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of limited access to your data (by only the researcher and her supervisor, Dr. T. Bernard), and safe storage (in a locked storage facility on the university premises) of hard copy versions of the response record forms and other raw data.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to partake in this study or not. If you consent, you may withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. You may also refuse to answer any question you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Melissa Martin (panteramj6@gmail.com) or Dr. Taryn Bernard (supervisor): 021 808 2146; tbernard@sun.ac.za.

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 8084622] at the University's Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to me _____ by Melissa Martin in English and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

Name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the participant*]. He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This information sharing took place in English and a translator was used if it was required.

Signature of investigator

Date

