

Master's in Community Counseling Psychology  
Research Dissertation  
Psychology  
University of Witwatersrand

'Reading between the lines': exploring the telling, hearing, reflective and  
relational components of women traders' narratives.

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## **Acknowledgments**

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## Declaration

Under the supervision of Professor Jill Bradbury,

I, Tamryn Coats hereby declare that this research is my own original work and all external sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged. This work has not previously, in its entirety, or in part been submitted to any other university in the interest of an academic qualification.

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Tamryn Coats

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Date

## **Abstract**

This research project focused on understanding the narratives of women informal street traders in Warwick Junction, Durban. This is a diverse and vibrant trading community and the five women interviewed have been working in the area for many years. This means that these research participants offer a unique window in on the intersections between individual (psychological) realities and historical, sociopolitical and economic life. The project adopted a narrative approach, analyzing the ways in which 1) particular incident narratives (PINs) within each life narrative reflect key aspects of the life story and draw on narrative principles to convey this; 2) the ways in which narratives are interactively constructed between the researcher and participants in the interview situation; and 3) the relational construction of individual lives in networks of communities. The results highlighted the inherently interwoven nature of identity construction between individuals and the communities with which they associate. The overarching factors of poverty, gender and trauma were shown, in all three levels of analysis, as key elements that tied the women together through relationships of shared experiences. The stories that the women chose to share were strongly influenced by the presence and responses of the interviewer and the researcher and thus, the ways in which power, entrenched in history and culture, influenced the narratives became most evident. The ways in which the women connect and disconnect with relational others was shown to influence their sense of belonging within various communities, both real and imagined. This contributed to the women's development of resilience and salient identities as cohesive communities were shown to be buffers against adversity and influencers in the construction of identity.

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