

killed you. And so right, they ran away from Shaka and at night they used to hide, and in the day they used to eat, you see, that's why it's dhla-mini.

After an elaboration of this account SS adds, "I can't say it's that thing's exactly happening, but as far as I know things, it happened." And he stresses again,

You see, that's how I can say I was more interested in history, to know what happened before, and to compare what happened now and what happened before, and then to see where are we really going to, and what's going to happen next time.

At school SS was "bright", perhaps the most common word he uses in describing himself, and regularly came first or second, doing better than his cousins, loving school, never bunking or "hiding in the mountains" like some of the other boys, and being rewarded by a proud uncle with prizes of new clothes or a specially slaughtered chicken.

He remembers learning to read quite vividly, and thinks well of his teacher.

Before she went to another lesson, she make sure that everybody understand the lesson that she has been telling. And then it was easy for me ... like at first, they taught us the vowels, and after that the alphabet. And then it was easy. It took me maybe about six months to be perfect with the vowels and the alphabet, and then from then there were... one of my uncle's brother was in Standard one, and then when he brings books home sometimes - let's say if he was happy - we sat together and he taught me more and more and more and more. And then my first year at school I was number one during December time when we got our results.

His uncle was not educated and there were no newspapers in the home, but SS remembers two school books which an older cousin had left in the house. He enjoyed reading "Masihambisani". "That book was nothing much, but it was telling good stories, like in the old ages. As far as I know those stories never happened, but they were good stories". He liked "Umcebu Wesizulu" even more for its stories, but also because it introduced him to a repertoire of Zulu idioms which helped him to express himself so "you know exactly how I'll feel". He points out that at the time he was at school there were no texts or courses in Seswati, but he was happy to study in Zulu because some of his family were Zulu.

He got special pleasure from "Modern Graded English". "It was in light English, but why I like it, it had good stories, and those stories were easy to understand. Short stories. And some times, I'd write my own stories taking some words from there." This pleased his teacher, who invited him to her home and lent him similar books. He also got pleasure from his text-books, especially in history, but he was bored by some of the subjects. These periods were used to develop his capacity for reverie: "I can say at that time I was thinking my own things when she taught us geography."

No-one read to SS at home, but he loved the periods when the teachers would read to the pupils, ask them comprehension questions and allow them to tell their own stories. In great detail he recounts the two stories he most liked to tell. Both concern a clever rabbit who outwits a thuggish lion. The desire for a victory of intelligence, gentleness and thoughtfulness is something of a leitmotif in all of the interviews with SS.

He derived a rather surprising pleasure from the Bible:

You see, why I enjoyed reading the Bible was to sit next to a white person. It was a very good thing. At school we had a white lady from England who used to teach us Bible, she was Mrs Copan. She always came with Bibles, small Bibles, and she gave us three and then we were happy. Everybody made sure she or he get that book, why?, because he like to be near her and everything. Mostly I liked the stories of King David and Solomon.

SS speaks of "an African chap - from here in Transvaal" who taught Standard six and showed him what history really was about, "but I can say I got that teacher too late". He speaks especially fondly of an American teacher who came to the the high school:

Our teachers were not bright - some of them were bright but some of them were not bright. I only started to see there's a difference in teaching when I was in Form one and my teacher was a white man from America. At first it was difficult because of his pronunciation, but when he was saying something he even made actions with hands so that we can understand... You see, from Standard two to Standard five we had black teachers and mostly they were women, and some of them were younger than me and some of them were older than me, and then when the younger ones came to teach us I couldn't pay much attention to her because she's younger than me.

Unfortunately he was not able to enjoy the improved tuition for long. At the start of his Standard seven year his uncle's tobacco crops were destroyed by hail. In the ensuing poverty one of his uncle's wives, he believes, influenced the old man to end his support for SS's education. The American teacher organised a bursary for him, but it required his father's signature. He wrote to his father, who replied hypocritically that the conditions made him feel that he was selling his son, and refused to sign. After two years in this impasse, SS at sixteen was tempted to come to the Reef to look for work. He found a job in a Johannesburg dairy, and was taken up by an Indian businessman who had been disappointed in his own children, and who offered to further SS's education, as far as becoming a doctor, which is what SS most wanted to be, or at least so that he could become a policeman, "work where you can help people". But the Indian asked that SS take his name, and once again his father refused permission. Various nasty scenes followed, in which SS's step-mother played a major role in forcing him by obligation to go on working in order to bring money into the home. The outcome of this very complicated story was that SS reluctantly moved in with father, step-mother and step-brother and sisters and found himself a job as a labourer at the factory at which

he still works. (He found the job by word of mouth, not after reading an advertisement.) The possibility of continuing his formal education on the Reef has always been set aside because of the prospect of having to study Afrikaans, which he doesn't know, and which he sees as having no value in Swaziland.

One day SS was asked to help with the donkey work of a stock taking. He was not impressed with the efficiency of the operation, and took some bold steps, in the course of which he risked losing his job, and ended up in a job as storeman/clerk. His success he attributes to his "brightness", but he points out that it would have been impossible if he hadn't been good at reading and at figures. In his job he sits at a desk on the factory floor, receiving and despatching the raw materials to the various operational sections. This involves him in some strenuous clambering about the stores, clipboard in hand. It is not what he aspired to, but he is grateful that it is so much more stimulating than the machine operators' jobs, and for the personal, if not private, space in which he can keep his paperbacks together with other odds and ends, and in which he organises lunch hour card games.

SS's explicit values

Asked what his idea of the good life is, SS says that he would like to have an easy life. But he qualifies this by saying very emphatically that he does not want to have people working for him. He doesn't want to be rich, and sees wealth as divisive: "If I've got money, I say, no, no, my friends are poor, I won't mix up with them, and sometimes it's them, they think, oh, he's big now because he's got money. They are jealous. See, mostly in outside countries, like in France, there's not so much jealous like here."

Through the interviews he shows an unconscious ambivalence about urban life. It is easier than life in the country, but he hates it because it is violent and disruptive, and above all he loves quiet. He would like to have some land in Swaziland. One of the virtues of this is that one doesn't need so much money, another that one doesn't have to make an impression with smart new clothes. On the other hand he likes good sport, and sport in the country is not so good. But when he goes on leave to Swaziland he enjoys visiting the nearby casino, so it is not so bad after all. Besides "my family is rooted there in Swaziland and my father is from Swaziland, that's why I want to go back. Our ancestors are there in Swaziland, so I would like to go back there." This is surprising, since he also sees traditional values negatively in another interview. They promote tribalism and conflict. Perhaps what he would like most of all is a place of his own. At present he and his wife and child share a house in the nearby township with his father and his uncongenial step-family. "In homelands it's better than here, because here you have no land to farm, you have got nothin, you've got only your room where you can sleep, and you pay that room." Discussing his leisure-time preferences he rates being alone, walking and reflecting most highly, together with reading (books, not newspapers), ahead of going to church and being in company, and well ahead of watching or playing sport, television and other options. He speaks nostalgically of going to sit on the top of the hill at twilight when

a youngster in Swaziland. Yet observing SS in the workplace he is sociable and enjoys his popularity; he says that he believes that most of the workers "old or young" like him.

His immediate response on being asked what a good man might be is this:

The main thing is that he must think of other people. And you mustn't think what kind of a person is that, he's black or white. If you say I won't help that one, he's Sotho and I am Zulu, I won't help him, that's very bad. (He elaborates the point quite extensively).

He would like his children to be like himself, friendly, "knowing about each other people, and each other's lives, that my neighbour is suffering like that, so I'm not suffering, so if I can give these to the neighbour he won't suffer as much as he's suffering." He wants them to be doctors, and he does not want them to be educated in South Africa. "You see, this nowadays here is no good. They go to school maybe for one month and the other month they going to riot and everything."

SS sees himself as apolitical. As will be seen, he fears the divisiveness of the media. In spite of attempts to push him to say something in that direction, he avoids saying anything about "the people's struggle", justice, or what kind of government he would prefer.

Asked about who he thinks taught him his beliefs about what is good and bad, SS answers that it is not people but books. This rather surprising response is plausible in terms of his perceptions of books discussed below. However, it is not books as such, but the introspection which he seems to associate with reading that is most influential:

Maybe I am like that because sometimes I sit and think, and maybe if somebody has done something wrong to me or to somebody else, and I sit and think, why did he do that thing? ... And then I try to find out before he do that thing, what he thought before he do it. And I say maybe he thought like this. And then, on my opinions, I think if he thought like this he was wrong, and if he thought like this he was good. Like maybe, there's a time when you do a thing and you think I help him, but you are not helping, you are damaging or doing something wrong, you see.

SS on reading and literacy

In spite of his reflective turn of mind, SS finds it impossible to explain to the inquisitive illiterate Mosotho what reading is, or how it works. "It is difficult to explain. But I can say, you see, to read ... is to get to know something like ah ... ah, is difficult. If you didn't go to school it's too difficult to see what, to understand what is it saying." But he has no hesitation in telling what reading is good for, why people read. "Oh, it does good, because you see reading ... let say like there's something which happened in another country

and they can't be there to tell you what happened in that country, but in a paper they can explain something to you." This leads immediately on to the advantages of writing letters over phoning long distance, and an account of how he communicates with his family in Swaziland. "I can say reading is helping very much, especially if I can write a letter home, or if I can get a letter from home."

Quizzed about the nature of books he says:

In life something happens to somebody else, and when he put it down on the paper and say, a thing like this happen to me and I did this and I did this - then that thing didn't cause me much trouble because I did this and this. And when a thing like that comes to you now you know what exactly you are going to do. Reading can help you very much. Like here in Transvaal nowadays, you are having riots in every locations here. And then, like, I'm here and I know what's happening in Soweto because of reading a newspaper. Let's say you came from Lesotho and you don't know what has been happening yesterday, but if you can get an old piece of paper you can know what was happening. Like you see, there in the stores, we have to have some papers to wrap us some stuff; we get old newspapers, and I see a newspaper here about Zola Budd's past, and if I couldn't read I wouldn't know it.

Asked what the value of a newspaper is when one can listen to the radio without being able to read, SS answers that the newspaper can be read at his convenience, not at times dictated by the radio. And the paper has more to offer. However, he has a decided opinion that the newspaper promotes contention and strife, and that the radio is more truthful, "because the radio it's an official thing, or you can say the government is mixed there, they take out only what is vital to the people. But ... if you can read all the news in the newspaper you can be confused... At times they are destroying people like somebody who is not political." SS's feelings about the media are mixed. In fact, when other parts of the interviews are considered it is clear that he does not like reading newspapers and is not all that keen on the radio, rating reading fiction or non-fiction well above newspapers. He does however enjoy television and his reading diary shows that it is the A-Team and similar programmes that he watches.

SS is a passionate reader of stories, and particularly of a series of cheap paperback westerns. These are formula novels, but an inspection of several of them shows that they make no concessions as far as difficulty of language is concerned, using a fairly complex vocabulary and syntax and what is, for me, a tough jargon in the dialogue. The story grammars are highly predictable. But this is by no means seen as escapist:

For me, I can know of my future, like what I have to do in future to prepare myself for a good future. Sometimes when I read - I read many books, yes, I can say I read many books - but when I read and then the book has got two characters there, and the one is good and the other is bad - normally it's like that, the one is good and the one is bad, then I see the one who's bad what he did

so that he's bad, and then I'll choose from these two which way I'll have to take and, right, maybe the book it's also giving me the reason if I want to be so what can I do.

SS has written his own western. He says that it is based on scenes from his daily life, but the names are changed for names from the wild west, the place names are plays on local place names - Albarco and Katlinton. His writing shows the extent to which he has lived into the discourse of his favourite paperbacks. SS's claim that his writing is based on his everyday experience could provide the subject for an extended reflection. His story is called "The killer who got himself caught". After listing a set of stock characters (clever Sheriff, rich farmer, herdboys, a foreman/gunslinger, a divorcee who runs the saloon) the action, starts thus (presented as SS writer it):

The sun was falling to the mountains when two figures appeared on the top of Boothill disturbing the gold sun rays casting long shadows on the lonely figure low the down trail. Sheriff Collinsen came to a halt to examine the two figures coming towards the town.

Soon the action comes so thick and fast that it confuses. Sometimes SS's valuing of cleverness comes to the fore, but is not realised in the action:

Mr Craven and Sam Slogan obeyed. Mr Jones din't see B.B. Shakes in the corner behind him. Thanks to the low glowing lamp it din't show him away. The two men againts the wall left their guns on the table. So J.J. was sure of himself; holstled his gun going for the table to pick up the guns belonging to the men againts the wall. Okay Bulldog, you might be fast with your gun but you are not with your thinking. Din't you see the third holstler on the table? Man, well you might be fast but I'm sure you can't beat my triger finger. Oh drop dead you bum crawled J.J. Watch your tounge Devil Bat you might scare me and press the triger. Just freeze. Mrs Craven take his guns away from him for me please.

The story ends in action:

The two men stared at each other. The saloon went quiet as there was no body in it. They went for their wapons. No body could swear what real happen. Three bangs were heard echoing the saloon. Johannes was flung to the far counter. The last thing the killer saw was the amazing draw of Shadow Preston. Take hint, Boothill.

THE END

SS sees reading as a help to tolerance. It lets you know of other people and their ways so that you do not think they are bad. Apart from this it is also practical. SS speaks briefly of doing welding and of the value of understanding instructions and measurements.

Asked if reading in the vernacular is of any value, SS is unclear. Yes, there are papers and books in the African languages, but he speaks in unconvincingly general terms of them, and is clearly not

very familiar with what is available. He sees vernacular reading as a stepping stone to English, and believes that its greatest advantage (apart from letter-writing) is that you can then get a dictionary and learn one of the official languages from it.

He vehemently rejects the suggestion that reading might be a bad thing because it destroys customs and traditional wisdom. His first reason is that an emphasis on the tribal language leads to conflict and a breakdown of communication between peoples. A complex attitude is embedded in his response, which is barely intelligible. It expresses a rejection of the opposition to certain valuable modern things like reading, but an understanding of the traditionalist's sense of loss and the fear for the future which lies behind such a rejection. "Nowadays we have to do something and we have to learn something, and if you are not educated it's hard." The thought that reading is an instrument of white hegemony is quite foreign to him. "Publishers are from all over the country, they are mixed... it's a team work and it's good, it's good, it's helping much people." And he does not think of the world of publishing as something remote and inaccessible.

Finally, his attitude to illiteracy is also complex. He agrees that some people think that the illiterate are stupid and he believes that reading does make one more clever, but he is resentful of the illiterate who lacked the opportunity to learn. Those, however, who do have the chance to learn and don't are stupid and contemptible. He has no doubt that literacy confers greater power, and sees this in terms of access and negotiation expressed in terms of trying to get a piece of land from a white man. If the illiterate does get that land he "won't use it the right way to help other people, he'll use it only to help himself, which is not good. In the discussion group SS was stronger in his support of the idea that literacy is important for the power and prosperity of workers, but his response in the group discussion about establishing a worker's reading centre suggested to me that his interest in literacy is far more personal than communal when compared with some of the other participants.

SS's current reading

SS considers that he reads well enough for his needs, and that he reads English and Zulu with equal fluency, although he generally prefers English. He sees himself as reading more than others in his community, and possibly as much as professional people. In an enforced choice of leisure equipment he chooses books first, then television, followed by a radio. He has very little interest in exercise equipment or in handwork. Ranking activities on a scale of ten, which he does quickly and decisively, he presents these responses (10 = very often, very much):

	How often?	Amount of enjoyment
Watching sport	2	6
Reading a newspaper	3	3
Hardiwork in the home	7	7
Reading non-fiction (not study)	7	10

Watching TV	5	6
Playing sport	0	3
Going to church	8	9
Reading fiction	9	10
Visiting friends and family	5	7
Reading for study	0	8
Being on your own, walking sitting, thinking	9	10

SS reads mainly sitting at home, but reading at work comes a close second. He does not read in the bus (this statement contradicts or is contradicted by his reading diary), the canteen or other places. He lists "to be generally informed" as his main reason for reading and "pleasure and relaxation" next. "Because it is necessary for your job" comes third. He buys his reading matter from cafes and bookshops, and says he does not get books from friends. The bookshop he knows is the CNA in the nearest white town. He has never visited a library in South Africa, but does remember one in Swaziland.

He says he is satisfied with the availability of reading matter, yet in the discussion groups he agrees strongly that as a community they have no read enough in their lives, believes that the reading environment is impoverished and argues against the proposal that the promotion of reading does not deserve priority among the needs of workers.

In the discussion of books and magazines SS shows the eagerness one would expect. His processing of the array of books and magazines is not searching. He chooses quickly after looking at the title and the picture on the cover, and does not use any of the more detailed cues.

He chooses more than the five or so which I suggest. The following are the choices he makes, with his valuing of them expressed as a score out of 10. (The full list of texts put on display is appended.)

Books		Ephemera	
Rogue Gun (cheap western)	10	Frontline (Cover: "Why peace eludes us")	10
The destruction of the Zulu Kingdom (Ravan, SA history)	10	Weekly Mail	10
China (Life World Library)	10	Sowetan	9
Science and inventions - a pictorial encyclopedia	10	Learn and Teach	9
Speak English Fluently	9	War comic	8
The enemy (Bagley)	8	See (Photocomic)	8
Julius Caesar	5	American comic book	8
Call me not a man*	4	Pace Magazine	7
Forced Landing*	4		
(*Local black literature)			

Some of the more interesting comments on this choice are:

He wants Speak English Fluently to help his reading. The Bagley is a bit long, he probably won't have time to read it. Julius Caesar - He has read The Merchant of Venice, and is quite curious, but will need someone to help him through it. He has read some African writers, but he would like to know "about all over the world, not just Africa." He chooses the magazines because of their cover articles. On the whole he doesn't like magazines). He has seen Frontline and Learn and Teach, but has not read them. He is most excited about Rogue Gun, and brings another of the series of westerns to swap with me at the next interview.

SS's reading diary

SS's reading diary is one of the three fullest from the eighteen participants. It is presented here with minimal editing.

Tuesday

Had a visit from my co-worker. He showed me a paper written by Mawu Organisation (the union). I did not like to read it as I am not politically minded, but when he said it's about busses not coming in our township I was interested. I took it. It was telling about busses might not come to our townships for 4 weeks. Then I had to leave for work. We took our different ways.

I caught a taxi. People in the taxi were talking about that paper. I was not interested since I've seen it. I had a book with me as I always carry one with me. I like reading love stories, westerns and war books. I had a western book with a topic of "No future for Marshal Cain". I was curious to know why there was no future for the marshal.

Arriving at work I've only finish one chapter. It was so interesting I could not put it down. Every minute I was not busy I'd go to toilet to read. I even told Eiphas Aman who works closer to where my table is if there is a delivery he can call me. He will find me in toilet.

At lunch break, we were playing cards with my friends when our Works Manager came to me to tell me after lunch we are to have a meeting with a boss from Pretoria. I couldn't wait because I like to be interviewed to talk my mind out to someone who is interested to know about world and it's occupants.

On the way home I was thinking about the meeting we had. I started noticing about everything, people in the taxi. There was nothing special except a piece of note stuck on the windscreen which I never took notice of the past days. It was almost 2 weeks stuck on every taxi. It was about taxi fares going up.

At home in the evening, I finished the book I was reading at work and I went to watch TV. I found my brothers watch a film on TV which is in Sotho. No body at home understand much of Sotho. But the action they clearly understood.

Wednesday

Not much reading before work. I was late and there was not enough transport. I had to go to the neighbouring township for transport to work. I got a taxi at 6.40am. Getting in the taxi I asked the driver if he can go fast, if he can make the factory before 7.00am. He said it's not possible with a car like he was driving. Only then I noticed the car was too worn to be roadworthy, let alone a taxi. I had a lot of work to do. All the work I neglected the day before.

By afternoon I had finish the hard work. Then I had few minutes doing nothing. I took out a book and went to the toilet to read, a war book with a topic of "The survivors". It was good to know there is such men who can risk the lives saving a friend.

At lunch I was playing cards with my friends. A man from Shell came to deliver oil he find us playing cards. He said oh you are in lunch I'll join in the game. When our lunch was through I signed the paper and we were already friends. We gave each other's addresses.

On the way home there was nothing that much. Too dark to read, except we saw a bakery truck burning. Bread and cake were all over the floor. The truck was written Ribbon Bakery. People were picking the bread and cakes for themselves.

At home I watched TV 2. On Wednesday there is not much interesting things in Zulu. The only thing I was interested in was the news. I saw a hospital in London burning. It was terrible and I also saw a Scweto Mayor's house burned. I shocked to see a thing like that at night. I dreamed about my home burning. I did not sleep well.

Thursday

At about 3.05am I was awake. I could not sleep fearing bad dreams about fire. I took a book of Kid Colt. I read until 5.15am and then I was and prepared myself to leave for work.

Transport was very short. There were no busses only taxis. Finally when I got a taxi it was 6.30am. I was reading my book when I heard the driver saying it's good busses are not coming in our township. In the evening he's checking +- R250,00.

I had a little quarrel with one of the quality controlers, he said I am stupid, I do not know my work. He find a wrong suction line welded on a wrong panel. He said why I issued a wrong suction line, but after he found out it was the welders mistake he apologised and I forgave him.

I got a taxi home, nothing to read, it was too dark.

I was very tired. I ate my supper and I had a little play with my son then went to bed.

Friday

Nothing much, only the daily chores. I was busy with GRNs (goods received notes) and cardex. But I had few minutes free. I want to read a western book my co-worker had borrowed me. Then I was writing out requisitions and delivery notes. Played cards at lunch.

Afternoon off. I went to town. I saw there a lot of changes, like there was no Pep store next Edgars in the main road, but now there is. I bought 4 paperbacks, Santa Fe Western, Big Country, Big man, Brett McKinley and one other. The American talk is quite difficult.

At home I played with my son while his mother was cooking supper for us. After I watched the A Team in TV1 I went to sleep.

Saturday

I went to work. On the way I saw a funny accident. A car was crashed on a fence, a house surrounded by that fence had no roof. But there was no sign showing the car had crashed on the house.

I went to bioscope. Electric was not working so there was no film. I went home to read my books I'd bought on Friday. I watched TV and some little reading.

Sunday

Before I went to church (The New Apostolic Christian Catholic Church in Zion) I had a bath, after bathing I read my books. In the afternoon I went to church. We were discussing the verse the priest had read to us in church. (The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard - some had found it difficult to accept, but SS felt that it was an example of true justice.)

Monday

Transport was short and I arrived 3 minutes late. I did the daily work. I wrote the stock list requisitions and goods received notes and I did ordering for the factory. Played cards with my friends at lunch.

On the way home I saw a group of soldiers. When I got off the taxi I went about 100m then another group of soldiers came rushing to me. they asked where I am going and where did I come from. I told them. They asked my reference book. I showed them, then they said you can go. And I went straight home.

We watched TV. After the film we were watching "The Night Rider". I went to the kitchen. I ate my supper, then I went to my room. I took out a book and read until my eyes were heavy then I slept.

PN: READING TO BE A SOMEBODY

PN stands all day at a spot-welding press, inserting sheets of metal and pulling down a bar. Around her waist she wears a checked blanket over her overalls. She is a stocky woman of forty-two, and she has a certain presence which is constituted largely by an air of purposeful indignation. She is a shop steward for the Metal and Allied Workers Union, and wears her membership badge proudly. As one gets to know her one discovers a sense of humour, much gentleness, and a streak of sentimentality. The interviews with her provide a striking contrast with the interviews with SS. She is laconic, and yet her answers are often given a loving warmth by her way of lengthening the main vowel sound and raising its pitch when she is enthusiastic about something. Her answering is decided and her answers are generalised and conclusive. She has none of SS's enjoyment of lengthy excursions into her early experience, which she remembers in little detail. While she has clear opinions about the value of reading and education, she is not much of a reader herself. Her life appears to have two or three focal points. Her children, who are entering adulthood in uncertain times, her task in the union, and, perhaps, her church. At my first meeting with her she is full of anger about the troops and police in the township, thinks they are just causing trouble, and wishes they would leave.

Past life and reading

PN was born and spent her childhood in a Reef township. Her grandmother was the story-teller:

My grandmother (said very affectionately), she used to tell us how they lived in those oldendays, even those wars which they took them over, those Dutch wars, she used to tell us about that... I understand that my grandfather, he was having a farm at Lesotho and they were very rich, they were having cows and those thing, and then she said the moment when the boers took over they start to take those things they were not supposed to have, and so on, their cattles were speed away. She tell us about Moshesh. She said he was a good king amongst all the kings of our people... Now the prime minister is oppressing the king, and then the king they say he's a soft somebody.

PN's family had a respect for formal education.

My father - I'm sure he never went to school, they were just looking after cattle - so when he was big he came here to Johannesburg to work, well he worked at a factory and then he married, and my mother was a learned somebody, because her mother was also learned. She went as far as Standard eight - Form 2 - she was know how to read and write, and so my father was interested. He went to evening classes and then he was learning to read and to write... My mother read us about stories, the stories in the books - about the things that were happening during her young

days. I am sure the books were from school, because my mother was intelligent.

PN went to a Catholic primary school in the township, and later to a Catholic boarding school in the Northern Transvaal, where she was taught mainly in English by nuns. She emphasises that she was at school before Bantu Education, and that her Standard seven makes her better than current matriculants. "This Bantu education is very bad because you find our children they are learning English when they are in Standards, and they can't catch up." Asked about the reading she did at school PN is vague. She had a good reading teacher, enjoyed learning to read, and remembers the series of readers which she calls the "Royal English Stories". But as in most attempts to get her to recall specific stories she is at best vague and generalised in her response. (I suggested to her that between interviews she should reflect on her reading during her life and try to recall books that had been special for her. This drew a blank.) She remembers a Sotho reader called "Moeletse" as a favourite book from childhood, a book which "gives advices about how to behave."

She could not remember books read at high school, except for a catechism, which she learnt even though she was not a catholic. However, after she noticed a copy of "Julius Caesar" among the books which I had brought, the dialogue went as follows:

P: Noo, I don't remember those books. The one which I remember was the Julius Caesar (laughing). That we had.

Q: Did you enjoy it?

P: VErY much.

Q: Why did you enjoy it? Did you act it?

P: It was because it was more interesting.

Q: Why?

P: Aah ... It was interesting to see that he was a great somebody, mmm.

(Further efforts to elicit detail are unsuccessful - the opposite of the experience with PN's fellow shop steward, who told me the story of "Twelfth Night" twice with unquenchable enthusiasm.)

PN wanted to be a nurse, but her parents did not allow her to because of their perception of the morals of nurses. "Yes, one rotten potatoes it spoils the others." Her parents "were TOO christianity, you see" and they made her go into dressmaking. She married and had three children before her husband left her to support them on her own. She found factory work more lucrative and came to her present job in 1981.

PN's explicit values and aspirations

This is how PN speaks of her values and aspirations:

I think a good life for people to live, we should be equal, people should get our rights, we should get, uh, the most important things in life it's money. We should get enough money so that we can live. (In the future) I think the situation will be better, although we're still having problems, people maybe still won't be

the same, but at least most of the things will be solved - if at all you can get money and equal education, I think these are most important... A good woman must have a good background, she must be brought up in a good way. Then she will be good. I mean she will be good in society, and then she will be good to herself also, I mean she will respect herself and respect other people... I want to see my children be well educated and if at all it happened that they got married they must settled nicely, they must have a nice living. (Asked if she would like them to be rich.) Provided if they worked hard to earn, because you cannot just be rich if you don't work. Because of what my parents did to me I won't be against my children. They must do whatever they like. I cannot choose for their education. I only having one son. I would like her to be a doctor if at all he can agree to that, because my elder daughter he maybe, if at all we still alive - things can go to normal - he want to go to university next year. He want to make ortho-what?... She wants to work with X-ray. Yes, radiography. The other one she want nursing. I'm happy for her to be a nurse, to work among sore people.

PN's notions of the nature and value of reading

PN deals with the question of what reading is by saying she would have to explain it fully to the inquisitive Mosotho in his own language, and that it would require time and detail. She leaps directly to an explanation of what a newspaper is. "It is telling them about news, what is happening EVERY day." But her real emphasis falls on correspondence:

Reading is good because when you are a somebody you must know how to read. Reading is very important because you find that when you are staying there at farm, at Bantuzan, and then you want to come here to work, and then you will come in order that those who are that side must know how you are keeping on this side. That's why reading is so important. And you must know how to read because it's dangerous if you can't read, because who knows how to read for you? Sometimes people are not the same; you find that one is selfish, he won't tell you exactly the right thing, so the best thing is for you to know how to read and how to write so you shouldn't struggle, so that that person shouldn't know your secrets. (It's important for a better job) because nowadays I understand they are going to be strict. In future as time goes on even those who are sweeping the road, they must know how to write and how to read - so it means it's very important to read.

Reading is important in union work and in the task of organising the workers. Illiterate workers are a problem:

They don't understand what the union is doing. We find that if you try to explain to them they say, "Ai, we are making things very difficult for them, just leave us in peace." It's because they haven't got light, they don't know what else it's happening in life. That's why they are ignorant people; they are just working only to earn money they are satisfied with each and everything

which they got. Even if the big bosses swear them they say it's alright. Reading will help them to be different because they will know what is good for them and what is not good. Reading will put them in light. As a human being you are bound to struggle for your rights to have your rights. You mustn't just wait even if you don't work in a good condition you must just work just because you are working you must try as a person to have good condition when you are working in safe places in safety for your life.

PN believes that the community understands and respects the illiterate, and does not think of them as stupid. At the same time reading "makes you to be alert. I mean you must know things, because sometimes if at all you don't know how to read you are somebody who are ignorant."

She sees no conflict between traditions and reading. "Even in the Old days some of our parents they were going to school. It doesn't interfere in our customs. You can still have customs." Reading is very important for power. "If at all you want to feed your little ones, you must encourage each our children to learn, so that they must know engineering all those things they must know. It's very important." In the discussion group PN is very insistent that white and black cultures have much to share, sees Western civilisation as being as much the black person's heritage as the white's, and thinks of it mainly in terms of technology. Newspapers are better than the radio because "the radio only shows you a short whereas in the paper you can read a lot." She is hesitant in answering whether the newspaper tells more truth than the radio, "but I think the newspaper tell the truth more than the radio, because the radio maybe you can just write the script for the announcer so he knows he can just talk like this, like this, like this, you see."

While newspapers tell us about "what is happening in our life every day", books have "an author who is explaining his life". Books are very nice to read. While PN asserts that there are many good books in Sesotho, mainly history, and thinks that people understand the Bible better if it is in the vernacular, she is very unspecific. However, she quickly shifts to the importance of knowing English. "I think it's not wise to know only your language. I mean, when we are working we are working under Europeans, so it's nice to know their own language so that you must know how to communicate. I think it's very important to learn English. Most people they don't know Afrikaans. They prefer English to Afrikaans."

PN answers the last question of the interview in an assertion of the value of independence:

Q: So you believe that the main importance of reading is for people to keep up, to understand what is going on around them?

P: To be able to do things by yourself, you don't ask somebody to do it for you.

PN's perception of herself as a reader and her current reading

PN believes that she reads well enough for her needs, and that she reads more than other adults such as friends and family, but less than professional people. She says that she reads English and Sesotho with equal facility, but would choose to read the English version of "Bona Magazine". Her favourite form of reading is story books, followed by magazines. She does most of her reading in bed or sitting at home, some on the bus and very little at work, her main reason for reading to be generally informed, and her second reason is for pleasure and relaxation. She gets her reading matter from the street vendor, friends, the cafe, and occasionally from the CNA (or NAC, as she calls it). She never uses a library, although her children do, but she is satisfied with the availability of reading matter. In her leisure profile she has strong preferences (10 = Very often, very much):

	How often	Pleasure
Watching sport	6	6
Reading a newspaper	10	10
Working in the home	10	8
Reading non-fiction (not study)	2	4
Watching TV	10	10
Playing sport	0	N/A
Going to church	10	10
Reading fiction	8	8
Visiting friends and family	5	10
Reading for study	0	8
Being on your own, walking ...	4	6

From the interviews it would seem that PN's actual reading is of a limited quantity, and is mainly communal. She says (with much pleasure in her voice) that she intends reading to her grand-daughter as soon as the child is old enough to understand. Reading roles seem to have been reversed at home:

My younger daughter she likes to read a lot. She doesn't want to work, she likes to read whenever she get a book she will read it and that night she will tell me the whole story. she likes it, mmm... She reads stories, and those the history ones, the one of Chakas, she will read them and tell me all about them (laughing with pleasure)... She's a clever somebody. She was supposed to go to university this year, so I didn't get enough money, but I've arranged a bursary to the church."

PN bought a novel by Nan Maynard at the CNA during the research, possibly moved to it by having to keep a reading diary, but two months later she had been too busy studying for a first aid course to have got far enough to tell me what it was about. (Nan Maynard writes novels of English working class life, but in this case PN seemed to be attracted by a woman's account of her love and her suffering.)

Going through the selection of books, PN's interest does not appear to be deeply engaged. She looks over them, without picking them up or in any sense browsing. She chooses Julius Caesar first because she remembers it and would like to "do" it again, then Matshoba's Call me

not a man, which is a passionate portrayal of contemporary black experience in South Africa. She chooses this because her fellow shop steward had borrowed it during the last series of interviews and had spoken to her about it, so that she wanted to read it. She had not come across much local or African literature. Her third choice is Dr Spock's Child and baby care. When I express my surprise at her interest, considering that she has already brought up three children successfully, she says "Yes, but one must know that things". Finally, she chooses Speak English Fluently. When I point to a brightly presented Ravan Worker Series book called My life struggle, with a picture of a union worker giving a power salute on the cover, and tell her that I expected her to take an interest in it, she does take an interest in it, almost as though she had not noticed it before, and says that maybe she would also like to read that.

She is more at home with the magazines, chooses a copy of Drum and one of Bona (she says she prefers the English edition, but does not feel strongly about this), a Learn and Teach Magazine, which she has heard is a good magazine, but has not actually read, and a Sowetan. It is from the Sowetan that she chooses to read me a passage - a grim front-page story about the rape and murder of a black nurse by a group of white men. She reads it slightly haltingly, but expressively. Discussing her reaction to it, she shows far more sadness for the fate of the girl than anger and a demand for retribution, although she says that the criminals should hang.

But PN's most vital response is to the Photo-comic love stories, with their white characters in middle-class or exotic settings. The two other women in the group had responded equally enthusiastically to these publications, obtainable in any corner cafe. One, a young divorcee, had said she liked them because they "mostly happened to me". She felt that the pattern of chance romance and disappointment was just like her life, and that it was good to see that things could work out well in the end, even if that had not happened to her yet. They gave her courage. The other, a matronly and more senior worker, had been very brief, answering with a chuckle that they made her feel young again. PN was characteristically didactic in her reason for liking them: they teach you about life. This somehow failed to explain her eagerness to have the magazines. At the last meeting I was pressed into giving away most of the ephemera I had brought, and had to make the three women promise to share the copies of the Love comics, which they all wanted - one of them having already "swopped" one of hers for one of mine.

PN's reading diary

Tuesday

I've never read anything this morning, but I have drink a cup of coffee. Somebody have give me a paper concerning about union which say proposals for the Amendment to the Engineering Agreement. We were discussing about somebody who got killed during week end.

Wednesday

Having a cup of coffee... No reading... Discussing my problems with my fellow workers... Having meeting with all union members discussing our problems.

Thursday

No time for reading in morning. Afternoon: I was reading Minutes of the Meeting of the shop stewards held on last month at 4 o'clock in the 2nd floor board room. Evening: Reading my bible in Sesotho.

Friday

No reading. Struggle to get buses which will take us to work. Afternoon: Reading a Sowetan. I was interested in an issue which stated about Botha will now recall Parliament to debate the government record in anticipating, coping and ending the current inactive...(?)

Saturday

No time for reading in morning. Afternoon: (Here PN copies the cover information of a novel which she had bought that morning at the CNA.) In her new novel Nan Maynard, author of This is my street and Weep not, my wanton, tells an immensely satisfying story of human relationships, exploring in depth the characters of three highly contrasting women. (In the second interview PN says it's a thick book, and she bought it because she likes reading, and then, pressed to give a reason, "because it's about how women behave inside, yes, it's about women.") Evening: Reading a Sowetan.

Sunday

Reading a Sunday Times. Going to church and reading my Holy Bible. (She has an English and a Sesotho Bible.) I have read Job 33:4 where it says The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. Evening: Saying my prayers and again reading my Holy Bible, Psalm 23. The lord is my shepherd I shall not want, He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters. (In the interview she says she reads the Bible "plenty" and enjoys it very much; but that she only reads it on week-ends.)

Monday is blank.

APPENDIX D

EXAMPLES FROM ACTUAL READING DIARIES

DAILY READING RECORD (WEEKEND)

Name: Day:

SATURDAY:

Morning Book called 'BLACK REVIEWS' (ARRESTS & DETENTION, POLITICAL TRIALS & PUNISHMENTS) MOTSALI THE FIRST PERSON IN S.A. TO BE SENTENCED UNDER THE TERRORISM ACT IN 1974

Afternoon THE SAME BOOK; MR. MOTSALI'S SENTENCE HE WAS SENTENCED TO FIVE YEARS (THE MINIMUM UNDER THE TERRORISM ACT.)

Evening INTERVIEWING OF THE BLACK BOXER, MAYISELA FOR HIS FIGHT AGAINST BRET TAYLOR (WHITE BOXER MAYISELA REFUSED TO SAY MORE HE ONLY SAID "MY FISTS WILL DO THE TALKING" (S. Sowetan))

SUNDAY:

Morning Sympathy card before I send it to one of my friends his wish in hospital for "OPERATION" (STOMACH) GET WELL & GOD (with) & come back home!

Afternoon No Reading.

Evening No Reading.

DAILY READING RECORD (WORK DAYS)

Name: W. M. Day: Tuesday

Before leaving for work: No time to read

On the way to work: In the bus stop I saw an advertisement which is good reading when you enter to Tokosa location they say drive carefull we like our children

At work: Morning My foreman tell me that I must done my safety inspection report.

At work: Afternoon No

During tea and lunch breaks: In the lunch break we were talking with my friend another friend he say the Xhosa was a dog for Tshakae but when we asked about a story for Xhosa and Zulu he did not explain us

On the way home: No time to read

At home in the evening: at home I tell my small brother about a story we have talk at work during lunch time he promise to buy for me a story book for Xosa and Zulu the book was written by T.S. SOGA Inikalo ka Xhosa

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE ON READING AND LEISURE PREFERENCES

NAME: DATE:

Tell me about your reading: What do you read? How do you read?
When do you read? and so on

.....
.....

Do you think that you read well enough for your own needs?

.....
.....

To help me to get a clearer idea about these matters, I would like to ask you some more precise questions:

1. Think of other adult people that you know - friends, family, neighbours:

Do you read ... more than them? _____
the same as most of them? _____
less than them? _____
don't know _____

2. Think of people like teachers and ministers in the church.

Do you read ... more than them? _____
the same as most of them? _____
less than them? _____
don't know _____

3. Do you understand most of your reading ... /in Eng / in Vernac
easily _____
with difficulty _____

4. If I said to you: "I am going to lock you in a room today. It is a comfortable room. You can have only one of the following." What would you choose? In order of preference: (0 = not at all, 4 = favourite)

- A TV set _____
- Equipment for doing physical exercises to get fit. _____
- A radio _____
- A set of books, magazines and newspapers of your own choice. _____
- Something to make or build, like woodwork or sewing _____

5. What kind of things do you read/ like most?

- Newspapers (0-4) _____
- Magazines _____
- Study material/text books _____
- Story books (fiction) _____
- Non-fiction books about people and places and events _____

Please tell me some more about your first choice.

.....
.....

6. Where do you read most? (0-5)

- In a chair at home _____
- In the canteen _____
- On the job _____
- In bed _____
- In the bus _____
- Other _____

7. What is your most common reason for reading? (0-3)

- It is necessary for your job. _____
- To be generally informed. _____
- Study for qualifications. _____
- Pleasure and relaxation. _____

8. Where do you get your reading matter?

	Friends	Cafe	Bookshop	School	Library
Newspaper	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Magazines	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fiction	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Non-fiction	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Books for study	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

9. Do you visit, or have you ever visited, a bookshop?

Often _____; Seldom _____; Never _____.
Where/which?
Why/not?

10. Do you visit, or have you ever visited, a library?

Often _____; Seldom _____; Never _____.
Where/which?
Why/not?

11. Are you satisfied with the availability of reading matter? _____

12. What are the things you do most in your free time, and what do you enjoy doing most in your free time?

.....
.....

Give a mark for how often you do the following and how much you enjoy them. (0 = never; 5 = very often) (0 = no pleasure; 5 = very great pleasure)

	How often?	Pleasure?
Watching sport	_____	_____
Reading a newspaper	_____	_____
Working in the home - fixing, sewing, building, cooking	_____	_____
Reading non-fiction (not for study)	_____	_____
Watching TV	_____	_____
Playing sport	_____	_____
Going to church	_____	_____
Reading fiction	_____	_____
Visiting friends and family	_____	_____
Reading for study	_____	_____
Being on your own, walking, sitting, thinking and looking at the view	_____	_____

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