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AUTHORING LIVES

A Case Study of How Grade 6 Children in a South African Township School Construct Themselves as Readers and Writers

Erató-Nadia Bizos

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how six children at the end of the Intermediate Phase, i.e. Grade 6, in a school located in a South African township construct themselves as readers and writers. It investigates the literacy and discursive practices the children draw upon, from both their in- and out-of-school worlds, in their identity work. It also focuses on gendered differences within these practices.

A Soweto primary school was selected as the research site. Adopting a single case study design, the six children were purposefully selected to constitute a 'case'. The children represented 'good readers and writers' and an equal gender spread, i.e. three girls and three boys. Over a period of three months numerous group and individual interviews were conducted. The children's school books and portfolio work, as well as a selection of literacy artefacts produced in the out-of-school domain, were collected. Informal field notes and interviews with the school principal and two Grade 6 teachers added valuable contextual information. Gee's (1990, 1996, 1998, 2001) work forms a grounding theoretical orientation for the research which is centred on his understanding of identity as a cultural construct varying across settings and constituted within and by particular Discourses. Postructuralist theorising of subjectivity provides an additional theoretical orientation for the research (Bakhtin 1981; Mishler 1999; Norton 1997; Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004; Weedon 1997).

In analysing the data, the thesis demonstrates a marked tension between the literacy and discursive practices of the children's in- and out-of-school worlds. The children's everyday out-of-school worlds are revealed to be rich sites of situated and social literacy. Within a variety of literacy practices the children are shown to draw on their out-of-school Discourses to construct themselves as active, competent and intentional meaning-makers. Alongside such findings, the children's in-school worlds are found to be dominated by an autonomous model of literacy (Street 1984, 1993). The

emphasis on skills like decoding and encoding texts rather than meaning-making is shown to offer the children markedly different, and limited, constructions of their literate selves. The tension between the children's in- and out-of-school worlds is further heightened by the varied opportunities available for using literacy to assert their gendered identities across the two domains.

The principal argument of the thesis suggests that the children recognise the point of tension between their in- and out-of-school worlds and resolve it by establishing and maintaining a third space (Levy 2008; Moje et al. 2004). Within this space the children are shown to draw on the Discourses and positions offered within both domains to construct their identities as readers and writers. The space is therefore demonstrated to be a place where competing knowledges and Discourses are brought 'into conversation', as well as a 'navigational space', providing the children with the means to cross and succeed in different domains (Moje et al. 2004, p.44).

Finally, the thesis concludes by exploring the implications of the research findings to the wider social context of the South African education system, and the opportunities for teacher professional development within the system.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

_____

(Name of candidate)

_____ day of _____ 2009.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

African National Congress	ANC
Christian National Education	CNE
Curriculum 2005	C2005
Department of Education	DoE
Further Diploma in Education	FDE
Head of Department	HOD
Read Educational Trust	READ
Non-governmental organization	NGO
Language in Education Policy	LiEP
Language of Learning and Teaching	LoLT
National Curriculum Statement	NCS
New Literacy Studies	NLS
Outcomes-Based Education	OBE
Progress in International Reading Study	PIRLS
United Kingdom	UK
United States of America	USA

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1. Reflections on the Beginnings of the Research

1.2. Aims and Research Questions

1.2.1 Research Questions

1.3. Rationale

1.4. Background to the Research:

The South African Educational Context

1.4.1 Before 1994 – Segregated Schooling

1.4.2 After 1994 – Educational Reform

1.4.3 2009 – The Literacy Crisis

1.5. Overview of the Thesis

1.1. Reflections on the Beginnings of the Research

A few years ago I visited a classroom in a school located in one of South Africa's many townships. On this occasion the purpose of my visit was to talk to Grade 6 children and determine topics of interest for a series of books Read Educational Trust (READ)[1] was planning to develop. As is often the case, my discussion with the children digressed into an informal conversation as I spoke to them about what they were currently reading and writing in class. Having been consistently interested in the

[1] A non-governmental organization (NGO) that aims to improve the quality of education and reduce illiteracy in South Africa. READ has been providing educational support to marginalized schools and communities since 1979.

psychological aspects of new learning and the importance of motivation and purpose to such learning (Luria 1976; Vygotsky 1978), I asked the children what they thought the purpose of learning to read and write was. One of the children leaned forward and confidently exclaimed that he was learning to read because 'reading frees your mind!' I smiled and commended his enthusiasm, realising that he was repeating a publicity slogan that READ had used for their Readathon campaign[2] a few years previously. The campaign poster, which was still displayed on the classroom wall, included the slogan together with a portrait of Nelson Mandela. Further questioning revealed that the child seemed unable to explore what he thought was meant by 'reading frees your mind'. Resisting discussion of himself as a reader or the meaning that reading carried for him in various aspects of his life, the child constantly reverted to a parrot-like repetition of '... because reading frees your mind'.

Upon reflection, I became curious about two particular aspects of this child's response. Firstly, what he was doing was drawing on the Discourses available and valued in his school context in explaining his experience of reading; and secondly, he expressed little ownership of the reading and writing process and found it seemingly impossible to reflect on his personal understanding of why he was learning to read and write. This got me thinking about the way we teach reading and writing in our schools and the extent to which children experience 'literacy as a meaning-making practice rather than a site of ritual' (Norton 2003, p.146).

Over the next two years, as I spoke to more children in similar contexts, my curiosity grew, and eventually laid the groundwork for the research presented in this thesis.

[2] Readathon is an annual national literacy awareness campaign spearheaded by READ.

1.2. Aims and Research Questions

The primary aim of the research is to understand how children at the end of the Intermediate Phase, i.e. Grade 6, construct themselves as readers and writers. In pursuing this understanding, a related aim is to investigate the Discourses the children draw upon in their construction of themselves as readers and writers. This aim signals the poststructuralist theorising of Discourse and subjectivity on which the research draws, whereby subjectivity is understood to be discursively constructed, and always socially and historically embedded (McKinney 2003). In seeking to identify these Discourses, both in- and out-of-school literacy practices are therefore considered important to the children's identity work. In response to a large body of work relating to literacy and identity and more specifically to literacy as a gendered behaviour (e.g. Alloway & Gilbert 1997; Millard 1994, 1997; Pidgeon 1994; Telford 1999), the research also aims to explore possible gendered differences in children's construction of themselves as readers and writers.

At this juncture I should draw the readers' attention to the features that are relevant to what the research study 'is', and what it 'is not'. Such clarification will hopefully assist in navigating my readers through the thesis. Firstly, the research does not purport to be a survey of how all Grade 6s construct themselves as readers and writers; nor is it a study of a smaller, but more manageable group, such as a class in a school. Following from Fry (1985), who was interested in how British children see themselves as readers, the research is deliberately restricted to using six young readers and writers as a single case study. Such a contracted focus will hopefully result in a case study that is revealing and helpful because of its detail and particularity.

Secondly, using Barton and Hamilton's (2000) definition of literacy as 'a set of social practices' that are 'observable in events which are mediated by written texts' (p.8) as a way of working with literacy, the research is deliberately focused on reading and

writing. Cognisant of contemporary definitions of literacy as plural and context specific (Kress 1997, 2003; Luke & Elkins 1998), as well as the growing body of research concerning 'multiliteracies' (New London Group 2000), the research focus is purposefully restricted to reading and writing as the tools most fundamental to further learning (Hodgskiss 2007). Amongst the previously disadvantaged rural and township schools represented by the research site, the South African education system seems to be struggling to successfully develop these skills in its learners. By restricting the research focus to reading and writing I hope to gain insights that might assist teachers in establishing these key skills. The terms 'literacy' and 'reading and writing' are therefore used interchangeably throughout the thesis.

The third feature necessary to draw attention to relates to the research aim of investigating the children's in- and out-of-school literacy and discursive practices. The term 'out-of-school' literacy practices rather than 'home' practices has been selected to signal the recognition that children engage in and acquire a number of literacy practices and knowledges outside of the defined home parameter, such as through their out-of-school peer play (Forbes 1999; Prinsloo 2004), and amongst broader community members (Heath 1983; Hey 1997; Malan 1996). Although the research aims to explore the children's in- and out-of-school practices, the data collection techniques have been deliberately restricted to exclude classroom observation or interviews with parents. This restriction is justified, as the research is not concerned with what 'actually' happens in those contexts, or with parents', teachers' or my own understanding, but rather with how the children understand and construct themselves in relation to what is happening. The research design does however include individual interviews with the school principal and the two Grade 6 class teachers. These interviews are used to provide contextual information about the research site, thereby adding immediacy and richness to the analysis of the data and the discussion of the research findings.

The fourth feature that should be acknowledged is the decision to restrict the research to the children's literacy work in English. English is not the mother tongue or home language of any of the children in the group although they all attend Umholi[3], a school, that to use a popular term in current South African commentary, 'goes straight for English'[4]. Although aware of the research and debate regarding second language literacy achievement (e.g. Cummins 2000; Hunt 2007; Pretorius & Mampuru 2007; Walter & Davis 2005; Williams 1996), the research has been restricted in order to foreground the research aim of examining the children's construction of themselves as readers and writers against the complex web of debate around language, schooling and identity in contemporary South Africa. What is presented here is therefore in many ways a beginning, an initiation of an exploration that could later be extended to investigate the impact of language on children's construction of themselves as readers and writers.

The fifth and final feature to acknowledge is the selection of Umholi as the research site. The school is a fairly well-resourced township school in Soweto, Gauteng Province. It has attracted and participated in a number of national and non-governmental (NGO) run interventions, including the READ/Business Trust *Learning for Living Project* (1999-2004) with which I was involved. As part of this intervention all the teachers at the school were trained and supported in their implementation of READ's 'Balanced Language Program'. Having worked with the teachers and learners in the school on various occasions, I have been repeatedly struck by the confidence of the children and their willingness to read, and discuss their reading preferences. It has subsequently always interested me what this school, which is in many ways similar to other township schools I have worked in, might be doing 'right'

[3] A pseudonym. I have used pseudonyms for the name of the school as well as all the research participants, i.e. the principal, teachers and learners.

[4] English has seemingly become the norm across many South African schools. As Hendricks (2006) points out, English has been the choice of medium of instruction among African home language speakers since the time of missionary schools, despite apartheid and from 1991, when school communities could decide the language of learning and teaching. This is indicative of the huge gap that exists between 'government language in education policy which promotes additive bilingualism and initial education in mother tongue, and practice in schools' (McKinney 2008, p.3).

to work against conceptions of deficit learner potential and the associated 'pedagogy of poverty' (Haberman 1991). In what Graetz (2007) describes as a prevailing deficit Discourse that designates schools in Africa (and more particularly those amongst previously disadvantaged groups in rural and township areas) as under-resourced and under-performing, Umholi was therefore selected to represent a possible convincing counter position. Related to the issue of language as previously discussed, the selection of Umholi was also informed by its being a school that 'goes straight for English' as the medium of instruction or Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) from Grade 1.

1.2.1. Research Questions

The central question that the research aims to answer is:

How do Grade 6 children in a South African township school construct themselves as readers and writers?

This includes consideration of the following questions:

1. What Discourses do children draw upon in their construction of themselves as readers and writers?
2. What out-of-school literacy and discursive practices do children draw upon in their construction of themselves as readers and writers?
3. What in-school literacy and discursive practices do children draw upon in their construction of themselves as readers and writers?
4. Are there gendered differences in children's construction of themselves as readers and writers?

1.3. Rationale

In embarking upon the journey which led to this thesis, I have repeatedly returned to my central purpose. In a conversation with a colleague at the outset I clearly stated that I wanted to do something valuable that could be used in my work. I work as an independent education consultant, materials developer, and teacher trainer for a number of publishing companies and NGOs in South Africa. I felt it was important for my research to be able to inform 'real change' amongst the teachers and learners with whom I work. It is this desire to produce research that is practical, meaningful and informative across both academic and 'on the ground' contexts that is fundamental to my research. Related to this desire, my research interest is underpinned by three additional motivations.

The South African schooling system, despite large sums of money, teacher training and input from both private and government stakeholders, on average, continues to deliver extremely low educational achievements (Fleisch 2008). The broad education system and the teachers are often a focal point for discussions on attitudes towards reading and writing and the instruction thereof, whilst children's voices are frequently ignored or marginalized. Underlying my research interest is a conviction that focusing on children's voices to explore how they position themselves in relation to reading and writing, how they use these skills in their identity work, and most importantly the 'value' they ascribe to these processes, may better equip us to understand their level of investment in becoming (and being) a 'literate subject' (Millard 1994). In light of Kohl's (1995) proposition that every child has a story to tell and that within that story is the secret to him or her as a learner, the research may therefore offer a starting point to address the cognitive and emotional underpinnings of our children's poor educational performance.

In South Africa, the majority of educational research, projects and interventions are focused on the Foundation Phase (Grades 1-3). Admittedly this phase of schooling is critical as basic literacy skills are to be acquired in these years. However, after acquiring the basic skills (or not) learners are unfortunately often 'left' to their own devices in the years beyond the Foundation Phase. Intermediate Phase teachers frequently stop focusing on the explicit teaching of reading and writing and assume that once the skills are in place they will develop and extend largely 'on their own'. Unfortunately, contrary to this belief, what often happens is that Intermediate Phase children's reading and writing abilities 'level-out' and remain much the same as they were at the end of the Foundation Phase (READ 2007). This is particularly worrying as research suggests that 'the middle years' i.e. the Intermediate Phase, is when readers are confirmed as 'life-long addicts of the pleasure and new challenges of reading or when the habit can lose its hold on even the most proficient de-coder' (Millard 1994, p.37). The research therefore sets out to explore what I believe to be a neglected area of inquiry, i.e. the 'largely unchartered waters of the middle primary years' (Nixon & Comber 2006, p.128).

A third motivation underlying my research interest relates to the gaps and limitations in the literature and research on writing in the South African school context. Although there is an abundance of literature on writing in the UK, the USA, Canada and Australia, where comprehensive empirical and theoretical work has been conducted, there are few studies pertaining to this area in the local context (e.g. Hendricks 2006, 2007; Taylor 2005, 2008). The need and importance for such work is confirmed by current educational debate, which recognises the lesser focus on writing in South African schools and acknowledges that far too little writing is being done by children (Taylor 2008). Moreover, the writing that is done in schools has been found to be mostly reproductive rather than productive[5] (Hendricks 2006, 2007). To date, the results of national systemic evaluations indicate children repeatedly scoring higher on reading than writing tasks (DoE 2003; DoE 2005; DoE 2008), suggesting an unequal

[5] Reproductive writing is focused on routinised classroom writing activities whilst productive writing denotes children conveying their own meaning about a topic (Kress 1982).

emphasis on in-school reading at the expense of writing (READ 2007). Against this backdrop the need for research on writing in schools, and more particularly writing and reading as interrelated skills, is critical and therefore the research could, despite its limitations, pave the way for more elaborate studies to be conducted. The research will certainly contribute towards an understanding of children's' experiences of writing (and reading) in South African classrooms.

1.4. Background to the Research: The South African Education Context

It is not possible to discuss the research presented in this thesis without first contextualising it in terms of the broader South African educational landscape. To do this it is important to consider the present period in terms of our past, which continues to shape the provision and quality of education and the country's education policies (Hendricks 2006). To this end, a brief discussion of the South African schooling system both prior to and after 1994, when South Africa's first democratically elected government came to power, follows. To frame the research further I have also included commentary on the current education crisis in South Africa.

1.4.1. Before 1994 – Segregated Schooling

During the apartheid regime, schools in South Africa were segregated with unequal funding and facilities. Primary education was free and compulsory for white children, whereas education for black children was neither. As shown by this parliamentary speech, the government policy of preparing white children for middle class careers and black children to be labourers, was by no means covert:

> [W]e should so conduct our schools that the native who attends those schools will know that to a great extent he must be the labourer in the country (quoted in the Eiselen Report 1951, in Kallaway 1990, p.176).

The governance of the apartheid education system mirrored the segregationist thinking: there were ten education departments in the ten homelands, four departments in the provinces for white children, a cabinet level minister for the education of black children in white areas, a cabinet minister to oversee general educational policy, and ministers of education attached to the Coloured and Indian chambers of parliament (Williams 1986, p.37-38). The divisions were enlarged through unequal spending, which entrenched class and race differences (Christie 1991).

Schools serving white children received the biggest per capita funding and this was evident in the solid educational infrastructure (Botha 2007). Schools were well constructed and had playgrounds, sports fields, office blocks, toilet facilities, libraries, halls and grassed areas. They were well-resourced and teacher-pupil ratios were low. The teachers teaching at these schools were trained at teacher training colleges and universities where they were taught both pedagogical and content knowledge (Botha 2007). These teachers all had 12 years' formal schooling and at least a third of them were degreed (De Lange Commission Report 1978, in Davenport 1991, p.534). Underpinning all aspects of these schools were the ideologies of Christian National Education (CNE) as set out in the 1967 National Education Policy Act. Although the education offered in these schools aimed to 'have a broad national character' the notion of the nation was limited to whites, and Afrikaner nationalism (Christie 1991, pp.176-178).

By comparison, in the segregated townships created by the apartheid regime, schooling conditions were extremely poor. Schools serving black children had inadequate buildings, sometimes without running water or electricity, there were seldom sports fields, libraries, or school halls and the teacher-learner ratios were high

(Botha 2007). Schools were under-resourced with inadequate furniture, books, stationery or equipment. The 1953 Bantu Education Act entrenched segregationist thinking by institutionalising mother-tongue instruction in primary schooling, less academic curricula with a greater emphasis on practical subjects, and the replacement of the few white teachers remaining in the schools serving black children by black teachers (Davenport 1991, p.535). The teachers working in these schools were trained at 120 scattered teacher-training colleges situated mainly in the homelands and rural areas. In comparison to the white teachers, 18% of these teachers had only eight years' formal schooling, 66% had ten, 16% had twelve, and fewer than 3% had degrees (De Lange Commission Report 1978, in Davenport 1991, p.534). This generation of teachers subsequently had little English and limited content and pedagogical knowledge. The underlying ideologies in these schools were those of a colonized, marginalized people, aware that they were being given an inferior education and fighting an inhumane system, at school level, through non-compliance with the education authorities (Botha 2007). This often made the schools sites where little teaching or learning took place, especially in the last days of apartheid.

As the years progressed, opposition to the gross inequalities within the schooling system grew. The watershed moment of the 1970s was the Soweto Uprising that led to other disturbances across the country. Kane-Berman (1978) estimates that violence resulted in about 700 deaths and the destruction or damage of at least 350 schools. The tension and violence continued into the 1980s. Students complained about unqualified, immoral teachers, the quality of education, educational facilities, insufficient textbooks and costly school uniforms (Dixon 2007). They called for a single education department, believing it would create equality in education.

In its dying days, the apartheid government in response to growing pressure took a significant step to desegregating the white state schools. In 1990, the Minister responsible for white education announced that these schools would be allowed to

change their status from the beginning of 1991 if a large majority of parents voted to do so[6]. Three new school models were available:

- Choosing Model-A would result in the privatisation of the school.
- A Model-B school would remain a state school but could admit black students up to a maximum of 50% of its total enrolment.
- A Model-C school would receive a state subsidy but would have to raise the balance of its budget through fees and donations. Model-C schools could admit black students up to a maximum of 50% of its total enrolment.

Heated debate and amendments to legislation ensued and by April 1992, 96% of the former white state schools became Model-C schools, therefore giving themselves the possibility of raising additional funds from parents. (The restriction on the admission of black students to 50% of the total enrolment remained in place until after the first democratic election in 1994). The reasons for this change in the status of white schools appear to have been twofold. First, the state was increasingly unable to provide the same level of financial support to white schools as previously. This was due to the changing political climate that obliged government to move to greater equality in spending on black and white education. Second, the change to Model-C schools was an attempt to ensure that white communities could continue to control their schools rather than allowing them to fall into the hands of a democratically-elected government, which was (rightly) seen as imminent (Pampallis 2002).

1.4.2. After 1994 – Educational Reforms

South Africa's first democratically-elected government took power in 1994. The new government, led by the African National Congress (ANC), was overtly committed to abolishing the racist order and overcoming its legacy. As part of the subsequent larger – and still unfinished – post-apartheid process of creating a democratic society, the education system has undergone dramatic changes. These changes include the

[6] For the status of a school to change, 80% of parents had to vote in an election, with 72% of them voting in favour of a change.

restructuring of the education administration into a single unified National Department of Education (DoE) as well as legislation and curriculum reforms to reduce historic inequalities. For example, the South African Schools Act of 1996 replaced the multiple school models of the various apartheid education departments with two legally recognised categories of schools – public schools and independent (private) schools. The Act also provided for the establishment at all public schools of governing bodies with considerable powers, such as determining the LoLT for the school. The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997 set out to ensure social justice in terms of language by promoting 'multilingualism ... through an additive approach to bi- and multilingualism' (Bengu 1997, p.1). Operating within a national context of 11 official languages[7] since 1996, nine of them formerly subjugated African languages, the LiEP aimed to rectify the marginal status afforded to African languages and the importance of mother tongue instruction by the previous education system. The policy advocates mother tongue being maintained throughout the formal education process with another official language, in most cases English, being taught as a subject by a specialist teacher. Gradual use of the official language selected as the LoLT may be introduced alongside the mother tongue but should never be used for more than 50% of teaching instruction. The policy therefore advocates for the development of learners' proficiency and literacy in an official language such as English 'without also contributing to the dominance of English and the consequent marginalisation of African languages' (Hendricks 2006, p.3).

Perhaps the most pivotal post-apartheid education reform has been curriculum innovation and change. At first these efforts concentrated on laying the foundations for a single national core syllabus and removing overtly racist and other insensitive language from existing syllabi. However, realising that greater change would be necessary, 'in 1996, the South African Qualifications Authority Act (Act No. 58 of 1995) approved the establishment of a single, integrated, outcomes-based National Qualifications Framework and the State embarked on a programme of curriculum re-

[7] These are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu (South African Constitution, Chapter 1 (6) 1996).

visioning that would effect a significant break with the past' (Prinsloo & Janks 2002, p.21).

The result of the re-visioning process was Curriculum 2005 (C2005) Education and Training Band for Grades R-9, which was approved in 1997 and was implemented in the Foundation Phase in 1998. However by 2000, the new Minister of Education, Kadar Asmal, appointed a committee to review C2005. The Review Committee recommended that C2005 be revised because 'in many ways the system did not have the capacity to deliver what was an overly complex vision' (Prinsloo & Janks 2002, p.21). The Revised National Curriculum Statement was published in 2002, designed to be more teacher-friendly and accessible. From 2006 the 'Revised' fell away and the curriculum documents are now referred to as the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). Drawing on progressive learner-centred education, outcomes-based education (OBE) and an integrated approach to knowledge (Review Committee Report 2000), the new curriculum was undoubtedly a necessary development, however its implementation has (and continues to) cause

> a degree of angst for many teachers, especially those in disadvantaged African schools. Many of these teachers are still under-qualified, and, although provincial education departments attempted to disseminate information about the proposed curricular changes, these teachers felt ill-prepared to implement them in their classrooms (Graetz 2007, p.12).

Initially, a major obstacle was understanding the educational jargon of C2005 and although the subsequent review aimed to 'promote conceptual coherence, have a clear structure and be written in clear language' (Chisolm 2005, p.87), it appears that interpretation of the concepts is still problematic, especially for African teachers. At Umholi, for example, informal conversations with Mrs Moloi, the Senior Phase Head

of Department (HOD)[8] suggest that she finds the new curriculum confusing and is still not sure what is meant by many of the Assessment Standards:

> Mrs Moloi: *I don't understand because it doesn't give me details – they must know not just 'recording information', what information, what content? Not just 'must be able to research', but research what? With the old syllabus this was a lot easier. I think I understood what I was supposed to be teaching more.*

Closely allied to the difficulties of interpretation are issues of implementation. Underqualified teachers lack the theoretical knowledge and the requisite application skills to fully realise the benefits of the new methodologies in their classrooms (Graetz 2007). Furthermore, the student-centred approach to learning propounded by the NCS requires independent research by the learners, often on self-selected enquiries. However this ideal becomes almost impossible to realise in the many seriously under-resourced schools which do not have even enough textbooks for all the students, let alone libraries of supplementary materials (Rural Education Report 2005). Not only are resources lacking, but often facilities are limited too and so classrooms are frequently overcrowded, making the collaborative work advocated by OBE very difficult to facilitate. Closer investigation in classrooms where normal circumstances prevail and desks are arranged in pods, often reveals this to be 'a superficial concession, with teaching still dominated by teacher exposition and triadic dialogue' (McKay & Chick 2001, p.406). Research suggests that this has as much to do with physical constraints as resistance to change. For example, in their study of the Wits Further Diploma in Education (FDE) programme, Adler and Reed (2002) found that 'the majority of teachers in our sample ... are taking up forms of learner-centred teaching that are not accompanied by the substance' (p.111). While perhaps beginning to subscribe to the ideals of the learner-centred approach, these teachers have

[8] To facilitate good school management the three HODs at Umholi are appointed to the Foundation Phase (i.e. Grades R-3), Intermediate Phase (i.e. Grades 4-5) and Senior Phase (i.e. Grades 6-7). This differs from the scenario in most primary schools where the Intersen phase (i.e. Grades 4-7) is often grouped together and appointed to a single HOD.

therefore seemingly not yet fully negotiated their own new role as facilitators of their students learning (Graetz 2007). As Janks (2008) writes:

> More student-centered interactive teaching methods require different and alien ways of being in the classroom for teachers and do not sit well with their existing embodied identities. This produces resistance (p.5).

The problems that beset the implementation of curriculum change are compounded by the fact that South African classrooms are unequivocally multilingual and that local school language policies, shaped largely by representations from the school governing body, often appear to thwart the LiEP intentions by mandating English as the LoLT. Even though it is the mother tongue or home language of a small minority of the population, English is the language of assessment in most South African secondary schools, is the main language used in higher education and is seen by many as a globally powerful language of social and economic advancement (Hendricks 2006; Heugh 2002; Murray 2002). Although ostensibly an expedient way to facilitate communication between teachers and learners of different language backgrounds, the significant 'cultural capital' (Bordieu 1991, p.18) of the language is thus a powerful determinant. The situation places many students in the untenable position of having to learn new concepts from an unfamiliar culture in a foreign language (Graetz 2007). It also presents teachers with significant challenges: firstly, they have to scaffold their learners' understanding of increasingly abstract, and often unfamiliar, concepts; secondly, they have to mediate their shift from the informal spoken vernacular to the formal written English for the relevant discipline; and finally they have to facilitate the 'border crossing' (Cleghorn & Rollnick 2002) between their own culture, on the one hand, and that of a school system which reflects the dominant Western culture, on the other. (Teachers have to accomplish these demands in English, a language that, in the vast majority of cases, is also not their home language.)

Finally, in considering the many challenges that have beset curriculum implementation in South African schools, Macdonald's (2006) study of the properties

of mediated action in three different literacy contexts offers useful insights. In her study Macdonald (2006) selects three communities by analogy with the classic work of Brice Heath (1983). She draws her communities from Gauteng, the province which represents the very poor and the very rich in South Africa, and along the lines of Brice Heath's (1983) schema refers to them as

> "Maintown"; "Roadville", which would be city schools, or those in working-class suburbs; and a completely new, indigenous category (replacing Brice-Heath's "Trackton") called "Ntsha Tsela", which means, literally, "beating a little path for yourself" (Macdonald 2006, p.57).

Macdonald's analysis offers a substantial understanding of the macro- and meso-circumstances of formal education in South Africa and is valuable in understanding the significant differences that exist between each of the contexts. Amongst the differences identified are the level of teacher education and professional training, the availability of resources, the 'time on task' and clarity of teaching goals, and the teacher-learner relationship (Macdonald 2006). In terms of curriculum reforms Macdonald (2006) raises important distinctions in the way that the new curriculum was 'taken up' by teachers in various contexts. Her Maintown teachers, who were accustomed to counting overseas educational trends as the role model for local change, implemented local innovations such as OBE with grave reservations and a considerable amount of suspicion (KMS 1999; Macdonald 1999, 2002). In Ntsha Tsela[9], the teachers greeted the new curriculum as the welcome replacement for apartheid-style education (Chisholm et al. 2000). They took it at face value, unproblematised, and tried to apply it (KMS 1999; Macdonald 1999, 2002). What many of the teachers in such contexts failed to recognise was that stripped of racist elements, the earlier curriculum actually had aspects of good teaching practice:

[9] Macdonald (2006) identifies these schools as catering for children coming from townships and informal settlements.

> Teachers did not seem to distinguish sound pedagogical forms from what they saw as "apartheid" education. So, for example, since there was not a theory of teaching reading, teachers no longer formally taught reading (Macdonald 2006, p.76).

The important point to make here is that a new curriculum – such as that which was introduced in South Africa – is not a neutral object and that the constraints operating in different contexts restricted equivalent affordances being given to the same opportunity for transformation (Macdonald 2006).

1.4.3. The Literacy Crisis

The South African education system is currently characterised by literacy crisis and failure. Unfortunately, study after study confirms the crisis. For example, the Department of Education's national systemic evaluation of Grade 3 learners in 2003 determined that the national average for reading and writing at that grade level was only 39% (DoE 2003). This means that 61% of learners in South Africa have not learned basic literacy skills by their third year of school. The Grade 6 systemic evaluation found that 72% of learners were not performing at grade level (DoE 2005). In the most recent (2006) large scale study of reading in South African primary schools, the Progress in International Reading Study (PIRLS), Howie (2007) found the raw mean scores of the Grade 4 learners to be 13,2% and that of Grade 5 learners to be 18,2%. These scores were the lowest scores of all the participating countries.

In an effort to address the current crisis, in 2008 the DoE launched the four-year 'Foundations for Learning Campaign' (2008-2011). The campaign

> is a national response to national, regional and international studies that have shown over a number of years that South African children are not able to read, write and count at expected levels, and are unable to execute tasks that demonstrate key skills associated with Literacy and Numeracy (Government Gazette NO 30880, p.4).

The campaign, recognising some of the difficulties encountered by teachers in implementing the curriculum, includes a strong focus on basic methodology to teach learners to read, write and calculate. To date, a number of documents aimed at supporting the implementation of the NCS have been generated.

In seeking to understand the present crisis useful insights are provided by Fleisch (2008), who, drawing on commentary made by former South African president Thabo Mbeki, explains the development challenge that currently characterises the South African education sector as follows:

> Following the logic of metaphor – a decade after the end of apartheid – South Africa has not one, but two education "systems" (Fleisch 2008, p.1).

The first 'system' consists of mainly the former white and Indian schools (ex Model-C schools), and a small but growing independent sector (Fleisch 2008). These schools are well-resourced and enrol the children of the elite, white-middle and new black middle-classes. The classes are smaller, teachers better trained, facilities better, and the language of teaching and learning is usually English, often taught by a native speaker. At most of these schools children are immersed in English and many children learn to speak the language fluently. For many black middle-class parents, this is the main reason for sending their children to schools within this 'first system' where most will acquire literacy competences that are akin to those of middle-class children anywhere in the world. Comparatively, the second school 'system' mainly consists of the rural and township schools, such as Umholi, on which the research is based. This system enrols the vast majority of working-class and poor children. Parental preferences for schools in the 'first system' have resulted in a considerable exodus of learners from these 'second system' schools, resulting in many being left to cater for the children whose parents cannot afford fees and transport costs. The second school 'system', characterised by generally under-resourced schools that are framed by disadvantage, struggles to meet these children's needs. As with the schools in the

'first system' the ideologies from the past can still be found, both in the teachers and in the overall organization of education at these schools (Du Plessis 2003).

Drawing on this distinction Fleisch (2008) refers to a bimodal distribution of learning achievement in South Africa, pointing out a consistent statistical pattern of underachievement amongst children who attend schools in the second 'system'. As Fleisch (2008) writes:

> While a talented few who attend these schools outperform their peers and may even compete on equal terms with children in the privileged "system", the evidence shows that the majority of children in the "second" system cannot read for meaning in any language and are not numerically competent (p.3).

Various researchers have worked towards understanding the reason(s) for this underachievement (e.g. Crouch & Mabogane 1998; Taylor et al. 2003; Western Cape Education Department 2004). A reason that has become popularly cited in recent years is the language factor, with an overwhelming body of research supporting the position that schooling in the home language puts children at an advantage, especially in the early stages of literacy learning (e.g. Cummins 2000; Thomas & Collier 2002)[10]. Whilst not disputing the value of home language education, Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) argue for a more complex understanding of the problem, pointing out that the language factor as played out in the South African educational context becomes submerged by a host of other factors. These factors include extensive poverty and high rates of unemployment, generally under-resourced schools, teacher underqualification and generally low levels of literacy amongst both teachers and parents/caregivers. Each of the factors 'impact on the educational context and give it diverse shapes and outcomes, depending on local conditions' (Pretorius & Mampuru

[10] 'Most of the investigation into school-based literacy in South Africa has taken place within wider debates on language-in-education policies within the context of the relative status and positions of English, Afrikaans and the indigenous African languages' (Heugh et. al. 1995, in Stein 2008, p.311).

2007, p.40). Moreover, all these factors must be taken into account when considering literacy accomplishment in the South African educational system.

1.5. Overview of the Thesis

The way the thesis is organised is outlined below.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review

I map out the theoretical context relevant to the research and discuss the literature that provides a background to the study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods

The research process is presented, outlining the methodologies used, as well as some of the advantages and disadvantages in their application, and the methods used to analyse the data. I also give a detailed account of the research site, Umholi, and the six children as research participants.

Chapter 4: The Out-of-School World

The literacy and discursive practices of the children's out-of-school worlds, and the ways in which they are positioned, by themselves and others, within these practices, is discussed. The discussion includes a description of the broad out-of-school context and an identification of four principal out-of-school literacy practices.

Chapter 5: The In-School World

The discussion of the data offered in this chapter is divided into two sections: 'reading' and 'writing'. The reading section is focused on three identifiable in-school reading practices and the ways in which the children are positioned, by themselves

and others, within these practices. The writing section focuses on a number of artefacts which demonstrate the in-school construction of writing and writers.

Chapter 6: Identity and the 'Good Readers and Writers Club'

This chapter situates the research findings using Gee's (1996) notion of primary and secondary Discourses and draws upon third space theory to present a principal research finding: The children's construction of themselves as readers and writers is shaped by their identification of themselves as members of the 'good readers and writers club' (a nomenclature adapted from Frank Smith's (1985) concept of the 'literacy club').

Chapter 7: Boitumelo's World

The chapter focuses on a single child, Boitumelo, and her construction of herself as a reader and writer. A consolidation of the arguments presented is offered.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The conclusion draws out the main findings of the research. In particular the implications for children like the research participants as well as for future literacy interventions in schools such as Umholi are discussed, as are avenues for further enquiry raised by the research.

In the next chapter (i.e. Chapter 2) the literature that informs the research is presented.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction
2.2. Literacy
2.3. Teaching Literacy
2.3.1. Approaches to Teaching Reading
2.3.2. Approaches to Teaching Writing
2.3.3. Sociocultural Models of Reading and Writing
2.4. Identity
2.4.1. Theorising Identity
2.4.2. Identity and Literacy
2.4.3. Gender, Identity and Literacy
2.5. In- and Out-of-School Literacies
2.5.1. Theorising In- and Out-of-School Literacies
2.5.2. Research Conducted
2.6. Hybridity and Third Space
2.7 Conclusion

2.1. Introduction

This chapter maps the theory relevant to the research as well as the literature that provides a background to the study. Pivotal to the theoretical context is my commitment to an ideological model of literacy that recognises literacy as a social process, 'inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society' (Street 1993, p.7). Having worked for over twelve years in the South African education system, this

model resonates on both a theoretical and personal level and provides an analytical lens with which to locate the children's literacy practices within wider socioeconomic, sociohistoric and socio-political processes. Within this theoretical framework I found the work of James Gee (1990, 1996, 1998, 2001) particularly useful to the kinds of questions the research aimed to ask and answer. Gee's (1990, 1996, 1998, 2001) understanding that 'reading, writing and meaning are always situated within specific social practices within specific Discourses' (Gee 1996, p.134) subsequently provides a main or grounding theoretical orientation for the research. His position that individuals participate in multiple discursive communities (Gee 1996) and that a Discourse[11] provides an 'identity kit' that signals membership in a particular group is also significant. This understanding of identity draws on poststructuralist theorising of Discourse and subjectivity (Davies 1990, 1991, 1997; Holland et al. 1998; Mishler 1999; Weedon 1997) and it is this theorising that provides a second theoretical orientation for the research.

The two main theoretical orientations in the research are detailed in the chapter. The chapter begins by discussing literacy and the teaching thereof. Theories underpinning various approaches to teaching reading and writing are reviewed with reference to previous studies that inform my analysis of the data. Following, poststructuralist theorising of Discourse and subjectivity is outlined. This approach views identity as multiple and in process, but also as rooted in specific ways through investment and desire (e.g. Davies 1990, 1991, 1997; Holland et al. 1998; Mishler 1999; Weedon 1997)[12]. The interrelationship between identity and literacy, and between gender,

[11] Gee (1996) makes a distinction between Discourse (spelled with a capital D) and discourse, defining the former as social practices and the latter as the languages that are central to those Discourses. Many authors use the term to refer to the former definition but do not necessarily use a capital 'D'. I follow the author's preferences in referring to their work but use the term 'Discourse' (spelled with a capital D) throughout the study to carry the meaning of Gee's original definition.

[12] While some authors prefer to use either the term identity or subjectivity, others use both terms, sometimes interchangeably. I follow the author's own preferences in referring to their work and elsewhere use the terms interchangeably myself. I therefore use identity to carry the meanings of subjectivity.

identity and literacy are discussed. Third, the chapter develops an understanding of children's in- and out-of-school literacies, first by theorising the relationship between the two domains and then by reviewing some of the research that has been conducted. Finally, a brief review of hybridity or third space theory is offered. Although the research was not initiated within this theoretical frame, it became increasingly important in the analysis and understanding of the data.

2.2. Literacy

Literacy is a large and contested area of study that currently encompasses a number of paradigms. This research is located within a theory of literacy as social and cultural practice, as put forward by Street (1984), Gee (1992), Barton and Hamilton (1998), and Ivanič and Hamilton (1990). Such a theory emphasises the social relationships and specific institutional contexts within which literacy is embedded. Literacy is thus seen as a form of social action, 'distributed amongst coparticipants, rather than an autonomous, individualised skill' (Stein & Mamabolo 2005, p.26).

The conception of literacy as social practice began with the publication of Street's ethnography of multiple forms of literacy in Iran (Street 1984). Street argued against what he termed the 'autonomous' model of literacy and for an ideological model of literacy. The 'autonomous' model, he argued, presents literacy as a set of neutral, technical skills, which once acquired, produce certain cognitive processes within an individual and give rise to a number of predictable social effects. Amongst the consequences said to follow from literacy are logical and analytical thinking, critical enquiry, reflective thinking, political democracy, greater social equity and more humane social attitudes. Implicit in such a model is the view that literacy 'does things to people regardless of context' (Prinsloo & Breier 1996, p.17). Moreover, by presenting literacy as a 'strong and socially determining technology' (Prinsloo &

Breier 1996) the 'autonomous' model creates a divide between oral and literate cultures.

In contrast to the 'autonomous' model, Street (1984, 1993) proposed his ideological model of literacy. The ideological model focuses 'on the specific social practices of reading and writing' (Street 1984, p.29). The model

> stresses the significance of the socialisation process in the construction of the meaning of literacy for participants, and is therefore concerned with the general institutions through which this process takes place and not just the specific 'educational' ones (Street 1984, p.29).

Within the ideological model the variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts are therefore recognised, and literacy practices are viewed as 'inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society' (Street 1993, p.7). Drawing on Gee (1990), Street (2001) goes on to describe literacy as being about knowledge:

> the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, being. Literacy, in this sense, is always contested, both its meanings and its practices, hence particular versions of it are always 'ideological', they are always rooted in a particular world view and a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalise others (pp. 7-8).

Street's ideological model of literacy marked another important methodological shift. Prior ethnographies of literacy largely relied on the concept of 'literacy events' as proposed by Heath (1982). 'Literacy events' are 'any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants interactions and their interpretative processes' (Heath 1982, p.93). To give greater emphasis to the social models of literacy that participants bring to bear on events and that give meaning to them, Street (1993) introduced the concept of 'literacy practices'. This concept has been further

developed by a number of influential literacy researchers whose perspectives have become known as the New Literacy Studies (e.g. Barton 1994; Barton & Hamilton 2000; Baynham 1995; Gee 1996; Prinsloo & Brier 1996; Street 1984, 1993, 1995), but remains true to Street's (1993) explanation of the term as

> a broader concept pitched at a higher level of abstraction and referring to both behaviour and conceptualizations related to the use of reading and/or writing. "Literacy practices" incorporate not only "literacy events" as empirical occasions to which literacy is integral, but also "folk models" of those events and the ideological preconceptions that underpin them (pp. 12-13).

The study of literacy practices therefore places literacy events and individual actions in a solidly social frame. Practices involve aspects that are not directly observable units of behaviour, such as 'people's awareness of literacy, constructions of literacy and discourses of literacy, how people talk about and make sense of literacy' (Barton & Hamilton 2000, p.7) The social processes that 'connect people to one another' are therefore included, as are 'shared cognitions represented in ideologies and social identities' (Barton & Hamilton 2000, p.8). Understood to be embedded in institutions, settings or domains which in turn are implicated in other, wider social, economic, political and cultural processes (Fairclough 1989, 1992; Freebody & Welch 1993; Gee 1990, 1996), the concept of literacy practices thus allows for a necessary focus on 'the ideologies, which may be linguistic or other, which guide processes of communicative production' (Street 1993, p.13).

Alongside this understanding of literacy practices is the influential work of James Gee (1990). Gee sees literacy as socially situated and inherently political. He locates literacy within a discourse-centred frame, understanding Discourse as

> a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and "artifacts", of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social

> network" or to signal [that one is playing] a socially meaningful "role" (Gee 1996, p.131).

Discourse therefore, to a large extent, determines how individuals view themselves (Gee 2001). Gee (1990) notes that each 'Discourse incorporates a usually taken-for-granted and tacit "theory" of what counts as a "normal" person and the "right" ways to think, feel and behave … Such theories, which are part and parcel of every Discourse, and which thus underlie the use of language in all cases', are what Gee calls ideologies (Gee 1990, p.xx). By virtue of training our gaze on the larger construct of Discourses, which are inherently ideological and reflect the distribution of power, Gee's (1990, 1996) work therefore provides a frame for understanding the connections between literacy, culture and power. It is Gee's (1990, 1996, 2001) definition and understanding of Discourse that the research draws upon.

A key aim of the research is to investigate the literacy and discursive practices of children's in-and out-of-school worlds. To this end, Gee's (1996) further distinction between primary and secondary Discourses is particularly helpful. Gee (1990) explains primary Discourses as those which are acquired in our initial socialisation as members of specific families and communities. Defined within a particular sociocultural setting, our primary Discourse is our 'socio-culturally determined ways of thinking, feeling, valuing and using our native language to focus in face-to-face communication with intimates' (Prinsloo & Breier 1996). These Discourses 'constitute our first social identity, and something of a base within which we acquire or resist later Discourses' (Gee 1996, p.137). Through our primary Discourses, we

> form our initial taken-for-granted understandings of *who* we are and *who* people "like us" are, as well as what sorts of things we ("people like us") do, value, and believe when we are not in public (Gee 1996, p.137, italics in original).

Secondary Discourses, Gee (1996, 2001) argues, are those of key institutions such as schools, the workplace, churches and official offices and subsequently involve more 'formal' interaction. Secondary Discourses are

> ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions and clothes (Gee 1996, p.127).

Gee further observes that there are a 'great many Discourses' and explains that they all 'create, produce, and reproduce opportunities for people to be and recognise certain *kinds of people*' (1996, p.128, italics in original). Discourse therefore affects everything from how we position ourselves rhetorically to when we use emotion, what we draw on as examples, and when and what we decide to use as humour (Williams 2005/2006).

Particularly relevant to the research is Gee's (1996) intertwining of his definition of literacy with his definition of secondary Discourse: 'I define literacy as a *mastery of secondary Discourse* .... Therefore, literacy is always plural: *literacies*' (p.143, italics in original). For Gee (1990) there is no literacy learning without the accompanying acquisition of a Discourse as '[w]e read and write only within a Discourse, never outside all of them' (p. xviii). 'Discourses' and 'literacies' are therefore inseparable, and to 'have', 'get into', or be a recognised member of a Discourse requires mastering the particular literacy (or literacies) of that Discourse, and if one cannot do so, then one is not 'in' the Discourse – that is, not a member of that Discourse (Gee 1996). Mastery of a Discourse is achieved only when the other members of the Discourse recognise us as being 'in' the Discourse (Gee 1996). Equally relevant to the research is Gee's assertion that although primary and secondary Discourses may interpenetrate each other in a particular site, such as in- or out-of-school, one moves through sites and is 'accepted or marginalised depending on the Discourse acquired and the social capital embedded in it' (Dixon 2007, p.49).

A theory of literacy as social and cultural practice necessitates recognition of a multitude of literacy practices. This notion of pluralities recognises that 'literacy is not the same in all contexts; rather there are different *literacies*' (Barton & Hamilton 2000, p.10). As Barton and Hamilton (2000) explain, the notion of multiple literacies can be understood in various ways: for example, practices which involve different media or symbolic systems can be regarded as different literacies, as in film literacy and art literacy. Another understanding is that practices in different cultures and languages can be regarded as different literacies. However, the main way in which the notion is used by New Literacy Studies (NLS) researchers, and upon which my study draws, is that literacies are 'coherent configurations of literacy practices which are often identified and named', as in 'school literacy' or 'home literacy', and that 'they are associated with particular aspects of cultural life' (Barton & Hamilton 2000, p.11). The 'worlds' or 'domains' in which literacy practices occur are therefore emphasised[13]. These are

> structured, patterned contexts within which literacy is used and learned. Activities within these domains are not accidental or randomly varying: there are particular configurations of literacy practices and there are regular ways in which people act in many literacy events in particular contexts (Barton & Hamilton 2000, p.11).

Different literacies are therefore associated with different domains of life such as home and school, or school and work-place. The practices people engage with in each of these domains may differ and this contributes to the idea that people participate in distinct Discourse communities in different domains of life (Barton & Hamilton 2000). These communities are groups of people held together by their characteristic ways of talking, acting, valuing, interpreting and using written language (Swales 1990). In terms of the research a further recognition regarding different domains is important: domains are not indisputable, and there is often overlap or movement between domains. For example, although home and community are often treated as

[13] I use the terms 'domain/s' and 'world/s' interchangeably to carry the same meaning throughout the thesis.

being the same domain, they are nevertheless distinct in numerous ways, including the dimension of public and private behaviour (Barton & Hamilton 2000). Also, it is difficult to determine the extent to which a domain is a distinct one with its own practices, and the extent to which the practices that exist originated in that domain. 'In particular, the private home context appears to be infiltrated by practices from many different public domains' (Barton & Hamilton 2000, p.11).

Finally, to conclude this discussion of literacy and to summarise the theory of literacy as social and cultural practice on which the research draws, I would like to offer Barton and Hamilton's (1998, 2000, p.7) six propositions about the nature of literacy as social practice. The propositions are:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others.
- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.
- Literacy is historically situated.
- Literacy practices change and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

2.3. Teaching Literacy

Having established that the study of literacy is both a broad and complex field, this section of the chapter focuses on approaches to teaching literacy, and more specifically reading and writing. This section is necessary in order to contextualise the children's in- and out-of-school literacy practices and also because their attitudes or

approach to reading and writing will undoubtedly be influenced by the ways they were taught to read and write. As argued by Millard (1994), 'learning to read has legacies in the expectations it sets up of what books can offer and how meaning is conveyed' (p.13). Most importantly, the theories underpinning approaches to teaching reading and writing provide the tools for the analysis of the children's in- and out-of-school practices offered in this study.

2.3.1. Approaches to Teaching Reading

One of the approaches to teaching reading that children are exposed to is the phonics approach, skills based, or 'bottom-up' approach[14]. This approach, which was particularly popular in the 1960s, is linear and requires decoding skills (Van Duzer 1999). Children need to be able to discriminate and identify graphemes, identify their phonemes, and blend them to make words (Simich-Dudgen 1989). Reading books adhering to this approach introduce young readers to a defined set of phoneme/grapheme relationships at a time. They regularise the language by restricting vocabulary, wherever possible, to words that obey simple rules in order to establish sound-symbol relationships. They are often supplemented by workbooks or sheets that ask children to fill gaps in words with particular sounds matched to picture cues (Millard 1994). The approach has been variously challenged (Smith 1978). For example, Hamayan and Pfleger (in Simich-Dudgen 1989) argue that English has a small ratio of symbol-to-sound correspondences, with many symbols representing several sounds, and vice versa. In addition, sound letter correspondences can create difficulties for children who cannot hear the phonemic distinctions because their home languages do not contain them (Dixon 2007). This is compounded by the fact that people's accents have an impact on how sounds are pronounced, particularly in relation to vowel sound production. However some of the most salient criticisms of 'bottom-up' approaches target the books offered to young readers. The need to work

[14] Both the 'phonic method' and the 'look and say method' are examples of bottom-up approaches.

with a limited number of sounds and patterns often makes these books appear very laboured, particularly in the first stages. As argued by Millard (1994)

> the message such readers give to the learner is that reading is a repetitive practice of sounds and words, something to learn before you go onto books that make sense (p.16).

Taking up this criticism, Perera (1993) has also pointed to the way that stories in readers founded on phonics or skills based approaches often stop without creating a sense of completion, muddle tenses when a narrator introduces a direct address to a particular character, and include language that is stilted and unnatural sounding due to a lack of variation in sentence length and structure coupled with the avoidance of pronouns. In terms of writing, Perera (1993) observes that if reading and writing are closely connected then such readers offer children a very limited form.

In counteracting what is considered the mechanistic, programmed view of the learning process embodied in a phonics approach to teaching literacy, another approach that gained popularity in the 1970s is the language experience approach. This approach stresses the natural development of language skills in children, positing a growth model for the written form of the language based on the model of spoken language acquisition (Clay 1979). The emphasis is on using language for real purposes in real situations rather than learning in a de-contextualised way, and the approach is subsequently considered to be 'top-down' or 'meaning based' (Millard 1994). The 'Break Through to Literacy' course, which is used by the Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy in a number of South African primary schools, is an application of the language experience approach (Molteno 2008). The course uses a plastic stand or 'sentence maker', and a folder that holds word cards with commonly used words with spaces to add a child's own interesting sight vocabulary. Children compose their stories to share with their teachers and peers using these sentence makers. The language is provided by the child and is therefore much more predictable

when read back. This helps the child to gain confidence. The approach has the added advantage of confirming the interconnectedness of writing and reading.

In the 1980s, the limiting consequences of the language experience approach in terms of the acquisition of a rich vocabulary, crucial for the reading of authentic texts, influenced a growing emphasis on the use of 'real' books in literacy instruction. Also considered 'top-down' or 'meaning based', the approach that developed as a result, has its origins in psycholinguistics. Smith (1978, 1982, 1988) posited that the mind operates with one level of interpretation at a time, therefore to make sense of a text decoding letters and words, as advocated by phonics and skills based approaches, was problematic. Rather, to read with comprehension required focusing on the meaning of the text: 'Readers normally look for meaning rather than strive to identify letters and words' (Smith 1978, p.163). His work, together with Goodman's (1982), Don Holdaway's (1979) and Warwick Elley's (1989) laid the foundation for what became known as the whole language approach in which emphasis is placed on the implicit knowledge a reader needs to bring to a text in order to predict both it's structures and meanings on the basis of selected cues. The focus is on de-coding to meaning rather than de-coding to sound in a process where the reader is engaged actively with the author through the printed page (Millard 1994). Key to the teaching methods advocated within this approach is the belief that through listening to stories, and 'Shared Reading'[15], children can be apprenticed as readers (Botha 2007). Stories are therefore an essential part of the whole language classroom and language work is built around themes arising from the stories. In describing the materials appropriate to the whole language classroom, Goodman (2005) explains:

> Basal readers, sequenced skills programs, or the usual types of instructional materials are not really needed .... What is appropriate is anything the children need or want to read and write. Lots of recreational books are needed, fiction and non-fiction, with a

[15] The 'Shared Reading' method has been described most fully by Holdaway (1979). Shared Reading is a whole class activity where the teacher and learners share a complete text, such as a story. The focus is on modelling and teaching reading skills, especially reading for meaning and comprehension of the text as a whole (READ 2008).

> wide range of difficulty and interest, and resource materials of all kinds, some particularly prepared for use in school (like beginners' dictionaries and encyclopaedias) and some 'real world' resources (like phone books, TV guides and adult reference books) (pp.34-35).

Two key points related to a whole language approach to literacy teaching are significant for the research. First, the approach advocates that because reading and writing are demonstrated to have real meaning and purpose, the children see value in having these skills and want to be literate, i.e. want to become members of the literate community. In this regard, Smith's (1985, 1988) work is important. Smith (1985) argues that 'to understand reading children must become members of a group of written language users, they must *join the literacy club'* (Smith 1985, p. 124, italics in original). He explains that there are no entry requirements to this club and that children can join it with

> a single unqualified reciprocal act of affiliation. A mutual acknowledgement of acceptance into a group of people who use written language is all that is required (Smith 1985, p. 124).

Smith's (1985) observation that children who join the literacy club take it for granted that they will become like the more experienced members of the club because 'they are the same kind of people' (p. 124) is relevant to the research because it suggests the possibilities for affiliation based on a shared or common identity. Members in such a club are concerned about each others' interests and well-being, but most importantly spend a large amount of time doing the activities the club was formed to promote, i.e. literacy, 'constantly demonstrating the value and utility of these activities to the new members …' (Smith 1985, p.124). Membership of the literacy club therefore becomes a principal means by which children – or adults – identify themselves as participants in the literate world (Smith 1998).

A second key point related to a whole language approach that is significant for the research is the emphasis placed on stories and fiction informed by the conviction

within the approach that 'stories have the ability to excite children's interest in reading and give children the message that learning to read is enjoyable, purposeful and meaningful' (Millard 1994, p.31). Meek, whose work is founded on her view that beginner readers should be enabled to 'discover the power and the excitement of reading, not simply its usefulness as a skill for information retrieval' (Meek 1988, p.26), has frequently demonstrated the lessons that children learn from imaginative fiction. Within a whole language approach the reading of fiction/storybooks is therefore often yoked together with the notion of pleasure, and reading is constructed as a pleasurable pursuit:

> One of the reasons teachers have always given for encouraging children to read fiction in school is the conviction that, because reading is pleasurable in itself, stories encourage children to become fluent readers and help to establish the literacy skills that they can carry through into adult life (Wade 1990, p.58).

The legacy of the correlation drawn between reading fiction, pleasure and reading achievement within the whole language approach persists in many schools (and school systems), including in South Africa. In discussing the tendency of school curricula to privilege fiction, Coles and Hall (2002) write:

> At the start of schooling children are taught to read through a story, so that being 'good at reading' often becomes synonymous with being good at reading stories. It is the reading of fiction that is most carefully monitored, most commonly studied in class and forms the bedrock of what children understand the subject 'English' to be about. The same emphasis on fiction also occurs in writing (p.105).

In reviewing the debates around whole language and more skills based or phonics approaches and the question of what the most effective method of teaching reading might be, numerous researchers have gone on to argue that reading is neither strictly a 'top-down' nor a 'bottom-up' process (e.g. Rumelhart 1977; Stanovich 1980; Pumfrey 1991; Adams 2001). Rather than adhering to any one approach, these researchers

support what has come to be termed interactive or interactionist approaches. Within these approaches, adherence to either a 'bottom-up' or 'top-down' approach is considered a disadvantage as skilled readers are understood to simultaneously use both higher levels of linguistic processing of the meaning of the text as well as the lower level decoding processes. As explained by Gregory (2000), an interactive approach

> describes reading in terms of a process of how children synthesise information from four knowledge centres: the grapho-phonic (phonic method), lexical (look and say method), syntactic and semantic (language experience and whole language approaches). Each can be seen as a knowledge centre providing different clues or cues (p.9)[16].

Furthermore, interactive approaches tie in with neurological models developed in recent years that have used modern technology to discern the neurological processes activated when readers read for meaning. Neurological models explain the reading process as activating multiple and different parts of the brain, such as those responsible for short term memory, language, visual and auditory memory, and long term memory or general knowledge (Cavallera & Leiguarda 2006).

To conclude this discussion of approaches to teaching reading I return to one of the aims of the research, which is to explore the in-school literacy and discursive practices the children draw upon in their construction of themselves as readers and writers. It is significant to note that the National Education Department's 'Foundations for Learning Campaign' (2008-2011), and the methodologies it advocates, is based on an interactive approach to literacy teaching as is READ's Balanced Language Program with which the teachers at the research site are familiar. Both advocate for a variety of text-based methodologies that move learners towards independence through careful scaffolding and support, for example Shared Reading and Writing, Group Reading, Guided Reading, Word and Sentence Level Work,

[16] Gregory (2000) added a fifth knowledge centre, that of 'bibliographic' or text knowledge.

Reading Aloud and Independent Reading and Writing. Most importantly, both adhere to an interactionist view as argued for by Adams (2001, p.315):

> [G]iven an alphabetic system of writing, learning to read depends critically on understanding and learning the phonological significance of its letters and spellings; that in turn, is best developed through reading, and writing, and spelling, and language play, and conceptual exploration, and all manner of engagement with text in relentlessly enlightened balance.

2.3.2. Approaches to Teaching Writing

Theorists within the field of NLS contend that writing and written language can assign social positions to people. Street and Street (1991) argue that the literacy practices of ordinary people are often rendered invisible. The claim made about Britain by Sheridan et al. (2000, p.7) is equally true of South Africa:

> [W]e live in a society that has reserved 'legitimate' writing' for a select few. Novelists, journalists, academics, government officials, poets and a small number of others are viewed as legitimate writers; their writing carries authority.

Kress (1982, p.34) develops this view, and refers to productive and reproductive writing. Productive writing goes together with high levels of education, and economic and political power, while reproductive writing refers to the routinised writing of scribes, secretaries and school children.

Hendricks (2006) argues that what is at issue is whether 'contemporary South African children's classroom writing is "alive with possibility"[17] or routinised and dull' (p.47).

In examining this distinction, her use of the terms 'composing' and 'scribing' is particularly useful to my study (Hendricks 2006, 2007). 'Scribing' denotes 'classroom activities and tasks in which learners practise content, display knowledge and grammatical accuracy' (Hendricks 2007, p.2). Rooted in a construction of writing as a technical skill, scribing allows children little or no authority over their text. 'Composing', Hendricks (2006, 2007) argues, is in direct contrast, and involves learners conveying their own meaning about a topic, their thoughts and/or feelings. Whilst composing, learners exert power and control over what they want to say.[18] The purpose for classroom writing is therefore central to the distinction between 'scribing' and 'composing' and is useful to consider alongside Hall and Robinson's (1994) view that for most of this century the demand for writing accuracy in schools has taught children how to be writers rather than authors. 'The very word "author" indicates someone who has authority over their text' (Hall & Robinson 1994, p.123). The definition of Hendricks' (2006) terms also denotes the different sense of ownership learners would have over their writing, depending on the whether they are composing or scribing. As noted by Hendricks (2006, p.47) 'both Norton (2005) and Datta (2000) claim that a sense of ownership of meaning-making is important to the development of literacy'.

The purpose and form of classroom writing differs within various approaches to teaching writing. These approaches can also be said to exist on a continuum with a skills-based approach on one side and a whole language approach on the other

[17] 'A popular advertising jingle claims that present-day South Africa "is alive with possibility". In contrast, presumably to the former political dispensation in which the aspirations of the majority of the population were denied' (Hendricks 2006, p.47).

[18] As composing frequently contains relatively complex thoughts, expressed through complex grammatical structures, it is the primary vehicle through which children's cognitive processes can be developed (JET Education Services 2008).

(Gilbert 1989; Simich-Dudgeon 1989). Kress (1982) makes the connection that approaches to teaching reading influence approaches to writing:

> If reading is seen as primarily a decoding skill, then it is quite likely that writing will be regarded as a process of encoding in quite an analogous manner. And indeed, as the heavy emphasis on matters such as letter-sound correspondences show, that has been the case. From this point of view the learning of writing is often regarded as the learning of the mechanics of translating; either speech into writing, or meaning into visual symbols.

He goes on to point out the impact that the production of reading materials has on writing:

> Specific theories of reading lead to the production of reading materials which enshrine the theoretical assumptions of the theories in which they are based. These reading materials constitute one form on which children meet written language ... The effect of this can be readily assessed by looking at early (and not so early) Readers, and comparing these (a) with a teacher's assumptions of what written language is and her or his expectations of the language which children should be producing, and (b) with what written language is actually like. The models of Readers are positively detrimental to the child learner as models of written language (1982, p.6).

Two influential approaches to teaching writing that it is necessary to touch on in this review are the process and genre approaches. These approaches underpin the writing requirements of the National Curriculum Statement (DoE 2002). The process approach has its origins in North America and Britain in the 1970s and 1980s which saw a revolution in the teaching of writing (Walshe 1981). This revolution grew out of research into the processes that proficient writers go through as they construct meaning into texts. Graves' (1983) seminal work *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*, introduced the process approach which shifts the focus from a completed text to the processes required for writing. Graves (1983) divides the writing process into several stages beginning with initial discussion and drafting, and moving on to

conferencing, revising, editing and publishing. The approach is child centered with the child choosing topics and being supported and guided by the teacher. The best practices associated with process writing encourage productive, original 'composing', while the worst practices often ensue when teachers do not understand the difference between editing and revising, an indispensable understanding in the process approach (Hendricks 2006). As Raimes (1983, p.10) explains, teachers employing a process approach need to

> give their students two crucial supports: *time* for the students to try out ideas and *feedback* on the content of what they write in their drafts (italics in original).

The process approach has been criticized for not challenging children's' writing, particularly in regard to how one deals with stereotypes, racist and sexist content in their writing (Gilbert 1989; Kamler 2001). In addition, having complete control of topics may mean that children limit themselves to particular topics and genres. In spite of these criticisms, the emergence of process writing significantly resulted in teachers being encouraged to become close observers of children at work. Of particular relevance to the aims of this research is the recognition afforded within the process approach to the connections between writing, spelling and reading: The approach makes it apparent that 'if we want our young writers to write, they have to be immersed in the language of books – they have to be read to and they have to read' (Harris et al. 2003, p.27).

The functional or genre approach was developed from the work of Halliday (1989, 1994) and his theory of functional linguistics. He argues that there are culturally specific ways of using language and that different contexts are associated with different registers or genres. The condensed and abstract nature of writing requires an awareness of the appropriacy of specific genres in relation to audience and purpose. The approach is therefore premised on the view that children need to be able to distinguish between genres such as procedures, descriptions, reports, explanations, arguments and various types of narrative (Maybin 1993). Based on a social

interactionist view of learning, the approach incorporates the notion of assisting children to perform in shared situations with the teacher what they will then come to master and do on their own. Scaffolding is therefore built into the approach, with the delineation of four-stages: teachers (1) introduce a text model of the genre, (2) analyse the structure and grammatical features of the genre with learners, (3) together with learners jointly produce a text of the same genre, and (4) let learners write the genre independently (Martin 1985). Teachers using a genre approach therefore employ cyclical, systematic and explicit instruction.

Although Reid (1987, p.2) refers to a period of 'genre versus process polarisation', both approaches promote a carefully staged and joint (learner-teacher and/or learner-learner) approach to classroom writing. One of the key differences between the approaches however, is that genre approaches integrate the teaching of writing and grammar rather than consigning it to the revising and editing stages. Furthermore, genre theorists privilege factual impersonal genres above the more personal writing favoured by process approaches. A final distinction between the approaches that is relevant here is the claim made by genre theorists that factual writing can give access to genres of power and develop a critical engagement with social reality in a way that other forms of writing do not (Martin 1985). This assertion has however been variously challenged. On the one hand researchers argue that 'social relations require forms of capital that go beyond knowing how to produce a text' (Dixon 2007, p.57). On the other, researchers point to the risk of teachers implementing genre pedagogy in a mechanical way and therefore inhibiting spontaneity and originality in children's writing (Hendricks 2006).

Having outlined understandings of the purpose and form of classroom writing and related approaches it is necessary to discuss the studies of classroom writing that inform the analysis of the children's writing in this project. Although working from different angles, several studies of how school texts develop children's writing have been useful. The first of these was based on Britton's (1970) initial theory of

language. Britton's (1970) theory proposed that humans use language in two major roles: as a 'participant' and as a 'spectator'. As a 'participant' we are involved in the world around us and the language we use, in the first instance, is the face-to-face interaction in our everyday worlds. Britton (1970) referred to this as 'expressive' language. However, when we need to know more, we move from the 'expressive' into more 'transactional' language (Britton 1970). This language is more explicit and informative and is used to explain, question, report, record and theorise (Britton 1970). Britton proposed that the second role we take on as humans is that of a 'spectator'. In this role we use language as 'art' or 'a means of evaluating and embodying individual feelings and experiences' (Murray 1988, p.12). Britton referred to this as 'poetic language'.

Based on his theory of language, Britton et al.'s (1975) study went on to analyse 2122 classroom texts in English, History, Geography, Science and Religious Studies of selected British children, in four different years of school. The writing was categorised along a writing continuum that differentiated writing in terms of purpose, audience and function. The continuum has expressive writing as the pivotal, and initial form of writing while transactional writing is at one pole and poetic at the other. Premised on the belief 'that writing begins as written down speech', expressive writing is explained to be close to 'speech for oneself' (Britton 1970, p.165). Such writing includes many details that tell us about the writer rather than forming part of what he or she is intending to communicate (Britton 1970). The role of audience and purpose for writing are critical in determining the move to transactional and poetic writing. As Britton (1970) writes:

> [I]t is when the demand is made for participant language that any reader can follow, or to spectator role language to satisfy an unknown reader that the pressure is on for a move from expressive writing to transactional and poetic writing respectively (p.174).

Children will however not be able to comply fully with the demands of poetic and transactional writing at once. Rather, it is by attempting to meet them that they

gradually acquire them. To trace writing development, two transitional categories are therefore included in the continuum. Britton et al.'s (1975) writing continuum is illustrated in Figure 2.1 included on the following page.

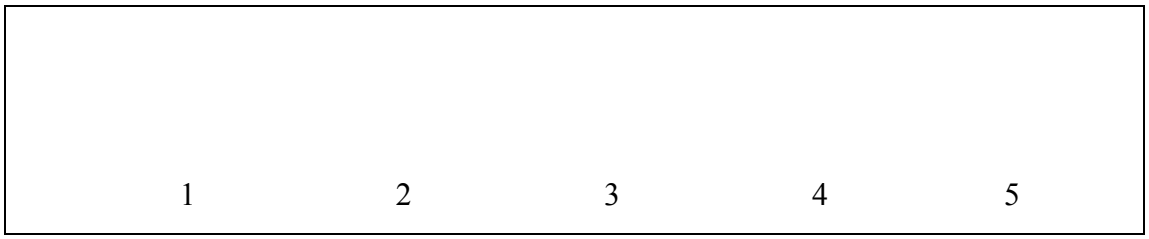


Figure 2.1: The writing continuum (Britton et al. 1975, p.174).

Given that the research is concerned with the children's construction of themselves as readers and writers, Britton's (1970) discussion of 'the self' in children's writing as it moves across the continuum, is particularly relevant. In analysing a ten-year-old boy's writing as being transitional between the expressive and transactional category, Britton (1970) explains:

> [E]xpressive language provides an essential starting point because it is language close to the self of the writer: and progress towards the transactional should be gradual enough to ensure that 'the self' is not lost on the way: that on arrival 'the self', though hidden, is still there. It is the self that provides the unseen point from which all is viewed: there can be no other way of writing quite impersonally and yet with coherence and vitality (p.179).

Britton et al.'s (1975) writing continuum is however problematic and has been variously criticised. In a fundamental criticism, Martin et al. (1987, p.63) cite research by Newkirk (1984) that discredits the idea that children begin with expressive writing before moving onto other forms of writing. Perera (1984) also claims that there is no psycholinguistic evidence of progression from expressive to transactional or poetic writing. As Hendricks (2006) observes, if one regards the idea that expressive writing is the starting point for writing development, the other shortcoming of Britton et al.'s continuum are 'the fluid boundaries between genres and the lack of a built in hierarchy of text types' (p.54). Particularly relevant to this study, the continuum does not take into account the effect on children's writing development when a teacher is the sole audience for writing, as is the case in most South African schools. Also, the

continuum does not take into account the comprehension exercise, a widely-used language teaching genre. Education's obsession with comprehension exercises – usually answering questions related to the factual information included in a text – has long been documented in the literacy research (Pearson & Fielding 1991; Pressley et al. 1992; Raphael & Au 2005; Raphael et al. 2006; Rosenblatt 1983). The genre is perhaps overly popular in South African schools, frequently confirming Smith and Elley's (1994) view that 'much of comprehension is determined by the purpose for the reading, and too often the purposes for the reading have been to answer ten questions' (p.49)[19].

The second study of children's in-school writing that is useful to the research was conducted by Barnes and Shemilt (1974). The study was carried out as an inquiry into teachers' attitudes to written work. Teachers of third-year classes in eleven secondary schools were asked to write down (1) why they set written work, (2) what they kept in mind when they set it, (3) what they did in 'marking' children's writings, and (4) what uses, if any, they made of it after marking. Teachers' answers were categorised and found to fall somewhere 'upon a continuum that ran from a *Transmission* view of teaching and learning to an *Interpretation* view' (Barnes 1976, p.140, italics in original). Barnes (1976) explains that a teacher whose answers fell mainly in transmission categories saw the purpose of writing primarily as the acquisition or recording of information. When setting written work, he/she thought mainly of the product and whether the task was clear and appropriate to students. He/she saw marking primarily in terms of assessment, and either handed back written work to students with no follow up or used it as a basis for the correction of errors. A teacher whose answers fell mainly in interpretation categories saw the purpose of writing either in terms of cognitive development or more generally as aiding the writer's personal development. When setting written work he/she was concerned with

[19] Children who are repeatedly confronted with such tasks will of course develop strategies to cope. One such strategy is reading the question first and then reading the story until a sentence is found with the same words as the question and then copying out the sentence (Smith & Elley 1994; Raphael et al. 2006).

students' attitudes to the task being attempted, and was aware of aspects of the context in which the writing was done, such as audience and availability of resources. He/she saw marking primarily in terms of making replies and comments, and was concerned to publish students work and use it as the basis of future teaching.

Although dated, Barnes and Shemilt's (1974) study raises important distinctions in both teacher and learner views of writing:

> The Interpretation teacher sees writing as a means by which the writer can take an active part in his own learning: as pupils write they can – under certain circumstances – reshape their view of the world, and extend their ability to think rationally about it .... The Transmission teacher on the other hand, is primarily aware of writing as a means of measuring the pupil's performance against his own expectations and criteria (Barnes & Shemilt 1974, p.96).

Underpinning these diverging constructions of written work, are contrasting views of the part played by learner and teacher in classroom communication (Barnes & Shemilt 1974). The 'Transmission' teacher sees it as his/her task to transmit knowledge and to test whether the students have received it. 'To put it crudely, he sees language as a tube down which knowledge can be sent; if a pupil catches the knowledge he can send it back up the tube' (Barnes 1976, p.142). Such a teacher does not see speech or writing as changing the way in which the knowledge is held. For the Interpretation teacher, however, the student's ability to reinterpret knowledge is crucial to learning, and he/she sees this as depending on a productive dialogue between the teacher and the student.

The third relevant study of how school texts develop children's writing was conducted by Hendricks (2007). The study was carried out as a comparison of two English (as a First Additional Language) teachers' practices in the teaching of writing, as well as their Grade Seven learners' texts, in two very differently resourced primary schools in South Africa: one a historically disadvantaged state school and the other a well-

resourced independent school. The study demonstrated that out-dated ideas about language teaching divided home and additional language curricula at the two schools into grammar, comprehension and extended writing. A large divide was found to exist between the writing of the privileged school and that of the under-resourced school, although writing pedagogy in both schools was shown to fall short of developing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. Of particular significance for my research is Hendricks's (2007) adaptation of Raison and Rivalland's (1997, p.15) four forms of support for extended writing, i.e. modelled, shared, guided and individual. To take into account whether learners had any choice about topics for their writing when analysing the texts produced by her sample, Hendricks proposed slightly amended terms. In this study, my analysis of the children's in-school writing practices draws upon Hendricks' (2007) terms. The terms are:

- 'copied' to refer to a common practice in many South African schools, whereby learners copy a model text from the board. The text does not serve as a model of a genre for learners to then subsequently mimic.
- 'controlled' for grammar exercises in which children fill in a missing word or choose the correct word from a pair.
- 'guided' to include grammar exercises in which children transform a sentence or text (e.g. direct to indirect speech) as well as longer texts for which the teacher provides a frame.
- 'independent' for texts that children produce without a frame to include passages such as stories, descriptions, expressive passages or transactional writing such as letters.

Since Hendrick's (2006, 2007) work is contemporary, focused on similarly aged children and conducted in the South African context, it is of particular interest, and provides a valuable study against which to compare and contrast the findings of this research.

2.3.3. Sociocultural Models of Reading and Writing

Given that the research is located within a theory of literacy as social and cultural practice (Street 1984; Gee 1992; Barton & Hamilton 1998), before concluding this section of the review it is necessary to briefly touch on sociocultural models of reading and writing.

The approaches to teaching reading and writing outlined above indicate some of the issues that have arisen amid competing perspectives on the 'right' or 'best' way to teach these fundamental skills. However, contemporary researchers such as Harris et al. (2003, 2006) align themselves with the views of Luke and Freebody (Freebody & Luke 1990; Freebody 1992; Luke 1993, 1994, 1995, 2000) and argue that amid these competing perspectives, whether to teach children using one particular approach or another is no longer a relevant question. Rather, teaching reading and writing should be grounded on a theoretical framework that allows for, yet extends, the best of all the varied approaches. Such a framework should acknowledge the importance of the 'whole-to-part-to-whole process' and the role that the three subsystems of language – the semantic, syntactic and graphophonic systems – play in the reading and writing process (Harris et al. 2006, p.34). Drawing on this framework, Harris et al.'s (2006) sociocultural models of reading and writing are particularly useful in providing a valuable lens through which to view the children's reading and writing practices.

Harris et al.'s (2006) sociocultural model of reading is based on Freebody and Luke's original model (Freebody & Luke 1990; Freebody 1992: Luke 2000). The model includes the three subsystems of language (Goodman & Watson 1998) that readers draw upon, and is contextualised in terms of Halliday's (1985) notion of context of situation and Pierre Bourdieu's (1992) work on context of culture. At the core of the model is Freebody and Luke's (1990) original conceptualisation of the reading practices that 'a successful reader in our society' (p.7) needs to develop and engage

in. These interactive practices are understood to work together in synergy as a reader works with texts. Freebody and Luke's (1990) four practices are:

- Cracking codes of texts (How do I decipher this text?)
- Making meaning with texts (What might this mean?)
- Working with purposes of texts (What might I do with this text here and now?)
- Critically analysing texts (What does this text do to me?)

Using Freebody and Luke's (1990) terminology, Harris et al. (2006) subsequently include four sets of practices in their model: code breaking, text participant, text user, and text analyst practices. The distinction between text participant, code breaking and text user practices is particularly relevant to this study. Text participant practices are those that refer to reading practices related to making meaning – participating in the construction of meaning with texts (Freebody & Luke 1990). Making meaning is viewed as an active and reflective process, moving beyond reconstructing meanings intended by authors or deemed relevant by others, such as teachers. Meaning is

> shaped by readers' prior knowledge, experiences, and attitudes that they bring to texts. What readers bring to text interacts with what the text brings to the reader. In that interaction, meanings arise and are confirmed and revisited (Harris et al. 2006, p.38).

Making meaning is also shaped by the sociocultural context in which a reader reads. Code breaking practices are those that relate to deciphering texts. These practices involve cracking codes in order to access what a text actually conveys. As code breakers, readers may need to decipher a variety of codes ranging from simple letter-sound relationships to attending to various design elements related to written language, visual imagery, audio text, and gestural actions (Harris et al. 2006). Reading practices related to texts serving different purposes across contexts are referred to as text user practices. A reader competent in engaging with text purposes recognises various social purposes that texts serve and can exploit these purposes to their own ends (Harris et al. 2006).

Harris et al. (2003) further draw on Freebody and Luke's (1990) work in developing their sociocultural model of writing. The model subsequently includes four sets of writing practices: text encoder, participant, user and analyst (Harris et al. 2003). These four practices parallel the reading practices in their sociocultural model, as illustrated in Table 2.1 below:

Reading as Social Practices	**Writing as Social Practices**
Code breaking practices - deciphering written and visual language	*Text encoder practices* - encoding written and visual language
Text participant practices - making meaning from written and visual texts	*Text participant practices* - composing meaning into written and visual texts
Text user practices - reading written and visual texts for social purposes	*Text user practices* - constructing written and visual texts for social purposes
Text analyst practices - detecting underlying values, beliefs, views and discerning reader/viewer position.	*Text analyst practices* - constructing underlying values, beliefs, views. Positioning the self as writer and positioning the reader as in reader/viewer.

Table 2.1: Parallel practices in sociocultural models of reading and writing (Harris et al. 2003, p.40).

Again, the distinction between text encoder, participant and user practices is important. Text encoder practices are practices whereby the writer creates a written text that can be read by others, conforming to the conventions and structures of written language (Harris et al. 2003). Text participant practices refer to composing meaning:

> As text participants, writers ask 'What meanings do I want to convey?' In engaging in text participant practices, writers draw on their prior knowledge, experiences and understandings about their world (Harris et al. 2003, p.42).

Text user practices refer to those related to the social purposes for writing. As text users, writers ask 'Why am I writing this text?' and 'What purpose will this text achieve?' (Harris et al. 2003, p.42). Text users draw on their knowledge about how different kinds of texts serve different kinds of purposes.

To conclude this discussion of Harris et al.'s (2003, 2006) sociocultural models of reading and writing, it is important to highlight a critical recognition afforded within such a framework, that is that reading and writing practices do not occur in isolation from one another, nor in a vacuum. Rather, the practices 'are embedded in and shaped by contexts of situation and culture in which readers read and texts are produced' (Harris et al. 2006, p.61).

2.4. Identity

2.4.1. Theorising Identity

The research draws on a poststructuralist theorising of Discourse and subjectivity. This approach views identity as multiple, fluid and in process, situated within larger socioeconomic, sociohistoric and socio-political processes (Davies, 1991, 1997; Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004; Weedon 1997). Individuals, drawing on and having to respond to different social and cultural contexts and the Discourses that circulate within them, take positions and are positioned in different ways (McKinney 2008).

Drawing on such an understanding, Gee (1990, 1996), whose work provides a grounding theoretical orientation for the study, considers identity to be a complex, cultural construct varying across settings and constituted within and by particular Discourses. As articulated by Gee (1996), Discourse therefore functions as 'a sort of identity kit' that constructs individuals as members in particular groups. Discourses come 'complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize' (Gee 1996, p.127). As Gee puts it,

> [i]t is not individuals who speak and act, but rather historically and socially defined Discourses speaking to each other through individuals (Gee 1992, p.23).

Gee's concept of identity, in the socially situated sense of the word, therefore leaves room for multiple formations within different Discourses. As Gee and his colleagues assert:

> There are innumerable Discourses in modern societies: different sorts of street gangs, elementary schools and classrooms, academic disciplines and their sub-specialties, police, birdwatchers, ethnic groups, genders, executives, feminists, social classes and sub-classes, and so on and so-forth. Each is composed of some set of related social practices and social identities (or positions). Each Discourse contracts complex relations of complicity, tension and opposition with other Discourses (Gee et al. 1996, p.10).

When Gee writes about identity and Discourse, we hear echoes of Foucault's (1972) use of the term, as well as Bourdieu's (1977) preceding conceptualisation of 'habitus'. Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus is valuable to the research in providing a way of thinking about the children's construction of their literate selves. For Bourdieu an individual's habitus, is the embodied 'schemes of perceptions, thought and activity' by which individuals engage the material world (Grenfell & James 1998, p.14). In essence, habitus comprises the dispositions, values, skills and

understandings individuals accumulate across their lifetimes. In terms of the study, for example, as children grow up in their homes they are subject to the influences of their family practices – such as the ways in which family members behave and get things done, the ways in which they view and use literacy, the ways in which they spend their time, the occupations they hold, places they go, relationships they have and how they interact, socialise, recreate and so on (Harris et al. 2003). These practices (and experiences) shape what the children come to know about themselves and their world and about the purpose or place of literacy in that world. This moulds their ways of perceiving the world and their ways of behaving in it, i.e. their predispositions. To use Bourdieu's (1992) words, these experiences reflect and promote for children 'a durable, transposable system of definitions of themselves and their world' (p.134). Habitus is therefore internalised as so-called second nature. As Janks (2008) writes:

> Our habitus affects our every action: our posture, the tiny movements of our tongues in our mouth that forms our accents, the way we sit and stand, our gaze, what we believe, what we value – all below the level of consciousness (p.1).

Both Gee's notion of an 'identity kit' (1996) and Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus are therefore useful in guiding the research whereupon the Discourses within the children's in- and out-of-school worlds are understood to provide the concepts, perspectives and values for the children's identity work and more particularly, the construction of their 'literate selves' (Matthews & Kesner 2000).

In considering the research aim of examining the children's construction of themselves as readers and writers, two broad aspects of poststructuralist theorising of Discourse and subjectivity are particularly important to highlight here. First, poststructuralists posit that individual identities are multiple, taken up by individuals as they assume various positions within the Discourses available to them. Identity is thus viewed as fluid and in process as multiple selves are continuously formed, reformed, and changed entirely in a 'changing sea of joint action' (Shotter 1993, p.38). Individual identities are 'neither unified or fixed' (Weedon 1997, p.87) and our

identity work is subsequently always ongoing and never 'done' (Holland et al. 1998). As Luke (1995) explains:

> available positions and discourses offer possibilities for difference, for multiple and hybrid subjectivities that human subjects actively make and remake through their textual constructions, interpretations, and practices (p.14).

This understanding of identity as multiple, consisting of selves that might 'conflict or align with each other' (Mishler 1999, p.8) is useful to the research as it affords a lens with which to view possible shifts and tensions that emerge in the children's construction of their literate selves within (and across) domains.

A second aspect of poststructuralist theorising that is important to highlight here is the understanding that the meaning-making involved in identity work is mediated by the Discourses and practices of people's social activity systems and their wider cultural and historical contexts (Davis 1997). Viewing identity in these terms therefore requires the very definition to be considered as part of the practices of specific communities (Gonzalez 1999)[20]. The understanding of identity as socially and historically embedded is significant to the research in orienting the broad aims and affording a lens with which to view the children's subjectivities as constructed by the practices of their wider social, cultural and historical contexts.

Key to a poststructuralist understanding of identity as a discursive construction is the notion of positioning. Although a 'position' is similar to a role, it refutes the independence of roles from the 'real' person (Davies & Harre 1990). As a term used by poststructuralists, positioning therefore makes 'problematic the taken-for granted concept of the individual as architect of their own subjectivity' (Davies 1992, p.68).
As a concept, positioning is related but not identical to Althusser's concept of interpellation, or hailing, wherein ideologies call out to individuals, recognising them

[20] As a result, numerous poststructuralists write about 'subjectivity' rather than 'identity' to signal the break with conceptions of the individual often called up by the term identity (Davies & Banks 1992).

or recruiting them into pre-defined positions (Althusser 1971). Drawing on the influence of theorists such as Foucault (1977), Butler (1990) and Hollway (1984), poststructuralist researchers tend to see the relations among Discourses, power and positions as being more complex, contradictory, and fluid than that envisaged in Althusser's germinal work (Mills 1997). Credited with introducing the concept of positioning to the social sciences, Hollway (1984), for example, explains that

> [t]he practices and meanings of particular individuals always occur within discourses, and discourses contain positions, as a sentence contains subjects and objects. To speak within a discourse (and everyone always does), one must take up a position, and in so doing, place oneself in relation to others (Hollway 1984, p.236).

Taking up a position within a particular Discourse therefore means that 'certain power relationships become relevant and that certain meanings, perspectives and values are recognizable and can be voiced, rendering other meanings undesirable and often seemingly invisible' (Peterson 2002, p.352). Most importantly, any one Discourse

> is neither the complete truth, nor complete lies. It is a temporary resting point, which throws some things into relief even as it disguises others ... the spaces between different discourses, their partiality, their very incompleteness, guarantees that they will change (Moss 1989, p.122).

Importantly, compared with the fixed conceptual nature of roles or actors, a poststructuralist understanding of subjectivity attributes agency to the individual. To emphasise the agentive nature of positioning, Bomer and Laman (2004) point out that

> the assignment and taking up of positions is improvisational and the fact that participants are drawing upon discursive resources does not mean that they are trapped into ready-made cultural patterns, as they can do new things with old material (p.4).

Weedon (1997) explains subjectivity as a conscious site of struggle between competing Discourses. The individual plays an active role in this struggle which, she argues, enables individuals to resist being positioned in particular ways and to produce new meanings from conflicting Discourses. As Weedon (1997) explains:

> The individual, who has a memory and an already discursively constituted sense of identity, may resist particular interpellations or produce new versions of meaning from the conflicts and contradictions between existing discourses (p.102).

Positions ascribed by an individual to both self and other, are therefore almost constantly in flux and often contested (Harre & van Lagenhove 1999).

Within poststructuralist theorising 'a sense of belonging' (Shotter 1993) and 'desire' (Norton 1997) are important to understanding why particular positions may be chosen over others. Shotter (1993) describes positions as 'bearing upon nurturance or injury to the basic being of a person' (p.38). This most basic being involves being secure in a sense of belonging. People only get that kind of security if other people in a group treat the individual as if his or her sayings and doings are legitimate (Bomer & Laman 2004). (This is similar to Gee's (1996) discussion of only being recognised as being 'in' a particular Discourse, when the other members of the Discourse recognise us as being 'in' the Discourse.) 'Because this sense of belonging is so basic, people work on it fairly constantly in their positioning of themselves and others' (Bomer & Laman 2004, p.425). Taking up this notion of belonging, Norton (1997) explains that subjectivities are associated with desire, 'the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, and the desire for security and safety' (Norton 1997, p.410), and that such desire is inseparable from the influence of power and privilege of the larger societal context. As argued by Li (2000),

> an individual whose desire is not satisfied will choose to negotiate or shift his or her identity in accordance with the relationship between the individual and the social context (p.2).

The emphasis placed by poststructuralist researchers on the influence of power in the larger societal context on acts of positioning, is important (Norton 1997; Holland et al. 1998). Positions manage which persons are entitled to say and do what, who is in and out of particular groups and roles, and who has access to particular spaces, activities, genres and voices (Holland et al. 1998). Positions, and the resources one can draw on from a particular position, therefore narrativise power relations (Holland et al. 1998). As observed by Bomer and Laman (2004):

> the qualitative dimensions of positioning will always inscribe power as working in a complex, multidirectional manner, and the particular nature of a given positioning event will be shaped by the discourse or 'figured world' in which it occurs (p.426).

A poststructuralist framework therefore allows for an examination and explanation of the 'negotiation of identities as situated within larger socioeconomic, sociohistoric and sociopolitical processes' (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004, p.3). These processes largely determine the repertoire of available subject positions within a particular context (or interaction) (van Langenhove & Harre 1999). People cannot employ subject positions to which they have not had access. 'Agency – an individual's ability to choose acts of positioning – does not extend completely outside this cultural-experiential circumscription' (Bomer & Laman 2004, p.427). The interrelationship of positioning, power, access and wider social processes is critical to the research. The children in the study go to a particular kind of school at a particular point in South Africa's history. In examining the ways in which they are positioned by themselves and others within their in- and out-of-school worlds, it is therefore essential to bear in mind the wider socioeconomic, sociohistoric and sociopolitical processes in the country. These processes underpin the questions that guide my exploration of the children's positioning in their in- and out-of-school worlds, such as: Who can the children be here? What do they need to do to be part of this group? What does it mean to be a reader/writer here? What is enabled and what is constrained?

2.4.2. Identity and Literacy

The intersection between identity and literacy is critical to answering my principal research question of how children construct themselves as readers and writers. This relationship has taken on increasing importance in recent scholarship. As Whitmore et al. (2004) point out:

> When the view that literacy is a cultural practice is accepted, two realities follow. First, literacy learners are seen as positioned in groups and in society by their existing cultural identities. Second, children acquiring literacy are also seen as acquiring cultural identity through reading and writing (p.316).

As 'moments in identity construction and representation' (McCarthey & Moje 2002, p.233), literacy practices therefore embody children's cultural, racial, linguistic, class, ideological and gendered positions in society (Whitmore et al. 2004). The identities children construct therefore shape their literacy practices while their literacy practices become a means for acting out the identity they assume (McCarthey & Moje 2002). These practices can take place in both in- and/or out-of-school contexts, for as argued by Barton et al. (2008)

> literacy practices are tools for engaging in both sanctioned and unsanctioned activities to foster identity building and positionality within and across a variety of contexts (p.75).

Studies that have highlighted the relationship between literacy practices and identity construction include the following: McCarthey's (1998) examination of young literacy learners where the children reconstructed their subjectivities based on the demands of the social setting; Egan-Roberton's (1998) study of girls in a writing club who seized opportunities to reshape Discourses about themselves when provided an

appropriate forum; Luttrell and Parker's (2001) examination of how students used literacy to construct identities both aligned with and in opposition to the figured world of their high school; Compton-Lilly's (2006) case study demonstrating how children's identities and cultural resources intersect and converge during literacy learning; and Blackburn's (2003) study that illustrated how an African American lesbian adolescent used the literacy practices she developed in a youth center to engage in both identity work and social change in school.

Although there is a large body of further research and commentary on the intersection between literacy and identity, in this review of the concepts and literature key to my study there are two features of this intersection that are important to highlight. First, given the theoretical understanding of literacy as sociocultural practice upon which the research draws, the children's conceptions of literacy and their perceptions of who uses it, for what ends, and in what circumstances depends on their interactions with others in their social and cultural worlds (William 2003). In light of poststructuralist theorising of power and positioning the children's construction of their literate selves does not occur within neutral social and political contexts, nor are their selves played out upon level social and political planes (Compton-Lilly 2006). For example, various researchers now recognise that social class is particularly strong in influencing learner identities, including children's identities as readers (Hicks 2001; McGuffrey & Rich 1999; Jones 2006). As Compton-Lilly (2006) writes:

> Privilege, access, and opportunity, related to race, class, and gender, have influenced and continue to influence the experiences and relationships that contribute to the formation of reading identities for students (pp.59-60).

The second feature of the intersection between literacy and identity that is important to highlight here is that

> children's personal histories as readers, their past successes, the official criteria for determining reading competence and their current struggles all contribute to the ways in which children identify themselves as readers (Compton-Lilly 2006, p.59).

In seeking to understand this connection between literacy and identity, Bruner's (1996) work on the significance of children experiencing success in the activities they pursue is valuable. Although situated more in the field of psychology and independent conceptions of the self, Bruner (1996) maintained that two principal components of self are the ability to initiate and participate in an activity and the evaluation of that participation. Given that the school is an arena in which children frequently initiate, carry out, and evaluate their participation in activities, Bruner (1996) argues that it plays a large part in a child's construction of self. Applying these ideas of self-construction to children's development as readers and writers, as children initiate and carry out literacy activities

> they develop expectations about their performance as readers and writers. If a child experiences success or failure during these interactions around reading and writing, this affects substantively a child's perceptions of self as well as how a child interprets future events involving reading and writing (Matthews & Kesner 2000, p.385).

To use poststructuralist terminology – children's perceptions of themselves as readers and writers are therefore constructed not only by how they position themselves but also by how they are positioned by others. It is this understanding that informs 'the inclusion of statements such as "My teacher thinks I am a good reader", "People in my family think I am a good reader", and "Other kids think I am a good reader" on numerous psychometric scales' (Henk & Melnick 1995, pp.478-479). (This understanding also informed the inclusion of questions such as 'What do you think your family say about your reading/writing? in the schedule of questions used for the individual interviews. See Chapter 3 section 3.5.2.)

In considering the importance of children's experiences in literacy interactions, and the subsequent manner in which they are positioned, by themselves and others, Smith's (1985, 1988) notion of the 'literacy club', as discussed in Section 2.3.2, is important. Smith explains that children who belong to the 'literacy club' have well developed literate selves, and as members of this club, 'regard themselves as the kind of people who read and write' (Smith 1988, p.128). Children's past success leads them to expect future success and with this perception of success comes increased interest and involvement in literacy activities.

In summary then, an understanding of literacy as social and cultural practice focuses on the significance of a child's interactions with others. When these interactions occur around literacy, children's understandings of literate processes are developed and their construction of who they are as literate people are revealed. These interactions also influence children's construction of themselves in relation to others and their perceptions of who they are and who they can become as literate people.

2.4.3. Gender, Identity and Literacy

The poststructuralist theorising of Discourse, subjectivity and identity upon which the research draws, recognises gender to be variable and 'constructed and performed rather than natural or biological' (Dutro 2001/2002, p.377). Within this understanding gender refers to the 'accomplishment of managing the social activities one does to proclaim membership in a Discourse of masculinity or femininity' (Gee, personal communication June 12 1997, in Young 2000, p.316). We therefore accomplish gender or claim membership in a Discourse of gender as we talk and act in ways that constitute us as masculine or feminine within social structures (West & Zimmerman 1987) so that we appear to be 'people like us' (Gee 1996, p. viii). Notably, the ways that constitute us as female or male, and the social differences they produce, are not fixed and as we inhabit them, we continually negotiate their meaning (Hartman 2006).

Gender is subsequently not something one accomplishes once and for all at an early age; it has to be publicly performed time and time again in accordance with the structures of social contexts (Butler 1990). From this perspective, gender is therefore more than an aspect of what one is, 'it is something that one *does*, and *does* recurrently, in interaction with others' (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p.140, italics in original).

In thinking about the discursive construction of gendered subjects, Butler's (1995) notion of performance is particularly important and provides a valuable lens to examine the way the children draw on specific dominant Discourses to 'perform' or 'do gender'. Rather than viewing gender as the cultural inscription of 'masculinities' and 'femininities' on a pre-existing binary of male and female-sexed bodies, Butler (1995) emphasises the 'performativity' of gender. For Butler (1995), gendered subjectivities unfurl in a series of performances that express the complex ways that gender operates in our daily lives – the choices we make, our conceptions of self, and our negotiations with the norms of gendered behaviour. These subjectivities, based on dominant and powerful Discourses, often reinforce particular 'gender hegemonies', which Butler (1990, 1995), alongside other researchers, argues are patriarchal and 'male privileging' (Lacan 1977)[21] and may contribute to women's oppression (Davies 1993; Cherland 1994; Finders 1997). An example of a dominant Discourse is that of hierarchical female/male duality, which is readily recognised and unconsciously reproduced across numerous social contexts. This Discourse creates an invisible, taken-for-granted ordering of the social world – 'a way that humans construct and organize the world' (Dutro 2001/2002, p.378). Such ordering comes to be based on opposing notions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' that include weak/strong, passive/active, emotional/stoic, and nurturing/detached (Dutro 2001/2002). 'These notions – that become stereotypes – are entrenched and often difficult to see because

[21] Feminist theorists refer to a 'patriarchal' (or ruled by the father) master Discourse, which serves to marginalize and disempower women (Butler 1990). Some argue that Western civilisation is controlled, organised and conducted in such a way to subordinate women to men in the domains of family, religion, politics, economics and the legal world (Laws 1990).

they seem "natural" or just the way things are' (Dutro 2003, p.470). The assumed naturalness of these notions is maintained through a process of silencing, in which other ideologies and experiences are 'buried, camouflaged, and discredited' (Fine 1987, p.157). Culturally dominant versions of masculinity and femininity are hence maintained as

> [t]o choose to move beyond the boundaries of the 'natural', culturally dominant forms is to risk socially-sanctioned ostracisation; it is to engage in an act of resistance (Davies 1993, in Dalley-Trim 2009, p.56).

There is a long tradition in educational research focused on the intersection of gender and literacy practices, and more particularly on examining the differences between boys and girls on literacy tasks. Rather than discuss this body of research in depth, I would like to present some of the most compelling findings:

- Boys read less than girls read.
- Girls tend to comprehend narrative texts and most expository texts significantly better than boys do.
- Boys tend to be better at information retrieval and world-related tasks than girls are.
- Boys value reading as an activity less than girls do.
- Boys have much less interest in leisure reading and are far more likely to read for utilitarian purposes than girls are.
- Boys and girls express interest in reading different things, and they do read different things.
- Boys are more inclined to read informational texts.
- Boys are more inclined to read magazine articles and newspaper articles.
- Boys tend to resist reading stories about girls, whereas girls do not tend to resist reading stories about boys.
- Girls read more fiction.

- Boys are less likely to talk about or overtly respond to their reading than girls are.
- Well-defined gender binaries are shown to exist in the topics of children's writing. Correct gender positioning is achieved when girls and boys write about particular topics. Romantic topics, for example, are exclusively feminine whilst sport and more action-orientated (even violent) topics are more suitably masculine.
- Girls are more willing to take up the positions offered within typically masculine topics for writing.
- Emphasizing relationships among characters is typically associated with feminine styles of writing.

These findings were drawn from various studies including Barrs and Pidgeon (1993), Coles and Hall (2002), Gilbert (1993), Millard (1994, 1997), Rogers (1996), Peterson (2002), Whitehead et al. (1977), Wilhelm (1997) and Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998). Amongst these studies, Coles and Hall's (2002) study of 'The Children's Reading Choices Project' is particularly important to the research. Although the project was conducted in England, it focused on similarly aged children, i.e. 10, 12 and 14, and many of the project findings offer valuable insights. The project sought to discover 'the extent and kind of children's voluntary reading, what satisfactions children seek from books and magazines, and which environmental factors influence their choice' (Coles & Hall 2002, p.97). Research confirmed many of the findings from previous studies (as summarised above), and revealed a clear influence of gender on reading. Findings included the following: significant differences in the types of books chosen by boys and girls; a marked preference amongst boys for reading non-fiction; a preference amongst girls for reading fiction, popular series books and magazines; marked differences between boys' and girls' social interactions around literacy practices and an increasing importance of peer-group activities and expectations in determining reading habits (Coles & Hall 2002, p.101-103).

Studies such as Coles and Halls' (2002) have however been variously criticised. For example, Smith and Wilhelm (2002) argue that the tendency to compare boys and girls in studies such as Coles and Halls' (2002) often results in the pitting of one gender against another, whilst 'contemporary gendered power relations are more complicated and contradictory than any simplistic binary discourse of 'the girls versus the boys'' (Heath 1999, in Reay 2001, p.153). Moreover, as argued by Millard (1997) teachers tend to use this kind of research in ways that emphasise traditional socially constructed notions of maleness and femaleness and reinforce current general tendencies rather than expand on or redefine them. Another and perhaps most fundamental criticism is that these studies leave the critical question of 'why' gendered differences in literacy development and engagement exist, unanswered (Gilbert & Gilbert 1998).

During the last decade research in the field of boys' education has burgeoned. This has largely been a response to the high profile public outcry over the 'failing boys' (Epstein et al. 1998) phenomenon in many Western countries. The decade has subsequently seen a groundswell of international research attempting to understand the underachievement of boys, in literacy in particular (Alloway 2007; Barrs 2000; Dalley-Trim 2007; Gilbert & Gilbert 1998; Millard 1997; Martino 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 2000, 2008; Newkirk 2000). As Alloway (2007) writes:

> In Australia, as in other countries – New Zealand, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom for instance – the educational gaze over the past decade has turned towards boys. At a national level, serious concerns have been expressed, and generous federal funds have been invested in improving learning outcomes for boys in Australian schools, a case that has been mirrored nationally elsewhere (p.582).

Although the complexity of the debate around the differential achievement of boys and girls in school-based literacies and how it might apply to the South African context falls outside of the scope of this thesis, the thinking about the concept of masculinity that has emerged from such research is important. Rather than attributing

boys' differential literacy achievements to biological determinism (Biddulph 1997) or oppressive feminist ideologies (Sommers 2000), scholars such as Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), Alloway and Gilbert (1997), Hearn (2004), Kenway (2000) and Martino (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 2000) use a social constructivist perspective to argue that boys are 'suffering from definitions of masculinity that are hegemonic, culturally-embedded, and harmful to both boys and girls' (Smith & Wilhelm 2002, p.9). This argument is based on an acknowledgement of the plurality, multiplicity and complexity of masculinity (ies), recognizing that there exists 'a range of masculinities – a range of ways in which to 'be' a masculine subject, a range of ways in which to 'do' or 'perform' masculinity' (Dalley-Trim 2009, p.56). These multiple Discourses or ways of doing masculinity are understood to 'ebb and flow', operating in 'concert and contest' (Kenway & Fitzclarence 1997, p.120). Thinking about masculinities in this way is useful as it allows one to think about the relational nature of the practices of masculinity to race, class, sexual orientation and social contexts (Young 2000). A key point stemming from this way of thinking about masculinities is that despite the diversity of Discourses of masculinity, masculinities are linked to each other and constitute a hierarchical relationship (Connell 1995; Webb & Singh 1998). Power and domination are not shared equally among men (Connell 1987) and each and all the Discourses of masculinity bring material consequences for those who take them up (Dalley-Trim 2009). Positioned powerfully at the top of this Discourse hierarchy are what are commonly referred to as hegemonic versions of masculinity. These are those

> dominant and dominating forms of masculinity which claim the highest status and exercise the greatest influence and authority and which represent the standard-bearer of what it means to be a 'real' man or boy (Kenway & Fitzclarence 1997, pp.119-120).

Constructed along with, but in contrast to femininity, 'hegemonic versions of masculinity operate as oppressive regimes within phallocentric discourses' (Martino 1994, p.2). These versions are characterised, furthermore, as inherently heterosexual (Kendall & Martino 2006). Represented as coherent, rational and obvious,

'hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculine identity frequently aspired to by many boys, and that comes to dominate classroom sites' (Dalley-Trim 2009, p.57).

In considering the question of literacy and masculinities, Martino (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 2000, 2008) argues that hegemonic versions of masculinity are not consistent with being literate and in fact militate and undermine literacy and literate behaviour. He argues that boys see literacy as feminised, and since males define their maleness as 'not female', literacy must be – and in fact is – rejected (Martino 1995a, 1995b). Martino's work builds on that of Walkerdine (1990), who was among the first to argue that culture pushes boys toward certain conceptions of masculinity and associated behaviours that conflict with literacy, which is culturally presented as a passive and private act that is feminised. Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus also accounts for the influence of traditional cultural practices and helps explain the resilience of masculine attitudes, including those toward literacy. As Millard (1997) writes:

> What the habitus creates, in effect, is an unexamined common-sense or practical way of proceeding within any repeated social routine that rules out, as extravagant or unconventional, other kinds of behaviour (p.22).

Millard (1997) also makes use of French theorists Lacan and Foucault, noting that both examine

> the ways in which the gender differences of a particular cultural group are inscribed in its language, so that the 'habitus' is reinforced and positions created within discourse appear more 'naturally' available to one gender than to another. Authority, it is argued, is located within male culture; on the other hand, the creative process may be inscribed within the feminine, particularly in its most expressive and experimental forms (p.28).

Since literacy teaching, and particularly the teaching of reading, is largely dedicated to the development of the individual through language, boys may therefore be

particularly disadvantaged and undermined by cultural attitudes, structures, and institutions that promote the status quo (Smith & Wilhelm 2002). This may be especially so when the focus is on narrative, emotional response, expressivity and creativity, as is often the case in literacy classes (Millard 1997).

Although in the last decade research on gender and literacy practices has largely focused on boys (and masculinities), as outlined above, there is an extensive tradition of research focused on girls' experiences (e.g. Cherland 1994; Christian-Smith 1990; Finders 1997; Gilbert & Taylor 1991). Whilst the studies conducted in this area are highly variable, many of the findings indicate that, like boys, girls use literacy to display their subjectivities, including at times, their resistance to how they are positioned as girls in the world (Cherland 1994). Three important points emphasised by researchers considering the ways in which different Discourses can position girls, are however especially important to the research (Davies 1993, Hey 1997; Walkerdine 1997). First, there are many different competing gender Discourses, some of which have more power and potency than others for particular groups of girls (Francis 1998). Second, such processes of discursive recognition, of feeling a better fit within one Discourse than another (Francis 1999) are influenced by factors such as social class, race, sexuality, age, and parental expectation (Alloway & Gilbert 1997; Connolly 1998; Hey 1997; McGuffrey & Rich 1999; Mirza 1992; Reay 2001). And third, girls can position themselves differently in relation to gender Discourses according to the peer group context they find themselves in. For example, girls may assume different positions depending on whether they are in single- or mixed-sex contexts (Francis 1999). Notably, all three points can equally be applied to the positioning of boys within gendered Discourses.

A final body of work necessary to outline in this review of the theories and research that relate to the research's aims in terms of children's gendered and literate identities is that of Davies (1989, 1993, 1997). Davies has written for nearly two decades on boys' and girl's gendered subjectivities as constructed in their literacy practices. In

her book *Shards of Glass* (1993) Davies analyzes discussions in which children are encouraged to recognise and deconstruct the male/female dichotomy in texts. Her notion of 'category maintenance' is particularly important to the research. Category maintenance refers to the 'demonstration of taken-for-granted knowledge about gender in order to be recognized as socially competent females and males' (Davies 1993, p.18). In describing children's sense of gender, Davies (1993) writes:

> In learning to be coherent members of their worlds they were actively taking up their assigned gender as their own …. They learned to make sense of the world and of themselves through the bipolar categories of identifiably one and not the other, of being one that is also opposite to the other (p. xvii).

The notion of category maintenance is relevant as numerous studies have demonstrated children's reading and writing preferences 'as a stage for revealing performances of gender' (Dutro 2003, p. 380) whereby they (often unconsciously) use their choices to reinforce their identities in relation to particular gender hegemonies (e.g. Cherland 1994; Coles & Hall 2002; Davies 1989, 1993; Dutro 2003; Finders 1997; Millard 1997, 2003; Walkerdine 1997). Children therefore use their reading and writing choices to provide them with a stable set of characteristics through which and against which to define their gendered subjectivities. For example, children might organise their reading choices into distinct bipolar categories: 'boy's books' and 'girl's books' (Dutro 2001/2002). Drawing on popular Discourses of gender stereotype that rely on assumptions about the innate differences between boys and girls to construct these gendered boundaries, children describe boys' interests as being action and non-fiction, whilst girls' preferences focus more on emotion, relationships and fiction (Coles & Hall 2002; Millard 1997). These bipolar categories are mirrored in children's writing choices and 'correct gender positioning' is achieved when girls write narratives about romances and 'human relationships' and boys write about more action-orientated and violent topics (Dutro 2001/2002, 2003; Millard 1997, 2003). Notably, topics deemed more masculine are largely considered 'inappropriate' for girls to write about (Millard 1997; Peterson 2001). This stereotypical division of

reading and writing preferences echoes popular perceptions of girls as being better equipped to engage with 'empathetic reading', explained as 'the ability to decentre, to empathise, to enter the world of the text, and to identify with characters' (Barrs 2000, p.288), and boys as being better equipped for 'efferent reading' (Rosenblatt 1978) which is explained as reading focused on 'the comprehension of content' (Barrs 2000, p.288).

Literacy classrooms, and schools in general, are contexts where the gendered boundaries between categories of reading and writing choices are heavily policed, and where crossing them comes with severe punishment (Alloway & Gilbert 1997; Blackburn 2005; Davies 1993; Dutro 2001/2002). This has been found to be more particularly the case for boys than for girls (Dutro 2001/2002, 2003; Orellana 1995; Rowan et al. 2002). For example, girls regard themselves as free to select books identified as being 'boy books', such as books about sports (Dutro 2001/2002), and are further able to value non-traditional aspects of female characters, such as physical superiority (Rice 2000). Girls therefore cross gendered boundaries more readily and are able to regard themselves as feminine or 'like a boy' (Rice 2000). Boys, on the other hand, have been found to strongly emphasise the lines between 'themselves and femininities in their reading practices … defining themselves against feminine fiction' (Dutro 2003, p. 486). As observed by Blackburn (2005), this is particularly notable amongst boys who are not hyper-masculine as it is these boys who are most penalised by dichotomous notions of gender. Boys positioned more firmly within dominant forms of hegemonic masculinity have more social capital and are 'freer' to cross gendered boundaries and choose to read a book with a female protagonist or write a narrative about a relationship, for example, without fear of being labelled 'a sissy' (Dutro 2003; Epstein et al. 1998). As Kenway and Willis (1998) argue 'when girls are harassed, it is very often because they are girls, when boys are harassed it is not because they are boys but because they are the wrong sort of boys' (p.103).

2.5. In- and Out-of-School Literacies

2.5.1. Theorising In- and Out-of-School Literacies

Gee's distinction between primary and secondary Discourses provides a valuable analytical tool with which to examine possible tensions between in- and out-of-school literacies. According to Gee (1990, 1996), children often find themselves in situations where the secondary Discourses they must adopt in school are at odds in some way with the Discourses and identities they have learned in their out-of-school worlds, i.e. at home, amongst their peers and in their communities. Sometimes the conflicts come from differences of culture between the home and school domains (Canagarajah 2002; Delpit 1995) whilst other children may find that differences in social class can also create differences in how they approach reading and writing (Dyson 1997; Lillis 2001). To demonstrate the serious mismatch that can occur between out-of-school Discourses and those premised and valued at school, Gee (1990) uses Michael's (1981) documentation of the show-and-tell speech of a seven-year-old African American girl. The girl tells a creative, imaginative story about her grandmother's birthday. The story demonstrates fluency in the girls' home Discourse, but violates the expectation of the classroom Discourse, where what is 'right' during show-and-tell is short, factual, and to-the-point reporting. Some children come to school already able to do such reporting because it is part of their home Discourse; they have a head-start at the reporting that the school values and are given more opportunity to practice it. Gee (1990) writes that

> children cannot feel they belong at school when their valuable home-based practices … are ignored, denigrated, and unused. They cannot feel like they belong when the real game is acquiring academic varieties of language, and they are given no help with this, as they watch other children get favourable assessments at school for what they have learned not at school but at home (p.37).

Gee goes on to argue that the prevalence of autonomous models of literacy in schools 'cloaks literacy's connections to power, to social identity, and to ideologies, often in the service of privileging certain types of literacies and certain types of people' (Gee 1996, p.46). For Gee (1990) schools often fail to take the literacy practices of a range of communities into account, or to help non-mainstream students acquire the secondary Discourses of school. All kinds of rich and complex literacy practices can therefore happen outside the classroom, but if they don't fit the Discourse(s) valued in the school, they 'don't count'. At the same time, children whose 'way of knowing matches what is considered valuable within the culture of the school' (Vogt & Shearer 2004, p.28), and who therefore fit the appropriate Discourse, will be rewarded. Using Bourdieu's (1977, 1992) terms, 'some children's knowledges, habitus and cultural practices do not count as cultural or linguistic capital in literacy lessons, while other children's do' (Nixon & Comber 2006, p.131). Some children will appear as 'fish in water', as already having 'a feel for the game' (Bourdieu 1990) whilst others will not.

The critical difference in the potential mismatch of in- and out-of-school literacies is that some Discourses, and the membership they allow in particular cultural groups, are more consequential than others (Williams 2005/2006). Gee (2001) calls these 'dominant Discourses' and defines them as the 'Discourses, the mastery of which, at a particular place and time, brings with it the (potential) acquisition of "social goods" (money, prestige, status, etc.)' (Gee 2001, pp.527-528). For Gee (2001), the power and prestige carried by the Discourses associated with schools therefore serve a gate-keeping function (p.531).

When Gee writes about dominant Discourses and the acquisition of 'social goods' we hear echoes of Bourdieu's (1986, 1990) notion of capital. 'As an index of relative social power, [the notion of capital] remains Bourdieu's principal contribution to contemporary understandings of literacy' (Luke 1993, p.6). As explained by Bourdieu (2006), capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: social, economic and cultural capital. Social capital refers to the social relations and networks that an

individual has that facilitate his or her chances of success in particular settings. 'To coin a phrase, social capital is a matter of not what you know, but who you know' (Harris et al. 2003, p.51). Economic capital refers to that which is immediately and directly convertible into money. Perhaps most important to the research is the concept of cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) describes cultural capital as the currency value of an individual's possession of knowledge, skills, and formal and informal qualifications, by which that individual may gain entry into a particular social setting, such as a school or university. For example, children whose home reading experiences include activities that predispose them to school literacy, such as reading a variety of picture books and being read to, develop knowledge and skills as readers that count as 'currency' at school, and this gives them relative advantage there. On a broader scale, the Discourses of schooling are subsequently considered dominant because mastering these 'can lead to higher levels of education, professional jobs, and a certain kind of cultural capital' (Williams 2005/2006, p.344).

Recognising the potential mismatch of in- and out-of-school literacies, scholars such as Street (1984, 1995), Barton and Hamilton (1998) and Prinsloo and Breier (1996), draw on Gramscian conceptions of power and hegemony to investigate the difference between dominant literacies, attached to the domain of authoritative institutions such as school, and vernacular literacies, such as local literacies developed and employed by those with relatively less authority. In terms of this, the work of Street (1984, 1993, 1995, Street & Street 1991) and Moll (Moll 1992; Moll & Diaz 1987; Moll & Greenberg 1990; Moll et al. 2001) are important to the research.

Based on his ethnography of multiple forms of literacy in Iran, Street (1984, 1993, 1995, Street & Street 1991) argues that Western notions of schooling or academic literacy are just one form of literacy amongst many literacies and that schooling and pedagogy constrain our conceptions of literacy practices. Over the years, Street (1984, 1993, 1995) has repeatedly raised this question: When there are so many different types of literacy practices, why is it that school literacy has come to be seen as the

defining form of reading and writing? In an article written with Joanna Street, he describes the 'pedagogization' of literacy, or the phenomenon of defining literacy solely by means of reference to teaching and learning, while other forms of literacy are marginalized (Street & Street 1991). By defining what counts as literacy by 'school literacy', the lack of 'school literacy' is subsequently constructed in deficit terms. This construction obscures the presence of literacy in other forms, and perpetuates the notion of literacy as individual performance only (Prinsloo & Breier 1996). In commenting on the autonomous model of literacy that continues to prevail in many classrooms, Street (1997) writes:

> If literacy is seen as simply a universal technical skill, the same everywhere, then the particular form being taught in school gets to be treated as the only kind, as the universal standard that naturalises its socially specific features and disguises its real history and ideological justifications (p.48).

Connecting micro-analyses of language and literacy use with macro-analyses of Discourse and power, Street's work therefore points to the dangers of reifying schooled notions of literacy. An important conclusion drawn from his work is that rather than focusing on the continuities and discontinuities between home and school in ethnographic research, there is a need to focus on the ethnographies of literacies more broadly and to document the ways that school can impose a version of literacy on the outside world (Street & Street 1991). Numerous NLS scholars have adopted and extended Street's framework and this has resulted in an important tradition of work on the resources, both personal and community based, that children, adolescents and adults bring to school. (Some of these studies pertaining to children's in- and out-of-school literacy practices will be discussed in the following section).

An example of such work that is particularly significant to this study is Moll's work with Latino communities and his generative term 'funds of knowledge' which he uses to describe the networked expertise woven through community practices (Moll 1992; Moll & Diaz 1987; Moll & Greenberg 1990; Moll et al. 2001). Defined as

'historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being (Moll et al. 2001, p.133), 'funds of knowledge' are resources accumulated from and shaped by a child's home and community as well as school settings (Moll & Gonzalez 1994). Much of Moll and his colleagues' work involves an approach to transforming the household resources of marginalized communities into resources for teaching current academic Discourse. The work effectively demonstrates 'how we can use funds of knowledge to bridge communities to classrooms when we acknowledge the expertise of parents and community members' (Hull & Schultz 2001, p.592). Current academic Discourse has adapted and used Moll's (1992) term in a slightly wider sense to refer to many of the cultural, linguistic, and communication discontinuities between home and school and it is in this sense that the term is most useful to my research.

In considering children's 'funds of knowledge' (Moll 1992), as discussed above, and possible tensions between in- and out-of-school literacies, a final conceptual tool relevant to the research, and therefore necessary to touch on here, is Thomson's (2002) notion of 'virtual school bags'. Thomson argues that children come to school with 'virtual school bags' full of different knowledges, narratives, interests and understandings (2002, p.2). Following from a 'funds of knowledge' framework (Moll 1992; Moll et al. 2001) the 'knowledges' Thomson (2002) refers to include, amongst others, cultural resources, past experiences, relationships and languages. At school, only some children get to open their school bags, take out various home and community-based knowledges and make use of them. For these children the contents of their school bags are congruent with and valued by school and what it counts as relevant experiences and practices. However, some children do not get a chance to open their bags, for what they know is not called upon or deemed relevant in their classrooms. 'Some of these children might open their bags to get out some of their "stuff", only to find it rejected or renegotiated' (Harris et al. 2006, p.57). Still other children may present problems because of what they bring to school, and in such

cases, as Comber (1997) puts it, it is usually preferred that children leave their bags at the school gate.

2.5.2. Research Conducted

An extensive amount of research into the literacy practices of children's in- and out-of school worlds has been conducted (e.g. Gregory 1997, 2001; Gregory et al. 2004a; Gregory & Williams 2000; Knobel 1999; Lankshear & Knobel 2003; Luke & Luke 2001; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines 1988). In terms of research agendas, much of this work (especially the earlier work) has been interested in whether these practices are complementary or noncomplementary (Heath 1982, 1983; Michaels 1986), oppositional (Ogbu 1991), assimilative (Guthrie 1985) or adaptive (Street 1993). In- and out-of-school literacy practices are viewed as complementary when the literacy practices that occur in the two domains build on and easily inform each other, noncomplementary practices do not do so. Oppositional literacy practices involve the rejection of either in- or out-of-school literacy practices as part of a broader set of oppositional relationships between the school and a particular cultural group. Assimilative practices involve the assimilation of the child into the school culture. Participation in assimilative practices does not necessarily mean rejection of the out-of-school literacy practices or cultural identities. Adaptive practices refer to the adaptation or transformation of a set of literacy practices so that they are consistent with one's culture. Such adaptations may be covert, which often occurs in situations in which the literacy practices of a dominant and powerful group are being adapted (Kulick & Stroud 1993).

As was previously mentioned, Street's (1984, 1993, 1995, Street & Street 1991) work shifted the focus in research of in- and out-of-school literacies to a broader consideration of documenting the ways that literacy is tied up in social conditions and local belief systems (MacCleod 2004), and how school can subsequently impose a

limited (and limiting) version of literacy. This shift was equally advanced by Brice-Heath's (1983) seminal ethnographic work that systematically documented the functions of reading and writing amongst three specific groups. Following from these initial studies, NLS researchers such as Barton and Ivanič (1991), for example, went on to demonstrate how in-school literacies often pathologise many adults and children as illiterate despite having rich literacy lives within the context of their own communities. In the South African context, Prinsloo and Breier (1996) demonstrated the disjuncture between local everyday literacy practices and the new adult literacy programs begun in the post-apartheid era, by offering rich descriptions of the literate practices undertaken by people who might be considered illiterate by school or state standards. Other work in a similar vein has focused almost exclusively on out-of-school literacy contexts and includes studies of practices that occur amongst children in differing communities (Gregory 2001; Heath 1983), in religious settings (Bloome 1989; Boyardin 1993; Heath 1983), at bedtime (Heath 1982; Taylor 1983), and during play and among peer groups (Forbes 1999). Research findings have shown that there are variations in literacy practices that reflect cultural differences (Canagarajah 2002; Delpit 1995; Heath 1983; Moss 1994), gender relationships (Rockhill 1987; Walkerdine 1990), and socioeconomic class differences (Dyson, 1997; Lillis, 2001).

Although fewer in number, studies that focus on in-school literacy practices have tended, by-and-large, to focus on how out-of-school practices can support the acquisition of in-school or school-sanctioned literacy. As argued by Marsh (2003), who uses the metaphor of one-way traffic, the relationship between in- and out-of-school practices is rather one-sided. Studies in the area have nevertheless included an exploration of the different pedagogies, pedagogic cultures and corresponding Discourses that children encounter in the in-school domain (Gregory et al. 2004b), the influence of the socialisation processes in which children are involved in the in-school domain (Baker 1991; Comber 1993; Dyson 1993, 1997), and the influence of children's social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds on their success in school learning (Freebody 1992; Luke 1997).

As Knobel's (1999) ethnographic case study of four adolescents in urban Australia aptly demonstrates, the question of what the relationship between school learning and children's' everyday lives is, and what an effective relationship between them might be, remains 'not yet fully answered by years of research on in- and out-of-school literacy' (p.6). Research into children's in- and out-of-school worlds has however demonstrated two principal findings:

- that there is a great deal of literacy activity in family and community settings, suggesting that characterisations by the mass media and politicians of contemporary society as illiterate and alliterate are a myth (Sheridan et al. 2000).
- that children's out-of-school literacy practices are often different from their school literacy practices, and that they therefore often experience a 'literacy shock' when they go to school (Meek 1991).

The research conducted within the South African context has largely focused on investigating out-of-school literacies and very little research has actually been conducted into in-school practices (Stein 2008). Before discussing some of the ethnographically-oriented studies that have been conducted, I would like to draw attention to a relevant small-scale comparative study conducted by Pretorius and Ribbens (2005). Although their research sample 'was small and certainly not representative, and as such generalisation about class and reading is problematic, the study does provide important pointers for further research' (Pretorius & Ribbens 2005, p.146). I consider my research to be the kind of 'further research' that is called for.

Interested in examining the impact of family characteristics, particularly poverty, on literacy-related practices and reading achievement, Pretorius and Ribbens (2005) set up their study to compare the reading competence and practices of a group of Grade 8 learners in a poor township school and a group of Grade 7 learners in a middle-class inner-city school. In the middle-class school, only seven of the 24 children in the

research sample were mother-tongue speakers of English. In addition to diagnostic reading assessments, the researchers administered a questionnaire about reading in the home environment. Their results indicated a massive difference in reading achievement between the Grade 8s, who were reading below their maturity levels and understood very little of what they read, and the Grade 7 children whom performed well on the test and read at almost double the rate of the Grade 8s. Pretorius and Ribbens (2005) concluded that language was unlikely to be a factor that explained the difference as three-quarters of the Grade 7 learners were not first language English speakers. Instead they suggested that the explanation lay in literacy practices in the home. Particularly significant to the research is the finding that

> although the majority of the children in both schools indicated they "enjoyed" reading, very few children in the township school engaged in reading for pleasure at home and had knowledge of children's literature or various literacy genres such as comic books and fantasy stories (Pretorius & Ribbens 2005, p.141).

The picture that emerges of language and literacy practices from studies such as Pretorius and Ribbens' (2005) is not however universal for all children growing up in poverty in South Africa (or elsewhere). This is effectively demonstrated by some of the ethnographically-orientated studies of South African children's in- and out-of-school worlds. Stein and Slonimsky (2006), for example, present a detailed study of literacy practices involving adult family members and girl children, all of who come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. What Stein and Slonimsky (2006) detail is how, contrary to commonly held beliefs, many families living in difficult or disadvantaged circumstances demonstrate a commitment to literacy and devote considerable attention to promoting and developing their children's reading abilities. Similarly, researchers such as Kell (2001) have demonstrated that so-called illiterate parents are often directly and actively involved in literacy practices and that through text mediators (those in the community that are 'code-breakers') they are able to participate in the literate world.

The rich literate lives that children may lead outside of school and the interplay of their various worlds is highlighted by Prinsloo's (2004) study of children in their everyday play in the Western Cape. Looking at a group of children's emergent literacy practices through the lens of their out-of-school peer play, the study sees the children drawing on a range of resources and influences to take and make meaning. The children's play is seen as a site where they

> can mediate and model for each other the semiotics, values and practices of school, local and popular culture, religion and mass media and home (Prinsloo 2004, p.292).

What is particularly significant for the research is Prinsloo's (2004) finding that the practices the children engaged with in their home language, i.e. isiXhosa, were in direct contrast to the kinds of literacy pedagogy they encountered in school, which was mainly in the form of isolated skill and drill teaching. Referring to a girl in his study Prinsloo (2004) notes that

> [h]er schoolteacher, like many others at non-elite schools in South Africa, understands literacy teaching to be simply drilling "the basics" of alphabet and syllable coding and decoding ... What gets lost in her school learning, in contrast with her play learning, is the development of rich, situated, permeable and reflexive ways of making and taking meaning ('in school ways') that she will need to be a successful player in her later years of school learning (p.302).

Janks' (2003) study of a whole school environmental educational development project in which critical literacy was nested within other projects, also points, although in a very different way, to the interplay between children's in-and out-of-school worlds. In this study one of the classroom projects involved the children collecting, explaining and illustrating their everyday games for children in Australia (Janks 2003). In completing the project the children were able to draw on their out-of-school literacies and use their multilingualism as a pedagogic resource.

Much of the ethnographically-oriented research into children's in- and out-of-school worlds in South Africa is characterised by a growing awareness that teaching children to read and write has to be linked to much broader chains of sustainability (Stein 2008). A study that demonstrates this particularly well was undertaken within the context of Prinsloo and Stein's (2004) Children's Early Literacy Learning (CELL) project. The project investigated the literacy practices of children across homes, schools, streets and communities and aimed to understand the key shaping influences that enables some children, and not others, to read and write in South African schools (Stein & Mamabolo 2005; Stein 2008). In the study, Tshidi Mamabolo an early literacy educator working with children from impoverished communities, changed her autonomous model of literacy pedagogy through reconfiguring the boundaries between home and school (Stein & Mamabolo 2005). After setting 'in-school' activities that built on children's indigenous knowledges, identities and multilingual practices, she discovered that

> the outside world came crashing into her classroom in all its misery and messiness: children dying of AIDS, children starving, children constantly absent. She came to the conclusion that "pedagogy was not enough" and that crossing the boundary between home and school needed to happen in a new, different kind of way: that communities had to "travel between", that there needs to be a constant traffic between homes and schools, a reciprocity from all sides (Stein & Mamabolo 2005, p.39).

A final project situated in the South African context and relevant to the research, particularly to the analysis of the literacy artefacts produced by the children in their in- and out-of-school worlds, is the Wits Multiliteracies Project (Stein & Newfield 2004). The project has developed 'classroom-based pedagogies which are multimodal, multilingual and involve different kinds of "crossings" – across languages, discourses, popular youth cultural forms, indigenous knowledges and performance arts' (Stein 2008, p.316). The pedagogies aim to move beyond a narrow definition of literacy in the form of written language only. The project is an effort to include children's life-

worlds in the classroom, which project members argue school literacies fail to do (Stein & Newfield 2004).

2.6. Hybridity and Third Space

The term 'third space' has been used, and contested, within a variety of disciplines to explore and understand the space 'in between' (Bhabha 1994, p.1). Contributors to the discussion and development of the term have included Foucault, (2000) Spivak (1999), Soja (1996), Lefebvre (1991), Gutierrez (1995, 1999, 2003, 2008), Hollinshead (1998) and Routledge (1996).

The understanding of third space that is most relevant to the research is specifically situated in hybridity theory, which posits that people in any given community draw on multiple resources or funds of knowledge to make sense of the world and of themselves (Moje et al. 2004). Hybridity theory further aims to explore and understand

> how being "in between" (Bhabha 1994, p.1) several different funds of knowledge and Discourse can be both productive and constraining in terms of one's literate, social and cultural practices – and ultimately one's identity development (Moje et al. 2004, p.40).

In referring to the hybrid or in-between space as 'third space', 'the role of the physical, as well as socialised, space in which people interact' (Moje et al. 2004, p.40) is explicitly emphasised. As English (2005) explains:

> Third space is where we negotiate identity and become neither this nor that but our own. Third is used to denote the place where negotiation takes place, where identity is constructed and re-constructed, where life in all its ambiguity is played out (p.109).

Third space and related notions have also been discussed by feminist researchers, and in this body of work I found Todd's (1997) metaphorical rendering of third space as 'a mucous space, a shared space where each is involved in an exchange with the other' (p. 251), particularly useful. Todd's (1997) rendering suggests that third space is not just an in-between space, but one where there is a continuous intermingling and fluidity between the two spaces, not a totally separate space, but one that embraces both sides.

Particularly relevant to the research is the application of third space to the concept of developing literate identities or selves, where several different 'funds of knowledge' (Moll 1992) meet. As such, third space can be applied

> to the integration of competing knowledges and Discourses; to the texts one reads and writes; to the spaces, contexts and relationships one encounters; and even to a person's identity enactments and sense of self (Moje et al. 2004, p.40).

A seminal example of this application of third space is Wilson's (2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2004) work on aspects of the prison environment Discourse and the manner in which literacies are created 'in between' the Discourses of 'inside' and 'outside' prison. As pointed out by Wilson (2004), the concept of third space is particularly appropriate where people, such as the prisoners in her study, 'find themselves operating at sites of struggle or at points of identity crisis' (p.75).

A further relevant application of third space is the notion of it being a space for developing continuity 'in between' (Bhabha 1994, p.1) home and school literacies. For example, in Cook's (2005a) study aspects of third space are applied to develop a model for using classroom role-play as a means of ensuring continuity of text construction between home and school. In the study, Cook (2005a) sets up an actual third space in primary classrooms by creating a special role-play area in which teachers and children can share an experience and the imaginative transformation of this, through role play. Cook (2005a) explains the role-play area as an actual third

space aiming to promote the production of 'unschooled texts' within the school setting. 'Unschooled texts' are understood to be those naturally occurring within families. Cook (2005a) argues that in addition to bringing home-type Discourses into the school, the intervention aims to clarify the connection between 'schooled' and 'unschooled' texts. She explains that

> this brings together the two discourses of home and school by linking children's experiences in a specially created "third space" with the formal teaching and construction of "schooled" texts (Cook 2005a, p.87).

Although the third space in Cook's (2005a) study was both conceptual and physical, the emphasis seems to be on the establishment of an actual physical third space within which the Discourses of home and school could meet. Third space is not however necessarily limited to a physically demarcated space, but can also be used as a tool to make explicit the ways in which children make sense of their home and school reading and writing practices and identities (Levy 2008). It is this application of third space that the research draws upon.

Moje et al. (2004) identify three main ways in which third spaces are conceptualised and capitalized on in educational contexts. First, they posit that third space can be viewed as 'a way to build bridges from knowledges and discourses often marginalised in school settings' (Moje et al. 2004, p.45). Drawing on the work of Gutierrez et al. (1999) to illustrate this, Moje et al. (2004) explain third space as a bridge between community or home-based Discourses to school-based Discourses. Within this view, third space is seen as a hybrid space, but it is less a space in which new types of knowledges are generated and more a scaffold used to move students through zones of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978, 1986) towards stronger understandings of school knowledges. Third space provides 'the mediational context and tools necessary for future social and cognitive development' (Gutierrez et al. 1999, p.92). Second, third space can be viewed as less of a mediator, bridging two Discourses, and more of a 'navigational space' providing students with the means to cross and succeed 'in

different discourse communities' (Moje et al. 2004, p. 44). This has been a particularly dominant perspective at the secondary level because of the need to cross the discursive boundaries posed by the different content areas that students encounter at this level (Lemke 1990; Luke 2001; Moje et al. 2001; New London Group 2000). Finally, third space can be viewed as a space of

> cultural, social and epistemological change in which the competing knowledges and Discourses of different spaces are brought into "conversation" to challenge and reshape both academic and content literacy practices and the knowledges and discourses of youths' everyday lives (Moje et al. 2004, p. 44).

The three ways in which third spaces are conceptualised are summarised diagrammatically in Figure 2.2 included on the following page:

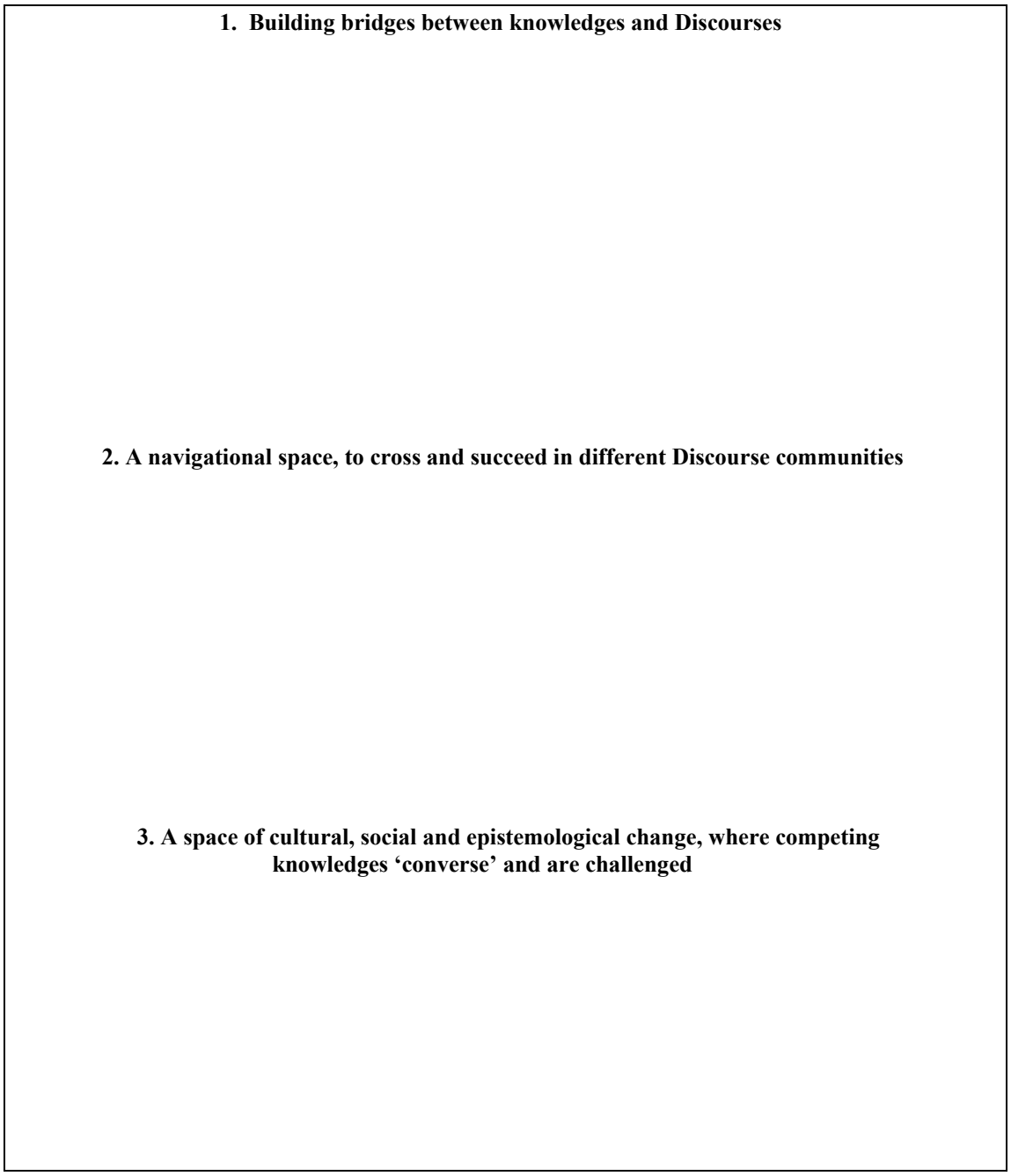


Figure 2.2: **Diagrammatic representation of three ways in which third spaces are conceptualised (Levy 2008).**

All three views of third space are relevant to the research, although the last two are perhaps more salient. Recognising that the children draw upon the literacy and

discursive practices of their in- and out-of-school worlds, the research aims to explore the ways these different knowledges are brought into 'conversation', and how such 'conversation' enables the children to create an 'identity kit' (Gee 1996) that allows them to cross and succeed across their different worlds.

2.7. Conclusion

This chaper began by setting up and defining a sociocultural theorising of literacy and literacy pedagogy as the conceptual framework for the research. Gee's (1990, 1996, 1998, 2001) work and his understanding of 'reading, writing and meaning being situated within specific social practices within specific Discourses' (Gee 1996, p.134) is foregrounded as the main theoretical orientation for the research. Included in this discussion is an overview of the debates in literacy pedagogy, phonics versus whole language in reading, and process versus genre in writing. Gee's (1990, 1996) understanding of identity as a complex, cultural construct varying across settings and constituted within and by particualr Discourses, led to a discussion of poststructuralist theorising of Discourse and subjectivity. This provided an impetus to thinking about the interrelationship between identity and literacy, and between gender, identity and literacy. Given the focus of the research on the children's in- and out-of-school worlds, the third part of the chapter begins by theorising the relationship between the two domains. In this discussion both local research and that of international scholars is drawn upon. Finally, the chapter offers a brief review of hybridity or third space as an important theoretical tool in the analyses and understanding of the data.

In the next chapter (i.e. Chapter 3) the methodology used to conduct the research is presented.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology and Methods

3.1. Introduction

3.2. Research Design: Qualitative Single Case Study

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3.5. Data Collection Techniques

- **3.5.1. Group Interviews**
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- **3.5.4. Conventions used for Transcribing the Data**
- **3.5.5. A Final Word on Data Collection**

3.6. Data Analysis

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I detail the methods used to conduct the research. Before embarking on this I would however like to draw attention to the commitment that informs the research design, data collection process, data analysis and the reporting of that analysis presented in this thesis. Following from researchers such as Langston et al. (2004), Scott (2000) and Norton (2003), I believe that if we want to receive valid information about children's views then it is the children themselves we need to ask. This commitment to hearing 'the voice of the child' (Nutbrown & Hannon 2003) subsequently guides the study's design to collect (and reflect) data directly from the children.

The chapter begins with an explanation of the research design I utilised for the study, i.e. a qualitative single case study. A justification for my choice of research design is offered. Thereafter I provide a description of the research site and participants. The data collection techniques are then described. The chapter ends with a discussion of the methods I used for analysing the data.

3.2. Research Design: Qualitative Single Case Study

My research was designed within a qualitative approach and employed a single case study methodology.

As an 'umbrella concept', qualitative research covers 'several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena, with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible' (Merriam 1998, p.5). As such, qualitative research demonstrates the following preferences: analysing words and images rather than numerical data; using naturally occurring data rather than establishing

experimental settings; using description and interpretation as tools to search for meanings rather than behaviour; and working towards inductive, hypothesis-generating research aims rather than hypothesis testing (Merriam 1998).

Given the common belief of qualitative researchers that 'they can provide a "deeper" understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data' (Silverman 2000, p.8), the approach seemed best suited to my research because:

- the research aims to understand what is arguably a social phenomenon: how Grade 6 children construct themselves as readers and writers;
- rather than try to generate a set of quantifiable data in an 'experimental setting', the research design involves interviewing a sample of six children 'in their natural setting', i.e. at school;
- my data consists of a set of transcripts generated by interviewing the children, their principal and their teachers, the children's school books and portfolio work, as well as a series of literacy artefacts produced by the children in the out-of-school domain. Data analysis consists of me, as researcher, describing and interpreting the artefacts and transcripts;
- as opposed to claiming some kind of false objective neutrality, I am clear about my role as researcher and analyst, and the selection of a particular approach, as the 'lens' through which the data is analysed;
- the research aims to be 'hypothesis generating' rather than making any claims to establishing an unending truth or testing a hypothesis.

Having committed to using a qualitative approach the research adopts a case study methodology, taking six children to constitute a single case. As defined by Knobel and Lankshear (1999) a case study is

> the intensive (in depth and detailed) study of a bounded, contemporary phenomenon such as a classroom, a school, a literacy inservice program, a literacy pedagogical approach, a social group, and so on (p.95).

Three key aspects of this definition are that case studies are in-depth, focus on one instance of a larger class of things and investigate phenomena in real life contexts (Knobel & Lankshear 1999). Following from this definition, my research is therefore designed to be:

- **intensive** in terms of both time span and the amount (and detail) of data collected;
- **focused on a clearly bounded phenomenon,** namely a social group consisting of six children in one school;
- **contextualised in contemporary, real-life events** as opposed to establishing experimental settings with control groups, baseline assessments and the like.

As a methodology, the purpose of case studies is to better understand a phenomenon and yield data that can then be used to 'expand and generalise theories' (Yin 1994). As explained in the introduction, the research does not take a large representative sample as its subject nor a smaller group such as a class in a school. Rather, it is restricted to six young readers and writers in the belief that such a narrow focus will yield a rich, detailed and informative case. Having stated this I should draw attention to what may become a concern for my readers. Although I selected and worked with six individual children I deliberately approached my research as a single case study. This decision was underpinned by my interest in the children's collective experiences and practices as a group rather than as individuals. A single case study design was therefore more appropriate than presenting multiple case studies. Also, although ethnographic or action research methods may have been valuable to the research, I deliberately chose to not include classroom observation or interviews with parents as data collection techniques. This decision is justified by the necessary restrictions for my thesis (in terms of both time and extent), and more importantly the research focus on the children's construction of their experiences (and themselves) across contexts. The research is therefore not concerned with what 'actually' happens in the home and school contexts, or with parents', teachers' or my own understanding. In light of this it is important to note that I have understood the children's interaction with me, and the discussions and artefacts generated within this interaction, to be an out-of-school

practice. As such, I understand these exchanges to be 'separate' from the rules and regulations of the children's in-school learning.

To conclude this discussion of the methodology employed by the research it is important to note that case studies are further considered

> a step to action. They begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use; for staff or individual self-development, for within institutional feedback; for formative evaluation; and in educational policy making (Cohen & Manion 1989, p.150).

A positive effect of adopting a case study methodology is therefore the benefit it can have for both the teachers and learners at the school where the research was conducted, as well as for training and professional development opportunities in the wider education system.

3.3. Research Site

The school chosen for the research, Umholi, is located in Region D of the City of Johannesburg. Region D encompasses the whole of Soweto[22]. Soweto is a composite name, standing for South-Western Townships. The school is located in one of the wealthier suburbs in the township where many prosperous Sowetans have built houses (http://www.joburg.org.za.). However, in comparison to the wealthier urban suburbs in Johannesburg, the area surrounding the school should be considered to be 'disadvantaged'. Most of the people living in the area live in extremely poor socio-economic circumstances, the public services that exist are over-subscribed and not adequately maintained, the level of unemployment and crime is extremely high and

[22] Region D is situated in the southwest of the greater metropolitan area, bordering on Johannesburg's mining belt to its north; forming the further most boundary of the City of Johannesburg in the west; separated from Johannesburg South by the Western Bypass of the N1 in the east; and neighbouring Region G i.e. Lenasia, Ennerdale and Orange farm, in the South (http://www.joburg.org.za.).

the school has to run a feeding scheme which feeds about 70% of the children at the school on a daily basis.

Compared to other township schools, Umholi is fairly well-resourced. It is a school that has attracted and participated in a number of national and NGO run interventions. I first encountered the school in my work with READ. Umholi was one of the schools selected for the READ/Business Trust *Learning for Living Project* (1999-2004). This project targeted 896 of the country's most disadvantaged schools over a five-year period. The result of the project was positive and at project close, the internal assessment revealed learner growth in project schools of up to four years in reading, and two years in writing over their counterparts in control schools (READ 2005). In addition, teachers' implementation of the methodologies was continuously measured through on-site assessments and

> at final observation, only 20% of teachers were still on the basic level of implementation, 44% of teachers were on a more advanced level, 26% of teachers were on a high level of implementation and 9% had reached a level of overall competence that would enable them to share their learnings within their own school as well as with surrounding schools (READ 2005, p.8).

Working with the Umholi staff and learners during the project, as well as in subsequent years, I have repeatedly been struck by the commitment and enthusiasm of its principal, teachers and learners. Perhaps most significant to the research is the noticeable difference between the learners at this school and other similar schools in the surrounding areas. On the whole the learners seem confident, demonstrating a clear ability to express themselves, read fluently, and enthusiastically share their reading preferences and opinions. As discussed in the introduction, it is on this basis that I selected Umholi to represent a possible convincing counter position to the prevailing deficit Discourse around learner potential and the associated 'pedagogy of poverty' (Haberman 1991).

Umholi serves the needs of approximately 900 learners, many of whom live in the surrounding township. The school fees are set at R150 a year with approximately 65% of learners paying full or partial fees. It is one of the few schools in the area that accommodates Setswana, isiZulu and Sesotho speaking children.[23] The staff complement consists of the principal, a deputy, three HODs, 22 teachers and three office support staff. Numerous members of the school staff have attended READ as well as other NGO training over the last 10 years. The school has become increasingly popular and the number of learners enrolled is rapidly growing. Informal conversations with the Deputy Principal suggest that the rising student numbers are placing pressure on both the teaching staff and the availability of resources.

As explained by the principal in informal conversation, one reason for the school's popularity amongst parents is its policy of *'going for English'* from Grade R. This decision was made because she felt that if the school resisted *'changing to English from the beginning'*, it would, as has happened with many of the surrounding township schools, lose the majority of its learners to the suburban ex-Model-C schools. Presently, the school's language policy is therefore English as the LoLT with Setswana, isiZulu or Sesotho being introduced from Grade 1 alongside. The school plans and implements the teaching of English according to the Home Language curriculum (DoE 2002)[24]. In Grades 4-7 Afrikaans is also introduced as a second additional language. The principal explained this decision as having being made in order to not disadvantage the learners who will go on to high schools in the area or in the adjoining suburbs, where they might be rejected if they have not done any Afrikaans.

[23] The variability in the languages spoken by the school's population is as a result of the school's history. Umholi was initially established and housed in a school in another area of Soweto. It was established to meet the needs of the Setswana speakers in that area. Later, when the school was built on its current site, the learners and even some teachers were bussed into the new area. These teachers and learners were Setswana speakers. Over time, people from the school's surrounding areas, who were predominately isiZulu and Sesotho speakers, began bringing their children to the school.

[24] This, despite the reality that English is not a home language for any of the children (or teachers) in the school.

Besides classrooms, the facilities at the school include a school library and an administrative block. In informal conversation the Senior Phase HOD explained that the library is currently under-utilised due to poor shelving, the need to formally organise the existing collection of books, as well as the difficulty of trying to co-ordinate a timetable to allow access for all the learners in the school[25].

My consideration of Umholi as a 'model' example of a township school is furthered by the exceptional commitment and competency of the school's principal. The principal is very 'hands on' in running the school and works very closely with her staff. She often refers to the school's mission statement and vision, which is clearly visible in all the school's administrative offices, including the staff room:

> Umholi School Mission Statement: Recognising the importance of education as a fundamental human right, we commit ourselves to quality, and the efficient and smooth running of the school in all sectors.
> Umholi School Vision: To be a mirror of society which is competent, transparent and accountable in all aspects (areas).

The school's mission statement and vision markedly attest to the emphasis on efficient administration and as such the school is very well organised and administratively co-ordinated.

As part of the READ/Business Trust *Learning for Living Project* (1999-2004) the Umholi teachers were trained in the methodologies of a Balanced Language Programme. These methodologies are: Shared Reading and Writing, Reading Aloud, Group Reading, Guided Reading, and Independent Reading and Writing. Although the project ended five years previous to the time when the research was conducted, the principal reports the school's approach to teaching reading and writing as continuing with the implementation of a Balanced Language Programme:

[25] In South Africa, only 27% of schools have school libraries (Pretorius & Mampuru 2007, p.41). Moreover, recent research, as well as my personal experience of visiting schools, suggests that the fact that schools have libraries does not necessarily mean that these libraries are utilised (Graetz 2007).

Principal: *After Business Trust, we were fortunate in that all the trained teachers, especially in the English language, developed a passion for teaching English with these methodologies, it has become like a culture to them, they are not able to teach in any other way, and the school sort of developed into that culture as a whole …*

Given that there have been considerable staff changes since the end of the *Learning for Living Project,* the school seems to have developed a peer-teaching method amongst its teachers. The teachers currently at the school have subsequently either been directly trained or received training from their peers:

Principal: … *they employ all the methodologies and they demonstrate the methodologies to the teachers who have never been trained before …*

Finally, the school's emphasis on literacy and its recognition of reading (and to a lesser extent writing) as a priority is confirmed by numerous informal conversations with the principal and deputy principal. At the time that the research was conducted the principal was actively working together with her HODs and teachers to develop a Literacy Strategy for the school.

3.4. Research Participants

In order to answer my research questions, I worked closely with six Grade 6 children. I conducted six semi-structured group interviews with the children and then interviewed each child individually. I also interviewed the children's class teachers, the school principal and the Senior Phase HOD. The aim of interviewing the teachers, principal and HOD was to get background information on the literacy practices and Discourses that permeate the school's approach to literacy. The information obtained from these interviews is used only in so far as it informs the analysis of the data that emerged from my discussions with the children.

I deemed the small sample of children appropriate due to the research being of a qualitative nature, aiming to get closer to participants' understandings and constructions of reading and writing and not test any formal hypotheses in the traditional hypothetico-deductive sense. Moreover, the small sample size was selected to enable optimal group participation and the elicitation of a breadth of responses during the group interview sessions.

Given that the principal data collection techniques consisted of semi-structured group interviews and individual interviews, I used purposive sampling to select the group of children who could provide the most meaningful information in terms of the research aims. The 'up-front' selection of participants is methodologically appropriate as the research does not intend to yield generalisable data (Breakwell et al. 1995). To select the sample I discussed the research aims with the principal, HOD and the two Grade 6 class teachers. I outlined the factors to be used to make the selection, i.e. that the sample should consist of:

- Grade 6 children
- three boys and three girls (to facilitate an exploration of gendered differences)
- children who have expressed ability, interest and enthusiasm to talk about reading and writing.

The school principal, HOD and the Grade 6 class teachers subsequently selected six children: three from each of the two Grade 6 classes. The table below (Table 3.1) summarises the age, gender and home language of the research participants.

Name	Age	Gender	Home Language
Boitumelo	12	F	Sesotho/Setswana
Refilwe	13	F	isiZulu
Prudence	12	F	Setswana/isiZulu
Sipho	13	M	isiZulu
Frans	12	M	Sesotho
Tshepo	12	M	isiZulu

Table 3.1: Profile summary of research participants.

Finally, given that my analysis will involve an organisation of the data into identifiable literacy and discursive practices, and that there will therefore be no opportunity for readers to develop a composite picture of each child involved in the study, I will provide a short sketch on each of the children. I have included these sketches here rather than as an appendix because I think additional information about the children, their contexts and their individual personalities, contributes to a richer understanding of my data.

3.4.1. Boitumelo: The Quiet Bookworm[26]

Boitumelo, who wants to be a climatologist, is the quietest girl in the group. She is also the biggest reader and writer. She lives with her mother, brother, two sisters, grandfather and uncle. At home, the family speaks Sesotho and Setswana. Boitumelo explains that her mother, who manages a feeding scheme, does a lot of reading and writing in her job. Most importantly, she describes her mother as the person who first taught her to read and write. She also remembers her mother reading a lot to her when she was small and believes that this helped her become a good reader. Boitumelo's mother buys her books to read.

Boitumelo likes to read biographies because she finds them interesting and enjoys learning about other people's lives. She is a mature girl, describing herself as not having too many friends. She enjoys playing '*active things, like running around and jumping'*, and describes herself as *'not really a doll fanatic'*. Boitumelo's best friend attends an ex-Model-C school. Although Boitumelo prefers reading she is also a writer, perhaps most notably keeping a diary in which she writes every day. She has a computer at home that her mother sometimes uses for writing but that Boitumelo

[26] The brief descriptors I have included alongside each child's name encapsulate my sense of the child's persona as revealed to me during the research process. Hopefully the descriptors also reveal the affinity I developed with the children.

doesn't know how to use yet. Her favourite pastime is sitting in the garden of the family home reading quietly.

3.4.2. Refilwe: The Chatty 'Girl'

Refilwe lives with her aunt and her older brother. Until recently she lived with her mother, father, sister and another of her brothers in a nearby area. Refilwe, indicative of her opinionated nature, describes her recent move as being her decision:

> Refilwe: *I was the one who said I don't want to live here in Extension because it's boring and people just love, like, sitting in their homes and not getting out, so, I really got very fed up and I said I wanted to go and live in Zone 1.*

Her siblings are either in High School or in long-term employment. Her father is a school principal, who, although at the time the research was conducted was without a post, was busy studying at the University of the Witwatersrand. Refilwe describes her father as being a very well-educated man and often makes statements that suggest an echoing of her father's voice, such as *'school doesn't end'* and *'I read to be well-educated'*. She describes her father as a *'big reader and a big writer'* and notes that her mother enjoys reading newspapers. The aunt Refilwe lives with works as an office assistant at a legal firm in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. At home Refilwe and her family speak isiZulu and she seldom speaks English outside of the school context, unless it is to one of her aunt's work associates who can only speak English.

Refilwe is a small girl for her age. She is extremely confident and expressive, often rolling her eyes to indicate boredom, describing herself as feeling *'fed up'* and frequently using the word *'like'* in her accentuated speech. She tries to convey herself as being very grown up in her discussion and presentation, but this is juxtaposed by a wonderful child-like enthusiasm that emerges when she talks about the games she

plays with her friends, the Barbie books she reads, or how scared she gets when she reads stories about ghosts. She was perhaps the most willing member of the group to talk about the games she and her friends play and bring me examples of her out-of-school literacy practices.

Refilwe describes herself as having many friends. Most of her close friends do not attend Umholi and she describes her best friend as attending a suburban ex-Model-C school. She enjoys writing and describes it as being easy to do. The jealousy or envy that other children might feel towards her is of great concern to Refilwe and she often worries about other people plagiarizing her writing, ruining her books, and saying nasty things to her.

Refilwe wants to finish primary school and go to a private school, like the one her father was a principal of the year before the research was conducted. She matter-of-factly explains that she needs to go to *'a good High School'* because she wants to be a lawyer.

3.4.3. Prudence: The Brave Author

Prudence lives with her mother, father, older sister and an uncle. At home she speaks Setswana or isiZulu, seldom speaking English outside of the school context. She only came to Umholi last year, but her previous school also taught in English from Grade 1. She is a tall girl for her age and looks older than her 12 years. This is not necessarily deceptive as she is strikingly mature for her age. She's a very reflective child and is extremely aware of how those around her behave towards and speak about her. She is a confident and opinionated child who, her teacher confirms, has quickly become a leader in the school. Prudence wants to be a doctor when she is older, and is very explicit about the realisation of her ambitions:

Prudence: *One day I would love to be a doctor. Open my own three surgeries in different provinces. I will have to change because there are three surgeries. For four months I will be maybe here in Gauteng, then the other four months in Cape Town, and the other four in Durban – that's how I will operate.*

Prudence was the only child in the group who expressed a marked preference for writing rather than reading, describing having more days when she's *'into writing'* than days when she's *'into reading'*. Although she does write at school, the majority of Prudence's writing, and especially her more personal writing, is done at home. She keeps a diary and has done so for nearly three years, writing in her diary before she sleeps at night, particularly if she is feeling very sad and alone. Depending on her mood, she also describes herself as sometimes writing poetry.

3.4.4. Sipho: The 'Boy'

Sipho lives with his mother, uncle and younger sister. He also has two older sisters and an older brother who have all finished school and live elsewhere. The family speaks isiZulu at home, but any reading and writing that happens in the family home is done in English.

Sipho comes across as a confident and considerate child. He displayed the most gender stereotyped behaviour amongst the group, often rolling his eyes impatiently when we spoke about topics such as the books girls preferred reading, mimicking the voices or behaviour of the girls in his class, and reacting in horrified disbelief when it was suggested that boys write about their feelings.

Like other children in the group, Sipho has a good friend who attends an ex-Model-C school. The two boys talk about books they have read and compare what they have enjoyed. Sipho also talks to his mother about things that he has read.

3.4.5. Frans: The Soccer Star

Frans lives with his grandmother, two uncles and a younger brother. His mother lives with her new husband, and although Frans does see her regularly he describes her as working a lot. The family speaks Sesotho at home.

When Frans first introduced himself to the group, he did so with a lengthy and humorous description of the many different names that people call him. He explained which names he preferred, which were casual nicknames and which were more formal names used by his family. In so doing, he immediately had all children in the group laughing and thus positioned himself as the group's comedian and most vociferous member.

Frans is an avid soccer player and has won numerous medals playing for a local team. His love of soccer is consistent across his book choice, the stories he enjoys reading and writing, and the career path he aims to follow:

Frans:	*In High School I'm just going to do biology, accounting and physics ... accounting because I really want to know about numbers so that when I have my shop one day, I must really know about the change and all those things so I can make money.*
Interviewer:	*and what kind of shop are you going to have?*
Frans:	*I think I am going to have a soccer shop with all the T-shirts of the legends, like Dr Khumalo and all those, and soccer balls ... all that kind of stuff.*

Perhaps most interestingly Frans identifies himself as a poet. Throughout the data there are numerous examples of vocabulary that one suspects he has come across in the poems he reads which he then inserts into his informal speech. For example, when

asked what he likes about poetry Frans explains that it is *'kind of **intimidating,** ah, yeah, and its really fun'* (my emphasis in bold).

3.4.6. Tshepo: The Shy Pilot

Tshepo is the shyest member of the group. He lives with his aunt in a suburb adjacent to where his father lives. Tshepo speaks isiZulu at home. Both Tshepo's aunt and father work at a popular retail chain of optometrists. Tshepo often visits his father and is the only child in the group who has an immediate family member who belongs to a public library. His father regularly gets him books from the Johannesburg Central Library, and sometimes allows him to accompany him to the library to select books. Tshepo's father also sometimes buys him books and he is the only child in the group who describes having out-of-school access to children's books in his home language, i.e. isiZulu.

The thing Tshepo likes the most about visiting the library with his father is that it is quiet and there is no noise. This is also the reason he prefers to read at home in his bedroom, rather than at school, which he finds too noisy. Tshepo's father is seemingly very involved with both Tshepo's in- and out-of-school literacy development. At the end of one of our group interview sessions he presented an exercise book with comprehension-type questions in it, which he explained as: '*this one is for my father, my father gives me homework* [pause] *when I am studying he makes questions and then I must answer them'*. Tshepo remembers learning to read as being very difficult for him as like many South African children he arrived at school only ever having heard isiZulu and then had to learn to read in English.

Tshepo's best friend does not attend Umholi. His friend does not enjoy reading, although the two share the same ambition of becoming a pilot. Tshepo subsequently

describes reading his initial book selection from the Group Interview Two session, *Flight Attendant*[27] (see 3.5.1), repeatedly and sharing it with his friend:

> Tshepo: *we read it together* [pause] *he doesn't like reading so I read for him. We read it and looked at the pictures.*

3.5. Data Collection Techniques

An advantage of the case study methodology is that a range of data collection and analysis methods can be used. Adopting the view that the best way of drawing on children's insights is to ask them (Davies 1993; Norton 2003), the primary methods I used to collect data for the research were semi-structured group and individual interviews. Given that the research interviews were more exploratory, I use the term 'group interview' rather than 'focus group interview' (or discussion). The term 'focus group interview' is largely associated with the marketing context wherein it is a tool used to get consumer relevant information about a specific topic (Fontana & Frey 2000). The group and individual interviews were supplemented by the collection of various literacy artefacts.

3.5.1. Group Interviews

Semi-structured group interviews were the prime means of collecting data. As a data collection method this was particularly suited to the research aims as group interviews allowed me to get closer to participants' understandings of and perspectives on the topic (Millward 1995) and facilitated 'the widest range of meaning and interpretation' (Fontana & Frey 2000, p.652). Furthermore, selecting this data collection method allowed me to tap into some of the advantages that group interviews offer over individual interviews. For example, sharing opinions in groups can have a synergistic

[27] Waller, T. & Nafte, D. 2007. Awareness Publishing, South Africa.

effect: the discussion stimulates other ideas and further discussion of opinions, thereby generating 'rich data that are cumulative and elaborative' (Fontana & Frey 2000, p.652). Also, as emphasised by Millward (1995), group interviews generate two interrelated forms of data: the group process (the way in which people interact and communicate with each other) and the content around which the group is organised i.e. the focal stimulus and the issues arising from it. By using group interviews I was therefore able to note the interactions and ways of communicating amongst the children in the group. This became important to answering the research questions as it allowed me to view the way in which the children positioned themselves, and were positioned by others. Most particularly, it permitted me to observe performances of gender in relation to the construction and use of reading and writing.

Over a two-and-a-half month period, I conducted six group interviews with the children. Each of the group interviews lasted for approximately 40 minutes and was run according to a semi-structured schedule of questions. Each schedule aimed to focus the discussion and delineate the themes or areas of research interest for that particular group interview. (Refer to Appendices A-F for the schedules of questions used for Group Interview One to Six.) The group interviews were not considered self-contained methods of data collection but rather as a forum for the children to raise issues and opinions that then functioned as 'leads' or supplements to the individual interviews I later conducted. All six group interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed. The transcription of all six group interviews in their entirety was necessary in order to allow me to identify patterns across the data set.

Contrary to concerns raised at the proposal stage of the research, research participants all had a lot to say and the group interviews often took longer than anticipated. Moreover, over the duration of the data collection process the children and I seemingly developed into a 'discourse community' – or grouping based on common interests with a focus on written texts (Swales 1990). As such, the group developed specific mechanisms for communication, and acquired a specific 'lexis' (Swales 1990,

p.25). An atmosphere of trust, arguably the foundation of any community, was established amongst the group members and as a result the children felt increasingly free to take risks and express themselves as the research process evolved (Blecher & Jaffee, 1998). The transcripts of the group interviews subsequently come to read more like a continuous discussion, moving back and forward between topics rather than sticking to the main aim of the interview session as identified by me.

Group Interview One consisted of a broad and informal discussion to introduce the research to the children. The children each had an opportunity to introduce themselves and share personal information about their lives, for example where they live, what their favourite food is and what they want to become when they are older. The principal purpose of this group interview was to initiate a relationship with the children. This was important as I needed to ensure that the children felt comfortable enough with me, as researcher, to share their thoughts and opinions in future group and individual interviews.

Group Interview Two consisted of discussing the children's attitudes to reading and writing, and more particularly their understandings and use of reading. The discussion also aimed to investigate the influence of gender on children's book selection and reading preferences. This group interview session utilised elements of a participatory methodology in that it included an activity whereby a selection of reading texts, such as books, magazines and comics were shown to the children. The children were asked to select the texts they would/would not be interested in reading and explain why. The activity aimed to stimulate and interest participants in the research whilst exploring possible gendered reading preferences. To prepare for the activity I worked together with two of my colleagues at READ, both of whom are experts with many years of experience in selecting books for children. Together, we purposefully selected a collection of 30 texts to include:

- a variety of age-appropriate fiction and non-fiction books that would appeal to a range of reading abilities;

- a wide range of genres, for example biographies, compilations, novellas, information books, comics, picture books, newspapers and magazines;
- a range of illustration types and styles that would accommodate a variety of preferences, for example black and white illustrations, coloured illustrations, photographs and no illustrations;
- books that education departments and schools often deem appropriate for the target age group, for example books on career choices, HIV/AIDS and relationships.

The fiction books selected included both predominantly text-only books, i.e. novella, ranging in reading difficulty from popular titles in the *Junior African Writers Series* (JAWS)[28] such as *Mr Pobee's Poda Poda* by O.V. Lawson to more demanding novels such as J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Picture books that include substantial text, such as *Tiger* by J. Allen, were also included in the selection as were compilations of African folktales, fairytales, and horror-type stories such as the popular *Goosebumps* series[29] by R.L. Stine. Given that the children would briefly peruse the books before selecting their reading preferences, we paid particular attention to each book's cover illustration and whether or not a blurb was included on the back cover. We ensured that there was an adequate range of variability across the collection. The front covers of all 30 texts in the selection are included in Figure 3.1. on page 122.

The non-fiction books selected aimed to appeal to a range of interests. Biographies such as *Winnie Madikizela-Mandela*, by C. van Wyk were included, as well as more general non-fiction books, ranging from the less difficult *A Day in Space* by S. Lord and J. Epstein to more text-dense and demanding titles such as the Dorling

[28] The JAWS series (Heinemann 1993) was designed to provide interesting and varied African stories for children. There are five graded levels in the series. Over the years the series has proved to be extremely popular amongst school children in many African countries, including South Africa.
[29] This series was included due to it being reportedly very popular amongst the target age group in ex-Model-C schools as well as in schools in other African countries such as Kenya, Botswana and Ghana (Helen King, African Sales Director, Macmillan UK, personal communication April 15 2007).

Kindersley's *Encyclopaedia of Big Cats*. Books such as *AIDS – Why Africa?* by M. Stanford and Dr C. Evian, *Being a DJ* by K. Cialashan and *Flight Attendant* by T. Waller and D. Nafte, were included in the collection as books that education departments and schools were most likely to select for children in the target age group.

To give the children the widest possible range to choose from, a variety of texts from popular media were also included in the selection. Texts such as the *Supa Striker* comic, which is supplied weekly together with the *Sunday Times* newspaper[30], and current issues of *UNCUT* magazine, which targets youth and is distributed monthly together with *The Star* newspaper[31] were included. A current *Daily Sun* newspaper[32] and a popular culture magazine *DRUM* were also included in the selection. Table 3.2. on the following page summarises the texts included for the Group Interview Two book selection activity.

[30] A large-scale nationally distributed weekly newspaper.
[31] A large-scale provincially distributed daily newspaper.
[32] A large-scale provincially distributed daily newspaper.

	Book Title		Author
FICTION	**Folktales:**	Tales from Africa	Compilation: Various authors
		Fairy Tales	Berlie Doherty
	Traditional tales:	The Twelve Labours of Hercules	James Riordan and Christina Balit
		Rumpelstiltskin	Retold and illustrated by Paul. O. Zelinsky
	Horror:	Goosebumps	R.L Stine
		Ghost on the Landing	
	Picture storybooks:	Boundless Grace	Mary Hoffman, Caroline Binch
		Tiger	Judy Allen
	Novels and novella:	Fair Shares	Lynn Kramer
		Mr Pobee's Poda Poda	Omojowo V. Lawson
		Caught in the act	Patricia Sealey
		The Gold Cadilliac	Mildred D. Taylor
		Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	J.K Rowling
		The Family Under the Bridge	Natalie Savage Carlson
NON- FICTION	**Biography:**	Winnie Mdikizela Mandela	Chris Van Wyk
		The soccer star and style icon – David Beckham	No author listed
		Martin Luther King	Julia Holt
	Career guidance:	Being a DJ	Kathy Cialashan
		Flight Attendant	Trevor Waller and Debbie Nafte
		Chef	Trevor Waller and Debbie Nafte
		Life skills: Dating – What is a healthy relationship?	Kate Havelin
	Information:	A Day in Space	Suzanne Lord and Julie Epstein
		My Skeleton	Jen Green
		AIDS – Why Africa?	Mindy Stanford and Dr Clive Evian
		Big Cats	DK encyclopaedia
		DRUM magazine	
		UNCUT	
		Supa Striker comic	
		Sunday Times metro; soccer and sport section	
		Daily Sun	

Table 3.2: Texts included for the Group Interview Two book selection activity.

Figure 3.1: **The front covers of texts used for Group Interview Two book selection activity.**

To ensure the applicability and success of the Group Interview Two book selection activity, prior to data collection I used a similar (i.e. matched) group of children to informally discuss the text selection I intended using with the research sample. After working with the matched group of children I did not make any adjustments to the selection as I felt confident that the collection of texts was both appropriate and of high interest to Grade 6 children.

Group Interview Three was introduced with a brief review and discussion of the children's understanding and use of reading as discussed in the previous interview. However, the principal aim of this interview was to discuss and explore the children's understanding and use of writing in both their in- and out-of-school worlds. The influence of gender on the children's construction and use of writing was explored.

Group Interview Four began with the children reporting back and talking about the book they selected during the Group Interview Two book selection activity. This took some time as, significantly, many of the children had swapped books and discussed them amongst themselves prior to the interview. The main focus of this interview was however to explore the children's understanding of reading and writing as related skills: what it means to be a good reader and what it means to be a good writer. Further exploration of the uses of reading and writing in the children's in- and out-of-school worlds was included, as was an exploration of family, friend and teacher constructions of the children as readers and writers.

Group Interview Five gave me an opportunity to bring the children together before conducting the individual interviews. Having transcribed the preceding group interviews, I had a few outstanding questions and clarifications to pose to the children. The interview consisted of further exploration of the attitudes and construction of reading and writing the children encounter in the in-school domain. At the end of the interview, after having briefly discussed the possible role of reading and writing in the children's futures, i.e. when they grow up, the children were invited to draw and/or

write a personal text about reading and writing. In an adaptation of a task devised by McKay and Kendrick (2001), I explained that the text could be about reading or writing that they do at home or at school. It could be about reading and writing that they do now or that they think they might do when they're older. It could be a written text, a picture, or a combination of the two. I provided the children with resources such as paper and coloured pens to complete the task but made it clear that the production of the text was optional and that they would not be in trouble if they chose not to. To facilitate the children's understanding of the task as optional, after explaining the task I left the room, allowing the children to either complete the task or leave the room and return to class.

Group Interview Six took place after all the individual interviews were completed. This interview session was not planned for at the proposal stage of the research but became necessary when I realised the children's need to conclude the research process together as a 'community' (Wenger 1998). By this stage, as researcher, I was acutely aware of the formalised meeting place or space that the research group provided for the children, and subsequently felt the need to actively scaffold the children as a 'community or social configuration' (Wenger 1998, p.5) prior to my withdrawal. I also felt that it was important to bring the children together to discuss any questions they had in relation to the research process as a whole. With the help of READ I was able to provide each child in the group with a selection of books to thank them for participating in the research. As a group we discussed how these books could be circulated, shared and talked about so as to maximise all the children in the group's enjoyment.

3.5.2. Individual Interviews

After five of the group interviews had taken place and been transcribed, I conducted semi-structured individual interviews with each of the children. I used a semi-structured format so as to conduct similar interviews amongst the six children, whilst

allowing for spontaneity depending on the situation and individual expression of each child (Merriam 1998).

The individual interviews took place within the two-and-a-half month data collection period. Each individual interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The schedule of questions for these interviews focused on the child's construction of him/herself as a reader and writer. In light of poststructuralist theorising of subjectivity being constructed not only by how an individual positions themselves, but also by how they are positioned by others, the interview schedule included questions such as 'What do you think your family say/think about your reading/writing? (Refer to Appendix B for the schedule of questions on which the individual interviews were based.)

One of the advantages of the semi-structured interview format was that it allowed me to improvise and adjust the schedule of questions posed to each child in response to issues raised within the group interview process. Also, some children seemingly felt more comfortable in the private face-to-face situation of the individual interview rather than the group. Added to this, some produced fairly extensive responses to the activity posed in Group Interview Five and the individual interview gave them an opportunity to discuss and explain their texts. Taken together, these factors resulted in some of the children's individual interviews lasting longer than others.

A semi-structured interview schedule was also used to interview the school principal on one occasion, and the two Grade 6 class teachers on another. (Refer to Appendix H for the schedule of questions used for the principal interview and Appendix I for the schedule used for the teacher interviews.) These interviews were used to explore the school's attitudes, policy and practices around reading and writing. These individual interviews were done at the end of the data collection process with the children, which allowed for two distinct advantages. Firstly, I had become very familiar to the teachers and the school and therefore had some insight into the school and classroom context, as well as a relationship with the teachers, before asking any questions.

Secondly, it meant I could ask for additional details about things I had noticed in the children's responses. Using a semi-structured interview format helped frame my discussion with the principal and teachers as an exploration rather than an investigation, judgement or critique. Simply stated, it allowed me to make adjustments to the interview pace and content according to the interviewee's responses, and therefore worked towards making interviewees feel free to say as little or as much as they chose.

I recorded and transcribed all nine individual interviews.

3.5.3. Artefact Collection

To support the transcribed data from the group and individual interviews, and my analysis thereof, I collected a number of the children's texts. I collected and made copies of each child's Languages[33] exercise book and portfolio work evidencing the year's literacy work to date. A few of the children brought me samples of writing and/or drawing that they had done at home. With their permission I made copies of the work before handing it back. I also collected the writing and/or drawings from each of the six children done in response to the activity posed in Group Interview Five[34]. Initially I hoped to use dialogue journals as a valuable source of data. To this end I provided each child with a journal and encouraged them to engage in dialogue around issues raised in any of the group or individual interviews. I also encouraged spontaneous writing hoping that the informal and private space of the journal would allow me to engage in dialogue with the children. Whilst I tried to open the space by commenting or posing individual questions in each of the children's journals, most of the children responded minimally or not at all and therefore as a source of data, the dialogue journals were largely unsuccessful.

[33] As per the NCS terminology, Languages is the Learning Area focused on developing children's reading and writing (literacy) skills (DoE 2002).
[34] As outlined previously, this task allowed the children to represent their ideas about literacy in writing, drawing or a combination of the two.

3.5.4. Conventions used for Transcribing the Data

Following from McKinney (2003), the following conventions have been used in transcribing the spoken data:

italics	to indicate words spoken
//	to indicate an interruption, where one speaker is interrupted by another. The beginning of the interrupted speech is also marked with //
...	to mark an omission or a cut in the transcript.
[ ]	square brackets used for transcriber's comments, mainly to include additional significant information such as facial expressions or movements that accompany speech or take place alongside speech.
Underlining	shows word stressed

Written and spoken data is reproduced exactly including any spelling or grammatical errors. I would like to remind my readers upon reading the data that the research participants are not English first language speakers.

Where longer extracts from the transcripts have been included I have indicated the name of the speaker. I have opted not to include the name of the speaker when shorter extracts such as words or phrases have been included because I am interested in the collective experiences and practices of the children as a singular (and unified) case. Simply stated, I have not identified individual speakers in instances where it is more important to understand the group of children as a collective voice. I have however identified the teachers' and/or principal's speech in each instance. I have also opted not to code the extracts from the transcripts in terms of the group or individual interview from which it emerges, because I have approached and analysed my data set as a collective and singular case study and therefore, unless stipulated in the body text, I do not believe additional value or understanding can be derived from such a

coding. In part the decision to keep the transcript convention simple in terms of coding was pragmatic, given the large corpus of data I was dealing with and my desire to maintain the readability level of my thesis.

3.5.5. A Final Word on Data Collection

Over the two-and-a-half month data collection period, I worked quite intensively in the school. As is often the case in trying to co-ordinate teacher, principal and researcher timetables, I frequently found myself at the school far earlier or longer than necessary, and even visited on days in which I did not actually conduct any interviews. In hindsight, this worked to my advantage as I was able to observe and make informal field notes on a number of school activities such as Friday morning assemblies, Readathon and Heritage Day celebrations. I was also able to have numerous informal conversations with the school's Deputy Principal as well as the Senior Phase HOD. Although my field notes from these interactions add immediacy and richness to my data, they are however not reconstructions, and they are not completely certain and objective. Indeed, such claims could not really be made about the transcripts either, particularly if the presence of a tape-recorder 'left the children sensing the omnipresence of a normative adult eye' (Bomer & Laman 2004, p.9). The most important use for my informal field notes was however to triangulate[35] and cross-validate my analysis and research findings with the data I collected from multiple sources (i.e. group interviews, individual interviews and artefact collection).

3.6. Data Analysis

As mentioned previously, I was able to transcribe each group interview almost immediately afterward and this enabled me to reflect on the data and engage in preliminary analysis along the way. It also informed decisions for further data collection, such as my decision to conduct a sixth group interview session. However,

[35] Triangulation refers to the use of 'two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour' (Cohen et al. 2000, p.112).

after having collected all my data I began a more rigorous process of data analysis. I divided this process into the seven steps outlined below:

Step 1: Reading and re-reading the data set (including transcripts of group and individual interviews; in- and out-of-school literacy artefacts; field notes; dialogue journals) and looking for 'patterns, inconsistencies and contradictions in the data' (Hammersley 1995, p.210). Identifying literacy events across the data and coding for themes.
Step 2: Connecting and linking different parts of the data – identifying the literacy events and activities that connect to form holistic literacy practices, practices that frequently extend across time and involve a number of participants. Organising the data beneath thematic headings pertaining to these literacy practices.
Step 3: Selecting data for in-depth analysis (including extracts from transcripts, literacy artefacts and field notes) based on literacy events and practices identified.
Step 4: Re-reading and making extensive notes on selected data; constantly moving between data and theory.
Step 5: Investigating similarities and differences within categorised literacy practices to identify Discourses within which they are situated. Moving between data and theory. (At times the analysis focuses on individuals, at others on all the children as a collective group, and sometimes on the specific literacy practice(s).)
Step 6: Further analysis to investigate the subject positions taken up by the children within the identified literacy and discursive practices. Moving between data and theory. (At times the analysis focuses on individuals, at others on all the children as a collective group, and sometimes on the specific literacy or discursive practice(s).)
Step 7: Further selection, interpretation and organisation of data during the writing of the analysis.

In order to answer my research questions I have therefore drawn on elements of content analysis and have taken a broadly interpretive approach in analysing the data. My data analysis process has also been influenced by Ivanič's (1998) adaptation of

Fairclough's (1989) diagrammatic representation for integrating language with its context of production. In her adaptation, which is set out below (Figure 3.2), Ivanič (1998) still places a 'text' at the centre although

> the main focus of interest is not a text but an event, and the people and actions which constitute it. The event includes "interaction" – the middle layer of Fairclough's diagram, the physical activities which surround the use of written language, and the immediate social context (Ivanič 1998, p.63).

Ivanič's (1998) representation matches Fairclough's diagram in that the middle layer represents the social context. This consists, firstly, of the conventions on which people are drawing on in the literacy event: practices, Discourses, and I would argue, subjectivities. The outer layer of the diagram represents those aspects of the socio-cultural context which shape practices and Discourses: 'the configuration of values, beliefs, interests and power relations' (Ivanič 1998, p.64).

Figure 3.2: Diagrammatic representation of literacy in context as set out by Ivanič (1998, p.64).

Envisioning my data such enabled me to move between different levels of focus and analysis, constantly aware of the inextricable relationship between the various layers as set out in the diagram. Indeed, many aspects of my data only began to make sense when viewed comparatively with other 'layers'. Sometimes interpretations changed or the data allowed for a number of different interpretations.

To conclude this discussion of the data analysis process, I would like to draw attention to my awareness of my role as researcher. As in McKinney's (2003) study, aspects of the children's multiple identities are revealed through the research despite the fact that I did not employ traditional life history research methods. These emerge through the conversations the children had, through the stories they told me, and through their written work. Thus whilst the research is principally concerned with the children's construction of their literate selves (as one aspect of their multifarious identities) the children inevitably draw on their biographies and experience outside of the research focus. This is important to note because I too draw on my on history and experience both during the research process and in interpreting and writing about the data. Indeed I recognise each aspect of the process as being shaped by my role as a white, middle-class, female, ex-teacher who is currently working with numerous schools and literacy NGOs across South Africa. Such autobiographical elements are central to the process of analysis. Cameron et al. (1992) argue that

> [w]e inevitably bring our biographies and our subjectivities to every stage of the research process, and this influences the questions we ask and the ways in which we try to find answers (p.5).

My research is no exception to this. I have aimed to represent the children's voices through their own words, though must acknowledge that their voices are, of course, always mediated by my own (McKinney 2003).

CHAPTER FOUR

The Out-of-School World

4.1. Introduction

4.2. Context

4.2.1. Access to Reading Choice

4.2.2. Access to Writing

4.2.3. Time and Space to Read and Write

4.2.4. Support and Recognition

4.2.5. Guiding Lights

4.3. Literacy Practices

4.3.1. Play and 'Re-creation'

4.3.2. Self-expression and Creativity

4.3.3. Storytelling/reading

4.3.4. Sharing Books with Friends

4.4. Conclusion

4.1. Introduction

Interest in the literacies of children's out-of-school worlds is not new. Numerous researchers have long recognised that the literacy children experience in their out-of-school worlds, for example at home and in their communities, has a significant impact on their view of themselves as literate beings (e.g. Davis 2007; Gregory & Williams 2000; Heath 1983; McCarthey 2001; Meek 1991; Stein & Slonimsky 2006; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines 1988). This chapter sets out to discuss the literacy and discursive

practices of the children's out-of-school worlds, and the ways in which they are positioned, by themselves and others, within these practices.

Recognising the mutually constitutive nature of meaning and context as argued for by the NLS, the chapter begins by discussing the broad context of the out-of-school domain. Findings pertaining to the physical setting, the people in the setting, what they are doing and saying, and where and when they are doing it, are included. The discussion will also offer a description of 'guiding lights' (Padmore 1994) as a common theme that emerges across the data. The chapter then details four out-of-school literacy practices. These practices were identified by collating the children's descriptions of literacy events, their discussions of reading and writing and a collection of artefacts which they volunteered to me. The discussion of these literacy practices focuses on identifying the Discourses within which they are situated and the children's construction of themselves within these Discourses.

4.2. Context

4.2.1. Access to Reading Choice

In the out-of-school domain the children exercise choice and control in their reading material and describe having access to a wide variety of texts. This is significant as the ability to exercise choice and control is critical to encouraging free voluntary reading (FVR), or reading because you want to (Carlsen & Sherrill 1988; Turner & Paris 1995; Worthy 2000; Worthy & Sailors 2001). Studies have shown that the strongest readers, and the ones most likely to become lifelong readers, are those who engage in FVR or reading for pleasure (e.g. Anderson et al. 1988; Applebee et al. 1988; Krashen 2006).

In the out-of-school domain the selection of texts the children describe reading includes, but moves beyond, the traditional definition of books to encompass popular media such as magazines, newspapers and comics. More particularly, Tshepo describes having a collection of books in his bedroom from which he chooses what he wants to read. His books are either from the Johannesburg Central Library, of which his father is a member, or they are bought for him. There are also a lot of newspapers in the house because his aunt *'... likes reading newspapers'*. Refilwe selects the books she wants to read from a *'box of books'* she has at home. She also gets books from her father, a school principal, who either *'... brings them home from school, if he has a principal's post, or sometimes buys them'*. Frans describes having a selection of reading texts at home, including the comics his mother buys him, his younger brother's books, his grandmother's Sesotho bible, his 19-year-old uncle's books, as well as daily newspapers. Prudence describes reading her older sister's books from school as well as the novels and other books her father has kept from his school days. Boitumelo describes having many books at home, including those she borrows from a friend who attends an ex-Model-C school.

The variety of texts available to the children in their out-of-school worlds enables them to use their reading choices to perform their identities. For example, in the Group Interview Two book selection activity, Sipho explains his book selection as '*I want to read this book to learn about what a DJ does. I love music so I want to know about careers with music. I'm just interested'*. Here Sipho asserts his identity as someone that is interested in music and chooses books accordingly. A further example of the interweaving of identity and reading choice is provided by Frans' explanation that *'I am a poet ma'm so I want to read poetry books, yah, all kinds of poetry books'*. For both boys the ability to read to pursue an area of personal interest significantly demonstrates the role of choice in reading for pleasure.

Another aspect of identity performed by the children's reading choices is gender. These performances demonstrate that the children (often unconsciously) use their

reading choices to reinforce their identities in relation to particular gender hegemonies (Butler 1990). This is particularly visible in the children's construction of gendered boundaries around their reading choices, whereby books are identified as being 'girl books' or 'boy books' (Dutro 2001/2002). Demonstrating the process of 'category maintenance' (Davies 1993), whereby what is perceived to be a natural and normal gender order is perpetuated, the children often position themselves relationally to these boundaries:

Sipho:	*I read more boy books ma'm, like action, stories ... not like Cinderella or anything* [laughing shyly] //
Frans:	*// yes, girls they like these 'Cinderella' books* [mocking tone] //
Sipho:	*// and Barbie books //*
Frans:	*// yes, ma'm, she buys them* [pointing at Refilwe and using an 'accusatory' tone] //
Refilwe:	*// no I don't* [the other boys in the group laugh]
Frans:	*No boys will read those books ma'm* [laughing]
Sipho:	*No, not a boy.*

In this interaction Sipho and Frans act in concert through a repertoire of 'put downs', that include laughter and ridicule, to conduct gender 'category maintenance' (Davis 1993; Martino 1999). In so doing, they use the gendered boundaries around reading choice to construct their identities within a hegemonic version of masculinity. This version is in direct contrast to femininity, which is accordingly constructed as lesser and almost 'criminal' – something to be accused of. Peer culture is highly significant here, and the generative influence the peer group has on regulating hierarchical masculinities is amply documented in recent work (e.g. Keddie 2003, Martino 1999; Renold 2001). The girls in the group use the gendered boundaries around reading choice to construct themselves differently. For example, Prudence, who regularly reads her father's books from his school days, uses her reading choices to position herself as resisting strict gender hegemonies – she explains that she doesn't mind *'reading all books really. I like books on soccer and books on Africa tales. I'm not*

like only into one thing – boy or girl books'. Here Prudence's willingness to cross gendered boundaries more readily in her reading choices is consistent with the literature that indicates that girls are 'freer' to regard themselves as feminine or 'like a boy' (Rice 2000), whereas boys, and especially those who are not hyper-masculine, cannot cross gendered boundaries and choose to read a book with a female protagonist, for example, without fear of ridicule and harassment for being the 'wrong sort of boy' (Kenway & Willis 1998).

Related to the children's use of reading choices to perform their gendered selves is their articulated preference for non-fiction. Much of the literature exploring the intersection of literacy and gender asserts that boys are more inclined to read informational texts, magazines and newspaper articles whereas girls prefer fiction (e.g. Barrs & Pidgeon, 1993; Coles & Hall 2002; Millard 1994, 1997). This contention is not however supported by my findings as both the boys and the girls in the group express a marked preference for non-fiction texts:

Prudence:	*I like to read non-fiction books with photographs*
Frans:	*yes ma'm, it's much more interesting to know about real things, like the 'Cats'[36] book ma'm, I liked that a lot ma'm and I showed all my friends.*

The children's preference for non-fiction supports studies that suggest that for many adolescent and young adult readers 'a non-fiction work can simply be a "good read" – something entertaining, fun, enjoyable, or just plain interesting' (Sullivan 2001, p.43). This construction of non-fiction texts as 'pleasure reading' notably conflicts with the documented tendency of schools to disproportionately favour fiction for this age group and to consider non-fiction in purely utilitarian terms, i.e. something to be used for homework assignments (Morrow 2003).

[36] Referring to the non-fiction book selected during the Group Interview Two book selection activity.

4.2.2. Access to Writing

Relative to the variety of reading texts available, the children initially report seeing fewer examples of writing in their out-of-school worlds. This may be because they draw upon a narrow or traditional understanding of writing as words on a page. As the research process unfolded, it did however become clear that many texts, drawing on a multiplicity of modes (actional, visual, linguistic) to contribute to meaning, are produced in the out-of-school world.

This having been stated, the writing in the traditional sense that the children do describe family members doing, is firmly embedded in meaning-making processes and includes a range of text types or genres, including lists, letters and explanatory notes. Much of this writing is focused on the running of the household and/or accessing or displaying information: parents write shopping lists, siblings complete homework activities, fathers write short notes and grandmothers receive letters from distant family members. Significantly, the children describe socially meaningful and purposeful texts. For example, Refilwe describes seeing her father writing in the context of his studies. Prudence and Tshepo both report seeing a family member engage more regularly in functional writing tasks that include composing a CV for a job application and writing addresses on envelopes:

Prudence: ... [pause] *I could say my mom likes writing because, like, most of the time, when she helps my father look for a job, she's the one writing for him, writing letters, his CV, things like that.*

Tshepo: *Yes, she writes like on an envelope .... she works in Spec Savers and she writes envelopes so that she can post them and people can know to come to Spec Savers.*

For Sipho, the out-of-school writing that he sees demonstrated is particularly sparse and restricted to a narrow conception of writing. He nevertheless describes looking through his two older sisters' school exercise books and because of the volume of work he sees, describes them as being *'big writers'*. Interestingly, Frans describes his 19-year old uncle, who at the time that the research was conducted was busy completing High School, engaging in a regular multimodal literacy practice. This practice involves keeping an archive-type record of his drawings, each of which he dates and sometimes goes back to reflect upon: *'... he started drawing from the age of 13, and then maybe, he draws the drawing, he writes the date and all that stuff ma'm, then he puts it in his file'*.

The writing that is modelled for the children in the out-of-school domain therefore effectively demonstrates individuals drawing on a range of resources to take and make meaning. Given that the ways that we each use writing (and reading) reflects the social purposes that are valued by our differing cultural situations (Luke 2000), this construction of writing is reflected in the texts the children produce. Although on the whole the children report doing far less writing than reading in the out-of-school domain, their texts clearly demonstrate an understanding of writing as a tool to 'make meaning for particular audiences' (Harris et al. 2003). Drawing on this understanding, the children produce texts for very explicit purposes and audiences. (These texts include diaries, poetry, and magazines and will be discussed in section 4.3.) The children's texts further demonstrate that the out-of-school domain provides them with literacy tools beyond books, such as paper, pens, and coloured crayons. Two children in the group report having a computer at home although both report only their parents using the computer as a literacy tool.

4.2.3. Time and Space to Read and Write

Reading and writing requires time. The children's description of finding time to read in their out-of-school worlds, as demonstrated by the excerpt below, signals the pleasure they derive from the practice.

> Boitumelo: *... sometimes I get distracted because I always have to wash the dishes, cook when my mother is late coming from work, so I got to look after my younger sister and help her with her homework, but whenever I get spare time, I read.*

Here Boitumelo describes the many domestic responsibilities she, and other children in similar socio-economic circumstances, experience. These responsibilities arguably make her finding time to read even more poignant. Reading is situated as an enjoyable activity that Boitumelo can look forward to – it is not a chore. Her enjoyment and subsequent prioritising of reading is further communicated by a later description of her sometimes having to *'make'* time to read: *'I just make spare time to read, I tell my sister I am going to my room to read and then she leaves me'*. This description suggests that not only has Boitumelo developed a sense of her own rituals for reading, but she has also established these clearly enough that her family respects her bedroom as a place for her to engage in her love of reading.

In socio-economic contexts that are often characterised by large and extended families sharing smaller houses, the spatial aspect of reading and writing is sometimes literally about finding a space for reading and writing in peace. Significantly all the children find or have established such a space, with most of them describing their bedroom or another room in the house as a privileged place to read and write. Boitumelo describes one of her favourite places to read as being in the garden because *'it is so beautiful'*. Both Tshepo and Frans prefer reading and writing at home because it is quiet there:

Tshepo: *... my favourite place is always reading alone in the room because reading with other people is not nice because they make noise and you can't think right ...*

A child's conjecture of what reading is for and how reading takes place reflects what the child experiences or has experienced materially (Davis 2007). Such experiences tell children what is 'typical' or 'normal' and mediate their actions. To use Bourdeiu's term (1977, 1990, 1991), these experiences shape the child's 'habitus' – dispositions that 'guide and perpetuate practice' in the social world (Grenfell & James 1998, p.15). The children's description of reading in their out-of-school worlds subsequently suggests that their habitus encompasses a sense of reading as a separate and private activity. The children are able to read silently to themselves and what counts as successful reading is quiet, solitary and pleasurable:

Frans: *// and I like to read when it is raining, because when you read when it's raining you just fall asleep and you don't know how you fell asleep.*

4.2.4. Recognition and Support

Families living in disadvantaged areas, such as that in which the research was conducted, were previously scrutinised for their supposed perpetuation of the 'intergenerational cycle of illiteracy' (Auerbach 1995). However, studies drawing on a sociocultural definition of what it means to be literate (e.g. Heath 1983; Knobel 1999; McTavish 2007; Stein & Slonimsky 2006; Taylor 1983; Taylor & Dorsey Gaines 1988) have demonstrated that all families and communities

> construct and express meaning through varied symbol systems, including written language, that may or may not fit mainstream expectations in school, but that achieve

> functionality and intellectual purpose in families' daily lives (Whitmore et al. 2004, p. 313).

Broadening the lens for what counts as literacy, such studies have revealed the rich literacy practices that pervade home and community contexts and have led to the recognition that all families, including those living in poor socio-economic circumstances, contribute to children's literacy development from birth. In a country like South Africa, where the majority of the school population live in poor socio-economic circumstances, such a shift in the lens with which we look at parental involvement in children's literacy development is important. Indeed, recent research, albeit conducted in the United Kingdom, suggests that the impact of parental involvement on children's literacy development may be 'greater than differences associated with variations in the quality of schools' (Desforges & Alouchaar 2003, p.84).

In light of the shift in our ways of viewing and understanding parental involvement, the children notably all come from families where a broad literate orientation is adopted and the children's literacy development is recognised and supported. In these families literacy is considered a worthwhile pursuit, it is valued, socially meaningful and purposeful. This is significant in shaping the habitus of each child, which is internalised as so-called second nature (Bourdieu 1990, 1991) and is key to the construction of their literate selves.

The support and encouragement the children receive in their homes varies but in most cases begins with early reading and writing practices. Such practices include storytelling/reading (which will be discussed in section 4.3.3) as well as explicit guided interaction from parents/caregivers. Tshepo, for example, clearly remembers his mother teaching him the beginnings of writing:

Tshepo: *My mother. My mother used to sit and hold me. She hold the pencil in my hand and show me how to write my name* [smiling as he demonstrates having his hand guided to write his name].

Interviewer: *So you'd write your name and //*

Tshepo: *// and then she showed me how to write my alphabet .... and the vowels.*

Significantly, Tshepo remembers these early learning experiences taking place before he entered the formal schooling system. He recalls his mother's mediation of his learning fondly and situates his emergent literacy practices within an important social relationship. Beyond the foundational role of family support to later literacy learning (Cairney & Ashton 2002), such early support appreciably shapes Tshepo's habitus or what Padmore (1994) refers to as his 'literacy outlook'.

In terms of modelling literate practices and supporting the development of a literate self, most of the children identify at least one other family member in their immediate home context as being a reader and someone they can talk to about the things they've read (or written). Such interaction and talk frames what counts as valid and legitimate ways of interacting with and talking about texts and is important to the children's literacy development and learning (Hannon 2000; Snow 1987, 1993). Refilwe describes having such talks with her father, whom she describes as a *'big reader'*. She reports talking to her father about *'... something I've read or learned about in school'*. Prudence often discusses what she's read with her older sister whom, alongside her father, she describes as *'a reader'*:

Prudence: *my father reads a lot, he's got a lot of books from school when he was young. He likes reading them.*

In addition to family members modelling reading behaviours and talking to the children about reading, the out-of-school domain recognises and rewards the children for being good readers and writers. Significantly, this recognition is often focused on

achievement in in-school or school-sanctioned literacy practices, thus reflecting the dominance of the school as a perceived 'gate-keeper' to higher levels of education, professional jobs and 'social goods' such as money, prestige and status (Gee 2001). Constructed as a form of social and cultural capital, literacy is subsequently recognised and rewarded with verbal encouragement, such as Tshepo's aunt classifying him as *'a clever boy'* and Refilwe's parents who are *'very proud'* of her, as well as more tangible rewards in the form of Sipho's promised cellphone:

Sipho: *yes, my mom says I should read more, and do more writing, because when I need things, she says, 'Let me see your report, how did you do, your results'. Like, last year she bought me a new phone and I lost it this year. Then she says, if December, I come out number one, two or three, then I get a new phone.*

The construction of literacy as social and cultural capital extends to the broader community where some of the children describe functioning as 'literacy mediators', a term used to refer to social actors who take on literacy tasks on behalf of others (Baynham 1995; Gregory & Williams 2000; Wagner et al. 1986). Boitumelo, for example, describes writing messages for extended family and community members:

Boitumelo: *... sometimes when someone wants to write messages, maybe it is someone's birthday, they know me as a good writer and so they call me to write*

Interviewer: *that's interesting, and what language do you write the messages in?*

Boitumelo: *in English*

Interviewer: *so if anyone in your family wants English messages they know you the good writer and so they come to you?*

Boitumelo: *not just my family, ma'm, lots of the people who live near us.*

Here Boitumelo's functioning as a literacy mediator fuses the significant cultural capital of English in the South African context with that of literacy. Being literate in English therefore gives her powerful recognition and a sense of status accorded by her

community, i.e. social capital. Although not all the children report operating as literacy mediators in this same manner, it is significant to note that the out-of-school positioning of the children as valued participants in the literate world subsequently affords all of them access to powerful forms of social and cultural capital.

4.2.5. Guiding Lights

Following from the varying levels of family recognition and support for the children's literacy development, all the children talk about a particular friendship or relationship that offers, or continues to offer them support and guidance. Drawing on Padmore's (1994) use of the term, I have referred to this recurring theme in the data as 'guiding lights'. Reporting on the Literacy in Community research project[37], Padmore (1994) explains 'guiding lights' as follows:

> When talking about their literacy lives, people quite often mention a particular individual, other than a parent or partner, who has played a significant role in their upbringing or adult life; someone who has encouraged their literacy development, and someone who is spoken of with affection, respect and trust (p.143).

Like the participants in Padmore's project, the children in the research group spoke about their 'guiding lights' of their own accord and were not directly asked who they admired or who had been a major influence on them. Most of the children described their 'guiding light' as an adult relative, who has played, or continues to play, a major role in their literacy lives. Three of the children's 'guiding lights' are discussed below.

[37] The project, which started in 1988, was a collaborative research project based at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom. The project aimed to explore local people's everyday uses of literacy; how they use reading and writing in their daily lives; how they feel about different literacy practices and how they cope when they are having difficulties (Padmore 1994).

Prudence

Prudence's deceased uncle was a full-time doctor who was also a professional pianist. Upon realizing her interest in music whilst at church, he initiated her musical literacy by buying her music books and teaching her to read music. He encouraged her interest in musical instruments and the two took to buying and talking about books that described instruments from other parts of Africa. Prudence remembers her uncle as being very *'into'* books, reading and writing a lot. (Her future career choice of becoming a doctor is perhaps not a coincidence.)

Tshepo

Tshepo's father belongs to the Johannesburg Central Library and often gets him books from the *'big library at town'*. Sometimes Tshepo goes with his father to choose books from the library, which he particularly enjoys because *'it's so quiet there we can read without noise'*. Tshepo describes his father as someone who reads a lot, and on visits to the library *'spends a lot of time looking at and choosing books'*. His father encourages Tshepo to choose his own books from the library (or say what books he wants) and will often read stories to Tshepo, or have Tshepo read aloud to him, before bedtime. Tshepo's father also sometimes buys Tshepo books and he is the only child in the group who describes having access to children's books in his home language, i.e. isiZulu, at home. Sometimes his father sets Tshepo comprehension-type questions and additional homework to support his school learning.

Refilwe

Refilwe's grandfather was a school inspector whom she recalls as being *'a big reader'*. When he died, he left her a *'lot of books in a box'*. Most of the books are old textbooks but there are also some *'books with lots of information in them'*. Even though her grandfather died two years prior to the research, Refilwe describes continuing to read and use this selection of books, which she keeps in her room:

Refilwe: *at home I just go to my box and I open the box and I then I take out any book I want to read, because they do have a lot of information, sometimes I don't go to the library to find information, I just get it from my books.*

The value of identifying 'guiding lights' as a theme across the data is that it suggests that a contributing factor to each of the children's understanding of reading and writing, and their subsequent 'literacy outlook' (Padmore 1994), is the presence of a supportive role model who has taken an interest in their life, and made an active literacy contribution. The experiences the children encounter in these relationships are key to the construction of their literate selves. In this regard it is significant that five of the six children report their 'guiding lights' as being in the out-of-school domain.

To conclude this description of the broad context of the out-of-school domain I will summarise some of the essential features. These features come to characterise the social and cultural context within which the literacy and discursive practices discussed in the following section are situated. Firstly, in the out-of-school domain, children have access to a variety of reading texts and are able to exercise choice and control in their reading material. The children use these choices to perform their identities, most particularly their gendered identities. Secondly, in the out-of-school domain writing is modelled as a meaning-making tool that serves particular purposes. Thirdly, in the out-of-school domain the children prioritise reading, and to a lesser extent writing, as a pleasurable activity and subsequently find time and space to read and write. Fourthly, the children's families and the broader community recognise and reward the children as good readers and writers. Literacy is constructed as a form of cultural and social capital to which the children, as successful readers and writers, have access.

4.3. Literacy Practices

4.3.1. Play and 'Re-creation'

Literacy events that the children describe in the out-of-school domain include activities such as playing school, producing magazines and making cut-out doll houses. Although the aim of these activities is not literacy per se, literacy plays an integral part in achieving the activities' aims, which are variously described as entertainment, alleviating boredom, and/or *'keeping busy'*. Recognising that these events represent social and cultural ways of utilising literacy (Barton & Hamilton 2000), I have grouped them together to represent an identifiable literacy practice termed play and 're-creation'. The discussion of this practice will detail three literacy artefacts produced by the children and volunteered to me as researcher. As advocated by Ormerod and Ivanič (2000)

> literacy practices can be inferred not only from events but also from characteristics of the 'text' itself'. Literacy artefacts can subsequently be studied as 'material' objects with specific visual and verbal characteristics as well as physical features that convey particular meanings and provide insight into the social practices associated with the artefact's construction and use (p.91).

The first artefact I have chosen to describe is a 'magazine' produced by one of the girls in the group. Prudence chose to bring the magazine to show me during her individual interview. Immediately situating it within a Discourse of 'literacy as pleasure' she explained that the magazine was called 'Reliever' and that she wrote it at home to *'keep busy and not be bored, like just for fun'* (Notably, Prudence explained that she has produced other magazines in the past and that this was a singular example.) The magazine takes the form of 14 loose pages (A4 size), all hand produced, and presented in a plastic sleeve. Significantly, the magazine is in English,

rather than the languages Prudence speaks at home i.e. isiZulu or Setswana. This is a convincing indicator of the powerful cultural capital of English as the language of social and economic advancement in the South African context. Prudence has used a range of materials as the 'stuff' (Kress 1997) which was to hand – as resources for representation – to create the magazine, including cutting and pasting in pictures from magazines and newspapers as illustrations. Most pages contain a mixture of words and pictures. She has used clear, unlined A4 pages for her magazine, drawing in pencil lines to write on when necessary. On some pages indentations on the surface indicate that she has erased these pencil lines, whilst on other pages the lines remain clearly visible. Most of the words have been written in blue pen ink, in small letters, although there are instances where she has used upper case letters for emphasis. Prudence has used large upper case bubble-type letters for the different section headings of her magazine, and in most cases has coloured these headings in using coloured pencil.

The title of Prudence's magazine, 'Reliever', is written in large, red bubble-letters on the first page. Included on this first page is a feature article as well as the date, cost and issue number of the magazine. The article is a summarised account on the success of 'Mafikizolo', a popular music group. Prudence explains having written the article based on a longer article she read in a local newspaper. She has notably cut out and pasted the picture from the original newspaper story to accompany her article. Her writing is not however a direct replication of the article, as indicated by her use of 'expressive language' (Britton 1970) and the foregrounding of her personal voice with reference to the recent tragic death of one of the group's members: 'By the way not forgetting GOD for their talent and blessings. Sorry for what happened to Tebogo'. The front page of Prudence's 'Reliever' magazine is included on the following page (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: **The front page of Prudence's 'Reliever' magazine.**

As a multimodal literacy artefact, Prudence's magazine is situated materially and textually in her life (Ormerod & Ivanič 2000). Important to understanding the magazine as materially situated is Ormerod and Ivanič's (2000) observation that 'given family circumstances, children make use of those materials and technologies which are available to them' (p.100). Accordingly, the physical characteristics of the magazine signal things about the immediate material environment within which it was produced. For example, Prudence uses A4 sheets of clear, unlined paper for her magazine rather than the lined paper provided by the school and/or available in standard school exercise books. This indicates that Prudence has access to this resource at home and denotes that the magazine is constructed independently, in her out-of-school world. Furthermore, imported textual components such as the pictures cut out from magazines and newspapers suggest that these resources are available in Prudence's wider environment, and that given that she feels comfortable cutting out pictures from them, they are not regarded as scarce or sacred.

In considering the magazine as textually situated it is useful to draw on the concept of Design as proposed by the New London Group (2000) which sees

> semiotic activities as a creative application and combination of conventions (resources or available designs) that, in the process of Design, transforms at the same time as it reproduces these conventions (p.20).

The resources that are produced and transformed through the Design process are described as the 'Redesigned' (New London Group 2000, p.23). Using a written paragraph as an example of the Redesigned, the New London Group (2000, p.22) write:

> Most written paragraphs are unique, never constructed in exactly that way ever before and – bar copying or statistical improbability – never to be constructed that way again. Similarly, there is something irreducibly unique about every person's voice.

> Designing always involves the transformation of available designs; it always involves making new use of old materials.

Prudence's process of writing her magazine can thus be considered as redesigning meaning – she integrates semiotic material as available resources to redesign or make new meaning. In this process she positions herself as an active and intentional meaning-maker. Viewing her magazine through this lens, she can be seen to draw on multiple designs – ideas, images, grammars, layout conventions and other signs – from popular media, which she then assembles in a new way to design a magazine of her own.

Perhaps the most obvious or traceable designs from popular media that Prudence uses are from the magazine genre, and more particularly from youth magazines such as *Y-Mag* and loveLife's *Uncut*[38]. Her magazine's textual characteristics draw on the layout conventions of the magazine genre and include the following: a cover story; a contents page; an advice column; a social or 'What's happening?' section; a competition, test-your-self and games section; a personal health section; an education or school-help section; car advertisements; a 'car of the month' feature; a sports section; letters to the editor; and an editorial. The format is significant as it indicates that Prudence has read a variety of magazines and is therefore familiar with the genre and the textual requirements thereof. Her writing further supports this view as she draws on her knowledge of popular youth magazines to provide a suitable grammar for her writing and the tone and style for her magazine. This is particularly evident in the editorial in which she directly mirrors *Y-Mag's* style by firstly addressing her reader 'Hi Peeps!', and then continuing to write in a personal and conversational tone.

[38] *Y-Mag* and *Uncut* are both youth magazines. Uncut is produced by loveLife, a consortium of South African public health organisations and NGOs that implement media campaigns, offer adolescent sex health services and community level outreach and support programmes for youth. (www.lovelife.org.za). Uncut is distributed freely with daily newspapers such as *'The Star'* and '*The Sowetan'*. *Y-Mag* was established in the late 1990s out of a joint partnership between Studentwise, publishers of white youth targeted SL Magazine, and Johannesburg radio station YFM, targeted at black youth. *Y-Mag* was conceived as the new voice of South Africa's recently liberated black urban youth.

As magazine editor, Prudence positions herself as a capable, confident and accomplished professional. She notably titles the editorial 'Me, Myself and I', and explains to her reader that 'I am the owner of the magazine. I know most of you are surprised to hear that .... First, I am writing this whole 2 pages to tell you about me'. The style Prudence adopts in her writing and the genre she chooses to mimic therefore reflect her interest in youth magazines and clearly demonstrate the powerful influence of reading on what children choose to write (Millard 1994).

Within the magazine, Prudence further draws on designs from other popular media, for example she incorporates designs derived from daily newspapers as demonstrated by the feature article on her first page and the crossword and 'spot the difference' puzzle in her games section. She also incorporates a death and condolences section, a feature more typical of a daily newspaper, into her 'redesign' of the magazine genre. Prudence has further used conventions from popular car advertisements by cutting out coloured pictures from newspapers and magazines and including labels to assemble or 'redesign' a car advertisement. Her awareness of the advertisement genre is reflected in the Discourse of enticement she draws upon in her 'sales line': 'This car is a gotta get!!!'. Prudence's car advertisement is included on the following page (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: **Car advertisement included in Prudence's 'Reliever' magazine.**

Rather than producing a straightforward replication of popular media resources that interest her, Prudence therefore designs and redesigns meaning through her magazine (Ranker 2007).[39]. This redesign extends to her use of writing as a tool to reflect on her life and 'present self' (Newkirk 1997). This is particularly clear in two specific sections: the social or 'What's Happening?' section and the personal health section. Prudence redesigns the 'What's Happening?' section of her magazine as a platform for her to recount a number of real or fictitious events. These recounts, all headed with appropriate titles, include her disappointment around events at school and her experience of visitors to the school:

> **Disaster of the month**
> ... Mr Marufane their class teacher took a decision that all the people who caused trouble are no longer welcome to the Grade 6 parties for the rest of the year! Guess what! Lindelani Sikhosana, Prudence's best friend was one of them. That one definitely broke Prudence's heart to pieces.

> **A visitor this time of year, oh no!**
> Mrs Mohapi paid a visit to the school. She greeted them with a big smile to show that she was happy and comfortable ... She introduced herself to the new learners and told that she is a former educator of the school ... She told the learners she had a good time while teaching them. She even said she was speechless.

In the personal health section of the magazine Prudence draws on a 'self-help' Discourse to write responses to imagined readers' questions. Her selection of 'problems' and her responses suggest the possible concerns of her and her friends, who are on the threshold of becoming teenagers. For example:

[39] It is this sense of Prudence's magazine demonstrating a redesigning or re-creating process rather than a replicating one, and the subsequent play on words, which led me to the term 're-creation' in naming the practice within which this activity is categorised.

> Many of you ask me how to look beautiful. I am going to tell you how to take care of yourself. 1.) Have a bath 2x a day .....6.) Do not eat food that will damage your beauty, such as peanuts, chocolate and butter every time. Try to eat them only once a week. Tell yourself it is better for you.

Confirming Kress' view that 'children, like adults, never copy ... we transform the stuff which is around us' (Kress 1997, p.96), Prudence's magazine therefore combines all she has socially available to design an assembled whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Important to the aims of this research, her re-creation practice constitutes part of her definitions of literacy and of herself, and is therefore significant in shaping her identity and predispositions in terms of literacy. In this process Prudence notably positions reading and writing as pleasurable activities that she can use as valuable tools for reflecting on her life and constructing her identity.

Considering the Discourses within which the practice is situated, the magazine draws upon (and integrates) a multiplicity of Discourses such as those of 'popular youth magazines', 'daily newspapers', 'sales', and 'self-help'. However, returning to the chapter aim of discussing the children's out-of-school literacy practices and the Discourses within which they are situated, the practice can be positioned primarily within two broad Discourses of 'literacy as pleasure' and 'literacy as representation-of-self'. In positioning herself as an 'active meaning-maker', 'expert' and 'authority of self' within these Discourses, the magazine signals aspects of Prudence's identity work. The construction of her identity work as being private is reflected in her description of only showing the magazine to her best friend when she came to visit Prudence at home. Prudence explains that her friend is also *'a writer'* and that the magazine is not something she would share with all the children at school, *'because they won't understand. They'd just copy'*. Prudence further reports not showing her parents the magazine, explaining that she*'... told them I was a magazine owner and they all laughed "You! A magazine owner!"'* Important to this understanding of the magazine as an artefact of self, and signifying the 'literacy as pleasure' Discourse within which the practice is situated, Prudence reports sometimes reading the

magazines that she has previously produced. She does not do this for revision and/or editing purposes but rather explains that *'I read them just to see what I wrote, it's interesting'*.

Prudence was not the only child in the group to describe literacy activities, or present artefacts situated in a play or re-creation practice. For example, during her individual interview Refilwe brought a pamphlet that she and her friends designed for when they *'play school together'*. The pamphlet includes a badge for their imagined school and a written set of school rules that the girls developed. The girls named their school and Refilwe, drawing on the Discourse and processes of the school modelled for her, explains how when they play school *'one is going to be the teacher and the others are learners and the others will be the principal and vice principal'*. Refilwe's play world is therefore shown to reflect her understanding of her social world, including 'deeply embedded cultural storylines about human relations and authority structures' (Gilbert 1994, p.131).

Another literacy artefact shared by Refilwe and situated in play as a social practice is what she referred to as her *'paper doll house'*. This is an A4 exercise book with pictures of furniture from magazines and sales catalogues cut out and stuck onto each double page spread to represent the various rooms in a house, for example the dining room, kitchen, etc. Two double-page spreads from Refilwe's doll house are included on the following page (Figure 4.3). In addition to the cut-out furnishings and fittings for the doll house there are people which Refilwe explained as being representative of family members such as *'the mom', 'the sister',* etc. The family members have been cut out and incorporated into the house. The house is carefully designed and includes flaps that can be lifted and slits into which the cut-out family members can be slotted:

Figure 4.3: **Two double-page spreads from Refilwe's 'paper doll house'.**

Refilwe: *Maybe when the sister is like doing her make-up she can do like this* [lifting up the dresser which has only been partially stuck down so as to enable it to flap up] ...

Recalling the previous discussion of Prudence's magazine, Refilwe's doll house can also be considered the product of a redesigning or re-creation process. Refilwe uses all she has socially available, including magazines and sales catalogues, to design new meaning (New London Group 2000). In this process Refilwe, like Prudence, draws on her prior knowledge, experiences and understandings of the world and constructs herself as an active and intentional meaning-maker.

Positioning herself as a 'confident expert' in the doll house practice, Refilwe explains that many of the girls, *'especially in the lower classes',* will bring their doll houses to school and either at break or in the streets after school, sit together and play:

Refilwe: *... they, like, bring their books, and they like, play with their friends, and if, like their friends have other books, they can play with them, and then maybe someone says* [in an affected tone] *'I'm going to visit you in your house' and then that one goes and visits at the other house, looks if it's nice ... They make up stories about the people in the house ...*

Here Refilwe's description of the practice reveals two significant points. First, the description indicates the relationship between identity work and play. The free expression of play provides an opportunity for children to develop new social competencies in imagined communities (Vygotsky 1978, 1986). When children make up worlds through play they therefore engage in a process of identity making, and play becomes a 'space of authoring' (Holland et al. 1998, p.270). In this context, authorship is

> a matter of orchestration, of arranging the identifiable social discourses and practices that constitute the child's social and cultural resources (Holland et al. 1998, p.272).

Understanding play as authorship therefore suggests that the doll house practice is a possible use of available social and cultural resources to explore middle-class aspirations and resources that are unavailable. Such play affords the girls opportunities to create 'possible roles in possible worlds' (Dyson 1997, p.14).

A second, and related point revealed by Refilwe's description of the doll house practice is the highly gendered Discourse upon which the girls' play draws. This Discourse of 'visiting neighbours' and 'being house-proud' constructs such concerns as being markedly female and functions to reinforce contemporary gendered power relationships in relation to the domestic sphere. Within this Discourse Refilwe and the other girls are therefore positioned in markedly middle-class and gendered roles.

Like Prudence, Refilwe's doll house practice draws upon a number of Discourses including a highly gendered Discourse of self, both real and imagined. For the purposes of the argument presented in the chapter I have however situated the practice within two broad literacy Discourses of 'literacy as pleasure' and 'literacy as creativity'. This decision is supported by Refilwe's drawing on a peer group Discourse that uses 'being into/not into' to position individual likes/dislikes to explain that *'I was very into my doll house when I did this'*. She further describes making the doll house as being *'all about creativity and enjoying yourself'*. Whilst paging through the book to show me the various rooms, she describes herself as *'a very creative person'* and proudly notes that she *'made it very stylish to put, like, couches and things'*.

Thus far the discussion of play and re-creation as an identifiable out-of-school literacy practice has focused on the literacy artefacts produced by the children, the social practices within which these are situated, and the positions taken up by the children within these practices. Before concluding the discussion it is important to expand on

the principal Discourse of 'literacy as pleasure' within which the play and re-creation practice is situated. This Discourse is variously drawn upon by the children in their construction of literacy in the out-of-school domain. For example, in talking about their favourite books, all of which were obtained in the out-of-school domain, the children link literacy to pleasure or enjoyment. They talk about using *'every spare minute'* to read, meeting special *'friends after school and reading together'* and *'sitting quietly and enjoying my book'*. (The discussion of the children creating time and space to read in the out-of-school domain (section 4.2.3.) further attests to the children's construction of literacy as a pleasurable activity.) As with Refilwe's description of being *'very into'* her doll house, the children draw on a peer group Discourse to construct literacy as something they are 'into': *'I'm into books and reading'* and *'I'm more into writing than reading'*. Notably, in the out-of-school domain enjoying literacy is not bound to any particular time, place or emotional state:

> Prudence: *Ma'm I do have a file, I write, like, when I'm bored, um, when I feel like writing, um, sometimes when I am sad* [pause] *or even when I'm happy. Sometimes I even write, like, I make things up ... really I just enjoy writing.*

Finally, to conclude this discussion of the out-of-school literacy practice of play and re-creation it is important to summarise what is key to the overall research aim of exploring how the children construct themselves as readers and writers. In the out-of-school domain literacy is situated in the games the children play and in their daily recreational practices. Within these practices the children demonstrate different ways of transforming the literate life they see around them. Although the activities and texts produced and consumed are situated in a multiplicity of Discourses, they are primarily situated within a 'literacy as pleasure' Discourse. Within this Discourse the children position themselves as active and intentional meaning-makers as well as confident, capable and accomplished experts. Rather than being a chore or meaningless activity, in the out-of-school domain reading and writing are constructed as treasured personal pleasures.

4.3.2. Self-expression and Creativity

In addition to those serving play and re-creation purposes, many of the literacy events that the children describe in the out-of-school domain use literacy as a tool for self-expression and creativity. To this end, I collated activities such as writing diaries, poems, letters and drawing to represent an out-of-school literacy practice termed self-expression and creativity. Within this practice the children use a range of semiotic resources to think about, make sense of and represent their worlds. It is also through this practice that the children, perhaps most obviously, use literacy to assert their gendered identities. Within this practice the children's activities are clearly gendered, with the girls in the group writing diaries and letters whilst the boys write poetry and draw.

In terms of the girls' practice of diary writing, two of the three girls in the group, Boitumelo and Prudence, report keeping a personal diary. They describe doing this for at least two years prior to the time that the research was conducted. Both girls situate their diary writing within a 'literacy as representation-of-self' Discourse and describe their writing as a way to express and reflect on their everyday lives and feelings. As demonstrated by the excerpt below, diary writing is also situated within a 'literacy as pleasure' Discourse, and is understood as a problem-solving strategy with cathartic benefits:

Interviewer:	.... *and what do you write about?*
Boitumelo:	*Ma'm, currently my mom is in hospital, she's sick and I write in my diary what I feel, how much I miss her*
Interviewer:	*and does this help you?*
Boitumelo:	*yes, when you are sad ma'm you look at your diary, and some things make you laugh*
Prudence:	*yes and it helps to say how you feel in your diary. When I have written how I feel then I can go to bed and I won't feel so worried.*

As a personal literacy practice organised around making sense of the world, the girls position themselves within the diary writing practice as meaning-makers, authors who have power and control over the meanings expressed in their texts. This position of authority allows the girls to use their diaries for 'expressive writing' or writing that is close to the 'self' (Britton 1970): *'I write in my diary what I feel'*. The girls describe feeling free to write *'whatever comes out of my head'* in their diaries with no wider audience in mind. It is this freedom and privacy that makes their diaries special to the girls and they therefore *'don't show anyone my diary'*.

Drawing on a Discourse of gender stereotype that constructs girls/women as more emotional than boys/men (Best 1983; Fabes & Martin 1991), the children position diary writing as an exclusively feminine activity:

Frans:	*boys don't write diaries. If maybe they have a problem they just tell each other face to face*
Interviewer:	*and girls, if they have a problem what do they do?*
Frans:	*ah ma'm* [rolling eyes and smiling] *they write about it then they cry*
Interviewer:	*and do girls write about it in their diaries?*
Frans:	*yes ma'm, boys don't write diaries*
Interviewer:	*okay, so what if a boy decides to write a diary* //
Sipho:	*// ai ai* [snickering and shaking his head]
Frans:	*//* [laughing] *A boy won't do that*

Here Frans and Sipho again act in concert to conduct gender category maintenance (Davis 1993) and construct their identities within hegemonic masculinity. Dominant ideas about what constitutes the 'right' sort of boy are here taken for granted as the 'norm'. Frans' repeated assertion of 'boys don't write diaries' and his use of the strong modal 'won't' in response to my persistence (as interviewer), demonstrates that those straying from the standard are considered to reflect a possible lack of competence in being masculine – 'A real boy would not do that', is implied.

Alongside diary writing, the girls' practice of writing letters is also positioned as a feminine activity. Like diary writing, the practice is situated within a 'literacy as representation-of-self' Discourse whereby the girls describe being able to *'say what I want to say'* and *'share things about me'* in their letter writing. As a personal literacy practice, the only intended audience for the letters is the writer herself:

Interviewer:	*so sometimes you write letters to someone but you don't post them, you just keep them?*
Prudence:	*yes ma'm, because I can say what I want to say without upsetting anyone.*

This description of privacy as related to writing purpose suggests that it is not purely for reflective or cathartic purposes. Rather, it suggests the taking up of oppositional thinking about gender and gender stereotyped Discourses that rely on assumptions about the innate differences between boys and girls: boys are more active; girls are better at forming and maintaining relationships; boys don't express emotions easily; girls are more sensitive and concerned about other people's feelings (Dutro 2003; Gilbert & Gilbert 1998; Laws 1990). In view of these Discourses, the boys position the practice of letter writing as strictly feminine, and devalue it by labelling it as *'a waste of time'*. As argued by Gilbert and Taylor (1991), the boys' devaluing of the letter-writing genre may be 'a variant of the more general devaluing of women's experiences and women's texts across the educational curriculum' (p. 146).

Contrasting the practices of diary and letter writing, two out-of-school activities positioned as suitably masculine are poetry and drawing. As with diary and letter writing, the activities are embedded in a broader practice of using literacy as a tool for self-expression and creativity.

Before discussing the boys' engagement with poetry I should note that although current international research is paying increasing attention to how aspects of youth culture and literacy in out-of-school contexts, such as spoken word poetry and 'hip

hop', can be considered literate practices (Jocson 2005; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade 2004), few, if any, specific studies of poetry reading, writing and/or reciting have, to date, been conducted in the South African context. However, in my observation and experience of working in schools, poetry is becoming an increasingly popular literacy practice amongst South African youth. Informal discussions with the teachers at Umholi suggest that this popularity may be related to the rich oral tradition pervasive in African cultures and the relative status afforded to effective orators. Furthermore, the popularising of traditional praise poetry and the emergence of kwaito[40] music in recent years may also contribute to poetry's growing popularity. Significantly, praise poetry and kwaito music have, to date, been considered predominately masculine activities.

The children in the group position poetry reading and writing as more suitably masculine activities, explaining that although both girls and boys can read and write poems, *'perhaps poetry writing is more for boys* [pause] *I think boys can be good poets'*. In light of research on the centrality of power relations in shaping gendered processes (e.g. Connell 1995, 2000; Martino 1999), I would argue that the positioning of competence in poetry writing as masculine establishes a relationship between 'being a poet', 'being a boy' and 'being in a position of power'. This argument is borne out in the children's recognition and admiration of Frans, the group member whom they all position as *'a good poet'*. From the very first meeting Frans takes up this position of power and uses the 'I am a ...' construction to assert his identity as a poet: *'The first thing you should know about me ma'm, is I am a poet'*. Frans occupies a position of dominance in the group (and reportedly the school), frequently engaging with and playing out dominant versions of masculinity. (He regularly mobilises Discourses of gender to regulate thought and action and police the boundaries of acceptable masculinity in the group.) Moreover, Frans is recognised as a keen soccer player, which has been shown to provide boys with a set of masculinising practices that come to act as a key signifier in constructing hegemonic masculinities in schools

[40] Kwaito is a genre of local popular music that incorporates forms of rap, township idiom and youth slang (Stein 2008).

(Skeleton 2000; Swain 2000).[41]. Based on his 'belonging to the ethos of "top dog" masculinity' (Salisbury & Jackson 1996, p.167), Frans' competence in poetry writing therefore comes to represent a prestige resource in signifying 'successful' masculinity within the group (and school).

As a prestige resource, the reading and writing of poetry is situated in various Discourses, such as 'literacy as creativity' (*'poetry can make me to create things, yah, be creative', 'I was born creative, I am a poet'*), 'literacy as representation-of-self' (*'I can say what I think'*), and 'literacy as pleasure' (*'it's kind of intimidating, ah yah, it's really fun'*). In terms of access to poetry books, Frans describes getting these from his friend who attends an ex-Model-C school. He describes his friend as bringing the books home from school or getting them from his uncle who buys them for him. Frans often copies the poems from his friend's book on a piece of paper so that he can have his own copy, and other times the two friends read and write poetry together with other boys:

> Frans: *sometimes it's more than just me and him ma'm, I've got a few friends I will sit with and read poems, write poems* [pause] ... *yes, sometimes Sipho is with us* [pointing at Sipho, who smiles shyly in response] ... *I love poetry.*

The social work (Dyson 1993) done by the reading and writing of poetry described by Frans supports the view that literacy practiced by adolescent boys is often intensely social, growing out of and functioning to maintain relationships (Newkirk 2002). His positioning as a poet gains Frans recognition and prestige amongst his friends, and facilitates his building cultural capital amongst his peers, most particularly with his close friend (Blair & Sanford 2004). This interpretation further supports the argument that in this context being a poet equates to being in a position of power and staking

[41] The game is seen to provide boys with techniques of self-legitimation that provide a public platform to display competence in a cultural form that 'personifies the acme of masculinity, and communicates ideals of fitness, strength, competition, power and domination' (Swain 2000, p.107).

out an elevated place in the hierarchy of masculinities. Relevant to the research aim of exploring how the children draw upon their literacy practices in their construction of themselves as readers and writers, Frans notably situates the practice of reading and writing poetry, and the pleasure he derives from this, primarily in his out-of-school world: '*I really write more poetry at home, ma'm, it's not so much for school.'*

Contrasting the construction of poetry reading and writing as intensely social, drawing, as an activity likewise embedded in a practice of self-expression and creativity, and positioned as 'masculine', is notably constructed as being a personal and private practice.

In my initial discussions of drawing with the children, the boys explained their drawings as a way to alleviate boredom or *'just to draw a picture or something'*. However later discussions of the practice drew upon a 'literacy as representation-of-self' Discourse as the boys revealed their use of drawing as a tool to reflect on their experiences and express their thoughts. This revelation of purpose struck me as being markedly similar to the girls' purpose for diary writing (albeit that the boys utilise a different genre). This similarity was confirmed by Frans' description, included below, in which he reports his young uncle regularly drawing and writing the date on his drawings:

Interviewer:	*and what does your uncle do with his drawings?*
Frans:	*he keeps them ma'm, in a special file*
Interviewer:	*okay, and does he ever show his drawings to you?*
Frans:	*no ma'm, he doesn't show them to anyone, only himself*
Interviewer:	*that's interesting. Does he sometimes look at his drawings again?*
Frans:	*yes, ma'm I think sometimes he goes through them*
Interviewer:	*and tell me, what do you think your uncle draws about?*
Frans:	*yah, like his feelings ma'm* [pause] *I think he even writes a bit, maybe like even song words, yes.*

Here Frans explanation of purpose for his uncle's drawing in many ways parallels that offered by the girls for diary writing: both are personal and private literacy practices organised around making sense of the world; both function as an avenue for expressing feelings; and within both practices writers re-reading and archiving their earlier writings suggests that texts function as 'messengers between past and current selves' (Atwood 2002, p.125). Given these similarities, the important distinction between the practices is that whilst diary writing is positioned as an exclusively feminine activity, drawing is positioned as appropriately masculine. A boy can draw about his world and add song words expressing his feelings and still remain within dominant codes of masculinity but he cannot write a diary serving the same purposes without being seen to be 'unmanly', 'non-macho' or 'feminine' (Dalley-Trim 2007). In light of this, and the previous discussion of his position of dominance in the group, Frans' discussion of his uncle's drawings seemingly signalled the 'sufficiently masculine' nature of this practice to the other boys in the group, and cleared a safe space for them to then share their similar self-reflective personal practices:

Sipho:	*... but I enjoy writing what I think, what comes out of my head*
Interviewer:	*and do you show that to anybody*
Sipho:	*no, that's just for me*
Interviewer:	*okay, and do you write it and sometimes read it again?*
Sipho:	*yes, sometimes I keep it and look at it again.*

To conclude this discussion of self-expression and creativity as an out-of-school practice, I will summarise what is important to the overall research aim of exploring how the children construct themselves as readers and writers. In the out-of-school domain literacy is situated in the children's need to express themselves, be creative, reflect on and represent their world. The activities and texts within this practice are situated within Discourses of 'literacy as pleasure', 'literacy as representation-of-self' and 'literacy as creativity'. Within these Discourses the children are positioned, by themselves and others, as meaning-makers: authors and poets able to exert both power and control over the meanings in their texts. Finally, the literacy activities the children

engage in within this practice are highly gendered and demonstrate the process of 'category maintenance' (Davies 1993). The gendered boundaries between reading and writing activities are heavily policed, and, especially for boys, crossing these boundaries invites serious 'punishment' (Dutro 2001/2002).

4.3.3. Storytelling/reading

A significant counter to the belief that working class families don't 'do literacy' and that children in low-income families experience few literacy events (McTavish 2007) is my finding that most of the children in the research group describe out-of-school literacy events that involve either being read to, told stories or reading/telling stories. As recognisably social ways of utilising literacy (Barton et al. 2000) I have grouped these events together to represent a literacy practice of storytelling/reading.

Early research indicates that as part of a family's daily life, shared reading experiences in the home function as a valuable extension of human relationships in a child's world (Crago & Crago 1983). Once thought to be a universal practice, then seen as mostly a Western middle-class practice, more recent research has focused on the extent to which reading to (and with) children can vary tremendously in form across social and cultural contexts (e.g. Rogers 2002; Taylor 1997). Although the form which storytelling/reading takes across the children's descriptions is fairly similar, the frequency and longevity of these events is particularly varied: some children report storytelling/reading as a current family practice whilst others only recall it happening *'when I was small'*. For example, Tshepo describes storyreading as a current bedtime practice in his home, whereby his aunt and/or father read him stories *'that are more difficult than I can read'*. Refilwe, however, recalls being read stories as a baby, but explains that '*it's only when I was, like, a baby, like not anything now* [smiling]'.

An example of the storytelling/reading practice as entrenched and actively maintained is presented in Prudence's recalling of how as a young child her mother would tell her stories before bed. The stories were a combination of made-up stories and traditional fables, and were always told in Setswana, the family's home language. The social nature of this practice is foregrounded by Prudence who explains it as follows: *'I used to sit with my mother and listen* [pause] *I remember sitting together. I loved the stories ... I remember the stories, even today'*. Situating the practice within a Discourse of 'literacy as pleasure', Prudence's explanation for one of her choices in the Group Interview Two book selection activity demonstrates the influence of this early experience:

> Prudence: [excitedly] *I chose 'Tales from Africa' because even when I grow up I want to tell my children stories before they go to bed, so if I read books like this I can know the stories.*

In this statement of intent Prudence makes her valuing of the practice clear by incorporating it into her present and future subjectivity. This valuing is also evident in her description of how earlier in the year when she had to look after a class of younger children, she decided to bargain with them by agreeing to tell them a story if they kept quiet. The story she told them was *'one that my mother told me and that I remember enjoying'*. In her acts of identity construction Prudence therefore positions herself as a confident storyteller, and demonstrates that her experience of the practice is sufficiently entrenched, and valued, for her to take on an apprenticeship role with others.

Contrasting Prudence's focus on past experiences in her description of storytelling/reading in her family, Boitumelo's description of the practice is focused on its present enactment. She describes her younger sister as *'the person in my family who most likes to tell stories'* and describes the participants in the storytelling practice as being *'not all the family ma'm, just me and my other two sisters, we all sit together and listen'*. The stories her sister tells include traditional fairytales and stories she gets

from books. Like Prudence, Boitumelo expresses a marked engagement with her sister's storytelling practice:

> Boitumelo: *yes ma'm* [pauses to think] *But sometimes I get bored ma'm, because she likes repeating things, she's like* [smiling], *she tells me a story and then I have to tell her she told me that story.*

Here, in describing the practice as a social process, Boitumelo notably positions herself as an active and intentional participant. She is able to voice her opinion and enhance her enjoyment of the practice by requesting alternative stories.

Finally, Frans' description of the storytelling/reading practice positions him as the 'storyreader' and his grandmother as the 'storyteller' in the family. As 'storyreader' Frans describes reading stories aloud to his grandmother and younger brother. His description, included below, demonstrates that similar to other group members, Frans understands reading to be a social act, firmly situated within a Discourse of 'literacy as pleasure'.

> Frans: *yes ma'm, I do read, but maybe not just a poem, even a book, like 'Hercules' I did read it to her* [Hercules was one of the books Frans chose in the Group Interview Two book selection activity]
> Interviewer: *did you read the whole 'Hercule's book to her?*
> Frans: *yes ma'm I did, she liked it, but she didn't like to see all those fighting, war, because of, ma'm, you know, the things that happened in South Africa* [lowers his tone when he explains this] *yes ma'm, she doesn't really like listening about that.*

Frans' description of his 'storyreading' is consistent with earlier discussions of the construction of literacy as cultural capital, to which Frans (as a good reader) has access and is able to share with his grandmother. The description also attests to the valuable role of literacy in extending relationships in Frans' world (Crago & Crago

1983). Frans goes on to position his grandmother as the 'storyteller' in the family and describes how she *'sometimes tells us stories about how it was in Lesotho when she grew up* [pause] *what they did, what it was like, ya, things like that'*. Demonstrating grandparents' sense of maintaining continuity and passing on their experience of family history, Frans' description therefore confirms the view that grandparents are likely to be important resources for the 'funds of knowledge' (Moll 1992) held within communities (Kenner et al. 2007).

To conclude this discussion of storytelling/reading as an out-of-school literacy practice I would like to emphasise the common function of developing important social relationships that the practice serves. Whether these relationships are parent/grandparent and child or sibling relationships, the practice demonstrates the children's out-of-school understanding of literacy as a social process. Within this practice the children draw on a Discourse of 'literacy as pleasure' and position themselves as empowered storytellers/readers, meaning-makers, and active participants.

4.3.4. Sharing Books with Friends

A final out-of-school literacy practice identified from the data is sharing and talking about books with friends. The significance of this practice will largely be dealt with in Chapter 6 as it concerns the children's identification of themselves as members of what will be referred to as 'the good readers and writers club' (a nomenclature borrowed from Frank Smith's (1985) notion of the 'literacy club'). However it is important to briefly discuss this practice at this juncture as it is markedly situated in the out-of-school domain.

The friends that the children report sharing books with vary in terms of either attending Umholi or other schools. Notably, with the exception of Sipho, all the children describe a close or *'best'* friend as attending an ex-Model-C school. Although

this thesis is not the forum to explore the social causality and effects of such friendships, it is nevertheless significant in terms of the children actively seeking out access to literacy resources beyond those of their immediate context. Describing their relationships with these friends, the children specifically refer to the *'more interesting/new/non-fiction books'* that their friends provide access to.

Coupled with the variance in their friendship circles, the extent to which the children engage with activities and discuss books with their friends also varies. For example, Refilwe positions both her friend, who attends an ex-Model-C school, and herself as enjoying reading and reports often talking about and swapping books with her friend. Her description supports research that suggests that children talking to their peers about books influences their reading choices, increases motivation for reading and helps readers to form lasting engagements with books (Kasten 1997). As demonstrated by the excerpt below, it was her friend's influence that informed Refilwe's Group Interview Two book selection:

Refilwe:	*Um, I chose 'Martin Luther King' and the 'Goosebumps' book.*
Interviewer:	*Are those both the ones that you really want to read?*
Refilwe:	*yes*
Interviewer:	*Why?*
Refilwe:	*Um, I heard that the 'Goosebumps' is interesting and my friend Lufundo once had it from her school, so I didn't have a lot of time to look at it but I think it will be very interesting. They always give them interesting books at her school.*
Interviewer:	*Do you know what the 'Goosebumps' books are about?*
Refilwe:	*Not really cause I didn't have time, so I only read about one and a half page. Lufundo liked the book so I think I will also.*

In this description Refilwe confirms her understanding of her friendship as affording her exposure and sometimes access to literacy resources beyond those of her immediate context. Such exposure is shown to widen her awareness of texts and subsequently influence her reading choices.

Contrasting Refilwe's friendship with a fellow *'reader'*, Prudence positions herself as being *'the reader'* in her friendship dyad and describes her best friend as not '*reading too many books'*. She actively negotiates this difference in interests and is aware of her friend's willingness to only share books or magazines about celebrities:

> Prudence: *yes we do talk about books but not every time we read a book, only the books that she's most interested in, then we'll say like 'Did you hear that like ....' Like the David Beckham book, we did talk about it. Not all the books I read.*

Attesting to the social and contextualized nature of literacy in the out-of-school domain, in this friendship Prudence is acutely aware of the aspects of her literate self she can/cannot share. Her friend is notably a member of a public library (which Prudence is not) and Prudence describes her friend taking books from the library not because she wants to, but '*just because her mother told her she has to improve her reading'*. Positioned by both herself and her friend as *'the reader,'* Prudence benefits from this practice by sometimes sharing these books with her friend, and may even read parts of the books aloud to her friend. Positioned as mentor or expert, Prudence is therefore aware of the reciprocity of her friendship.

Finally, the children, outside of school time or instruction, sometimes go to the local public library with their friends. Such visits are not necessarily focused on finding information, the purpose most often assigned by school projects, but rather on reading for enjoyment and discussion:

> Interviewer: *so do you go to the library?*
> Frans: *yes ma'm, when maybe they projects, for school, or sometimes we just go if we just feel like reading*
> Interviewer: *do you go only with the school or do you go when you out of school?*
> Frans: *yes ma'm in the afternoon, maybe Fridays, I go with me, Sipho and Bandile.*

Significantly, Frans describes going to the library together with Sipho, who is also a member of the research group, and Bandile, a child whom he later identifies as being in Grade 5 at Umholi. The relevance of this friendship grouping going to the library together to read for pleasure will be discussed in Chapter 6, as it concerns their membership of 'the good readers and writers club'.

In summary then, situated within a Discourse of 'literacy as pleasure' the practice of sharing and discussing books with friends serves a dual function for the children: first, it permits them access to literacy resources, and second, it creates a broader community of readers who share common interests and exchange views on reading texts. Most importantly, within this practice the children position (and understand) themselves as participants in a wider community of expert readers.

4.4. Conclusion

To begin the conclusion of this chapter I would like to reiterate a central premise of literacy as social and cultural practice: literacy is situated amongst significant others engaged in authentic configurations of social practices (Barton et al. 2000; Street 1995). The children's out-of-school literacy practices, as discussed in this chapter, effectively demonstrate this premise and show that, contrary to commonly held beliefs of deficit in disadvantaged or impoverished families (McTavish 2007), the everyday out-of-school worlds in which the children live and participate are rich sites of situated and social literacy. In the out-of school domain the theory that the 'act of reading and learning to read and write are social processes and that children are active, competent and intentional participants in these processes' (Gregory et al. 2004a, p. 15) is brought to life in the encounters the children have with one another, with other children and with other family members, including parents, grandparents, siblings and uncles.

Before reviewing aspects of the literacy and discursive practices of the children's out-of-school worlds, I should emphasise that my analysis is not intended to make assumptions regarding the literacy development of all children living in poor socio-economic circumstances. Undoubtedly the richness of these children's everyday worlds may not apply to all children living in similar contexts. In countering the prevailing deficit Discourse of disadvantaged children's worlds (Purcell-Gates & Salinger 1991), my findings of out-of-school literacy practices will however hopefully promote broader reflection on what families who live in challenging socio-economic circumstances may do (either intentionally or unintentionally) and what the worlds of children living in such circumstances might look like.

This having been stated, the out-of-school worlds of the children in my study are both rich and meaningful. In these worlds:

- the children's access to a range of texts allows them to exercise reading choice and in so doing perform aspects of their identities.
- although perhaps limited in quantity, the children see the adults in their lives engaged in authentic writing practices that constitute a range of genres, for example applying for jobs, making shopping lists and writing addresses on envelopes.
- the children are apprenticed into literacy practices by variably supportive family contexts (including extended family members) and perhaps more importantly by particular friendships that offer them access to texts, support and guidance in their literacy development.

The literacy practices engaged with in these out-of-school worlds range in purpose and are situated within social processes such as playing games and re-creation, self-expression and being creative, telling/reading stories together and sharing books with friends. Significantly, in these worlds the children's reading and writing practices are about meaning-making rather than 'ritual' (Norton 2003). The texts produced and consumed by the children in this world include a wide range of genres such as poems,

letters, magazines, drawings, diaries, oral storytelling and other non-fiction texts. Their use of literacy therefore moves beyond the purely functional to include imaginative, creative, critical and interpretive purposes. Moreover, the children's practices form relationships, determine what is valued, signify competence, and communicate who participants are to one another (Gee 2005).

Although recognising the multiple Discourses which permeate the children's out-of-school worlds and upon which they draw, the principal literacy Discourses within which the practices are situated are 'literacy as pleasure', 'literacy as representation-of-self' and 'literacy as creativity'. These Discourses construct positions which the children take up, such as that of reader, writer, poet, meaning-maker, clever boy, magazine owner, editor, home designer/owner, authority of self, creative person, confident storyteller, storyreader, and author. From these positions the children exert power and control over the meanings of their texts and identify themselves as capable and accomplished professionals, confident experts, participants in meaningful relationships, and perhaps most importantly authorities on reading and writing. Drawing on a 'funds of knowledge' framework (Moll 1992) the literacy practices, Discourses and subject positions taken up by the children can be considered the everyday 'funds of knowledge' of their out-of-school worlds. These multiple resources (or knowledges) are summarised in the diagrammatic representation included on the following page (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: **Diagrammatic representation of literacy practices, Discourses and subject positions taken up in the children's out-of-school worlds.**

Finally, to conclude the chapter I would like to emphasise another important premise of a sociocultural view of literacy: literacy is intimately tied to individuals' identities and individuals therefore actively negotiate their practices (and identities) as they move across and within new contexts or worlds (Laman & Sluys 2008). The children's out-of-school literate identities as outlined in this chapter should therefore be borne in mind in orienting to the next chapter, in which I will consider the literacy and discursive practices of the children's in-school worlds.

CHAPTER FIVE

The In-School World

5.1. Introduction

5.2. Reading

5.2.1. Access to Reading Choice

5.2.2. Reading Aloud

5.2.3. Reading to Find Information

5.2.4. DEAR Time

5.2.5. Summary

5.3. Writing

5.3.1. The Secondary Status of Writing

5.3.2. Writing as a Technical Skill

5.3.3. Writing as Authoring Self

5.3.4. Virtual School Bags

5.3.5. Summary

5.3. Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

The Discourses and literacies of children's lives in both their in- and out-of-school worlds provide them with ways of knowing, of making meaning and of 'performing' identity (Williams 2005/2006). Following from the previous chapter, which focused on the out-of-school domain, this chapter details the literacy and discursive practices of the children's in-school worlds. In-school practices are understood to be uses of

written language undertaken to display competence with a particular form and register (Street & Street 1991). Language is therefore used to display the skill of the user and is evaluated accordingly.

To identify the children's in-school practices I have collated their descriptions of literacy events, their discussions of reading and writing and a vast collection of artefacts, which include each child's Languages exercise book and portfolio work evidencing the year's literacy work to date. By examining the range and variety of learners' written work I was able to get a sense of the components of the year's literacy activities, as well as insight into the daily classroom routines and tasks.

The discussion of findings offered in this chapter is divided into two sections, namely 'reading' and 'writing'. The reading section begins with a description of the children's access to reading choice. Interesting parallels and contrasts with the out-of-school domain are drawn. A discussion of three identifiable in-school reading practices, and the Discourses within which they are situated, follows. These practices are: reading aloud; reading to find information; and Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time. The positions taken up by the children within these practices are discussed. The writing section of the chapter begins with a discussion of the secondary status afforded to writing in the in-school domain. An exploration of the in-school construction of writing as a technical skill is offered, followed by a discussion of the children's limited opportunities to use writing as a tool for 'authoring self' (Van Sluys 2003). Finally, Thomson's (2002) notion of 'virtual school bags' is used as a lens to demonstrate the limited recognition afforded the children's out-of-school knowledges in the in-school domain.

5.2. Reading

5.2.1. Access to Reading Choice

At Umholi, each classroom is equipped with a small, albeit aged, classroom library selection. These libraries were supplied to the school in 2001 as part of the READ/Business Trust *Learning for Living Project* (1999-2004). Each classroom library contains approximately 20 books, which were specifically selected to be appropriate for the particular age group. In terms of available reading materials, *The Star*, also donates surplus newspapers to the school.

Even with Umholi being a better resourced township school, the children, in marked contrast to the rich reading choices described in their out-of-school worlds, describe access to a fairly limited selection of in-school reading texts. Whereas they report reading poetry books, comic books, storybooks in other languages, biographies and magazines in the out-of-school domain, the children describe school reading texts as consisting mainly of '*lots of pieces of paper, and sometimes textbooks'*. This sparse description of reading choices suggests the construction of reading in the in-school domain as 'work'. This construction is confirmed by Mr Marufane's commentary that much of the reading done in the school is concerned with '*getting through the curriculum'*.

Given the disparity between the texts available in the two domains, the children use reading choice as a feature to distinguish their in- and out-of-school worlds: '*at home we read everything, at school we can only read what they give us'*. Reading in the in-school domain is therefore understood as a means of impositional control as the children can only read what they are given. This understanding of reading is markedly divorced from the pleasure and enjoyment associated with it in the out-of-school domain. The children describe the books at home as '*more interesting than the books*

at school, which are a bit boring' because they have to '*read the same books the teacher gives us, lots of times, the same books'*. Corresponding to their book selection preferences as demonstrated in the out-of-school domain, the children all request more non-fiction as a way to make reading at school more interesting:

Frans:	*yes I'd buy non-fiction books because there are a lot of fiction books in the school, ma'm, and fiction books are just stories ma'm, non-fiction books teaches us about our world //*
Prudence:	[nodding in agreement] *// yes, there's not enough non-fiction*
Refilwe:	*it's more interesting cause like it tells you about real things that are happening, not just stories.*

As discussed in relation to the children's preferences for non-fiction in the out-of-school domain, the finding of the children's desire to read about *'real things that are happening'* and their observation of the school's favouring of fiction, supports studies that indicate a tendency amongst schools to be 'fictioncentric' in their book selection procedures (Abrahamson & Carter 1993; Sullivan 2001). This favouring of fiction suggests an in-school persistence of the correlation drawn within whole language approaches between reading fiction, pleasure and reading achievement. This correlation is particularly problematic in light of research indicating differences in the kinds of texts children from low and high socio-economic backgrounds are exposed to (Heath 1983; Duke 2000b). Children living in low socio-economic circumstances, such as those in my research group, have been found to read a variety of non-fiction texts as they go about their 'real-world' living, with the reading and enjoyment of fiction often being less familiar and valued in their home contexts (Heath 1983, Smith 2000). These children subsequently have fewer opportunities to develop important forms of 'semiotic capital' (Duke 2000a, 2000b) and are at a distinct disadvantage if their schools, by focusing on fiction texts, fail to provide them with opportunities to acquire the textual practices that accompany non-fiction texts – texts that will appear more and more as they move through school (and life).

The limited selection and access to reading texts in the in-school domain constrains the children's ability to exercise choice and control in their reading material. This has important implications. Firstly, it works against engaging the children's interests and curiosity and therefore their willingness to read for pleasure (Turner & Paris 1995; Worthy 2000; Worthy & Sailors 2001). Secondly, it obstructs an important avenue through which the children perform their identities. This contention is based on the out-of-school finding that the children use their reading choices to perform their identities, and more specifically to reinforce their identities in relation to particular gender hegemonies (Butler 1990). In terms of this, the children describe the gendered boundaries around their reading choices as demonstrated in the out-of-school domain, as being inapplicable or absent in school:

Interviewer:	*... are there boy's books and girl's books in class?*
	[The children in the group look at one another, smile and then collectively say 'no']
Interviewer:	*now that's strange, how come not in class?*
Prudence:	*in class we all read the same books, we saying outside class, the things that we buy //*
Frans and Boitumelo:	*// yes*
Frans:	*what we want to read.*

This description of the children's gendered reading preferences being ignored in their in-school worlds situates reading within a binary relationship whereby, worryingly, the children read what they **want to** out-of-school and what they **have to** in the in-school domain.

The finding of the in-school domain's constraint on the children's choice of reading material depicts a negative or sparse reading context. In this context, the counter-finding of a teacher functioning as a 'guiding light' (Padmore 1994) for one of the children is therefore particularly salient. The teacher that offers Sipho support, guidance and access to *'interesting books'* is notably not his class teacher, rather he

describes Ma'm Faas as *'a teacher that taught me in Grade 4'* and who *'... sometimes, especially when it is holidays gives me books to take home and read'*. In contrast to the other children in the group, Sipho is the only child whose guiding light is found within his in-school world. Amongst the group, Sipho's out-of-school world, although for example rewarding him for success in school-sanctioned literacy by buying him a cellphone, is the least supportive of his literacy development. Fortunately Sipho finds this support from his guiding light – Ma'm Faas. The other children in the group also identify Ma'm Faas as a teacher who sometimes lends books to children in the school, regardless of the class or grade the child is in. Significantly, as demonstrated by the excerpt below, the children draw on their preference for non-fiction books to distinguish Ma'm Faas' books from those generally available in the school:

Refilwe:	*They new books ma'm, like colour books*
Frans:	*ya, interesting books about this, and that, not like in school //*
Prudence:	*// like non-fiction ma'm, Ma'm Faas has information kind of books*

To conclude this discussion of the children's access to reading choice in the in-school domain, it should be noted that without wishing to trivialise the difficulties involved in acquiring resources, over the duration of the research process I discovered that there are numerous school textbooks and even reading books (some brand new) that are stored and unused in the school. These books include a selection of non-fiction books, a set of encyclopaedias (although old) and a number of poetry books. This is distressing when regarded alongside the finding of the limited reading choices available to the children and supports studies which suggest that in many South African schools, information or storybooks, if they exist at all, are locked away in a cupboard with teachers having little idea of how to use the resources they have been supplied (Dixon et al. 2008; Ntuli & Pretorius 2005; Place 2004; Pretorius & Matchet 2004).

5.2.2. Reading Aloud

A number of literacy events in the in-school domain incorporate an element of reading aloud. These events include selected learners reading at Friday morning assemblies, reading in class and reading as part of the school's celebrations, such as Readathon Day and National Heritage Day. Recognising that these events represent what the school 'does' with literacy (Barton et al. 2000), I have grouped them together as an identifiable literacy practice.

Recognised by the school as being good readers, the children in the group are often called upon to read, perform dramas, and present poetry on various occasions. This suggests that, congruent with the out-of-school domain, the in-school domain recognises the children's reading abilities, singles them out and rewards them accordingly. In the in-school domain a contrariety is set up between the children who read, established as *'the readers'* and the rest of the school population. This construction of the children as a collective group with a shared identity is evidenced in words and phrases such as *'those who read'* and *'them'*:

> Principal: *Reading we have created time and ways, we reward those who read, the readers, we call them to assembly, we always call them to come and read.*

Reading aloud as an everyday literacy practice in the school is best elucidated by examining the school's practice of Friday morning assemblies. The following is a re-construction of a Friday morning assembly from field notes:

> *7.30am Friday 29 August*
>
> It is Friday morning and the school is preparing for their weekly assembly. Mrs Mbule, the principal, greets me at the office and I accompany her to assembly, which is held in the school quad. The quad is a large open space flanked by school buildings on either side. The children line up in long rows

according to their class so that all the Grade 1 classes are alongside each other, all the Grade 2 classes are alongside each other, and so on. There are approximately 800 children in the school. Standing at the back of the quad alongside the principal, I am struck by how well behaved the children, standing in their rows, are. Even before assembly starts the noise level is not unusually high. Assembly begins with one of the teachers calling the children to order. A preacher, whom the principal explains helps the school with assembly each Friday, begins the assembly with a prayer. At the end of the prayer the children echo the preacher's 'Amen'. The preacher then reads a verse from the bible. When he is finished, the same teacher that initiated the assembly goes through a number of school announcements. At the end of the announcements the teacher introduces a group of about eight children, who are visibly from different grades, to read to the school. The children, who were standing in a huddled group nearby the teacher from the beginning of assembly, move forward and space themselves out. One of the children steps forward and begins to read from what appears to be a class reader. There is no microphone and the reading is largely inaudible. That which I can hear seems quite mechanical and drone-like, as if the reading is being recited 'by heart'. The principal explains that she tries to ensure that every child in the school has a chance to read at assembly. She describes trying to check on this by asking random children, 'Have you read at assembly?' and marking it off on a list toward the end of the year. She laughs as she explains that she has to do this because 'if you ask the teachers you never get the truth, they just put the good readers to do it again and again. They like to show off the good readers'. The children at the front take it in turns to step forward and present their reading. I listen as two of the children present a poem, another gives a book review and a third summarises a newspaper article. All the children speak, or read, in mechanical or rehearsed voices and are barely audible. After the children finish presenting, the teacher thanks them and explains that, 'What I really liked was that the learners summarised the main points in the book. This is

important to be able to do. It is in the curriculum. Grade 6s next week is your turn!'

An examination of this reconstructed example reveals that a particular conception of reading prevails in the school. The most obvious is that reading functions as a performance of particular skills rather than as a meaning-making exercise of any sort. Reading is constructed as a public act that takes place in front of teachers and peers. As a public act it becomes a platform for teachers to display or *'show off the good readers'*, a skill to be repeatedly rehearsed for an audience's scrutiny and critique. Reading therefore comes to be situated within a Discourse of 'literacy as a performance of skill' wherein the children, as *'the readers'*, are positioned as performers. In terms of this construction it is significant that in this instance the teacher limits the audience's meaning-making processes, and their experience of the reading, to a singular skill, i.e. the ability to summarise. Notably, additional value derived from the reading is diminished or excluded and the teacher restricts her comments to school-sanctioned curriculum requirements. Ironically the practice of being selected to read at assembly, which is constructed as being a recognition and reward for *'the readers'*, is rendered fairly meaningless because no one can hear what is being read, and no-one, including the teachers, seems particularly concerned.

The in-school construction of reading within a 'literacy as a performance of skill' Discourse extends to the classroom context, where although the children describe sometimes reading along with the teacher or reading alone, they report most frequently being called upon to read aloud in class. Divorced from any meaning-making, the children take up this 'performance' Discourse and reading comes to be synonymous with *'reading aloud'* and *'practising'*. Concern with understanding what is being read is framed solely in terms of display or being seen to perform well: '*you must be able to say what is the book all about, otherwise, like, you will look stupid or something'*. This emphasis on reading aloud in class echoes studies conducted in similar South African schools which suggest that the majority of children in

Languages classes don't read, often mumbling along or going unnoticed as the stronger readers are always called upon, and that when reading does take place it more often than not consists of the children following the teacher in chorus (Taylor & Moyana 2005)[42]. Notably the children only report taking a book home to read in the context of practising for public performances, such as at other schools or functions.[43] In the in-school world reading therefore comes to be about '*performing to a crowd'* and the skills to be demonstrated become those identified as enhancing performance. Teachers' input is described as including guidelines such as making eye contact with the audience, for example:

> Sipho: *mmm because sometimes when you read you have to face a crowd of people, because you cannot read looking at the book and not looking at the people. Some teachers say when we read we must look above the people's heads.*

As demonstrated by the above excerpt, the conception of reading as a performance therefore impacts on the bodily disposition or training for reading that takes place in the school. In this context, reading embodies a disciplining of body and mind into a predisposition or habitus (Bourdieu 1977, 1990) for performance and display, rather than meaning-making. The children subsequently position themselves, and are positioned by others, as performers and the skills they construct as being important are those they envisage as improving performance, such as, *'pronouncing words clearly', 'not being shy to face the crowd', 'having confidence',* and *'making people understand what you are reading'*. The characteristics of a good reader and a good performer are conflated and the most important characteristic of a reader becomes the ability to entertain:

[42] As part of the Khanyisa baseline study, Taylor and Moyana (2005) found that while the vast majority of children had access to books, either in the classroom or to be taken home, very little actual reading of these books was done. Independent learner reading, rather than teacher reading or chorusing, took place in less than one in ten cases.

[43] A number of NGOs and government bodies recognise Umholi as being a model or 'exceptional' school. As such, learners from the school are often invited to present at various official functions such as launches and annual general meetings.

Refilwe: *// and like you don't have to bore people because people just, like, fall asleep* [laughs along with the other children in the group] *and then when they sleep and you finish, you'll feel terrible* [giggles] *//*

Frans: *// read so people can hear what you are saying, you must read something which has more action or maybe something funny, a lot of people like comedies.*

As performers, the children accordingly describe reading in the in-school domain as being *'scary'* and *'worrying'* due to the potential criticism and even ridicule of their audience. This anxiety permeates reading as a public act, and as evidenced in the excerpt below, the children are acutely aware of their audience's judgement:

Interviewer: *What's the most important thing you've learned about being a reader?*

Boitumelo: *never to think about negative things*

Interviewer: *what do you mean?*

Frans: *like making a mistake* [whispered quietly in the background]

Boitumelo: *worrying that I will do something wrong and then people will talk me badly, laugh at me, you shouldn't worry about that* [the other children nod their heads in agreement].

This concern with the public nature of reading in the in-school domain and the prevalent Discourse of error and failure embodied in the fear of *'making a mistake'*, may contribute to some of the children's articulated preference for reading and writing at home (as discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.2.3.). Indeed children such as Prudence offer the in-school construction of reading as a public act, as a principal reason for their writing preference:

Prudence: *… so, ma'm I prefer writing because* when *you are writing you don't have to read to the next person what you are writing, you just write*

Interviewer: *okay, so you think writing is something you do on your own but reading //*

Prudence: *// you read aloud for other people.*

Underpinning the dominant conception of reading as a performance in the in-school domain, is an understanding of reading as distinct technical skills. This is indicated by the teachers' descriptions of good readers which include words and phrases such as *'skills', 'decode', 'punctuation', 'cutting words' 'correct pronunciation'* and *'teaching the required language skills'*. This construction of reading is demonstrated in the following excerpt, wherein Mr Marufane describes punctuation and automaticity as two distinguishing criteria of a good reader. Automaticity or rapid decoding refers to the skill of being able to recognise letters and common letter combinations rapidly so that they can be used to decode words (Konza 2003). This skill is of critical importance for fluency and understanding. Mr Marufane does not however relate the mastery of this skill to a reader's ability to understand or make meaning. Rather, as with the importance of obeying punctuation marks, the ability to decode words fluently is framed solely in terms of improving reading aloud performance, i.e. display:

Mr Marufane: *... to me a good reader is that learner who obeys the punctuation marks when it comes to reading. He or she stops when she's supposed to stop, she asks questions where they say, where there is a question mark, and where there are exclamation marks, she maybe, like changing the voice, the man said* [in an affected tone] *'Whoa can't do this'. Yes, changing something like that. For me that one is a good reader, who obeys the punctuation marks and who also doesn't, some of the learners when they read they cut the words, like b-e-c-ause, like they cut the words, so if you don't cut words, you read the word as it is, then to me you are a good reader.*

The understanding of reading as discrete, decontextualised skills as evidenced by Mr Marufane's description suggests that a traditional, autonomous model of literacy prevails in the in-school domain. Such a model works from the assumption that

literacy in itself – autonomously – will have effects on other social and cognitive practices. As explained by Gee (1996), the model 'rips literacy out of its socioeconomic contexts and treats it as an asocial cognitive skill with little or nothing to do with human relationships' (p.46). The cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin literacy are therefore disguised, and literacy is presented as being neutral and universal (Street 1993, 1995). As argued by Street (2001) it is on the basis of this conceptual framework that work in many fields, from schooling to development programmes, makes the assumption that

> introducing literacy to poor, 'illiterate' people, villages, urban youth etc. will have the effect of enhancing their cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their 'illiteracy' in the first place (p. 72).

Although a thorough exploration of the implications of such a model of literacy underpinning the in-school construction of reading may not be within the ambit of this thesis, it is however important to draw attention to a concern raised by the dominance of such a model. This concern is linked to Fleisch's (2008) notion of a bimodal distribution of achievement in the South African education system, whereby schooling in the country is seen to be divided into two, largely unequal 'systems'. The first 'system' consists of mainly the former ex-Model-C schools and a small but growing independent sector, whilst the second 'system' consists of the many rural and township schools. Fleisch (2008) argues that children attending schools in the 'second system' struggle to read for meaning and that their learning remains largely context-bound and non-generalisable. As a township school operating within this second system, my finding of what counts as a reader at Umholi therefore adds weight to Fleisch's (2008) argument. In this context a good reader is a public performer who demonstrates skills unrelated to reading as a meaning-making activity.

In view of a conception of literacy as sociocultural practice, there is however a wider social context within which reading aloud and the school's construction of a reader,

needs to be placed. This wider context speaks to the broader conditions in South African education which have resulted from specific socio-political and curriculum changes. The teachers in schools such as Umholi are generally poorly educated and trained and they don't teach in their mother tongue. As argued by Macdonald (2006), the nature and quality of their teaching and their professional judgment are consequently affected. These teachers were generally schooled and later trained through a rote-learning method (Hawes 1979), with a cultural overtone that Macdonald (1987) calls the 'rote rhythm method'. As Macdonald (2006) points out:

> Alongside the dramaturgical overtones of the method, the main point of the classroom educational process is for the teacher to establish that she is the expert and the children are the novices ... and it manifests itself in a particular kind of chanting ritual, where the teacher is concerned that the children are paying attention to what she is saying, rather than whether they understand what she is teaching (p.59).

Significantly shaping teachers' habitus and predispositions toward literacy teaching, this strictly ritualised teaching and learning context prohibits a focus on reading for meaning and enjoyment. A slight substitution of singular words in the above description of the rote rhythm teaching method clearly demonstrates the extent to which the practice of reading aloud as enacted at Umholi is embedded in such a context:

> Alongside the dramaturgical overtones of the method, the main point of the **reading aloud** process is for the **reader** to establish that she is the expert and the **audience** are the novices ... and it manifests itself in a particular kind of chanting ritual, where the **reader** is concerned that the **audience** are paying attention to what she is **reading,** rather than whether they **(or she)** understands what she is **reading** (Adapted from Macdonald 2006, p.59).

5.2.3. Reading to Find Information

Although perhaps not as evident as the practice of reading aloud, a number of in-school literacy events indicate a practice of reading to find information or facts. These events include comprehension exercises and assessment tasks, and school-sanctioned visits to the public library.

In addition to being positioned as a good performer, the in-school domain further positions good readers as being able to find information. Drawing on a 'literacy as coming to know facts' Discourse, Mr Sibaya makes this construction explicit in his individual interview:

> Mr Sibaya: *... a good reader is someone who wants to find a lot of knowledge, of information, in, in books ... a good reader knows different kinds of books, knowing exactly where to find the information, information books you know ... who visit the library from time to time, you know, who knows where to find information and who knows how to use the information optimally ....*

Here Mr Sibaya notably describes visits to the library as only taking place *'from time to time'* rather than being a regular, valued practice. Moreover, his description of a good reader knowing where to find information demonstrates a construction of reading as the retrieval of information, decontextualised from social or cultural context. The reader is positioned as a 'fact-finder' and a passive recipient of neutral knowledge. The skills demonstrated by such a reader are technical and involve 'striving to extract all the information the author or printer provides' (Smith 1985, p.96). Although physically active in going out to find books (and/or libraries) the reader is not positioned as a text participant or 'meaning-maker' (Freebody 1992; Freebody & Luke 1990; Harris et al. 2006; Luke 1993, 1994, 2000), but rather as a passive 'meaning-seeker'. This construction of the reader, and reading, adds weight to

my argument that a traditional, autonomous model of literacy, as critiqued by Street (1984, 1993, 1995), dominates the in-school domain. Mr Sibaya's marked foregrounding of information books to the exclusion of any other kinds of reading material (or practices) further supports this view. A multitude of other literacy practices/texts that a good reader may engage in/with are not recognised and the conception of literacy communicated is as unitary and universalist. In this context what counts as being a good reader is being able to find information in school-sanctioned texts. Interestingly, Mr Sibaya's prioritising of information books as school-sanctioned texts contradicts the children's reporting of the scarcity of non-fiction books in the school. Moreover, his use of the term 'information books' for non-fiction demonstrates an in-school perception of the genre as being only about information.

Indicative of the practice of reading to find information, many of the classroom activities and assessments that the children complete involve comprehension exercises. Much of the reading research has foregrounded the centrality of comprehension to the reading process, with wide agreement that 'the end result of any act of engagement with a written text should be comprehension of that text' (Harris et al. 2006, p.37). Reading theorists working within a sociocultural perspective agree that such comprehension occurs when the reader retrieves prior experiences, and concepts rooted in their culture and language, to construct a meaningful message inside their heads (e.g. Harris et al. 2006; Pearson 1992; Tierney & Pearson 1992; Tierney & Shanahan 1991). As Applegate et al. (2002) explain:

> Through a complex interaction of systems, readers construct a plausible interpretation of the text in order to understand, respond to, and react to the meaning intended by the writer (p.174).

Connecting past experiences with a text is therefore critical to enabling a reader to interpret, evaluate and consider alternative responses and interpretations, rather than merely recall a text (Applegate et al. 2002).

Unfortunately, despite what theorists have said about the nature of reading, many teachers, including those at Umholi, continue to measure comprehension by how well children recall the factual details of what they have read (Allington 2001). This suggests the prevalence of a 'transmission view' of teaching and learning whereby the teacher sees it as his/her task to transmit knowledge and to test whether the learners have received it (Barnes & Shemilt 1974). In terms of the broad research aim of investigating the children's construction of themselves as readers and writers, the significance of this view of classroom learning lies in the orientation toward reading that sets of comprehension questions convey to the reader. To clarify this, an exercise extracted from a comprehension test given to the children in the first term is included on the following page (Figure 5.1). Although the exercise is a singular example, I should emphasise that it is suitably representative of the kind of comprehension exercises the children are required to complete. Furthermore, it should be noted that the exercise is reproduced exactly as it appeared in the test given to the children. This includes the poor print quality and readability of the short newspaper crime report on which the questions are based. Included below for my readers is the text as it appears in the report:

> BRAKPAN: A father and son were shot dead in a robbery at their business in Brakpan on Wednesday, East Rand police said. Captain Jethro Mtshali said three men armed with AK-47 rifles entered the BG Scrap Metal dealership which the father and son ran and demanded money. "They then shot them and got away with an undisclosed amount of money. Empty AK-47 cartridges were found at the scene," said Mtshali. The 51-year old father and his 27-year old son died at the scene – SAPA.

Figure 5.1: **Extract from a first term comprehension test.**

Four of the five questions included in the comprehension test focus on low order cognitive processes and are restricted to basic 'fact-finding'. In terms of Anderson et al.'s (2001) revision of Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives' the use of rudimentary 'wh' questions (where, who, what) reflect the lowest order of cognitive demand. Although question five – give this story a title – asks the reader for a slightly broader understanding of the text, the reader is never required to perform

higher-order thinking such as applying, analysing, evaluating or creating (Anderson et al. 2001). All the questions are literal or low-level inference type items, involving no conclusions about and responses to ideas in the text (Applegate et al. 2002). Notably the most important instruction given to learners in the test is to answer in full sentences.

The construction of reading conveyed to the reader by the comprehension questions included in the test is therefore that reading involves no more than the storage and retrieval of the details of text (Applegate et al. 2002). In this construction the reader is positioned as a passive meaning-seeker aiming to reproduce the ideas of the author rather than to use their own experiences to construct meaning in response to the text. Congruent with Mr Sibaya's description of a good reader as discussed above, the test therefore constructs reading as a passive, one-sided communication (Tierney & Pearson 1992).

Also situated in the practice of reading to find information, visits to the public library, of which there are two in the suburb the school is situated in, and libraries in general, are singularly framed by the teachers as being to *'find information for assignments and projects'*. School-sanctioned visits to the library are described by the children as being *'only for projects the teachers give us'* and, as demonstrated by the excerpt below, reveal a concerning construction of reading in the public library domain.

Refilwe:	*ma'm, we go to find information, the librarians don't like you to walk around, taking out books and looking //*
Prudence:	*yes, they want you to pay money, make a copy of the information and go //*
Refilwe:	*// they don't allow you to read and then write on your paper, they want you to photocopy every time, and if we don't have the money then 'oops' that's your problem.*

Perhaps most disturbingly, the children's description suggests that the librarians share the in-school construction of reading as focused on finding information or 'coming to know facts' rather than reading for meaning or pleasure. As visitors to the public library the children are positioned as being passive and devoid of agency, and they are 'policed' or controlled accordingly. This is concerning given Ward and Wason-Ellam's (2005) contention that public libraries 'reflect the society that sustains them, providing insight into currently acceptable interactions with literacy' (p.92). The children's description of activity in the library suggests that in this context acceptable interactions with literacy are underpinned by an autonomous model: literacy is conceptualized as a series of independent skills, in which finding information is singled out; it is decontextualised from its social and cultural meanings; and, situated in institutional ideology, it has statutory rules which function to construct it as a means of impositional control.

To summarise then, my findings indicate that a reader in the in-school domain is constructed as an effective 'meaning-seeker' or 'fact-finder' who *'knows where to find information'*. Based on a transmission view of teaching and learning, reading is understood as little more than the storage and retrieval of the details of text. The reader is positioned as a code breaker and a passive recipient of neutral knowledge rather than as an active text participant, user or analyst (Freebody & Luke 1990). This positioning synthesises with the reader as public performer as both constructions demonstrate an emphasis on code breaking practices and display – skills that are unrelated to reading as a meaning-making activity. Recalling Fleisch's (2008) notion of a bimodal distribution of achievement in the South African education system, my finding adds further weight to his view that children in the second system demonstrate context-bound and non-generalisable learning and struggle to read for meaning. Again, whilst not making the finding any less concerning, there is however a wider social context within which the practice of reading to find information and the school's construction of a reader, needs to be placed. As argued by Macdonald (2006), in schools such as Umholi authoritarianism is a well-established feature of

school life and in some ways the role of the teacher is subsequently stereotyped. Following from an apartheid legacy of a transmission view of learning, the teachers in many of these schools are positioned as having been trained and therefore 'know' things, whereas the children are positioned as the ones 'who do not know' (Macdonald 2006). 'The conception of learning principally revolves around coming to know *about* things, specifically to know facts' (Macdonald 2006, p.69, italics in original). Knowledge is therefore a closed system – application of knowledge to new situations is not expected (Luma 1983). As argued by Balfour (2003), in many of these schools

> the authority of the teacher and text has merged with an authoritarian tradition of elder and tribe, leading to what Reddy (1995) terms the creation of "authorised responses" in the English curriculum; that is, the notion that the teacher provides "right" examples and that texts allow only one "legitimate" meaning (p.185).

Within such a conception of learning children are not expected to be expert, or even reliable sources of information about events in daily life. In terms of reading, children's knowledges outside of the text are therefore considered to have no bearing on the text (or the reading process). Reading is subsequently constructed as a neutral vehicle in the service of 'coming to know facts', and it is within this Discourse that the 'reading to find information' practice is situated.

5.2.4. DEAR time

The findings of reading practices in the in-school domain discussed thus far indicate the dominance of an autonomous model of literacy and the construction of reading as a performance of discrete and particular skills. Embedded in Discourses of 'literacy as a performance of skill' and 'literacy as coming to know facts', the skills that a good reader demonstrates in this context vary, to include either those identified as enhancing performance, such as maintain eye-contact with the audience, or the

passive skill of finding (and decoding) information. The notion of 'pleasure' in terms of 'immediate enjoyment' gained from a story read or another literacy event engaged with in the out-of-school domain is strikingly absent (Gregory & Williams 2000).

Against this context the school's implementation of DEAR time (Drop Everything and Read) can be considered an attempt to open a sanctioned space wherein an alternative, or counter Discourse on reading can emerge. This understanding is based on the school-sanctioned construction of DEAR time as explained by the teachers, who describe it as a practice focused solely on *'encouraging the children to love reading'*. The alternative Discourse made possible by such a practice would therefore be similar to the Discourse of 'literacy as pleasure' that permeates the children's out-of-school literacy practices.

DEAR time (a.k.a. Sustained Silent Reading; Free Voluntary Reading; Drop and Read; Reading for Pleasure; Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading), as envisaged by Krashen (1993, 2006), is an instructional practice that aims to promote free voluntary reading (FVR) in schools[44]. It is a regularly scheduled time when children are allowed to 'drop everything' they might be doing and read whatever they want to (within reason), including comics, newspapers, magazines, manuals and catalogues (Krashen 2006). The intention during DEAR time is to promote reading for pleasure – a powerful indicator of whether children will become life-long readers (Millard, 1994). As such, there are no book reports, assignments or awarding of marks. Children aren't required to finish their selection if they don't want to, and are free to choose something else to read. During DEAR time, teachers model the enjoyment of reading

[44] The theoretical underpinnings of DEAR time are based on research (Cunningham & Stanovich 1991; Elley 1989, 1991, 1992; Elley & Mangubhai 1983; Krashen 1993) that suggests that one of the most successful and economic ways to achieve language acquisition and development is simply by 'reading because you want to' (Krashen 1993: x), i.e. free voluntary reading (FVR). Furthermore, studies have found that: time spent reading in school and the opportunity to self-select reading materials promotes increased positive feelings about reading and improved achievement (Carson et al. 1990) children who participate in voluntary reading in school are more likely to read outside of school (Pilgreen & Krashen 1993); and that FVR introduced early enough in the primary school has a greater influence on comprehension than traditional language teaching methods (Olen & Machet 1997).

by reading with their learners (Krashen 1993, 2006; Worthy 2000; Worthy & Sailors 2001).

As a practice, DEAR time was first introduced to Umholi as part of the Business Trust/READ *Learning for Living Project* (1999-2004). As asserted by the principal, Umholi identifies itself as a school that *'prioritises reading'* and as such designates one 30-minute period a week to DEAR time. Although implementation of DEAR time may vary among classrooms (and schools), the National Education Department 'Foundations for Learning Campaign' (2008-2011) stipulates that schools should set aside half an hour a day for this *'reading for enjoyment'* (South African Government 2008). At the time that the research was conducted, DEAR time was timetabled across the school, from Grades 1-7, for the first half hour on a Friday morning. It is worth noting that the school's timetabling of DEAR time for 30 minutes weekly, as opposed to daily, may suggest a possible scepticism on the school's (and/or teachers') part of the effects of the practice and perhaps a marked preference for rather using instructional time to teach skills more directly related to test-taking. This is supported by the children's description of often having to remind their teachers *'that it's DEAR time ... because sometimes they just want to give you more notes, you know, get through the work'*. The fact that DEAR time is scheduled on a Friday, the last day of the week, as opposed to being prioritised on a Monday morning or as a daily practice further supports this view. By timetabling DEAR time on a Friday it is arguably constructed as a 'filler' or 'reward' for teachers to use after completing the week's work rather than as an important instructional practice.

In terms of understanding DEAR time as a practice wherein an alternative Discourse of reading can emerge, both teachers (and the principal) identify the purpose of DEAR time as being *'free reading time, just for the love of reading'* (Mr Marufane). Key distinguishing features of DEAR time are described as *'not stipulating exactly what the children should be reading'* (Mr Sibaya) and *'dropping everything and reading to show them that it can be enjoyable'* (Mr Marufane). The use of words and

phrases such as *'free', 'love of reading', 'not stipulating'* and *'can be enjoyable'* construct DEAR time as a counter to many of the everyday reading practices in the school, which by implication, the teachers recognise as not doing these things. Within this practice, children are positioned as exercising agency in the form of choice and control over their reading material (similar to that which they exercise in the out-of-school domain).

The school-sanctioned construction of DEAR time is however situated within the broader context of the dominant in-school literacy and discursive practices. As such, the boundaries around DEAR time are porous. When examining the children's understanding of DEAR time, the extent to which the dominant in-school Discourses permeate these boundaries, and subvert the emergence of an alternative Discourse, becomes evident.

The children understand DEAR time as the time when *'we have to sit and read',* and draw on the in-school Discourse of 'literacy as a performance of skill' to construct it as a time to *'practice'* and *'improve your reading skills'.* When children do describe access to newspapers during DEAR time, they contextualise their reading in terms of specific skills rather than deriving any personal interest or enjoyment, for example, *'you practice your English by reading newspapers'*. In terms of access and choice of reading texts during DEAR time, both of which have been identified as essential to enabling children to benefit from the instructional practice (Krashen 1993, 2006; Worthy 2000; Worthy et al. 1998), the children report getting most of what they read from the classroom library:

Tshepo:	*I have to read the same books from the classroom library, they not interesting* [pause] *they the same*
Interviewer:	*are they the same books that you've had the whole year?*
Tshepo:	*yes, I have read them all and I have to read them again and again.*

Issues of limited funds and resources aside, Tshepo's description of reading the same text over and over notably diminishes the aim of DEAR time as an opportunity to read for pleasure and pursue areas of personal interest.

Another element that has been identified as important to gaining benefits from DEAR time is 'modelling' the enjoyment of reading for children (Krashen 1993, 2006; Worthy 2000; Worthy et al. 1998). Contrary to the teachers' reports of reading with their learners during this time, the children's description negates this and reveals reversion to the dominant construction of reading as a set of skills to be performed and evaluated: *'they just let us read and then they listen, sometimes they give us marks for reading'*. Once the children felt comfortable enough within the research context, they describe how time and opportunity to share their responses with their peers and talk about the books that they read is largely forbidden during DEAR time:

Interviewer:	*and do you ever talk about the books you've read in DEAR time? Or do you just sit for the time and read?*
Frans:	*we do ma'm, if maybe, actually we don't, but if maybe the teacher is out, you just go to your friend sh sh sh* [imitates talking fast and conspiratorially to a friend]
Interviewer:	*and talk about what you've read?*
Frans:	*yes, and then when he comes 'He's coming! He's coming' and sh sh sh* [imitating racing back to his desk*] like nothing ever happened.*

This construction of talking to peers about reading as forbidden and therefore secretive, is worrying. Although it may function to make reading and talking about books an illicit and therefore more appealing practice, it nevertheless suggests that the school not only fails to establish DEAR time as a space for an alternative Discourse of reading for pleasure to emerge, but that it actually constrains the emergence of such a Discourse.

Perhaps the most striking evidence of the dominant in-school Discourses constraining any alternative Discourse that may emerge during DEAR time is provided by data from the final group interview session. It was only then that the children perhaps felt sufficiently comfortable to reveal their honest experience of the DEAR time practice in their school:

Prudence:	*actually ma'm after DEAR time its cycle test*
Frans:	*cycle test and then we write*
Interviewer:	*so you just put your books away and start writing your test?*
Prudence and Frans:	*yes ma'm*
Prudence:	*that's why ma'm I like, when, like, on Fridays that's why I like reading my school because, my exercise books, because they have notes, and maybe you are writing one of the tests on your notes, so you read your notes.*
Interviewer:	*Can you read your exercise books in DEAR time?*
Prudence:	*yes ma'm, so it's like revision* [other group members nodding and mumbling 'yes ma'm' in agreement]
Interviewer:	*and is that what you do most of the time?*
Collectively:	*yes ma'm.*

DEAR time as a space within which a counter Discourse of reading can emerge is therefore revealed as having been displaced by the Discourses that dominate reading in the in-school domain. The time is subsequently not used to '*encourage the children to love reading'* (Mr Marufane) but, drawing on the dominant Discourses of 'literacy as a performance of skill' and 'literacy as coming to know facts', comes to be situated in institutional ideology regarding assessment and evaluative criteria. This suggests that at Umholi reading as a meaning-making process and an activity to engage in for pleasure and personal enjoyment is negated by the very practice that purports to encourage it. This negation should not however be viewed in isolation from the social context within which the teachers operate. In South Africa, numerous programmes have aimed to support (and change) teachers' professional development. Most of

these programmes have not experienced great success in transforming teacher's practices (Fleisch 2008). Where there has been change, it is often more of form than substance (Janks 2008). As Janks (2008) explains:

> Part of the problem is that teachers' conceptions of what education is, do not match those of the researchers or the in-service educators and researchers who work with them (p.5).

Many of the changes required of teachers, such as the introduction of DEAR time, require different and alien ways of being in the classroom for teachers and do not sit well with their existing embodied identities (Janks 2008). This produces resistance and, coupled with limited training in the process, may go some way to explain the teachers' use of DEAR time for a more familiar function, i.e. a study period.

5.2.5. Summary

My discussion of reading in the in-school domain has demonstrated that, underpinned by an autonomous model of literacy, reading is constructed as a set of neutral and technical skills to be performed. Divorced from any meaning-making process, reading is largely understood as a public act that is displayed in front of teachers and peers. In this context it is evaluated and critiqued against skills that are more concerned with the performance itself than the reading for pleasure familiar to the children in their out-of-school worlds. Reading in this domain is further constructed as 'finding information or facts' and within this construction the reader is positioned as a decoder and 'meaning-seeker' – a passive recipient of neutral knowledge. Contrasting the children's out-of-school positioning as active and reflective participants, the notion of the reader participating in the construction of meaning is strikingly absent in their in-school worlds. Discourses of 'literacy as a performance of skill', 'literacy as coming to know facts' and a Discourse of error and failure permeate the children's in-school practices. Possible counter Discourses are constrained.

5.3. Writing

5.3.1. The Secondary Status of Writing

In an article reflecting on ten years of outcomes-based education in South Africa, Taylor (2008) points to what is rapidly becoming an accepted opinion in current educational debate: a major problem with 'current teaching practices in the majority of South African schools is that far too little writing is done by children' (Taylor 2008, p.27). Studies supporting this view suggest that schools divorce reading and writing as interrelated skills and focus on getting children to read at the expense of developing their writing skills (e.g. JET Education Services 2008; READ 2007). Furthermore, on average, learners do not complete an adequate number of written exercises per week in order to make real progress (JET Education Services 2008; Taylor & Moyana 2005), and many schools provide learners with little or no opportunities for composing extended texts based on personal experiences and interests (Hendricks 2006, 2007).

Alongside the findings of such studies, the principal at Umholi openly acknowledges that the school has not *'balanced reading and writing. All our celebrations are about reading, not writing'*. Although the school environment is relatively print rich with examples of children's work displayed in the classrooms as well as in the school foyer and staff room, the imbalance is evident in the contrast between the number of practices the school implements to promote reading and the relative absence of any aimed at specifically promoting writing in the school. The school's foregrounding of reading at the expense of writing is particularly noted by Mr Marufane, who at the time that the research was conducted, had only been teaching at the school for eight months:

Mr Marufane: *... they can speak the language, but writing the language, that's their problem, I always tell the principal … speaking the language, wonderful, but when it comes to writing it's a problem*

Interviewer: *and as a teacher, why do you think this is?*

Mr Marufane: *I think maybe they speak too much rather than writing. Like, also in the classrooms, they have to read a story, retell a story ... in the classroom the time for writing is not enough.*

Mr Marufane's linking of reading and speaking and his view that the school has foregrounded these skills at the expense of writing, is taken up by the children, who in turn construct a secondary or lesser status for writing as compared to both reading and speaking. As demonstrated by the excerpt below, the children do not perceive speaking, reading and writing to be interrelated skills.

Frans: *... so I prefer reading* [pause] *and I read a lot ma'm because when I grow up I am going to be a soccer player and soccer is not about just always writing, you just have to talk, make speeches and all those things*

Interviewer: *and tell me is soccer about reading?*

Frans: *no ma'm*

Interviewer: *but you like reading?*

Frans: *yes ma'm, and reading is going to help me make speeches, to talk*

Interviewer: *and writing, you don't think maybe that will help you make speeches?*

Frans: [pause] *no ma'm.*

Here Frans situates reading and speaking as relevant to his present and future positioning as a soccer player, but constructs the role of writing as being ambiguous. In this construction he considers reading rather than writing to be a productive process that will help him to make, or author, speeches.

Although an exploration of the causality of the secondary status of writing at Umholi, and other South African schools, and the demands placed on both teachers and

children writing in English as a second or additional language falls outside of the ambit of this thesis, the quantity and quality of the children's in-school writing practices must be viewed against this contextual background.

5.3.2. Writing as a Technical Skill

In addition to a broad perspective of the year's literacy activities, the examination of the children's writing as presented in their Languages exercise books and portfolios afforded insight into their in-school writing practices and the prevalent Discourses within which these are situated. An initial analysis of these artefacts revealed that, in accordance with previous studies (e.g. JET Education Services 2008; Taylor & Moyana 2005), the children do not do an adequate amount of daily writing. On average, the number of exercises completed per week is between three and four. (In this regard it should be noted that although I looked at the children's books at the end of the third term, the children had 'lost' almost a whole month of schooling due to a National Teacher's Strike.) The exercises suggest that out-dated ideas about language teaching dominate and divide writing into differentiated categories of grammar, comprehension and extended (or creative) writing. However the exercises seldom involve extended writing or writing as 'composing', and largely consist of repetitive tasks in which learners practise grammatical knowledge and accuracy, i.e. 'scribing' (Hendricks 2006, 2007). Rather than being positioned as a creative or productive skill, writing in the in-school domain is therefore often merely the mode of display for subject specific knowledge, e.g. Languages, Natural Sciences, etc.

In terms of the differentiated categories of writing done in the domain it is disturbing that the distinction between the different kinds of writing is unclear to the teachers:

Mr Marufane: *Functional writing, now is it, ah, the writing that we do in class, and there's also creative writing.*

Interviewer: *okay, and can you explain what that creative writing is?*

Mr Marufane: *Creative writing is that writing when we say, we give them a topic, maybe from a story* [Interviewer nods] *mmm like writing, maybe we say to them, the story was that there was a boy whose father was a pilot, then maybe you say to them, now you write, that's also creative, I think, you write a letter maybe to that father and you ask him to tell you more about the career of being a pilot* [pause] *something like that.*

Interviewer: *and then what is 'functional writing'?*

Mr Marufane: *Functional writing is,* [hesitates] *that writing that we* [hesitates] *that common writing that we do in class, like, we give them, we give them, like, grammar* [pauses, looking nervous], *but even if me, I'm not really sure about that 'functional'....*

Not surprisingly, the children echo this ambiguity and are unable to distinguish the different kinds of writing required of them in school:

Interviewer: *And writing, what kind of writing do you do in school?*

Boitumelo: *essays* [pause] *and scenarios*

Interviewer: *what are scenarios?*

Boitumelo: *ma'm it's kind of like an essay but there's a difference*

Interviewer: *What is the difference with an essay?*

Boitumelo: [pause] *ma'm, I don't really know what the difference is.*

Following from earlier educational theorists such as Vygotsky (1978) and Luria (1976), Smith (1998) observes that activities, including literacy activities, are always undertaken for a specific purpose: If there is no recognizable purpose for a literacy activity it is not considered meaningful and is subsequently unlikely to be engaged with or continued (Hall & Robinson 1994; Smith 1998). The critical role played by purpose in successful literacy learning subsequently makes the uncertainness around writing in the in-school domain even more concerning. I would argue that because it's purpose is unclear writing is not considered meaningful within the domain. Moreover, if engaging with literacy activities is understood to be a social act (Barton

& Hamilton 2000; Gee 2000; Lave & Wenger 1991; Street 1995), whereby those who are more proficient demonstrate 'the value and utility of these activities to others' (Smith 1998, p.114), it is extremely worrying that neither the children nor their teachers are sure of the value or utility of the writing activities they perform in this domain.

Applying Hendrick's (2006, 2007) terms for the forms of support for extended writing to analysing the quantity and quality of the children's writing, there is sparse evidence of the children doing any independent writing. Congruent with studies of writing in South African schools (e.g. Hendricks 2007; JET Education Services 2008), the majority of the children's writing appears to be 'copied', 'controlled' and/or 'guided' (Hendricks 2006, 2007). Dictation work is particularly prevalent as is the practice of making the children copy out whole sentences from a textbook in order to change the verb tense of a single word. Although grammar items such as homophones are part of the curriculum requirements at this grade level, I was particularly struck by the seemingly inappropriate nature of activities that required copying out words and sentences to learn the difference between homophones such as choir/quire, bawl/ball, and brood/brewed. An examination of the children's writing therefore supports the argument raised in my discussion of the in-school practice of reading to find information, that is that a transmission view of teaching and learning dominates the in-school domain. Within this view, the purpose of writing is understood primarily as the acquisition and recording of information (Barnes 1976). Writing is subsequently not constructed as a means by which the writer can take an active part in his or her own learning. Like reading, it is not understood to function as a meaning-making process but as a display of isolated skills – text encoder practices are emphasised (Freebody & Luke 1990). Confirming Kress' (1982, p.5) observation that when 'reading is seen as primarily a decoding skill, then it is quite likely that writing will be regarded as a process of encoding', these skills are decontextualised and divorced from social context:

Mr Marufane: *Yha a good writer ... a good writer is someone who uses his or her tenses correctly. Then when your story is in the past and you punctuate correctly, that's punctuation, that's tense, and then also your concord because most of the learners can't use the 's', Mr Mbhele sings, that concord stuff is very important then, but some of the learners are aware of that but now it's the time for us to teach them the importance of the concord. So it's concord, punctuation and also the tense.*

Here Mr Marufane's construction of a 'good writer' in terms of a set of technical skills situates in-school writing practices within the prevalent Discourse of 'literacy as a performance of skill'. Within this construction the isolated skills that a 'good writer' needs to display (or perform) are punctuation, tense and concord, i.e. text encoding. The children take up this construction of writing as a repertoire of technical skills and explain that *'writing takes a lot of thinking and time', 'your hand gets sore'* and that *'when writing you must know where to put a comma, where to put a full stop, all those things'*.

Following from the conception of writing as having '*correct rules and regulations'* (Mr Marufane), both teachers and the children construct the role of the audience for their written texts, as being to *'detect a mistake'* (Mr Sibaya):

Boitumelo: *like ma'm if you make a mistake in your writing and your teacher or someone sees it, you need to have a good personality to understand that your writing will be better if you listen and not get angry*

Prudence: *yes, a good writer is someone who can take the correction and make the correction to make their writing better.*

This construction of the audience's role as critic of form and grammar, directly contrasts that which is constructed for the audience in the out-of-school domain. In the out-of-school domain, where writing serves self-expression, recreation and

creative purposes, the audience, who is often the writer him/herself, reportedly re-reads what was written for reflection, comment (on content) and enjoyment purposes only. The distinction between the construction of the audience role in the two domains attests to the differing conceptions of writing that dominate each domain, and signals that the conception of writing as a technical skill, and the accompanying Discourse of error belong solely to the in-school domain.

5.3.3. Writing as Authoring Self

Perhaps the most startling contrast in the children's understanding and use of writing in their in- and out-of-school worlds relates to their use of writing as a tool for 'authoring self' (Van Sluys 2003). In the out-of-school domain the children use writing as a tool for thinking about and 'composing' personal meaning (Hendricks 2006, 2007). They draw upon a range of semiotic resources to exert power and control over what they want to say and use 'expressive' writing (Britton 1975) in a variety of text genres, such as diaries, poems, letters and drawings. Recalling Prudence's 'Reliever' magazine (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.1), the children also engage in 'transactional' writing, i.e. writing that uses 'participant language that any reader can follow' (Britton 1970, p.174). As a social act firmly embedded in contexts such as playing games or gaining social capital amongst friends, writing in the out-of-school world is situated in Discourses of 'literacy as pleasure', 'representation-of-self' and 'creativity'. Within these Discourses the children are positioned as authors, poets, creative people, and most importantly, writers. These positions are empowering as they include a firm sense of agency and the ability for the children to express themselves and act upon their world.

Contrasting this, and confirming Hall and Robinson's (1994) observation that for most of this century schools have taught children to be writers rather than authors, the repetitive tasks or 'scribing' (Hendricks 2006, 2007) that constitute the majority of the

children's in-school writing affords few, if any, opportunities for personal and expressive writing. The focus on scribing also indicates a lack of uptake from policy in that the National Curriculum Statements (DoE 2002) advocate genre and process approaches to writing, requiring learners to engage in frequent and varied forms of writing:

> The National Curriculum Statements (DoE 2002), following many literacy theorists (e.g. New London Group 1996), make an argument *for* textual diversity, including the importance of learners having the opportunity to produce a variety of text types as well as pictures, drawings and computer-generated graphics to develop their written communicative competence' (Hendricks 2007, p.1. italics in original).

The marked difference between their in- and out-of-school writing practices is articulated by the children, who explain that *'I write more about me at home'* because '*at school we do a lot of activities and not too much writing about me'*. The limited opportunity for the children to compose texts and write about themselves and their interests has two important implications. Firstly, in relation to the concept of authorship, it implies that the children's autonomy as writers is not being developed. This is concerning as a sense of ownership of meaning-making processes is important to the development of literacy (Datta 2000; Norton 2003). Secondly, it implies that the in-school domain constrains the children's use of writing as a 'deliberate tool to construct and express issues of identity' (Williams 2003, p.180). This constraint is aptly demonstrated in the limited opportunities available for the children to use their writing choices to reinforce (and/or challenge) their gendered identities (Peterson 2002). Although the children construct gendered boundaries around writing choices, and identify topics such as *'friends'*, *'relationships'* and *'fashion'* as being for girls and *'cars'* and *'soccer'* as being more suitably masculine, they describe having few in-school opportunities to choose their own writing topic and report having to mostly *'write about whatever our teacher tells us'* or *'something from class'*. This restriction of topic choice is well illustrated by Prudence, who describes what happens when she

tries to challenge the boundaries that dominate 'correct gender positioning' in her in-school world (Millard 1997, 2003):

Interviewer:	*Would you write about cars?*
Refilwe:	*no!* [answering immediately, with a horrified expression. The other children laugh]
Interviewer:	*Why wouldn't you write about cars?*
Refilwe:	*yho, cars is mostly for boys, and they like to draw cars* [Prudence is shaking her head.]
Interviewer:	*okay, Prudence, would you write about cars?*
Prudence:	*um, 65% yes I would write about cars because I'm a bit interested in cars, especially, the new car, the Nissan one, Nevada, so I do like looking at cars, writing 'this is my dream car'. Once I asked someone to draw one for me because I can't draw ma'm*
Interviewer:	*okay, I don't know much about cars, but I'm interested in the other 35%. Why wouldn't you maybe write about cars?*
Prudence:	*because, um, ma'm, most people think that because boys are into soccer and cars and things like that, if I write about cars they think you are being a bit tomboyish ma'm, like you're doing it to get attention. I tried to ask Mr Marufane if I could write about cars* [pause] *I don't think he liked it. He said I must write what he told me.*

In this extract Prudence, a self-professed *'car lover'* who uses writing in her out-of-school magazine to assert this aspect of her identity and who actively uses her out-of-school reading choices to position herself as resisting strict gender hegemonies, attempts to challenge the gendered categories around her in-school writing choices. These categories are strictly policed in the school as demonstrated by Refilwe's shocked response to the idea of girls writing about what is clearly positioned as a 'boys' topic. By describing the possible threat of others thinking *'you are a bit tomboyish'* Prudence indicates that she is wholly aware that choosing to write about cars involves a transgression of the established gendered boundaries. Her attempt to challenge these boundaries is however constrained or even shut down in the in-school

domain as indicated by her perception of her teacher not liking it and his instruction for her to rather write about the assigned topic. Interestingly, the contrast between Prudence's out- and in-school writing as an assertion of her gendered identity echoes Blake's (1995, 1997) study of fifth-grade girls writing in private and public settings. When writing in private contexts (within small groups of girls), Blake (1995) found that the girls used writing to 'begin to name, to critique, and to understand their roles and their lives as urban, poor, young women' (p.16). On the contrary, when writing within writers' workshop the girls' writing was patterned after 'formulaic' literature that presented female characters in stereotypic ways or were 'nondescript', designed not to evoke controversy (Blake 1995, 1997).

Issues of identity expressed through writing are, of course, not restricted to gender. The limited in-school opportunities for composing personal and expressive texts further functions to constrain the children's use of writing to to reflect on their lives, reshape their view of the world (Barnes & Shemilt 1974) and try on new identities whilst shaping their own (Hicks 2001; Van Sluys 2003). This is particularly concerning given Davies (2006) argument that 'as a sense of writing the self develops, a sense of possibility as an active agent in one's own life emerges' (p.227).

To illustrate the children's limited opportunities to use writing as a tool for authoring self, I have chosen to describe a literacy artefact produced in the in-school domain. This artefact is one of the very few in-school examples of writing being used as a tool to reflect on experiences and construct personal meaning. It is nevertheless suitably representative of teachers' responses to learners' writing. The artefact was produced by Frans as part of his class writing for his portfolio. Frans explained that the topic assigned for the writing task was to write *'about what you want to be, like your career or something'*. Frans's 'My dream career' text is included on the following page (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: **Frans's 'My dream career' text.**

There are a number of points worth making about Frans's writing here, of which the first must be that he is in control of his text and says what he wants to say. He uses written language to successfully communicate his dream career. He is aware of his reader's need for some kind of explanation and he chooses words to describe his feelings and actions accordingly. Also, he feels free to write whatever he wants without having to stop and find a word in a dictionary or avoid using a word because he is unsure how to spell it. Using Britton et al.'s (1975) continuum, Frans' writing can be considered to be transitional between purely expressive writing and transactional writing. For example, he includes numerous details such as the name of the soccer team, which bring the experience to life for him and enliven his description for those who are interested in him. His foregrounding of 'the self' at this transition stage is entirely appropriate as 'progress towards the transactional should be gradual enough to ensure that 'the self' is not lost on the way' (Britton 1970, p.179). Frans includes a drawing of a winged heart with his writing. The heart is drawn in pink koki pen and the words have been written over the picture. The heart is placed at the centre of the writing. Above the heart there is what looks like a halo. Frans has included loosely drawn lines or squiggles on the page that suggest clouds or the sky through which the heart is 'flying'. The drawing can be understood as moving beyond being purely decorative and signals that the meaning Frans is communicating here is central to his identity. The combined use of a heart and angelic-like wings suggest that what is being communicated are Frans's hopes and dreams for the future: they are important to his heart and spirit. As a literacy artefact, Frans's writing therefore demonstrates his use of writing as a tool to reflect on his life and shape his identity. Most importantly, the purpose or aim of Frans's writing is to communicate his dream of being a soccer player. In this aim, he is successful.

However, as the sole audience for Frans's writing, his teacher's response, situated in a 'transmission view' of teaching and learning (Barnes & Shemilt 1974), demonstrates the prevalent school conception of writing as a set of autonomous, technical skills. The response focuses on the form rather than the content of the writing, with one

category being assigned to the content and four categories to the form, i.e. spelling, language, punctuation, and neatness. Having awarded one mark to the writing content, the only comments the teacher includes are firmly situated in the *'rules and regulations'* (Mr Marufane) of writing: 'Your sentences are too long' and 'Sentences begin with capital letters and full stop at the end'. (Interestingly, although Frans's writing demonstrates many of the difficulties he is having with spelling and grammatical structures such as tense, the one rule of punctuation that he applies regularly is the use of capital letters and full stops.) Indicating a view of marking primarily in terms of assessment, the Discourse of error that dominates the response gives no recognition to what Frans as a writer might be doing well, and no guidance or effort is offered to use it as the basis for future writing development or teaching. Perhaps most importantly, the teacher's response to the writing as a set of corrections does not reply to or comment on Frans's meaning in any way. There is subsequently no acknowledgement of what Frans considers important to who he is or of his integrity as a writer. Perhaps most disappointingly there is no reply to his statement that he has no soccer shoes to play with but will not give up on his personal dream – Frans's communicating of sincere personal issues and concerns appears to have gone completely unheard.

I am not arguing that punctuation, spelling, handwriting and grammatical accuracy are unimportant, but rather that 'ultimately it is most helpful if they are part of the repertoire of authorial skills' (Hall & Robinson 1994, p.123). Put differently, text encoding is only one set of the writing practices that a successful writer needs to develop and engage in (Freebody & Luke 1990). Frans's teacher's response to his writing however suggests that the technical skills involved in encoding text are the only ones valued in the in-school domain and that children's efforts to use writing to author and shape their identities are subsequently negated. This finding is made even more disturbing by the notable tension with the children's use of writing in the out-of-school domain. This tension will be taken up in Chapter 6. To conclude this discussion of writing as a tool for authoring self suffice to emphasise that in the in-

school domain the children are seemingly not allowed to function as authors, and their efforts to do so are on the whole, not treated as serious, meaningful and valid communication (Hall & Robinson 1994).

5.3.4. Virtual School Bags

Using Thomson's (2002) notion of 'virtual school bags' as a lens to look at the children's in-school writing practices suggests that in addition to constraining efforts to shape and perform identity, the prevalent construction of writing further constrains opportunities for the children to open their 'school bags' and bring their out-of school literacy knowledges and practices into the classroom. This is clearly demonstrated by the artefact included on the following page (Figure 5.3) wherein Frans, in response to a task to *'write about education'*, attempts to bring his poetry writing into the classroom and write a poem. Poetry is often used by children and adolescents as an 'imaginative writing practice', functioning as a venue for identity construction and experimentation; an outlet for expressing resistance to family, school, community, and societal norms; and a way to express or vent emotions and desires (Weinstein 2006). For Frans, poetry writing and reading is an out-of-school practice which he avidly foregrounds as marking his identity. Poetry is an integral part of the knowledges that he brings with him to school.

Figure 5.3: **Frans's 'Poem about education'.**

Again, as with his 'My dream career' text (discussed in section 5.3.3), Frans's 'Poem about education' contains spelling errors. However his message is powerful. Frans clearly communicates what education means to him. His use of personification as a poetic device is made dramatically evident with slight and simple editing:

> Education you gave me knowledge.
> You taught me to read and write
> you taught me to have wisdom
> you gave me everything I needed the most...
> You, education.
> You gave knowledge to teachers, learners, policemen, doctors
> and lots of other people.
> Today they are proud for what you gave...
> Even now they still need you.
> So be everywhere...
> and in the mind.
> Education.

In form, Frans's poem is arguably reminiscent of the oral tradition of African praise poetry:

> The genre of praise poetry called *izibongo* in Zulu (used in its plural form) is a political art form found in southern African societies like the Nguni- and Sotho-Tswana-speaking peoples. The term refers to the form of poetic expression that defines and names an individual (Mphande 2004, p.182).

As a spoken poem about a person, each line in a praise poem gives one 'praise name'. A 'praise name' is a colourful description (imagery) of some aspect of that person. The praise poem can be chanted to a drum beat or performed as a song. Rhythm and sound are important, but rhyme is not (Mphande 2004). Reading Frans's education poem aloud, it seemingly follows this structure and I would therefore argue that his poem represents a possible use of a literate form with which he is more familiar, i.e.

oral, to structure and develop his writing skills, a literate form with which he is perhaps less familiar.

Again, as the sole audience for Frans's writing his teacher's response draws on Discourses of error and 'literacy as a performance of skill'. As opposed to responding or replying to any of the content or meaning in Frans's poem, the teacher draws on an outdated notion of poetry and only responds to the form: '*This is not a poem. A poem is made out of stanzas and not paragraphs.'* Admittedly, this response may be derived from the teacher's limited subject knowledge: Frans would no doubt have benefited from the transformation of his poem (as presented in the edited version) and praise for his powerful use of personification, but perhaps his teacher could not recognise the ways in which his writing could be a poem. Nevertheless what is significant in the response is that it communicates to Frans that what counts as being a successful writer in the in-school domain is someone who obeys the rules of writing. Writing poetry in stanza format is, by implication, one such rule. Imaginative or creative writing that does not adhere to the narrow understanding of in-school writing is therefore dismissed or negated – it has no place 'here'.

As literacy artefact, Frans's poem therefore demonstrates that his out-of-school knowledge or cultural resources, are not recognised as being useful in the in-school domain – they are not given space in the school curriculum in ways that may make a difference to his literate identity (Nixon & Comber 2006). As a result Frans, alongside the other children in the group, constructs the in-school domain as being an 'unsafe' space to share the writing he produces in his out-of-school world. Given their out-of-school understanding of writing as a tool to reflect and author self, and a trepidation to subject this self to the in-school focus on writing as a technical skill, the children's reluctance is most often communicated as being about teacher and peer criticism:

Refilwe*:* [pause] *I don't want to, like, take out my personal stuff and write them so my teacher and everyone knows, and, like, says everything's wrong*

Furthermore, aware of their positioning as good readers and writers within the school domain the children are reluctant to share their personal writing practices for fear of plagiarism:

> Frans: *ai ma'm, I don't bring my poems to school. Because ma'm, other children they see them and then they just write them and they say to other friends 'I wrote this, I wrote this, I wrote this,' and no it was my poem.*

The perceivable tension between the children's in- and out-of school worlds is of particular concern in view of the richness of many of their out-of-school literacy practices. This concern is heightened by the numerous studies which suggest that the narrow representation of what it means to be literate valued by teachers, schools and systems is often linked to children's alienation and disengagement during the middle years of schooling (e.g. Cormack 1996; Gumming 1996; Baker 2002).

5.3.5. Summary

In considering writing in the in-school domain my discussion has focused on how writing is positioned as less important or secondary to other literacy skills such as reading and speaking. Enacting an autonomous model of literacy, writing is constructed within the Discourses that dominate this domain, namely 'literacy as a performance of skill' and 'literacy as coming to know facts'. As with reading, writing in the in-school domain is largely divorced from any meaning-making process. Situated within a transmission view of teaching and learning, teachers ostensibly understand writing as a means of measuring the children's performance against their own expectations and criteria. They subsequently draw on a Discourse of error or failure to evaluate and critique the children's writing against specific technical skills such as punctuation. Narrow conceptions of what counts as writing prevail and the children are expected to produce (and reproduce) an extremely limited variety of text

types (genres). They have little, if any, opportunities to use writing as a tool for authoring self. When the children do write for purposes of self-expression, reflection or creativity, their meanings are not replied to or commented on. The children's writing practices therefore demonstrate a marked discontinuity between their literacy experiences, attitudes and Discourses, i.e. their 'funds of knowledge' (Moll 1992), in their in-and out-of-school worlds.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the literacy and discursive practices of the children's in-school worlds. As set out at the beginning of the chapter, the purpose for offering such an exploration is based on the understanding that the Discourses and literacies of both the children's out- and in-school worlds offer them ways of knowing, of making meaning and of constructing themselves as readers and writers.

What is most noticeable about the in-school practices described in this chapter is the stark contrast with those of the children's out-of-school worlds. Whereas literacy Discourses in the out-of-school domain include those of 'personal pleasure', 'representation-of-self' and 'creativity', the principal Discourses that permeate the reading and writing activities enacted in the school are those of a 'performance of skill', a 'coming to know facts' and a consequent Discourse of failure and error. Situated within a 'transmission view' (Barnes 1976) of the teacher-learner relationship, neither reading nor writing function as meaning-making processes, but rather as a display or performance of discrete and decontextualised skills. Practices such as reading aloud subsequently come to be about displaying skills such as reading to entertain an audience. Reading to find information comes to be about demonstrating the passive and technical skills of locating facts or 'neutral' information. In this context a 'good reader' can decode and read with fluency and expression for an audience. Drawing on a sociocultural model of reading, the in-

school domain therefore places emphasis on the reader as a code breaker with little attention being afforded to practices such as making meaning with texts (text participant), working with purposes of texts (text user) or critically analysing texts (text analyst) (Freebody 2004; Freebody & Luke 1990). Readers are subsequently constructed as 'meaning-seekers' rather than 'meaning-makers'. In-school writing practices come to be dominated by activities that involve 'copied', 'controlled' and/or 'guided' writing (Hendricks 2006, 2007). Contrasting the wide variety of text types produced and consumed in the out-of-school world, the children's in-school writing is restricted to a limited range of text types, with few, if any opportunities for children to compose their own meanings in texts. Discrete skills such as punctuation, tense and concord are focused upon and the children's attempts to use expressive writing and function as authors, exerting power and control over their texts, are shown to be constrained. In this context the emphasis is upon text encoder practices and a 'good writer' can therefore write neatly, punctuate sentences and use tenses correctly (Freebody & Luke 1990). Practices wherein alternative Discourses of literacy could emerge, such as DEAR time seem to be misunderstood by the teachers and are consequently defeated by the Discourses which dominate the in-school domain.

Importantly, my findings of the in-school literacy and discursive practices suggest that markedly different models of literacy underpin the in- and out-of-school domains. The practices of the out-of-school domain draw upon an ideological model of literacy that understands literacy as social and cultural practice (Barton & Hamilton 1998; Gee 1992; Street 1984, 1993). Such an understanding emphasises the social relationships and contexts within which literacy activities are embedded and accepts that the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity and being (Street 1993, 1995). The literacy-oriented activities, practices and Discourses of the in-school domain, however, suggest that a traditional or autonomous model of literacy dominates. Such a model understands literacy as a set of cognitive skills possessed (or lacked) by individuals (Barton & Hamilton 2000). The significance of this difference becomes important when considering Gee's (1990)

view that literacy is always contested, both its meanings and its practices, and therefore particular versions of it are always 'ideological', they are always rooted in a particular world-view and a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalise others. Relating such a contention to the production of literate subjects by schools such as Umholi, the dominance of such a model therefore serves particular ideological purposes. The exploration of these purposes must be situated in the wider social context and in this, Fleisch's (2008) notion of a bimodal distribution of achievement in the South African education system has been particularly helpful.

Returning to the research aim of exploring the children's construction of themselves as readers and writers, the in-school practices work to produce and position the children in significantly different ways to those offered by their out-of-school worlds. At school, the children are positioned as passive recipients of literacy knowledge. They are not positioned as meaning-makers working to make sense of the literate world around them. Whereas the out-of-school domain positions the children as authors, creative people and accomplished literacy experts, the in-school domain positions them as novices learning the decontextualised, technical skills of a monolithic notion of literacy. The children's in-school experiences, attitudes, knowledges and Discourses are therefore markedly different to those of the out-of-school domain. These resources or knowledges are summarised in the diagrammatic representation included on the following page (Figure 5.4):

Figure 5.4: **Diagrammatic representation of literacy practices, Discourses and subject positions taken up in the children's in-school worlds.**

Given that the children's positioning within their in-school worlds affords them little, if any, power and control over their engagement in literacy activities (and the texts consumed or produced), it is however important to recognise their retained sense of personal agency. Albeit that the positions offered by their in- and out-of-school worlds are markedly different, the children retain a sense of personal agency by taking up these positions and excelling at them. This is evidenced by the school's recognition of the children as *'the good readers'*. Simply stated, the children demonstrate an awareness that the rules for playing the literacy game in their in- and out-of-school worlds are different but they have learned how to play the game in order to be 'successful' across both domains.

I would like to end this chapter by referring to Lindfors' (1990) notion of 'memories that endure' as related to engagements with literacy. Lindfors (1990) reported that when she asked groups of students to write about successful moments in their

education which had remained in their minds as ‘memories that endure’, a number of common features emerged across the responses. Those moments were times when students felt ‘I was competent’, ‘I was treated as someone special’ and ‘I was able to do my own thing’ (Lindfors 1990). Although Umholi goes a long way in countering a deficit Discourse around township schools, recognising and rewarding literacy achievement, establishing practices such as reading at assembly and DEAR time, and providing a context wherein at least one child finds a guiding light, my examination of the children’s in-school practices makes me fear that very few of the children’s experiences might become literacy memories that endure.

CHAPTER SIX

Identity and the 'Good Readers and Writers Club'

6.1. Introduction

6.2. Situating the Chapter

6.2.1. Primary and Secondary Discourses

6.2.2. Constituting a Third Space

6.3. The 'Good Readers and Writers' Club

6.3.1. Belonging/not Belonging to the 'Good Readers and Writers' Club

6.3.2. Integrating Knowledges and Discourses in the 'Good Readers and Writers Club'

6.3.3. Claiming and Redefining Gender in the 'Good Readers and Writers Club'

6.3.4. Constructing Literacy as Empowerment in the 'Good Readers and Writers' Club

6.4. Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

The preceding chapters (Chapters 4 and 5) detailed the literacy and discursive practices of the children's in- and out-of-school worlds. The findings demonstrate that different Discourses permeate the two domains and as a result markedly different positions are offered and taken up by the children in each domain. Pulling together

these findings, and others, this chapter will focus on how the children's identity work draws on their positioning within both domains to construct their subjectivities as readers and writers. To begin, the chapter will be theoretically situated using Gee's (1996) notion of primary and secondary Discourses and the framework of third space theory (Leander & Sheehy 2004; Moje et al. 2004). The chapter will then go on to present a principal research finding, namely that the children's construction of themselves as readers and writers is shaped by their identification as members of what I have termed the 'good readers and writers club' (a nomenclature borrowed from Smith's (1985) concept of the 'literacy club'). Related to their club membership the children's identity work will be discussed in terms of the integration of their in- and out-of-school literacy Discourses, their use of literacy to claim and redefine their gendered and literate identities, and their construction of literacy as empowerment.

6.2. Situating the Chapter

6.2.1. Primary and Secondary Discourses

Gee's (1990, 1996, 2001) distinction between primary Discourses, which we learn from our families and communities, and the multiple secondary Discourses that we acquire in the course of our interactions with key institutions throughout our lives, offers a valuable tool with which to consider the Discourses of the children's in- and out-of-school worlds and the way in which they position themselves within these worlds. So too does his observation that because individuals can participate in multiple discursive communities (Gee 1996), children sometimes find themselves in situations where the secondary Discourses they must adopt at school are at odds in some way with the Discourses and identities they have learned at home and in their communities. Borrowing from, but adapting Gee's (1990, 1996) distinction to apply specifically to literacy, I identify the children's out-of-school Discourses to be their primary literacy Discourses and the Discourses that dominate the in-school domain,

their secondary literacy Discourses. Drawing a theoretical thread around salient aspects of the findings thus far, the children's primary and secondary literacy Discourses are shown to be misaligned. The children's primary literacy Discourses comprise 'pleasure', 'representation-of-self', and 'creativity'. Within these Discourses the positions the children take up as 'facets of self' (Davis & Harre 1990) are as meaning-makers, readers, writers, poets, storytellers and authors. Contrasting this, the children's secondary literacy Discourses are shown to construct literacy as a set of neutral, technical skills to be displayed or performed. These secondary literacy Discourses comprise 'a performance of skill', 'coming to know facts' and a pervasive Discourse of error and failure. Within these Discourses the children are positioned as meaning-seekers, public performers, novices and passive recipients of literacy knowledge. The dominant secondary literacy Discourses of the children's in-school worlds are further shown to hinder their attempts to bring their primary literacy Discourses into the classroom. Finally, the findings demonstrate that to be recognised as members of the community identified as *'the readers'* in the in-school domain, the children master their secondary literacy Discourses, taking up the positions offered within and excelling. The visual representation below (Figure 5.1) summarises the children's positioning within their primary and secondary literacy Discourses.

Figure 6.1: Diagrammatic representation of positioning within primary and secondary literacy Discourses.

Before continuing it should be noted that my findings of the children's primary and secondary literacy Discourses being misaligned is not, in itself, unique. Numerous scholars in the NLS tradition have demonstrated a disjuncture between primary and secondary Discourses (e.g. Blackburn 2003; Canagarajah 2002; Dyson 1997; Gee 2000; Gregory 1997; Gregory 2001; Lillis 2001; Michaels 1986; Street 1991). What is however significant, and perhaps even unique, is that if the Discourses that count in school are to be considered dominant because their mastery is understood to bring with it 'the (potential) acquisition of "social goods" (money, prestige, status, etc.)' (Gee 2001, pp.527-528), this does not seem to be the case at Umholi. On the contrary, my findings of the in-school literacy Discourses and practices focusing on little more than (de)coding and surface level comprehension, suggest that it is the children's out-of-school practices that will afford them access to the social and cultural capital associated with higher levels of education and professional jobs. Put another way, the school is shown to constrain the children's use of literacy to act on the world (Luke 2000) and it is within their out-of-school literacy practices, wherein they construct themselves as active and powerful meaning-makers, that they are far more likely to develop resources that will enable them to become life-long readers and writers.

This having been said, it is however particularly concerning that despite this disjuncture the Discourses and practices of the school, through acts such as assessments, awarding of marks and promoting learners, remains the measure against which the children, and their efforts, are valued. Although in the world outside and beyond school it is doubtful that this measure will enable them to go on to obtain tertiary qualifications, get jobs, and develop the skills required by citizens in a modern democracy (Taylor 2008), it nevertheless continues to be dominant, acting as a gate for those outside it (Gee 2004). Concern raised by the dominance of the school's construction of literacy is amplified by the argument that in propagating a limited understanding of literacy the school also effectively denies the children access to what educationist Michael Young (2007) calls 'powerful knowledge': abstract and theoretical knowledge that takes children beyond their immediate circumstances.

Given an ideological model of literacy which views versions of literacy as always being 'ideological', rooted in particular world views and a desire for that view of literacy to dominate (Street 2001), the dominance of the in-school construction of literacy raises important questions regarding the kinds of literate subjects South African schools such as Umholi are likely to produce. This discussion will be taken up in my concluding chapter, i.e. Chapter 8.

6.2.2. Constituting a Third Space

Returning to the focus on the children's identity work, the conflict between the literacy and discursive practices of the children's in- and out-of-school worlds creates a point of tension. In recognising this tension a number of questions emerge, such as how the children reconcile one identity with another, whether they are forced to choose and whether they feel torn. Indeed, as observed by Wenger (1998) the effort to reconcile multiple identities

> may be the most significant challenge faced by learners who move from one community of practice to another … because learners must deal with conflicting forms of individuality and competence as defined in different communities (Wenger 1998, p.160).

My analysis of how such a challenge is addressed suggests that the children resolve the tension between their in-and out-of-school worlds by the establishment and maintenance of a third space. I understand this third space to be a hybrid space because it brings together or merges the different knowledges, Discourses and relationships the children encounter across both domains. Following a theoretical framework that recognises the way in which 'discursive practices actively produce space' (Leander & Sheehy 2004, p.3), the third space lies in-between the oppositional binaries of in- and out-of-school, collapsing such binaries and allowing them to work together to generate new knowledge, Discourses and identities (Moje et al. 2004). In

conceptualising the third space thus, Kendrick and McKay's (2002) observation is particularly pertinent:

> When school literacy practices do not afford "spaces for belonging" and when children are unable to place the cherished identities that they live at home in dialogue with new identities they encounter at school, they turn to other values and practices as points of identity and connection (p.54).

In light of this observation, the remaining sections of this chapter aim to elucidate the points of identity and connection, or third space, the children in the study seek out, are those of club membership. Principally, the children identify themselves as members of a specialised 'literacy club' (Smith 1985) which I have termed the 'good readers and writers club'. To echo Gee (1996), membership of this club produces and reproduces opportunities for the children to 'be and recognise certain *kinds of people*' (p.128, italics in original). As illustrated in the diagram below (Figure 6.2) this 'third space' merges the 'first space' of the children's out-of-school worlds with the 'second space' of the more formalised institution of the school.

Figure 6.2: Diagrammatic representation of the 'good readers and writers club' as a third space.

In selecting to analyse the data this way two important points need to be highlighted. Firstly, I am not using third space in physical terms or as an intervention to promote continuity, but rather as a metaphorical tool to help develop a new conceptual understanding. Secondly, following from Moje et al. (2004), although I have chosen to align the concept of first space with that of the children's everyday, out-of-school worlds, the naming of what counts as first or second space is arbitrary:

> one could easily reverse these labels to suggest that first space is often that space which is privileged or dominant in social interaction, whereas second space is that which is marginalized (Moje et al. 2004, p.40).

Following from Moje et al. (2004), what is critical to the research is the sense that these spaces can be reconstructed to form a third, different or alternative, space of knowledges and Discourses.

6.3. The 'Good Readers and Writers Club'

As a principal research finding, the discussion of how the children establish and maintain the 'good readers and writers club' as a third space within which they are able to 'give meaning to themselves, others and the world' (Davies & Banks 1992, p.2), draws on (and adapts) Frank Smith's (1985) original concept of the 'literacy club'. The club that the children in the group join and identify themselves with is not the broader literacy club of the school, wherein an arguably rudimentary or functional level of reading and writing is demonstrated, but rather a more specialised literacy club I have termed the 'good readers and writers club'.

Before discussing the 'good readers and writers club' as a third space, I should note what was an initial concern for me as researcher, and perhaps for my current readers. In first recognizing the club whilst collecting my data I suspected that the duration

and intensity of the research process itself resulted in the children identifying themselves as belonging to a group. I was understandably concerned about what would happen when the research process was over. However, in working with my data I realised that the children's construction and membership of the club pre-dated my arrival at the school, and that in all likelihood would continue after I left. This was confirmed by informal conversations with the children on repeated school visits under the auspices of READ and subsequent to the research process. I therefore view the research process as having provided a physical demarcation of the 'good readers and writers club' as a third space, offering club members a formalised meeting place but not establishing or maintaining the club's existence.

Having clarified this it should be noted that within the space of the 'good readers and writers club' the children form a group distinctive and culturally-specific enough for them to be identified as a community (Wilson 2000a). Membership of this community provides the children with opportunities to shape a reading and writing 'identity kit' (Gee 1996) that allows them to negotiate their literate selves across different Discourse communities. Such opportunities include the integration of their in- and out-of-school literacy Discourses and the use of literacy to claim and redefine their gendered identities. The children's club membership further engenders a construction of literacy as a form of social, cultural and linguistic capital, within which they position themselves as empowered. A discussion of the children's identification of themselves as members of the 'good readers and writers club' as well as the opportunities that such membership allows for, follows.

6.3.1. Belonging/not Belonging to the 'Good Readers and Writers Club'

As members of the 'good readers and writers club' all the children identify themselves as good readers and writers. For example, Frans describes himself as '... *a creative*

person, who's a good reader and writer [pause] *yes I do see myself as that',* Prudence explains that she loves *'... writing, but both really. I am a good writer and a good reader',* and Sipho shyly reports that *'yes, I know I am a good writer* [pause] *but I am really a good reader more'*. As good readers and writers the children position themselves as being different to many of the children (and adults) in both their in- and out-of-school worlds. Perhaps the foremost way the children do this is by establishing a discursive contrariety between themselves as 'us' and other children and adults as 'them' or 'other'. Repeated referrals to 'us', identified as 'readers', and 'them', 'they' or 'other people' establishes the distinction between these two positions:

Boitumelo:	… *but in the Zone 5 library, people don't just take a book, they just write on the books and tear off the pages so you really don't see the information that you need //*
Tshepo:	*// yes even here at school some of the children they don't take care of the books, they don't care //*
Boitumelo:	*// they not readers.*
Prudence:	*yes lots of other people don't know about reading.*

Here, as elsewhere in the data, the children take up a relational position of themselves as 'readers' and respectful participants in the literate world (Smith 1998). 'Other' children and adults are correspondingly positioned as being 'non-readers' and by implication, marginalised participants in the literate world. This positioning is powerfully conveyed in Prudence's '*other people don't know about reading'* that functions to construct reading as a body of knowledge to which only some, including herself, have access. The social and cultural capital embodied by reading, and thereby literacy, is effectively confirmed. Furthermore, Prudence's construction suggests a sense of secrecy or illicitness in that *'other people don't know'*, and this adds weight to my argument that the children position themselves as members of an exclusive club. Simply stated, as members of the 'good readers and writers club' the children (including Prudence) 'know' about reading whereas others do not.

If identity is understood to be constituted both within Discourse and in relation to others' perceptions (Davis 1997), then the children's identification of themselves as members of the 'good readers and writers club' is not entirely free from the way they are positioned by their 'social network' (Gee 1990). In light of this, in both their in- and out-of-school worlds the children are positioned by others as members of the 'good readers and writers club'. In their in-school worlds the children's teachers (and the principal) selected them as research participants based on their having 'expressed ability, interest and enthusiasm to talk about reading and writing'[45]. Also, as explained in the discussion of the children's in-school practices (see Chapter 5) and confirmed in the excerpt below, the teachers identify the children in the group as *'the readers'* and often call upon them to read, perform dramas, and present poetry on various occasions.

Interviewer:	*Do you often read at assembly?*
Frans:	*aah, yes ma'm, I do. Even this week I think I am going to read again because, of maybe they just say 'people that are good readers' and then you just come with books. I did also read Hercules there by the assembly.*

Frans's description of being repeatedly called upon to read notably confirms the concern raised by the principal and reported on in my field notes describing the practice of reading aloud at assembly: '*if you ask the teachers you never get the truth, they just put the good readers to do it again and again'*. The routine aspect of this situation is revealed in Frans's description of reading in class included below.

Frans:	*... or when it comes to reading, he always picks the person who should read, ma'm, and he always picks me.*
Interviewer:	*okay ... so do you think he thinks that you are a good reader and writer?*
Frans:	*yes ma'm, he knows.*

[45] The remaining two factors used to make the selection were that the sample should consist of 'Grade 6 children' and 'three boys and three girls'.

Although for the purposes of this argument Frans's description confirms his teacher's positioning of him as a 'good reader', it nevertheless raises concern regarding the other children in the class who may not be 'good readers' and who are therefore seldom given opportunities to read.

In their out-of-school worlds, in addition to positioning themselves as members of the 'good readers and writers club', the children describe being positioned likewise by their families, community and peers. For example, Tshepo reports his father being pleased that he is such a good reader and telling him *'to keep reading'*, and Boitumelo describes functioning as a literacy mediator for others in the community who *'know me as a good writer'.* Significantly, parental positioning of a 'good reader and writer' often refers to school-sanctioned literacy and the production of the 'good school subject' who achieves and does well academically. This confirms the dominance of the in-school or secondary literacy Discourse and is evidenced by Sipho's mother promising him a cellphone on the basis of the marks in his school report as well as Prudence's description of her parents' response to her reading and writing, included below.

> Prudence: *They always like to say "we never see you reading, you always writing, writing, writing". They know I'm a good writer and reader but they want me to read more because they say if I like read silently it can make me to think that I know this word and if I have to read to someone else then I make a lot of mistakes with the pronunciation and stuff like that.*

Although Prudence's description reveals that her family's construction of reading resonates with that of the school in that reading is understood to be a public act centred on display or performance, it nevertheless makes her family's positioning of her as a 'good reader and writer' clear. Evidencing her consolidated sense of herself as a good reader, Prudence notably goes on to describe resisting her family's construction of reading and continuing her practice of reading silently: '*I like reading*

to myself more than to other people, so I just go to my room or somewhere and read until they leave me alone [laughing]'.

Significantly, in their positioning as individuals who gain considerable pleasure and enjoyment from reading and writing, the children often describe themselves as being 'other' amongst siblings:

Interviewer:	*and do your older brother and sister like reading as much as you do?*
Boitumelo:	*no ma'm, they say I'm going to be a 'nerd' ma'm* [giggles]
Interviewer:	*a 'nerd', and what do you say to them?*
Boitumelo:	*I tell them I like being a 'nerd'*
Interviewer:	*and what do they mean when they say a 'nerd', what is a 'nerd'?*
Boitumelo:	*a person who knows too much ma'm* [pause] *a person who's got an answer to every question*
Interviewer:	*okay, and what do you think makes a person have an answer to every question?*
Boitumelo:	*Reading ma'm, that's why I read.*

Here, Boitumelo synchronizes her positioning as a 'nerd' with her membership in the 'good readers and writers club', and drawing on her understanding of reading as making '*a person have an answer to every question*', she regards both as affirmative attributes of her literate self. Recalling the distinction between club members as 'readers' and non-club members as 'them' or 'other', and the subsequent construction of reading as social and cultural capital, I would argue that Boitumelo does not mind being teased or called a 'nerd' as she understands the exclusivity of the club to which she belongs.

The description of critique or ridicule accompanying the children's positioning as club members is evidenced across all the children's reports of their in-school peers' responses to them. These responses function to position the children relationally in terms of being/not being members of the club:

Tshepo:	*Sometimes my friends don't play with me. They say I am boring – everyday I read ... because they like soccer.*
Interviewer:	*all right, but sometimes your friends say you just boring because you just read?*
Tshepo:	*yes ma'm and because I talk about books and things*
Interviewer:	*and what do you say when your friends say you're boring?*
Tshepo:	*ai, ma'm, I just go. I don't mind* [pause] *I just don't talk to them about it.*

Here Tshepo's friends position themselves and Tshepo in terms of membership of the 'good readers and writers club' – Tshepo is a member and his friends are not. Interestingly, like Boitumelo being called a *'nerd'*, Tshepo does not mind his friends' accusations that he is *'boring'*. He dismisses this positioning in a manner that suggests that his friends 'just don't get it'. For Tshepo, talking *'about books and things like that'* is a club activity and he is therefore unfazed by non-club members' responses to such activities. Tshepo's friends' positioning of him and themselves also raises an interesting point in terms of literacy and masculinities. Martino (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 2000, 2008) argues that hegemonic versions of masculinity are not consistent with being literate and are in fact militate against and undermine literacy as a passive and private act that is feminised. Moreover, as mentioned earlier in my thesis, soccer has been found to provide boys with a set of masculinising practices almost entirely predicated on physicality and embodied social action (Swain 2000). Significantly, Tshepo's peers subsequently rank the ability to play soccer over and above other pursuits. Subordinated masculine identities, such as those exhibited by Tshepo who prefers reading to soccer, in defiantly deviating from the norm are felt as a challenging alternative to the construction of hegemonic masculinities in the school. For preferring pursuits that, in their absence of physical aggression, are categorically located as feminine, such identities are consequently declared '*boring*' and positioned as 'other' (Smith 2007).

Perhaps the most powerful confirmation of the children's identification of themselves as members of the 'good readers and writers club' is found in their description of recognising other children who, as Gee (1996, p.126) puts it, are 'like us'. The recognition of other club members extends beyond the research group to children both in the school and the wider social context. In the in-school domain the recognition of other group members transcends individual class and even grade boundaries: '*My friend Bandile in Grade 5 is also a big reader … We sometimes talk about books we've read'*. In the out-of-school domain the children recognise their friends attending ex-Model-C schools as fellow club members who afford access to literacy resources beyond those of the immediate environment (as discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.3.4.). Most importantly the children recognise fellow club members based on an identification of those who do, value and believe the same sorts of things (Gee 1996). This is perhaps most powerfully articulated by Frans's description of going to the local public library with his friends (as discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.3.4), and recognising other children as fellow members:

> Frans: *// ai, sometimes ma'm if I just, me, Bandile and Sipho, go the library, but ma'm I do see all those, Tshepo, Boitumelo, and Prudence at the library, we all see each other there ... all the children that like reading.*

Finally, in identifying themselves as members of the 'good readers and writers club' the children establish the club as a safe space within which they are able to perform certain activities that, as demonstrated in the discussion offered in Chapters 4 and 5, are perceived as being 'unsafe' to perform amongst non-members. For example, in the safe space afforded by the club and fellow members, the children can: talk to each other about books; share their reading and writing preferences; let someone see a magazine or poem they wrote; and discuss common perceptions of reading and writing without fear of reproach. The construction of the 'good readers and writers club' as an in-between space in which it is 'safe' to share out-of-school writing practices within the in-school domain (but only amongst club members), is aptly

demonstrated by Frans's description of sharing his dialogue journal entries and some of his poetry with Sipho:

Frans:	*I was just busy these days writing in my little book about myself* [indicating dialogue journal]
Interviewer:	*okay, and did you //*
Frans:	*// yes ma'm, Sipho and me we just talked about what we read, about what we wrote in our little books* [smiling proudly while Sipho looks on apprehensively]
Interviewer:	*so you spoke to Sipho about what you wrote //*
Frans:	*// yes and I showed him a poem I wrote at home, aaahh ma'm we talked about it and stuff*

An additional club activity that was powerfully demonstrated for me during the research process is that of swapping books. As club members the children all recognise the scarcity of resources and therefore swap books selflessly. This feature of club membership was revealed when the children arrived for Group Interview Three and I realised that since the Group Interview Two book selection activity, all the children had swapped their chosen books. Interested in whether this activity had taken place in response to revised reading preferences, I questioned the children on this. An excerpt from this discussion is included below.

Interviewer:	*Frans, what did you do, did you decide you wanted to read 'Goosebumps'?*
Frans:	*no ma'm she* [indicating Refilwe] *wanted to read 'Cats', but I don't want to read this 'Goosebumps' … I was interested in reading 'Big Cats', but then she wanted it so I was just busy these days writing, reading other things*
Interviewer:	*okay you swapped because Refilwe wanted 'Cats'. Did you all do that, share your books with other children?*
Prudence, Boitumelo:	*yes ma'm*
Prudence:	*but not with all the other children, just us ma'm*

Frans: *yes ma'm, the other children don't know how to look after books.*

Here, clearly delineating book swapping as a club activity, the children's explanation for swapping books makes two things clear: first, that they swapped books due to a recognition of the scarcity of resources not necessarily because there was a particular book they wanted to read; and second they only felt comfortable with this kind of book swapping amongst themselves as club members, i.e. people who '*know how to look after books'*.

To summarise then, identifying themselves as members of the 'good readers and writers club' is a principal part of the children's construction of themselves as readers and writers. This aspect of their identity work incorporates both the recognition of other members as similar '*kinds of people*' (Gee 1996, p.128, italics in original) as well as the differentiation of club members from non-members. As members of the club the children are sometimes positioned as *'nerds'* or as *'boring'*. The children do not resist these positions as they have a firm sense of what club membership will afford them. (The children's valuing of their club membership will be discussed in section 6.3.4.). Finally, the club gives the children a safe space in which to demonstrate club activities such as swapping books, talking about books and sharing their writing. Echoing Smith's (1998) commentary on the 'literacy club', membership of the 'good readers and writers club' is therefore a principal means by which the children identify themselves as participants in the literate world. I will next explore how the club further affords the children a space within which to integrate competing knowledges and Discourses.

6.3.2. Integrating Knowledges and Discourses in the 'Good Readers and Writers Club'

To understand the manner in which the children, as members of the 'good readers and writers club', create a way of 'being' a reader and writer by integrating their in- and out-of-school knowledges and Discourses, it is necessary to return to Smith's (1985) initial discussion of the 'literacy club'. For Smith (1985), membership of the club serves the important function encapsulated in the words: You learn from the company you keep. Simply stated, 'we learn and behave like we see ourselves as being' (Smith 1985, p.125). Smith (1985) subsequently asserts that by identifying themselves as members of the literacy club, children see themselves as readers and writers and behave like readers and writers.

Applying this understanding to the research findings, the children's identification of themselves as members of the 'good readers and writers club' therefore allows them to create and maintain a space within which they can behave as the kinds of people they understand good readers and writers to be. In this third space the children can bring the knowledges and Discourses they encounter across their in- and out-of-school worlds into 'conversation' (Moje et al. 2004), resisting the perceivable constraints and selectively merging them to behave as they see themselves as being.

In recognising the 'good readers and writers club' as such a space, it is useful to consider Gee's assertion that the ability to acquire knowledge of any new Discourse is assisted by 'having a meta-knowledge of existing Discourses which can lead to the ability to manipulate, to analyse, to resist while advancing' (Gee 1992, p.117). As Weedon (1997) points out, 'knowledge of more than one discourse allows for a measure of choice on the part of the individual' (p.102). The significance of this is that the children's participation in the multiple Discourse communities of in- and out-of-school provides for an awareness of the tension between the two domains. Put

another way, it is the children's knowledge of and participation in their primary literacy Discourses that enables them to 'stand outside of' and critique their secondary literacy Discourses. This participation engenders the establishment and maintenance of the 'good readers and writers club' as a third space within which the children can comment, critique and integrate selected knowledges and Discourses. The children's awareness of the tension between their primary and secondary literacy Discourses is effectively demonstrated by the excerpt below.

Interviewer:	*What kind of writer do you think you are?*
Frans:	*no I don't think I'm a good writer ma'm*
Interviewer:	*but what about all your poetry?*
Frans:	*Ai, ma'm, you mean like that, Ai I am a good writer* [smiling proudly] *I am a poet* [the other children giggle in the background]
Interviewer:	*But hold on, I am interested, when I'm saying a good writer, what do you think I mean?*
Frans:	*I thought you meant writing like your name, grade* [imitating writing motion with his hand]
Prudence:	*he thinks you mean about his handwriting ma'm*
Frans:	*yes, things like that ma'm, punctuation.*

Here Frans's initial answer to my question draws on the framework provided by his in-school or secondary literacy Discourses. Indeed, given that I, as interviewer, am an adult, and that the interview was conducted within the school grounds, Frans could reasonably have understood that his positioning in terms of his secondary Discourses was what was required. However when Frans is reminded of his out-of-school practice of poetry reading and writing, he confidently goes on to assert his subject position of *'I am a good writer'* and *'I am a poet'*. Significantly he introduces this assertion with *'ai, ma'm, you mean like that'*, whereby his use of '*that'* indicates his awareness of multiple meanings for the term 'good writer' as defined within different Discourses. For Frans, his identity as a writer and a poet is notably not positioned within his in-school literacy Discourses, which he and Prudence go on to identify as

being narrowed down to fundamentals of form such as *'writing your name, grade'*, *'handwriting'* and *'punctuation'*.

The children's critique of the constraints of their secondary literacy Discourses presents in a number of ways across the data. For example, the children comment that at school they do '*a lot of activities and not too much writing about me'* and *'too much textbook exercises again and again'*. As mentioned elsewhere in my thesis the repetitive textbook exercises described by the children are not writing in the 'composing' or creative sense but rather involve 'scribing' (Hendricks 2006, 2007) whereupon writing becomes the mode of display for knowledge in the Languages or other Learning Areas. In terms of reading, the children further critique the limited selection of reading texts available and recognise the constraint this places on their ability to perform their identities: *'We don't really read the books I like at school, like poetry ma'm, there's no real poetry books to read'*. Although recognised as good readers by the school, the children critique in-school reading practices, wherein their out-of-school construction of reading as a private and pleasurable activity are afforded little, if any, 'space'. This critique is evidenced in the excerpt below.

Interviewer:	*Do you like reading aloud to other people?*
Tshepo:	(laughing shyly) *No ma'm. All the time at school we have to read and there is a lot of noise.*
Interviewer:	*Do you mean that there is noise while you reading aloud?*
Tshepo:	*when I am reading aloud ma'm, but also all the time ma'm*
Frans:	*we never have a chance to sit and read quietly ma'm, there's always talking, talking, talking*
Tshepo:	*it's better at home.*

Following from the discussion of the children's awareness and critique of the tension between their in- and out-of-school worlds as discussed above, I will now turn to demonstrations of the children integrating the knowledges and Discourses of these worlds as they construct their identities as readers and writers. The first example

presents in the children's construction of a 'good writer'. In this construction the children recognise their secondary literacy Discourse, which positions a good writer as *'someone who can use punctuation correctly'* (Mr Marufane), but move beyond this focus on form to express far more sophisticated and personal understandings of the writing process (and literacy):

Interviewer:	*okay but let me ask, what makes a good writer, if I ask you to describe for me a good writer?*
Frans:	*I think maybe reading a lot, and teaching yourself some stuff, maybe from other countries, other communities, around the world*
	...
Inteviewer:	*and why does that make you a good writer?*
Frans:	*it's because of, ma'm, you know a lot of things and then you can just write, then you can visualize and then you know just what to write*
Prudence:	*it's like then you have something to say*
Interviewer:	*so it gives you ideas?*
Frans:	*yes, and then like when I write my poetry ma'm, I read the poetry books so I get some of the ideas from them, it helps me*
Refilwe:	*yes like, also travelling like, all over the world, then you'll, like, get to see a lot of things, then you can write about them*
	....
Frans:	*Maybe a good writer also has to know about things like punctuation, spellings, yah, things like that.*

This excerpt is extracted from Group Interview Four, by which time the children felt more comfortable with sharing the space of the 'good readers and writers club' with me, as researcher. Encapsulated in the excerpt is a far richer view of literacy than that of encoding or decoding words on a page. Drawing on their primary literacy Discourses, the children's descriptions convey writing principally as a meaning-making process: *'you have something to say'*. Furthermore, this process is understood to be deepened and expanded by travelling, reading, and visualising, and encompasses a clear sense of the writer's autobiographical self (Ivanič 1998). Significantly the

description reveals the children's awareness of reading and writing as being interrelated and the purpose for writers consulting secondary sources: '*I read the poetry books so I get some of the ideas from them, it helps me'*. Although the literacy Discourses of the in-school domain, which characterise writing as the display of technical skills such as punctuation, are recognised, it is notable that Frans (and the other children) makes minimal reference to this construction. Frans notably introduces his reference with the modal 'maybe' which functions to express doubt and thereby construct the statement as a possibility. Within the 'good readers and writers club' the construction of a good writer is therefore shown to merge both in- and out-of-school knowledges and Discourses. As a result, the construction of literacy within the club moves beyond that of the in-school domain and comes to mean, amongst other things, reading the world (Freire & Macedo 1994), talking about experiences, and building relationships. Within such a construction, literacy subsequently becomes a tool for 'refiguring boundaries, entering new worlds, and building identities' (Van Sluys 2003, p.182).

The second example of club members integrating knowledges and Discourses in their identity work is Prudence's writing and discussion regarding her ambition of being an author. Prudence wrote about this ambition in a text she produced in response to the Group Interview Five[46] activity (see Chapter 3, section 3.5.1). Her text is included on the following page (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3: **Prudence's text written in response to Group Interview Five activity.**

As a literacy artefact, Prudence's writing is richly situated in her life. She immediately identifies her reading preferences as being non-fiction and alerts her reader to her future hope of visiting 'other countries'. Most importantly, she asserts herself as a future author, 'I would also like to write my own books in the future', and, matching her reading preferences, explains that she 'wouldn't really write about non-existing things'. As both a current and future author, Prudence includes a drawing of a book with her name included as author, 'BY: P. SEPENG'. In positioning herself as an author Prudence suitably titles the book *First Time Experience*.

In a preliminary viewing of Prudence's writing, her construction of herself as a writer and future author is seemingly embedded within her out-of-school Discourses of literacy as 'pleasure', 'representation-of-self' and 'creativity'. She does however draw on her secondary literacy Discourse of 'coming to know facts' in her recognition of authorial skills as incorporating reading to raise awareness, and travel to find 'more information'. Nevertheless the most significant evidence of Prudence drawing on her in-school Discourses in her identity work presents in the later discussion of her text and her ambition of being a future author. The discussion took place during her individual interview. An excerpt from the discussion is included below.

Prudence:	*ma'm you know like I am into writing, but I am not so good at spelling, so I will have to do more reading, buy a lot of books and especially non-fiction books ma'm*
Interviewer:	*why do you think that //*
Prudence:	*// because if I want to write non-fiction I must read non-fiction* [pause] *even this writing ma'm* [indicating the text written in response to Group Interview Five activity] *I know my spellings and things like that are not right. I think if I look in books a lot, it will help me to know how to write because ma'm like, myself, some alphabets, like 'f' ma'm, that's a problem for me*
Interviewer:	*are you talking about writing the letter 'f'?*

Prudence: *yes writing it … I need better spellings, maybe like sometimes I write something and people won't be able to understand my writing if it's all wrong.*

Here Prudence draws on her secondary literacy Discourses in recognising that skills such as punctuation, spelling and accuracy are a necessary part of the repertoire of authorial skills, and that in order to be an author she will need to read more to build up a knowledge base. Perhaps the most striking element of Prudence's integrating her in- and out-of-school knowledges is the purposeful context within which she situates the skills. Unlike many of her in-school writing practices, wherein technical skills such as punctuation and accuracy are decontextualised and largely divorced from any meaning-making, Prudence situates these skills as being necessary for her to make meaning: *'people won't be able to understand my writing if it's all wrong'.* She therefore recognises the need to integrate elements of both her primary and secondary literacy Discourses to communicate her meaning. To understand the manner in which Prudence's identity work, as a member of the 'good readers and writers club', enables her to integrate these Discourses, it is necessary to return to the argument with which I began this section: the children's identification of themselves as members of the 'good readers and writers club' allows them a space within which to behave as good readers and writers. As a club member, Prudence's identity work positions her as a future author. She therefore sees herself as an author and behaves as an author. In this position she is able to integrate her primary and secondary literacy Discourses in the service of being, and becoming, an author.

To conclude this discussion of the children integrating their in- and out-of-school knowledges and Discourses, I return to an observation offered in the conclusion to Chapter 5: Albeit that the positions offered by their in-school practices are markedly different from those taken up in their out-of-school worlds, the children retain a sense of agency by taking up these positions and excelling at them. To this observation I would now add that the fact that the children are recognised as excelling in the practices of the in-school domain is itself a confirmation of their ability to comment

on, critique and integrate the knowledges and Discourses of their differing worlds. This argument is based on the findings offered in Chapters 4 and 5 which suggest that the children's recognition as *'the readers'* in the school is not based on an affiliation with specific school-based activities resulting from their out-of-school practices (as Gee (1990) argues is often the case), but rather on their awareness of the gate-keeping function served by the school as an institution (Gee 2004). Recognising the school as controlling access to social and cultural capital, as members of the 'good readers and writers club' the children use the space to create an 'identity kit' (Gee 1996) that allows them to negotiate their success across the different Discourse communities of their in- and out-of-school worlds. Put differently, as club members the children can critique and comment on the constraints of their in-school Discourses whilst retaining the richness of their out-of-school literacy Discourses and practices. It is this understanding of the children's identity work within the 'good readers and writers club' that leads me to view the children's membership of the club as a survival strategy: In the face of in-school knowledges and Discourses that in many ways challenge, and sometimes conflict with, the children's out-of-school knowledges and identities, the children 'survive' by creating a third space in which they can integrate their primary and secondary literacy Discourses and the performance of their literate selves across domains. In this sense, the children's establishment and maintenance of the club confirms the view of third space as a 'navigational space, or a way of crossing and succeeding in different Discourse communities' (Moje et al. 2004, p.44).

6.3.3. Claiming and Redefining Gender in the 'Good Readers and Writers Club'

Gendered identities are understood as one of a 'plurality of sub-identities' such as race and social class, which 'taken together constitute identity' (Mishler 1999, p.8). Following from postmodernists who refer to multiple selves, the children's literate selves and their gendered selves are therefore understood to be two of a multitude of

sub-identities. To discuss the possibilities for claiming and redefining gendered identities within the space of the 'good readers and writers club', it is necessary to first review the findings of the relationship between literacy and gender in the children's in- and out-of-school worlds.

Confirming the view of feminist researchers such as Butler (1990, 1995) and Dutro (2001/2002), the children are shown to use literacy to perform and 'do' gender in their daily lives – gender influences the literacy choices they make, their conceptions of their literate selves, and their negotiations with the norms of gendered and literate behaviour. For example, the children construct gendered boundaries around their reading and writing choices. They use these boundaries in the process of 'category maintenance' whereby they are able to achieve 'correct gender positioning' by recognising and differentiating reading and writing choices as appropriate to boys and girls (Davies 1993). To this end, in the out-of-school domain the girls engage in activities positioned as strictly feminine, such as writing diaries and letters, whilst the boys enact those positioned to be appropriately masculine, such as writing poetry and drawing. Contrasting much of the gender work performed in the out-of-school domain, the in-school domain is shown to limit opportunities for the children to use their reading and writing choices to reinforce (and/or challenge) their gendered identities (Peterson 2002). As demonstrated by the excerpt below, in the in-school domain the children are acutely aware that the boundaries that separate categories of female and male, feminine and masculine, and girl and boy are heavily policed (Blackburn 2003; Davies 1993; Dutro 2001/2002; Young 2000).

Prudence:	*they like writing about their friends ma'm, because girls are into friends. Almost, the majority of them are into friends, and boys, if you notice them ma'm, they all into soccer, playing, they are not into //*
Refilwe:	*// and cricket as well*
Prudence:	*yes anything with sport*
Interviewer:	*okay when you say girls are into friends, are you saying they like writing about their friends?*

Prudence:	*yes ma'm, they like writing to say about this friend or they had a fight with that friend* [the other children are nodding in agreement], *boys don't write about that.*
Interviewer:	*boys don't write about friends at all?*
Frans:	*no ma'm, and boys like to fight*
Interviewer:	*okay but before you talk about that I want to try understand something. Sipho, you were telling us earlier how you like to write about different cultures and sometimes even write about your best friend – where you met him, what you do together?*
Sipho:	*yes ma'm , I will write that but the boys in my class won't write about that*
Interviewer:	*why do you say so Sipho?*
Sipho:	*boys are not interested in culture, I am but most boys are not interested.*

Related to the policing of gendered boundaries, Sipho's explanation in the excerpt above as *'I will write that but the boys in my class won't write about that'* and *'boys are not interested in culture, I am but most boys are not interested'* introduces a principal finding regarding gender and the way it is performed amongst members of the 'good readers and writers club'. This finding is that the children explore, adopt and affiliate with different ways of 'being' and 'doing' gender in the public spaces of their in- and out-of-school worlds and the safe space of the 'good readers and writers club'. (As a third space, the club is arguably perceived as being more private based on its exclusive membership of 'like-minded' individuals who value similar activities and behave in similar ways (Smith 1985)). The finding is supported by numerous instances in the data where the children demonstrate a willingness to vary their ways of doing gender within the safe space of the club. For example, although when discussing the classroom context the children align themselves with subjectivities related to particular 'gender hegemonies' (Butler 1995), e.g. *'boys don't write about friends, feelings, things like that'*, as club members, they (often unconsciously) later challenge these subjectivities. This challenge is most evident in the children identifying themselves as exceptions to the recognised rules for gendered

subjectivities: Refilwe expresses her enjoyment of the *Goosebumps* series but explains that *'it's more for boys ma'm'*; Prudence likes reading and writing about soccer *'but not most girls are into soccer'*; Boitumelo enjoys writing about nature and animals but recognises that *'girls are not interested in nature, they want to write about dolls and fashion, things like that'.*

Another example of the children's willingness to challenge gendered subjectivities and explore alternative ways of 'doing' gender within the safe space of the club, relates to their reading (and writing) choices. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 the children demonstrate an initial reliance on the boy/girl dichotomy to express and perform their identities as both readers and writers and as boys and girls. This reliance is clearly revealed in initial conversations about the children's reading and writing choices, whereby all the girls/boys in the group define themselves in part by contrasting themselves with boys/girls and things associated with boys/girls (Dutro 2001/2001, 2003). Confirming the literature, the girls were more willing to consider transgressing gendered boundaries whereas the boys' anxieties around crossing gender boundaries were strongly displayed (Dutro 2001/2002; Miedzian 1991; Pollack 1998). The two excerpts from Group Interview One included below effectively demonstrate this initial reliance on gender stereotypes in the children's construction of their literate and gendered identities.

Interviewer:	*so then what are girls into?*
Prudence:	*they don't like action movies //*
Frans:	*// they like toys and games //*
Interviewer:	*// okay but what do they like reading?*
Prudence:	[in a whimsical tone] *they like reading about Cinderella um //*
Refilwe:	*Snow white and the seven dwarfs* [Sipho is rolling his eyes and making gulping noises, Frans is 'overacting' as if on verge of laughter]
	...

Interviewer:	*Sipho, do you think there are books that boys will like more than girls?*
Sipho:	*yes*
Interviewer:	*what kind of books do you think?*
Sipho:	*um, Superstrikers*
Interviewer:	*Superstrikers?*
Sipho:	*yes, I haven't seen a girl reading it //*
Refilwe:	*// I do //*
Prudence:	*// me too //* [Sipho looks at the girls with a shocked but mocking expression]
Interviewer:	*But this is interesting because Refilwe, you read the Superstrikers and you enjoy reading books about Barbie*
Refilwe:	*yes, I can read both.*

Significantly, as the research process progressed and the children became more comfortable with the group as a formalised meeting place for members of the 'good readers and writers club', they began to disrupt normative performances of gender and reveal alternative ways of doing things. In view of the documented tendency of boys to overemphasise the lines between 'themselves and femininities in their reading practices' (Dutro 2003, p.486) due to fears of appearing to have failed at being masculine, being 'wimpish' or even gay (Miezdian 1991), the willingness amongst the boys to explore and adapt their gendered reading and writing choices is particularly interesting. This gender play amongst the boys is demonstrated in the three excerpts below which are taken from various points during Group Interview Four.

Sipho:	*can I ask a question?*
Interviewer:	*Of course Sipho*
Sipho:	*Can you express your feelings through writing?*
Prudence:	*of course you can!!* [looking shocked]
Interviewer:	*hang on Prudence. Sipho, do <u>you</u> think you can?*
Sipho:	[pause] *I guess so, yes you can*
Interviewer:	*how do you //*

Sipho:	*// like writing a poem*
Interviewer:	*definitely //*
Sipho:	*// maybe even a story or something*
Frans:	*you can also sing or maybe draw about your feelings*
	...
Interviewer:	*okay, let me ask you this, do you think it might be interesting to one day read a story like Shrek?*
Sipho:	*I enjoyed the movie Shrek, I laughed*
Frans:	*me too ma'm, like Shrek and Princess Fiona* [laughing]
	...
Sipho:	*yes, and I know sometimes I like to read my sister's kind of books, not Cinderella, but like, maybe I take my sister's old one and just look at the pictures, read it, things like that*

Here Sipho, the boy who in Group Interview One was rolling his eyes and gulping at the mention of femininities in reading and writing practices, and who in other places in the data goes to great lengths to define writing about feelings as a strictly feminine practice, disrupts his earlier normative performance of gender and moves toward exploring alternative ways of 'doing' and 'being' masculine. Significantly, he hesitantly looks to the other group members to confirm the possibility of a 'subordinate' masculinity that would incorporate being masculine and writing about feelings (Smith 2007). He notably receives this confirmation from Frans, the boy who frequently polices the boundaries of acceptable masculinity in the group and who in the hierarchy of masculinities belongs to the ethos of 'top dog' or hegemonic masculinity (Salisbury & Jackson 1996; Kendall & Martino 2006). Upon receiving this confirmation Sipho then goes on to feel comfortable enough to construct himself within a subordinate version of masculinity that will allow him to sometimes enjoy reading books that are positioned as feminine reading preferences and yet continue to be identified as sufficiently masculine. Two things about Sipho's gender play as discussed above need to be especially highlighted. Firstly, Sipho is arguably only comfortable to explore these alternative ways of doing a 'boy reader and writer' within the safe space of the 'good readers and writers club'. Secondly, his comments

and Frans's approval of them, clear a safe space for the other club members, most notably the boys, to play with gender and explore positive talk about reading and writing practices that are positioned as feminised. Connell's (2000) view that it is 'peer group, not individuals, that are the bearers of gender definitions' (p.162) is thus proved correct. Most importantly, Sipho's comments point to a significant and endorsed conception of masculinity within the group. This construction of masculinity notably does not conflict with literacy, which is often culturally presented as feminised (Martino 1995a, 1995b). As members of the 'good readers and writers club' the boys therefore do not have to fear displaying 'clever' or 'studious' behaviour towards literacy and can focus on aspects such as narrative, emotional response, expressivity and creativity (Millard 1997) without fear of being taunted for being 'the wrong sort of boys' (Smith 2007).

To summarise then, my examination of the children's identity work and the relationship between their literate and gendered selves confirms that, although in variable and different ways, the children all use literacy to perform and 'do' gender in their daily lives. Most importantly, as members of the 'good readers and writers club' the children are willing to explore slightly different ways of 'being' and 'doing' gender. Whereas in the public space of the classroom the children strictly align themselves with subjectivities related to gender hegemonies, within the safe space of the club they reveal a willingness to challenge these subjectivities. In this understanding, membership of the club therefore engenders new or revised relationships between the children's literate and gendered selves.

6.3.4. Constructing Literacy as Empowerment in the 'Good Readers and Writers Club'

In this final section of my discussion of the children's membership of the 'good readers and writers club' and the identity work that such membership engenders, I

will briefly discuss the manner in which literacy is constructed amongst club members. This construction is evidenced in the children talking about literacy and the benefits of being literate in particular ways across the data.

On the whole, the findings indicate that the children link literacy with empowerment and the creation of a better future for themselves. In this, the children's collective attitudes suggest the dominance of what Graff (1979, 1987) has called 'the Literacy Myth'. Graff and Duffy (2008) explain 'the Literacy Myth' as follows:

> Literacy Myth refers to the belief, articulated in educational, civic, religious, and other settings, contemporary and historical, that the acquisition of literacy is a necessary precursor to and invariably results in economic development, democratic practice, cognitive enhancement, and upward social mobility (Graff 1979, 1987) (p.41).

Work in the NLS tradition has however argued against the uncritical acceptance of the Literacy Myth positing that the principal weakness of the myth is its neglect of critical aspects such as power, agency and ideology. The myth 'expresses a hope that literacy alone is enough to end poverty, elevate human dignity, and ensure a just and democratic world' (Graff & Duffy 2008, p.50) however a less benign reading is that

> the Literacy myth is a means through which to obscure the causes of social and economic inequities in Western society at least by attributing them to literacy or illiteracy of different peoples (Graff & Duffy 2008, p.50).

This reading of the myth is significant given that the children in the group all come from families living in poor socio-economic conditions within a township in South Africa. Literacy is not, as in the myth, an independent variable but is rather 'historically founded and grounded, a product of the histories in which it is entangled and interwoven, and which give literacy it's meanings' (Graff & Duffy 2008, p.50). The social and historical circumstances within which the children and their families

live must therefore be borne in mind when considering their drawing on the Literacy Myth. Furthermore, the Literacy Myth presents reading and writing as ideologically neutral – a universal good – however, literacy is a product of the specific circumstances of its acquisition, practices, and uses and therefore reflects the ideologies that guide these (Graff & Duffy 2008). 'School literacy, in particular, is neither unbiased nor the expression of universal norms of reading and writing; it reflects the structures of authority that govern schools and their societies' (Graff & Duffy 2008, p.50)

Against this contextual background, the findings demonstrate the children repeatedly draw upon 'the Literacy Myth' (Graff 1979, 1987) in their construction of literacy, and of themselves as readers and writers. The most frequent manner in which they do this is in their positioning of the literate person (or subject) as being educated. 'Educated' thus becomes a proxy for 'literacy' and at a rudimentary level this is expressed as an explanation of the purpose for reading, for example when Refilwe asks her father why he reads, she reports his reply as being *'to be well educated'*. Almost every child in the group, at some point, asserts *'being educated'* as a purpose for reading and writing. This assertion is powerfully conveyed by the conflation of the subject position of being educated with that of being a good reader and writer. This is evidenced in the excerpt below.

> Frans: *You see, our class teacher said he's going to pick all those that are educated and then he's going to take them out and they are going to form their own group, because the other people are always depending on us and then they not always doing their work, so we will have our own group.*

Here, in describing his teacher's future strategy for differentiated learning, Frans clearly fuses together his positioning of himself (and fellow members of the club) as a good reader and writer with being educated. The most immediate implication of such a construction is that the *'other people'* Frans refers to are singularly constructed as

being uneducated. In this construction Frans confirms the dominance of 'the Literacy Myth' according to which those who learn to read and write well are deemed successful, whilst those who do not develop or excel in these skills are seen as less intelligent, lazy or deficient in some other way (St. Clair & Sadlin 2004). Interestingly, despite my probing and efforts to encourage discussion, the children offer little further exploration of precisely what they mean by *'being educated'*. This is arguably an indictment of a historically situated Discourse of literacy in South Africa, whereby education, as embodied in the ability to read and write beyond a functional level, was really only available to the White population. Literacy, as embodied in the wider concept of education, therefore continues to be an important form of symbolic as well as cultural and social capital, and as such is unquestioningly asserted as a monolithic notion (Bourdieu 1990).

The capital (Bourdieu 1990) which literacy embodies within the children's worlds is further revealed by their yoking together of literacy, education and innate intellect:

Interviewer:	*so you take him* [referring to Frans' brother] *with to the library sometimes and make him read a book?*
Frans:	*yes ma'm, as much as I can*
Interviewer:	*Are you going to make him a reader?*
Frans:	[laughs] *He is going to be a reader because in my family there's no one whose not, there's no one stupid, because we are all educated.*

This construction of the literate person as being intelligent or 'not stupid' functions to merge the literate subject and the educated subject. As such, the children's descriptions collocate the literate subject as being *'a person whose got an answer to every question'*, *'a person who knows about the world'*, '*someone who travels'*, *'someone who can get a better job, an interesting job'* and *'a person who can be something'*. In these descriptions the literate subject is notably empowered by their access to particular forms of social and cultural capital. Such descriptions again confirm the dominance of versions of 'the Literacy Myth' (Graff 1979, 1987)

whereby literacy stands alone as the independent and critical variable for a range of individual accomplishments including advancement and social progress. As argued by Graff and Duffy (2008),

> [i]mplicit in this formulation is the belief that individual achievement may reduce the effects of social and structural inequalities, and that economic success or failure corresponds at least in part to the quality of personal effort (p.47).

The following extract from Refilwe's dialogue journal in which she wrote a list of things she believes reading can do for her, confirms the dominance of constructions based on versions of 'the Literacy Myth' (Graff 1979, 1987): 'Reading can make me the best person I want to be; Reading can make me intelligent and clever; Reading can make me a future leader'.

The children's conflation of literacy and social mobility is added to by their fusing together of literacy, education and the ability to speak *'high English'*:

Interviewer:	*okay, but if she's the chairperson of SAFA* [South African Football Association]*, do you think she reads?*
Frans:	*yes ma'm she does read, you see, sometimes on Friday when we finish to play soccer, she talks to us in high English. I know that she does it because she is educated, she can't say all those high words and talk like that without being educated.*

Indicative of the symbolic power of English in the South African context (Granville et al. 1998), the *'high English'* referred to in the above extract approximates to a variety of White South African English (including the key audibility aspect of the accent) (McKinney 2008). Literacy, as the ability to speak '*high English'*, is therefore constructed as a form of cultural capital, or more precisely linguistic capital that enables the speaker to become the chairperson of SAFA. In this construction being able to speak a particular brand of fluent English, apart from being valued as an

economic resource, is a signal of being well-educated (Kamwangamalu 2003; Gaganakis 1992; McKinney 2008). As well-educated, the literate subject is therefore further empowered by having access to the symbolic power embodied in English as linguistic capital.

The significance of the construction of the empowered literate subject to the children's identity work lies in the emphasis that the construction places on the individual putting literacy to work to achieve personal goals (and in many cases heightened status). As such, 'literacy is used for individual ends and empowerment comes to stand for personal power' (Comber 1996, p.208). In this construction, being literate equates to being in a position of power. As club members, the children's identification of themselves as good readers and writers and participants in the literate world, subsequently positions them as empowered subjects, able to achieve and utilise power. From this position the children in the 'good readers and writers club' identify themselves as being different (and perhaps even superior) to those whom they identify as non-members. This is evidenced in the excerpt below, wherein Frans's positioning as an empowered literate subject, allows him to identify himself as having social, cultural and linguistic capital.

Interviewer:	*Do you think the boys in your soccer team know you as a good reader and writer?*
Frans:	*yes they do, because ma'm, maybe sometimes they ask me to motivate the team, and then I talk 'high English'* [laughs]
Interviewer:	*and what's 'high English' Frans?*
Frans:	*proper words, big words, correct pronunciation, things like that ma'm*
Interviewer:	*okay //*
Frans:	*// yes ma'm, they know I have to be a good reader to be able to talk 'high English', to get them to listen to me*
Interviewer:	*mm,mm*
Frans:	*yes they know I'm clever, they respect me.*

In summary then, the children's identity work and their membership of the 'good readers and writers club' engenders a construction of literacy that embodies social, cultural and linguistic capital. In this, the children are shown to draw upon the socially and historically situated 'Literacy Myth' (Graff 1979, 1987). Most importantly, the children's identification of themselves as members of the club engenders a construction of themselves as empowered subjects and an implied construction of non-members as disempowered, less intelligent and/or incompetent.

6.4. Conclusion

After Chapters 4 and 5 detailed the children's in- and out-of-school literacy and discursive practices, this chapter focused specifically on the children's construction of themselves as readers and writers. Shifting Gee's (1990, 2001) distinction between primary and secondary Discourses to talk specifically about literacy and discursive practices, the chapter began by establishing the children's out-of-school Discourses as their primary literacy Discourses and those that dominate the in-school domain, their secondary literacy Discourses. These Discourses are shown to be misaligned, with the secondary literacy Discourses of the school failing to extend and expand the primary literacy Discourses of the home. The literacy Discourses of the in-school world are shown to constrain and constrict the children's out-of-school Discourses. In order to resolve the resulting tension and reconcile one identity with another, the children establish and maintain a third space. Following from Smith's (1985, 1998) work, I have termed this space the 'good readers and writers club'.

The 'good readers and writers club' is shown to afford it's members a space within which they are supported by similar *'kinds of people'* (Gee 1996, p.128, italics in original) and where elements of 'conversation' can take place between the knowledges and Discourses of their in- and out-of-school worlds (Moje et al. 2004).

In this space the children are able to freely perform their literate selves and demonstrate activities such as swapping books, talking about literacy and sharing their writing. Understood as a third space, membership of the 'good readers and writers club' is shown to provide the children with a space within which to create an 'identity kit' or way of 'being' a reader and writer that allows them to negotiate their literate selves across different Discourse communities (Gee 1996). The creation of this 'identity kit' (Gee 1996) is engendered by opportunities for the children to integrate the knowledges of their in- and out-of-school worlds and behave as they understand good readers and writers to be. As a third space, the 'good readers and writers club' is therefore shown to serve a dual function: it is a space of 'cultural, social and epistemological change in which the competing knowledges and Discourses' (Moje et al. 2004, p.44) are brought into conversation to challenge and reshape both the practices and the knowledges of the children's everyday lives; and it is a 'navigational space' providing the children with the means to cross and succeed in 'different discourse communities' (Moje et al. 2004, p.44).

As members of the 'good readers and writers club', a further aspect of the 'identity kit' (Gee 1996) which the children construct is that of a gendered self willing to explore different ways of 'being' or 'doing' gender. In this construction the children create new or revised relationships between their gendered and literate selves. Whereas in the public space of the classroom the children strictly align themselves with subjectivities related to gender hegemonies, within the safe space of the club they reveal a willingness to explore alternative ways of doing gender in relation to literacy. Significantly, such exploration and the subsequent shifts in the gendered positions taken up are supported within the space of the club. These shifts in the way the children are positioned, by themselves and others, allow for boys to read, and perhaps even enjoy, 'girls books' and for girls to enjoy reading action and sports stories. Most importantly, the endorsed conception of masculinity within the group does not conflict with literacy and literacy learning, which is often culturally presented as being feminised (Martino 1995a, 1995b).

Another aspect of the children's identity work engendered by their membership of the 'good readers and writers club' and discussed in this chapter, is their construction of literacy and the benefits of being literate. Indicative of the dominance of 'the Literacy Myth' (Graff 1979, 1987), the children's construction of literacy conflates being literate with being educated, clever and able to speak *'high English'*. Constructing literacy as a powerful embodiment of social, cultural and linguistic capital, in their identification of themselves as good readers and writers the children subsequently position themselves as being empowered.

Finally, in viewing the club as a space within which the children can integrate their out-of-school practices and identities with the Discourses they encounter in the more formalised institution of school, club membership allows for variegated ways of 'being' and 'doing' a 'good reader and writer'. Within this space the children are not forced to choose between their in- and out-of-school literacy Discourses and identities. Their integration is rather facilitated, and in the alternative discoursal space which emerges a Discourse of authorship that incorporates elements of literacy as 'pleasure', 'reflection-of-self', 'creativity', 'performance of skill' and 'coming to know facts' is enacted. Membership of the 'good readers and writers club' thus enables the children to position, and understand, themselves as authors, poets, and creative people whilst incorporating positions of novice in terms of acquiring technical skills such as punctuation. To use a simplistic, popularised, yet apt, phrase, in the 'good readers and writers club' the total is seemingly greater than the sum of its parts.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Boitumelo's World

7.1. Introduction

7.2. Boitumelo's Out-of-School World

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7.2.1.1. Access to Reading Choice

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7.3. Boitumelo's In-School World

7.3.1. Reading

7.3.2. Writing

7.4. Boitumelo and the 'Good Readers and Writers Club'

7.5. Conclusion

7.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to apply the findings thus far to a single child, Boitumelo. Methodologically it should be noted that the purpose for doing this is to illustrate the arguments presented in Chapters 4 to 6. Such an offering does not change the

approach, analysis and discussion of the data from being a single case study. In presenting this chapter as a consolidation of my arguments, some of the details of Boitumelo's worlds may therefore have been included elsewhere in my thesis. These details are however purposefully repeated here as part of a more consolidated snapshot of the findings (and of the individual child). In as much as possible, I have tried to correlate the discussion offered in this chapter with the same headings used in previous chapters. This provides my readers with a clear understanding of how I chose to analyse and interpret the data.

7.2. Boitumelo's Out-of-School World

7.2.1. Context

Boitumelo lives with her mother, brother, two sisters, grandfather and uncle. At home, the family speaks Sesotho and Setswana although the reading and writing described as taking place in the home is notably reported as being *'only in English'*. Boitumelo is the quietest girl in the group but is also the biggest reader, commenting that she enjoys reading more than writing but *'can't really explain exactly why'*. She is a mature girl, describing herself as not having too many friends. Boitumelo enjoys playing *'active things, like running around and jumping'*, and describes herself as *'not really a doll fanatic'*. When she grows up Boitumelo wants to be a climatologist, because '*I am very interested in nature, and the weather. I want to help people by telling what can happen, how our climate can change because of the things we do'*. This career ambition is consistent with Boitumelo's reported preferences for reading and writing about the environment and nature.

7.2.1.1. Access to Reading Choice

In her out-of-school world Boitumelo describes having access to many books. She gets her books from three principal sources: her mother, who often buys her books to read; her friend, who attends an ex-Model-C school and from whom she sometimes borrows books; and her uncle, who used to work in a bookshop and often brought home books for her to read. In many ways Boitumelo's uncle is her 'guiding light' (Padmore 1994). Although her uncle no longer works in a bookshop and now owns a music studio, she describes him as the person who reads the most in the family. He continues to bring home books for Boitumelo to read and is the person whom she goes to for help with her homework or to talk to about something she has read or learned about. Boitumelo characterises herself as being like her uncle in her preference for reading biographies, explaining that she finds them interesting and enjoys learning about other people's lives. The last biography she read was Steve Biko's, which her uncle recently brought home for her to read. She explains that she did not read all of this biography because '*it is a very thick book*' but is visibly excited when she describes talking about the book with her uncle:

> Boitumelo: *I didn't finish the book but I went to my uncle and we talked about Steve Biko. I like reading about other people's lives. My uncle sits with me and I learn new things. He says reading can make me to think more about things* [smiling].

As demonstrated by the excerpt above, Boitumelo's out-of-school world therefore provides for interaction and conversation around reading and writing. This is significant as opportunities for children to talk about and reflect on texts read is an important factor for children's broad literacy development and learning (Hannon 2000; Snow 1987, 1993). In terms of Boitumelo's awareness and construction of reading as revealed in this excerpt, she notably constructs reading as a tool to help her think more deeply. In this construction, reading is further positioned as an important resource for the transmission of community 'funds of knowledge' (Moll 1992).

7.2.1.2. Access to Writing

Boitumelo describes her mother as the person who first taught her to read and write. Her mother is a *'feeding scheme manager'* whom she reports as doing a lot of reading and writing in her job. She describes her mother as '*working very hard at her job'* but also *'enjoying her work'*. Significantly, she remembers her mother reading a lot to her when she was small and considers this as having helped her become *'a person who loves reading'*. In response to a question posed to her in her dialogue journal, Boitumelo describes her experience of learning to write as follows:

> The person who taught me writing is my mom because when I was small and my mom writes a shopping list, I would also steal her pen in her bag and write the same thing in the same paper. When my mom saw me she said it was good and we can write lists together (Dialogue journal, 25 September 2007).

Here Boitumelo's account describes writing being used to record information important to the running of the household. Notably she reports currently being the person responsible for much of the household shopping and that she therefore continues the practice of writing shopping lists as a memory aid: *'I write shopping lists. If I don't remember to buy the things I have to I get into trouble ... writing a list helps remember'*. In Boitumelo's out-of-school world writing is therefore constructed and modelled as a meaning-making and purposeful practice. Although making meaning is the principal purpose for writing, later discussions of Boitumelo's initiation into writing reveal that her mother's early input extended to also include the technical skills involved in writing. This is elucidated in the excerpt below.

Boitumelo:	*... ma'm when I started my first year here at school, it used to be such a difficult alphabet to write, and my mom helped me a lot*
Interviewer:	*and how did she help you?*
Boitumelo:	*She told me to write a 'p' with a circle and then another stick under the circle* [demonstrating with her finger on the table].

Interviewer: *okay*

Boitumelo: *and then she showed me if I write another stick under the 'p' it becomes 'r'* [demonstrating with her finger on the table].

Interviewer: *okay, so you saying that your mother also helped you at home when you were learning to write at school?*

Boitumelo: *yes ma'm, she would sit with me so that I could write at school.*

To apply the framework of the findings offered in previous chapters, the input and modelling of writing that Boitumelo received in her out-of-school world therefore incorporated both meaning-making, indicative of her primary literacy Discourses, as well as the technical skills that are more characteristic of her secondary or in-school literacy Discourses. This having been stated, Boitumelo's out-of-school construction of writing is however predominantly about meaning-making. This is supported by her reported functioning as a 'literacy mediator' for extended family and community members (Baynham 1995; Gregory & Williams 2000). As 'literacy mediator', Boitumelo takes on specific literacy tasks for others, such as writing birthday or other messages. Significantly, these messages demonstrate writing as a meaning-making process undertaken for specific purposes and addressed to particular audiences (Harris et al. 2003).

7.2.1.3. Time and Space to Read and Write

In her out-of-school world Boitumelo clearly positions herself as an avid reader. She is able to discriminate and discuss the books she prefers reading and can name the exact title and author of some of her favourite books. All of her favourite books were sourced, and read, in the out-of-school domain. Boitumelo gains pleasure and satisfaction from reading books. For example, consider the following excerpt from her dialogue journal, in which her response to her Group Interview Two book selection is included as a postscript:

21 September 2007

Dear Nadia

The person who taught me to read is my mom. She actually taught me both. And oh before I forget sorry I didn't bring you my class book. I forgot it at home. I hope you understand.

Boitumelo Nkosi
P.S. Ghost on the Landing was a very scary book. I regret why I chose it. Anyway I finished reading it but I will never choose a book like that again. I could not sleep I was so scared. Thanks a million for the opportunity (Dialogue journal, 21 September 2007).

Here Boitumelo's postscript addition to her letter format (which was not a requirement for the dialogue journal) reveals a strong affective connection with reading. This connection makes reading in her out-of-school world a valued part of her daily life. Boitumelo subsequently finds time to read despite the many domestic responsibilities she, and other children in similar socio-economic circumstances, experience. These responsibilities include washing the dishes, cooking, looking after younger siblings and helping with homework. For Boitumelo, *'whenever I get spare time, I read'*. She notably describes sometimes having to 'make' this spare time, which involves telling her younger sister she is going to her room to read and then being left alone. The description of this act suggests that Boitumelo has developed her own rituals for reading and that these have been established enough for her family to respect them.

7.2.1.4. Recognition and Support

In light of the extent of family input and interaction as discussed above, Boitumelo therefore comes from a family where a broad literate orientation is adopted. Reading in Boitumelo's out-of-school world has high status and the adults with whom she

lives are supportive in developing an environment that promotes and respects reading as a rewarding and necessary activity (Davis 2007). This is significant in shaping Boitumelo's habitus (Bourdieu 1990) and is key to the construction of her literate self. Most importantly, Boitumelo's literacy development is recognised and supported, and she repeatedly refers to her mother and uncle as being *'very pleased'* and especially proud of her.

Interestingly, as discussed elsewhere in my thesis, Boitumelo, alongside other children in the group, positions herself as being 'other' or different from her siblings. She describes her older brother and sister as not liking reading as much as she does, and reports that when she reads, they '*go to their rooms and listen to music or they go out'*. Laughingly, Boitumelo explains her brother and sister telling her that her frequent reading indicates that she is going to be a *'nerd'*. As discussed in Chapter 6 (see section 6.3.1.), as opposed to constructing this as an insulting or offensive accusation, Boitumelo synchronises her positioning as a 'nerd' with her understanding of herself as a 'good reader and writer' and constructs both as affirmative attributes of her literate self. She clarifies that a nerd is *'a person whose got an answer to every question'* and, confirming her positioning as an active seeker of knowledge, goes on to explain *'that's why I read'*.

Finally, a unique aspect of the support and recognition afforded to Boitumelo's literacy development in her out-of-school world is that, unlike the majority of other children in the group, her family's positioning of her as a 'good reader and writer' is not framed within school-sanctioned Discourses and practices. As shown in the excerpt from her individual interview included below, the support offered by Boitumelo's family suggests a richer construction of literacy focused on how she might use literacy in her present and future life outside of school.

Interviewer: *and tell me Boitumelo, do you enjoy reading to other people aloud?*

Boitumelo:	*no ma'm I don't. I like reading to myself quietly in my room or outside.*
Interviewer:	*okay, and what does your mother or your uncle say about your reading?*
Boitumelo:	*They say they are very pleased with me, they like when I read by myself at home, they say that when I go to university one day I'll need to sit and read on my own.*
Interviewer:	*so they think your reading will help you in your future and //*
Boitumelo:	*// not just then ma'm, like even now they say my reading will make me a more interesting person because I'll know more. They know I love reading.*

Unlike Sipho's mother promising him a cellphone on the basis of the marks in his school report or Prudence's parents' emphasis on reading aloud (see section 6.3.1.), Boitumelo's family support her developing reading as a tool to act on the world (Luke 2000). In this construction, reading functions as a tool to help Boitumelo toward an expansion of self that will make her *'a more interesting person'*. Reading is further constructed as a tool that will afford her access to her aspiration of going to university (to study towards becoming a climatologist). Significantly, reading *'by myself'* is recognised as a valuable and enjoyable activity. Much like the teachers interviewed by Atwell-Vasey (1998), for Boitumelo reading at home in private therefore seems 'a world apart from reading in school' (p.24).

7.2.2. Literacy Practices

7.2.2.1. Self-expression and Creativity

As discussed in Chapter 4, many of the literacy events that the children describe in the out-of-school domain use literacy as a tool for self-expression and creativity. Within this literacy practice the children use a range of semiotic resources to think about, make sense of and represent their worlds. The activity which Boitumelo most

frequently engages in and which represents this practice is that of personal diary writing. As described in Chapter 4, Boitumelo reported keeping a diary for two years prior to the time that the research was conducted. As a personal literacy practice, Boitumelo organises her diary writing around making sense of her everyday life and feelings. Situating her writing within a 'literacy as a representation-of-self' Discourse, she describes her diary writing as having problem-solving and cathartic benefits: *'Ma'm currently my mom is in hospital, she's sick and I write in my diary what I feel, how much I miss her'.* Significantly, Boitumelo uses her diary writing as a messenger 'between past and current selves' (Atwood 2002, p.125), and describes re-reading and reflecting back on her diary entries:

Interviewer:	*And do you ever re-read something you've written in your diary?*
Boitumelo:	*yes ma'm, I find it interesting*
Interviewer:	*What's interesting about it?*
Boitumelo:	*When I ask myself 'is this me, I wrote this?'* [laughing]

Most importantly, within her diary writing practice Boitumelo is positioned as an active meaning-maker who authors the meanings expressed in her text. Her diary writing therefore presents a daily reading and writing activity through which she defines herself as a writer and expresses herself in her world.

Another out-of-school activity situated within a practice of self-expression and creativity, and discussed in Chapter 4, is that of drawing. Boitumelo describes herself as *'not so much of a drawing person'*, preferring to *'sit and read a book or write in my diary'.* She does however produce a drawing that she presented to me together with a written response to the activity posed to the children at the end of Group Interview Five. As a creative expression of the images of literacy constructed by Boitumelo, the drawing provides insights into her personal experiences of literacy, that is, what sense she has made of the complex world of literacy in her life (Kendrick & McKay 2004). Boitumelo's drawing is included on the following page (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Boitumelo's 'I love to read!' drawing.

In discussing her drawing during her individual interview, Boitumelo explains her illustration as reflecting one of her favourite places for reading: *'sitting by myself on my mother's couch at home'*. Significantly she depicts herself reading a book but also draws three other books on the table in front of her. One of these books is an atlas and the other is laid open to reveal an illustration of a plant. Boitumelo's reading interests

in nature and the environment are therefore reflected in her drawing. Boitumelo incorporates a cloud-like 'thinking bubble' in her drawing which includes a drawing of the sea that she explains as *'it's in the book I'm reading* [pause] *I'm thinking about the sea'*. This inclusion vividly illustrates Boitumelo's experience of reading as being separate from and able to transform the here and now. Similar to the images described in Kendrick and McKay's (2004) study, 'the image communicates the experiential aspect of being completely absorbed in reading much more lucidly than language' (p.119).

To conclude this discussion, I should emphasise what is important to the research aim of examining her construction of herself as a reader and writer. Most importantly, in her out-of-school world, literacy, as evidenced by the activities described above, is situated in Boitumelo's need to reflect upon and express herself, be creative and represent her world. In this world Boitumelo uses literacy to construct who she is and who she would like to be.

7.2.2.2. Storytelling/reading

As discussed in Chapter 4, Boitumelo describes storytelling as a current literacy practice in her family. She explains her eleven-year-old sister as *'the person in my family who most likes to tell stories'*. The participants in the storytelling practice are not all of Boitumelo's family but rather just her two sisters and herself. The stories her sister tells include traditional fairytales and stories she gets from books. Reminiscent of the oral tradition, Boitumelo describes sitting together with her sisters and listening to the stories. She describes enjoying the stories her sister tells although she reports sometimes having to remind her sister to not repeat stories. Perhaps most significantly, within the storytelling practice Boitumelo understands literacy as an 'authentic social practice' situated amongst significant others (Barton et al. 2000). Furthermore, as a reader and writer she constructs herself as an active, competent and intentional participant within these practices (Gregory et al. 2004a).

7.2.2.3. Sharing Books with Friends

A final out-of-school literacy practice identified from the data and discussed in Chapter 4 is that of sharing books with friends. As noted in Chapter 6, this practice aptly demonstrates the children's identification of themselves as members of the 'good readers and writers club' and their recognition of other children who are 'like us' (Gee 1996, p.126). Of particular interest in considering Boitumelo's out-of-school world is her recognition of her best friend, who attends an ex-Model-C school, as a fellow club member who enjoys reading and does, values and believes the same sorts of things she does (Gee 1996). She further recognises her friend as affording her access to literacy resources beyond those of her immediate environment.

Boitumelo positions both her friend and herself as enjoying reading, but qualifies this description by stating that *'sometimes I like reading a bit more than she does'*. She reports that her friend often *'brings home books for us to read together'*. Boitumelo's description of engaging in a peer supported reading practice with her friend as they read her Group Interview Two book selection, J.K Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* together, draws primarily on a Discourse of 'literacy as pleasure':

Interviewer:	*okay, and does she sometimes bring you books from her school?*
Boitumelo:	*yes ma'm* [pause] *and we read the books together*
Interviewer:	*I'm interested in how that works. How do you read the books together?*
Boitumelo:	*she sits with me and reads with me and then when we finish a page we turn*
Interviewer:	*so you must both read at the same time, fast or slow //*
Boitumelo:	*// sometimes if she's a bit slower, or if she's tired, I read the page to her.*

In this description Boitumelo reveals her understanding of the reciprocity of her relationship with her friend: her friend provides access to additional books and in return she is sometimes positioned as a mentor or expert. Without doubt, within this practice Boitumelo positions both herself and her friend as good readers.

In summary then, Boitumelo's personal-based literacy practices narrate her everyday out-of-school world as a rich site of situated and social literacy. She talks about reading in order to think more deeply, and as a resource for the transmission of funds of knowledge. Positioning herself as *'a person who loves reading'*, Boitumelo describes reading as a valued part of her daily life. She understands writing as a meaning-making and purposeful practice and in her positioning as a 'good writer' functions as a 'literacy mediator' for family and community members (Baynham 1995; Gregory & Williams 2000). Boitumelo authors a daily diary and uses literacy to reflect upon and express herself. Her relationships with siblings and friends create opportunities for her to participate in storytelling events and the pleasure of reading books together. Returning to Thomson's (2002) notion of 'virtual school bags' as discussed in Chapter 5, it is these 'knowledges, narratives, interests and understandings' (p.2) that Boitumelo takes with her into her in-school world.

7.3. Boitumelo's In-School World

7.3.1. Reading

In her in-school world Boitumelo has a fairly limited selection of reading texts available to her. She acknowledges the disparity between the reading choices afforded by her in- and out-of-school worlds and describes reading far less at school than she would like to: *'We read from textbooks and things like that. There are not so many real books'.* Boitumelo's commentary is particularly worrying when surveying the Languages textbook used by Umholi[47] in Grade 6 as well as other textbooks similarly targeted[48]. In these books the average reading passage consists of little more than one and a half pages. This is significant given the importance of developing children's reading stamina as they progress through the primary school years (Konza 2003), and the frustration for readers such as Boitumelo, who notably took less than four days to finish reading *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, a 200-odd page novel. (Boitumelo selected the book during Group Interview Two and handed the book back to me three days later.) For Boitumelo it can therefore be argued that there is a considerable gap between how she sees herself as an avid and expert reader, and the reading material afforded her in the in-school domain. Boitumelo speaks with frustration about this gap and is able to critique this as a constraint of her in-school world:

[47] *Keys to English, Learners' Book Grade 6* by Burkett, B., Murray, S., Robertson S. and Smuts, D. (First published 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008), Heinemann Publishers (Pty) Ltd: Johannesburg.
[48] For example, *New Daybreak Grade 6, Learner's Book* by Clohessy, D., O'Riodan, E., Beake, L. and Kuhne, C. (2004), Maskew Miller Longman (Pty) Ltd: Cape Town, and *Let's Use English, Grade 6 Learner's Book* by Ellis, R. and Murray, S. (2005) Heinemann Publishers (Pty) Ltd: Johannesburg.

Interviewer: *what about the books in the classroom library, are they interesting?*

Boitumelo: *we've read them so many times ma'm* [pausing and looking down shyly]. *Like I am so into horror, that's why I choose Ghost on the Landing, and at school there's no books like that*

Interviewer: *so there's no books on horror //*

Boitumelo: *// Ghost on the Landing was an easy book but it was scary. It was good, at school the books are too easy and not so much interesting.*

Here Boitumelo's commentary, framed by a comparison of her book selection and interests in the in- and out-of-school domain, reveals her understanding of the complex relationship between text level and interest. Simply stated, an easier-levelled book on an interesting topic is acceptable but an easier-levelled book on an uninteresting topic is simply frustrating. For an avid reader such as herself, Boitumelo experiences the books at school as being both *'too easy'* and uninteresting.

An additional tension between the reading practices of Boitumelo's in- and out-of-school worlds pertains to the in-school practice of reading aloud. In her out-of-school world reading is constructed as a solitary engagement best enjoyed by Boitumelo when she sits for example, on her mother's couch or lies on her bed in her bedroom. Reading is therefore understood as a personal and private space, a treasured reward. Contrasting this, Boitumelo's in-school world is dominated by the construction and practice of reading aloud as a public performance. Boitumelo, who is a shy and quiet child, takes up the Discourse of performance that permeates such a construction and is particularly anxious about things like *'making a mistake'* and people laughing at her. She not surprisingly expresses a marked preference for her out-of-school practice of reading silently:

Interviewer: *and do you enjoy reading to other people aloud?*

Boitumelo: *no ma'm I don't, not at all* [smiling shyly]

Interviewer: *how do you like to read then?*

Boitumelo:	*I like to read to myself. Here at school we have to read aloud so I do but I really prefer reading on my own* [smiling]
Interviewer:	*okay and do you sometimes do the kind of reading on your own here at school?*
Boitumelo:	*I do it at home ma'm, I do a lot of reading at home.*

In the above excerpt Boitumelo's statement of '*Here at school we have to read aloud so I do'* effectively highlights a pivotal premise of my thesis. This premise is that at school Boitumelo, like the other children in the group, retains a sense of personal agency by taking up the positions offered within the in-school practices and excelling at them. She, like the other children, knows how to play the game of in-school literacy and is thus one of the school's *'good readers'*. This having been said it is however important to note that in looking across the data Boitumelo's discussions of school-sanctioned reading are markedly devoid of her understandings of reading to think more deeply, to expand her world, and to reflect who she is and who she would like to be. The 'personal-ness of her reading' is therefore not addressed in her in-school world (Luttrell & Parker 2001). This disjuncture between Boitumelo's in- and out-of-school reading practices resonates with the experiences of the other five children in the group.

7.3.2. Writing

Alongside the other children in the group Boitumelo's in-school writing world is characterised by a focus on technical and discrete skills such as punctuation, tense and concord. Contrasting her authoring of a daily diary in her out-of-school world, her in-school world affords few, if any opportunities for her to compose her own meanings in texts. Boitumelo's in-school writing world is best elucidated by a close examination of excerpts from her Languages exercise book and portfolio work.

Page after page of Boitumelo's Languages exercise book is characterised by activities focused on decontextualised and discrete skills such as writing verb tenses in column format, punctuating sentences, and listing opposites. As an avid reader, her book seems to give credence to the view that reading extensively supports the development of writing skills (Krashen 1993) as she most frequently gets every activity item correct. However, looking closely at the activities in her book raises a number of significant concerns. Firstly, as illustrated by the excerpt included on page 284 (Figure 7.2), Boitumelo's class work often involves her answering multiple-choice questions. In itself, this would not be concerning, however, typical of the copying practice common in many South African schools (Hendricks 2007), Boitumelo is required to copy out the question as well as the full range of answers offered, in order to indicate her choice. This time consuming and pointless exercise carries no educational value. Synchronous with her statement regarding reading aloud (i.e. '*Here at school we have to read aloud so I do'*), Boitumelo however conforms to what is required and behaves appropriately. To put it another way, although such a task is markedly different from her out-of-school writing practices, she recognises this as being how writing 'is done' in the in-school domain. She conforms as she has learned how to play the literacy game to be successful in both her in- and out-of-school worlds.

Figure 7.2: **Sample of multiple-choice activity as reflected in Boitumelo's Languages exercise book.**

A second concern raised by looking at the activities in Boitumelo's book is her teacher's marking and response to her work. Included on the following page is a double-page spread from Boitumelo's exercise book (Figure7.3) reflecting an activity that involves writing paired sentences to reflect the meaning of various homonyms and homophones provided by her teacher. In examining the first item in the activity, dated 21 May 2007, Boitumelo writes sentences to demonstrate the difference between the homophones 'bawl' and 'ball'. Her first sentence reads 'I was bawling to my friend yesterday morning', correctly reflecting the meaning of 'bawl' as 'to weep loudly'. Her teacher however marks this sentence incorrect and Boitumelo, in her corrections for the activity, then writes the sentence 'Mom uses bawl to bake cakes'. Here she uses 'bawl' as a substitute for 'bowl'. Her teacher marks this sentence correct. My intention in presenting this example is not to demean or diminish the abilities of Boitumelo's teacher, but rather to highlight that which I believe is pertinent. The in-school focus of language instruction on decontextualised and 'manageable' pieces results in the complexities of the language becoming confusing, especially to second language speakers, of which Boitumelo's teacher is one. Of course at the core of such an activity, I, and perhaps my current readers, am forced to ask whether a distinction between 'bawl' and 'ball' is the most appropriate homophone for Grade 6 children in a South African context to be focusing on.

Figure 7.3: **Double-page spread from Boitumelo's Languages exercise book reflecting activity based on homonyms and homophones.**

A third and final concern raised by looking at the activities in Boitumelo's exercise book and portfolio is the lack of variety of text types reflected in her work. The dominance of 'scribing' as opposed to 'composing' (Hendricks 2006, 2007) in the children's writing activities and the manner in which this indicates a lack of uptake from policy has been discussed in Chapter 5. Here I would like to focus on the perceivable emphasis placed on drawing amongst the children's activities. Seven of the eight pieces of work that Boitumelo presented as part of her Languages portfolio involved drawing. These items included a Mother's Day card, an Easter card, four 'little books' whereby a story dealt with in class was written up and illustrated, a poster to advertise Readathon Day and a poster to reflect Heritage Day. (Admittedly these may not have been all the portfolio work produced to date but did constitute the total that was offered to me by both Boitumelo and her teacher.) Boitumelo's Mother's Day card and an excerpt from one of her 'little books' are included on the following page (Figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4: **Boitumelo's Mother's Day card and an excerpt from one of her 'little books'.**

Most contemporary definitions of literacy (Cope & Kalantzis 2000; Kress 2000, 2003; Kress & Jewitt 2003; Lankshear & Knobel 2003: New London Group 2000; Stein 2008) go beyond narrow and traditional understandings of being literate meaning 'being able to read, write or code' (Eisner 1985). Such definitions incorporate multiple modes of expressing or making meaning, moving beyond language symbols to that of multiple symbols, including, amongst others, drawing and visual images. Accordingly, school curricula are beginning to include multimodal representations which 'allow for the expression of a much fuller range of human emotion and experience, and which acknowledge the limits of language' (Kendrick & McKay 2004, p.111). Textual diversity embodied in opportunities to produce a variety of text types as well as pictures, drawings and computer-generated graphics is subsequently a foregrounded feature of the NCS (DoE 2002).

Accepting that teachers interpret and implement the curriculum according to their contexts and circumstances and that curriculum implementation therefore varies across contexts (Macdonald 2006), I would however argue that there is a marked overemphasis on drawing to the exclusion of other text types in Boitumelo's in-school world. This argument is supported by the extract from a comprehension test included below (Figure 7.5). (Aspects of this same comprehension test based on a short newspaper crime report were discussed in Chapter 5, section 5.2.3.)

Figure 7.5: Second extract from first term comprehension test.

In these test items the children are asked to 'Draw the robbers killing the father and son. Write a sentence about your drawing' and 'Draw the scene of the robbery'. Whether the children need to produce one or two separate drawings here is unclear. The important point to make however is that at Grade 6 level, there are no assessment standards in the home language curriculum (which the teacher's report using with the children) that relate to such drawing activities. The only assessment standards that might feasibly incorporate drawing as an element of design involve learners developing visual texts such as CD and book covers and newsletters. The comprehension test item does not involve any such task and the teacher's intended outcome from including the item is therefore unclear. In light of this uncertainty I would therefore argue that the inclusion of such simplistic drawing tasks demonstrates what Fleisch (2008) identifies as a contributing factor to the poor academic achievement amongst disadvantaged schoolchildren in South Africa. As explained by Fleisch (2008):

> teachers who teach poorer schoolchildren tend to have lower expectations of what learners can achieve. We also know that these teachers tend to interpret the official curriculum to support their lower expectations. It's not that every child in disadvantaged schools under-achieves, but rather the majority are likely to do so and the typical learner is unlikely to be exposed to a curriculum linked to high expectations (p.122).

Drawing on the concept of the 'Pygmalion Effect', which describes 'how learners in a classroom perform better because they are expected to do so' (Fleisch 2008, p.129), Fleisch (2008) draws on a number of South African studies to suggest that teachers' expectations in disadvantaged and township schools such as Umholi, operate to adversely influence achievement. He goes on to explain that such teachers' low academic expectations of their schoolchildren stem in part from a misinterpretation of the official curriculum standards and popular misconceptions about child-centred pedagogy (Fleisch 2008). Of particular relevance when considering the items included in Boitumelo's comprehension test as discussed above, is Howie's (2005) study in

which she suggests that many teachers do not set learning tasks that are sufficiently cognitively demanding, and that many teachers tend to teach to the slowest or weakest child in their class. Fleisch (2008) argues that:

> the reason for this is self-evident: when teachers' own subject knowledge is weak, teaching to the slowest learners is a way of coping. The misinterpretation of child-centred pedagogy can be used to justify the practice (p.130).

The important point to make here is that for a child such as Boitumelo, who keeps a daily diary, reads a fantasy novel in a matter of days and has rich conversations with her uncle about Steve Biko's biography, the world she walks in at school more often than not requires a minimal and unchallenging level of writing (and reading). She nevertheless takes up the positions offered in this world and, having learned how to play the literacy game in this context, excels.

I would however posit that Boituemlo's survival as 'a good reader and writer' in this world is largely supported by her membership of the 'good readers and writers club'. Such membership allows her to surround herself with 'people like her', integrate her in- and out-of-school worlds and synchronise the performance of her literate self across domains.

7.4. Boitumelo and the 'Good Readers and Writers Club'

Chapter 6 set out my understanding that the children's construction of themselves as readers and writers is shaped by their membership of the 'good readers and writers club'. This club is a constituted third or hybrid space wherein 'the competing knowledges and Discourses of different spaces are brought into "conversation"' (Moje et al. 2004, p.44). In terms of the children's identity work, membership of this

community is shown to provide the children with a space in which to create an 'identity kit' or way of 'being' a reader and writer that allows them to successfully negotiate their literate selves across different Discourse communities (Gee 1996). The creation of such an 'identity kit' (Gee 1996) is engendered by opportunities for the children to integrate their primary and secondary literacy Discourses, explore and redefine their gendered identities and construct literacy as empowering. The data indicates that as a member of the 'good readers and writers club', Boitumelo utilises all these opportunities in her identity work. Rather than offering small excerpts in support of each feature, I will elucidate Boitumelo's club membership and the possibilities it entails by examining a text written by her in response to the activity posed at the end of Group Interview Five. As a literacy artefact, Boitumelo's text and the subsequent discussion around it, which took place during her individual interview, reveal important aspects of her identity work and her construction of herself as a reader and writer. Boitumelo's text is included on the following two pages (Figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6: **Boitumelo's text written in response to Group Interview Five activity.**

Perhaps the most striking initial aspect of Boitumelo's text is her up front assertion of herself as 'Author', which she writes alongside her name in the top left corner of her page. For Boitumelo, this self-definition fits both the person she is and the person she would like to be. As author she is able to express her individuality, take control of the meanings she conveys and assert power over events and other people. In many ways her assertion establishes her text as outside the parameters of her in-school world, wherein such opportunities are seldom provided. As author Boitumelo therefore positions herself and this text within the safe space of the 'good readers and writers club', from where she feels free to combine the Discourses of in- and out-of-school to make sense of what reading and writing is, and to construct her literate identity. This positioning is demonstrated by her framing of herself as 'other' or 'exceptional' throughout her text: she wants to be the only one in her family 'with a different career path', she is 'not like every girl', and her frequent reading and writing make her sometimes 'feel I am not wanted'. Such positioning recalls the discussion offered in Chapter 6 of the manner in which the children, as members of the 'good readers and writers club', identify themselves by establishing a discursive contrariety between 'us' and other children or adults as 'them' or 'other'.

In beginning her text 'Reading and writing is gonna help me a lot because the career path I am choosing kind of hard and I want to be the only one with a different career path', Boitumelo shares her career aspiration, and briefly refers to the role of reading and writing in facilitating that aspiration. Her foregrounding of this aspiration suggests that it is important part of her current identity work. It could well be argued that her aspiration of going to university and pursuing a career path that is 'kind of hard' (i.e. a climatologist) has come to symbolise a certain level of freedom and self-fulfilment for Boitumelo. Significantly, within her assertion of future aspiration Boitumelo draws on a construction of reading which is markedly situated in her out-of-school world and distressingly absent from her in-school world – that of reading as a tool to access further education.

Boitumelo goes on to discuss her preference for reading in a paragraph that exposes elements of 'conversation' taking place between the 'knowledges and Discourses' of her in- and out-of-school spaces. First, she draws on Discourses of literacy as 'pleasure' and 'creativity' in her description of reading as 'getting my creative juices flowing'. She then juxtaposes this by drawing on in-school Discourses that focus on writing as a 'performance of skill', most particularly handwriting, and describes writing as being 'a bit tiring'. Her statement that if one chooses writing as a preference 'you have to get stuck no matter what because you have to think about what you are writing about' draws on an in-school Discourse of writing being a more technical and difficult skill. On discussing this construction with Boitumelo she explains that the kind of writing she is referring to here *'is when they like give us a topic at school to write'* and not when she writes in her diary or for that matter in this particular text. Here, as in her diary, Boitumelo's identification as author makes it '*easy to write about myself, what I like, what I want to be, things like that'.*

Boitumelo's third paragraph offers a clear articulation of her willingness to challenge gendered subjectivities and explore alternative ways of 'doing' gender within the safe space of the 'good readers and writers club'. Here, Boitumelo indicates her clear sense of audience, engaging her reader by drawing on a mystery Discourse to share a 'secret': 'There's something you don't know about me...'. Boitumelo's clear assertion that she is 'not like every girl' because she is not into fashion and dolls and that other girls say she is 'supposed to be a boy' because she likes 'wearing trousers alot' demonstrates her explicit sense of gender performances reinforcing subjectivities in relation to 'gender hegemonies' (Butler 1990, 1995). Within the safe space of the 'good readers and writers club' Boitumelo is however able to challenge these subjectivities and construct herself against gender stereotypes. Put another way, she authors both her text and herself as someone whose 'wardrobe is full of trousers' and who only has two dresses.

The final aspect of Boitumelo's text which I wish to discuss is that of her reference to her reading and writing making her 'feel I am not wanted because they called me a nerd and said I am too nortistic'. This statement seemingly contradicts previous data where Boitumelo reported telling her brother and sister that she likes being a 'nerd', synchronizing this positioning with her membership of the 'good readers and writers club'. Upon discussing this with Boitumelo in her individual interview she explains it as follows:

Interviewer:	*I'm interested what you wrote here about reading sometimes making you feel unwanted* [pointing to the place in the text], *what do you mean here by this word?* [indicating 'nortistic']
Boitumelo:	[smiling] *narcistic, it means someone who loves themselves too much ma'm*
Interviewer:	*oh, and do people sometimes say this to you?*
Boitumelo:	*yes, but really only my brother and sister ma'm*
Interviewer:	*yes, I remember you told me about how they sometimes call you a nerd because you read so much*
Boitumelo:	[laughing] *yes ma'm*
Interviewer:	*and does this bother you Boitumelo? Does it make you feel unwanted?*
Boitumelo:	*not really ma'm, at school it's not good to be a nerd but I don't really mind*
Interviewer:	*okay, help me understand here Boitumelo, you wrote 'Reading sometimes puts me off and feel //*
Boitumelo:	[laughing] *it's not really true ma'm, sometimes at school I just say it*

Here Boitumelo once again reveals that which I have identified as a pivotal premise of my thesis. This premise is that in order to play the literacy game successfully, Boitumelo, and the other children, have learned that they need to take up the positions offered within the in-school domain, even if these positions sometimes challenge or conflict with those they live in their out-of-school worlds. Put another way, the children sometimes have to 'hide' or 'cloak' aspects of their identities in order to play

the literacy (and social) game in their in-school context. For Boitumelo, her love of reading and subsequent positioning as a 'nerd' does not really bother her, but her explanation suggests that she sometimes has to act as though it does because *'at school its not good to be a nerd'*. Disturbingly, Boitumelo is subsequently forced to sometimes write statements such as 'reading sometimes puts me off and feel I am not wanted' in order to successfully be a 'good reader and writer' amongst the teachers and other children at Umholi. Her assertion that such a statement is *'not really true ma'm, sometimes at school I just say it'* supports an understanding of the 'good readers and writers club' as a 'navigational space' which provides the children a means to cross and succeed 'in different Discourse communities' (Moje et al. 2004, p.44). In terms of her identity work, what Boitumelo's assertion highlights is the fluidity of her identity, which is 'neither unified nor fixed' (Weedon 1997, p.87). Recognising that subjectivities are associated with the desire for recognition and affiliation (Norton 1997), in order to 'belong' Boitumelo exercises individual agency and shifts her identity in response to possible tensions arising within and across communities or domains.

To summarise then, Boitumelo's text highlights a number of valuable aspects of her construction of herself as a reader and writer. For the purpose of the argument presented in previous chapters, an aspect that is powerfully conveyed by her writing returns me to the rudimentary metaphor used elsewhere in my thesis. This metaphor views the children's membership of the 'good readers and writers club' as a survival strategy: In the face of in-school knowledges and Discourses that sometimes conflict with the children's out-of-school worlds and create a challenge to their identities, the children 'survive' by creating a third space in which they can integrate the knowledges and Discourses of these different spaces and the performance of their literate selves across domains.

7.5. Conclusion

This chapter offered a consolidated snapshot of the findings as applied to a single child, Boitumelo. Boitumelo's out-of-school world is shown to be a rich site of situated and social literacy that takes place in her encounters with her mother, uncle, siblings and friends. She asserts herself as *'a person who loves reading'* and although she indicates her interest in the environment and nature, her choices represent a broad scope of reading interests. In her out-of-school world Boitumelo has access to a wide variety of texts and perhaps most significantly the adults she lives with are supportive in developing an environment that promotes and respects literacy. In this world Boitumelo uses literacy to make sense of her everyday life and feelings, and writing becomes a messenger between her 'past and current selves' (Atwood 2002, p.125). In terms of her identity work and her construction of herself as a reader and writer, Boitumelo draws on the knowledges and Discourses of her out-of-school world to construct herself as an active meaning-maker. Positioned thus, she constructs and uses literacy as a tool to act on the world (Luke 2000) and to author and express herself in the world.

A marked tension is shown to exist between Boitumelo's identity as an active meaning-maker in her out-of-school world and that which is presented to her in school, where the reading and writing she engages with is more often than not minimal and unchallenging. In terms of her identity work, Boitumelo identifies herself as one of the school's 'good readers and writers' but reveals a need to negotiate or shift her identity in accordance with the relationship between herself and the social context (Li 2000). Significantly, Boitumelo's construction of herself as a member of the 'good reader and writers club' is shown to allow for elements of 'conversation' to take place between the 'knowledges and Discourses' of her in- and out-of-school worlds (Moje et al. 2004). Also, as a club member Boitumelo is shown to challenge gendered subjectivities and assert herself as being *'not like every girl'*.

Amongst the six children in the research group, there are two aspects of Boitumelo's construction of herself as a reader and writer, which are unique to her. Firstly, she asserts her construction of reading as a tool to access further education. As a 'good reader and writer' Boitumelo therefore constructs herself as someone who will go on to university and study towards her aspiration of becoming a climatologist. This is a prominent desire for Boitumelo and an important part of her identity work. The discursive construction of this desire is situated in Boitumelo's out-of-school world which is worrying given that the school evidences little if any of this construction. Notably none of the children in the group foreground this construction of their identity. The second aspect of Boitumelo's construction of herself as a reader and writer which is fairly unique to her is her clear articulation of the need to shift her identity in response to tensions arising across her in- and out-of-school worlds. This is not to say that the other children in the group do not perform similar shifts but rather to highlight that Boitumelo's statements such as *'Here at school we have to read aloud so I do',* and '*it's not really true ma'm, sometimes at school I just say it',* perhaps most vividly demonstrate the children's awareness of the conflict between their in- and out-of-school worlds and the identities they are able to perform in these worlds.

Finally to end the conclusion of this chapter attention should be drawn to something well illustrated by the chapter, but which can be equally applied to the other five children in the research group. Barton and Hamilton (1998) write about 'ruling passions', which they explain as follows:

> When we went to interview people we wanted to find out about reading, writing and literacy practices. Unfortunately, it seems the people we interviewed often wanted to talk about something else; each person had a ruling passion ... We talked to them about literacy, it seemed, and they talked to us about their lives (p.83).

In talking to Boitumelo about being a reader and writer her 'ruling passions' emerged. She wanted to talk about the books she loved reading, her uncle's music studio and

his enjoyment of reading, her admiration and love for her mother and her aspiration of going to university to become a climatologist. This having being said, in providing this chapter I have principally aimed to elucidate Boitumelo's construction of herself as a reader and writer. However, I have hopefully also provided my readers with a richer understanding and appreciation of Boituemlo's 'ruling passions' (Barton & Hamilton 1998) and the worlds in which she walks.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

8.1. Introduction
8.2. Drawing Together Findings, Answering Questions
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8.1. Introduction

This research sought to explore how Grade 6 children construct themselves as readers and writers. This was done by investigating the Discourses the children draw upon in their identity work. The research began with the understanding that both school-sanctioned and out-of-school literacy practices are consequential to chidren's construction of their literate selves. A key focus of the research was therefore exploring the in- and out-of-school practices and their related Discourses. Within these practices, gendered differences in the children's construction of themselves were identified.

The research took a 'situated' view of literacy/ies, grounded in Street's (1984) ideological model and in line with proponents of NLS, 'where multiplicities of reading, writing, and literacy-related activities and practice are contextualised within day-to-day life' (Wilson 2004, p.70). Within this framework, Gee's (1990, 1996, 1998, 2001) work was chosen as a grounding theoretical orientation for the research because his work deals with issues of identity, Discourse and power. Gee's (1990) understanding of identity as a cultural construct varying across settings and constituted within and by particular Discourses draws on postructuralist notions such as that of multiple identities (Bakhtin 1981; Mishler 1999; Weedon 1997). Postructuralist theorising of identity and subjectivity subsequently provided a second theoretical orientation for the research.

8.2. Drawing Together Findings, Answering Questions

The analysis of the data and the research findings were presented in Chapters 4-7. In the sections below I draw these findings together.

In answering the central question of how the children construct themselves as readers and writers, several research findings emerged in the examination of the out-of-school literacy and discursive practices the children draw upon. These findings reveal that the out-of-school worlds in which the children live and participate are rich sites of literacy practices that are both situated and social. The findings therefore offer a convincing counter to the documented tendency to consider disadvantaged children's worlds in terms of deficit (Fleisch 2008). Through practices such as playing games and re-creation, self-expression and being creative, telling/reading stories together and sharing books with friends, the acts of reading and writing are clearly positioned as purposeful and valued social processes. Within these processes the children construct themselves as active, competent and intentional participants using literacy in a variety

of ways, including as a tool to form relationships and determine what is valued (Gee 2005). In these worlds, the children's use of literacy is shown to move beyond the purely functional to include a range of genres that serve imaginative, creative, critical and interpretive purposes. The children position themselves and are positioned by others within Discourses of literacy as 'pleasure', 'representation-of-self' and 'creativity'. They are confident authorities on reading and writing, readers, writers, poets, clever boys, magazine owners, editors, home designers, creative people, storyreaders, storytellers and authors. Most significantly, the children's positioning of their literate selves within their out-of-school worlds is as text participants and text users (Freebody & Luke 1990) whose literacy practices are subsequently about meaning-making rather than 'ritual' (Norton 2003).

The literacy and discursive practices that permeate the children's out-of-school worlds, as set out above, contrast with those they are shown to draw upon in their in-school worlds. Data from group and individual interviews, literacy artefacts and informal field notes indicate a clear misalignment between the in- and out-of-school domain. In the in-school domain an 'autonomous' model of literacy (Street 1984, 1993) is shown to dominate, and the reading and writing the children do subsequently functions as a demonstration or performance of discrete and decontextualised skills, rather than a meaning-making exercise of any kind. The in-school practice of reading aloud is shown to be about the performance of skills such as maintaining eye contact and entertaining the audience, whilst the practice of reading to find information is revealed to be about the passive and technical skill of locating information. The in-school Discourses of literacy within which these practices are situated are identified as those of a 'performance of skill', a 'coming to know facts' and a related Discourse of failure and error. Drawing on these Discourses, the in-school domain positions the reader as a 'code breaker' and passive meaning-seeker, with little attention being afforded to the reader making meaning with texts (text participant), working with purposes of texts (text user) or critically analysing texts (text analyst) (Freebody 2004; Freebody & Luke 1990).

Also situated within the in-school Discourses of literacy which permeate the domain, writing practices are shown to be dominated by activities that involve 'copied', 'controlled' and/or 'guided' writing (Hendricks 2007), with few, if any opportunities for children to compose their own meanings in texts. In this domain emphasis is placed on encoding texts and discrete skills such as punctuation, tense and concord are focused upon. The children's attempts to function as authors are notably constrained. Also, indicative of a lack of uptake from policy, in-school writing practices neither provide for the production of a wide range of genres (as advocated by a genre approach) nor for a rich understanding of the writing process (as advocated by a process approach). Drawing on a deeply entrenched 'transmission view' of teaching and learning (Barnes & Shemilt 1974), teachers' responses to the children's work are shown to focus almost exclusively on form with little, if any, attention being paid to the content of the writing, that is the 'meaning' the writer is trying to convey. The emphasis placed on form and display rather than purpose or meaning-making in the children's in-school practices, offers them markedly different positions from those taken up in their out-of-school worlds. Within limited, and limiting, in-school Discourses of literacy, the children subsequently position themselves, and are positioned by others, as performers, passive recipients of neutral and hierarchical literacy knowledge, text decoders/encoders and novices learning decontextualised and technical literacy skills.

In exploring the gendered differences in the children's construction of themselves as readers and writers, the research findings indicate that the tension between the children's in- and out-of-school worlds and their identities as readers and writers between those worlds, is considerably heightened by the differential support offered to their use of literacy to assert their gendered identities across the two domains. In the out-of-school domain the children use literacy as a 'deliberate tool to construct and express issues of identity' (Williams 2003, p.180), including gender. This use is shown to be largely unsupported, and even constrained within the in-school domain.

The most effective demonstration of this contrast is presented in the children's reading and writing choices across the two domains.

In the out-of-school domain the children are shown to use their reading choices to explore gender in a way that often reinforces, and sometimes challenges, particular gender hegemonies (Butler 1990). To this end, gendered boundaries are constructed around the children's reading choices and books are clearly identified as being 'girl books' or 'boy books' (Dutro 2001/2002). In terms of writing, many of the children's out-of-school practices are clearly gendered, with, for example, the girls in the group writing diaries and letters whilst the boys write poetry and draw. Consistent with the literature, gendered boundaries around reading and writing choice are shown to be heavily policed, although girls, and to a lesser extent more 'hyper-masculine' boys (Kenway & Willis 1998), are 'freer' to cross these boundaries (Rice 2000). Contrasting the availability of texts in the children's out-of-school worlds, the limited selection and access to reading texts in the in-school domain constrains the children's use of reading choice as a performance of identity, and more specifically of gender. Significantly, the children describe gendered boundaries around their reading choices being absent or inapplicable in school. In terms of writing, although the children's description of topics appropriate for girls' and boys' writing reveals their assumptions regarding correct gender positioning, the children describe having few in-school opportunities to choose their own topic to write about. By restricting topic choice and providing little, if any, opportunities for composing, the in-school domain therefore limits the children's ability to use their writing choices to assert their gendered identities (Peterson 2002). Evidence from the data further indicates that the children's efforts to create a space for questioning gender stereotypes and the taken-for-granted meanings of dominant gender Discourses within the in-school domain, are, for the most part, silenced or shut down.

In drawing together the research findings discussed thus far and answering the central question posed by the research, it is necessary to highlight an unexpected and

principal research finding. Based on data from the group and individual interviews and literacy artefacts collected, this finding indicates that in recognising the tension between their in- and out-of-school worlds, and the Discourses which permeate these worlds, the children resolve the point of tension by establishing and maintaining a third space. Within this space, which, borrowing from Smith's (1985) notion, I have termed the 'good readers and writers club', the children draw on the Discourses and positions offered within both domains to construct their identities as readers and writers. Membership of the club is shown to create, produce and reproduce opportunities for the children to 'be and recognise certain *kinds of people*' (Gee 1996, p.128, italics in original). Accordingly, as members of the club, all the children identify themselves as good readers and writers, positioning themselves as being different to many of the children (and adults) in both their in- and out-of-school worlds. A powerful confirmation of the children's identification of themselves as members of the club is their recognition of other children, in both the school and wider context, who are 'like us' (Gee 1996). Significantly, the children's membership of the 'good readers and writers club' is shown to engender a construction of literacy as a form of social, cultural and linguistic capital. Confirming the dominance of versions of 'the Literacy Myth' (Graff 1979, 1987), being educated becomes a proxy for 'literacy' and as members of the 'good readers and writers club' the children subsequently position themselves as being empowered. (By implication, non-members are positioned as being disempowered, less intelligent and/or incompetent.)

The children establish the club as a safe space within which they are able to perform activities that are positioned as 'exclusive' to club members. Such activities include swapping books, sharing out-of-school writing practices, talking about reading preferences and discussing common perceptions of reading and writing without fear of reproach. Most importantly, club membership provides the children with a space within which to create an 'identity kit' (Gee 1996) that allows them to negotiate their success across their in- and out-of-school worlds. As club members the children can subsequently critique and comment on the constraints of the in-school Discourses of

literacy whilst retaining the richness of their out-of-school literacy and discursive practices. Within the 'good readers and writers club' different ways of 'being' or 'doing' the role of 'good reader and writer' can therefore be explored, and in the alternative discoursal space that emerges, a Discourse of authorship that incorporates elements of both in- and out-of-school Discourses is enacted. Different ways of 'being' or 'doing' gender in relation to literacy is also shown to be explored within the safe space of the club as compared to the more public spaces of the children's in- and out-of-school worlds. Notably, a construction of masculinity that does not conflict with literacy, which is often culturally presented as feminised (Martino 1995a, 1995b), is shown to permeate the club. As a third space, the 'good readers and writers club' is therefore shown to serve a dual function: it is a space of 'cultural, social and epistemological change in which the competing knowledges and discourses' (Moje et al. 2004, p.44) are brought into conversation; and it is a 'navigational space' providing the children with the means to cross and succeed in 'different discourse communities' (Moje et al. 2004, p.44).

Finally, in terms of the children's identification of themselves as members of the 'good readers and writers club' and their construction of themselves as readers and writers, I posit that it is their club membership that provides them with a survival strategy: In the face of in-school knowledges and Discourses that in many ways challenge, and sometimes conflict with their out-of-school knowledges and identities, the children 'survive' by creating a third space in which they can integrate their in- and out-of school literacy Discourses and the performance of their literate selves across domains. Club membership subsequently allows these children to write, both literally and metaphorically, outside the lines that have been scripted for them (Luttrell & Parker 2001), and in many ways, to therefore author their lives.

8.3. Research Implications and Recommendations

Recalling my rationale as expressed in the introduction to my thesis, the research is directed and shaped by my need for the findings to be useful to my work as an education consultant, materials developer and teacher trainer. Considering this grounding desire, the research findings give rise to a number of important implications for those (like myself) working in education and teacher professional development. I believe that it is within these implications and the recommendations that are offered in response, that the major contributions of my research lie.

In order to discuss the research implications it is necessary to return to my purposeful selection of Umholi as my research site. At the outset I stated that I selected Umholi as a possible counter to the prevailing deficit Discourse around learner potential in schools within the 'second system' (Fleisch 2008). It is a school that has, over the years, received considerable support, resources and teacher training. My selection was made based on my previous work with the school and my observation of a noticeable difference between the learners at the school and other similar schools in the surrounding area. However, I erroneously gauged this difference on the learners' demonstrated confidence and oral ability to express themselves. Whilst not denying that this difference is valuable, that Umholi does more to promote and develop their learners' literacy skills than other similar township schools, and that the dedication and commitment of the staff can at no time be questioned, my findings do however indicate that much of this is a 'performance' and opportunities for reading and writing as meaning-making activities are few and far between. Despite previous teacher training interventions, in this environment literacy and teachers' understanding thereof is shown to be restricted to code breaking and text encoding practices (Freebody & Luke 1990). The significance of this is revealed when compared with the children's out-of-school reading and writing practices, which demonstrate a far more

sophisticated construction of literacy that moves well beyond deciphering or encoding text. Most notably, the children's out-of-school texts demonstrate their 'doing' literacy, actively positioning themselves as text participants (making and composing meaning) and text users (reading and constructing texts for different social purposes) (Freebody & Luke 1990). The children's out-of-school understanding of literacy and themselves as readers and writers has therefore surpassed the practices of their teachers/school. Simply stated, the research therefore demonstrates that children are being 'failed' by their school, and teachers are being failed by the wider education system. This has important implications and raises critical questions for organisations and individuals implementing educational interventions in the current context. These implications point to three broad areas of concern (and their interaction): teacher training, learner opportunities and resource provisioning. Each of these areas will be discussed below. Recommendations in response to the research implications raised will be offered.

8.3.1. What are the Implications of the Findings for Teacher Training and Development?

Perhaps the most obvious implication of the research findings for teacher training and development is encapsulated in a question that begs a response: What are we, as training organisations and individuals working in teacher professional development, still doing wrong? Despite huge sums of money and extensive teacher training programmes the findings indicate that we are still unsuccessful in our task of enabling teachers to do the kind of work in literacy that we need them to do. Teachers' constructions of literacy continue to be limited to code breaking and text encoding, with little, if any, consideration of practices that would make them text participants, text users and text analysts (Freebody & Luke 1990). This limited construction constrains the children's literacy development and their use of literacy to act on the world (Luke 2000). Most importantly, the dominance of such a construction of

literacy, and the teaching thereof, casts doubt on the children's opportunities to go on to obtain tertiary qualifications, get jobs, and develop the skills required by citizens in a modern democracy (Taylor 2008). Seeking to understand what is 'going wrong' with teacher training and how it might be re-evaluated or revised is therefore critical to interrupting a process whereby limited constructions of literacy are seemingly being passed on to the next generation of South African learners.

In considering why teacher training courses might be continuing to 'fail', the wider social context within which the teachers, and schools such as Umholi, operate needs to be emphasised. A consideration of this context is particularly important to avoid the risk of conveying a simple binary that deems everything in the in-school domain 'wrong' and everything in out-of-school domain 'right'. Throughout my thesis I have referred to Umholi as a school characteristic of Fleisch's (2008) 'second system'. The teaching and learning context in such schools has been discussed with specific reference to the in-school practices of reading aloud and reading for information, and the construction of writing (and responses to writing) within this domain. The teachers in schools such as Umholi are generally poorly educated and trained, they do not teach in their mother tongue, they were schooled and later trained through a rote-learning method (Hawes 1979) that embodied a transmission view of teaching and learning, and they subsequently understand knowledge to be a closed system (Macdonald 2006). Apartheid education has prepared these teachers to be code breakers and text encoders (Freebody & Luke 1990). Many of them are not themselves regular or fluent readers or writers (Bertram 2006; Taylor & Moyana 2005) and practices such as text participant, text user and text analyst (Freebody & Luke 1990) are not embodied practices in either their in- or out-of-school lives. This has important implications, for if teachers' habitus (Bourdieu 1990) or literate subjectivities do not incorporate these practices then their teaching of literacy, more than likely, will be devoid of opportunities for children to develop and utilise these practices. For this reason, I believe that exploring teachers' own literate subjectivities and the possibilities for shifting these subjectivities, may prove a valuable starting

point from which to navigate future teacher training interventions (as has been suggested by Janks 2008). To do this, a number of important questions need to be addressed before planning such interventions:

- What are teachers' assumptions about what constitutes good teaching of reading and writing? Why do teachers hold these assumptions? Can these assumptions be shifted, and if so, how?
- What do teacher training courses focused on specific methodologies assume about the teacher as a literate subject? How do these assumptions affect the teachers' 'uptake' or ownership of the various methodologies?
- How might teacher training courses shift teachers into the 'habit of literacy'?

Recommendations

1. Teacher training courses need to explore and provide opportunities for teachers to 'get into the habit' of literacy. Literacy practices need to become part of the teachers' habitus (Bourdieu 1990) before they can be expected to 'shift' their students into such practices. Fundamental to teacher training and development programmes, the possibilities for shifting teachers' literate subjectivities need to be afforded greater consideration.
2. The notion of shifting teachers' literate subjectivities cannot be regarded as a 'quick-fix' or short term 'solution' but is most likely a long term process that may only yield significant results in the next generation of teachers. To assist current teachers literacy specialists therefore need to be trained and allocated to individual schools (as recommended by Janks and Stein, personal communication, 2007). These specialists need to be expert in reading and writing as meaning-making processes and be tasked with the day-to-day guidance and support of the literacy teachers in the school.
3. Teachers need more knowledge and experience of reading as a socially purposeful and meaning-making activity. To facilitate this, teachers need to be made aware of the varied and interacting reading practices in which a successful reader engages, such as making meaning with texts, working with purposes of texts, cracking

codes of texts and critically analysing texts (Freebody & Luke 1990). Alongside this, teachers need opportunities to consider the focus of their reading instruction and need knowledge of how to teach reading in different ways. Teachers need to be given practical examples/demonstrations of how to support children's development of integrated reading practices. Located in larger contexts of setting and culture, a close consideration (and possible adaptation) of the purpose and implementation of practices such as DEAR time and reading aloud in class or at assembly is required.

4. Writing needs to be prioritised and practices to promote writing need to be established. Teachers clearly need more knowledge and experience of writing as a meaning-making activity and the multiple writing practices as advocated by a social model of writing: text encoder, participant, user and analyst practices (Harris et al. 2003). This needs to be accompanied by an awareness of the importance of offering children opportunities to produce a variety of writing genres for a multiplicity of audiences. Emphasis needs to be placed on children using writing to think about, make sense of and represent their world and in so doing, 'author self' (Van Sluys 2003). Alongside this, located in larger contexts of setting and culture, teachers need opportunities to consider and alter their approach to teaching, responding to and assessing children's writing.

8.3.2. What are the Implications of the Findings for Learners?

Against the context of a bimodal distribution of educational achievement (Fleisch 2008), the research findings suggest that the children in the 'good readers and writers club' are an exception, 'a talented few who outperform their peers, and given the opportunity, may even compete on equal terms with children in the privileged "system"' (Fleisch 2008, p.3). The children's development into 'good readers and writers' is markedly nurtured by their out-of-school worlds rather than their in-school experiences, thus confirming the literature arguing for the importance of the home or

out-of-school environment on children's literacy development (Desforges & Alouchaar 2003; Gregory 2001; Heath 1983; Stein & Slonimsky 2006).

Significantly, the children's creation and maintenance of the 'good readers and writers club' as a third space is shown to function as a survival strategy that allows the children to integrate their in- and out-of-school Discourses and the performance of their literate selves across domains. The children's ability to exercise agency and 'play the literacy game' successfully across worlds is therefore facilitated by their club membership. Whilst much of the literature on third spaces in educational contexts involves the teacher facilitating the establishment of a third space for developing continuity between home and school literacies (Cook 2005a; Levy 2008), the findings show the 'good readers and writers club' to be created, and maintained by the children themselves in order to 'survive' the discontinuities between their home and school worlds.

Of course, in considering the broad implications of the research findings it is of extreme concern that the children in the research group need to 'survive' their school domain. (This relates to the previously raised argument that the children are being failed by the school, and by implication, the wider education system.) If the school and 'education' are constructed in the public domain as giving children a way out of poverty and a life of menial work or unemployment (Taylor 2008), the findings suggest the contrary. Notably, the children's aspirational constructions of literacy and what it will do for them in their lives are situated in their out-of-schoool worlds, and there is a marked absence within the in-school domain of a construction of literacy as a tool to access further education. The most immediate question that these findings raise is what happens to the other children in the school who do not experience their out-of-school worlds as rich literacy sites. As non-club members these children may not realise that their school's construction of literacy is something that they need to 'survive'. How to support the literacy development of these learners, as well as those within the 'good readers and writers club', therefore becomes a critical concern. In

response to this concern I believe that we, as training organisations and individuals working in schools, need to shift or expand our focus beyond the teachers to the learners themselves. In view of the previous discussion of the research implications for teacher training and the possibilities for shifting teachers' literate subjectivities as a long term solution, I believe we cannot afford to 'wait and see what happens'. Before planning future school interventions a number of important questions therefore need to be addressed:

- What can be done to facilitate the 'survival' of similar groups of children whilst working towards meaningful change within wider school contexts?
- What can schools do to encourage and foster recognition for out-of-school literacy practices amongst communities?
- How can children's out-of-school literacy practices be brought into, and built upon, in the classroom/school?

Recommendations

1. Awareness of the importance of resisting stereotypical Discourses pertaining to the deficit of disadvantaged children's out-of-school worlds needs to be heightened in South Africa. Schools and teachers need to investigate ways to recognise and encourage out-of-school literacy practices within communities.
2. There needs to be a careful consideration of the relationship between children's in- and out-of-school knowledges and literacies, and the extent to which out-of-school resources are given space in the school curriculum. An understanding of the significance of creating such spaces for children's identity work needs to be developed. The rich background of knowledge, values, attitudes and patterns of social interaction that children bring to school from their home, community and peer networks needs to be acknowledged. In seeking to provide children with the means to redefine themselves and to author worlds, the school needs to actively work towards closing the gap between children's everyday literacy and their school-based literacy.

3. Appropriate and varied literacy activities need to be provided. Learners need to be given opportunities to engage in and develop a range of reading and writing practices that include code breaking/text encoder, text participant, text user and text analyst (Freebody & Luke 1990).
4. Appropriate teaching and learning opportunities need to be provided for children who excel and are recognised as the 'good readers and writers'. Focused language or grammar tasks have a place but for a child who writes her own magazine at home or reads a part of Steve Biko's biography, other activities may have far greater value. Opportunities for such children to come together to develop their learning and share their interests should be created and activities such as writing circles, dialogue journals and book clubs should be investigated. These book clubs need not be grade specific and can be run as an after-school activity.

8.3.3. What are the Implications of the Findings for Resource Provisioning?

As outlined earlier in the thesis the legacy of the correlation drawn between reading fiction, pleasure and reading achievement within the whole language approach persists in many schools (and school systems). 'Good at reading' often becomes synonymous with good at reading stories (Coles & Hall 2002). Confirming the literature, the findings indicate an in-school persistence of this correlation (Sullivan 2001) with the children repeatedly commenting on the limited reading choices available to them in the school and the disproportionate number of fiction versus non-fiction books. Despite this in-school persistence, the findings indicate that the correlation between reading fiction and pleasure, which forms the bedrock of the whole language approach (Elley 1989; Goodman 1982, 2005; Holdaway 1979; Meek 1988), is not borne out in this context. For the children in the research group non-fiction, rather than fiction texts are considered interesting and enjoyable. Situated in Discourses of literacy as pleasure, the texts the children consume and produce in their

out-of-school worlds draw the correlation between non-fiction and pleasure. This finding confirms previous research suggesting that children living in low socio-economic circumstances read a variety of non-fiction texts as they go about their 'real-world' living, with the reading and enjoyment of fiction often being less familiar and valued in their home contexts (Heath 1983; Smith 2000). The immediate implication of the contrast between the school's yoking together of reading fiction and pleasure and the children's marked preference for reading/writing non-fiction as a pleasurable pusuit, is that those providing resources to schools need to carefully review (and possibly revise) the assumptions upon which they base their book selection procedures. As studies have shown that the strongest readers and the ones most likely to become lifelong readers are those who frequently read for pleasure (Anderson et al. 1988; Krashen 2006), this is critical if we are to 'attract' children to the literacy 'habit'.

A final implication of the research findings that is necessary to touch on here, relates to both resource provisioning and teacher training. The teachers at the school, like many South African teachers, have, at some point, been trained to manage their allocated resources. However the findings indicate that there are numerous books (including fiction and non-fiction books), encyclopaedias and poetry books that are stored and unused in the school. This finding is consistent with the literature that indicates that despite various government and non-governmental interventions, South African teachers are frequently found to not use the material resources they have been supplied with (Dixon et al. 2008; Ntuli & Pretorius 2005). At a rudimentary level the following recommendations can therefore be made:

- the teachers in the school need to be trained to better manage the resources they have been provided with;
- classroom libraries need to be restocked during the year or rotated amongst classes;
- the school should work towards reviving the school library and establishing a timetable so that children, outside of assigned classwork tasks, can voluntarily

visit and spend time in the library. The systematic management of children and books would of course require the skills of a trained teacher/ 'librarian'.

However these recommendations need to be viewed against the discussion of teachers' literate subjectivities outlined in 8.3.1. In light of this argument I believe that the difficulties teachers have with resources might be rooted more in issues of their own literate subjectivities than administrative challenges. If literacy is not central to teachers' 'cultural schemata' and is not 'seen to assign value in everyday exchanges' (Janks 2008, p.6), then the value of activities such as establishing school libraries containing books for 'pleasure reading' becomes doubtful. This poses an understandable threat to the literate subjectivities of the next generation of learners and reiterates the importance of my principal recommendation in terms of teacher training and development: Teacher training courses need to explore ways to 'work with' and shift teachers' literate subjectivities as the critical foundation for changes in the daily 'running' and routine of literacy activities, teaching and resource management in schools.

8.4. Avenues for Further Research

This thesis is merely a beginning in thinking about children's construction of themselves as readers and writers. As such there are a numerous ways it can be extended and developed. The avenues for further research discussed below are in no way comprehensive but strike me as important.

This study was confined to a single group of children in a single grade at a particular township school. Although such a focused delineation of the 'case study' was important for my methodology, it can, in looking at it with different eyes, be deemed a limitation of the study. Adopting this view, it seems that a longitudinal study tracing a similar group of children's construction of themselves as readers and writers from the Foundation Phase, through the Intermediate Phase and on to the Senior Phase

could be of value. Indeed, a study tracing this same group of children's transition into the Senior Phase (and on to High School) could be particularly interesting. Comparative studies between different types of schools (private, rural, urban ex-Model-C) could also yield interesting results. In addition, this study has not adequately addressed the issue of language in relation to literacy. In light of the complexity of the linguistic landscape, multilingual classrooms and the language in education policy in South Africa, the impact that this has on children's (and teachers') construction of themselves as readers and writers, as well as on teachers' level of skill and confidence in teaching literacy, needs exploration. The focus of this study is on general patterns rather than a detailed analysis of individuals. To deepen the scope of the research, individual children could be examined in more depth over a period of time. This may require incorporating ethnographic and action research methods such as classroom observations, interviews with parents, and home visits into the study.

In relation to the recommendations made in the previous section, it may be valuable to research teacher practice. Further research could be done with teachers to think through some of their practices and/or to investigate teachers' own reading and writing practices and how these shape their habitus (Bourdieu 1990). Recalling some of the implications raised in terms of training offered to teachers, it may also be valuable for organisations such as READ to review the training courses offered in light of what is/is not affecting change. The variable uptake and effectiveness of interventions in schools could also be researched. In conjunction with these suggestions, if teachers receive training that extends their knowledge of reading and writing as meaning-making processes, and how it can be taught, then issues around implementation and transformed practice could also be researched.

Finally, the workings of third space as a hybrid space within and in-between children's in- and out-of-school worlds, most particularly in the South African context, needs more sustained investigation.

8.5. Some Nagging Questions

At the end of this research process some nagging questions still remain and they too point to the need for more sustained research. The first question revolves around other connections between literacy, identity and Discourse that this thesis does not discuss, and how other theoretical lenses could be applied to the data. What could be gained by organising the data differently, for example presenting each child as an individual case or foregrounding questions pertaining to the relationship between the children's literate and gendered identities? Would using the work of Bourdieu (1977, 1986, 1990, 2006) and his theory of capital as a grounding theoretical orientation yield similar or different insights? How might the research be shaped if the theoretical argument of third space is foregrounded and used to shape the research questions?

The second question pertains to the applicability of a NLS framework to the South African context. Within such a framework the focus is upon describing and understanding local practices within their context. What is not usually provided for is an evaluative element of those practices. Applying such a framework, it could therefore be argued that the literacy pedagogy of the in-school world as revealed by the research, is what the 'local' practices of schooled literacy in South Africa look like and that they serve the purpose of the construction of literacy within the school space. However, in a context such as South Africa, where the education system is characterised by underperformance and failure, the framework seemingly needs to be 'pushed' further. The in-school literacy practices are shown to be limited and I believe have dire consequences in the lives of the research participants and school children more generally. Simply stated, within such a context it is perhaps not 'good enough' to describe and understand, rather critique accompanied by action seems critical.

The third is a question about Discourse, power and ideology. This research has shown that the in-school domain constructs a literate subject who is primarily passive, demonstrating skills unrelated to reading or writing as a meaning-making activity.

Such a literate subject is not provided with opportunities to develop the embodied capital that will allow the use of critical resources such as literacy to meet the present and future demands required in school and society (Fairbanks & Ariail 2006). For me, the most nagging question that remains is what ideological purpose this limited construction serves. Although it is not my intention to simply be controversial in this final paragraph of my thesis it is nevertheless important to raise difficult questions, which in the face of South Africa's poor educational achievement, need to be asked: Is the imprint of race and division in the South African education system too deep to remove? Is the South African education system now discriminatory on the basis of socio-economic class? If so, what chance do the majority of our country's children have to author their own lives? It seems there are many questions and only a few answers.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Group Interview One

The children selected to participate in this research will be purposefully sampled to include those who have demonstrated ability, interest and enthusiasm to talk about reading and writing. The group interview schedules (and later individual interviews) therefore presume an interest and enjoyment of reading and writing.

This initial group interview aims to be an informal discussion in which the researcher and the research can be introduced to the children.

The children should each be given an opportunity to introduce themselves and share personal information about their lives. The following questions can be used to facilitate this:

- Where do you live?
- Who do you live with?
- What language do you speak at home?
- What is your favourite food/pastime?
- What do you want to become when you are older?

Group participants should be reminded of the following:

- the importance and procedures for turn taking
- the guarantee of confidentiality in the writing up of research results
- the fact that the research aims to explore and try to understand what they think about reading and writing and how they use the two processes. There are no right or wrong answers. All contributions will be valued and they don't have to answer any questions they don't want to.

APPENDIX B

Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Group Interview Two

These are the kinds of questions that will be asked:

1. What do you use reading for? (Prompts: What do you like about reading?
2. What don't you like about reading?)
3. What do like to read about?

Show the children a collection of texts. Give them an opportunity to look over the books and talk about which books they would like/not like to read and why. Ask the children to select the book they would most like to read as well as the book they are least interested in reading. (Observe the children while they are selecting books: Do they look at the blurbs of books? Do they page through a book before making a decision? Do they discuss books amongst themselves before making a decision?) Give each child an opportunity to present and talk about the book they would most like to read and the book they are least interested in reading.

Use questions like this to guide the follow-up discussion:

4. Where do you get your books? How do you choose them?
5. Are there books you like reading?
6. Are there books you don't like reading?
7. Do you think there are girl's books and boy's books? What's different?
8. Would you read (opposite gender) books? Why/Why not?
9. Do you buy comic books and/or magazines?
10. What are some of your favourite features or characters?

11. Do you have any favourite books? Why are they your favourites? (Prompts: Do you ever read books more than once? What makes you do this? What do you like about the illustrations/topic/main character?)

This group interview session should end with the children being offered the option of taking the book they selected during the activity home to read.

APPENDIX C

Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Group Interview Three

The principal aim of this group interview is to explore the children's understanding of writing and what they use writing for. These are the kinds of questions that will be asked:

1. What do you use writing for? (Prompts: Why do you write? What do you like about writing? Do you think that writing is something you can do alone? Do you write often? What don't you like about writing?)
2. Where do you get ideas for your writing from?
3. Who writes in your family? What kinds of things do they write?
4. Who writes at school? What kinds of things do they write?
5. If you could choose to write about anything you like, what would you write about?
6. What do the girls in your class write about?
7. What do the boys in your class write about? (Prompt: If your teacher told you to write about any topic you want, what would you write about? What do you think your friend (opposite gender) would write about? Are there things you wouldn't write about? Why? What kinds of descriptions/details would you include in your writing? Why would you include these?)
8. Do you ever read what you have written to anyone?

APPENDIX D

Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Group Interview Four

This group interview session should begin with a brief review and discussion of the books children selected to take home to read (if applicable).

The main focus of this interview session is to explore the children's understanding of reading and writing as related skills: what it means to be a good reader and what it means to be a good writer.

These are the kinds of questions that will be asked:

1. What is reading?
2. What is writing?
3. Do you enjoy reading and writing equally or one more than the other? (Prompts: What kinds of things do you use reading/writing for? Do you think you use one more than the other? Is there something harder/more difficult about reading than writing/writing than reading?)
4. What kind of reading do you do in school?
5. What kind of reading do you do out of school?
6. What kind of writing do you do in school?
7. What kind of writing do you do out of school?
8. (Prompts for questions 4-7: What kinds of books/texts do you read? What kinds of writing tasks do you do? Do you sometimes choose what you want to read/write about in school? Do you read/write at school everyday? Why do you read/write in/out of school? How is reading/writing in/out of school the same/different?)
9. What kinds of things do you like about reading at school?
10. What kinds of things don't you like about reading at school?

11. What kinds of things do you like about writing at school?
12. What kinds of things don't you like about reading at school? (Prompts and discussion for questions 8-11: Do you think you do too much or too little reading at school? Do you think you do too much or too little writing at school? Why do you say so? Do you remember doing much more reading/writing in the younger grades? Do you find reading/writing at school easy/difficult? What do you enjoy the most about reading/writing at school? What don't you enjoy so much?)

APPENDIX E

Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Group Interview Five

This interview session aims to further explore the attitudes and construction of reading and writing the children encounter in the in-school domain.

These are the kinds of questions that will be asked:

1. What is the most important thing you have learned about being a reader?
2. What is the most important thing you have learned about being a writer?
3. Who are the good readers in your class? What makes them good?
4. Who are the writers in your class? What makes them good?
5. Do you think you can be a good reader but not a good writer (or visa versa)? What makes you say so? (Prompts: Do you think you can be a good reader/writer at home but not such a good reader/writer at school? What makes you say so?)
6. What does your teacher (or other teachers in the school) use reading and writing for?
7. What kinds of things that you do in class or school motivate you to want to read?
8. What kinds of things that you do in class or school make you not want to read?
9. What kinds of things that you do in class or school motivate you to want to write?
10. What kinds of things that you do in class or school make you not want to write?
11. If you were designing a curriculum for Grade 6, how would you teach reading and writing? What would you do to motivate learners to read and write? (Prompts: What teaching methods would you use? What books would you

give learners? Would you make any timetable changes? What new 'things' would you introduce?)

12. How do you think you will use reading/writing in the future, as you grow older?

To end this group interview session, informally (conversationally) discuss what the children use reading and writing for in their daily lives. Talk about what the children might want to be when they grow older and how they think they might use reading and writing to achieve this aim. Either use a process writing approach to work with the children or allow them to work on their own to draw and/or write a personal text about reading and writing. It can be about reading or writing that they do now or that they think they might do when they are older. It can be a written text, a picture, or a combination of the two (adapted from a task developed by McKay and Kendrick (2001)). Provide the children with resources such as paper and coloured pens to complete the task.

APPENDIX F

Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Group Interview Six

This group interview session, unplanned for at the proposal stage of the research, consisted largely of discussing the research process with the children. The children were afforded an opportunity to ask any questions in relation to the research. As researcher, I was equally able to ask any remaining unanswered questions resulting from the previous group and individual interviews, which had all been transcribed by this point.

APPENDIX G

Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Individual Interviews

If the child produced a picture or written text about reading/writing in response to the Group Interview Five activity, initiate the interview by inviting them to discuss their text e.g. who/what have you drawn/written about, what's happening, where is this happening, etc. If the child did not produce a text, introduce the interview by briefly discussing some of the 'school' impressions of reading and writing raised in Group Interview Five. Review questions might include:

- Is reading/writing at school easy/difficult for you? (Prompts: What do you enjoy (about) reading/writing at school?)
- How do you think you will use the reading and writing you do at school in your future, as you grow older?

Although the individual interview schedule may be slightly adjusted for each child (in response to issues raised in the group interview sessions), these are the kinds of questions that will be asked:

1. How would you describe yourself as a reader?
2. How would you describe yourself as a writer?
3. How do you think your teacher and friends at school see you as a reader? (Prompts: Does anyone ever make comments about your reading? Do you sometimes talk to your friends about something you have read? Do you ever share/swap books with your friends? Do you ever talk about what you enjoy or don't enjoy reading?)
4. How do you think your teacher and friends at school see you as a writer? (Prompts: Does anyone ever make comments about your writing? Do you ever share something you have written with your friends? How do they respond?)

5. Who do you live with? Do you live with them all the time?
6. What languages do you speak at home? Do you read in that language? Do you write in that language? If so, when/why? Do you read some things in English and other things in other languages?
7. Who in your family/home/community reads? What do they read? Who in your family/home/community writes? What do they write? Do you think they enjoy reading/writing? What makes you say so?
8. Do you have books or other reading material at home? Where do you get these?
9. Do you ever talk to your friends or family about something you have read (in or out of school)?
10. Do you ever talk to your friends or family about something you have written (in or out of school)?
11. Does any of your family, or the people you live with, ever comment on your reading or writing? What do they say?
12. How do you think your family, or the people you live with, see you as a reader?
13. How do you think your family, or the people you live with, see you as a writer?
14. Do you remember who taught you to read? How did they teach you? Did you find it easy or difficult? Do you remember the names of some of the first books you read?
15. Do you remember when/how you learned to write?
16. Where and when do (or did) you enjoy reading the most?
17. Where and when do (or did) you enjoy writing the most?

(Prompts for 16-17: At home? At school? Early in the morning?)

18. Do you enjoy reading to other people or out loud?
19. Do you ever read your writing out loud/to other people? Do you enjoy doing this?
20. Do you ever write about a story (or something else) you have read?

21. Do you ever read a story you have written aloud/to another person?
22. Do you ever get books from the library (school or other)/bookshop?
23. How do you choose books from the library/bookshop?

APPENDIX H

Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Principal Interview

These are the kinds of questions that will be asked:

1. Do you enjoy reading/writing?
2. How is reading/writing taught in your school? (Prompts: Do teachers use a particular method/reading scheme or programme? What language do learners initially learn to read in? How is the transition to English made? Do you think your learners do the same amount of reading as writing? Does the school make these equal priorities? How? What resources do you have in the school for teaching reading/writing? Do you think these resources are effective? Has the NCS made the teaching of reading/writing easier/more difficult for your teachers/learners?)
3. What do you think is a 'good reader'?
4. What do you think is a 'good writer'?
5. What role do you encourage your teachers to take in the development of learners as readers/writers? (Prompts: Does the FP teacher understand a different role from the IP teacher? How is that difference communicated to teachers? Does the school have a policy about the teaching of reading and writing? How is this policy make explicit to teachers? How are teachers supported in their role? Is there communication/collaboration between FP and IP teachers around the teaching of reading and writing?)
6. What classroom/school practices do you think particularly motivate children to read/write? (Prompts: Do you have specific policies and practices in place, e.g. DEAR time? Does the school have a library? If so, how is it used by learners and teachers?)

7. What do you think is the most difficult thing/challenge for you and your teachers in relation to the teaching of reading and writing?
8. How do you feel that your learners' home environments contribute to their understandings of reading and writing?
9. Do you think there are differences in the way/s boys and girls in the school understand and use reading and writing at home/at school?
10. Do you think your school has a positive attitude to reading? Does the school promote 'the pleasure of reading'? How does it do this?
11. How do you think /hope your learners will use reading and writing in their future?

APPENDIX I

Semi-structured Interview Schedule for Teacher Interviews

These are the kinds of questions that will be asked:

1. What was your experience of reading/writing at school? (Prompts: Do you remember how you were taught to read/write? Do you remember it being a positive/negative experience? What kinds of methods/resources were used?)
2. Do you enjoy reading/writing?
3. Have you always taught Grade 6s? If not, what grade did you teach previously? How was it the same/different?
4. What do you think is a 'good reader'?
5. What do you think is a 'good writer'?
6. How is reading/writing taught in your class? Why have you chosen to use these methods? (Prompts: Do you use a reading scheme/programme? Do your learners find it easier to write with a genre/frame rather than a more process approach? Have you attended extra training on reading and writing instruction?)
7. Once the children have learned the basic skills in the Foundation Phase, what role does the school encourage you, as an Intermediate Phase teacher, to take in terms of teaching reading/writing? (Prompts: What do you think your role is as an IP teacher? Does reading/writing still need to be explicitly developed/ taught in the IP? If so, how? Are there any 'new things' about reading and writing that learners need to develop in the IP? When you are teaching, how do you take into account the basic skills children learned in the FP? Does the school have a policy about the teaching of reading and writing? How is this policy make explicit to you? How are you supported in your role as an IP

teacher? Is there collaboration with FP teachers around the teaching of reading and writing?)

8. When is reading/writing timetabled? (Prompts: Is it specifically timetabled as a lesson or is it incorporated into the demands of other Learning Areas? If your school has a specific DAR time, when is it timetabled?)
9. What classroom/school practices do you think particularly motivate children to read?
10. What classroom/school practices do you think particularly motivate children to write?
11. Do you think the NCS is making teaching reading/writing easier/more difficult for teachers/learners? What makes you say so?
12. What do you think is the most difficult thing/challenge for you in relation to the teaching of reading and writing?
13. What resources for reading/writing do you have in your classroom/school? Do the resources sometimes make the teaching of reading/writing easier/more difficult? (Prompts: If you use a reading scheme, how did you choose it? Does your school have a library? Who uses the library? How do they use it? Are there any learners who use the library more often than other learners? What do the other learners say about the learners who use the library often?)
14. How do you choose the texts your learners will read/write? Do your learners sometimes choose the texts they will read/write?
15. What kinds of books/texts do your learners enjoy/not enjoy reading/writing?
16. What do you think your learners enjoy/dislike about reading/writing?
17. Do you think your school has a positive attitude to reading? Does the school promote 'the pleasure of reading'? What makes you say so?
18. How do you think /hope your learners will use reading and writing in their future?

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