THE ANALYSIS OF A DOMINANT GENDER DISCOURSE - PART 2

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ABSTRACT

Gender dilemmas are formed where a woman’s role and identity is constructed in alternative ways, ways which do not cohere with the ways prescribed and expected within a dominant gender discourse. Gender dilemmas give birth to internal discomfort and a loss of experiencing the self as meaningful. Gender dilemmas disempower and silence women.

The following questions are addressed: Which processes and powers construct women in certain ways? How are the roles and identities of women formed during these processes?
An analysis of a dominant gender discourse within the South African cultural context is discussed to increase the understanding of the constructed nature of the gender identity of women and to increase the understanding of gender dilemmas that silence and disempower women.
A qualitative reflexive research design was chosen where a discourse analysis is performed (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:148; Mouton, 1996:102; Rommetveit, 1990:90). Texts for the analysis came from transcriptions of ten in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews with nominated women. The analysis was done by combining the ideas on discourse analysis of Parker (1992:6-20) and Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999:154-167). The analysis aims at increasing the understanding of the constructed nature of femininity and to generate further ways to understand gender dilemmas. This process opens up space for alternative reflections that could lead to change.

OPSMOMING

Gender-dilemmas word gevorm waar ’n vrou se rol en identiteit gekonstrueer is op alternatiewe wyse wat nie ooreenstem met tradisionele konstruksies binne ’n dominante gender-diskoers nie. Gender-dilemmas gee oorsprong aan interne ongemak en ’n verlies aan selfsinvloedheid. Vroue word daardeur verstoed en ontmagtig.

Die volgende vrae word aangespreek: Deur watter prosesse en kragte word die vrou gekonstrueer? Hoe word die rol en identiteit van die vrou gevorm deur hierdie prosesse? ’n Analise van ’n dominante gender diskoers binne die Suid-Afrikaanse kulturele konteks word bespreek om begrip vir die gekonstrueerde aard van die gender identiteit van vroue te genereer en om begrip te bevorder van gender-dilemmas waardeur vroue verstil en ontmagtig word.

’n Kwalitatiewe reflexiewe navorsingsontwerp is gekies waartydens ’n diskoers- analise uitgevoer is. (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:148; Mouton, 1996:102; Rommetveit, 1990:90). Tekste vir die analise is bekom uit die transkriپsies van tien indieme, semi-gestrukturreerde individuele onderhoudse met genomineerde vroue. Die analise is gedoen op
**INTRODUCTION**

Foucault (1979b:15) wrote: "It is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies". Gender can be viewed as a social construction, a constructed category of experience, which has historical, social and cultural, rather than biological origins (Spargo, 2000:12). Gender as construction is formed in language practices. "What we come to recognise as male or female as mediated by our relationships to others through language practices" (Elliott, 1997:55).

Language plays an important part in the social construction of gender and in the roles and identities that are brought about by these constructions. Constructionists view language as more than a vehicle for the expression or reflection of meaning. Language is seen as a cultural system of meanings and practices that construct the reality of individuals (Ward, 1997:82-100; Gavey, 1998:460; Freedman & Combs, 1996:22; Hare-Mustin, 1994:19; Holloway, 1983:231).

Language consists of certain broad patterns or systems that contribute to the generation of meaning. A discourse is a system that carries broader social meaning than is found in language practices. A discourse can be described as "a system of statements, practices, and institutional structures that share common values" (Hare-Mustin, 1994:19). Discourses are historically situated and produce power relations. "Discourses exist within and support institutions and social groups, and are bound up with specific knowledges" (Spargo, 2000:73).

Discourses operate in certain ways, they have an effect on women and they constitute the gender identity of women. "...Discourses are practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak..." (Foucault, 1972:49). Who we are and what we are, how we portray our bodily identity, our perceptions and thoughts and how we position ourselves as women, mothers, lovers, employees and friends are reflected in discourses (Zeeman, 2000:chapter 3). These forms of subjectivities are negotiated and constructed socially by discourse (Weedon, 1997:2).

**PROBLEM STATEMENT**

A dominant gender discourse exists within the community. Femininity and more so, the roles and identities of women or the ways in which women position themselves in relation to others and in relation to the 'self' are shaped or constructed in discourse. Within a discourse there exists certain expectations of women. Gender dilemmas are formed where a woman's role and identity is constructed in alternative ways, ways which don't cohere with the ways prescribed and expected by a dominant discourse. Gender dilemmas tend to silence and disempower women.

**BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM**

"Gender issues tend to be masked beyond awareness, these tensions are likely to be expressed in other ways such as fatigue, stress, relational conflict, depression, or low self-esteem" (Knudson-Martin, 1997:423). Gender dilemmas have certain effects on women. Women's gender dilemmas give birth to internal discomfort and a loss of experiencing the 'self' as meaningful.

A narrative told by a client in individual therapy at a mental health nursing private practice setting serves as an example of a gender dilemma:

Erica, 28, is being challenged by depression. She has a baby of four months. The baby cries continuously when he is not with Erica. Erica is an only child and had good relationships with both her parents until she started dating men at the age of twenty-one. Conflict emerged between her and her mother when she entered her career as a computer programmer and moved to her own home. Eventually Erica married at the age of 25. She describes her marriage as "a good marriage". She enjoyed her work and was happy during her mid-twenties. Two months before the birth of their baby Erica left her job against her will. At that stage conflict between her and her mother...
escalated. Erica's mother believes that a woman should stay at home and tend to the needs of her husband and children. Erica's mother told her that an essential feminine quality is self-sacrifice and that she should resign and be with her family in order to be a good wife and mother. Erica's mother believes that women should sacrifice their own needs and careers to the benefit of their family members. Erica feels guilty because she believes differently. She loved her job and misses it. During the past six months Erica became increasingly depressed and frustrated. She withdrew socially and her family describes her as subdued.

Reflection

The feminine role is constructed in a specific way by a gender discourse in a specific context. In the narrative Erica is constructed by a gender discourse as a wife and mother. Being a good wife and mother calls for particular qualities, thought to be naturally feminine, such as loving, caring and self-sacrifice. These essential feminine qualities structure Erica's access to the labor market. Erica is advised not to pursue her career as she has a small child. Erica's role and identity is constructed in an alternative way that is dissimilar to the views on femininity of her family of origin. She feels guilty about her need to return to her job. The two parts in her, the need to be a good mother and wife and the need to return to her career oppose one another. The guilt and discomfort experienced when the two sides or parts in her oppose each other fuels the depression. This gender dilemma disempowers and silences Erica. It becomes an oppressive force on her identity (Zeeman, 2000:7, 8).

Gender dilemmas of women form the object of study, as gender dilemmas are often heard in the narratives told by women in therapy. Women more often than men are, in the position where they are being silenced by not only gender dilemmas but also by the effects of other practices of power such as discrimination, sexism, violence and victimisation. According to statistics of the South African Police force, 21 women are raped in relation to each single male sexual assault. One in every six women murdered in South Africa is murdered by a spouse (Misdadinligtinganalisesentrum SAPD, 1999:1-23) "There is no typical victim of abuse and no typical perpetrator, except in so far as the victim is overwhelmingly female and the perpetrator male. One of two women is battered at some time during her life" (Finucane, 1999:3).

As women are more often in a position where they are silenced by gender dilemmas and where they become, more often than men, the objects of discrimination, sexism and violence, the study focus on women, their gender dilemmas and the empowerment of women.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The discursive nature of gender or the construction of gender identity is addressed by discourse. This is done by presenting an analysis of a dominant gender discourse within the South African cultural context. It aims at increasing the understanding of the constructed nature of femininity and it aims at increasing the understanding of gender dilemmas.

The following questions are addressed: Which processes and powers construct women in certain ways? How are the roles and identities of women formed during these processes?

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the study is to increase the understanding of the constructed nature of the gender identity of women and to increase the understanding of gender dilemmas that silence and disempower women by the analysis of a dominant gender discourse within the South African cultural context.

PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

"Discourse analysis is a qualitative research design" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2000:48). It should first be situated in its broader paradigmatic context namely: Structuralism, Post structuralism and Social Constructionism. "Post structuralism and Social Constructionism developed within the postmodern line of thought" (Kvale, 1992:8). These aspects are discussed in the preceding article.

DATA SOURCES

Data was gathered from two main sources: Theory and
the research field.

Theory

The theoretical framework and literature of Poststructuralist feminism served as data sources. Feminist literature served as a text during the discourse analysis as it addresses the social discourses that focus on gender, femininity and women. During the analysis the two data sources were integrated with one another and evolved in a conversation between the texts and the researcher.

The research field

Narratives told by unique women during individual interviews served as main text for data analysis. The sample was selected in the following way:

SAMPLE

Women living amidst a dominant gender discourse in South Africa were identified as purposive sample (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:201) for the study. A panel of women representatives of the cultural diversity in the community came together and identified selection criteria for the participants of the study. The panel discussed broad themes, identified selection criteria for unique women and then nominated unique women from their communities. The following variables were represented by nominated unique women:

- Language - Afrikaans, English, Tswana and Zulu
- Age - Aged between 24 and 64
- Relational Status - Single, married, single with a child, divorced, estranged, a partner in a relationship
- Education - Grade 6 to PhD level
- Occupation - Housewife, marketer, teacher, professor, therapist, cleaning lady, accountant, on pension and unemployed
- Religion - Believe in God, believe in God and ancestral spirits, agnostic

The nominated women were approached and asked to take part in the research project.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Guba's model (1981:215-216) of trustworthiness of qualitative research was used and is briefly discussed below.

Truth value

Prolonged and varied field experience: The researcher worked for three years as therapist before the commencement of her studies. Furthermore, she made use of field notes during the in-depth interviews.

Reflexivity: A field journal was kept.

Triangulation: More than one female interviewer interviewed respondents using the same framework, namely the narrative format. Interviews took place in the unique woman's natural environment.

Peer examination: Questions and queries from an independent analyst, promoter, co-promoter and colleagues were answered at length.

Structural coherence: Inconsistencies that arose during the collection and reflective process of the data were declared.

Referential adequacy: This was done on account of the researcher's previous experience in qualitative research on post graduate level, her preparatory field work for three years, the experience of the alternative interviewer regarding narrative interviewing as well as the comprehensive experience of the promoter and co-promoter. The researcher also attended a workshop in the theme of discourse analysis and the experience of the researcher when she acted as interviewer of other researchers' projects also contributed to the authority of the researcher.

Applicability

Nominated sample: Purposeful selection of unique women.

Time sample: The researcher believes that the co-constructions of conversations between the researcher and the participant are a real reproduction of the interaction between the two parties at a certain moment in a specific historical era.

Dense description: The research context, methodology of collection of the data, analysis of the data and reflections on the research process were explained in full.
Consistency

Dependability audit: This was done in order to describe the specific methods of the collection, analysis and interpretation of data.
Stepwise replication: The method of interviewing was repeated as far as possible.
Triangulation: The researcher received guidance from inter alia the promoter, co-promoter, an independent discourse-analysers and a panel. Data was collected from two different sources and field notes were taken. Interviews with unique women took place until the data was saturated.

Neutrality

A confirmability audit took place.
Triangulation and a reflexive journal contributed to the neutrality of the study.

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected during ten in-depth, semi structured individual interviews (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Poggenpoel & Schurink, 1998:229; Polit & Hungler, 1992:272; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994:344). The in-depth interviews were done according to the narrative format (Kohler Riessman, 1993:54). Two central questions were asked. Meanings created during the interviews were treated as a co-construction between the interviewer and the women (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995:1-4). Interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the women and transcribed. The transcriptions of the interviews served as one of the texts for the discourse analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

A discourse analysis was chosen as a reflective qualitative research design. Discourse analysis can be defined as the act of showing how certain discourses are deployed to achieve particular effects in specific contexts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:154). Discourse analysis is not a descriptive and explanatory practice that aims at truth claims; it rather is a form of reflexive research. "Discourse analysts understand the task of research to be a reflexive and productive not a descriptive practice" (Parker, 1992:6). A short preface to discourse analysis as a qualitative research design will ensue:

The aim of discourse analysis

The aim of discourse analysis is "...to account for how particular conceptions of the world become fixed and pass as truth, rather than describing and explaining the world and making truth claims" (Durrheim, 1997:181).
"Seeing historically how effects of truth are produced in discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false" (Foucault, 1984:88).

Durrheim (1997:181) explains that discourse analysis is a reflexive process that aims to provide an account of how 'objects' in the world are constructed against a background of socially shared understandings. These socially shared understandings often have become institutionalised and gained factual status. It is a form of social critique.

"A Social Constructionist epistemology moves away from the mechanistic and individualistic understanding of the object of study. It moves away from a conceptual critique to a social critique" (Durrheim, 1997:181). During discourse analysis we "want to understand the function of a particular discourse, the way they position their subjects in relations of contempt and respect, of domination and subordination or of opposition and resistance, we pass quickly and ineluctably from conceptual critique to social critique" (Parker, 1992:37).

Discourse analysis as described by Parker (1992:6) and Durrheim (1997:181) has a second goal: it is not only a reflexive process; it is also a productive process or a process that brings change. During discourse analysis reflexivity is employed to produce new meanings by showing how taken-for-granted everyday and scientific objects are embedded in certain 'regimes of truth'. During the reflexive process in research new meanings and ways of understanding the objects of research are generated.

Some discourse analysts describe this second aim as the aim of overturning commonly accepted understandings of 'objects' by drawing on other marginalised discourses to demonstrate the constructed nature of common understandings.

In the words of Durrheim (1997:181): "What is the point
of overturning convention and deconstructing truth? In short it has political aims of disrupting the oppressive and exploitative effects associated with institutionalized discourses and forms of life. Discourse analysis doesn't describe or explain the world; it is a critical enterprise, a reflexive process, a form of ideology critique.

Discourse analysis "...does not aspire to truth, but to change" (Derrheim, 1997:161). Foucault (1984:68) said: "Knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting". To do a discourse analysis is to exercise the cutting tool of knowledge toward the aims of human emancipation.

The "how" of discourse analysis

Books, articles, advertisements, movies and transcribed interviews serve as examples of texts. Discourses as objects are studied by examining them in texts. In this study, the theoretical frameworks of post-structuralist feminism (Weedon, 1997:104) and semi-structured, narrative individual interviews with the unique women served as data sources or texts for the discourse analysis. Transcriptions of interviews with women served as the main text for the discourse analysis.

There is no field guide to discourse analysis. "Even though researchers, students and teachers of discursive approaches have to set out a method, there is really no method as such, there is no one thing called discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is not a set of methodological techniques that only carefully trained experts understand and are able to use..." (Parker, Levett, Kottler & Burman, 1997:198).

Terre Blanche & Derrheim's (1999: 154-167) three-facet 'approach' to discourse analysis was used in connection with discourse analysis (See Part 1).

DISCUSSION

Discourses live in texts and are spoken of as objects (Terre Blanche & Derrheim, 1999:154-167, Freedman & Combs, 1996:28; Sampson, 1993:1221; Weedon, 1997:171; Parker, 1998:138). A patriarchal discourse as a dominant gender discourse was found to be at work in the texts. The discourse gave away it's own presence in the texts by speaking in certain terms. The terms or words that the discourse speaks in are: "men, women, femininity, masculinity, authority, female submission".

The patriarchal discourse is as old as the mountains. It had been there since the first relationships (Finucane, 1999:15) and in South Africa it operates across a multitude of boundaries such as culture, ethnicity, language, sex, and age.

A patriarchal discourse and the practices of power

A patriarchal discourse cannot be named without referring to the practices of power. Traditionally within modernist thoughts power was seen as the exercise of one person's will over others (Parker, 1998:4, 26, 63). This form of power, seen as one of the multitude practices of power, is referred to by Parker (1998:4, 26, 63) borrowing the words from Foucault as 'sovereign power'. It is seen in the patriarchal discourse at work where it constructs persons in different power positions. A person is constructed by the discourse in a position of authority in relation to another person constructed in a position of subordination.

Traditionally, the discourse constructs men in positions of authority and women in positions of subordination (Weedon, 1997:2). The following text from an individual interview with a unique woman serves as an example of this way of working of the discourse: "...I grew up in a society where the women and children should be quiet that the men could speak. I was raised in a very conservative Afrikaans family where the authority of the men were never questioned".

The analysis of a patriarchal discourse is a reflexive process. It reflects on the discursive construction of the gender identity of women, not only in relation to men with regards to power, but also with special reference to the practices of power involved in the construction of femininity.

Patriarchal power operates by attaching women to certain paradigms of feminine identity. The patriarchal discourse constructs women in certain roles based on the assumption that their biological and sexual difference from men fits them for different social tasks. Women are physically different to men. They have the ability to
breast feed infants and become pregnant. On the basis of these differences women had acquired certain social functions, primarily those of mothering, nurturing and taking care of children and family. These roles had become synonymous to the feminine identity (Bartky, 1990:71; Gutting, 1991:291; Weedon, 1997:2).

The assumption that men and women are physiologically different and should therefore be treated differently had a great effect on certain social policies and practices in the past (Weedon, 1997:4). During the age of the industrial revolution men worked with heavy structures and machines where their physical power was needed. Women could not do the same work as men because of their physiological difference. This gave rise to the division of labor (Weedon, 1997:4). Men and women were separated in the work environment.

Currently we live in the era of information technology where physiological differences between men and women are not supposed to influence work performance. Job performance isn’t influenced by physical strength any more. This opens up a space for gender equality in the job environment. The physiological or biological differences between men and women should not be the basis for unequal treatment in the job environment as it has been in the past.

The effect of this construction of the patriarchal discourse may lead to discriminatory social policies; for example in the work environment where women with small children find it difficult to succeed in career structures that do not take account of parental responsibility. The effect of this construction of a patriarchal discourse leads to discriminatory policies not only towards women but also towards men. Often men cannot be as involved in childcare as they want to be when they are not entitled to parental leave (Weedon, 1997:74).

A patriarchal discourse constructs women in specific roles. These traditional roles had become the norm - what is expected of women. Within this norm certain qualities or characteristics are being ascribed to the female identity and femininity such as patience, emotion, piety, self-sacrifice and nurturing (Landman, 1994:117-119). These qualities are seen as resembling femininity or the feminine identity. The operation of the discourse in this way is seen in the following text of an interview with a unique woman: "...to me the center of being a women is found in the qualities of softness, warmth, submissiveness, piety, humbleness. If I think about my mother - and father - she was always the one to keep quiet, making sacrifices to the benefit of my father".

Unique women, who have found their own "voice", rejoice in the characteristics that are coupled with femininity. One respondent says the following in this regard: "...To me a part of my journey was celebrating my womanhood and finding my own space within that, because within my family the expectation of the normal woman is to be very feminine, frills, ruffles, make-up and I am not that way. I am not a frills and make-up type of person. I had to identify and create my own feminine identity ... the way I dress, the way I speak, how I talk ... and in that celebrating my own femininity and womanhood".

As a result of the practices of power of a discourse, a patriarchal discourse constructs men and women in different social roles and ascribes different qualities and characteristics to these constructions. These constructions lead to discriminatory effects and social policies.

The effects of a patriarchal discourse

The effects of the operation of a patriarchal discourse come to light when the question is asked, "What does the text do?" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:13). The texts frame some of the women as abnormal when they are constructed in alternative roles. The following text serves as an example of this construction: "I had to function within a very definite space and set role, and I could no longer go along with it. I accepted myself as different and didn’t feel hurt by the rejection of others. I went against what was expected but found inner peace in that".

The text frames the unique woman as ‘different’. That implies ‘different to the norm’ or ‘not normal’. Within a patriarchal discourse operating in the text, differentness or individuality is met with isolation or rejection. Alternative constructions of feminine roles and identities within the discourse challenge dominant constructions of femininity and might destabilise the patriarchal discourse. Difference is constructed as ‘abnormal’ within the parameters of a patriarchal discourse. One respondent
says the following in this regard: "... the most difficult part was to be a normal woman according to the definition of the community, they had many questions on my normality, this was not about my psychical condition but on questions as why is it not a priority for you to focus on having a boyfriend, and if you had one, two or three times, why did your bottom not fall out if you decided that it did not work out, don’t you want children and a heritage, are you gay..." This is seen in the effect of the construction of differences in the text, namely rejection or isolation. If the text frames a woman as being rejected on grounds of her difference to the norm it prevents the patriarchal discourse from being destabilised. This form of patriarchal power strengthens the position of the discourse.

A patriarchal discourse and other discourses

A patriarchal discourse could be viewed as a dominant gender discourse. Women are constructed in different positions by different discourses in other contexts. To reflect on a discourse at work is a difficult process for discourses are not static. More than one discourse operates in a text at the same time. To explain the relations between discourses at work is almost impossible. Foucault (1979a:102) explains it in the following words: "Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can run different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can on the contrary circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy".

Other discourses found at work in the same text, as the patriarchal discourse is a Calvinist discourse and a nuclear family discourse. These three discourses are strengthened by one another. Women are constructed by the Calvinist and nuclear family discourses as altruistic, religious and of high moral value. Men are constructed as the spiritual leaders, the providers and the heads of the household, the authority figures (Finucane, 1999:23-30). This supports a patriarchal ideation of male defined authority.

Within a Calvinist discourse God is male, defined and spoken of as "Father" (Katoppo, 1997:88). God is rarely defined in terms of the qualities thought to be naturally feminine such as nurturing and caring. God is not often referred to as God the mother. In the vocabulary and language of a patriarchal discourse, a nuclear family discourse and a Calvinistic discourse the authority figures are male defined. The three discourses support one another. They work together and compliment one another to ensure the stability of certain institutions.

Ideologies and Institutions

The analysis also comments on the historical context the discourse lives in and how larger structures and institutions are influenced by the working there of (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:154-167; Parker, 1992:6-20). Other discourses act either as complimentary or opposing agents to a patriarchal discourse.

Institutions supported by a patriarchal discourse are the institution of the nuclear family, which involves the idea of a father, mother and children. A text of an interview reads: "The colored people around me don't know anything good about being a single parent with your child. They say I am bad; I am all bad, no good. Their eyes keep following me; they suspect me of courting their husbands. They don't think there can be any good in being a single parent with your child". The woman in the text is constructed by another discourse as a single parent. A patriarchal discourse supports the notion of a nuclear family with a mother and father. An alternative discourse constructs the woman in an alternative way and she falls prey to marginalising and discriminatory practices as an effect of a patriarchal discourse at work: she is labeled as "all bad" and "no good".

A patriarchal discourse supports certain ideologies and bigger institutions. Ideologies in support of inequality are promoted by a patriarchal discourse, such as the sexist, heterosexist, nationalist and racist ideologies (Schaffner & Kelly-Holmes, 1996:16). The following text of an interview with a unique woman is informed by a sexist ideology: "I grew up with the idea that I should please, my future lies in pleasing. My husband would provide,..... I took my form to the Dean, I was the best student by far in the Faculty, and the Dean told me women are not allowed to study here. According to the University regulations he was not allowed to say that". Sexism asserts that one sexual group is more valuable and more important than the other is (Rothblum & Bond, 1996:253).
This notion forms the foundation for discrimination. In the past a patriarchal discourse brought forward ideologies of sexism and racism within the South African culture. These ideologies gave form to discriminatory practices such as apartheid and the oppression of women. These practices supported the view that institutions such as the Afrikaner National Government, the Dutch Reformed Church and institutions of tertiary education should be dominated and controlled until the early nineties by Afrikaans speaking white males.

Over the years, the patriarchal discourse has changed its ways, South Africa’s Government is one of National Unity, Apartheid was demolished and men and women have equal rights. The patriarchal discourse is still at work in South Africa as seen in the practices of reverse discrimination and affirmative action and the abuse of men, women and children. The patriarchal discourse is still constructing persons in positions of authority or power and other persons as submissive. The government, nuclear family, some religious structures and heterosexuality are some of the institutions being privileged by this.

**Disciplinary technologies**

A patriarchal discourse also supports certain disciplinary technologies in the form of scientific systems such as the fashion and beauty world (Weedon, 1997:172; Bartky, 1990:71). "These disciplinary technologies produce specifically feminine forms of embodiment, such as dietary and fitness regimens, expert discourses on how to walk, talk, style one’s hair, care for one’s skin and wear makeup. They are tied to a central component of normative feminine identity, namely sexual attractiveness" (Bartky, 1990:71). If women live within this normative category and master the acquired skills they are seen as sexually attractive. A patriarchal discourse operates in favor of the scientific systems of the fashion world and the beauty and clothing industry. This industry and its related technologies benefit from the work of a dominant gender discourse.

The discourse works against the scientific discipline of feminism and related feminist institutions. Feminism asserts the ideology of equality. Equality and basic human rights are lost in the powerful actions of a patriarchal discourse and its related practices such as racism, Calvinism, sexism, nationalism and heterosexism.

**The subjects of the discourses**

"A subjectivity is produced in discourse as the self is subjected to discourse" (Parker, 1998:64).

Dominant and alternative discourses are in dialogue with each other. They negotiate with one another and women are constructed during this process as their subjects. When a nuclear family discourse and a patriarchal discourse work together in the text they construct a subject - a woman labeled as abnormal or strange as she is unmarried, has no children and invests her energy in a career. The single career woman receives the label of abnormality or "an old maid" when she is unmarried. This is seen as a marginalising practice of the discourses. These two discourses, a patriarchal discourse and a nuclear family discourse articulate one another and support one another in the text.

**A patriarchal discourse and other gender discourses**

A patriarchal discourse at work is destabilised by alternative discourses such as a discourse of individuality and diversity and a gender discourse that positions women in alternative ways such as single parenthood, women in sport, career women. These alternative discourses challenge a patriarchal discourse and often the movement brought about by alternative discourses in society destabilises a patriarchal discourse. Patriarchal power could be deconstructed during this destabilisation process. Foucault (in Spargo, 2000:21) wrote: "There are no relations of power without resistances".

Uniqueness and authenticity could be an expression of resistance to this form of sovereign power. Perhaps women’s authenticity or uniqueness rephrased could be thought of as a reverse discourse. The patriarchal discourse is challenged by the movement and reacts to alternative or reverse discourses by imposing discriminatory and marginalising practices such as sexism, racism and heterosexism on the individuals formed by these alternative discourses.

**RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS**
Due to logistical reasons the results of the research will only be discussed briefly. Transcriptions of individual interviews and the literature of feminism and narrative therapy that address Poststructuralist themes served as text for the analysis.

It was found that certain unique women developed the ability to dissociate themselves from the patriarchal discourse and find their own voices regardless of this type of depressing discourse. They are able to live their lives to the full although they are living in the midst of this type of discourse. They are also proficient in finding their own uniqueness and authenticity.

From the analysis of the interviews it appears as though unique women allege the liberation of the self, they appeal on discourses of alterativity and diversity, and analyse the dominant discourse to find alternative self-descriptions.

Unique women who participated in this research are engaged with the destabilisation of traditional ways of thinking of femininity on a daily basis through the ways in which they live their lives to the full. These unique women are thus in the significant position of being involved in the process in which gender is redefined and in which dominant gender discourses are deconstructed. This is illustrated by the following text: "... this way of life free my hands to do what God destined for me, because I am free and independent, I have the space to live my life to the full, to be able to develop and actualise myself, to do something with myself and to be happy, to be able to care for other people. It is not important for me to strive after a man, possessions, children, such things. I am not concerned about women that are suppressed and that now have to turn against their husbands ... If you are a man and you want to be a ballet dancer and unfortunately you are now more delicate, why not? ..." This discourse of diversity and alternatively grants permission to both men and women to be able to adapt their lives to other ways of living and to direct their lives in extraordinary ways.

CONCLUSION

Could gender dilemmas be viewed as an effect of the negotiation process between discourses? Are gender dilemmas born in a space of tension amongst discourses? Are these dilemmas constructed during women's subjectification process, where the discourses are at work negotiating their subjects?

The operation of the patriarchal discourse and patriarchal power should not be viewed as negative or positive in terms of its effects. Foucault (1979:194) wrote: "We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms; it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts' it 'masks' it 'conceals'. In fact power produces, it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth".

A patriarchal discourse is also constitutive in its effects. With regards to gender it gives form to wisdom, truths, norms and knowledge that govern the lives of people in society. It supports structures, enhances certain disciplines and promotes ideologies. Cultural systems and structures are sustained by the work of the discourse and the operation of its power.

The analysis serves as a reflection on how a dominant gender discourse operates, what the effects of the discourse are and how femininity and the roles and identities of women are constructed in discourse in the background of socially shared perceptions. These perceptions became institutionalised with the passing of time and obtained truth status.

The goal of discourse analysis is not to aspire to truth but to generate other ways of understanding gender, gender dilemmas and unique women. The reflection or analysis aimed to increase and diversify the understanding of gender dilemmas within the South African cultural context.

LIST OF REFERENCES


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