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Zulu names and their impact on gender identity construction of adults raised in polygynous families in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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Personal naming is viewed as a significant process of bestowing a name upon a child as a symbol of identity. Unlike in Western culture where names have become more label-like, in African culture an individual's name is a qualifier, a communal term that indicates their ethnic and clan origins. Nguni culture and tradition avoids open discussion of sensitive issues, hence personal names generally function as a signal to others, or to the family, about issues that cannot be openly discussed and resolved and that is why personal names are much more meaningful. Personal names have undergone major transformation due to sociocultural and political factors, which shows that culture is not static but dynamic and ever-changing. This article explores how naming in polygynous families has a direct impact on the individual's gendered identity and how there has been a gender shift in the naming practices, allowing more women to be name-givers. The findings are based on a study conducted on the gendered narratives of adults who were raised in polygynous families in the Hammarsdale area in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This article used a qualitative methodology within an interpretivist paradigm, interviewing ten male and ten female participants with at least matric level of education and who were raised in polygynous families. The participants in this study highlighted that their names have a direct bearing on their gendered identity and discussed the implications a specific name had on their personal identity. This article aims to foreground naming as a factor contributing to the construction of gender identities of adults raised in polygynous families and the implications thereof.

Introduction

Naming is a universal practice of individualising and identifying people (Mensah and Mekamgoum 2017). In African culture, a name is very important. It signifies to outsiders the individual's identity, clan origins, the family dynamics as well as their destiny. In Zulu culture, rarely do the parents of the child name their child, instead extended family members are the name-givers. A name highlights the bearers' historical and social background as well as the circumstances surrounding their birth. According to Ncube (2019), names and naming practices are symbolic in that they ensure the individual's relationship to space, time and culture. A name also reflects the past experiences as well as other sentiments the name-giver attaches to the name-bearer (Mensah and Mekamgoum 2017). In Africa, if you ask an individual who they are, their personal name will quickly be followed by a qualifier, a communal term that indicates ethnic or clan origins (Mama 2001). Personal names have been studied from different perspectives, namely from a sociocultural perspective (Ngubane and Thabete 2013; Mensah 2015), and sociolinguistics and ethnolinguistic perspectives (Oduyoye 1982; Marjie-Okyere 2015; Mensah 2015), and all these studies highlight that the unique forms of cultural identity show that African names are expressive symbols that reflect the people's social background, religion and philosophy (Mensah and Mekamgoum 2017). This study, however, is unique from previous studies

conducted on names or naming of individuals because those studies researched individuals born into nuclear families, while this study focuses on adults raised in polygynous families and how their names influence the construction of their gendered identity. This article aims to fill the gap in the literature about how names in the Zulu polygynous family have a bearing on how individuals raised in polygynous families construct their gendered identity.

The concept of a name in traditional African culture is complex due to the close connection between the name and the person to whom it is given, as well as the wider family context (Ngubane 2013). Given names disclose a great deal of information about an individual and their family. The naming of a child is thus a reflection of the society to which they belong. Thus names are a system in which information is symbolically stored and retrieved. However, the nature and range of information stored in a personal name can only be retrieved by members of the name-bearer's society (Oyěwùmí 2016). Mphande (2006) states that a name may indicate linguistic structures and phonological processes found in the language, the position of the name's bearer in society, and the collective history and experiences of the people close the individual. Chang and Sakai (1993) note that a new-born's name is the earliest semantic signifier of their personal identity. Children learn their sense of identity, how to relate to other people and develop a sense of belonging learnt from their home culture. Children learn through their names that they are individuals with specific characteristics. Names are not static but evolve over time, often losing their referential meaning and becoming more label-like, which is the case for most Western names. Just like culture, which is not static but dynamic and ever changing, personal naming practices have undergone a major transformation due to sociocultural and political factors (Ngubane and Thabethe 2013). Names change with societal changes, as people move from rural to urban environments and their social frameworks are transformed and this is what makes personal names in Africa meaningful (Suzman 1994). The participants in this study confirmed that their names did have a bearing on their gendered identity and that a name in the Zulu culture is an intrinsic part of a person's identity.

Traditionally, personal names are unique and meaningful, emerging from circumstances occurring at the time of the child's birth, and fathers and grandfathers have been the customary name-givers. The giving of a name to a child had significance in the larger family, with the consequence that the child was rarely the focus of his or her name (Ngubane and Thabethe 2013). According to Neethling (2003), choosing personal names in African societies are conscious decisions, rather than random processes. Parents or guardians bestow a personal name on a child that has social and cultural relevance and meaning (Ngubane and Thabethe 2013). As will be later explained, the names highlighted in this study are specific to polygynous Zulu families and would not be given to children in nuclear Zulu families. This article advances the argument that in polygynous Zulu families the names given to the children play a pivotal role in how they construct or (de)construct their gendered identity. Firstly, this article unpacks the literature and theoretical framework that underpins the study, and then the research methods are explained, followed by a discussion of the findings.

Comparison of the different naming systems in Africa

African cultures have many varied systems of naming. Given the epistemic values of names, naming systems are knowledge systems (Oyěwùmí 2016). According to Ogechi and Ruto (2002), African communities such as the Chindali of Tanzania, the BaSotho of southern Africa and the Kikuyu of Kenya name their children after living relatives (Swilla 2000; Guma 2001). Many African cultures and traditions (e.g. a group in Tanzania, southern Sudan and Ethiopia) name their children after certain events, whether tragic or not. The Luo of Kenya have a very specific practice of naming their children

after a certain event. An example of this would be the name Bomblast Otieno, where Bomblast refers to a child born after 1988, which was when the USA embassy in Nairobi was bombed, while Otieno means a child born at night (Ogechi and Ruto 2002).

In another Kenyan community (the Gusii), the children have two names: a personal name and their father's surname. However, the women in this community choose the name of the infant after the umbilical cord has fallen off (LeVine and LeVine 1966). Some groups in Tanzania name a child Mwana, until the child has its first tooth then the grandfather names the child. In the Zulu tribe of southern Africa, a child is considered a full person when their milk teeth appear. The Yoruba of Nigeria have a naming ceremony eight days after the child's birth following consultation with family members (Muchiri 2004).

A name in Togo, Nigeria and Congo signifies the position of the child in the family. The name of a first child and a last child of the family is very different, highlighting their position and gender in the family. This is also a practice used by the Zulu tribe: certain names are only given to the first born of the family and those names are also gender specific.

Africans and the naming process

In traditional African cultural naming practices, the name bearer was rarely the focus of his or her name (Suzman 1994). According to Mensah and Mekamgoum (2017), naming is a prominent site for struggle, conflict resolution and sociocultural performances. According to Ngade (2011), the modern Bakossi people of Cameroon have converted to Christianity which bought with it new names. Being baptised into Christianity meant denouncing their African tradition as being "wrong" and adopting non-Bakossi names, which departs from the ancestral naming practices that carry the values and beliefs meant to construct Bakossi identity (Ngade 2011). Although there is significant literature on African names and African naming practices, the literature is silent on how the names of individuals born into polygynous families affect their gendered identity.

An act of naming is thus not only the concern of the immediate family, the extended family and the community also play their part. Ngubane (2013) argues that a sense of community and humane living are highly cherished values in traditional African life. The community is essentially sacred, rather than secular, and the environment in which a child is born greatly influences the name of the child (Ngubane 2013). African personal names are thus widely observed to be both socially and culturally meaningful (Nsimbi 1950; Beattie 1957; Middleton 1961; Tonkin 1980; Alford 1988; Suzman 1994; Oyěwùmí 2016).

De Klerk (2002) states that African cultures assign names with a strong emphasis on the meanings of the names. African names provide information about their bearers, their givers and the sociocultural and sociopolitical circumstance of the time (De Klerk 2002). Traditionally, Zulu children were given names that reflected values and attitudes in a particular social context. Suzman (1994) states that name-giving provided an outlet for the regulation of social relations in the intense social interaction of small communities. It allowed people to communicate their feelings indirectly, without overt confrontation and possible conflict. As communities migrated from rural to urban areas and families were split up, the extended family lost its prerogative as name-giver to a certain extent (Suzman 1994).

According to Mumford (1956), the act of naming is almost godlike because when one had got possession of a name, one seemed to exercise command over the object it identified. Bosmajian (1974) states that the name is a badge of individuality where the owner of the name identities themselves and begins a subjective existence. Slovenko (1983) observed that a new name affects the person-perception process. The names of people in Zulu are derived from circumstances connected with their birth. In the Bakossi (Cameroon) tradition, it is the man (husband) who names the first child of the

family and usually the child would be named after the man's immediate family member. The woman (wife) names the subsequent children of the marriage and usually the child/children would be named after members of her immediate family. This is also practised in the BaSotho tribe of Lesotho (Ngade 2011). In the Zulu culture, whether the child is born a girl or boy, it is named by its father. In this article, most of the participants would refute this claim because they were named by their mothers. Interestingly, the participants who were named by their mothers were born as a result of subsequent marriages. None of the participants who were born from the first wives claimed to be named by their mothers so one can infer from this that their fathers named them.

The giving of a name to a child had significance within the larger family. Suzman (1994) states name-giving allowed people to communicate their feelings indirectly, without overt confrontation or possible conflict. This rang true in this article because some participants voiced how their names had affected how they viewed their identity. In the Bakossi tradition, giving a name conveys identity, invoked in the summoning and binding of individual agents into groups (Ngade 2011). According to Ngade (2011), this is why the Bakossi naming culture concentrates on gender identity to construct one's self-image as regards belonging to a specific sex group (Ngade 2011).

Theoretical framework

The theories utilised in this study are African feminism and social constructionism. African feminism is applicable in the study because it aims at highlighting the difference in how gender is conceptualised in Africa as opposed to the West. Social constructionism underpinned this research because social identities are socially constructed.

African feminism

The assumption is that there is one "African feminism",[1] which is problematic because African feminism is not a clear-cut concept that can be precisely defined and delineated. There are complexities involved with being an African and a feminist simultaneously. Western feminism fails to effectively represent and cater for African women. African feminist, Nnaemeka (2005), states that the issue of balance is neglected in the one-dimensional Western constructions of African women, who are usually viewed as poor and powerless. Western feminism does not acknowledge the agency and potential of African women. African women are depicted as confined, powerless and unable to "control their lives". African feminism offered a framework for understanding the unique cultural circumstances and realities that contribute to the construction of gender identity in polygynous families. African feminism is unique to Africans because of the constant negotiating of cultural gender roles and modern gender roles.

Social constructionism

The social constructionism theory acknowledges that identities are stable but are capable of change in different contexts. Social constructionist[2] theory stresses the role played by culture and context in making sense of behaviour. Social constructionism originated as an attempt to come to terms with the nature of reality. In attempting to make sense of the social world, social constructionists view knowledge as constructed, opposed to created. Society is viewed as existing both as a subjective and an objective reality. Meaning is shared, thereby constituting a taken-for-granted reality (Andrews 2012). Feminists believe that gender is a social construct, which means that people's dispositions and their ideas about gender are not predetermined by their biological sex differences. Ideas about gender and the social practices that they institutionalise are alterable, indicating that gender is variable from culture to culture and is therefore socially constructed (Conrad and Baker 2010). Gender

is achieved and constructed through psychological, cultural and social means (West and Zimmerman 1987). Socialising gender means creating differences between girls and boys, women and men. These differences are not natural, essential or biological, but once the differences have been constructed, they are used to reinforce the "essentialness" of gender (see West and Zimmerman 1987).

Gender identity construction in Africa

Oyewumi (2002) states that the application of gender theories to the African context is problematic because gender debates and research originated in the West and from Western women's experiences. She continues to say that within the African family system, which is not nuclear, the family is not gendered and power is not gender-specific, but age-specific. Other African scholars have argued that gender divisions were present in pre-colonial societies but deeply entrenched by the colonial governments. During the colonial era, women were marginalised as producers in a rural economy and the sexual division of labour forced men into the cash crop economy, while women were relegated to subordinate subsistence activities. Conceptions of gendered identities need to be viewed as relationally and historically constructed, rather than relying on the conflation of the gendered division of labour with public and private dualism (Oyewumi 2002). Gender is far from being a stable conceptual category, and is fluid and constructed anew in every encounter.

These theories are compatible because they are complementary. Social constructionism states that societal norms, culture and identities are socially constructed, and African feminism aims to show that gender in the African context is not constructed the same way as in the West. African feminism therefore offered a framework for understanding the unique cultural circumstances and realities that contribute to the construction of gender identity in polygynous families. African feminism is unique to Africans because of the constant negotiating of cultural gender roles and modern gender roles.

The theories underpin the study by dispelling notions held in the West that a name is just a label and insignificant. In this article, we aim to argue that Western theories fail in acknowledging the complexities of names/naming systems in the African context, as well as to illustrate that a name does have an influence on its bearer, whether it be a positive or negative one.

Research methodology and methods

This study employed a qualitative research methodology in an interpretivist framework. An interpretivist framework is a communal process involving the presentation of the participants' realities from their own viewpoints, the role of the researcher as a co-creator of meaning, and the types of knowledge frameworks or discourses informing that particular society (Henning, van Rensburg and Smit 2004). This communal process was in line with the focus of the research, which was to gain a deeper understanding of how adults raised in polygynous families formed their gendered identities and how their names played a role in this. The study was in Hammarsdale in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, which is a peri-urban[3] area. This being a qualitative study, non-probability sampling was used in selecting the sample. Non-probability was suitable because it aims to garner deeper understanding of complex human issues rather than generalising results (Marshall 1996). The non-probability sampling method employed in this study was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows for the selection of respondents whose qualities or experiences permit an understanding of the phenomena in question and therefore are valuable (Marshall 1996). Since this article builds on a previous study conducted by the first author (Mkhize 2011), the previous respondents were asked for suggestions for potential participants for this particular study. This article made use of in-depth interviews for data collection which were useful in leading to a deeper understanding of how the research participants constructed

meaning from their experiences. The participants consisted of ten men and ten women, and ages ranged from eighteen to fifty-six years old. The selected adults had at minimum a matric certificate and some had a postgraduate degree. The educational level was important because we wanted to generate different findings from previous, related studies conducted on polygynous families, where the level of education was not a criterion. We interviewed only those participants whose parents' polygynous marriages were legally recognised by the government. We decided to focus on adults rather than children of polygynous families, based on the assumption that adults were mature enough to be able to reflect on their experiences regarding how their gendered identities have been challenged, reaffirmed and reconfigured over time.

We employed in-depth interviews over a period of one year from July 2013 to July 2014 in order to elicit rich qualitative data. In conducting in-depth interviews, we used open-ended questions to enable the participants to reflect on and give detailed accounts of their polygynous families and socialisation. The interviews were then transcribed manually[4] and responses were analysed for content and discourse. Transcriptions took place in tandem with the data generation process.

Thematic and narrative methods of analysis were used in this study. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is not a specific method but a tool used across methodologies. Thematic analysis incorporates methods that may be independent of theory and epistemology, and may be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches (Braun and Clarke 2006; Hammersley 2015).

Results and discussion

Negative names and their impact on gendered identity

Joubert (1993) indicated that one's name is intrinsically linked to one's self-esteem. This was true of participants with negative names. Daniel and Daniel (1998) stated that personal names play significant roles in inducing and responding to racial, religious, gender and ethnic oppression. The literal meaning of a child's name in the Zulu culture has and continues to be viewed as significant. It is believed that when a child is born and named, that child will have to fulfil their destiny based on the meaning of the name they carry. In a polygynous family, children are sometimes named in response to the in-fighting between wives. One male respondent noted the significance of this:

Thuluzufe (keep quiet until you die)

> *My name is an answer to a comment the first wife made to my mother (who was a second wife). The first wife hated my mother, which I can understand as what woman would be happy to share her husband? But that is the situation we found ourselves in. This did affect me as a man because people (African people) hear my name and know immediately I am from a polygynous family who hate each other.*

The literal meaning of Thuluzufe's name can be expanded upon to infer that one has no voice and cannot speak, but that perhaps in death and the afterlife one will have freedom of speech. Clearly, Thuluzufe's name has negative connotations; he has been used or viewed as a weapon in the never-ending feud between his mother and her husband's co-wives. This name has also influenced how Thuluzufe views his gendered identity and masculinity because, according to Thuluzufe, being a man in Zulu culture means the opposite of his name. Zulu women are expected to be quiet, composed and submissive. Thuluzufe's name is therefore a contradiction of what it means to be a respected Zulu man. According to African feminist Mikell (1995), men and women in African cultures are not positioned equally. Men represent the air and women the earth, therefore men are expected to talk

confidently and boastfully. In Zulu culture, men are expected to be strong, confident warriors who command respect and attention when they speak. A negative name could therefore have a detrimental impact on that identity, as Thuluzufe's response indicated.

Other respondents reported on the impact of the meaning of their name as follows:

Soneni (where did we go wrong)

> *My name is a negative name because directly translated it means "where did we go wrong to deserve such a child?". My grandfather named me. My mother says my grandfather (my father's father) did not approve of her being a subsequent wife and he showed his disapproval even further by naming me Soneni. I do not use my full name. I go by "Sone"* [sin] *so people will not know the full story of my life but even this is not ideal but what can I do? I did discuss the possibility of changing my name but mother stated that it will give the in-laws even more reason to hate her and possibly me. My mother says the best way to counter the name is to live a good respected life.*

Zehlihlati (disappointment)

> *My original name is self-explanatory and I do believe in one's name determining their destiny that is why when I became an adult I had it legally changed. I do not know why my grandmother named me such a name. I unfortunately never had the opportunity to ask this before she passed, but I did ask my mother and she said the woman who named me was my father's mother so she could not argue with her about what she had named her child. My mother said the name my grandmother gave me meant she was a "disappointment" in that she married her son and could not produce a male child as well. If I was born in a nuclear family, I would never been given such a horrible name.*

Zehlihlati refers to the fact that her given name greatly affected how she viewed her own identity. She emphasises that although she never viewed herself as a disappointment, she chose to change her name because she did not want her future to be affected by the negative connotations of her name. Zehlihlati's name contradicts her present gender identity because she is an educated, empowered women who has a successful professional career, thus she is not a disappointment.

The preceding responses indicate that naming may be a generational issue as Zehlihlati changed her name when she became an adult because it really affected her personally, whereas a younger participant was not bothered by his name. Soneni would like to change her name but is conflicted about whether that would be construed as disrespectful to the family. From the same responses one can surmise that naming is also a gender issue because as women, Zehlihlati and Soneni appear to be significantly more affected by the negative connotations of their names than the male respondents. It is also interesting to note that male and female participants understood the far-reaching implications of changing their names. They understood that in their culture changing anything bestowed upon you by an elder in the family would be viewed as disrespectful. This is in line with the African feminist theory of seniority (Oyewumi 2002) in that in African culture the most chronologically senior person in the family is the most highly respected. Going against the most senior person who yields the most power would have dire consequences.

As argued by Suzman (1994) and supported by Thuluzufe's response, the names of children born into Zulu culture were traditionally derived from circumstances connected with their births. Furthermore, regardless of whether a child was born a girl or boy, they were traditionally named by their father or grandfather. In this article the majority of participants refuted this claim because they were named by their mothers. Interestingly though, these participants were born as a result of subsequent marriages.

None of the participants who were born from the first wives of polygynous marriages claimed to have been named by their mothers so one can infer then that their fathers named them. Although naming practices are thus more flexible in current Zulu society, name-givers still tend to give children names that come from from the social fabric of their lives (Suzman 1994). As evidenced by the participants' responses above, naming does appear to impact on identity construction, but to varying degrees, depending on factors such as gender and age.

Suzman (1994) identifies various themes of name-giving, for example: family structure (including number and sex of children); God's role in the birth of the child; parent-child relationship (including feelings of love, pride and happiness); parental circumstances; barrenness; friction in the family; and other relatives in the clan. Suzman (1994) also states that names given to children fall into certain categories: mother (in rural areas the mother and grandmother were also name-givers); father (usually the primary name-giver but dependent on the birth order of the child); birth circumstances (usually only when the birth takes place in extraordinary circumstances); child (if the child has something unusual about him or her); religion (including Christianity and ancestry or *amadlozi*).

The literature has highlighted that there has been a shift in customary naming practices. In contemporary Zulu society, a number of underlying factors give rise to personal naming practices that are influenced by current trends in the context of human rights and neo-liberal capitalism. Whereas in the past only men had the right to name their children, the women empowerment discourse, for example, has resulted in more women becoming name-givers. Males were usually the name-givers but now women have been extended that privilege as well. Ngubane and Thabethe (2013) point to the reality that women are heads of most households now, thus many fathers and grandfathers have lost their name-giving prerogative. Due to the cultural principle of seniority, it is generally only older women who are afforded the privilege of being name-givers. As evidenced in Zehlihlati's narrative, however, some older women (often grandmothers) appear to maintain the practice of giving negative names to children, thus perpetuating patriarchal culture and practices.

This change brings to light that women in Zulu culture are not positioned the same in the patriarchal system because only certain women can be name-givers. This has not proved to be positive or a break with patriarchal thinking because older women have given their grandchildren negative names thereby being perpetrators of patriarchal thinking and practice. This shows that women are not complete victims of the patriarchal system because they have carved out a space for themselves and are now able to be name-givers. The problem is that when women give a name (especially a negative name), it is empowering as well as disempowering at the same time. Empowering because they have the privilege to name, but disempowering because they are perpetrating patriarchy by giving negative names .

These names are indicative of the constant underlying tensions and unspoken rivalries in polygynous families, which are translated into the names given to the children, often by the women themselves. The above names are usually messages aimed directly at someone in the name-givers personal life; they are commands or questions that often identify sources of silent conflict (Suzman 1994). One might suggest that in making sources of conflict public through naming practices, they perhaps neutralise or contain them by pointing at the person responsible (Suzman 1994). This statement highlights the contradictions inherent in Zulu patriarchal culture. People are socialised to value privacy above all else and never make family matters public, yet the bestowing of a negative name on a child makes a very public statement regarding the war that is raging in the family. It may be that in polygynous families, co-wives find comfort in giving a child a particular name, thereby allowing the mother to say what she cannot say privately or publicly to her rival (Mkhize 2011). However, giving a child a negative name is being short-sighted. In Zulu culture, there is a belief that the name-bearer will fulfil

that name's destiny, so if they name their child a negative name, in essence they are willing into existence a negative destiny for their children.

Is there a shift from negative to positive naming practices?

Both Suzman (1994) and Mphande (2006) have highlighted a shift from negative to positive Zulu naming practices and claim that children are no longer given names that bring to mind negative connotations of tension among co-wives and ill treatment of daughters-in-law. This article, however, seems to refute this claim because one of the youngest participants' was born as recently as 1997 and yet was given a negative name. This then suggests that negative naming practices continue, particularly in polygynous families.

The implications of names on the individual's identity construction are conspicuous. Identity is a unified, purposeful aspect of self and hence is only part of the self-concept. Frable (1997) states that gender always involves an individual's relationship to gender as a social category. Ashmore (1990: 512) defines gender identity as the "the structured set of gendered personal identities that results when the individual takes the social construction of gender and biological 'facts' of sex and incorporates them in overall self-concept". Personal identities begin with a name and a name is very personal, especially in Zulu culture. A name states who you are, where you come from, and where you belong. Egan and Perry (2001) state that gender identity includes personal and social attributes, social relationships, interests and abilities, symbolic and stylistic behaviours and biological/physical/material attributes. An individual's gender identity is separate from their sex stereotype and gender attitudes.

In any culture, genders are recognised, named and given meaning in accordance with the culture's rules or customs (Augustine 2002). Culture is the matrix of gender and thus gender changes as culture changes. We have highlighted that the literature suggests that there has been a shift from negative naming of children to more Zulu-conscious naming practices. This has, however, been negated by the findings of the study. Names in a polygynous family reflect the family dynamics of the family. The participants voiced that these negative names did affect their gender construction because when they introduce themselves by name, most Zulu-speaking people (or even Nguni speakers) would know exactly what family they are from and what their family dynamics are. This proved to be humiliating for respondents at times because people would immediately pity them and judge them based on the literal meaning of their names.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, names have a significant impact on identity construction, particularly in Zulu culture. Negative names sometimes go against traditional gender roles and expectations and this have an impact on gender identity construction. If a man is given a name representing "traditional" female characteristic, he has to negotiate the contradiction between his name and the expected traditional role as a man in Zulu culture. As mentioned in the literature review, some individuals have embraced religion as a way to deviate from their traditional cultural names. Some participants voiced that they have turned to their religion and have found solace in the Christian church and believe that the meaning of their name in the Zulu culture has no bearing and carries no negative connotations for their Christian beliefs.

According to Oyěwùmí (2016), names are a product of language, society and culture. Naming practices are, however, not static, but change over time and through the cultural experiences of people in any society. A change in the social, political and linguistic influences on a society may result in changes in the names given to children. In most cases in the Nguni culture, personal names

generally function as a signal to others or to the family, about issues that cannot be openly discussed and resolved. The Nguni tradition avoids open discussion of sensitive issues; the parents or the family will name a child to express their concern in an indirect way (Ngubane 2013). A person is identified by his or her name from birth until death, unless there are situations that demand a name change such as when one finds that one's name has negative connotations which may result in negative experiences in life (Ngubane 2013). There has been a shift in naming practices in that women can now be name-givers. This change emphasises that not all women in Zulu culture are positioned equally because only certain women can be name-givers, usually based on their seniority.

As evidenced by testimony of the article's respondents, a name can either confirm a masculine identity or contradict it. Although the female participants mentioned in this article did not have glaringly contradictory names that affected their feminine identity, the negative connotations of their names appeared to affect them more personally than publicly. Negative names, however, could further reinforce women's subordination in a patriarchal society. This article therefore identifies naming as a significant social practice that is crucial to gender identity construction. The dynamic nature of culture and consequent naming practices can be considered a platform through which naming can be utilised to promote egalitarian relations between men and women

Notes

1. African intellectual feminism is criticised for being elitist and pro-Western, while popular African feminism is rooted in the lived experiences and cultural beliefs of African women but fails to mobilise against cultural practices that are oppressive. It is difficult to reduce both strands of feminism into a single theoretical context because of their inherent differences (Nnaemeka 2005).
2. According to Andrews (2012), the terms constructivism and social constructionism tend to be used interchangeably, and are included under the generic term "constructivism". Constructivism proposes that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes, while social constructionism has a social rather than an individual focus. It is less interested, if at all, in the cognitive processes that accompany knowledge. We will be using "social constructionism".
3. These types of areas are difficult to define because they are a mixture of rural and urban living. The peri-urban interface is a transitional zone between city and countryside (Mkhize 2011).
4. This process involves us taking voluminous amounts of information and reducing it to certain patterns, categories or themes and then interpreting this information by using some schema. Creswell calls this "decontexualization" and "recontextualization". This process results in a "higher level" analysis "while much work in the analysis process consists of 'taking apart' (for instance, into smaller pieces), the final goal is the emergence of a larger, consolidated picture" (Creswell 1994: 154).

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