# **#KeepItReal**:

Discursive constructions of authenticity in South African consumer culture.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

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February 2018

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.

## Abstract

Writers as diverse as Oscar Wilde (1915), Matthew Arnold (1960), Erich Fromm (1997) and a proliferation of contemporary self-help gurus, variously assert that it is preferable for people to focus on "being", or to value "who you are", instead of emphasising "having" or the material possessions you have acquired. These discourses assert that individuals content with "being" are happier and more fulfilled than those involved in the constant (and alienating) motion of acquiring material goods as representations of themselves (de Botton, 2004; Fromm, 1997; James, 2007). This thesis provides an in-depth critical exploration of one of these ideal "ways of being": authenticity. It does not seek to discover what authenticity is in an empirical sense, nor to define what it should be in a normative sense, but to map the cultural work done by changing and often contradictory discourses of personal authenticity. More specifically, this study uses a qualitative research design, social constructionist theoretical framework, and discourse analytic method to critically discuss the discursive constructions of subject authenticity in South African brand culture. The sample consisted of (1.) ten marketing campaigns of several large, mainstream brands, which were popular in South Africa from 2015 to 2017, and (2.) fifteen smaller South African "craft" brands popular in the "artisanal" context. The analysis is presented in two distinct, but interrelated, sections (namely, Selling Stories and Crafting Authenticity), where the relevant discourses of authenticity for each data set are explored in depth. Through this analysis the thesis provides a critical discussion of the ways in which these discourses of authenticity work to produce and maintain, (or challenge and subvert), subject positions, ideologies, and power relations that structure contemporary South African society.

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**Acknowledgements**

I would like to briefly acknowledge the (smart/interesting/critical/kind/patient and generous) beings who have contributed to the completion of my thesis.

To my lovely friends (Mojgan, Eva, Angela, Abby and Oliver) who fed, valued and believed in me when I was unable to do this for myself.

To my brother, mother and, of course, my father. Björn, thank you for being a consistent source of strength throughout my life. Mom, I owe so much of what I am to you, thank you.

To my empathic and insightful mentors, Gloria, Sharon, Crispin and Sarah Jane, whose unwavering faith in my ability has brought me so much stability. Thank you for always being available as a point of reference for my disorganised ideas and helping me to develop my thoughts more fully.

To my colleagues, Sam and Michelle. Sam, I am in awe of your strength and optimism. Your generosity and encouragement, particularly over these last two months, has been extraordinary. Thank you for the light and humour you bring to my life. Mill, you are the most interesting, thoughtful and fun person, and our friendship is such a rare treasure. I am so proud of what you have achieved and so grateful to have had you by my side through this journey.

To my brilliant supervisor, and mentor, Anthony Collins. Thank you for your immeasurable assistance throughout this long and challenging process. I am so grateful for your ongoing support and guidance in my work, and life more broadly. You have helped me grow, both professionally and personally, and the insight, creativity and empathy I have developed, are a result of the equal parts of care, knowledge, and generosity you continue to bring to my life.

To my two little “stuups”. Thank you for your calming presence and constant affirmation. You both bring me so much joy and love, even on the most difficult of days. Caring for you has truly taught me how to care for myself, you have profoundly changed my life for the better.

*"If essence and existence stand opposed to each other, and if their union as their actual realization is the authentic free task of human praxis, then where the factical conditions have progressed to the complete perversion of the human essence, the radical abolition of this factical condition is the definitive task. It is precisely the unceasing focus on the human essence that becomes the inexorable impulse for the founding of the radical revolution.* ***For the actual situation of capitalism is characterized not only by an economic or political crisis, but by a catastrophe of the human essence*** *– this insight condemns to failure from the outset mere economic or political reform and unconditionally demands the catastrophic abolition of the actual conditions through total revolution"* (Marcuse, 1973, p. 29).

# Chapter 1:

## Introduction

"Always be a first-rate version of yourself and not a second-rate version of someone else."

Judy Garland

"I had no idea that being your authentic self could make me as rich as I've become. If I had, I'd have done it a lot earlier."

Oprah Winfrey

"In our Oprah Winfrey world, as long as you feel that your sexual infidelity or paedophilia or invasion of Iraq is true to yourself, as well as publicly proclaiming it, your sincerity is accepted if you are believed to have acted on the basis of powerful emotions."

James (2007, p. 373)

"Whoever is versed in the jargon [of authenticity] does not have to say what he thinks, he does not even have to think it properly."

Adorno (1973, p. 9)

This thesis does not seek to discover what authenticity is in an empirical sense, nor to define what it should be in a normative sense, but to map the cultural work done by changing and often contradictory discourses of personal authenticity. More specifically, it explores the functioning of discourses which valorise a "true self" and "real me", frequently articulated in opposition to ideas of an alienated, materialistic and status-focussed "self-for-others" (Goffman, 1959; Plüg, 2012). It is concerned with the role that these discursive articulations play in the production of both subjectivities and forms of social organisation. It includes an exploration of the tension between a supposedly critical version of authenticity as offering an alternative to conformity to social expectations and the manipulations of marketing (Brown, 2010; James, 2007), and the increasing appearance of these discourses in lifestyle and marketing media which claim to offer authenticity precisely through personalised consumer options and participation in the dominant regimes of work and consumption. The complexity and influence of these deployments might be seen in the massive success of Oprah in seamlessly weaving together the sentimental narcissism of "discovering your spirit" and a personal, experience-based emotional critique of racism, child abuse and gender inequality,

as well as the audience euphoria at the free basket of luxury commodities under their seats, thereby confirming that "being yourself" and being the richest woman in the world are not only compatible, but in fact constitutive elements of the same project.

A historical overview foregrounds rapid advances in technology over the past 150 years that have led to a shift in the focus of global capitalism, from production to consumption and the promotion of brands. As goods became easier and quicker to produce, corporations required increasing consumption to ensure markets for their products (Jansson-Boyd, 2011). The function of product publicity, therefore, "changed from delivering product news bulletins to building an image around a particular brand" (Klein, 2000, p. 6). As a result of this shift, the multiple and varied consequences of consumerism and materialism became of interest in social research. In particular, the influence of consumer culture on people's sense of self became especially significant. Writers as diverse as Oscar Wilde (1915), Matthew Arnold (1960) and Erich Fromm (1997), and the proliferation of contemporary self-help gurus, variously asserted that it is preferable for people to focus on "being" or to value "who you are" instead of emphasising "having" or the material possessions you have acquired. These discourses proposed that individuals content with "being" are happier and more fulfilled than those involved in the constant (and alienating) motion of acquiring material goods as representations of themselves (de Botton, 2004; Fromm, 1997; James, 2007).

Within this burgeoning discourse, it is useful to explore how people come to understand which "ways of being" are constructed as desirable, which kinds of people "deserve" to be valued, and how these "attributes" come to be seen as socially desirable and therefore socially rewarded in the form of status, acceptance and approval (de Botton, 2004; Plüg & Collins, 2013). In his contemporary international research, James (2007) identifies culturally desirable kinds of "being", one of which is authenticity. He defines authenticity as "being real rather than false" (p. 372) and links this with what he refers to as an intrinsic value: authentic people tend to focus on meeting self-defined needs rather than unnecessary, excessive and consumer-culture produced wants (James, 2007).

This distinction between authentic needs and socially imposed wants has a substantial intellectual history. From early romantic humanism it moves in one stream via Nietzsche to Freud, asserting a fundamental tension between the individual and the demands of the social world. Freud (especially in *Civilization and its Discontents*, 1930) theorised this as the

tension between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. The other stream proceeded from Marx's critique of alienation and the fetishism of the commodity, through the Frankfurt School (especially Marcuse) and a proliferation of critiques of consumerism (Jacoby, 1975). Both streams combined and consolidated (with intellectual help from Marcuse) in the Western countercultural movements of the sixties and seventies, rejecting corporate careerism and commodity consumption in the pursuit of the true self. This is perhaps captured in the Situationist claim that they could not be co-opted, because what they wanted was not in the market (Klein, 2000).

James (2007) formalises a popular notion of authenticity asserting that it involves finding the things that are "true" irrespective of the time period or geographical location, things that are not subject to fashion or fad, and do not require utterance to become true or real (James, 2007). Authenticity is here seen to be part of an intrinsic experience of the world, rather than being influenced by the ways in which others perceive us. This suggests a return to a "pre-social" self: one that has not been tarnished by the opinions of others or the options provided by advertisers. This highlights James' argument that the task of being authentic has become increasingly more challenging within consumer-driven, image intensive societies where concentrated exposure to increasingly more versions of who you could and should be, both disguises and alienates individuals from who they "genuinely" are (James, 2007).

This was similarly expressed by Brené Brown in her extensive research on "Wholehearted living", exploring what makes US American people happy. Brown (2010) describes authenticity as a practice where people actively choose to either behave in ways that reflect their true self or not. She argues that "Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we're supposed to be and embracing who we are" (Brown, 2010, p. 50). Brown (2010) describes how hard it is to choose to be authentic when we live in a culture that stresses that we need to fit in or "belong".

Within psychological literature, the current discourse of authenticity appears to be derived from post-Freudian existential-humanist theorists who argue for revealing the "real" self and finding meaning in life through actualisation (Jacoby, 1975). Here Carl Roger's (1957) notion of congruence, and Maslow's (1967) Hierarchy of Needs (with self-actualisation at its pinnacle), have not only had an impact on academic psychology but have also been deeply influential in shaping popular discourses of true selfhood. In Jacoby's (1975) critique, the

problem with romantic notions of the post-Freudians arises from the ways in which their ideas of authenticity and self-actualisation become removed from the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they were produced (Jacoby, 1975). Although claiming to offer personal liberation, their work omits the necessary focus and attention that needs to be given to challenging and changing social structures for such liberation to occur. In other words, the post-Freudians claim to provide the means to "unleash[ing] or tap[ing] the real self and real emotions: the authentic individual" (Jacoby, 1975, p. 47) with a distinct disconnect from the social and historical factors which produce and continue to produce that "real" self.

A problem with all of these versions of authenticity is the way in which they posit a true self, from which one can be alienated by acquiescing to social influence, including and especially the influence of corporate marketing media and the demands of social status (Klein, 2000). The broad shift to social constructionism in general and theoretical anti-humanism in particular, profoundly problematises the assertion of this pre-social core authentic self (Soper, 1986). At the same time, the anti-humanist critique needs to account for the ways in which, from a phenomenological perspective, people experience deep affective responses to subjectively feeling authentic versus subjectively feeling alienated, and the experiential epiphanies of "finding oneself" in a range of diverse cultural artefacts including religious beliefs, types of music, career choices, relationships, and lifestyle commodities ranging from luxury cars to inspirational posters (Berger, 1972; de Botton, 2004; James, 2007; Klein, 2000).

Furthermore, it can be argued that the Western countercultural movement of the sixties and seventies consolidated a foundational discursive opposition between authentic selfhood and corporate consumption. In response to this, the genius of late capitalist marketing was to co-opt this tension (perhaps most visibly in the "Think Different" hip consumerism of Apple's i-branding) and re-direct the quest for the true self back into the ownership of faux-customised lifestyle commodities (Frank, 1997).

This study aims to investigate these processes by exploring discourses of authenticity and the work they perform within the marketing campaigns and brand culture in South Africa. More specifically, it aims to explore the implications that these constructions of authenticity have for systems of power which are maintained through the production of subjects who participate in consumer culture as a means of achieving and expressing their authentic selves.

Critically exploring these discourses of authenticity will articulate a critique of how social control works by identifying some contemporary mechanisms of regulation that have not previously been explored in adequate depth given the historical tendency to focus on coercive and repressive means of control (Foucault, 1981). In broad theoretical terms this could be seen to follow Foucault's (1982) critique of both traditional social determinist theories and humanist theories of personal liberation, as expressed in his idea that the aim of contemporary social resistance "is *not* to discover what *we are*, *but* to refuse what *we are*" (p. 216).

This thesis is divided into two main sections. In the first section I provide a broad historical overview of how the conceptualisations of authenticity have evolved over time, and in different intellectual traditions, highlighting the similarities and contradictions between these accounts (Chapter 2). I go on to map the social and cultural background within which this study is located, paying particular attention to the social, cultural and technological developments associated with the emergence of globalisation, individualism and consumer culture (Chapter 3). Finally, I will explore the theoretical framework for the current work, focussing specifically on social constructionism, discourse and power (Chapter 4).

The second section of this thesis contains two distinct but interrelated sections of analysis, each with their own set of data, discourses and discussion. The first section, Selling Stories, focuses on the marketing campaigns of several large, mainstream brands, which are popular in South Africa, and the deployment of discourses of authenticity within both the technical aspects (Chapter 5) and content of these endorsements (Chapter 6). The second section, Crafting Authenticity (Chapter 7), focusses on smaller South African "artisanal" brands and similarly explores the discourses of authenticity, within these labels, and their implications for both subjectivity and social regulation. Finally, I will conclude with a critical reflection of my personal role in the research process, highlight the significant aspects of the analysis, as a whole, and present considerations for further research (Chapter 8).

## Chapter 2:

## The History of Authenticity

*"Know yourself and be yourself. If we invest in deeply knowing ourselves and, then commit to being ourselves, we can unlock a life of success and happiness"*
*– Robert Hutchinson, The Authentic Life Company.*

The above quoted *Authentic Life Company* website is just one of the many media promoting the ideal of personal authenticity. From magazine to television shows, we are being told that tapping into the "real you" will be the liberating force allowing us to live happy and successful lives. And for many people today, this has become an ultimate aspiration. One of the leading exponents of this idea was Oprah and particularly her close colleague Phillip C. McGraw (Dr. Phil), who have been disseminating these ideas for the last three decades.

McGraw is particularly invested in the idea of authenticity. His best-selling self-help book "Self Matters" speaks of his personal transformation, tracing his distressing and dissatisfied feelings to experiencing himself as a "sell out" to the freedom and joy of becoming who he really was meant to be. He describes a "sell out" as someone who has forfeited his own needs, goals and desires in order to fulfil external social demands which often revolve around earning money. In a moment of blissful epiphany, he acknowledged the unfavourable trajectory his life was taking and vowed to "totally reengineer those parts of my life that were not 'me,' and build on those that felt right because they were right" (McGraw, 2001, p.6-7). By drawing on the all too common feelings of worry and dissatisfaction that plague many people, Dr. Phil creates a relatable and hopeful tale of triumph and in the process won millions of followers. The epiphany he describes involves a new relation to yourself. He describes the authentic self as:

> *…the you that can be found at your absolute core. It is the part of you that is not defined by your job, or your function, or your role. It is the composite of all your unique gifts, skills, abilities, interests, talents, insights, and wisdom. It is all your strengths and values that are uniquely yours and need expression, versus what you have been programmed to believe that you are "supposed to be and do." It is the you that flourished unself-consciously, in those times in your life when you felt happiest and most fulfilled* (McGraw, 2001, p. 30).

What is required here is not uncovering something about the world, or something outside the self. But rather the most inner "sacred" part of yourself that is very often hidden and concealed from the "everyday self" you present to the world. From this perspective the goal becomes reconnecting with and revealing your "true self" and making it central to how you live your life. This creates a very specific version of personal transformation. Usually transformation involves becoming a better, different "you". But here what is stressed is that the process of becoming who you already "truly" are, is the best version of you that you could be. In other words, previous conceptualisations of personal transformation stress that "the ideal condition you strive to reach is something you have the capacity to achieve, but it is not necessarily equated with any set of traits and characteristics already in you" (Guignon, 2004, p 2). On the other hand, the more contemporary notion of self-transformation through achieving authenticity "directs you to realize and *be* that which you *already are,* the unique, definitive traits already there within you" (Guignon, 2004, p. 2). Closely linked to this is the conceptualisation of authenticity as "a quest" or a pursuit. Here the reward of finding the "real you" is seen to emanate from the "journey" or process itself and not from completion or reaching a final end point (Funk, 2015).

According to Guignon (2004) the ideal of authenticity appears to have two main aspects. Firstly, it involves identifying and accessing the "real" parts of yourself. These refer to all the qualities, thoughts, feelings, desires and abilities that make you a unique and complex individual. This first step often involves differentiating these qualities from those aspects of you which are not genuinely "yours". This process of coming to recognise which parts of ourselves are genuine can be achieved through introspection, self-reflection and meditation. It involves becoming aware of your own thoughts, feelings and actions and critically reflecting on them to gain a better understanding of your nature and purpose. The second aspect of the authentic ideal stresses the need to act consistently with this genuine inner self. In other words, people need to express their "true selves" in their everyday interactions with others. From this perspective, personal authenticity is achieved by ensuring that there is no crack, gap or split between presentation and "assumed essence" of an individual. In other words, "the outward performance of the self needs to be in utmost congruence with the inner self" (Funk, 2015, p. 18). Goffman (1959) refers to this as there being consistency or alignment between the "front" and "back" stages. As Guignon (2004) explains, we need to "*be* what we *are*" (p. 4) in order to achieve the authentic ideal, and such achievement would produce both a fulfilling self-actualising experience as well as approval from other. These ideas can be

traced back to the European philosophers Rousseau and Kierkegaard, both of whose work will be discussed later.

In this chapter I will provide an in-depth and detailed discussion of the historical development of the notion of authenticity. I will begin by giving a brief overview of some of the areas of agreement and disagreements across the literature, drawing specifically on the works of Funk (2015) and Ferrara (1998), in order to provide a framework for conceptualising the wealth of divergent accounts to follow. I will then map the historical background of the concept ending with a brief discussion of the current popular accounts of subject authenticity provided by several contemporary authors. Finally, I will conclude the chapter by problematising the concept of authenticity from a social constructionist perspective, framing the context and aim of this current work.

### 2.1. Outlining Areas of Consensus and Dissent

Authenticity is an elusive and slippery term, used in a variety of different contexts, making it difficult to define. Entangled in this problem is its relationship with several other contested concepts: reality, truth, identity and the self. A range of scholars, from philosophers, through psychologists, to New Age writers have explored the relevance of authenticity. Several authors, including Erickson (1995), Golomb (1995), Ferrara (1998), Guignon (2004), Vannini and Williams (2009), and Funk (2015), have provided comprehensive and overlapping, albeit contrasting, accounts of some the key writings in this area.

One of the key areas of agreement in the literature which is discussed by many authors, in many ways is "the paradox of authenticity". Most generally, this paradox refers to the way in which authenticity simultaneously requires declaration and disavowal, and is therefore simultaneously present and absent. As Funk (2015) describes, "authenticity cannot be perceived in or for itself but can only be externally ascribed or observed as an effect of mediation" (p. 13). In other words, authenticity is not a naturally apparent phenomenon. It requires external representation in some form in order for it to be observed. A simple example of this can be seen in the "genuine" stamps of authenticity placed on "real" leather belts, bags or shoes or "proper" sterling silver or gold jewellery. This process of achieving external recognition, however, directly undermines the quality of authenticity (Straub, 2012). For example, showing or telling somebody that your belt or bangle is authentic would be unfavourable. Similarly, Culler (1988) argues that the "authentic sight requires markers but

our notion of the authentic is the unmarked" (p. 164). Additionally, many authors stress that providing a direct description or representation of authenticity is nearly impossible, and thus defining authenticity becomes extremely difficult. Funk (2015) refers to this "inbuilt defiance to definite classification" as "*resistance to unambiguity*" (p. 16) and Ferrara (2009) describes it as a "protean" (p. 21). For this reason, authenticity is often defined "*ex negative"* (in terms of what is lacking or "is not"). In other words, authenticity is best understood in relation to inauthenticity, or that which is fake, superficial, simulated or imitated (Funk, 2015; Hartman, 2002; Huber & Seita, 2012).

As previously mentioned, one of the reasons why authenticity is such an elusive and contested concept, lies in its near inextricable closeness to notions of "real" and "truth". Funk (2015) asserts that whenever authenticity is used, "a notion of truth is also invoked" and the forms, which this "truth" may take varies according to the object or subject under discussion. For example, a close companion may be referred to as "a true friend" or Shakespeare's works are often described as "true masterpieces". Funk (2015) argues that although authenticity and truth are often used interchangeably, with an implied assumption of sameness, they appear to have a dialectical or antagonistic relationship. More specifically, the term truth can only be used and understood within "symbolic frames of references" (Funk, 2015, p. 14) that humans use to describe and explain reality, it cannot move beyond this. Alternatively, he suggests that the term authenticity does appear to exceed these limits by referring to the existence of reality not captured through these representations. Here, it appears Funk (2015) is differentiating between the objective connotations associated with truth (it is something that one can see and observe, for example "personality") and the more subjective implications of authenticity (it can also be something that one *feels,* for example "aura"). The conflation of these two terms tends to reinforce the incorrect assumption of authenticity as absolute.

Authenticity has been used in a plethora of different contexts and can refer to both inanimate and animate things. Knaller (2006, p. 22 as cited in Funk, 2015) highlights the necessity of broadly differentiating between these two different types of authenticity (namely distinguishing between "object authenticity" and "subject authenticity") as the conceptualisation of authenticity differs remarkably depending on the circumstance. This, in itself, appears to be a very difficult differentiation to make as very often authenticity involves both people and objects simultaneously. A good example of this is Moore's (2002) three-part typology for framing authenticity which is useful and applicable beyond the specific genre

(authentication of music) within which it was developed. He suggests that there are three different ways in which authenticity can be understood, namely *first person authenticity* (authenticity of expression); *third person authenticity* (authenticity of execution) and *second person authenticity* (authenticity of experience). Although his work leans more toward discussing object authenticity, Moore (2002) argues that the difference between the three different types is based on who (as opposed to what) is in the process of being authenticated, more specifically, the artist, the audience or another. Each of these "types" of authenticity will be described below and illustrated using Lionel Shriver's (2003) well-known novel "We Need to Talk about Kevin", and its unusual depiction of motherhood, as an example.

According to Moore (2002) first person authenticity focusses on the original artists and whether they are able to express their own personal message to their audience "in an unmediated form" (p. 214). For example, one would question whether Shriver's (2003) novel accurately represents her own personal feelings and experiences of being a mother of a "challenging" child. Third person authenticity is interested in artists who are portraying another individual's message and whether they are able to "accurately represent the ideas of another" (Moore, 2002, p. 218) through their performance. For example, Shriver (2003) could be telling her mother's or a friend's experience of motherhood, and the degree to which her narrative captures *their* feeling or experiences would be relevant here. Second person authenticity focusses on the audience or receiver, and focusses on whether a performance is fully capturing the listener's life experiences or "'telling it like it is' for them" (Moore, 2002, p. 220). This, for example, would be seen as the degree to which readers (particularly those who are mothers) identify with and relate to Shriver's (2003) depiction of the challenges of motherhood in her novel. This type is particularly useful because it stresses that there is no innate or intrinsic quality in either the person or the object that deems it authentic. Rather, authenticity occurs as an interaction of people and things - "it emerges from the alignment of the listener's experiences of life with the aesthetic performance on offer" (Funk, 2015, p. 20). In this study, conspicuous consumption itself is understood as the "performance on offer". Defining authenticity as interactive and emergent stresses the relational and transient nature of the concept and moves away from fixed or unambiguous definitions.

This study will focus more specifically on the personal articulation of authenticity. Ferrara (1993) argues that personal authenticity involves the "courage to stand by one's ethical intuitions even in the face of one's contingent inability to work them out in the language of

abstract reflection" (p. 136). Ferrara's (1998) work on subject authenticity provides a pivotal framework for integrating and understanding the modern accounts of authenticity explored in this review. Broadly this framework can be seen to outline two distinctly different versions of authenticity which represent the extremities between which all other conceptualisations may be positioned. The first pole values the presence of "an uncompromising, existentialist and radical self-determination" (Funk, 2015, p. 18). In other words, individuals who have a clear and coherent idea of "who they are" and that they want, an unwavering commitment to pursuing or achieving these. The second version of authenticity, on the other hand, is seen to be produced within open and honest, and selfless and courteous interactions between individuals. Funk (2015) refers to this more interactive or co-operative version of authenticity as "interauthenticity".

More specifically, Ferrara's (1998) detailed conceptual model highlights four distinct dimensions for understanding various positions of authenticity that different individuals may occupy. Each dimension contrasts two different aspects of authenticity. The first dimension differentiates between what Ferrara (1998) refers to as *substantialist* and *intersubjective* notions of authenticity, which are closely tied to different conceptualisations of the self. The former (discussed later in the works of Guignon (2004) and Funk (2015) to mention just a few) stems from the essentialist perspective of the self that asserts that all individuals have a true, core essence which they are continually attempting to present through their interactions with other people. These interpersonal interactions, therefore, merely provide a space for individuals to express their core self or, more likely, inhibit "the possibilities inherent in the self" (Ferrara, 1998, p. 54). The latter, on the other hand, views identity, and therefore (in)authentic identity, as entrenched in social interactions. "What distinguishes the authentic ones is something else, namely, the capacity to express a *uniqueness* which has been socially constituted through the interplay of the singularity of the formative contexts and the singularity of our responses to them" (Ferrara, 1998, p. 54).

The second dimension that Ferrara (1998) describes is the contrast between *antagonistic* and *integrative* notions of personal authenticity. This dimension differentiates between those versions of authenticity that stress a deliberate divergence "from the constrictions of an [established and well]-entrenched social order" (Ferrara, 1998, p. 55) and those that do not. *Antagonism* highlights that authenticity should involve opposing or challenging the expectations of those around us, including those of society more generally. The *integrative*

version, on the other hand, stresses that these structures and institutions, although repressive and constraining, also provide the "symbolic material" from which we produce, and where we perform, our authentic identities. Ferrara (1998) therefore argues that these two contrasting conceptualisations present very differently in terms of both responses and attitudes. *Integrative* authenticity tends to produce caring and compromising responses, whereas, *antagonistic* authenticity tends to elicit fearful responses. This contrast can be seen in the juxtaposed positions on identity presented by Freud and Foucault (both of which are discussed later) and is similarly explored by Trilling (1972) in his discussion of Burke's (1764) account of "the sublime and beautiful".

The third dimension that Ferrara (1998) explores makes a distinction between *centred* and *centreless/decentred* understandings of personal authenticity. Theorists whose works assert a *centred* version of authenticity tend to stress the need for an individual to preserve an ordered and coherent sense of identity. This is achieved by differentiating that which is core or essential to their identity from that which is less important or lying on the margin. Additionally, they argue that clarity amongst the chaos and complexity of multiple experiences is found by relating these various experiences to their central life goal. In other words, "authentic subjectivity, understood along these lines, neither renounces unity and coherence in favour of an unstructurable self-experience nor seeks a coercive coherence stemming from principles external to the self" (Ferrara, 1998, p. 56). Alternatively, works which assert the *decentred* notion of authenticity actively resist or challenge the idea of achieving a unified or coherent "internal hierarchy" of the core and peripheral aspects of self and life (Ferrara, 1998, p. 56).

Finally, Ferrara (1998) suggests that notions of authenticity can be categorised by understanding the contrast between *immediate* and *reflective* notions of authenticity. This dimension arose from the public political discourse of authenticity which, through the emergence of identity-politics, equated difference with identity. Notions of *immediate* authenticity argue that parts of us that are truly authentic, and hence those worth cultivation and acknowledgement, are those aspects that differentiate us from others. In other words, they are "the features that set us apart from the rest of our fellow human beings, or that set one people apart from all the other peoples of the earth" (Ferrara, 1998, p. 58). Similar to Heidegger's concept "Eigentlichkeit", framed as "immediate uniqueness", personal authenticity is a collation of all our individual "differences" from others, minus our

"sameness". On the other hand, *reflective uniqueness* frames authenticity not in terms of the "objective" or "factual" traits of uniqueness themselves, but rather stresses the more specific, unique manner in which each individual combines their aspects of similarity and difference to others. In other words, it focuses on the amalgamation of "the universal with the particular aspects of an identity" (Ferrara 1998, p. 58), merging (as Rousseau did), both aspects of commonality and specificity rather than prioritising one over the other.

This framework provides a useful conceptualisation for understanding the diverse accounts to follow. As mentioned earlier, the notion of authenticity is by no means a new idea, and the more contemporary conceptualisations should not be understood ahistorically. Various competing and contradictory conceptualisations of the term have developed over as many as twenty centuries. Several of these key developments in thought will now be explored.

### 2.2. Early Christian Doctrines

Guignon (2004) argues that one of the reasons that the ideal of authenticity is so widely accepted and adopted is that it is strongly rooted in important practices and beliefs significant in Western history. One of these important traditions is religion, specifically Christianity. For centuries, religion has urged us to search within ourselves and to connect with our "real truth" for direction and purpose in our lives. This idea emerged in the writings of "late medieval and early modern religious reformers" (Guignon, 2004, p. viii) who, arguing for a less rigid and authoritative doctrine, placed value on personal and intimate one-on-one connections with God, with the individual's own sense of integrity guiding their actions. Here the idiom "the Kingdom of God is within you" is stressed. In other words, all people should be able to look deep within themselves and find God, and connecting with the God within them will lead them to the meaningful and purposeful lives they all desire. Also located within this historical context is the Christian practice of confession, which can be seen as the origin of self-examination. According to Guignon (2004), many of the self-help writers appear to recognise and acknowledge the influence of religious traditions in their modern writings. This is particularly evident in the way they describe people as having "God given gifts" and harnessing and using these gifts to their full potential is what is required for "successful living". The question that arises from this discussion is whether these religious beliefs are still relevant in modern society, where the context (valorising science and critical reflection) is so vastly different from those in which the traditions and beliefs were established.

Religious doctrines, more broadly, tended to be concerned with engagement in meaningful and purpose-filled lives and this idea has to a large degree, has been adopted, particularly in 20th Century Western societies, through "living authentically". Here, authenticity is linked to the idealisation of self-possession or "owning yourself" (Guignon, 2004). "Become all that you can be" is a good example of the rhetoric used with the ideal of self-ownership. One of the main criticisms for the perspective that values self-ownership is that achieving authenticity seems to be a highly elusive and evasive process. The person is exhorted to become fully aware of the self within, without any explicit sense of how one would achieve this, or what achieving this would really look or feel like. For this reason, a marketplace of self-help programmes which claim to assist people in the process of "harnessing" their "inner selves" have emerged.

This, however, is not the only conceptualisation of meaningful living that has been developed over the years. Alternatively, self-loss is idealised for meaningful living. From this perspective people are encouraged to stop trying to control and manage their own feelings and needs, and to look to greater and more omnipotent sources for control and guidance. The phrase "give yourself over to something greater than yourself" (Romans 6:13, The Holy Bible, New King James Version) or "Instead, give yourselves completely to God" is a good example of this process of self-release (Guignon, 2004). It can be argued that this ideal stems from the idea that most social tension arises from valorising egocentricity, specifically in individualistic societies, because this persistent self-interest leads to increased competition for affirmation and success. When others are viewed primarily as "rivals" or "impediments", people tend to become more aggressive and resentful towards each other. This undermines mutually beneficial and cooperative social relations and, as a result, produces experiences of isolation and alienation. The Russian writer and philosopher Fyodor Dostoyevsky thus stresses the need for "*kenōsis*" (meaning "self-emptying" or "self-rejecting") as a means to fulfilment. This concept has a strong focus on closeness with others, where the main focus of life should be belonging to a greater whole as opposed to succeeding on your own. Meaningful living therefore comes from responding to a "higher calling" which may be seen as God or social transformation. "The suggestion here is that we should seek release from the bondage to ego, not ever greater involvement in the 'I'" (Guignon, 2004, p. 4). This notion, particularly in the form of self-transcendence, is also a founding principle of Eastern religion (Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, 1966). Both these perspectives are problematic and their shortfalls tend to be highlighted by the alternate view.

Authenticity assumes a particular version or theoretical conceptualisation of the self. More specifically, it is based on the assumption that within each one of us is a unique set of traits and characteristics that represent our "true self" and that this unique self provides us with useful resources and it is therefore worthwhile for this real self to be expressed. The notion of authenticity relies on these assumptions to come into existence, and hence, was not always accepted or commonly held. Trilling (1972) argues that these conceptualisations of self only become fully developed and popular in the later 18th century. The core idea that really grounded the notion of authenticity and brought it to the forefront, is the assumption that there is a clear differentiation between the inner and outer self, the inner being the source of the real true self and the outer which is a false, inauthentic self. Trilling (1972) argues that this key idea was not fully articulated in Western culture until relatively recently, approximately 200 years ago.

Before the distinction between inner and outer self was as distinctly defined as in the modern conceptualisations of the self, many other interpretations of the self were presented by various philosophers. For example, Socrates when writing about "Know thyself', although superficially appears to imply a differing inner and outer self, actually stems from a very different theoretical understanding. In Socrates era, individuals' purpose and meaning, their being that is now consider "the self", was derived entirely from its functionality within a greater whole. In other words, the defining feature of all objects and people, was "determined by its place and function within that wider whole" (Guignon, 2004, p. 7).

### 2.3. The Enlightenment Period

South African psychologist and life coach Claire Newton shares the details of one of her talks on her website. The talk is entitled "To Thine Own Self Be True - The Confident YOU!", a phrase (or part thereof) frequently used as a mantra for 12 Step support programmes all over the world. This, in the modern understanding of the authentic ideal, highlights the quest for authenticity as a goal in and of itself. In this quote from Shakespeare's Hamlet, authenticity is seen as desirable as a means to something else: being true to others. In this context it was used to juxtapose to contrasting characters: Polonius (who was portrayed as fake, dishonest, manipulative and selfish) and Hamlet (who was portrayed as more honest, sincere and self-aware). In other words, the value of authenticity was seen to be its social value and not its personal value (Guignon, 2004). Several crucial historical changes in thinking occurred, predominantly during the 16th Century in Europe that paved the way to this modern

understanding of authenticity. In relation to the notion of the self, the Enlightenment was a period of complexity and contradiction. It was through this period of contestation that the "self became an issue, a point of fundamental instability in the world" (Mansfield, 2000, p. 14).

Descartes' (1964; 1970) work is particularly relevant to any discussion of the Enlightenment period. His most well-known quote "I think, therefore I am" (translated from "*Cogito ergo sum*") marks an important shift in focus (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Firstly, it stresses individuality - the existence of people as separate beings marked by "I". Secondly, it highlights the role that cognitive functioning plays in guiding and interpreting experience. The emphasis on "the conscious processes of observation, analysis and logic as the key instruments in the search for objective truth" (Mansfield, 2000, p. 14) which stem from this assertion have come to be the defining characteristics of Western modern thought.

Descartes' (1964; 1970) influence can be seen in the following historical shifts that occurred during the Enlightenment period. Firstly, the shift toward religious individualism. Here, thinkers including Jan Hus and Martin Luther were at the forefront of a new Christian religious orientation which moved away from material indulgence and acts/behaviours/rituals outside of the individual as a means of redemption and rather stressed inner personal devotion to God as the key requirement for salvation (Guignon, 2004; Mansfield, 2000). As a result, in the West, increasingly people turned their attention to their internal intentions becoming what Foucault refers to as "subjects of inwardness"- subjects preoccupied with what they feel and desire (Rabinow, 1984).

Secondly, during this period modern science achieved prominence. Advances in science lead to a fall in popularity of the idea of a divine plan. There was a shift in thinking away from "all things happen for a reason" proverbs which stress that reality has a coherence or significant and organised sequence guided by a God. Instead, the world, and all contained within it, was seen to be guided by a set of arbitrary yet specific set of causal relationships (Guignon, 2004). One's purpose was seen as "proper" only in so much as it contributed to the functionality of this system. From this anthropocentric perspective, people are constructed as distant and objective subjects (Mansfield, 2000) who observe, measure and analyse the separate, knowable objects of the world (Kant, 1929) as a means of mastering and

manipulating them for their own use (Taylor, 1989). Fitting into "God's plan" or the "natural order" was no longer desirable - controlling and transforming nature came to be seen as key.

In addition, views on the origins of society began to shift. In contrast to previous notions of society as innate and predetermined, new emerging understandings of society, as a human-made and contractual arrangement between people for personal benefit, came to the forefront. Linked to this shift is the idea that, as society is chosen by individuals, the social realm remains external to, and separate from, our "real self". From this perspective, we are only truly ourselves in private, separate from the public, social lives we perform (Arendt, 1958). This reiterates, and reinforces, the first shift to individualism (and intrapersonal introspection) explored previously in the discussion of religion.

### 2.4. Romanticism Responds

Toward the end of the 18th Century, the Enlightenment world view, stressing rationality, objectivity and control, began to lose favour. The sharp distinction between people and their environment, reflected in the sharp distinction between reason and emotion, was critiqued for making people feel fragmented and disillusioned. As a response, Romanticism emerged as an alternate movement. Guignon (2004) stresses three aspects of Romanticism which have had a significant influence on our contemporary understanding of the concept of authenticity.

Firstly, regaining the sense of wholeness and unity which was fractured with the modern world view. This aspect of Romanticism reflects a biblical narrative structure: in the beginning, people are pure and untainted and had a closeness and connectedness with their surroundings, which is then lost through the acquisition of knowledge and reflection and leads to an experience of turmoil, which in turn prompts a quest for "rebirth"- a return to a previous unsullied state of wholeness. In Romantic thought, however, this "rebirth" does not merely indicate a return to a previous pure state, unchanged. Rather, it brings the individual a greater degree of insight, and a more unified sense of being, than experienced in the beginning. One of the most significant Romantic writers, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1992), attributed the loss of connectedness and unity to the emergence of social living, in particular the demanding concerns of status present in these social interactions. This idea, although divorced from its original context and meaning, still holds popularity today and is evident in self-help advice columns that provide us with "7 Ways to live a Simpler Life in a Modern World" (Gardner, n.d.) or "15 things you must give up to be happy again" (Chernoff, 2014).

Rousseau's (1997) work, specifically his book *The New Heloise* which was released in more than 70 editions, was extremely influential and he played a fundamental role in disseminating and popularising the idea of authenticity (Varga & Guignon, 2016).

Rousseau (1921) goes on to stress that our "natural instincts" as humans are always good and right, and that all our failings and offences can be seen to originate from our social surroundings. This leads to the second key aspect of Romanticism linked to authenticity: an emphasis on "a total immersion in one's own deepest and most intense feelings" (Guignon, 2004, p. 27), rather than rational thinking and empiricism, as a means of uncovering reality and truth. Although we may gather information from others and the world, what is really important lies solely in our own spontaneous and basic emotions (Starobinski, 1988). As Rousseau (1921, p. 227) states: "it is by these feelings alone that we perceive fitness and unfitness of things in relation to ourselves, which leads us to seek or shun these things". It is clear that, despite never using a word that could directly be translated into the word "authenticity", his writings fully encapsulate the commonly assumed tenets of authenticity. As Guignon (2004) relates:

> *There is the distrust of society and its demands and the idea of an inner, "true self," where this notion captures both the spontaneous child within and the "noble savage" that existed (or is imagined to have existed) in some "happy age" in the distant past. There is the nostalgia for an earlier state and the intimation that by turning inward and hearing the inner voice of the true self, one might make contact with the great groundswell of Nature from which we have sprung. There is the idea that our access to the source of our being is achieved not by cognitive reflection, but by feeling. And there is a conception of freedom as liberation from socially imposed constraints* (p. 31).

This quote is particularly important because it highlights the articulation of authenticity as "natural" and "pre-social", an idea reflected in several other authors' more recent definitions of authenticity including Trilling's (1972), James (2007) and Brown (2010) all of which will be discussed in more detail later.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, "to know oneself" from this perspective relies heavily on awareness of what we feel, however, being visible to oneself alone is not

sufficient for self-knowledge. Rousseau argues that reaching a position of self-awareness requires that others both identify and validate the person you feel to be. Rousseau's (1953) numerous personal writings can therefore be seen as an attempt to achieve this confirmation. This is linked to what Taylor (1989) referred to as "expressivism": the process though which our personal inner feelings are compelled to be externalised in the world around us. Taylor (1989) is particularly interested in the way in which our inner life manifests in different forms- through facial expressions, bodily gestures, writing, speech, and creative endeavours.

The third way in which Romanticism is relevant to the concept of authenticity is that is positions the discovery of "the self" not just as the ultimate and all-important task of exploring reality, but one that constitutes reality in its entirety. Here, perhaps, we see the differentiation between "subjective truth" and "objective truth", and the heavy prioritisation of the former moves us toward a notion of authenticity (Starobinski, 1988). From the Romantic school of thought, this very journey of self-discovery, in itself, becomes the self. Focus is not on finding a pre-existing self, waiting to be exposed, but rather the process of self-creation that occurs during our pursuit for self-discovery. In other words, we "just *are* what we make of ourselves in the course of our quest for self-definition. The important thing is the creative act itself, not objective self-assessment or accurate representation" (Guignon, 2004, p. 39). It is important to reiterate that this artistic process should not be confused with self-reflection as understood in the enlightenment era- it is one of complete emotional immersion. By continually expressing your rawest and most spontaneous feelings, you create yourself as true and real. Ironically, this process is by no means natural or automatic- it requires rigorous effort to be able to reject or eliminate society's influence and solely focus on expressing what is true to you. In this sense, authenticity becomes viewed as asocial. This perspective is in stark contrast to the articulation of authenticity within the broad area of existentialist philosophy. Several key theorists from this era will be explored below.

### 2.5. Authenticity through Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger

Kierkegaard, sometimes referred to as the father of existentialist philosophy, made a valuable contribution to the concept of authenticity. Of particular interest is his assertion that social and cultural institutions create "inauthenticity" where people become stereotypical replicas of a crowd. High levels of "massification" (the process of enforcing unity and conformity) in societies cause individuals to become extremely anxious and dejected. In order for people to be able to avoid this despair, and "become what one is" (Kierkegaard, 1992, p. 130), they

need to find meaning or value in the world, and actively work at expressing those parts that will solidify this meaning as a concrete identity. This is "not a matter of solitary introspection, but rather a matter of passionate commitment to a relation to something outside oneself that bestows one's life with meaning" (Varga & Guignon, 2006). Here, authenticity can be seen to be conceptualised as accurate self-expression. Since Kierkegaard was primarily a theological thinker, he stressed the importance of relating to God (Golomb, 1995). Golomb (1995) highlights the complex and contradictory life/work relationship that Kierkegaard experienced, describing it as an "existential dialectic of authenticity" (Golomb, 1995, p. 22). Kierkegaard's existential worry and confusion about who he was and how he could achieve a sense of authenticity in his life was the driving force behind his writing. On the other hand, the process of writing was ultimately the medium through which Kierkegaard came to experience himself as authentic. This links back to aspects of Rousseau's writing, particularly his autobiographical works.

I now turn to another famous existentialist philosopher, Nietzsche. Although never referring to the term authenticity specifically in his works, numerous ideas regarding "authentic being" can be clearly traced in his writing. Most notably, he regularly distinguished between two concepts: *Wahrheit* (truth) and *Wahrhaftigkeit* (truthfulness). He argues that truth and truthfulness, although often used synonymously, are two completely different concepts, and evidence of the latter by no means implies the existence of the former. Thus while admiring the "truthfulness" in earlier philosophers', such as Schopenhauer and Socrates, works, he rejected their "truths". Nietzsche's work recurrently highlights a marked shift of focus from philosophy to philosophers, and in turn, from truth (as it was initially understood) to personal authenticity (Golomb, 1995). Golomb (1995) suggests that the Nietzschean concept of *Wahrhaftigkeit* is remarkably similar to the concept Heidegger used, *eigentlich.* Nietzsche argues that in order for people to achieve a state of "truthfulness" they need to "accept life in all its harshness and its complete immanency" (Golomb, 1995, p. 46). A deep sense of alienation emerges between an individual, "his 'civilized' acts and his civilization" when he is no longer able to create or express himself in a genuine manner. In other words, Nietzsche aims to encourage us, through his writing, to resist the repressive force of our culture by exposing or revitalising our ability to be creative. This idea was later articulated in psychological terms by Freud (1961).

Related to both Kierkegaard's and Nietzsche's conceptualisations of the self, is Heidegger's concept called *Dasein* (directly translated as 'being-there'), which he also understands as a "*relation* of being" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 12). Heidegger was mainly interested in exploring the meaning of "being" and intimately entwined with this is authentic being- they are part of one and the same question. In other words, "authenticity is a genuine 'is-ness' hence to ask about the meaning of Being is to look for the meaning of authenticity" (Golomb, 1995, p. 62). The term authenticity itself is most closely associated with Heidegger, despite him never using this world himself. In his work *Being and Time* (1962/1926), he created the word "*Eigentlichkeit" by combining the term "eigentlich*" (directly translated means 'really' or 'truly') *and the word "eigen"* (directly translated means 'own' or 'proper'). Varga and Guignon (2006) suggest then, that this directly translated would mean "'being one's own', implying the idea of owning up to, and owning, what one is and does" (n.p.). Part of his framing of authenticity involves the concept of "*Geworfenheit"* (a sense of being thrown or falling). By this he means that people have little control of the world around them and therefore their behaviours, to a large degree, are initially prescribed to them. Recognising that "being thrown" constrains them, and being confronted with the possibility of their inevitable death, is what prompts people to stand up to these forces and "make themselves". In other words, "individuals transform their mode of being to reflect a sense of care (i.e., assumed responsibility) toward others and their being themselves" (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 290).

### 2.6. (In)authenticity and Alienation

A central idea implied in many of the conceptualisations of authenticity previously discussed is that inauthentic living leads to feelings of alienation, or perhaps even that alienation and inauthenticity are different articulations of a similar, overlapping concept. In the same way that authenticity is often understood in close relation to inauthenticity, Ollman (1971) argues that "alienation can only be grasped as the absence of unalienation, each state serving as a point of reference for the other" (pp. 131-132). The theorist, arguably, most interested in the concept of alienation specifically is Marx. Marx draws on the works of several other theorists and philosophers as he develops this concept. For example, Hegel's (1807) notions of "objectification" and "estrangement" presented in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as well as references to Aristotle's *Nichomacean Ethics*, and Rousseau's (1762) *The Social Contract* are all evident is his work (Wendling, 2009).

Reiss (1997) argues that for Marx, alienation refers to "a philosophical term, used to describe a socioeconomic and psychological condition, for political ends with moral and rhetorical force" (p. 18). It specifically highlights the destructive impact that capitalist modes of production have on people, including the negative effects on both their bodies and psyches, as well as "the social processes of which they are a part" (Ollman, 1971, p. 131). These destructive consequences may include exhaustion, physical and mental ill health, and strained interpersonal relationships, to name but a few. In other words, both the individual person and his/her way of living may be referred to by Marx as being "alienated". Furthermore, he suggests that all people can experience alienation, even those in positions of relative power. "The forms of alienation differ for each class because their position and style of life differ, and, as expected, the proletariat's affliction is the most severe" (Ollman, 1971, p. 132).

As alluded to previously, Marx uses this concept frequently in his works in a number of different ways. Firstly, he uses it to refer to workers- specifically those who work for someone else. These people lose a sense of independence and control in their lives as they are forced or coerced to work "under the dominion" (Marx, 1956, p. XXII) of others. This is compounded by the strong value that is placed on productivity and competition within capitalist systems which tends to produce spaces where people and their needs become less important than profit. In other words, workers are coerced into a situation where they feel they have to choose between exploitation and deprivation. In systems like this, workers become alienated or estranged from both the goods they produce and the work they do: they do not own what they produce, it is created for the profit of someone else. Furthermore, their work tends to be repetitive and unskilled, labour is divided and narrowly specialised, and therefore it lacks personal meaning and the pleasure of creativity (Reiss, 1997; Wendling, 2009). As Marx (1956) describes:

> *the fact that labour is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind* (p. XXIII).

Finally, people become both disconnected from others (who they see as opponents with whom they must compete for limited resources) or "isolated from the social whole" (Ollman 1971, p. 134) as well as and separated from their "intrinsic" selves. This Marx (1956) refers

to as “self-estrangement” or “the loss of his self” (p. XXIII). “An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from his labour, from his life activity, from his species-being is the estrangement of man from man. When man confronts him, he confronts the other man” (Marx, 1956, p. XXIV).

This draws attention to interrelation of the self, others and work. It highlights the idea that what people do is intricately linked with who people are, and emphasises the disparity between the current state of society and the potential people could achieve. Interestingly, for Hegel (1807), as Hyppolite (1979) explains: “The term estrangement (*Entfremdung*) is stronger than the term alienation (*Entäusserung*). It implies not only that the natural self gives itself up, alienates itself, but also that it becomes alien to itself” (p. 385, as cited in Wendling, 2009, p. 17).

Initially alienation was used to refer to the experiences of work- specifically those of European factory workers in the 18th century. Today, many people in Indonesia, China and Vietnam (Klein, 2000), to name but a few, are still working under equally bad, if not worse, conditions. In South Africa, in addition to factory workers, alienation may relate closely to those engaged in “menial” work (for example domestic workers, miners or security guards) or “no work” (such as home-makers and students). Alienation, however, is by no mean limited to the working sphere, and everyone has the potential to experience it. In a broad sense alienation refers to a human “experience of feeling dehumanised” (Reiss, 1997, p. 16) and tends to occur when a person feels like their needs have not been recognised or fulfilled. These conditions lead people to feel a range of different experiences (including feeling drained, dejected or apathetic; powerless and isolated; mistreated and dissatisfied; or angry and aggressive) all of which can be considered the “subjective aspects of alienation” (Reiss, 1997, p. 17). In this sense, alienation is also commonly used as a means of conceptualising unhappiness.

### 2.7. Psychology and the “Real Me”

The conceptualisation of authenticity as “asocial” was developed throughout the 19$^{th}$ Century and extended to refer to more than going against societal norms and to include another related aspect: being “antisocial”. Here we begin to unpack the significant role of the discipline of psychology in our modern understanding of authenticity. One of the key ideas in the above exploration is the return to an infantile, childlike state as a means of (re)establishing an

authentic self. This is particularly evident in the rise of the discipline of psychology, where early childhood experience plays a significant role in the production of adult personality (Giddens, 1991), and, in particular in the conceptual framing of psychotherapy where the overall therapeutic goal is (almost always) "to discover our own personal truth" (Miller, 1997, p. 4).

### 2.7.1. Psychodynamic Psychology and The True Self

Freud, the founding psychodynamic theorist, suggests that the self contains three interrelated but different parts, namely the Id, Ego and Superego. Each of these parts perform distinct functions. From this perspective, the conscious part of the self (the part responsible for all "executive functioning- that thinks, plans and acts) which is referred to as the ego, only constitutes a small part of who we are. It can be defined as "the individual's image of himself as a self-conscious being… which experiences and senses the outside world" (Thurschwell, 2000, p. 82). The ego stems from an unconscious primal entity of the self, that we are all born with, which Freud (1961) calls the id. The id may be defined as "an amorphous unstructured set of desires" (Thurschwell, 2000, p. 82). This aspect of the self holds all of our basic instincts or drives (for food and sex and other pleasure generating activities) that operate beyond our awareness, guiding us toward certain actions and producing different emotions. The id operates on the "pleasure principle", constantly seeking immediate gratification, and the ego operating from the "reality principle" attempts to curb rampant desires as a means of self-preservation (Thurschwell, 2000). From this perspective, the authentic, real self is this hidden part of us that covertly shapes all our experiences and behaviours. In other words, the id would be identified as the truest, most authentic aspect of the self. When interacting in the world we cannot crudely display these crude and primal desires uncensored. Our ego mediates these drives, turning them into more socially acceptable and palatable expressions. For Freud (1961), the ego is merely the façade or mask we use to disguise our raw basic selves from others (Guignon, 2004).

Later Freud went on to stress that these instincts are not always pleasurable for others. They include aggression and destruction and despite our attempts to conceal these cruel drives and "act civil", in all of us lies a dark desire for violence. These ideas were developed in his work *Civilization and Its Discontents.* Freud (1962) argues that "men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved... they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness" (p. 302). In order for society to

function, or in fact exist at all, we are all required to restrain our natural aggressive urges and there needs to be a common refusal of gratification. In other words, “civilisation – the sum total of all our complicated structures of culture, law, religion and society – arose through the learned repression of individual instinctual urges” (Thurschwell, 2000, p. 103). As a result, sublimation occurs: our natural urges and desires are changed into more socially appropriate behaviours. It is facilitated by the third and final part of the self, the superego. The super-ego acts as an internalised moral compass that surveys and assesses one’s thoughts and actions. It is from this self-critical part of the self that guilt, shame and anxiety arise. From this perspective, authenticity and “civilisation” are seen to be in conflict, and people are required to curb or moderate their authentic selves for society to function.

A later psychoanalyst, Alice Miller (1997), also writes extensively about the ways in which adults come to have “personalities” which are split from their “true” and “natural” childhood selves, through insufficient or inappropriate parental care in the early stages of infant development. When the primary care given is incapable of seeing and responding to the child as “she really is”, from moment to moment, as this changes, the child will lose the ability to develop ownership of her own feelings and experiences, her emotions remain inseparable from those of others. According to Miller (1997) this is particularly problematic when parents respond to their children’s emotions with disapproval or punishment, as the child then comes to understand these emotions as unacceptable or inappropriate and they lose the ability to fully experience these emotions.

These ideas are based on Winnicott’s (1960) conceptualisation of a “false self” (p. 145). He uses this term to refer to the defensive psychological developmental response of a child in reaction to parenting that repeatedly fails to meet her emotional needs, particularly illustrated through care that either impinges on or rejects and abandons the child’s emotional and physical experiences. In these cases, the child “is forced to accommodate h[er] own needs to the conscious and unconscious needs of those upon whom [s]he is dependent” (Daehnert, 1998, p. 251). Consequently, the child ceases to experience herself as possessing either initiative or spontaneity and this leads to an increasing sense of “futility and despair” (Winnicott, 1959-1964, p. 133). From these perspectives, the “true self” is one that is able to experience the full range of human emotions. In other words, for many people, this true self has been hidden or replaced by a conforming "as-if personality" (Miller, 1997, p. 11) that only feels and displays socially-approved emotions. Similarly, Glasser (1992) adds to this

discussion asserting that “we may thus speak of the deceptively compliant shell of the False Self which protects the hidden True Self from the mother's colonization. In psychic terms, this is a narcissistic act of self-preservation” (p. 497). Here examples of the “happy-go-lucky” person who likes to keep everyone happy, or the “problem-solver” who is serious, rational and unemotional in manner, come to mind. Miller (1997) suggests that most people remain indefinitely unaware of, and separated from, their concealed true self until they experience its loss through the emptiness and alienation of depression, or alternatively, are abrasively confronted by their true self through psychosis (Miller, 1997).

After exploring in-depth the different manifestations of this loss of true self, Miller (1997) goes on to discuss how one would reconnect with, or uncover, the self that has been hidden. The key is not to try and elicit the acknowledgment and confirmation lacking from their childhood care from another adult partner or friend now in adulthood. Instead the task is to accept and come to terms with this lack through an intense process of mourning, after which one is able to experience and express their feeling more spontaneously. In this sense the true self can be realised through maturity (Miller, 1997).

Verhaeghe (2014) provides a related but different position. He describes the development of the self-concept as an ongoing process that arises from two simultaneous yet contrasting psychological processes which, he argues, appear to be consistent irrespective of culture and historical context. The first process he refers to is “mirroring”. In simple terms, this refers to the ways in which we learn to experience ourselves (including what we feel) by following or copying how those around us (termed “the other”) behave and feel. As we mature, we begin to receive increasingly more complex sets of messages or ideas (both positive and negative) regarding our experiences, feelings and personalities, which all merge to be understood and experienced as “who we are”. This idea reflects the Hegelian notion of the self-conscious as “the gaze of the other” (Verhaeghe, 2014, p. 15): it is specifically through surveillance *of others,* and the conscious recognition *by others,* that we come to distinguish our own existence. In other words, we become what we see, when we are seen. This idea is exemplified by Arthur Rimbaud’s words “*Je est un autre”* which translated into English means ‘I is another’ (Verhaeghe, 2014, p. 15). At the same time, however, a second process is also underway. We are constantly striving for a sense of autonomy, a longing for “separateness” from the other, where we resist and reject the ideas that have “created us” in

an attempt to establish a distinction, or distance, from them. In this sense, our individuality or autonomy stems from opposition.

The shift toward the "psychologised" (viewed through the lens of the psychology discipline) self (not only evident in the above discussion, but now routinely used in everyday conversations) stresses an increasingly pervasive focus on our individual, innermost thoughts and feelings, with little concern left for the experiences of others. As Guignon (2004) asserts, "The glorification of disorder and violence in today's society, especially in the youth culture, receives its justification from the ideal of authenticity just as does the mild-mannered decency promoted by Oprah and Dr. Phil" (p. 54). In other words, behaviours that had previously constituted common decency or "civility", become viewed as ingenuine while achieving authenticity involves uncovering and expressing our darkest instincts.

### 2.7.2. Self-Actualisation and Existential Psychology

The psychodynamic stream, unsurprisingly, not the only area of psychology that was interested in unpacking the notion of authenticity. In fact, almost every branch has conceptualised it in some way. From a Humanist perspective, both Rogers (1961) and Maslow (1962) wrote about authenticity in their work. Rogers, often using the words "real" and "genuine" in his writings, saw authenticity as both a tool for therapeutic use and necessary for ideal personal functioning (Rogers, 1965; Schmid, 2001). The former he termed "congruence" whilst in relation to the latter he used the concept "self-actualisation".

Rogers (1961) believed that being authentic was an essential part of the therapeutic relationship. He stresses that it is "extremely important to be *real*" (Rogers, 1961, p. 33). By this he means that it is important for therapists to be extremely aware of their own personal feelings and to make sure that what they express is consistent with these feelings. When this occurs, the therapist is integrated and unified. Rogers (1961) argues that this grounds the relationship with a "reality", more specifically, it presents the therapists own "reality", allowing or guiding the client to find their own "reality". Rogers (1961) stresses that this is relevant irrespective of how good or useful the therapist views their personal feelings to be. In his later work, Rogers (1980) refers to this realness as congruence. In addition to seeing authenticity as an essential condition of productive therapeutic relationship, Rogers (1980) also sees it as an important "way of being" that allows us to become a person. A genuine person is someone who is open to both themselves and others (Schmid, 2005). They are able

to recognise how they feel at a particular given moment and communicate this to others in a clear and transparent manner.

According to Rogers (1951), individuals have one primary goal in life: to self-actualise. "The organism has one basic tendency and striving - to actualize, maintain, and enhance the experiencing organism" (Rogers, 1951, p. 487). This is similar to the pinnacle of Maslow's "Hierarchy of Human Needs", where self-actualisation is defined as a "person's desire for self-fulfilment, namely, the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially" (Maslow, 1943, p. 382). He goes on to explain that this manifests very differently in different people. For example, "in one individual it may take the form of the desire to be an ideal mother, in another it may be expressed athletically, and in still another it may be expressed in painting pictures or in inventions" (Maslow, 1943, p. 383).

For Rogers (1951) those who are able to achieve this state of self-actualisation, referred to as "fully-functioning", display several different qualities. Firstly, they are open to all experiences offered to them. This includes being able to navigate ambiguous situations comfortably, and interpret events without distorting or repressing them. Secondly, these individuals are content with living "fully in the moment" (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 294). They are able to adapt to varying situations as they see themselves as "in process", continuously changing and developing, rather than as fixed and stable. Furthermore, they have great confidence that their feelings will direct their actions in a suitable way. From this perspective, individuals who are operating optimally experience themselves as having freedom. Even though they may not be able to change certain external factors, they are still free to choose how they react and what they feel about the situation. Finally, these engage with their lives in a creative and resourceful manner, allowing them to avoid becoming stagnated in restrictive ways of being. Again, people who are adaptable, flexible and able to "trust their gut" tend to be more creative (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

### 2.7.3. Contemporary Conceptualisations of Authenticity within Psychology

Several contemporary authors working in the broad areas of social psychology have explored authenticity in their work. This discussion will focus primarily on the work of Brown (2010) and James (2007). James (2007), drawing extensively on the work of Trilling (1972), discusses authenticity by specifically contrasting it to, and differentiating it from, sincerity. Trilling (1972) broadly explains the difference lies in the "direction" of the performance,

namely external or internal. Sincerity appears to have an "external point of reference" (Funk, 2015, p. 24), it looks outwards to others, the society or the community. Sincerity involves really being what we would like others to know we are (Trilling, 1972, p. 11). In other words, it is the virtue of being pure, without pretending (Berger, 1973). According to Trilling (1972) authenticity developed in response to the collapse of, and presents in direct opposition to, sincerity. Authenticity turns its attention within. It involves a search of the self that exists below "all the cultural superstructures" (Trilling, 1972, p. 12). As Berger (1973) argues, "The contrast is clear: Sincerity is discovered *within* social roles, authenticity *behind and beneath* them" (p. 82).

According to James (2007) authenticity refers to being "real", and authentic individuals are seen to actively work on differentiating between what is true and original, and what is false. So although once almost synonymous and often still confused, sincerity and authenticity are now significantly different. The difference, he argues, depends on the wider considerations for the feelings or behaviours. Authenticity required broader frames of reference than the proverbial "I feel it strongly, I express it, therefore it is true" consideration associated with expressions of sincerity (James, 2007, p. 373). These frames of reference that authentic individuals "seek out" can include personal experience, natural history or the natural world but most importantly they are found in the everyday common experiences and interactions with others. Authenticity involves finding the things that are "true" irrespective of the time period or geographical location, things that are not subject to fashion or fad and do not require utterance to become true or real (James, 2007). Authenticity is seen to be part of an intrinsic experience of the world, whereas sincerity is linked to and influenced by the ways in which others perceive us. In this way, James (2007) argues that authenticity encompasses a desirable way of being, and sincerity, produced through the influences of materialism and consumer culture, is fundamentally undesirable. This reflects Dr. Phil's references to "selling out" explored previously.

James (2007) highlights the usefulness of observing children as positive examples of how to "be" authentic. This involves a lack of pretentiousness, a return to a simpler and more humble ways of experiencing ourselves and relating with others. This suggests a return to a "pre-social" self: one that has not been tarnished by the opinions of others or the options provided by advertisers. This highlights James' argument that the task of being authentic has become increasingly more challenging within consumer driven, image intensive societies where

concentrated exposure to increasingly more versions of who you could and should be, both disguises and alienates individuals from who they "genuinely" are.

Brown (2010) adds to this discussion by drawing attention to the way in which authenticity is often seen in dichotomous or binary terms. Authenticity is seen as a characteristic or trait- a quality that people either inherently "have" or "don't". Brown (2010) rather describes authenticity as a practice where people actively choose to either behave in ways that reflect your true self or not. She argues that "Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we're supposed to be and embracing who we are" (Brown, 2010, p. 50). Furthermore, she argues that the practice of authenticity exists on a continuum. In other words, some people tend to consistently behave in a way that is reflective of their genuine self, others never behave in this manner, and most people behave variably- acting genuinely on some occasions and not on others.

Brown (2010) stresses the complexity of the idea of being able to "choose" to practice authenticity. On the one hand the idea is particularly liberating because authenticity is seen to be a widely held social ideal desirable to most. If one is seen to be in control of authenticity, one has the opportunity to achieve this social ideal with merely one's own volition. Yet at the same time the idea also seems to be particularly immobilising considering the degree to which social and cultural norms shape people's lives. In other words, "choosing authenticity in a culture that dictates everything from how much we're supposed to weigh to what our houses are supposed to look like is a huge undertaking" (Brown, 2010, p. 50). Brown (2010) describes how hard it is to choose to be authentic within a culture that stresses the need to fit in or "belong". She sees authenticity as "standing up" against the culture that determines everything we are supposed to be and to combat the shame of not achieving those standards. This draws attention to the contrast established between authenticity and alienation, specifically alienation from both the self and others, which is explored in more depth in relation to Marx. These ideas are also closely linked to the work of Trilling (1972) and Ferrara (1998), discussed above. Interestingly, in 2014 Brown teamed up with the Oprah Winfrey Network to release an online life class for harnessing "wholehearted living", which includes a section on "cultivating authenticity", which is still running today, for $60.99.

### 2.7.4. Quantifying Authenticity as a Psychological Trait

In addition to the above contemporary qualitative writing on authenticity, a wide range of current positivist quantitative work has been produced, particularly in the area of positive psychology (Harter, 2002). Positive psychology is interested in the exploration of "human strengths virtues and effective functioning" (Coon & Mitterer, 2007, p. 23), rather than an emphasis on neurosis and abnormal psychological functioning, and the positivist literature within this area tends to focus on measuring correlates of various traits and behaviours (Neuman, 2011). Two key contributions to this literature are Kernis and Goldman's (2006) "Multicomponent Conceptualization of Authenticity" and "The Authenticity Scale" developed by Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, and Joseph (2008).

Similar to Brown's (2010) definition of "practicing" authenticity, explored above, Kernis and Goldman (2006) argue that authenticity can be defined as "the unobstructed operation of one's true- or core-self in one's daily enterprise" (p. 294). Rather than conceptualising this as a single, linear and unified process, they argue that it occurs as four distinct but connected constituents, namely, "*awareness, unbiased processing*, behaviour, and *relational orientation*" (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 294).

According to Kernis and Goldman (2006), *awareness* refers to an individual's self-knowledge and their interest in improving and developing their understanding of their thoughts, emotions, desires and motives. By developing this self-knowledge, people start to recognise themselves as complex and multifaceted, and can begin to assimilate these different, and often contradictory, parts of themselves into a more unified sense of self (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). *Unbiased-processing* refers to an individual's ability to receive and interpret information about themselves, from both internal and external sources, in a neutral and detached manner, without altering or exaggerating the information in any way (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Kernis and Goldman (2006) describe the third aspect of authenticity as *behaviour*, which refers to a person's ability to act in a way that is consistent with their beliefs and values, without acquiescing to others expectations. Although there are situations where this is not always possible, authentic individuals will be particularly mindful and considered when choosing how to behave in these situations, and never thoughtlessly submitting to external pressure (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). The final component, *relational orientation*, refers to "valuing and striving for openness, sincerity, and truthfulness in one's close relationships" (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 300). This includes a desire for these close

others to “see you as you really are”. From this model, Goldman and Kernis (2004) developed a four factor psychometric scale called the “Authenticity Inventory” used to measure the degree to which individuals are authentic in their daily lives (Lakey, Kernis, Heppner & Lance, 2008). Participants are required to respond to 45 items (for example “I want people with whom I am close to understand my weaknesses” or “I am in touch with my motives and desires”) on a 5-point Likert Scale, where one refers to “strongly disagree” and five refers to “strongly agree” (Lakey et al., 2008, p. 233).

Another psychometric scale, very similar to the AI described above, was developed by Wood et al. (2008) to quantitatively measure dispositional authenticity and its correlation to other traits. Dispositional authenticity refers to an individual’s supposedly “trait-like” tendency to express themselves authentically in various contexts including social, work and home situations (Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012). The Authenticity Scale is much shorter, containing only 12 items (for example “I am true to myself in most situations” or “I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular”) to be answered on a 7-point Likert Scale, where 1 refers to “does not describe me at all” and 7 refers to “describes me very well”. The 12 items can be divided into three factors, namely, *Authentic Living*; *Accepting External Influence* and *Self-Alienation* (Wood et al., 2008, p. 399).

This scale has become a widely used instrument, evaluated in a number of different contexts as diverse as France (Grégoire, Baron, Ménard, & Lachance, 2014), Turkey (Satici & Kayis, 2013) and Serbia (Grijak, 2017). Additionally, it has been used to provide correlations of authenticity with a vast number of different variables, to name but a few, wellness, happiness and self-esteem (Leary, 2003; Ménard & Brunet, 2011; Wood et al., 2008); humour (Barnett & Deutsch, 2016); as well as anxiety, depression and stress (Boyraz, Waits & Felix, 2014; Grégoire et al., 2014; Joseph, Maltby, Wood, Stockton, Hunt & Regel, 2012; Satici & Kayis, 2013; Wood et al., 2008). One of the obvious problems with these measurements of authenticity is the issue of biased self-reporting where individuals may provide favourable, socially appropriate answers to the questions, altering the accuracy and validity of the scores produced. More specifically, the risk here is that the more inauthentic the person, the more likely they are to want to provide an acquiescent or desired response thus high scores on the authenticity scale may, in fact, indicate low authenticity of the individual.

In their paper, Wood et al. (2008) briefly refer to a rich and diverse body of work on authenticity, stemming from other schools of psychology including both the psychodynamic and humanist schools, within which their work is ultimately located. Contributions of both these schools will be explored in more depth later. Here, however, I would like to briefly consider the main conceptual framework used to develop this scale: Barrett-Lennard's (1998) person-centred definition of authenticity. From this model authenticity is seen to revolve around three different aspects of experience: *actual experience, awareness*, and *behaviour and communication* (Barnett & Deutsch, 2016; Barrett-Lennard, 1998; Wood et al., 2008). *Actual experience* is where this definition locates the true self. It refers to an individual's physiological reactions, feelings and beliefs. *Awareness* refers to the cognitive recognition of these experiences and *behaviour* stresses the ways in which that awareness is expressed or communicated through an individual's actions and emotional reactions (Barnett & Deutsch, 2016; Barrett-Lennard, 1998; Wood et al., 2008). When there is a discrepancy between actual experience and awareness of this experience, as there always is, an individual experiences *self-alienation*. The degree to which an individual experiences self-alienation depends on the degree of the discrepancy, with high levels being linked to psychopathology.

Furthermore, when there is a discrepancy between an individual's conscious awareness of an experience and their external expression of that awareness, their ability to "*live authentically*" is compromised. "Incompatibility between outward acts and inward states can impair self-worth and self-efficacy" which can cause individuals to both act "unnaturally" and find activities less enjoyable (Barnett & Deutsch, 2016). The third and final part of this model, highlights the social nature of humans. Since people are fundamentally shaped by their social context, so too are self-alienation and authentic living (Barrett-Lennard, 1998). According to this definition, the more an individual sees others as having a significant influence on them, the more they will experience a sense of self-alienation and the less they will experience themselves as living authentically (Schmid, 2001; 2005). This aspect is referred to as "*accepting external influence*" (Wood et al., 2008, p. 386). As Barnett and Deutsch (2016) state, "the constant barrage of outside criteria, which are impossible to fully live up to in any circumstance, can lead someone who is susceptible to outside influences into a state of low self-esteem" (p. 108).

A summary of this "tripartite" version of authenticity can be seen in Figure 1 below:

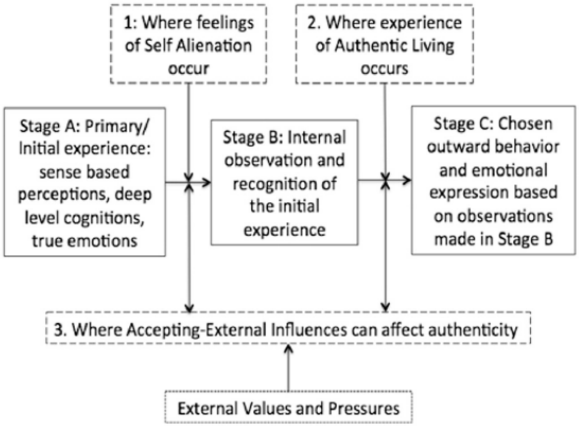


*Figure 1:* Barrett-Lennard's (1998) person-centred definition of authenticity as depicted in Barnett and Deutsch (2016, p. 108).

At first, studies on dispositional authenticity appeared to focus almost exclusively on women samples as research suggests that women are more prone to experiencing mental health concerns such as low self-esteem and depression. One of the most common explanations for this gendered difference in levels of experienced mental ill health are the differing societal expectations for men and women. More specifically, the societal expectations of women in the 21st Century are extremely conflicted (Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012). Traditional gender roles like primary caregiver and housewife highlight the pressure to behave in ways that accentuate their dependence and submissiveness. Yet simultaneously, women are now also required to be economically active and successful in the work place, these roles require ambition and productivity, qualities previously associated with men. It has been argued that societal devaluation of traditional gender roles is a strong contributing factor to women's experienced poor mental health (Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012). This issue requires much more critical engagement problematising both the devaluation of so-called "women's work" and the oppressive gender roles within which both men and women continue to be confined and assessed (hooks, 2000).

A growing area of positivist research focusses on the ways in which people can behave "inauthentically", and specifically the negative mental health consequences thereof (Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012). In most of these studies, the construct of interest has been relational authenticity, which refers to the degree to which an individual reflects their true or real feelings and thoughts within their close personal relationships. Within this literature, inauthentic behaviour has been referred to in several ways, including "false self behaviour,"

(Harter, 1997, p. 82), "silencing the self," (Jack & Dill, 1992, p. 98), or "inauthentic self in relationships" (Tolman & Porche, 2000, p. 367). In all of these definitions, the key idea that is stressed is the disparity between what a person thinks or feels and their actual engagement with others, with greater levels of incongruence reflecting higher levels of relational inauthenticity (Impett, Sorsoli, Schooler, Henson & Tolman, 2008; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012).

As with the research on dispositional authenticity, research in this area framed experiences of self-silencing and relational inauthenticity as a "women's problem", that lead to increased experiences of depressive symptoms amongst women which seemed to arise during adolescence (e.g., Jack, 1991; Impett et al., 2008; Theran, 2011). More recent research has now expanded the area to include male samples, highlighting the similar degrees to which men engage in self-silencing behaviours or "inauthentic" relations with others and the comparable implications that these have on men's mental health. Kernis and Goldman (2006) argue that defining "living authentically" strictly in terms of a person's actions or how a person behaves within their relationships is simplistic. Authenticity also requires a degree of self-awareness and acknowledgement of one's "multifaceted self-tendencies, the willingness to process self-relevant information in an open, non-defensive way and without distorting it, and behaviour in accordance with one's needs". As seen above, for Kernis and Goldman (2006) dispositional authenticity includes facets of relational authenticity, as well as more internal, "processing" aspects of an individual's functioning, for example how individuals interpret themselves and others in varying situations.

### 2.8. The Possibility of Multiple Social Selves

Several writers, philosophers and theorists have argued that people have multiple and varied selves. The founding father of psychology William James, for example, was amongst the very first to suggest that we have different selves suitable for different social roles. James (1890) does not see this to be a "mask" or façade, rather, that we are more than one self, combined in a single body. We can, for example, be loving and caring parents, strict and serious teachers and relaxed and jovial friends, all as a single being. He argues, however, that if we are to be happy we are required to examine our different selves and choose one specific role as overarching and defining of our character. "So the seeker of his truest, strongest, deepest self must review the list carefully, and pick out the one on which to stake his salvation. All other

selves thereupon become unreal" (James, 1890, p. 294 as cited in Martin & Mc Lellan, 2013, p. 33).

Nietzsche, on the other hand, rejected this notion that we had to choose one single self for us to be happy. He argued that we are constantly evolving beings happy to have not one but "many souls" or identities. Thinkers like Nietzsche, and the postmodernists following him, shift their focus to the multitude of complex and competing external sources that shape how people act, think and feel. This view is in direct contrast to the assertion of a common nature evident in all of the above Romantic and Humanist discussions of the authentic self.

It is clear that from the postmodern perspective, without the existence of an underlying self or selves that exists beyond social cultural and historical structures, the concept of authenticity seems problematic, if not irrelevant (Erickson, 1995). Instead, an alternative version of authenticity is proposed, to openly accept the lack of "true self". Guignon (2004) asserts "the postmodern ideal, then, is to *be* that lack of self with playfulness and ironic amusement" (p.61). Here he returns to Nietzche for inspiration of this light-hearted liveliness and stresses that from this perspective, being true to ourselves involves "unflinchingly fac[ing] the fact that there is nothing to be true to" (Guignon, 2004, p. 61).

### 2.9. A Critical Approach to Socially-Constructed Authenticity

*"Far from being an outdated concept that has been exposed as illusionary and swept away in the tide of postmodernism, authenticity has turned into a prime venue for attempts to gauge the ways in which postmodern insights may be both acknowledged and transcended in contemporary discussion."* (Funk, Gross & Huber, 2012, p. 11).

Almost anything (as diverse as politicians, wallets, hair products, restaurants and holiday packages) today can be described as authentic. More importantly, authenticity has "become a major selling point" (Funk et al., 2012, p. 10). In their book 'The Aesthetics of Authenticity', Funk et al. (2012) stress that authenticity is a concept that is becoming increasingly more relevant and researched within contemporary cultural studies. Framed within the context of a variety of media sources, Funk et al. (2012) provide a detailed account of the "paradoxical nature of authenticity" (p. 9), highlighting its emergence in places of contradiction, places where there is ambiguity and tension between "the fictional and the real, original and fake, margin and centre, the same and the other". They stress that although authenticity by its

definition is believed to be something that is innate and inherent, existing naturally without production, this is fundamentally inaccurate. Authenticity, according to Funk et al. (2012) very often appears to come in to being through very deliberate and strategically used techniques which can be identified and understood. Furthermore, it is argued that authenticity has become especially valued in societies where everyday life has become increasingly dependent on, and structured by, new media and new mediations. In other words, with no possibility of escape from a mediated engagement with the world, the quality of the mediation becomes paramount. The more natural and inherent it appears, the better experience it provides.

Funk et al.'s (2012) account draws attention to the stark contrast between the "innate" or "intrinsic" and socially constructed articulations of authenticity. They argue that "Promising the genuine and the immediate and by this, at least to some extent, an escape from mediated existence and experience, authenticity itself turns into a quality of mediation and is thus conditioned by what it seems to deny" (Funk et al., 2012, p. 10). This highlights the degree to which the notion of authenticity appears to be inconsistent. On the one hand, it suggests that things and people have genuine roots or true and real cores, yet it provides no basis for identifying or understanding what such "realness" would look like or by what it might be indicated. In other words, "Contemporary aesthetic and critical engagements with authenticity are deeply grounded in postmodern challenges to traditional concepts of reality; yet they are infused with ethical considerations and emotional investments that put them seemingly at odds with postmodern positions" (Funk et al., 2012, p. 12).

Funk et al. (2012) suggest that authenticity can be more fully understood from three overarching principles: it is fragmented, contested and performative. Firstly, authenticity is asserted to involve the random and disjointed amalgamation of several separate parts. It is neither seamless nor unified. Secondly, it is seen to be constantly questioned and challenged, not only in terms of academic discussion, but also in terms of conflicting ideological and power structures. Its intricate link to the experience of the self in relation to others makes it a key to understanding the ways in which value and meaning are constantly negotiated within society. Finally, authenticity is involved in the process of communication which involves "the interplay between production, aesthetic object, context and reception" (Funk et al., 2012, p. 13). In other words, authenticity becomes the effect of the implementation of a particular

form and style. Therefore, as with almost all concepts and meaning, authenticity is forever shifting, continually being revised, remoulded and reinvented.

This thesis intends to extend this exploration of authenticity from a social constructionist perspective. Rather than aiming to find a socially constructed version or equivalent of the authentic ideal, I aim to explore how the ideal of authenticity itself is socially constructed, specifically in the South African context. I aim to highlight the different discourses of authenticity at work in a number of different texts, exploring the implications that these discourses have for South African consumer culture. Perhaps most importantly, I hope to explore the systems of power that are produced and maintained through these discourses of authenticity. From this perspective, authenticity is neither a singular nor an innate given truth, and thus, it is important to explore the various contextual factors through which the constructions are produced. In the next chapter, a brief overview of these main social and cultural developments will be discussed.

# Chapter 3:
# Contextual Background-
# Globalisation, Individualism and Consumer Culture

*"When people accept the claims of globalism, they simultaneously accept as authority large parts of the comprehensive political, economic, and intellectual framework of neoliberalism. Thus the ideological reach of globalism goes far beyond the task of providing the public with a narrow explanation of the meaning of globalization. Most importantly, globalism is a compelling story that sells an overarching neoliberal worldview, thereby creating collective meanings and shaping personal and collective identities"* (Steger, 2009, p. 15).

In this chapter I provide a broad overview of some of the key social, cultural and technological developments relevant to this study, paying particular attention to the emergence of globalisation, individualism, and consumer culture and the associated implications thereof. It is important to sketch this contextual background as, from a social constructionist perspective, context is seen to play a key role in the ways in which people experience their lives, their relationships and themselves. More specifically, in this thesis I am exploring various brands' deployment of discourses of authenticity, and as such, it is essential to understand the history from which "brand culture" has emerged. As Schroeder and Zwick (2004) assert, "advertising representations influence cultural and individual conceptions of identity, and must be understood as the result of changing social and cultural practices. Consequently, our overarching framework views meaning…as the result of historical contingencies" (p. 24). This highlights the way in which social, cultural and historical contexts mould the production of identities and construct particular realties.

## 3.1. Globalisation

Globalisation can be defined broadly as "both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (Robertson, 1992, p. 8). Elliott and Lemert (2009) argue that it contains several different aspects, including a condensed sense of time and space and the tight intertwining of nearby and remote events and experiences (both of which have been facilitated through the rapid development of mass communication) as well as the "acceleration of the speed of capital and cultural flows across the globe" (p. 5). Also providing a detailed definition, Steger (2004) views globalisation as "a

multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant" (p. 2). Originally, researchers investigating this area tended to portray globalisation as a relatively new occurrence, emerging as late as the 1960's. Current research, however, stresses that the processes of globalisation have emerged over an extended period, and the specificities of these social processes have altered significantly over the years (Bauman, 1998).

Saldanha (2002) defines globalisation as the "formations of spaces in which economies, technologies, policies, things and bodies from different places intermingle" (p. 337). In his work on youth cultures in South India, he draws attention to the irony of the strong Western bias in research on globalisation as, originally, this process occurred most intensely in Third World countries and not in Europe. "It's odd that in empirical study, this perspective has mostly been applied to globalising spaces in the West. Odd, because it was, after all, the world outside Europe that first had to deal with the hybridizations and disruptions the literature of globalization talks about" (Saldanha, 2002, p. 337). He highlights the significance of colonialism in forcibly producing "multicultural" societies in the developing world considerably earlier than the process of migration induced equivalent changes in Europe. "People in the Third World got used to reflexively comparing and combining differing cultures … long before Westerners began taking interest in yoga and salsa" (Saldanha, 2002, p. 337).

Steger (2004) argues that although globalisation is a contested concept, several themes of agreement have emerged over the years. One of the main areas of agreement includes the common characteristics of globalisation. Firstly, rather than being viewed as a single, consistent and solid process, globalisation needs to be understood as a series of intricate "**conflicting** and **contradictory** social processes" (Steger, 2004, p. 2). Furthermore, these processes promote both the formation of new socially interconnected networks, and the expansion and escalation of already established social interactions. And finally, one of the main consequences of globalisation commonly understood as "compression of time and space" (Steger, 2004, p. 2), refers to more than just an objective, scientific occurrence. It resonates deeply on an individual level, having a profound impact on people's lived experiences.

Recognising that globalisation is a multifaceted process is important because it stresses the need to move toward inter- or multidisciplinary approaches drawing on many different thematic lines of enquiry at once (Appadurai, 1997). It highlights the need for research to cover both the traditionally explored economic and technological aspects of globalisation, as well as the non-structural facets including issues of subjectivity and the production of ideas or "truth" (Steger, 2004). In other words, from this perspective, globalisation involves:

> *important discursive aspects in the form of ideologically charged narratives that put before the public a particular agenda of topics for discussion, questions to ask, and claims to make. The existence of these narratives suggests that globalization is not merely a set of material processes anchored in economics and technology, but also constitutes a plethora of stories that define, describe, and analyse these very processes* (Steger, 2004, p. 4).

It is important to note that the multifaceted social processes that we refer to as globalisation, are intricately intertwined with ideological (specifically neoliberal) values and norms (Bauman, 1998). The market ideology that produces this particular neoliberal form of globalisation can be referred to as globalism. Throughout the 1990's, people were persistently flooded with information about the array of personal benefits and social advantages of globalism through numerous media sources. Steger (2003) provides "five central claims" (p. 96-11) of globalism which highlight the political nature of the movement, and its association to and promotion of particular beliefs and values.

Firstly, it is asserted that "globalization is about the liberalization and global integration of markets" (Steger, 2003, p. 97). This claim stresses that free markets are natural, rational and efficient and essential for promoting social integration and producing all round material progress and personal freedom for all. In other words, this discourse of globalism conceals a deliberate political agenda by constructing neoliberal globalisation as both a factual and natural necessity. Secondly, it is argued that "globalization is inevitable and irreversible" (Steger, 2003, p. 99). In other words, closely linked to the first claim, it is asserted that globalisation is a "natural force" that inevitably enforces the assimilation of national economies which extends from the "irreversible market forces" (Steger, 2004, p. 6) produced through the constant and unavoidable technological advancements. Within this discourse, people are compelled to adapt to these supposedly unalterable circumstances in order to survive (or prosper as is promised). Thirdly it is claimed that "nobody is in charge of

globalization" (Steger, 2003, p. 101). Since globalism is both natural and inevitable, the obvious following claim is that "markets" or "technology", broadly, control the process, not people. Most importantly, if "the natural laws of the market have indeed preordained a neoliberal course of history, then globalization does not reflect the arbitrary agenda of a particular social class or group" (Steger, 2004, p. 7). This, again, disguises or conceals the ways in which particular political agendas produce and maintain unequal power relations. Furthermore, this claim undermines opposing movements of resistance to develop. Once people have been convinced that globalism is natural and unchangeable, they are no longer open to engaging with or supporting alternate social systems.

Perhaps the most important of all the claims is that globalisation can be viewed as a positive process, because it is in everybody's best interests. In other words, it is asserted that globalisation is for the benefit of all people (Steger, 2003). This claim is closely tied to the first claim, that liberalisation of markets will produce improved living conditions for all. Although globalists acknowledge the increasingly large income inequalities that exist between the developed and developing countries, they argue that these are merely unavoidable "irregularities" in market forces which, when eventually rectified, will lead to dramatically improved levels of economic efficiency (and, as a result, better standards of living). Unfortunately, very little guidance can be given as to when this shift will occur (Steger, 2004). The final claim is that free markets not only produce democracy, but are in fact one and the same thing. In other words, it is asserted that "globalization furthers the spread of democracy in the world" (Steger, 2003, p. 110). From this perspective, the official or procedural aspects of democracy (for example, everyone having the right to vote) are stressed while engagement in other essential democratic processes (such as informed participation in decision making) are wholly overlooked. As mentioned earlier, this strategic channelling of focus allows those in power to maintain these positions.

### 3.2. Individualism

One important aspect of globalisation has been the shift from community-based living and values to an increased emphasis on individualism. Although individualism developed most clearly in the Western context, it has become increasingly prevalent in non-Western contexts (including South Africa) where Western economic systems have been readily adopted and increasingly accepted as legitimate and valid. Stevens and Lockhat (1997), discussing this in relation to post-Apartheid South Africa, argue that:

> *The new role models, economic structures and dominance of western ideologies, however, have now encouraged an ideological shift from collectivism to individualism. Increasingly apparent, is the emergence of what could be referred to, as a 'Coca-Cola' culture - an embracing of American individualism, competition, individualistic aspirations and general worldview* (p. 253).

Individualism is by no means a new concept. The term was first introduced in the 1830's by de Tocqueville (1969) in response to the feeling of social isolation growing in America. More specifically he was referring to bourgeois men who tried to distance themselves from the mass of "commoners". De Tocqueville (1969) describes this "a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself" (p. 606). Two things stand out from this original definition. Firstly, the prevalence of "egotism" amongst the privileged who were able to achieve and maintain the value of individualism. Secondly, the emphasis on personal responsibility: people are required to live separate lives and manage any problems they may encounter alone (Haji & Cuypers, 2008). Since then, the conceptualisation of individualism has gone through numerous changes.

Today, the moral and social ideal of individualism still dominates our thinking, although now it is specifically tailored to technological advancements and international relations produced by globalisation. According Elliott and Lemert (2009) the increasingly globalised and technologised world has altered individualism in several important ways. Firstly, societies have become increasingly "detraditionalised" (Giddens, 1991). As cultural and religious traditions have become less rigorously imposed, individuals gain access to an increasingly wide variety of "free choice" and, at the same time, an enhanced feeling of uncertainty. Elliott and Lemert (2009) highlight that globalisation has led to the demise of context: as "new technologies offer alternative paradigms and possibilities for social life" (p. 13), our internal worlds have become our primary focus. Rather than drawing on traditional ways of living, we are required to continually create context ourselves.

Secondly, individualism has been radically altered by the influence of privatisation: the shift from government owned and funded services to privately owned, for-profit businesses. Perhaps the most pressing move to privatisation currently facing South Africa is that of

higher education. Language such as "improved delivery" for "paying customers" who require a particular "educational product" is now rife (Elliott & Lemert, 2009, p. 9; Watson, 2004). Privatisation has had a serious impact on how individuals understand themselves and their relations with others. Furthermore, privatisation has changed the way in which people both understand social issues and how these should be addressed. As Elliott and Lemert (2009) assert:

> *As market forces penetrate ever more deeply into the tissue of social life, what we see taking place today is a shift from a politicized culture to a privatized culture. People, increasingly, seek personal solutions to social problems in the hope of shutting out the risks, terrors and persecutions that dominate our lives in the global age* (pp. 9-10).

Furthermore, our understanding of who is affected by individualism has changed over time. As discussed earlier, de Tocqueville (1969) defined individualism as a value only available to the wealthy. He argues that although individualism is a "freedom" to which the lower class may aspire, in reality it is not attainable for them. With the emergence of marketing and consumption, this appears to no longer be the case.

> *Economically the global nature of international capital has led to a net loss for the world's poorest even as it may have pulled some into the comfortable social and economic classes. While culture in the form of mediated experiences and consumption desires has brought the rich and poor closer in the paradoxical sense that the poor cannot achieve the standards of the well off but they can and do have a better understanding of how the other half lives* (Elliott & Lemert, 2009, pp. 10-11).

In other words, although in modern times income inequality has increased dramatically, in terms of cultural practice, the gap between the classes has reduced significantly. This has negatively affected people's lived experiences as they now possess knowledge of how "the other half" lives whilst simultaneously recognise this way of being as inaccessible or unattainable to them. In addition to the numerous "old" afflictions of poverty (for example, increased exposure and vulnerability to illness and violence), those in the middle class are now additionally suffering the consequences of social isolation and psychological angst (de Botton, 2004) produced by individualism and particularly the rise of consumption and marketing (Jansson-Boyd, 2011), discussed a little later.

Callero (2009) provides a comprehensive definition of individualism relevant to these recent developments:

> *Individualism is a belief system that privileges the individual over the group, private life over public life, and personal expression over social experience; it is a worldview where autonomy, independence, and self-reliance are highly valued and thought to be natural; and it is an ideology based on self-determination, where free actors are assumed to make choices that have direct consequences for their own unique destiny* (p. 17).

At first glance, this definition paints individualism in an innocuous, if not favourable, light. For many people living in societies with predominantly neoliberal social structures, it aligns neatly with their personal values and morals. Callero (2009) argues that although individualism, used in a restrained and sparing manner, may encourage useful and productive behaviour, the serious and pervasive personal and social implications of widespread individualism need to be carefully considered and addressed. Similarly, in their book, *"The New Individualism: The emotional costs of globalization",* Elliott and Lemert (2009) provide a discussion of the numerous manifestations of globalised individualism and the profound emotional effects of this culture. For them, new individualism can be characterised by four key dimensions, namely "a relentless emphasis on *self-reinvention*, an endless hunger for *instant change*, a preoccupation with *short-termism* and *episodicity*; and fascination with *speed* and *dynamism*" (Elliott & Lemert, 2009, p. xi). This definition is particularly relevant in the context of this study as these characteristics, as a whole, provide a broad framework for understanding the emergent discourses of authenticity within the context of consumption, advertising and brand culture.

Several writers, including Sennett (1998), have stressed the negative consequences that individualism and globalisation are having on individuals' personal and public lives. Most significant, perhaps, has been the shift from permanent, long-term employment, to part-time "flexi-hours" which has undermined the sense of coherence, meaning and predictability that individuals can maintain in their working lives. Furthermore, erratic and frequent changing of jobs as well as the newly blurred line between time assigned to work and family, has a serious negative impact on the individual's personal and family lives (Sennett, 1998), including increasingly negligent raising of children and a higher prevalence of adult

depression (Elliott & Lemert, 2009). Additionally, other researchers have explored individualism and its link to a culture of narcissism- a "preoccupation with the self" (Elliott & Lemert, 2009, p. 12) which very often includes or leads to the pursuit of self-actualisation and self-fulfilment and draws attention away from "the common good". Most significant here, perhaps, is how this focus on self-fulfilment is simultaneously accompanied by self-limitation. "The culture of advanced individualism has ushered into existence a world of individual risk-taking, experimentation and self-expression– which in turn is underpinned by new forms of apprehension, anguish and anxiety stemming from the perils of globalization" (Elliott & Lemert, 2009, p. 12). This combination of competing negative and positive elements, specifically between freedom and alienation, can be seen as the most notable aspect of individualism as relevant to our current context.

### 3.3. Consumer Culture

Closely interrelated with both the processes of globalisation and the value of individualism, is one of the most predominant and pervasive aspects of contemporary societies: consumer culture. Broadly, Featherstone (2007) defines the analytic concept of consumer culture as having two key foci: Firstly, it highlights "the cultural dimension of the economy" (Featherstone, 2007, p. 82) or, more specifically, the ways in which goods have become used as symbols that communicate rather than merely performing useful tangible functions. Secondly, it emphasises the "economy of cultural goods, the market principles of supply, demand, capital accumulation, competition, and monopolization which operate within the sphere of lifestyles, cultural goods and commodities" (Featherstone, 2007, p. 82).

Slater (1997) stresses the "inextricably" tight link between consumer culture and modernity as a historically significant process. Firstly, "core institutions, infrastructures and practices of consumer culture originated in the early modern period" (Slater, 1997, p. 9). Consumer products first began to play an important role in individuals' social lives during the 16$^{th}$ century. Perhaps the most important factor stimulating the expansion of consumer culture during this period was the rise of fashion and style and, in turn, the advancing market practices and infrastructure related to them. Displays of fashion and style became a key means of acquiring and demonstrating status socially (Gottdiener, 2000; Mathur, 2014). Slater (1997) argues that "consumer culture is not a late consequence of industrial modernization and cultural modernity… [but] rather part of the very making of the modern

world" (p. 9). Furthermore, Slater (1997) stresses how consumer culture is also closely tied to the prevalent founding assumptions of modernity, how it frames truth/reality/experience, and how it understands social subjects. In other words, if modernity views people to be free, rational and objective subjects, and reality to reflect a "rational organisation" of scientific or empirical knowledge, then the "consumer and the experience of consumerism is both exemplary of the new world and integral to its making" (Slater, 1997, p. 9).

Many authors including Slater (1997), Gottdiener (2000), Banet-Weiser (2012) and Mathur (2014) all discuss the role that both Fordism and post-Fordism played in shaping consumer culture. The mid-20th century was characterised by Fordist processes of mass production, where consumers were identified in terms of broad and unified/homogenous groups based primarily on social class (Banet-Weiser, 2012). Slater (1997) highlights that the move from Fordist to post-Fordist ways of thinking is reflected in the shift of focus from (and significance of) production to consumption. In the late 20th century the post-Fordist focus on "small-batch production" (Mathur, 2014, p. x) emerged with the development of new technologies (particularly "narrowcast" media, like the Internet, which targeted specific niche audiences). Mather (2014) suggests that this transition into a "new and improved" consumer culture can be best illustrated by the move from family-oriented to individual-oriented consumption, as post-Fordism specifically identified small and differentiated groups and emphasised individual consumer choice through the specialisation of products that recognise these differences in personal taste. As Slater (1997) asserts:

> *a newer and truer consumer culture of target niche marketing in which the forging of personal identity would be firmly and pleasurably disentangled from the worlds of both work and politics and would be carried out in world of plural, malleable, playful consumer identities, a process ruled over by the play of image, style, desire and signs* (p. 10).

This development, which includes the related shift from advertising to branding, explored through Klein's (2000) and Banet-Weiser's (2012) work a little later, is one of the key characteristics of 20th century Western society.

Featherstone (2007), similarly incorporates these ideas when articulating the three predominant understandings of consumer culture. Firstly, he argues that consumer culture emerged from the "expansion of capitalist commodity production" (Featherstone, 2007, p.

12) which created a massive array of products for consumption and spaces in which said consumption could occur. This increasing emphasis on activities that centred on consuming, most specifically consuming "leisure". This marked a shift away from purchasing functional or useful products that proved essential and practical in one's day to day life to the consumption of "lifestyle" where individuals acquired "unnecessary" but glamourous goods and experiences associated with the "good life". This can be illustrated by the increasing consumption of holiday or cruise packages and the frequency of dining out. Secondly, he stresses the importance of understanding how consumption plays a significant role in experiences of emotional gratification. More specifically, focussing on "the dreams and desires" promoted through mechanisms of consumer culture, including its imagery and spaces of consumption, which "generate direct bodily excitement and aesthetic pleasures" (Featherstone, 2007, p. 12). Finally, sociologists highlight the means by which fulfilment and social standing have become increasingly reliant on consistent displays of material goods. In other words, possessions become functional tools used to manage social relations by either promoting social connections, or accentuating divisions (Featherstone, 2007).

### 3.3.1. Status and Status Anxiety

One significant implication of the emergence of consumer culture has been the shift in the meaning of (and means of acquiring) "status" and the related psychological experiences associated with a lack of status. In this context, status refers to a person's standing or rank in society, or more specifically, how they are valued in relation to others around them. Status is awarded differently from society to society. Bruce (2007) argues that status is similar to what Maslow referred to as the need for "esteem" which includes "fame, glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, dignity or appreciation" (Maslow, 1970, as cited in Bruce, 2007, p. 60). More specifically, Bruce (2007) argues that status refers to "one's ability to achieve standing, acceptance or respect among members of one's family, peer group or community" (p. 60). With the advent of consumer culture, status is becoming increasingly connected to material wealth. Attaining high status has many tangible benefits (for example resources and time) as well as less obvious psychosocial advantages (such as attention and care). Similarly, occupying a low position in society results in more than just material disadvantage: it is most often accompanied by a deep sense of shame and humiliation (de Botton, 2004; Bruce, 2007).

Status anxiety refers to an intense and pervasive worry that one will be unable meet the "ideals of success" (de Botton, 2004, p. vii) established by society and, as a result, will fail to earn the admiration of others, or maintain a sense of dignity. This worry emanates from occupation of a low rank or fear of losing a high rank. Bruce (2007), similarly refers to the experience of "status insecurity". He describes this as "an internal uncertainty or doubt about one's ability to achieve such standing or acceptance" (Bruce, 2007, p. 60). Status (and related anxiety) is so important because our self-image and self-worth is understood as being derived, to a great degree, from the opinions of others (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003). In South Africa there is the proverb "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu", which translated means "a person is a person because of other people" (Bruce, 2007, p. 57). This highlights how, despite a shift to more individualistic values, people still require the recognition and respect of others in their lives if they are to experience themselves as worthy and acceptable. Unlike when status was awarded on bloodline or name, achievement-linked status is extremely difficult to both acquire and maintain. As de Botton (2004) asserts:

> *The advantages of two thousand years of Western civilization are familiar enough: an extraordinary increase in wealth, in food supply, in scientific knowledge, in consumer goods, in physical security, in life expectancy and economic opportunity. What is perhaps less apparent and more perplexing is the way that such impressive material advances may have gone hand in hand with … a rise in levels of status anxiety among ordinary Western citizens, by which is meant a rise in levels of concern about importance, achievement and income* (p. 25).

In other words, although in tangible or material terms, deprivation is much less severe than in the past, people are now experiencing increased levels of fear and concern about their relative deprivation. It can be argued that this is closely linked to increased expectations. As one's expectations increase, so does the risk of disappointment and humiliation. De Botton (2004) illustrates how occupying low status in society has become an increasingly painful source of humiliation by discussing "Three Useful Old Stories about Failure" and "Three Anxiety-inducing New Stories about Success" (p. 48-67). This highlights the significant role that commonly-held beliefs (or collective narratives) play in shaping individual's lived experiences.

One of the particularly relevant ideas that de Botton (2004) discusses in the shift between the old and new narratives during the mid-18th century, is the emergence of meritocracy which challenged both the idea that status, position and wealth should automatically be transferred according to bloodline or family association (the hereditary principle), and the belief that wealth and resources should be divided equally between all people of a society (the egalitarian principle) (de Botton, 2004). This new ideology argued that society needed to first have an initial period where all members of society were afforded equal access to all opportunities and resources, after which division in wealth, and in turn status, could be seen to be justified and acceptable. In other words,

> *If everyone had had the same education and the same chance to gain access to careers, differences in income and prestige would then be justified by reference to individuals' own talents and weaknesses; consequently there would be no need to equalize incomes. Privileges would be merited - as would hardships* (de Botton, 2004, p.81).

It is important to highlight several points in relation to the notion of meritocracy. On the one hand, it appears to provide many people with opportunities that were previously withheld from them and allows for the promising possibility of social mobility, at least for those who are talented enough. On the other hand, however, for those still unable to achieve the merits necessary for success, low status comes with a crippling and "deserved" sense of personal failure and shame. No longer could the poor view themselves as "unlucky" or "unfortunate", they were now constructed as either lazy or incompetent. As a result, occupying a low position in society became a clear indication of one's moral standing, and thus, increasingly difficult and painful to experience psychologically. In addition, meritocracy is also linked to another important concept, Social Darwinism, which stressed that all people competed fairly for scarce resources, and those that managed to secure them were naturally stronger, smarter and more creative. They, therefore, not only deserved, but needed to prosper, for the evolution of a strong and successful society. From this perspective, assisting the poor, in any way, was seen to be detrimental for society as a whole (de Botton, 2004). This idea which is still very much in circulation in many societies today, including South Africa, became more influential in the 1980's and onwards, and can be seen as the neoliberal attack on the "welfare state".

Perhaps most importantly, is to raise the question of what such an "initial period of complete equality" essential to meritocracy, or the "fair struggle over scarce resources" (de Botton 2004, p. 87) in social Darwinism, may look like, or whether these conditions are possible at all. This is of particular relevance in the context of post- Apartheid South Africa where the social transition into Democracy brought with it the illusion of equality but, in reality, for the majority of South Africans "the objective material conditions" (Engels, 1999, p. 37) within which they live remain relatively unchanged (Alexander, 1992).

### 3.4. Consumption and Marketing: From advertising products to branding culture

As indicated earlier, one of the primary developments associated with the emergence of consumer culture is the rise of marketing. Exposing and accentuating (and ultimately producing) individuals' anxieties around status and worth, discussed above, is the primary technique of this industry. Advertising plays on "the fear that having nothing you will be nothing" (Berger, 1972, p. 143). Advertising relies heavily on the use of images. Schroeder (2002) argues that the proliferation of images is arguably the most significant characteristic of 20th century societies. This has become increasingly more relevant with the rise of the internet and online communication. This image-central culture creates the impression that "We are static; they are dynamic" (Berger, 1972, p. 130). In other words, the images are such a pervasive and penetrating part of everyday life that they come to be experienced as natural, unavoidable and immovable even though people are active agents capable of looking away from the television, turning the page of a magazine or scrolling past a meme. Similarly, Schroeder (2002) argues that we often appear to be unaware of the images that surround us, and more importantly, we seldom acknowledge the significant meaning-making and information-filtering roles they play in our lives.

As alluded to earlier, up until the mid-1980's the central goal of companies was to make products, and advertising encouraged the consumer to buy these products by stressing that their lives would, in some way, be better if they owned these goods. In his seminal work, "*Ways of Seeing"*, Berger (1972) highlights how advertising is constantly offering us the alluring proposal of transformation: that purchasing a material item will increase our worth, despite us having less money thereafter. In order to facilitate this transformation, advertising uses others who have already made this favourable transition as an example of who we could be. This promotes feelings of envy and insecurity which compel us into action: buying. In

other words, advertising "steals her love of herself as she is, and offers it back to her for the price of the product" (Berger, 1972, p. 134). In the 1980's, however, a fundamental change occurred. As technology developed and production of goods became easier, cheaper and more efficient, the market was flooded with more products than demand could consume. Companies needed new and innovative ways to promote consumption of their specific products- a way to differentiate their products from those of other manufacturers. Companies now needed a "brand". As Klein (2000) argues "competitive branding became a necessity of the machine age — within a context of manufactured sameness; image-based difference had to be manufactured along with the product" (p. 6).

Furthermore, corporations were becoming too big and cumbersome and the logistics and practicality of manufacturing goods began to be seen as a liability. Branding allowed companies to increase their profits exponentially without the enormous outlay of money, time and resources required to produce them. In this context, advertising functional products was no longer sufficient. Advertising was now required to give products a name, image and personality. Initially the key branding strategy was to "evoke familiarity and folksiness" (Klein, 2000, p. 6) when consumers came across the product. Ouma Rusks and Joshua Doore are two South African examples of this early version of branding. Over several decades, it became increasingly clear that branding required more than just an image or a logo- the entire company should have coherent "corporate consciousness" or "brand identity" (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 168). Coca Cola is one of the brands to fully embrace this strategy in South Africa.

Similarly, Banet-Weiser (2012) stresses the ways in which cultural practice of branding has shifted over time. Historically branding was understood very literally: a brand name, protected by its own trademark, was developed and dispersed. With the introduction of industrialisation and the subsequent range of different technological processes (for example printing and transport), the practice of branding shifted. Branding became more interested in producing "cultural value" in order to vie for attention within an increasingly competitive consumer market. As this became more important, companies began to assign increasingly large portions of their budget to the marketing and branding of their products (Banet-Weiser, 2012). These shifts in political economies (in this case from industrialisation to neoliberalism) are associated with changes in both how culture is valued in that particular society, as well as how different types of people are assigned relative value (Banet-Weiser, 2012). In the 21st century, where brands occupy significantly more cultural value, and social

and cultural space is increasingly commercially saturated, people have begun to use consumption, and its language of brands, as the primary means of connection with others. Within this context, certain types of social relations become obligatory. A useful example of this is De Beers, the South African diamond corporation. In 1947, their slogan "A diamond is forever" birthed the social practice of presenting engagement rings during marriage proposals by seamlessly associating diamonds as symbolic representation of "true" romantic love and life-long commitment.

There was a temporary fear of "the death of the brand" in the United States of America during the 1990s as consumers developed "brand blindness" in the wake of the recession. More specifically, 2 April 1993, commonly referred to as "Marlboro Friday" in the industry (Pearson, 2014), symbolically represents the day that well-respected, dominant brands could no longer withstand the pressure of changing consumer behaviours. It appeared, at the time, that "prestige" and "notability" were no longer of any interest to consumers, and their sole requirement was value for money (Pearson, 2014). Despite this short-lived shift, those companies who were committed to branding, and continued to allocate time, money and resources in order to maintain their brands, rather than resorting to techniques such as promotional giveaways or price reductions, exited this period not only fully intact, but well ahead of their competitors. These companies (such as Nike, The Body Shop and Disney, to name but a few) had successfully held on to the idea that the "real" product was in fact the brand itself, and consequently branding had become far more than an added extra. It was now an integral part of the "very fabric of their companies" (Klein, 2000, p. 15).

In this sense, it was argued that the significance of Marlboro Friday was not "the death of the brand" at all (Pearson, 2014), but rather that clarified and reinforced the two key forces behind the increasing strength of 1990's consumption:

> *the deeply unhip big-box bargain stores that provide the essentials of life and monopolize a disproportionate share of the market [Makro et al.] and the extra-premium "attitude" brands that provide the essentials of lifestyle and monopolize ever-expanding stretches of cultural space [Apple et al.]"* (Klein, 2000, p.16).

One of the key ways in which the latter group, including the likes of Nike, Calvin Klein and The Body Shop, remained committed to lifestyle branding was by using advertisements to

closely align their brands with fashionable or popular movements such as evocative or trendy street art and “progressive” political values (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this technique is the sheer absence of the physical “product” in these advertisements. One of the most interesting examples of this is the case of Absolut Vodka, which developed an entire advertising brand around the absence of its product: “its brand was nothing but a blank bottle-shaped space that could be filled with whatever content a particular audience most wanted” (Klein, 2000, p. 17). Absolut Vodka (#BeAbsolut) continues to be incredibly successful in South Africa and has stood as an example for other developing alcohol brands including SKYY vodka (“Live the SKYY life”) and Savannah (“It’s Dry. But you can drink it”). What is key here is not the brands’ superior ability to accurately target one niche market, but the fluidity and mobility with which it targets all markets, simultaneously, as quickly as they should appear. In other words, the brand became a “cultural sponge, soaking up and morphing to its surroundings” (Klein, 2000, p. 17). Other brands, such as The Body Shop, took this one step further and abandoned direct advertising altogether, deeming it too clumsy and intrusive. Instead, these companies focussed entirely on “image building”. These seamlessly constructed identities were then transmitted into the general cultural fabric of society through a number of means including “cultural sponsorship, political controversy, the consumer experience and brand extensions” (Klein, 2000, p. 20; Banet-Weiser, 2012). Another useful example is the international fast food chain, Nando’s, which originated in South Africa. Very few, if any, of the Nando’s advertisements feature chicken at all. The advertisements, instead, present the audience with a witty or satirical scene, very often political providing critical commentary on a social or political occurrence. As such, those who “get the joke” become part of a positive social group who are both humorous and fun, and critically aware.

Although cultural sponsorship had already been popular for many years, branding in the nineties wanted more than just a “swoosh” on the scoreboard, or participants drinking a coke after the game. Brands aimed to outshine the event entirely. In other words, instead of reflecting popular culture of the time, they worked tirelessly to produce their brand, itself, as popular culture. “And why shouldn't it be? If brands are not products but ideas, attitudes, values and experiences, why can't they be culture too?” (Klein, 2000, p. 30). The line between branding of culture and branded culture has become so fine that is often difficult to tell the difference and with the advent of “co-branding”, the line has been erased entirely.

Klein (2000) asserts that it is important to note that this shift, in itself, was not inherently problematic and, to begin with, it seemed to produce a mutually beneficial relationship:

> *the cultural or educational institution in question received much-needed funds and the sponsoring corporation was compensated with some modest form of public acknowledgment and a tax break… there is an unfortunate tendency to tar all sponsorship with the same brush, as if any contact with a corporate logo infects the natural integrity of an otherwise pristine public event or cause* (Klein, 2000, p. 31).

As state funding was slowly withdrawn and public institutions became more reliant on brands' sponsorship for survival, the finely balanced relationship started to become distorted. Brands no longer viewed their roles in sponsorship as a useful amalgam of altruism and brand image development. They wanted more credit and control, and they could harness their economic power to achieve this (Klein, 2000).

Almost all spheres of cultural life- from music to sports, from Woodstock to "The Ghetto", and everything in between- became co-opted by brands. One of the most significant moves during this period was a shift in target population from adults to children. As Klein (2000) asserts "parents might have gone bargain basement, but kids, it turned out, were still willing to pay up to fit in" (p. 68). This, however, required more than a little relabelling and repackaging of pre-existing products. Brands needed to reinvent themselves entirely to be consistent with trending youth culture of the time. This was a difficult task as an inherent requirement for "cool" is that it evades definition. An intangible definition means that it remains elusive to most who are trying to imitate it. In this sense, "if everything is cool, then nothing is" (Hawthorne, 2012, p. 16). Within this forever in flux, consistently mutating nature of popular culture, the biggest and best brands needed "cool hunters" not only to keep up with the latest trends, but to, themselves, participate in creating them.

One of the most notable examples of "branded cool" relevant to this work is what is referred to as "ironic consumption" (Mc Coy & Scarborough, 2014). This refers to the consumption of popular products which the consumer self-identifies as "bad". Popular culture is ironically celebrated for its awfulness (Mc Coy & Scarborough, 2014). The youth "were now finding ways to express their disdain for mass culture not by opting out of it but by abandoning themselves to it entirely —but with a sly ironic twist" (Klein, 2000, p. 78). Loving to hate

“bad” television, visiting Disney land intoxicated, or wearing a loathed celebrity on your shirt, all became signs of insubordination to an unavoidable system of control. “Not only were they making a subversive statement about a culture they could not physically escape, they were rejecting the doctrinaire Puritanism of seventies feminism, the earnestness of the sixties quest for authenticity and the "literal" readings of so many cultural critics” (Klein, 2000, p. 78). And as with all other emerging youth culture, the brands responded, morphing into “New Trash Brands” that appeared self-mocking and sneering, their new spin was being ironically old and selling the uncool as tongue-in-cheek cool. With all other literal and psychological “space” already filled, it was an inevitable next step “to fill up that narrow little strip of un-marketed brain space occupied by irony with pre-planned knowing smirks, someone else's couch commentary and even a running simulation of the viewer's thought patterns” (Klein, 2000, p. 78).

Within this setting, one of the most problematic and unexamined beliefs was that “alternative culture”- meaning all that which was new and different to mainstream culture- was naturally or automatically opposing mainstream culture (Widdicombe, 1993). Instead, it did very little to challenge mainstream ideas, and more often than not, alternative culture was merely mainstream culture “in waiting”. Although those producing alternative culture appeared to genuinely believe in remaining independent and autonomous, in standing up to the big corporations and rejecting capitalist ideals and practices, these notions of a purity were often the first to be “sold out” when the inevitable gaze of the cool hunters turned their way (Klein, 2000). These ideas can be more fully understood by unpacking the notions of “liminality” coined by van Gennep (1960), and later extended by Turner (1969), and what de Certeau’s (1984) refers to as the “space in-between”. Both these concepts refer to an in-flux stage of transition where people are caught between two different positions or identities. As Turner (1969) asserts “the coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterises the peculiar unity of the liminal: that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both” (p. 99). Liminality is commonly used to understand experiences of young people in society who no longer feel like children but are not yet recognised as adults either (Bucholtz, 2002; Luzzatto & Jacobson, 2001; Wood, 2012). In this sense they are “positioned on a boundary or threshold” (Weller, 2006, p. 102) of society or in a state of “betweenness”. Similarly, the ironic consumers, discussed above, are too in a state of “in-betweenness”. They are neither part of popular culture, nor outside of popular culture, but are somehow simultaneously both.

Closely linked to this was the capitalist co-option of activist movements themselves. During this period (and perhaps arguably still today) much, if not all, social activism focused on the subversion of media presentations of minority groups. Klein (2000) asserts that "for a generation that grew up mediated, transforming the world through pop culture was second nature" (p. 109). Although this approach was not wrong or problematic in itself, it led to a narrowly-defined focus and over-emphasis of personal politics causing these issues to become divorced from, (or entirely concealing) more global and systemic issues (Kellner, 1983). Furthermore, the manipulative and guileful nature of (particularly branded) popular culture, allowed surface level changes to identity politics to be easily made without challenging or altering the underlying ideological structures that initially produced problematic representations to begin with (Banet-Weiser, 2012). In other words:

> *The backlash that identity politics inspired did a pretty good job of masking for us the fact that many of our demands for better representation were quickly accommodated by marketers, media makers and pop-culture producers alike … [and] our insistence on extreme sexual and racial identities [in fact] made for great brand-content and niche-marketing strategies* (Klein, 2000, pp. 110-111).

Although some perceived these changes to be representative of personal freedom and social equality, others viewed this as an instrumental ideological tool for managing or manipulating people (Adorno, 1973; Washburn, 2007) by creating the illusion of democratic choice whilst directing their focus away from more serious political engagement. Berger (1972), consistent with the latter, argues that consumption is offered as an alternative or replacement for engagement in significant democratic decision making in these societies. By offering consumers choices between clothing, cars or collages, those in power are able to maintain a monopoly on important social and political issues. In this way, advertising allows unjust and undemocratic aspects of society to remain concealed and unchallenged. As Berger (1972) asserts "Capitalism survives by forcing the majority, whom it exploits, to define their own interests as narrowly as possible" (p. 154). Although this was previously imposed through more overt or "forceful" means (such as widespread deprivation), it increasingly became achieved through the construction of deliberately unattainable ideals of desirability.

Berger (1972) adds that, similar to the processes of globalisation, marketing is also understood and validated by its exponents as being in the best interests of all in society: it

promotes competition between companies allowing for increased access to choice for consumers, and in turn develops the economy of the country. Both these ideas are closely linked to constructions of freedom in capitalist countries. This reflects Marcuse's (1964) argument that notions and symbols of liberty hold authoritative and controlling potential when presented in, or operating within, an exploitative societal structure. This is particularly relevant to the notion of "free choice" (Kellner, 1983). In other words:

> *Free election of masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves. Free choice among a wide variety of goods and services does not signify freedom if these goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear-that is, if they sustain alienation. And the spontaneous reproduction of superimposed needs by the individual does not establish autonomy; it only testifies to the efficacy of the controls* (Marcuse, 1964, p. 10).

In light of the two previously mentioned shifts in advertising culture (the necessity of brand identities and the youth as the most lucrative burgeoning target market), cultural diversity became all leading brands' top priority when producing new and improved identities with which they could relate to and connect with youths. In South Africa this was dynamically teamed with post-Apartheid messages of a united, free and fair "rainbow nation". Two clear and successful examples of this are Castle Lager and Coca Cola. In 1998 Castle Lager released what is now considered one of their most iconic South African advertisements. It was set in New York and featured a culturally diverse group of South African men bustling through the busy streets to finally come together and share a beer. The tag line "All over the world, a South African's home is his Castle" (Timeshare, 2008) stresses a commonality and sense of togetherness. In 2014, Coca Cola celebrated South Africa's 20 years of democracy by dramatically creating a rainbow across a full building billboard reading "Happy 20 years to our rainbow nation" (Macleod, 2014). The aims and effects of such campaigns have been hotly contested. On the one hand, some have argued that these changes suggest that the advertising industry may have progressed into more positive influential social roles. Others, however, are less convinced. As Klein (2000) cynically remarks, "people who saw themselves as belonging to oppressed groups were readymade market niches: throw a few liberal platitudes their way and, presto, you're not just a product but an ally in the struggle" (p. 113).

These ideas have become increasingly prevalent particularly in relation to emergence of "socially conscious" and "ethically responsible" (Johnston & Taylor, 2008) brands, where political engagement has become neatly packaged and sold to consumers at exorbitant prices. A useful example of this is the growing number of cruelty free and organic cosmetics brands (South African examples include Africa Organics, Lulu & Marula, and Skoon), which all actively market their products around upholding stringent ethical principles. In this sense social activism has become depoliticised and replaced with branded lifestyle activism. This thesis aims to develop understanding of this practice further by exploring the specific ways in which discourses of authenticity facilitate this process by highlighting how lifestyle consumption choices have become inextricably linked to experiences, and displays, of personal authenticity.

### 3.4.1. Authenticity and Brand-Culture

Green (2010) writing for The New York Times highlights the prevalence of the authentic ideal in marketing and consumption, arguing that it has become "a buzzword for selling handmade products," and commenting that "the exultation of the 'authentic' reaches near-hilarious heights in the design community, with young bloggers creating endless catalogues of 'authentic' items like denim or Prouvé chairs" (Green, 2010). This tongue-in-cheek remark is more fully developed by Potter (2010) who argues that if we carefully examine the lifestyle activities commonly labelled by the media as authentic (including "loft-living, ecotourism, or the slow-food movement") it becomes clear that this movement is "a disguised form of status-seeking" (Potter, 2010, p. 15).

Freedman and Jurafsky (2011) highlight an important and often overlooked element in the discussion of authenticity: the issue of class. Most of the activities associated with authentic living tend to be those targeted at, and accessible to, the middle class. Freedman and Jurafsky (2011) argue although "the classes may use different metaphors for defining the authentic experience, both [middle and lower classes] seek it out" (p. 53). More specifically, Freedman and Jurafsky (2011) discuss the different ways in which authenticity was marketed to different socioeconomic classes by analysing the packaging of potato chips. They suggest that the ideal is still important to those in lower socioeconomic groups, but is defined differently, and has a stronger focus on particular aspects of authenticity. They found that in marketing images aimed at the upper class, authenticity was defined predominantly as naturalness and specifically contrasted to that which is artificial or fake. On the other hand,

the packages of inexpensive chips, designed for lower socioeconomic groups, defined authenticity as having strong ties to family history and tradition, and locality.

Beverland, Lindgreen, and Vink (2008) also explore representations of authenticity in branding. They argue that the notion of authenticity in marketing no longer refers to the "genuine-ness" of product alone. Rather, "modern uses of the term go beyond such claims, seeking to imbue the product with a set of values that differentiate it from other, more commercialized brands" (Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink, 2008, p. 5). Advertising using the notion of authenticity is a challenging task since advertising itself is perceived as an artificial and simulated process. In their study, Beverland, Lindgreen, and Vink (2008) suggest three key ways in which the authenticity of brands are assessed by their participants, namely, pure (literal) authenticity, approximate authenticity, and moral authenticity.

Pure authenticity was conceptualised as being consistently committed to traditions and origins and showing very little alternation over time. "Consistent with this definition of authenticity, cues that reinforce perceptions of authenticity are those that reinforce a continuance of historic practices including means of production, place of production, and product styling" (Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink, 2008, p. 10). Approximate authenticity refers to the ways in which tradition is represented in abstract and symbolic ways in advertisements. Here tradition still played an important role in determining authenticity, but unwavering loyalty thereof was not regarded as essential as long as the brands essence remained intact. Here what was deemed important was the "overall emotional impression" or feeling of authenticity the advertisement created. Finally, moral authenticity was defined by participants as the use of a traditional process where handmade goods are individually constructed by artisans. These consumers valued "brands that were genuine in their intent" and they only wanted to support brands that reflected their "personal moral values" (Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink, 2008, p. 15). In other words, authenticity was assigned to brands that appeared to be produced by an enthusiastic artist who chose their profession through love and passion, rather than for purely commercial goals.

Banet-Weiser (2012) provides a comprehensive and interesting account of authenticity and brand cultures. She refers to brand cultures as the process whereby brands, and their relationships with consumers, "become cultural contexts for everyday living, individual identity, and affective relationships" (p. 4). She stresses this emphasis on brand culture

(rather than merely focusing on the economic functions of branding), highlighting the narratives constructed through brands.

> *When that story [a brand tells to consumers] is successful, it surpasses simple identification with just a tangible product; it becomes a story that is familiar, intimate, personal, a story with a unique history. Brands become the setting around which individuals weave their own stories, where individuals position themselves as the central character in the narrative of the brand* (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 4).

What becomes important is the relationship between the brand and the consumer- this, like all other relationships, should be based on "the accumulation of memories, emotions, personal narratives, and expectations" (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 8). Banet-Weiser (2012) argues that individuals use these relationships when constructing and enacting their personal identities. In other words, brands have become the cultural space within which individuals are able to experience security, relevance and authenticity. Banet-Weiser (2012) is particularly interested in exploring the different ways in which "authenticity" can be perceived within the branding culture. It forms part of both the branded cultural space and the consumer-brander relationship. Again, this re-emphasises the ways in which authenticity has been constructed through consumption choices via lifestyle as a means of self-expression. This thesis aims to extend this exploration by focussing specifically on examples relevant to the South African context, and exploring the various institutions, power relations and ideologies which are reinforced through these discourses. The following chapter will outline, in more depth, the theoretical framework and methodological procedures used in the current study.

# Chapter 4:
# Methodology

*"As Foucault puts it, technologies of self are 'the way in which the subject constitutes [herself] in an active fashion, by the practices of the self, [but] these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by [herself]' (1987, p. 122) … They are not random, then, nor individually or idiosyncratically produced, but are historically and culturally specific"* (Gill & Orgad, 2016, pp. 329-330).

This chapter will explore the theoretical framework and the associated methodological procedures used in this study.

## 4.1. Theoretical Framework

This section provides a detailed exploration of the main theoretical concepts used to shape the research aim, questions, design and analysis presented in this thesis. I will begin by presenting the broad theoretical foundation of the study, focussing specifically on social constructionist and feminist theories. I will then build on the historical literature of personal authenticity presented in the previous chapter by exploring understandings of identity from this perspective. Finally, I will explore the importance of power and discourse.

### 4.1.1. General Assumptions of a Social Constructionist Framework

The main theoretical underpinning of this study is social constructionism. Social constructionism is an umbrella term used to describe a critical approach which directly opposes the positivist notions of empiricism and objectivity. In social constructionism, language is the main focus. It specifically highlights the way in which meaning and reality are socially-created through interaction. Furthermore, social constructionists emphasise the power relations present during the meaning making process, and a primary aim is to uncover concealed structures which maintain an oppressive status quo. A broad range of different approaches, asserted by numerous different authors, fall under this school of thought. Burr (1995) argues that these authors and approaches are unified by little more than obscure 'family resemblance': "This is because, although different writers may share some characteristics with others, there is not really anything that they all have in common" (Burr, 1995, p. 2). Similarly, Potter (1996 as cited in Nightingale & Cromby, 1999) argues that "there is no one type of [social constructionism], and that constructionism is itself a

construction" (p. 4). Despite this, several key areas of consensus can be identified between social constructionist writers.

Several different assumptions of social constructionist theory, agreed on by most writers, are succinctly outlined by Beyer et al. (2007). Firstly, as mentioned above, from a social constructionist perspective, people use language to construct both personal and collective versions of reality. This idea moves away from the empiricist notion of a single, external real truth, and instead suggests that each society and culture develops a variety of truths linked to their specific language and socio-cultural context. "Reality is only accessible to us through categories, so our knowledge and representations of the world are not reflections of the reality 'out there', but rather are products of our ways of categorising the world" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). Burr (1995) emphasises this point by suggesting that researchers working from this perspective challenge commonly accepted knowledge and view the world with a critical outlook which involves challenging conventional ways in which the world can be understood by highlighting how these "truths" are socially constructed. For example, the stereotypical views that many people hold of men (strong, aggressive, virile beings) and women (subservient, submission, fragile) constitute a conventional way of thinking and understanding the world that are challenged and reframed through social constructionism.

Burr (1995) argues that truth cannot be merely observed from an objective and unbiased standpoint, instead we create truth by reflecting what we perceive to be real when observing the world around us. Both the different words that we use to describe our experiences and the "guiding metaphors" we develop are of great significance as they simultaneously emphasise and conceal various aspects of experience and, in turn, create a particular picture of "truth" (Beyer et al., 2007; Rorty, 1989). Although all social constructionist writers appear to be united in their oppositional stance towards positivism and the "empiricist tradition of science" (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p. 6) which valorise 'facts' collected through impartial and impersonal observation, there are two broad ways in which theorists frame this opposition. For some, this opposition in itself is enough, and there is no overt connection to political action. Others, alternatively, argue that social constructions are both relative and specific (not random). In other words, they "emerge through social processes that are already shaped by influences such as power relationships" (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p. 6) and, hence, they are intricately linked to, and should be used to challenge, political contexts.

From a social constructionist perspective, the process of social interaction is a key means of facilitating the production of reality and sustainment of knowledge. Cromby and Nightingale (1999) stress the importance of social processes as fundamental producers of experience. They argue that "it is the social reproduction and transformation of structures of meaning, conventions, morals and discursive practices that principally constitutes both our relationships and ourselves" (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p. 4). In other words, it is only when particular versions of truth are used by individuals within their social relationships, that they become meaningful. Social constructionists, therefore, emphasise various types of social interactions, with particular attention being given to the language used within these interactions (Burr, 1995). This, again, foregrounds language (referring to both its central roles as (1.) the main "carrier of categories and meanings" (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p. 4) and (2.) as a primary medium through which our activity or behaviour is mediated) highlighting its essential role in shaping experience and reality. All social constructionists appear to agree on this aspect, however, there is a broad range of divergence on how fully it can be applied. On the one hand, several social constructionist writers (including Edwards & Potter (1992) and Butler (1990)) argue that 'there is nothing beyond the text'. In other words, reality only exists in so far as we discursively produce it. On the other hand, many social constructionists (for example Harré, (1990)) believe that there is a "real", physical or material world that stands beyond language, yet our experience of this is limited to the ways in which it is constructed through language.

Linked to this, social constructionism highlights the role of history and culture in the production of "truth". As Cromby and Nightingale (1999) argue: "History provides extensive evidence that cultures change over time, while social anthropology demonstrates that they vary greatly from place to place" (p. 4). As a result, both what we "know to be true", and how we determine and prove this, could be different, change, or shift. In other words, knowledge, experience and meaning is not only socially created, but historically and culturally specific or "contingent". Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) explain that the "view that all knowledge is contingent is an *anti foundationalist* position that stands in opposition to the foundationalist-view that knowledge can be grounded on a solid, metatheoretical base that transcends contingent human actions" (p. 5). In other words, social constructionism places relationships as the primary and paramount source of "truth" and embeds all understandings of reality within social, historical and cultural contexts (Beyer et al., 2007; Rorty, 1989).

Burr (1995) takes this a step further by arguing that understandings of truth and reality are not only specific to particular historical and cultural contexts, but are also created and produced by these factors. In other words, understanding and knowledge relies on specific social and economic systems that are predominant in a particular culture during a specific time period (Burr, 1995). Cromby and Nightingale (1999) add to this emphasising that this produces different kinds of people and relationships: "the subjectivities of the actual, living people that are constituted in and from those ways of speaking will vary, along with the cultures that produce and sustain them" (p. 4). This will be discussed more fully in the next section. Again, although all social constructionists emphasise the role of history and culture in shaping experience and reality, they do not all agree on the extent to which this occurs. The divergence here appears to be the degree to which writers focus on or emphasise what is common or similar about people from very diverse cultural and historical contexts, rather than a sole focus on difference.

Furthermore, social constructionism suggests that communities combine and connect life experiences through the use of stories and narratives (Beyer et al., 2007). Dominant stories within a society are referred to as grand narratives. These stories are the most prominent narratives and, hence, the most frequently told stories in a particular society. These grand narratives also tend to be totalising in that they attempt to group a vast range of social behaviour using one single, uniform explanation. All communities, however, contain multiple narratives and very often the minority groups have their stories silenced or overlooked in favour of the majority's overriding narrative. In other words, within these grand narratives, "some forms of action become natural, others unthinkable" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). Our social constructions of reality can produce a variety of different social actions, and therefore the social construction of knowledge and truth has social consequences" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). An important aspect of social constructionism involves discovering and recognising the silenced stories and highlighting their concealed meanings (Beyer et al., 2007). In addition, examining collective social practices is seen as tantamount to developing understandings of particular cultural and time bound social and psychological realities (Burr, 1995; de la Rey & Duncan, 2003).

### 4.1.2. Understanding Socially Constructed Identities

Social constructionism asserts that as individuals are actively involved in creating their own realities, they too have a role to play in moulding their own future (Rorty, 1989). It

emphasises language and individuals' own stories or narratives and focuses specifically on the way in which meaning and reality are socially-created through interaction (Burr, 1995). Individuals do not develop one fixed and constant identity. Rather, identity is viewed as fluid and dynamic, it can be constructed and reconstructed in different social and historical environments (Beyer et al., 2007; de la Rey & Duncan, 2003). Since "the ways in which we understand and represent the world are historically and culturally specific and *contingent*: our worldviews and our identities could have been different, and they can change over time" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). Burr (1995) provides a comprehensive but succinct summary of socially constructed selves. She states:

> *Instead, then, of people having single, unified and fixed selves, perhaps we are fragmented, having a multiplicity of potential selves which are not necessarily consistent with each other. The self which is constantly on the move, changing from situation to situation, is contrasted with the traditional view of the stable, unchanging personality. And our view of 'human nature' becomes historically and culturally bound rather than fixed for all time. What we have traditionally called 'personality' begins to look more like a theory that we are using to try to make sense of the patterns we see in our experience rather than a fact of human nature* (p. 20).

This is potentially a very empowering assumption because it suggests that as authors of their own narratives, people have the potential to alter the way in which they represent and describe their experiences in more liberating terms and in turn shape more emancipatory futures (Beyer et al., 2007; Burr, 1995; de la Rey & Duncan, 2003; Rorty, 1989). This is supported by Burr (1995) who argues that one of the main aspects of social constructionism is its focus on social action. This is similar to Butler's (1990) notion of performativity which is discussed below. If the world can be perceived and created in various different ways using language as the tool for construction, then language itself can be used as a means by which action and social change can occur. Burr (1995) argues that if "language is indeed the place where identities are built, maintained and challenged, then this also means that language is the crucible of change, both personal and social" (p. 29). It is important to note that not all theorists working from this perspective highlight this liberating view. For Foucault, for example, the emphasis is placed on the ways in which knowledge is rooted in power relations which, through oppression, shape us into subjects necessary for a well-functioned and productive society. Foucault's work on power and discourse will be explored in detail a little later.

### 4.1.3. Feminism and Gendered Identities

Feminism generally supports the tenets of social constructionism but, in particular, highlights gendered identity. More specifically, it focusses on the way in which an individual's gender is socially constructed and influences both how they are positioned in society, and how this shapes their constructions of reality. Neuman (2011) notes that "feminist research assumes that the subjective experience of women differs from that of men" (p. 116). Feminists argue that gender is not an innate and inevitable categorisation of individuals but rather something that is constructed in different social, cultural and political environments. hooks (2000) argues that "challenging sexist thinking about the female body was one of the most powerful interventions made by contemporary feminist movement" (p. 31). With regard to the body, feminists such as hooks (2002) suggest that women cannot experience liberation unless they reject sexist definitions, which value a woman solely on her physical appearance, and become aware of gender relations and power inequalities which permeate all social life (Neuman, 2011).

Although early feminist theory did focus primarily on emancipation of women, contemporary feminism has extended its scope to potentially include a broader range of social suffering and domination. As Cromby and Nightingale (1999) argue:

> *Feminists and critical theorists have drawn attention to how dominant notions of 'women' and 'the person' in contemporary Western society fit all too neatly with the demands of patriarchy and capitalism. Such notions are much more than just ways of representing people; they become, in their elaboration, determinants of social practices in which we make and find ourselves as the subjects of patriarchy and capitalism, or alternatively as their opponents. In both cases, patriarchy and capitalism become influences to which we must attend* (pp. 4-5).

If feminism argues that femininity is socially constructed, then so too are notions of masculinity. With regard to men, there is an emphasis on the way in which dominant ideals of sexuality, gender and power advantage as well as oppress and constrain men and boys (MacMullan, 2002). It suggests that an alternative to patriarchal masculinity is required, yet this must not merely resemble that which is "feminine" as this, too, is problematic. This vision of masculinity should reject militaristic notions such as domination and discipline (hooks, 2000).

Furthermore, oppression linked race, sexual orientation and class have all become relevant feminist issues. Arguably the most significant development in feminist theory has been the increased focus on intersectionality. This term, initially coined by the legal scholar and feminist theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, emerged in response to both feminism's and critical race theory's failure to adequately explore the complex and nuanced nature of experiences and challenges of women of colour. Intersectionality refers to the multidimensional nature of "marginalized subjects' lived experiences" (Nash, 2008, p. 2; Crenshaw, 1989). In other words, it highlights the interaction of different identity categories including race, gender, and sexual orientation in producing different lived experiences, "social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies" (Davis, 2008, p. 68).

### 4.1.4. Foucault's Analysis of the Body and Sexuality as Identity

Although Foucault's work focusses heavily on power, knowledge and discourse, his analysis of the body and sexuality give us some key insights into identity. Foucault viewed the body as "the site on which discourses are enacted and where they are contested" (Mills, 2003, p. 81). As with his general analysis of power, Foucault presents a bottom-up analysis of power in relation to the body. In other words, Foucault viewed the body as a place of power enactment and resistance. Foucault deliberately chooses to discuss "the body" as opposed to "the individual" in order to distance himself from the position that individuals' are stable and fixed with an innate essence, and instead assert individuals' as an effect of the discursive influences that constantly shape and produce them. Foucault (1980a) writes: "the individual is not to be conceived of as a sort of elementary nucleus . . . on which power comes to fasten … In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals" (p. 98). In addition to challenging the essentialist notion of the "solid body", Foucault also highlights the historical and cultural specificity of bodies and thereby brings to the fore the idea of different social constructions of the body- where within each context, the body is perceived, regarded and experienced uniquely.

Arguably one of the most interesting aspects of Foucault's work, with specific reference to sexuality, was his discussions of "silencing" and taboos. He asserts that attempts to censor conversation around sexuality and to limit supposedly "deviant" sexual practices, particularly in the nineteenth century, were not successful. Conversely, this repression inadvertently promoted the talk about sexuality, the engagement in sexual acts, as well as the experienced

desire for (and during) both of the fore mentioned. In other words, by attempting to stifle "worrying" or "aberrant" forms of sexuality, these restrictive discourses unintentionally created awareness about such forms of sexuality and, by constructing them as "forbidden", produced them as desirable.

### 4.1.5. Butler's Notion of Performativity

Butler (1990; 1993) argues for a radical feminist social constructionist view and suggests that both gender and sex are socially constructed and, hence, identity cannot be understood as a single, stable, personal attribute but rather should be viewed as discursively constituted amongst discourse and law in various cultures over time. Subjecthood is therefore fluid and dynamic in nature and can be repeated and altered in differing ways (Butler, 1990; Salih, 2002). Butler (1990) asserts that subjects are effects of institutions and social forces, and that individuals cannot be understood outside of language. In addition, gendered and sexualised identities are performative. In other words, individuals do not exist naturally preceding social behaviour; their identities are formed through performative actions. This is not to suggest that identities are performed, as this implies that there is an actor behind the action. Performativity involves an action which pre-exists a subject which performs such action. The subject is formed and created through the actions and the sequence of these performative acts come to be perceived as a stable, fixed and consistent individual (Butler, 1990).

This view has been criticised for "killing off" the subject and hence undermining the potential for political action. Butler (1990), however, argues that the process by which we deconstruct and destabilise commonly accepted natural and inevitable notions, by uncovering their socially constructed and historical origins, is in itself a form of agency and provides great potential for altering and reconstructing these ideas in new and liberating ways and in turn subverting the current power structures we perceive as natural and inevitable (Butler, 1990; Salih, 2002).

### 4.1.6. Althusser's Notion of Interpellation

Butler draws extensively on the work of the French Marxist writer and thinker Louis Althusser. Of particular relevance is his concept of interpellation and the role of ideology in his understanding of identity which was developed in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses". The French word "*interpeller*" (which directly translated to English is "interpellates") is a common verb used more commonly in French. It has two meanings: to

call out or beckon someone; and to interrogate or question someone. In an Althusserian sense, both meanings of "interpellates" are used simultaneously to describe the process whereby an individual is "hailed" or summoned into a specific subject position by a figure of authority, or more precisely, by ideology (Althusser, 1971; Ferretter, 2006). The most common example of this process, given by Althusser himself, is a policeman beckoning a layperson on the street. By responding to the calling of the policeman, the person takes up the subject position into which they are being interpellated. Althusser (1971) explains this saying "Because he has recognized that the hail was "really" addressed to him, that "it was *really* him who was hailed" (and not someone else) [sic]" (p. 163). It is important to note that the process is two-sided: it requires someone to do the summoning, and the other to "turn around" metaphorically, and respond to that calling.

The authority figure referred to in this process, for Althusser, is always ideology: "The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing" (Althusser, 1971, p. 163). For Althusser (1971) an ideology "always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices" (p. 156). The dominant ideas or discourses in a context always succeed and are regulated by the various institutions and their corresponding practices and rituals. As Ferretter (2006) explains:

> *…societies consist of a complex set of relations between the mutually interacting practices by which they are constituted. Individuals do not determine these practices or their relationships; rather, the practices and their relationships determine the lives of the individuals within them…The concept of the free and self-determining subject is therefore an ideological concept. In reality, each human being exists as an individual inserted into the complex set of practices* (p. 88).

According to Althusser, it is through this very process of interpellation *by ideology*, that we come to experience ourselves as independent and self-governing. By calling out to us, as if by name, continually throughout our lives, ideology recruits and transforms us into the position of the subject which we then experience as our own personal thoughts, actions and beliefs- in other words, as our own personality and identity (Althusser, 1971; Ferretter, 2006).

### 4.1.7. Foucault's Analysis of Power

Foucault's critical analyses appears to uncover problematic or "evil" aspects of social conditions but at the same time resist the idea that merely uncovering these entrenched ills is enough to promote a better or "good" living condition. In fact, he seems to suggest that even overcoming or addressing these ills will not necessarily ensure an improved society. This is often uncomfortable for most people as "he seems to be gesturing towards an emancipatory politics, at the same time as undercutting any possibility of such a position" (Mills, 2003, p. 2). The aim of critical work, therefore, is to challenge common sense assumptions about everyday life. As part of this aim, Foucault strongly urges us to challenge our own social, theoretical and political positions, paying particular attention to the contradictions in our own thinking.

Foucault challenges the idea that concepts, like the subject and the economic, are fixed and stable entities and, instead, stresses the need to critically evaluate these concepts themselves, by locating them within a historical understanding and tracking their development over time. This focus on critical reflection moves away from the essentialist notion if reducing all explanations to one particular feature of society. To begin with let us consider Foucault's understanding of the word subject. He asserts that it can refer to two different things: "subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to" (Foucault, 1982 as cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p. 21). This emphasis on the importance of power will be explored below.

Foucault provides a "bottom up model of power" (Mills, 2003, p. 34) by highlighting the way in which power occupies all social interactions in everyday life. He is particularly interested in the ways in which people are active agents, constantly contesting and enacting power in different social interactions. This view deviates from the Marxist theorists' focus on power, which strongly stress the oppressive nature of power on seemingly "helpless" individuals. Foucault contradicts commonly held understandings of power which define it as an object to be gained, acquired or lost, and instead views it as an action or strategy, to be performed in relationships. In *Power/Knowledge* he writes: "Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain … Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organisation … Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application" (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). From this perspective, Foucault views power

as more than just a prohibitory force, oppressing and repressing people by preventing particular behaviours, actions and freedoms, as early Marxist theorists proposed. He also highlights the productive aspects of power arguing that certain kinds of actions and events come into being through the enactment of positive power.

Foucault is particularly interested in the different techniques and practices through which power is exercised. For example, in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), he analyses how discipline, specifically through self-regulation, is one of the most commonly used mechanisms consistently found in a number of different institutions in Western societies. He understands the technique of wielding power through discipline as having several different aspects: "Discipline consists of a concern with control which is internalised by each individual: it consists of a concern with time-keeping, self-control over one's posture and bodily functions, concentration, sublimation of immediate desires and emotions" (Mills, 2003, p. 43).

All of the above components are produced by the individual themselves, but are simultaneously a result of an external disciplinary force. In other words, individuals tend to internalise the demands of external institutions and adapt their actions in order to confirm to these societal expectations or norms. Since the individuals have internalised these norms, they experience the regulation of their behaviour according to these norms as self-determined and "voluntary", and the institutions are no longer required to explicitly coerce people into conforming to these systems of power. This subtle form of coercion is so strong and pervasive that individuals appear to experience it as a natural part of everyday life. They begin to self-correct and self-control automatically and unconsciously. These practices of self-discipline are well-entrenched in almost all spheres of social life. This can be illustrated by women repressing their appetites to adhere to dieting regimes or parenting styles that condition children (for example, by using "reward charts") to behave and feel in "controlled" ways.

Mills (2003) suggests that for "Foucault, discipline is a set of strategies, procedures and ways of behaving which are associated with certain institutional contexts and which then permeate ways of thinking and behaving in general" (p. 44). These ideas of control first originated in the prison setting and then spread to other contexts including educational institutions, hospitals, the army and the workplace.

One of the ways in which discipline is instilled is through the physical and spatial arrangement of people. Foucault (1977) explains this by using the Panopticon model as an illustrative example. Within this architectural design, prison inmates are spatially positioned to ensure that they can be observed without ever being able to see the observer. This arrangement compels the inmates to constantly behave as if they are being observed, irrespective of whether they are actually under surveillance at the time. This creates a new understanding of power relations. Foucault asserts that "he who is subjected to a field of visibility and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (Foucault, 1977, p. 202). Instead of those in authority physically exerting their power on the powerless individual's body (for example through torture), the individual is now cast into "both roles", persecuting themselves according to the internalised rules of the oppressor, despite the possible absence of the authority figure. It can be argued that the Panopticon model can be applied to many other contexts, including present day examples such as CCTV cameras or speeding cameras. Furthermore, this model can be used to explain the ways in which individuals voluntarily makes themselves visible for scrutiny on social media.

Of importance here is Foucault's work on Governmentality. This can be understood as an analysis of those who can govern (and those who can be governed) as well as the process through which this influence occurs. He argues that many theorists often construct The State as being fixed and permanent and this construction creates the impression that altering the State's position of power is very unlikely. This, Foucault argues, conceals "the fragility of the maintenance of power" (Mills, 2003, p. 48). In addition, he stresses that The State does not consist solely of the Government. It also includes the police, the legal system and various other sectors, all with their own aims and differing aspects of power. It is, therefore, simplistic to view The State as having a single unified and coherent goal when wielding power. "That is not to deny the power that is exercised over individuals by the State, through its various agencies, but rather to suggest that we must recognise the multiple and conflicting agencies involved in the notion of the State" (Mills, 2003, p. 49).

Furthermore, Foucault (1988) suggests that it is problematic to ascribe intentions to institutions or organisations. Although some may have very coherently defined mission statements mapping their goals and objectives, this very seldom reflects their modus operandi

in reality. Overlooking this complex nature of organisations, by reducing them to single individuals and entities, prevents us from fully exploring the net-like means by which power is organised and negotiated in society. It is important to acknowledge that all social relations-including those between family and friends and within romantic and work relationships-are structured by power. Power is negotiated within these relationships and individuals compete to attain particular positions within a seemingly intangible and relatively fluid hierarchy.

Thornborrow (2002) extends Foucault's ideas with regard to Governmentality arguing that it is essential to differentiate between the status one is afforded within various institutions (for example being a doctor or a lawyer) and the status that an individual is able to acquire through negotiation of power in personal interactions with others (family or spouse relationships). The former she terms institutional status, and the latter she refers to as local status (Thornborrow, 2002). Thornborrow (2002) argues that although these two forms of power or status may be seen as closely interrelated, forming and informing each other, it is important to note their differences. One major difference lies in one's ability to transform or transcend them. Local status appears to be more readily open to change in that individuals can, for example, challenge their local status, and improve it, through the use of language. Institutional status, however, appears much more resilient to these means (Thornborrow, 2002; Mills, 2003).

It is clear that Foucault's theorisation of power stresses a complex consideration of the numerous possible influencing factors involved in power dynamics, as opposed to relying on the linear cause and effect model that is commonly used when historical accounts are produced. Although his framework makes examining and understanding past historical events more complicated and difficult, the analyses produced are more nuanced and complex, highlighting the diffuse dispersion of power throughout societal structures, and within social relations, and thus provide a more in-depth explanation of their occurrence.

#### 4.1.8. Foucault's Analysis of Discourse

Many of Foucault's writings highlight the importance of acknowledging the role that discourses play in power relations. He uses discourse in a number of different ways in his various works, referring to both the "groups of statements" which have meaning and generate effect as well as the "regulated practice[s]" (Foucault, 1972, p. 80) that produce various

statements or utterances. More generally speaking, Foucault defines discourse as "a regulated set of statements which combine with others in predictable ways" (Mills, 2003, p. 54). Structured sets of rules and complex practices regulate discourse and thereby either promote or hinder the circulation of particular statements or accounts. From this perspective, a statement is seen as more than just a sentence. It refers to an "authorised proposition or action through speech" (Mills, 2003, p. 65). It is simplistic, however, to view discourses as entirely consistent units as they are always comprised of differing (and often contradictory) statements. They do, however, always tend to perform similar functions, and are always linked to particular institutions.

Foucault argues that discourse is essential in understanding how we experience reality. Discourses fundamentally structure our perceptions of the world, more specifically, they appear to confine these perceptions. In other words, Foucault argues that individuals rely on discourses to understand the world around them. By using discourse to organise and understand their experiences, they simultaneously construct these discourses as "real", "fixed" and "normal", rendering them seemingly inscrutable (Foucault, 1981). Foucault highlights that the use of discourse is closely interrelated with the functioning of power. Again, what is stressed is not the imposition of discourse onto individuals in a simplistic way, but rather the dual roles that discourse plays in relation to power. In other words, "discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines it and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (Foucault, 1978, p. 101). In this sense, discourse, like power, is also seen to be integral to understanding and achieving resistance, and not merely a function of oppression.

Foucault's writing stresses the importance of exploring the various ways in which discourses are regulated through both restricting and productive processes. He argues that "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures" (Foucault, 1981, p. 52). He differentiates between the internal and external processes which shape discourses, and ultimately bring them into existence. When discussing external exclusions, he refers to the influence of prohibitions on speech, which he terms taboos (for example subjects of sexuality and death), as well as the divisions between both madness and insanity, and truth and falsehood. Understanding this disjuncture is important because it highlights the way in which discourses that reflect the ideas of those who are considered "sane" or hold authoritative positions in society are seen to

be “true” and important, and therefore remain in circulation. On the other hand, the discourses of the “mad” or the marginalised person are either deemed “untruthful” and rejected, or overlooked altogether. These exclusions are supported by numerous institutions, including universities and scientific associations, and their accompanying practices which all work to maintain discourses of “truth” and conceal “false” discourses (Foucault, 1967; 1972).

In addition, Foucault also describes several internal techniques of exclusion organising discourse including: the transformative role that explanations of primary texts have on the original (“commentary”); the author’s functional role in linking otherwise distinctly separate texts (“author-function”), artificially maintained parameters between subject areas (“disciplinary boundaries”) and the (in)accessibility of particular discourses to certain people in particular settings (“rarefication of the subject”) (Mills, 2003, p. 58-60). To take this current written thesis as an example, my (and Mills’ or Dreyfus and Rabinow’s) explanations of Foucault’s primary text shape the meaning of his original work and thus can be considered as “commentary”. In addition, the connections that I have made between different socially constructed perspectives of identity illustrate “author-function”. An example between “disciplinary boundaries” can be seen in chapter two, where the accounts of authenticity by philosophers, psychologists and sociologists were artificially separated, for clarity and structure, where in practice their accounts are closely connected and interrelated. Finally, “rarefication of the subject” can be seen in the “authority” bestowed to me as “researcher”, through the formal educational process into which I have been interpellated, whereas those not entrenched within the higher education institution would not be granted such legitimacy. All of the above are described as influencing the way in which discourses are organised, categorised, disseminated by determining those people and discourses with authority and those who lack it. These regulatory processes highlight Foucault’s interest not in the “innate” existence of discourses, but rather the means through which sets of statements come into being.

Mills (2003) summarises, “discourse should therefore be seen as both an overall term to refer to all statements, the rules whereby those statements are formed and the processes whereby those statements are circulated and other statements are excluded” (p. 62). Foucault’s primary focus when discussing discourses is to acknowledge and challenge the specificity of what we think and the structures that shape how we come to think these things. This may explain why he refrains from referring explicitly to the “speaking subject”. Through this avoidance of the

"consciousness, obscure or explicit" (Foucault, 1977, p. 59), he highlights the "impersonal system which exceeds the individual, and he analyses precisely this abstract, anonymous system and structures" (Mills, 2003, pp. 65-66). By uncovering or denaturalising these structures, we are able to examine whose interests are being upheld and how their discourses maintain positions of power.

I will now turn, more specifically, to particular methodology used in this study.

## 4.2. Methodology

This section will discuss the specific research aims, questions, sample and analysis techniques developed from the above theoretical framework. This study follows a qualitative approach, drawing on a combination of interpretive social science, critical social science and feminist principles (Neuman, 2011). Neuman (2011) argues that qualitative research is both iterative and emergent in nature. This study was iterative, in that it followed a cyclical, rather than linear, design which stressed flexibility and reiteration (Neuman, 2011). In addition, it was emergent in that it began with a fairly broad or general research area and gradually became more focused and refined during the process (Neuman, 2011).

### 4.2.1. Overarching Aim

This study draws on a social constructionist framework and discourse analytic approach to explore accounts of personal authenticity presented within the marketing material and/or campaigns of several brands prominent in South Africa. In addition, it discusses the implications that these constructions have for identity and social regulation. This is explored through the following research questions:

- What discourses do these brands and/or campaigns use when representing the notions of subject authenticity and the "true self"?
- What are the contextual origins of these discourses?
- How do these discourses of authenticity interpellate subjects, and influence the ways in which people construct their identities and social relationships?
- What ways do these discourses work to reinforce or challenge dominant institutions, ideologies or power relations?

### 4.2.2. Sample Description

Two separate but interrelated samples were chosen as part of this study, each of which are discussed more fully in their respective analysis chapters. Sample one consists of ten advertising campaigns (of large national or international "mainstream" brands) that were prominent in South African media (online, on television and/or in magazine print advertisements) between 2015 and 2017, all of which implicitly referred to personal authenticity. Sample two consists of fifteen South African artisanal or craft companies that self-identify as "authentic". Selecting a small sample is consistent with a qualitative research where the focus is on providing an in-depth and meaningful discussion of specific relevant examples (Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Ulin, Robinson, Tolley, & McNeill, 2002). Both samples were selected using non-probability, purposive sampling as they all had particular relevance to the research questions (Ulin et al., 2002). The specific selection criteria used for each sample will be discussed in the relevant analysis chapters.

This sample was selected because it is useful, illustrative and iconic, as opposed to representative (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). Goffman (1979) argues that when analysing advertisements one should deliberately choose examples that are particularly relevant to the issue under exploration. "This approach is typical of an art historian or art critic-focusing attention on images that are deemed noteworthy, important, or interesting" (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998, p. 165) instead of assembling a random selection. This is consistent with a qualitative research design where the aim is not to generalise or extrapolate but to provide an in-depth and thorough discussion of a specific area of enquiry (Neuman, 2011). I have, however, particularly within the first sample, attempted to deliberately select brands that target a range of different economic sectors of the market (for example: PUMA- high; Edgars- middle; Jet- low). This was more difficult in the second sample as artisanal brands tend to deliberately target middle to upper class consumers. Diversity of sample, here, was achieved by selecting brands across a variety of different product groups (clothing, food, décor etc.) and originating from several different South African provinces (including KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape and Eastern Cape).

Although the aim of this work, more specifically, is to explore how subjects are interpellated within the advertisements or brand material themselves, it is also important to acknowledge the possible ways in which these campaigns shape and construct the sectors within which they are situated. In other words, it is important to recognise advertisements as "cultural

artefacts" (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004, p. 23). Many writers (including Fairclough (2001) and Spitulnik (1996), for example) highlight the significant role that mass media plays in the transmission of culture, shaping the readers'/viewers' perception and understanding of the world, and influencing the ways in which they engage in society. Türken, Nafstad, Blakar and Roen (2016) argue that it is essential to recognise that "media discourse cannot be directly translated to everyday talk and experience" (p. 36). In other words, it is important to note the ways in which readers/viewers actively shape and produce the meaning of these media messages in their specific contexts.

Although it is beyond the aims of this study to explore the "dissemination of subject positions offered in media discourse to the general public and their everyday talk and experience" (Türken et al., 2016, p. 36), the data gathered in this study does emanate from a multitude of different "voices" thus providing rich material for exploring the subject positions and work performed through these discourses. In addition, Spitulnik (1996) stress that mass media serves as "both reservoirs and reference points for the circulation of words, phrases, and discourse styles in popular culture" (p. 162) and, as a result, provides a useful source for exploring the construction of meaning in broader society.

### 4.2.3. Data Collection and Procedures

Data collection occurred predominantly online via the brand or campaign websites or social media pages. For sample one, data consisted of promotional output of the ten campaigns including online and magazine advertisements, Facebook or Instagram posts linked to the campaigns, as well as online magazine articles discussing the campaigns. The data collected from these sources was transferred either from the original online sources to a single word document, or from print media, photocopied and filed. Most of the campaigns also included video content. All the verbal data presented within these videos was transcribed following King and Horrocks' (2011) method for basic transcription. Consistent with this technique, all material was recorded verbatim in order to preserve valuable information (such as emotional emphases or hesitation). I also ensured that I recorded significant non-verbal cues including expressive factors (such as tone of voice and displays of emotion) as well as important visual data (including physical actions, body cues and facial expressions). The transcription process facilitated a particularly important part of the initial analysis as it provided me with the opportunity to become familiar with, and fully immersed in, the data (King & Horrocks, 2011). For sample 2, data was collected from the brands websites, Facebook or Instagram

pages, as well as from online interviews showcasing their operations which were published on local lifestyle online magazines. Again, this data was transferred from the original online sources to a single word document and saved. The computer programme NVivo10 proved to be a useful tool for both storing and organising the data obtained.

### 4.2.4. Data Analysis

Since the sampled data was heavily reliant on visual imagery, I began my analysis by briefly considering some of the pertinent visual aspects of the material. For this I drew on Schroeder and Borgerson (1998)'s framework which was derived from a combination of Barnet's (1997) and Barrett's (1990) works (which analyse art and photographs respectively). This was then assimilated with a number of different social science theories (including those by both Goffman (1979) and Archer, Iritani, Kimes and Barrios (1983)). The method that was developed (a summary can be found in Figure 2 below) was not intended as a prescriptive and complete account to be followed rigidly in all cases. Rather it highlights some of the possible key areas which would be useful to explore. Consistent with most visual analysis methods, this approach begins the interpretation of an image by providing a basic description thereof. This should include an "articulation of form, subject, genre, medium, colour, light, line, and size" (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998, p. 166). Further, more in-depth, descriptive work will differ depending on the type of medium and genre of the visual image being explored.

The next stage involves interpretation of the image. Although the line separating the description and interpretation stages is not distinct, it is preferable that the second stage of interpretation develops from the initial features that were described. Schroeder and Borgerson (1998) articulate two different forms of interpretation, namely internal (factors within the image or photograph, an extension of the descriptive phase above) and external sources (the artist and subject, the context and purpose in/for which it was produced, and where/how it was presented). It is also important to explore the cultural context in which the image was produced, and its connotations: the specific aspects of the image that invoke fascination or are of superior quality. In other words, "what they imply, how they move us, how they become like memories [and] why they are so valuable to us" (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998, p. 168). Finally, the fourth phase refers to social psychological aspects which include factors such as head and bodily positions (indicating dominance or submission) or the type of touch (how hands are used).

Table 1: Tools for Visual Analysis

| *Tool* | *Issue* | *Examples* |
|---|---|---|
| Formal Analysis | Form | Size, texture, technique |
| | Subject Matter | Portrait, still-life, landscape, abstract |
| | Genre | Nude, impressionism, classical |
| | Medium | Paper, canvas, drawing |
| | Color | Black and white, bright, subdued |
| | Light | Darkness, intensity, shadow |
| | Line | Solid, sweeping, curving, think |
| Photographic Analysis | Art Historical Referents | Painterly, classic technique, resemblance to famous works |
| | Production qualities | Paper, equipment, finish |
| | Vantage point and angle of focus | Frame, subject appearance |
| | Focus | Sharp, blurry, fuzzy, hazy |
| | Depth of field | Short, deep, long, flattened |
| Interpretive Analysis | Context | Culture, purpose, presentation |
| | Comparisons | Photographs, photographers, artists visual artifacts, writers |
| | Internal sources of information | Within photograph; formal analysis |
| | External sources of information | About artist, context, purpose, reception, value, subject |
| | Connotations | Symbolic associations |
| Social Psychological Factors | Face-ism | Prominence of head and face |
| | Licensed Withdrawal | Psychological removal from scene |
| | The Feminine Touch | Hands used for aesthetic purposes vs. utilitarian (grasping or holding) |
| | Head and body cant | Signifies submission |
| | Eye contact | Signifies dominance |
| | Bodily dominance | Size, height, space |
| | Male gaze | Acknowledges sexual dualism |
| | Objectification | Male pleasure |

(adapted from Archer et al. 1983; Barnet 1997; Barrett 1990; Goffman 1979)

*Figure 2:* Summary of Schroeder and Borgerson's (1998) Visual Analysis Technique (p.167).

I then went on to conduct a thorough and detailed discourse analysis of the sampled texts. More generally, a discourse can be understood as a combined collection of images, speech, statements, stories and meanings that construct a specific version of a phenomenon, individual or group of people (Burr, 1995). Discourses, therefore, can be described as the "meaning-making" lens through which we experience the world (Burr, 1995; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Discourse analysis refers to the wide range of methodological approaches used to identify and understand the various discourses in a particular domain. Broadly, discourse analysis can be defined as a "theoretical perspective on language and more generally semiosis … which gives rise to ways of analysing language or semiosis [the meaning produced through signs (Bains, 2006)] within broader analyses of the social process" (Fairclough, 2001a, p. 121). According to Barker and Galasinski (2001) discourse analysis highlights the "social actions accomplished by language users communicating within social and cultural contexts" (p. 63). One of the fundamental aims of this analysis is to explore the ways in which both the apparent and obscure structural interactions "of dominance, discrimination, power and control [are] manifested in language" (Wodok & Meyer, 2001, p. 2). Discourse analysis, therefore, attempts to uncover and explain, the

various structural forces that shape an individual's thoughts, their personal relationships and experiences in the world around them, and the identities they enact.

Numerous different accounts of discourse analysis have been provided by various researchers (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Some accounts provide overarching and broad theoretical guidelines, whilst others give more structured methodological steps to conducting a specific type of discourse analysis in particular research settings. Although discourse analysis is used in many different disciplines, and can be used to explore a variety of research areas, it is a theoretically-specific technique that cannot be used divorced from its ontological and epistemological groundings (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). For purpose of this discussion, I would like to narrow my focus to two broad "types" of discourse analysis, namely, discursive psychology and Foucauldian discourse analysis, and provide a brief comparison of these two approaches as considered by Willig (2008). Although some researchers, perhaps most notably Potter and Wetherell (1995), argue that this differentiation is unnecessary as both types may be combined and used concurrently to explore a single aim, it is useful to understand differing foundational traditions from which they stem, and the areas of study for which they are most appropriate.

Discursive psychology is an umbrella term used to describe various discourse analytic and social constructionist perspectives developed as a response to the cognitivist approaches dominant in social psychology (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). It developed out of conversation analysis and focusses predominantly on how discursive practices function. It focusses on the various ways people use language to negotiate meaning during everyday, specific social interactions (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). In contrast, Foucauldian discourse, as its name suggests, has its roots in Foucault's and other post-structuralists' writings and aims primarily to uncover the varied ways "subjectivity, selfhood and power relations" are constructed through discourse (Willig, 2008, p. 95). Here, what is emphasised is not how individual people use discourse during daily interactions, but rather the type of objects, subjects and ways of being produced through discourse and made available to people. Discursive psychology and Foucauldian discourse analysis, therefore, have overlapping but contrasting types of research questions.

In addition to a distinction between research questions, Willig (2008) highlights two other areas of difference between the two approaches: agency and experience. In terms of agency, a

speaker, within discursive psychology, is viewed as actively deploying particular discourse practices in everyday interactions in an attempt to maintain a favourable position. On the other hand, from a Foucauldian discourse analytic perspective, an individual's agency is restricted by the subject positions made available to them through prevailing discourses (Willig, 2008). Additionally, discursive psychology challenges the value that more traditional psychological approaches assigns to personal experience. It views the category of "experience" as one of the many discursive tools that individuals can use to validate their position when negotiating meaning in social interactions. Foucauldian discourse analysis, alternately, highlights how the various ways our experiences are shaped and produced through discourse (Willig, 2008).

Although discursive psychology provides a wealth of invaluable knowledge and key insights into "discursive actions" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), it is the Foucauldian discourse analysis approach that will be drawn on most frequently considering the aims of this thesis. Parker (1992) provides an in-depth exploration of seven criteria (embedded in this are his frequently used "steps") to consider when conducting a discourse analysis of this type. Willig (2008), drawing on Parker's (1992) criteria provides her own 6 steps of Foucauldian discourse analysis. The discussion below will explore both these methods together.

Firstly, it is important to note that different perspectives emphasise different "sources" of language within which discourses can be identified. Parker (1992) suggests that we use the word "texts" when referring to these sources as this includes, but does not limit us to, individuals' speech and written material. Very often, important meaningful texts are overlooked because a clear author is difficult to identify. The initial task when conducting discourse analysis, therefore, is to choose and specify the particular texts you wish to interrogate. In this study, the data gathered consists of a variety of different "texts" including magazine images, television advertisements, song lyrics, as well as personal accounts through both spoken word and written comments. Once these have been identified, you begin to uncover the varied and contrasting meanings and insinuations prompted by the texts. Parker (1992) suggests that this process is best carried out using free association amongst a group of people.

The second overarching consideration involves the process of objectification: the naming of objects. This involves two layers. Firstly, referring to objects found within discourses (which may or may not have a concrete structure beyond these discourses which produce them) thereby presenting them as real. Willig (2008) suggests that the first key to clarifying the objects of study, is to think carefully about the research questions you are trying to answer. We then make note of all the numerous ways in which these objects are referred to in the chosen texts, being sure to not focus solely on explicit keywords. Implied references to objects, without using the key phrases we expect, often provide great insight to how the object of interest is constructed (Willig, 2008). The second layer of objectification that Parker (1992) refers to is the labelling of the discourses themselves as objects. Willig (2008) describes this process as "locat[ing] the various discursive constructions of the object within wider discourses" (p. 115).

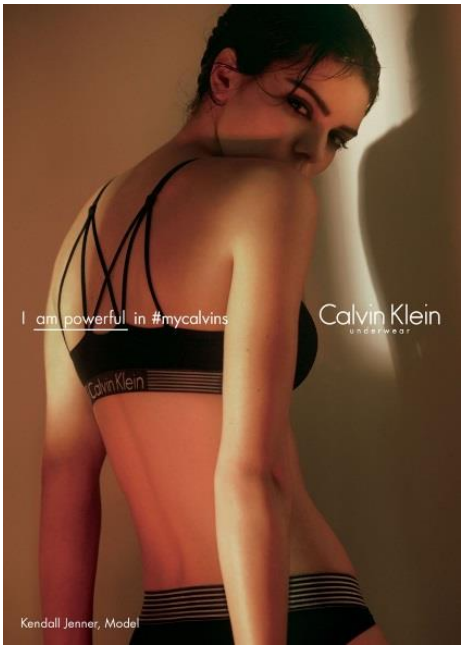


*Figure 3:* Supermodel, Kendall Jenner, poses for the Calvin Klein Underwear 2016 campaign #mycalvins ('Kendall Jenner returns for Calvin Klein's steamy underwear ads', 2016).

To give a practical example to illustrate this process, in the image of a Calvin Klein underwear advertisement pictured above (see Figure 3), the objects which can be identified include woman, beauty, and the body. Two of the discourses through which these objects are constructed can be identified as the discourses of femininity and authenticity. The words "*I am* powerful" create an emphasis on, and valorise, how she personally perceives herself to be, and directly contests the implicit assumption "*you are* feminine/fragile/gentle/weak" imposed on her by socially constructed gendered norms. In this sense she is rejecting the common interpellation into femininity by asserting a more "authentic", self-defined version.

In other words, here authenticity is constructed in opposition to the oppressive or alienating feminine gendered norms. In the present study, the objects of study include people or "selves", women, the body, relationships, work, and brands, as constructed in relation to discourses of authenticity. This will be explored in depth in the chapters that follow.

Parker (1992) goes onto the third criterion of conducting a discourse analysis: identifying subjects within the discourses. Some of these may have already been identified as objects in the previous consideration. A subject refers to the various "selves" or types of people which are called to, or interpellated as Althusser would say, through the discourse. If we again use the *Calvin Klein* advertisement as an example, subjects such as lover, consumer, self-carer, the desired or the strong woman may be identified. Additionally, discourse analysis requires us to consider the ways of speaking available in that subject position. Willig (2008) refers to these two stages as "Action Orientation" (which focusses on how and in which contexts these discourses are deployed) and "Positionings" (which refers to "a location for persons within the structure of rights and duties for those who use that repertoire" (Davies & Harré, 1999, p. 35 as cited in Willig, 2008, p. 116). Returning again to the above example, from these discourses the model is positioned as a confident and autonomous woman capable of defending herself and defying others.

The next stage involves exploring the variety of different, but interrelated, ideas, images, metaphors and comparisons produced by the discourse and grouping them together to establish a clear and consistent picture of reality. Parker (1992) refers to this as a discourse having a "coherent system of meanings" (p. 6). It is important to note that the meanings (objects, subjects etc.) identified are by no means exhaustive. As is consistent with a social constructionist perspective, these meanings will be specific to the social, historical and cultural contexts in which they are produced and a different set of contextual factors would produce alternate explanations. During this process a key task is to uncover the ways in which oppositional terminology is managed or negotiated in the discourse. Furthermore, reflecting on, or critiquing, one discourse often requires the use of other discourses. By identifying both the overlapping areas of similarity and the divergent areas of difference between discourses, we gain greater insight into the numerous and multiple ways objects and subjects are represented (Parker, 1992). In the above example, the discourses of authenticity and femininity can be more fully understood by examining broader neoliberal discourses of personal freedom (Türken et al., 2016).

The penultimate criterion that Parker (1992) stresses is the internally self-reflective "property" of discourses. Parker (1992) states that although "not every text contains a reflection on the terms chosen, and not every speaker is self-conscious about the language they use" (p. 14), it is important to identify the instances where the words used within discourses are commented on by that discourse. Other texts can be extremely useful in the process of clarifying and developing our current understanding of the discourse being explored. Finally, as mentioned previously, the historical specificity of discourses is essential from this perspective. Acknowledging this fluidity and dynamism of discourses requires focus on how a discourse initially arose and how the varied layers of the discourse have evolved over time. Here Willig (2008) instead refers to "Practice" and "Subjectivity". She is interested in highlighting the ways in which particular constructions promote or inhibit certain practices, "ways-of-seeing the world and certain ways-of-being in the world" (Willig, 2008, p. 117). In other words, it is important to explore the ways in which particular discourses shape how an individual can behave and what they can say, as well as how the varied subject positions, produced through the discourse, influence what they can feel or think. In the Calvin Klein advertisement, for example, the woman is able to see the world as "defy-able" and thus experience herself as being in control and free thereby reducing the anxiety or fear that may be experienced from an alienated or oppressed position.

Arguably the most important aspect of Parker's (1992) framework are his final six steps which he adds in "three auxiliary criteria". These strongly emphasise the roles of institutions, power and ideology, thereby highlighting that discourse analysis can involve political utility. Parker (1992) stresses that discourses can have serious ideological implications as they are often used to uphold specific institutions, or undermine others, through the reproduction and maintenance of particular power relations. Discourse analysis can, therefore, pay careful attention to the various types of institutions, both reinforced and supressed, by the different discourses explored in the previous stages of analysis. A crucial aspect of this process involves uncovering the power relations at work in these discourse. In other words, it is important to identify those sets of people who benefit from, and therefore are actively invested in promoting, a particular discourse, and other groups of people who are undermined by the discourse, and therefore aim to suppress it (Parker, 1992). Finally, Parker (1992) argues that a critical and useful approach to discourse analysis requires an analysis of ideology. He asserts that ideology should be viewed as "a description of *relationships* and *effects,* and the category should be employed to describe relationships at a particular place

and historical period" (Parker, 1992, p. 10). This involves exploring the ways in which different discourses intersect to produce oppression, and highlighting how discourses enable specific groups of people, voices and stories to become dominant, true and justified, and others are erased and silenced, and prevented from shaping or changing social reality (Parker, 1992).

The data analysed and presented in the following chapters was carried out using the specific steps presented by Willig (2008) and Parker (1992). A summary of the steps of these two methods, altered very slightly for brevity, are as follows:

Willig's (2008) six stages for conducting Discourse Analysis:

1. *Discursive Constructions*
2. *Discourses*
3. *Action Orientation*
4. *Positionings*
5. *Practice*
6. *Subjectivity*

Parker's (1992) twenty steps for conducting Discourse Analysis:

1. *Treating our objects of study as texts which are described*
2. *Exploring connotations through free association*
3. *Asking what objects are referred to, and describing them.*
4. *Talking about the talk as if it were an object, a discourse.*
5. *Specifying what types of person are talked about in this discourse.*
6. *Speculating about what they can say in the discourse.*
7. *Mapping a picture of the world this discourse presents.*
8. *Working out how a text using this discourse would deal with objections to the terminology.*
9. *Setting contrasting ways of speaking, discourses, against each other.*
10. *Identifying points where they overlap.*
11. *Referring to other texts to elaborate the discourse as it occurs.*
12. *Reflecting on the term used to describe the discourse, involves moral/political choices on the part of the analyst.*
13. *Looking at how and where the discourses emerged.*

14. *Describing how they have changed.*
15. *Identifying institutions which are reinforced when this or that discourse is used.*
16. *Identifying institutions that are attacked or subverted when this or that discourse appears.*
17. *Looking at which categories of person gain and lose from the employment of the discourse.*
18. *Looking at who would want to promote and who would want to dissolve the discourse.*
19. *Showing how a discourse connects with other discourses which sanction oppression.*
20. *Showing how the discourses allow dominant groups to tell their narratives, and prevent those who use subjugated discourses from making history.*

(Parker, 1992, pp. 7-20).

A combination of these two procedures was chosen because, together, they fully address the aims of the study and are most appropriate and consistent with the underlying theoretical tenets of the work. The methods work well together because they both overlap and diverge in important ways. Willig's (2008) stages are most useful for addressing issues of subjectivity and positioning. Her clear and explicit explanations provide particularly helpful direction when encountering the overwhelming abundance and richness of qualitative data, particularly initially as I commenced the analysis process. Willig's (2008) method, however, does not provide a detailed exploration of discourses' genealogy or the historical roots from which they emerge. Furthermore, it fails to fully identify and explore the potentially oppressive (or liberating) political uses of discourses. Both these aspects, fully covered in Parker's (1992)'s comprehensive approach, are directly relevant to the overall aims and objectives in this study. The final three criteria (consisting of 6 steps) are particularly pertinent as they specifically focus on power and ideology.

Consistent with qualitative methodology, discourse data analysis does not follow a linear or straightforward process. In this study, data analysis began in the early stages of the research design, and continued throughout the data collection and transcription stages. The steps described above were, therefore, carried out in an iterative and reflexive manner (Neuman, 2011). The following chapters will present a full and detailed exploration of the major discourses at work in the data.

### 4.2.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Rhodes University Ethics Committee before the study commenced. Since the vast majority of the data in this study was collected online, I referred to Markham and Buchanan (2012) "key guiding principles" for conducting internet research, paying particular attention to the important areas of "tension" discussed. This included a careful consideration of what constituted a private or public sphere and consistently reflecting on the ways in which data (text) is closely connected to the people that produce it. In addition to these procedural ethical considerations, practical ethical concerns ("positive ethics") remained an ongoing and important aspect of this work.

Prilleltensky and Nelson (2002) stress the necessity of researchers engaging beyond the narrow scope of procedural ethics and producing work that is critically ethical. This requires continuously acknowledging how theory, research and action each may function in either an emancipatory or marginalising manner. In addition, critically ethical researchers choose to actively espouse values, assumptions and practices that produce knowledge that challenges oppressive status quos and facilitates more liberatory ways of being. Engaging in critically ethical research is essential in contexts, like South Africa, where there is a long history of racial and gendered oppression. In South Africa this history continues to have an impact on current ways of living, where extensive racial, economic and gender inequality, and a severe divide between the un/educated, is still present. These contexts are particularly vulnerable to abuse of power and reinforcing pre-existing marginalising practices. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) argue that researchers need to develop what they refer to as "ethical competence" if they are to remain critically aware throughout the research process. This includes the ability to recognise ethical problems as they occur and to meticulously engage with the multiple available options, responding thoughtfully and sensibly. In other words, ethical competence is reliant on reflexivity: it requires that the researcher is consistently aware of, and critically reflects on, the ways in which she shapes the research process (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). My personal reflection will be explored in the conclusion.

## Chapter 5:
## Selling Stories

*"the ways in which individuals habitually perceive and conceive their lives and the social world, the alternatives they see as open to them, and the standards they use to judge themselves and others are shaped by advertising, perhaps without their ever being consciously aware of it"* (Lippke, 1995, p. 108).

This chapter will discuss the first key way in which discourses of authenticity are evident in, and facilitative of, consumption practices: through advertising. As explored in the previous chapters, through the works of Klein (2000) Beverland, Lindgreen, and Vink (2008), Potter (2010) and Banet-Weiser (2012), notions of authenticity have been intricately tied to advertising and branding for decades. Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry (2003) refer to authenticity as "one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing" (p. 21). This chapter will begin by providing a broad background of several current large national and multinational brands' advertising campaigns, and discuss the ways in which these campaigns draw on discourses of authenticity to shape the advertising *medium* itself. The following chapter will extend this discussion by, more specifically, critically analysing the discourses of personal authenticity portrayed within *the content* of these campaigns, and exploring the implications that these have for both subjectivity and social regulation. The images found in these advertisements (and other visual media) are important not just as reflections of current subject positions available in a particular context, but also in the construction and reconstruction of these particular identities.

Schroeder and Zwick (2004) suggest three important assumptions to consider when exploring advertisements. Firstly, they stress the importance of recognising advertisements as aesthetic objects: both in terms of the creativity, planning, and conceptualisation of most big advertising campaigns, and the many ways in which consumption has been made "artistic" through style and fashion (Lury, 1996). Secondly, it is useful to consider advertisements as socio-political artefacts. In other words, they are intricately linked to the socio-political context within which they appear. They tend to both reflect and produce this context. Although aesthetic and political aspects are usually considered to be mutually exclusive, Schroeder and Zwick (2004) argue the need to consider how advertising is simultaneously located in these different domains and how advertisements relate to and connect with each

other. Finally, they argue the importance of locating advertising "within a system of visual representation that creates meaning within the circuit of culture" (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004, p. 24) and this system extends beyond the initial intentions of those involved in the creation (i.e. the brand managers, advertising companies etc.). This system explains how advertising is both a product and producer of culture (Hall, 1980) and hence, how discourses operating within advertisements both mirror and generate dominant social norms in that particular social and historical context.

### 5.1. Campaign Backgrounds

More specifically, this section will analyse and discuss discourses of personal authenticity explored through numerous advertising campaigns that were prominent in South African media (online, on television and/or in magazine print advertisements) between 2015 and 2017, namely Edgars- *#BecomeYou*; PUMA- *Do You*; Under Armour- *#UnlikeAny*; Dove- *#MyBeautyMySay*; Jet- *Love Yourself* , Woolworths- *#OwnYourFit,* Adidas Originals- *Original never ends* and *Your future is not mine;* Dawn South Africa- *#YOUGOTTHIS* as well as JOKO Tea South Africa and Surf Laundry South Africa (various, untitled). These 10 brands' advertising campaigns were purposefully selected as they all had particular relevance to the research questions. More specifically, the selection criteria included that all of the campaigns should: make reference to authenticity in the title and/or conceptualisation of their campaigns as well as within the visual and written outputs as part of the campaign; have either South African origins, or a large South African audience; be produced by a large national or multinational company (as opposed to the small artisanal brands discussed in the final analysis chapter); and, finally, use the process of using "real" people to tell "true" personal stories as a key part of the marketing strategy.

The campaigns were explored through analysis of their promotional output including online and magazine advertisements, Facebook or Instagram posts linked to the campaigns, as well as online magazine articles discussing the campaigns. The data collected from these campaigns was transferred either from the original online sources to a single word document, or from print media, photocopied and filed. Many of the campaigns also featured video content which was transcribed verbatim, as discussed earlier. The data was analysed, both within and across the different campaigns, again using a combination of Parker's (1992) and Willig's (2006) methods of discourse analysis as outlined previously. I will begin by providing a brief background of each of the campaigns included in this analysis, highlighting

the ways in which these campaigns provide useful examples of authenticity. In addition, I will provide an analysis of how the procedural and technical aspects of these campaigns, and the medium as a whole, were shaped broadly by discourses of authenticity. In the following chapter I will go on to provide a comprehensive account of the prominent discourses that emerged from these campaigns, and each of the constructions of authenticity alluded to here will be explored in more depth.

### 5.1.1. Edgars (South Africa) - #BecomeYou

In June 2017 Edgars, a well-known and popular South African clothing chain, launched an online advertising campaign for arguably it's most popular in-house clothing brand *Free2BU*. The campaign, which carried the tagline #BecomeYou, presented the personal stories of six South African media personalities who each shared a significant moment in their life that, to them, reflected a progression toward, or return to, their authentic self. These narrative videos were posted on the Edgars Facebook site accompanied by comments and images all with underlying messages related to authenticity. Considering that even the name *Free2BU*, itself, draws on the notion of authenticity, it is no surprise that the #BecomeYou campaign is not the first time that Edgars has aligned itself with the ideal of authenticity (see Figure 4 below).


*Figure 4:* An example of Edgars' marketing material making implicit reference to authenticity (Edgars, 2017).

In 2015, Edgars, in collaboration with Cheeky Media, released a reality show called *She's The One* (initially broadcast on SABC 3 and subsequently on e.tv), which aimed to find the new "face" of Edgars. One of the judges, Kojo Baffoe, specifically stressed that authenticity was the key "characteristic" they were looking for in a winner. In 2015 Edgars also launched the "Piece of Me" campaign where several South African celebrities donated a special "old faithful" pair of jeans with a personal story of how the item was a unique "piece of them". All

the clothing items were then recycled into a single, one-of-a-kind, denim dress, created by local fashion designer Craig Jacobs, which was then auctioned on Twitter and the proceeds were given to charity ('Edgars 'Piece of Me' project', 2015).

### 5.1.2. PUMA- DO YOU

In September 2016 PUMA, a multimillion dollar international sports brand popular in South Africa, released a massive ongoing online, magazine print and billboard advertising campaign: DO YOU. The campaign, which is run specifically by one of their sub groups/brands, PUMAWomen, was conceptualised by musician and R&B icon Rihanna and features model/actress Cara Delevingne as the main "face" of the campaign (see Figure 5 below). With only women featuring in the campaign, it aims to provide a strong message of empowerment of women and suggests "living life your way" as a means of achieving this (Cahil, 2016). In the online medium, the campaign presented the personal stories of approximately 20 "extraordinary" women (including dancers, athletes, actresses and musicians) from numerous different countries (including Great Brain, US, India and South Africa). These narratives, each ending with the campaign tagline "Do You", specifically explored personal authenticity by discussing the different ways in which each woman was able to actively "be herself" in her everyday life. In addition, numerous print magazines (including the South African editions of Glamour, Cosmopolitan, People, Elle and Women's Health) all featured a variety of versions of the PUMA, DO YOU advertisement.


*Figure 5: PUMA's DO YOU Magazine Advertisement featuring Cara Delevingne (Trevelyan, 2016).*

Due to the success of the initial outputs of this campaign (as indicated through both sales and public response), several other components have been added, and continue to be added, since its conception. For example, in July 2017, Cara Delevingne and PUMA produced an online

four-part DO YOU mini documentary series (McGarrigle, 2017) which explores the stories of several “ordinary” women from various different countries. This series aims to forefront women’s issues and highlight the “need to keep making changes to improve the lives of women across the world” (Gill, 2017). Furthermore, Puma launched a “24-hour experiential hub” run by Urban Nerds, which aimed to provide an open public platform for empowerment of women (Ellison, 2017). This event, which was carefully planned to fall on the day after International Women’s Day (9 March 2017) was held in the UK and consisted of various forms of fitness training classes and fashion and style workshops each of which were run by “strong female icons who embody the 'Do You' ethos” (Ellison, 2017). Similarly, on 6 November 2016, PUMA India held a public DO YOU fitness event where hundreds of women gathered to create a new Guinness World Record of “the most people to hold the abdominal plank position” (Padalkar, 2016). After their event, they continued with this experimental strategy by offering successful-women-led classes teaching a range of skills/disciplines (from bar tending, through yoga, to capoeira) to women of the public in Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore ("PUMA-DO YOU", 2018).

#### 5.1.3. Under Armour- #UnlikeAny

On 19 July 2017, Under Armour, a multinational fashionable sports footwear and clothing company, launched their most recent marketing campaign “Unlike Any”. As with the PUMA-Do YOU campaign discussed earlier, it focusses solely on women. The original campaign consists of 6 videos each featuring an “all-star” famous woman athlete (see Figure 6 below) sharing “her story” with the assistance of poetic verses created by lyricists and spoken word artists (Pasquarelli, 2017). Each story draws on the notion of authenticity by stressing how the individual is “truly them self”, as opposed to being like someone else. The campaign expanded to include an online competition, released on 2 August 2017- just days before International Women’s Day, run in numerous countries (including South Africa) which encouraged local women to share their unique stories. In South Africa the competition was launched by the South African distributors of Under Armour, Apollo Brands, and the competition prize consisted of R25 000 in Under Armour apparel (‘Under Armour honours women’, 2017). As with the original campaign, the three South Africa finalists of the competition each featured in their own “Unlike Any” video which was accompanied by poetry written by Capetonian artist, Winslow Schalkwyk. As a whole, the campaign aims to “exemplify how each individual is truly Unlike Any” (Under Armour Inc., 2017) through

personal stories to which “We can all relate” because they epitomise “human truths” (Jaques, 2017, as cited in an interview with Pasquarelli, 2017).


*Figure 6:* Athletic Sprinter, Natasha Hastings features in Under Armour’s Unlike Any advertisement campaign (‘Under Armour startet neue Kampagne’, 2017).

As with all of the previous case studies explored above, the #UnlikeAny campaign is not Under Armour’s first campaign that draws on notions of authenticity. Two previous Under Armour campaigns “I Will What I Want” and “Rule Yourself” included similar references. When Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps first watched the final production of his “Rule Yourself” advertisement he confirmed that “…the world is going to see the REAL Michael Phelps and THAT is what I am excited about” (‘Under Armour launches “I Will What I Want™”’, 2014). The “I Will What I Want” campaign which was released in 2014 was Under Armour’s first and most extensive campaign that, like #UnlikeAny, spoke to women alone. Featuring many of the sportswomen who went on to star in the latter campaign, “I Will What I Want” was in some ways an earlier conceptualisation of the #UnlikeAny campaign.

Although the main aim of “I Will What I Want” was to highlight experiences of overcoming adversity, this campaign also drew on ideas of authenticity both implicitly and explicitly in both the conceptualisation and execution. For example, in the official press release for the campaign the Under Armour, Senior Vice President and Creative Director, Fremar (2014, as cited in ‘Under Armour launches “I Will What I Want™”’, 2014) asserts that "Today's athletic female expects the same level of performance and authenticity from her apparel and footwear as the world-class female athlete" and highlights that the campaigns “depict *real*

moments of will that each woman has faced in her life, capturing the grace and determination that defined each of them in their personal triumphs" ('Under Armour Launches', 2014). In the same press release the main "face" of the campaign, American Ballerina Misty Copeland, adds to these ideas when she states "I am excited to …be able to inspire women as they find the will to pave *their own way*, just as I have" ('Under Armour Launches', 2014). Here, again, authenticity is used in a number of different ways. Firstly, the clothing (product) itself is directly referred to as authentic. Secondly, the "narratives of perseverance" used in the campaigns are described as "real", specifically highlighting that they are true and genuine rather than fabricated. Finally, Misty's reference to her (and others) following her/their "own way", also implicitly refers to authenticity by differentiating one's *own* way from those of others.

#### 5.1.4. Dove- #MyBeautyMySay

No discussion of authenticity and advertising could be complete without including an exploration of one of Dove's many campaigns that forefront "real women". The (still ongoing) Real Beauty campaign that Dove launched as early as 2004 was one of the very first marketing movements to use discourses of authenticity both within the content and in the form of the campaign. According to Johnston and Taylor (2008) this campaign which draws on feminist critiques (specifically in relation to unrealistic beauty ideals) was strategically coincided with the precise period in political history "when scholars bemoaned the constant assertion that feminism is dead" (p. 942).

Some of the more recent Dove campaigns that stem from this tradition and continue the discussion of real beauty with a strong focus on authenticity include: the #MyBeautyMySay campaign, launched in 2016, which "encourage[s] women everywhere to stand up for their own beauty" (Dove, 2016); #MyHairMyWay, launched in 2017, which appears to be a specifically South African version of #MyBeautyMySay focussing particularly on embracing your own unique hair type; as well as the #RealDads campaign, also launched in 2017 (this time by Baby Dove), the first of the "real" campaigns aimed at men, or in this case new fathers. All of the above campaigns reinforce the ideas that there is no one "right" way to look or to be. Rather, they suggest there is "only your way" and that is enough (Baby Dove, 2017). In addition to using "real" people to tell their "real stories", similar to many of the previous examples, these campaigns also implicitly forefront authenticity in the message content by emphasising that embracing who you *really are*, naturally, and doing things "your

way" is the best and/or "only" way to live. Although several of the Dove campaigns have been explored in depth by many previous studies (Johnston & Taylor, 2008; Millard, 2009; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012), their inclusion here is useful, not only because the campaigns are extremely prominent in South African media, but also because they have proved pivotal for many other South African companies, including Woolworths (#OwnYourFit) and Jet (Love Yourself) who have attempted to emulate Dove's "real beauty" ideas in various ways.

### 5.1.5. Jet (South Africa) - Love Yourself

In early February 2016, Jet (one of South Africa's most affordable clothing retail outlets) launched their ground breaking campaign "Love Yourself" which was created by Advertising Agency Joe Public United. This was the first South African brand to produce a lingerie campaign that featured plus size women with a range of different physical features. As with many of the previously discussed campaigns, rather than using traditional models, Jet (drawing on the notion of authenticity) chose to feature "real" South African women who they considered to be successful professionals (including a singer-songwriter, a publicist, an artist, a writer and an architect, to name but a few), but most importantly, they claimed, "sisters, daughters, and women we all can relate to" (Thomas, 2016). The campaign closely resembles Target's "Yay for everybody- For any body and every body" lingerie advertising campaign released in Australia at the exact same time. Both Jet and Target introduced their respective campaigns as part of their Valentine's Day marketing agendas. By choosing to release the campaign in time for Valentine's Day, they aimed not only to contested feminine beauty ideals but also to challenge the way in which "True Love" is frequently used to sell anything from diamonds to brassieres. As Thomas (2016) aptly asserts, "Instead of selling, 'this is hot and your man will love it,' Jet is serving treat yo' self realness. Because it's pretty backwards that a holiday all about love, makes people feel the opposite".

The campaign consisted of all black and white print advertisements in magazines (see Figure 7 below), in-store billboards and a "behind-the-scenes" short video of each woman released via Jet's social media accounts. The campaign tried to creatively challenge judgemental stereotypes about body size by featuring each women's bra size with a self-chosen complimentary adjective describing themselves (for example **32C**onfident or **32D**aring).


*Figure 7:* A diverse group of "real" South African women feature in Jet's Love Yourself Valentine's Day marketing campaign (Somuah, 2016).

In addition, each woman was, of course, asked to share why they love themselves, with almost all the women using references to authenticity in their narratives. This campaign proved to be particularly successful, with articles on the movement being featured on over 8 media outlets including the Sunday Times Newspaper, Cosmopolitan Magazine and Power FM radio station. In a report published by the creators Joe Public United, it was found that over "2500 people participated in the online conversation with 98% of those conversations being positive" and the campaign as a whole earned Jet a Public Relation value of over R 6 000 000, and return on investment of 1:40 (Joe Public United, 2017). The campaign also received extremely positive feedback from its customers and followers. Twitter user MelanieRamjee tweeted "When ur allowed to be yourself. Thanks @jet_fashion for the awesome campaign #jetloveyourself". Similarly, @hopematsabe tweeted "I love the #JetLoveYourSelf campaign we must love our self the way we are and not to try to be somebody else" and, @estakaalits, applauded "When an ad is made for real humans and rings true. #JetLoveYourself" ('#JetLoveYourself', 2018). These responses from members of the public, again draw attention to the ideal of authenticity through references to "real humans" and loving *yourself* rather than trying to be "somebody *else*".

### 5.1.6. Woolworths (South Africa) - #OwnYourFit

Following in Jet's footsteps, Woolworths, one of South Africa's largest and most popular middle to high end clothing and homeware chains (Marks & Spencer or David Jones are, perhaps, the closest equivalents), released their "Own Your Fit" campaign in November 2017. The campaign features a diverse group of "trend-setting" South African woman of

different body shapes, skin colours and hair types all modelling Woolworths' underwear that is the "perfect fit" for them (see Figure 8 below). In addition, as part of the campaign, they have each used their social media accounts to share their personal #ownyourfit story (focusing on how they learnt to love themselves and become "comfortable in their own skin") and encouraging other women to share theirs too.

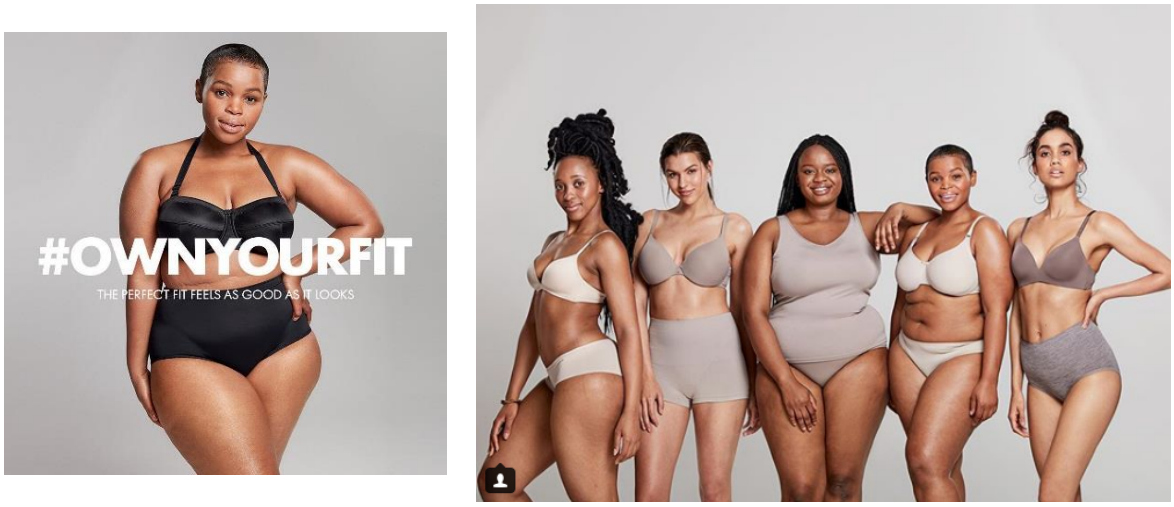


*Figure 8:* South African women feature in Woolworths' #OwnYourFit campaign ('Instagram post by Woolworths SA', 2017).

Although very new, this campaign has already received positive feedback from the public. Instagram user @simangelesicwebu, for example, applauded Woolworths saying "This is the kind of advertising I like using *real* people with *genuine* bodies, not the polished models with bodies that don't even exist in this entire universe!!" ('Instagram post by Woolworths SA', 2017). By valorising bodies that are "genuine" (rather than "artificial") and people who are "real" (rather than "fake"), notions of authenticity have been closely linked to positive body-image. Another Instagram User, @oyamabotha, highlights how long it has taken for advertisements to adjust in terms of diversity, arguing that she was practicing the "self-love", to which they are referring, long before they suggested she could: "@woolworths started using REAL bodies for their campaigns....PLEASE let them know I've beeen ready owning my fit #OwnYourFit" ('Instagram post by Woolworths SA', 2017). Finally, Woolworths has, consistently, sold items of clothing with messages that stem from discourses of authenticity. Three such examples are: a woman's sweater featuring the message "be authentically you", children's t-shirts sporting the words "Just be you" or "Do it your own way", and an ironically "faux-aged" denim waistcoat asserting "Be Yourself", "Original" and "Not a copy" (see Figure 9 below). This last example provides a useful example of the contradictions in

"authentic" consumer culture as the faded denim, is which can be considered inauthentic both in terms of being artificially faded, and being a tired or recycled cliché of sixties countercultural style, has come to represent originality and authenticity within this context. These items (which retail at R 499, R699 and R 150, respectively), are beyond the financial means of the majority of South Africans.


*Figure 9:* Two photographs of an example of apparel at Woolworths that specifically draws on discourses of authenticity (Plüg, Personal Communications, 2018).

### 5.1.7. Joko Tea, Dawn Cosmetics, Surf Laundry (South Africa)

Experiencing authenticity was, originally, considered to be a "middle class issue" associated with "higher order" needs that only become relevant once basic needs have been fulfilled (Maslow, 1943), and therefore, initially, these discourses were only promoted through high end brands (Freedman & Jurafsky, 2011) (as will be discussed with the artisanal, craft brands in the final analysis chapter). It is important to note, however, that discourses of authenticity have now extended their range and are now also prevalent amongst cheaper household brands. In addition to Jet, explored above, over the course of 2016 and 2017, three other basic, "lower income" South African brands, namely, Joko Tea, Dawn Cosmetics and Surf Washing Powder, have emulated various discourses of authenticity in their promotional output, drawing on many of the key ideas explored in the more expensive campaigns discussed above.

With all three of these brands, what at first appeared to be merely a series of loosely connected advertisements, with further exploration revealed a consistent and regular narrative of individuality, authenticity, femininity and empowerment. Although only one of these

brands had a specific distinct "campaign" (Dawn- #YouGotThis), and all of these examples relied on more basic or "amateur" techniques producing material that lacked the complexity, finesse and artistry of the high end campaigns, each of these brands strongly emphasised notions of personal authenticity of "real" people through their print and online media messages.


*Figure 10:* Examples of marketing output from Dawn, Joko and Surf that specifically draw on discourses of authenticity, retrieved from their respective Facebook pages (Dawn South Africa, 2017; JOKO Tea SA, 2017; Surf Laundry SA, 2017).

Both Surf and Dawn featured images of quotes or short video clips of "ordinary" consumers (or relatable brand ambassadors) sharing their personal experiences and advice. The Dawn #YouGotThis campaign which launched in South Africa in June 2017 particularly encourages women to be confident in "who they are" and to use this self-confidence to achieve success. In addition, as part of this campaign, Dawn organised a "Mentor Meetup" event which featured a day long workshop where South African celebrities and brand ambassadors shared their personal "success story" with "ordinary" consumers.

Similarly, JOKO draws on the notion of authenticity both directly (see Figure 10 above) and implicitly by regularly encouraging consumers to relate to and identify with posted material (see Figure 11 below). One such example asserts "We love celebrating the different types of JOKO tea lovers! Tell us which cup describes you?" (JOKO Tea SA Facebook Page, 2017) which was posted with a panoramic image describing different ways tea can be consumed (for example, "timeless and traditional" or "bold and mysterious"). This example is important because it highlights the way in which commodities have become a key means of self-expression. Furthermore, consistent with many of the previously discussed campaigns, all three of these brands chose to focus solely on women. Although specifically targeting women

is common for cosmetics and household cleaning products, a gendered focus for tea is more unusual.


*Figure 11*: JOKO Tea advertisement exploring tea drinker's "personalities" (JOKO Tea SA, 2017).

Marketing writers suggest that, by using "middle class" discourses, these brands (and Jet, discussed above) have attempted to reframe themselves as higher end brands. As Koza (2016) comments on the Jet- "Love yourself" campaign: "Did anyone notice the Jet rebrand?... [The public] all seem to agree that it's an 'edgy' concept for a 'once conservative brand'". He goes on to describe how Jet, which has historically catered to primarily lower-income consumers, asserts that it is in the process of "repositioning the brand" (Koza, 2016) as more "upmarket". In addition, it may be argued that these messages suggest that authenticity is now relevant to, and expected of, people across different demographic groups, particularly from all income groups. This is consistent with Schroeder and Zwick (2004) assertion that advertising may be located "within a system of visual representation that creates meaning within the circuit of culture—often beyond what may be intended by the photographer, advertising agency or commissioning company … [and thus] advertising representations influence cultural and individual conceptions of identity, and must be understood as the result of changing social and cultural practices" (p.24).

### 5.2. Authentic Advertising Techniques

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of these case study examples, alluded to in the background above, lies not in the analysis of the discourses of authenticity in their "messages" alone, but rather the way in which discourses of authenticity shape and structure the advertising methodology itself. As mentioned earlier, the campaigns included in this sample chose to draw on a relatively new format of advertising where instead of using actors to play characters (or perform a role) in an advertisement, they "offer" "real people" "a chance" to "tell" their "real stories". This shift can be understood as the most recent in a series of changes in marketing strategies, some of which were previously discussed in

Chapter 3. Banet-Weiser (2012) asserts that the most significant change in late 20th Century and early 21st Century consumer culture is the emphasis on developing relationships between consumers and producers, a process which is facilitated by recognising or "mobilising the authentic, "real" consumer" (p. 37). In other words, the key issue here is about trying to construct a "personal" relationship with the consumer, rather than a faceless commercial transaction. This development appears to have progressed one step further by not only focusing on the authentic *consumer* but by actively foregrounding the authentic *brand* which uses authentic advertising techniques. In this sense, the "genuine-ness" and "humanness" of *both* the buyer and the seller are essential to this construction. In this section I specifically highlighting how this new format functions, and some possible reasons why this shift became necessary.

### 5.2.1. Real People and True Stories

As mentioned above, the "real people, real stories" advertising technique should not be understood ahistorically and, can be seen as an extension of various previous strategies including what Klein (2000) identified as co-branding. This is defined as "a fluid partnership between celebrity people and celebrity brands" (Klein, 2000, p. 30) where high end brands choose to feature very popular celebrities (or other niche brands) as a means of attracting a "double audience" for the advertisement. This was a popular trend in the 1990's and was used amongst many well-renown "Superbrands", for example Nike and Pepsi.

The key aspect in these examples, of course, was that the personalities chosen needed to be "real" and "authentic". In fact, half of the campaigns sampled chose to feature less well-known celebrities, or "ordinary" (albeit successful, as I will explore more fully in the following chapter) individuals or celebrities who have been identified (by themselves or their fans) as being relatable or "down to earth". Cara Delevingne, for example, has been described by many journalists or interviewers who have met her as genuine and unaffected: "Cara seems always to be declaring, 'This is the real me!'" (Haskell, 2015). Similarly, author Jennifer Niven describes her (overwhelmingly positive) interview experience with Cara:

> *I sit in the sun and hope Cara is as genuine as she appears. As someone who spends her life giving a voice to teens who are struggling, authenticity is important to me… She hugs me hard, and my first thought is that she is small. …There's something else about her, though. Something that you sense within about a minute of being around*

> *her. An underlying strength and ease. She's at home with herself and her surroundings, and has a real-ness that instantly makes me feel at home as well* (Niven, 2017).

Similarly, Jay Anstey, a South African actress and model featured in the Edgars #BecomeYou campaign was also commended for her relatable and genuine personality by People Magazine South Africa: "We love her down-to-earth and laid-back personality that's sprinkled with humility and dashed with a whole lot of bubbliness and laughter" (Matjuda, 2016). By choosing to feature real or "ordinary" people, or "genuine" celebrities who are widely considered to be "down-to-earth", these campaigns actively reduce the gap between idealised media representations and actual consumers or viewers that existed with previous methods. This strategy attempts to address or counteract the alienation caused by this gap, as a means of not only fostering a close and authentic relationship, but also closing the critical distance between the brand and consumers. In other words, it aims to mystify the instrumental economic relation of the seller and buyer by representing it as a "real" "human connection" or personal relationship in order to, ultimately, increase brand loyalty and sales.

The technique used in the sampled campaigns, however, extends and surpasses this by incorporating the aspect of personal narrative. Although the popularity or "personal brand" of the individual chosen to feature still appears to be extremely relevant, what is most important here is their story. Telling stories has been a common technique used in marketing as stories provide an excellent basis for advertisements by making references to familiar places, relevant characters and significant and relatable life experiences. All of these aspects of storytelling have been said to encourage empathic reactions from the audience, and allow watchers to recall the advertisement significantly more clearly (Woodside, 2010). Furthermore, stories also strengthen the ties between a brand and consumers by opening or creating "conversations" where people can engage around a common theme and connect their personal experiences with those represented in the advertisement narrative (Escalas, 2004). This appears consistent with the current sample as several of the brands including Jet and PUMA, specifically mentioned that the success of their campaigns could be seen through brand loyalty that developed from resonating and connecting with their relevant audience and "getting people talking" about their campaigns.

All of the campaigns analysed in this section use stories with one added ingredient: the stories are "real" or "true". This approach is even more subtle and covert than cobranding or storytelling alone because by claiming to be true stories of real people, they frame themselves as "mini-documentaries" and are subsequently watched and interpreted as such. Simply put, these campaigns do not "look" like advertisements. Or at the very least, they look like advertisements with/for a "good cause". This technique has been aided by the advancement in new media technology which has allowed for more complex compilations and dissemination of video material. These "mini documentaries" or "mini film" advertisements also gain the appeal of being entertaining which means they can hold the viewers' attention for longer, and attract an audience that would normally "look away" from regular advertisements. Most importantly, this "authentic" technique allows these campaigns to bypass the cynicism normally associated with "older" advertising strategies by inviting the viewer into a world that feels real and legitimate. Again, this collapses the distance between the viewer and the narrative, reducing the critical lens with which it is viewed and thus interpellating the consumer, more effectively, into the narrative created by the marketer.

The Under Armour campaign, in particular, appears to extend this element by using both competitive sportswomen and spoken word artists to enhance the uniqueness and originality of the format and attract two different sectors of the market. This campaign retains the benefits of using real people and their stories but also incorporates an element of art therefore linking their brand to that which is highbrow, prestigious and refined (Berger, 1972). By producing a platform for regular people to share their "real life" stories, these brands actively construct themselves, as a whole, as authentic. These campaigns, therefore, attempt to challenge the biggest and most common accusation that the advertising world is facing in modern times: that the entire industry is inherently fake because it uses glamour and deceit to manipulate buyers. This is ironic since this "real" format continues to actively mask their primary aim (which has remained unchanged: to sell shoes, clothes and soap), under the guise of sincere and altruistic intensions. In almost all of the explored definitions in the various fields, this would be considered extremely *in*authentic. This critical assertion will be returned to in more depth throughout the analysis.

### 5.2.2. Authenticity and Irony

This idea that the advertising industry is innately inauthentic was directly expressed by and challenged in Kentucky Fried Chicken's (KFC) most recent 2017 television advertisement

titled “It's Honestly Finger Lickin’ Good!” (KFC South Africa, 2017). In this advertisement, the narrator begins by cynically asserting that “The truth is, advertising's always just showing us the best bits…AND we've done this at KFC too”. It then goes on to satirically show, in a number of different stereotypical (and amusing) ways, how they could “try to impress you” by making their product seem “cool” or “desirable” (see Figure 12 below). The narrator asks “Does this make you like us?” as images from beautiful bikini clad women on a boat lavishly enjoying their KFC chicken, to trendy skateboarders (one with a Colonel Sanders tattoo on his leg because “these guys are cool…if we get our logo in there that will make US look cool”) casually “hanging out” (Jardine, 2017). All of these examples highlight that the advertising medium, as a whole, relies on deceit and allure. More importantly, the narrator asks sarcastically “everyone believes us, right?” suggesting that both the marketers and the consumers themselves are well aware of the inauthenticity of the advertising messages and images commonly portrayed. This reflects Klein’s (2000) account of irony and post-irony in advertisements, specifically that they “need to self-mock, talk back to themselves while they are talking, be used and new simultaneously” (p. 78).

*Figure 12:* Still image from the KFC “It's Honestly Finger Lickin’ Good!” Advertisement (KFC South Africa, 2017).

Several authors have discussed the ways in which “irony functions as a kind of ideological sophistry” (Bewes, 1997, p. 41) by allowing those who harness it to “resist passionate political movements” (Young as cited in Bewes, 1997, p. 41). In this sense irony, as a goal in and of itself, has been commodified in a way that undermines its ability to adequately contest dominant ideological structures (Bewes, 1997). Žižek (1989) articulates this in more depth by drawing on Sloterdijk's (1987) work on cynicism. He argues that cynicism as a form of irony

is the central means by which ideology operates and occurs similar to the way in which early Marxist theorists understood false consciousness, "an illusionary representation of reality" (Žižek, 1989, p. 21), to work. He, however, stresses that the false representation of reality and reality itself cannot be separated. In other words, Žižek (1989) asserts, "the main point is to see how the reality itself cannot reproduce itself without this so-called ideological mystification. The mask is not simply hiding the real state of things; the ideological distortion is written into its very essence" (p. 28).

Finally, the narrator in the KFC advertisement asks, "Wait, what if we just got honest and showed you our chicken? ... It's honestly finger lickin' good". This assertion highlights the strong link that is created between authenticity, genuineness and honesty. Again, by deliberately highlighting and opposing what "other" *dis*honest (and therefore *in*authentic and *un*ethical) companies do, KFC is actively positioning themselves not only as "truly" authentic and honest, but also as self-aware and cognisant enough not to disparage or underestimate their consumers. In other words, they invite the audience to be part of their joke, incorporating self- reflexivity which allows them to both distance themselves from other brands, and neutralise or close the distance between themselves and the audience. This use of irony, according to de Man (1996) constructs a divide between those who are "in the know" (in this case KFC and their customers), and thus constructed as more intelligent, sophisticated and refined, and those who are "left out" or "laughed at" (the other brands and their "less aware" consumers).

It is then these "superior" qualities that, in turn, make KFC desirable. It is important to note that portraying themselves as desirable is still valued. Ironically, despite framing the question, "Does this make you like us?" sarcastically, the advertisement, as a whole, is still trying to confirm that you do, in fact, like them. The idea of being "liked" has not been disregarded, only reframed. They affirm themselves as *deserving* respect and admiration for genuine, legitimate reasons like ethics and quality. In other words, they are desired for authentic reasons (for "*what they really are*"), rather than for superficial or deceptive reasons. This illustrates Adorno's (1978) warning that the use of irony runs the risk of becoming complacent as, he asserts, "it has never entirely divested itself of its authoritarian inheritance, its unrebellious malice" (Adorno, 1978, p. 210). The link between ethics and authenticity, alluded to above, will be returned to in the following chapters.

### 5.2.3. Authenticity, Originality and Art

Another excellent example of a brand that has drawn on original and authentic discourses within the particular advertising techniques themselves, is Adidas Originals. Adidas Originals, a sub brand of one of the leading "superbrands" Adidas, was arguably one of the first companies to fully incorporate authenticity into the very fibre of their brand identity. Over the last three years Adidas Originals has released numerous campaigns that draw on the notion of authenticity. Two of their recent campaigns, namely, *Original never ends* and *Your future is not mine*, use discourses of authenticity in particularly innovative and creative ways within the advertising techniques and, thus, were selected for exploration in this study. Each implicitly refer to authenticity in their titles, the content and form used (each of which will be explored, in turn). Both these campaigns were very popular, both worldwide and in South Africa. The *Your future is not mine* campaign which was released first (in January 2016) can, perhaps, be viewed as the precursor to the *Original never ends* campaign as it sets the tone and artistic style for the latter campaign which, to some degree, reads as a continuation of the former. Both also used the "mini film" medium (predominantly, although as with many of the other campaigns, other mediums did supplement this focal output) to capture their concepts, and were released via their social media accounts.

The *Your future is not mine* mini film developed by Johannes Leonardo features "eight upcoming artists and 'cultural influencers' from around the world" (Goldrich, 2016) confidently striding through dystopian-esque scenery to a destination of their choosing, with Daisy Hamel-Buffa's original song "Your future is not mine" delivering the overarching message in the soundtrack. Although on the surface this follows the more traditional fictional storytelling method, discussed a little earlier, it diverges from this technique in two significant ways. Firstly, all of the people featured in the film are "being themselves": as with co-branding, they are not merely performing a part, but have been chosen because they represent this idea *just by being themselves*. In other words, the film is about authenticity specifically because the people chosen to be featured are, purportedly, not acting, performing or pretending to be someone else, but rather are being "naturally themselves". Secondly, the mini film is artistically innovative, both in the employment of unusual imagery and by avoiding the use of a narrator or dialogue and rather relying solely on the music lyrics (of an original song created specifically for this film) to portray their message. Here authenticity is constructed as closely tied to notions of originality- that the style used is creatively unique and as a result the campaign becomes differentiated from (and therefore superior to) others.

Both of these methodological techniques draw on ideas of both authenticity and originality in more subtle and refined ways than traditional stories: the narrative gives the appearance of emerging "more organically", rather than being told, and notions of authenticity are embedded or entwined into the "essence" of the film. As discussed with the previous examples, these techniques are effective because by inserting critical distance in the medium itself, they collapse the critical distance between the audience and the medium, thus facilitating the viewer's interpellation into the narrative more successfully.

The *Original never ends* campaign was first released on 18 January 2017 and went on to win a Grand Prix Music Award at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival in France. It also uses the mini film medium to portray the idea of authenticity, and more specifically the closely related concept of originality, paired with apocalyptic representations of the future. It goes one step further than previous campaigns by assimilating and contrasting this with very famous but "overused" artistic symbols from recent history. The campaign consists of 4 slightly different versions of the same original video, each released approximately a month apart. All versions of the video are designed around the iconic (and, again, "clichéd") song "My Way" by Frank Sinatra (a cultural symbol of authenticity in itself), which is remixed with modern techno beats and sung/spoken by numerous celebrities (including 21 Savage, James Harden and Kendall Jenner, to name but a few), who also feature in the mini films. All of this comes together seemingly seamlessly to highlight the central challenge that the campaign makes: "that originality doesn't have to mean being first" (Nudd, 2017).

Although the visual imagery in these videos is particularly striking, and was widely acclaimed for being extremely creative, in many ways these Adidas campaigns are neither new nor innovative. Berger, as early as 1972, stressed the strong connection between advertising and historic art and highlights how advertising tends to draw significantly on both the artistic techniques and symbols used in traditional paintings:

> *Today the attitudes and values which informed that [art] tradition are expressed through other more widely diffused media-advertising, journalism, television… There are many direct references in publicity to works of art from the past. Sometimes a whole image is a frank pastiche of a well-known painting.* (Berger, 1972, p.63, p. 134)

More specifically, explicit references to art history (as is the case with the Adidas advertisements) "lend cultural authority to" (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998, p. 164) the advertisement and, therefore, allow it to be seen as connected to wealth, class and status. Advertising also makes use of art in more subtle and indirect ways, by drawing on a similar "language". Some of the key common ideas include celebrating private property, revelling in nostalgia by "selling the past to the future" (Berger, 1972, p. 139) and imitating tactility of the "real". In addition, advertising tends to reiterate gender stereotypes represented in art history, (for example women as sex-objects and men as virile) (Berger, 1972; Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998). That being said, it is still interesting to explore, in more depth, the ways in which these images (which combine traditional references to art history and futuristic references) are used to produce various constructions of authenticity. For this reason, in addition to the discourse analysis presented hereafter, I have chosen to draw on the visual analysis method presented by Schroeder and Borgerson (1998) in this discussion.

The Adidas "Original is never finished" campaign uses several of these techniques in both the conceptualisation and articulation of the mini films. The entire conceptualisation of the campaign emphasises recreating the old and historical to produce something new and "original" and this strongly reflects Berger's (1972) idea of using the past to create an image of the future. Furthermore, each version that was released used the exact same concept but had a slightly different twist with different images and casts. In other words, the films reproduced their own "old" material in an updated way to become new again. Secondly, within all of the mini films, more direct and explicit references to history were made. Berger (1972) argues that advertising strategies, like this campaign, need to make reference to these historical and therefore "truly" authentic images, as they "would lack both confidence and credibility if it used a strictly contemporary language" (p. 139). As mentioned earlier, all of the films used Sinatra's famous "My Way" as the sound track. In addition, all the films featured famous historical authentic art works which were spliced/superimposed into/onto new recreated modern dystopic depictions of these very works. Two of the examples that stand out are the depictions of Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" and Da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man" (see Figures 13 and 14 below).

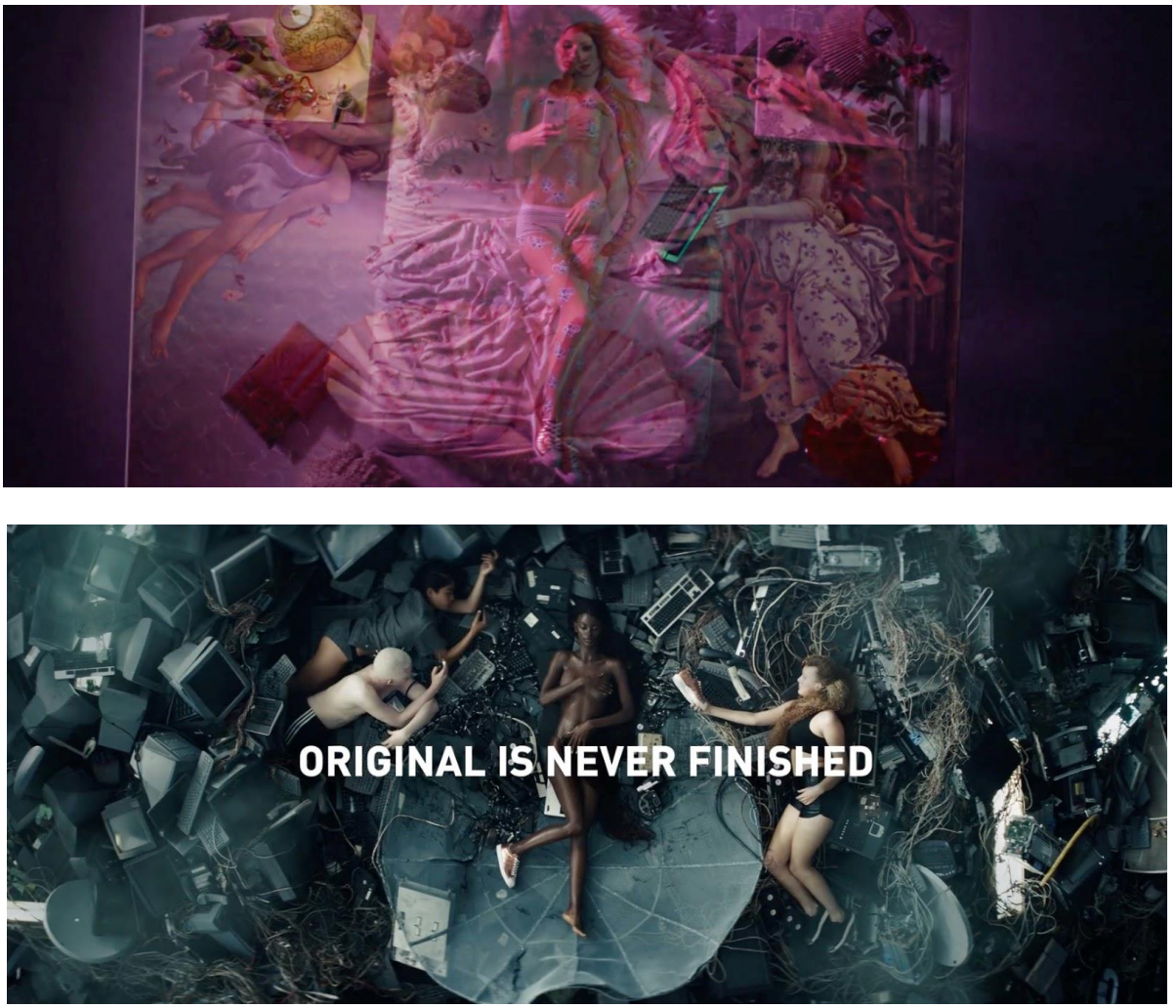


*Figure 13:* Two still images from the first version of the Adidas Originals #ORIGINALisneverfinished mini film both depicting a modern interpretation of Botticelli's classic artwork, "Birth of Venus" ('Deeferent #7: Original is never finished by Adidas, 2017).

Here I will explore the first set of images (representing the "Birth of Venus") in more depth. In the first image, a young, very pale skinned, white, thin but curvy women, closely reassembling the original subject, is lying on her bed in her bedroom. Everything in the bedroom has a light dusky pink hue, including her telephone and her pillows. This colour is very similar to the blanket in the original artwork. She is naked except for a pair of light coloured underwear bottoms and Adidas Originals shoes. Her entire body is covered in a nude/light pink hue with flowers (a precise replication of the flowers featured in the original artwork) superimposed on it. Her body is positioned in the exact same way that the women in Botticelli's "Birth of Venus" is depicted: legs stretched out, one foot provocatively turned out, head tilted to the side, staring vacantly or emotionally withdrawn, with one hand across

her pelvis and one hand across her chest. The lines and colours are soft, beautiful and feminine. In the modern depiction the woman is using the hand that covers her chest to hold her cellphone and take a "selfie" photograph. This provides a useful illustration of one of the many ways in which the paradox of authenticity plays out in popular culture as it highlights the tension within constructions of authenticity "for others" represented in the "real me" selfie. In other words, it highlights the contradiction between the notion of spontaneous authenticity and the deliberate performance of this authenticity in order to shape how one is perceived by others (Nunius, 2012). This idea will be explored more in the next chapter. Unlike the original artwork, there are no other people in this image. Instead, in the place of the other three people lie her cellular telephone and her laptop. This could suggest that in modern times our primary connection to others is through technology. Their presence is felt, but always mediated. As the film plays Botticelli's original artwork splits over and through this modern depiction and then is replaced by the second image.

In the second image, a young, very dark skinned, thin woman is lying in a large television satellite dish that resembles the large clam shell in the original. Again she is naked (except for one gold Adidas Originals shoe) and her body is positioned in precisely the same manner except for her head, which is upright and firm and she stares steadfastly ahead. Rather than flowers, water, reeds as trees (as in the original), this lady is surrounded by a "sea" of "technical rubble" including old televisions, computer monitors and keyboards, radios and electrical cables. The colour palette in this image is remarkably different to both the original artwork and the first recreation. This image is starkly monochromatic with all features being black, white and grey in colour other than the gold shoes. This could suggest that we are in the process of being stripped of the "rose tinted glow" through which we were once able to view the world. In addition, the angles and lines are hard and harsh suggesting that this image presents a darker, tougher depiction of the future than depicted in the previous image.
In the second version three other people are presented (as in the original).

A very light skinned man, topless in black Adidas shorts, lies on his side with his arms forming an embrace but holding only a cellphone. The woman (who was represented as clinging to "this" man's side in the original) is presented above him by a young biracial women dressed in grey. She reaches out and up in front of her, again appearing to touch a technological device of some kind. This deliberate change in positioning of gendered bodies appears to suggest a challenge to the commonly-held stereotypical views of women as

dependant of and submissive to men. The woman, placed physically higher and turning away from the man, now symbolically claims a position of power, authority and independence. Both, however, have turned their love and attention towards, and become dependent on, the technological devices that they gently caress. On the right hand side of the main subject is a young white woman with long frizzy auburn hair (similar to that of the main subject in the original). She reaches out to the women in the centre, but rather than extending a floral blanket, she offers the second gold Adidas Originals shoe.

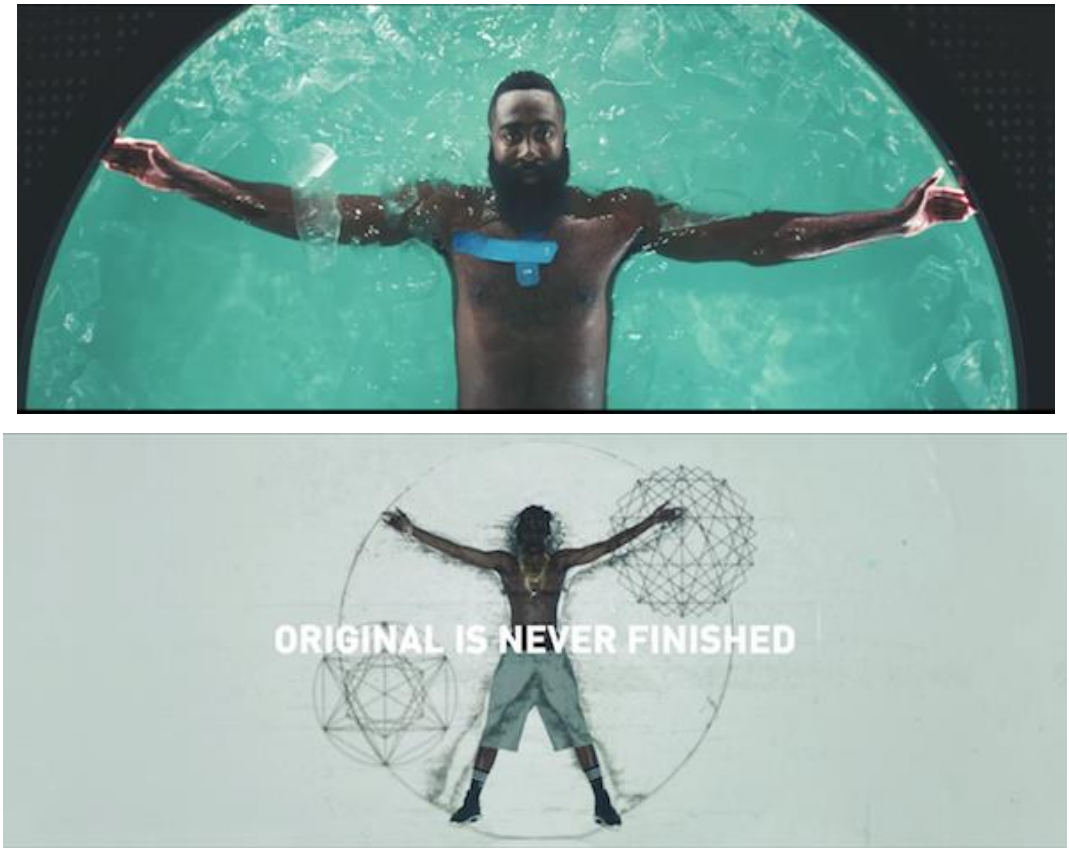


*Figure 14:* Two still images from the third version of the Adidas Originals #ORIGINALisneverfinished mini film both depicting a modern interpretation of Da Vinci's "Vitruvian Man" (Woon, 2017).

This is significant as, in the original art work, the floral blanket appears to be very important. It is large and ornate and is being offered as an adornment. This highlights the shoe not just as a piece of clothing but a cultural symbol of prestige and worth. This closely reflects what Berger (1972) asserts:

> *And so the quoted work of art … says two almost contradictory things at the same time: it denotes wealth and spirituality: it implies that the purchase being proposed is both a luxury and a cultural value* (p. 135).

Another useful example to draw on comes from the second version of the mini film, which debuted at the 2017 Grammy Awards (Diaz & Pasquarelli, 2017), and was centred around popular rap artist Snoop Dogg. In this version Snoop Dogg creates a rap remix version of "My Way" and, in addition, his own "iconic" album cover for "Doggystyle" features in the film in an updated/re-enacted/re-created format. The original album cover is a cartoon drawing of a red and yellow dog kennel with a sign saying "Beware of Dogg!!" written on it. It has a very human-like masculine dog on top of the kennel, reaching out to grab a feminine human/dog hybrid which is crouched in the dog kennel with only her sexualised bottom visible. In the recreations, people (Snoop Dogg himself and a young, voluptuous black woman with pink hair) wearing masks of dog faces replace the cartoon animals (see Figure 15 below). As with the above images the original versions and the various updated versions of the images are mixed together appearing in and over each other, merging throughout the mini film.


Figure 15: *Still image from the second version of the Adidas Originals #ORIGINALisneverfinished mini film depicting a recreation of Snoop Dogg's album cover, "Doggystyle" (Adidas Originals, 2017).*

In the recreated images of this example, the positions of the man and women alternate or switch back and forth between each other, with both masculine and feminine "dog" having a chance to sit on top of the kennel. This shift in positions, as with the previous example reflects a questioning and challenging of gendered positions and power relations. This notion was extended by featuring an all women cast in one of the versions of the mini film. These mentioned manifestations were all framed as "powerful" or "bold" ('Adidas Originals- "Original is never finished"', 2017; Nudd, 2017) acts of social commentary by symbolically

assigning women power through increased visibility in “authority” or “dominating” positions. A critique of this representation and form of “empowerment” will be discussed in depth the next chapter.

In summary, the “Original is never finished” campaign used a number of traditional and new media techniques and a seemingly “organic” form of storytelling to both directly and indirectly draw on cultural symbols of authenticity (such as Sinatra’s music or famous artwork) from the past to create a presentation of future that feels authentic and original. In addition to this, this campaign, goes one step further. Instead of only questioning constructs in the surrounding cultural context (for example what it means to be a man/women or what it means to be beautiful), it dynamically challenges the construction around which their entire brand’s personality was developed by questioning our (and, they claim, their own) understanding of originality. As Alegra O'Hare (the Vice President of global communications at Adidas Originals) explains in an interview with marketing and media magazine, *AdAge* (Diaz & Pasquarelli, 2017):

> *We have in the past challenged 'outward'-facing concepts like what it meant to be a superstar, or the dystopian notion of the future…For the first time ever, we decided to point the attention in, and challenge the very ethos of our brand and the notion of what it means to be a true original.*

This quote is particularly important because it subtly addresses the issue of how an item which is manufactured (and therefore, technically, not original) can come to express personal authenticity.

In all of the above examples the advertisement campaign use and produce discourses of authenticity through the technical aspects of the advertisement format. Most importantly, they use notions of authenticity to avoid appearing like advertising campaigns altogether, again disguising the fact that their primary interest lies in encouraging viewers to buy their products. In the next chapter I will extend this discussion by providing a detailed exploration of the discourses of personal authenticity presented within *the content* of the sampled advertising campaigns.

# Chapter 6:
# Discussing Constructions of Authenticity

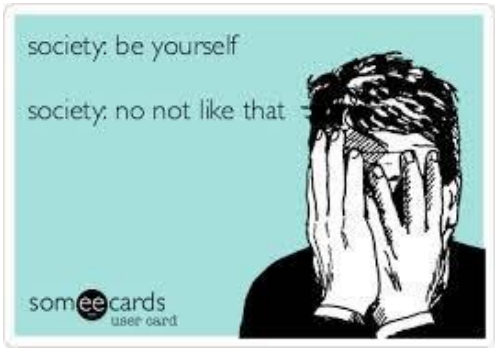


*Figure 16:* Popular internet meme (Estar, 2014).

This section will provide an in-depth exploration of several of the prominent discourses of authenticity identified within and across the "selling stories" texts sampled. Each of the identified discourses will, in turn, be described, explained and discussed in relation to relevant existing empirical and theoretical literature. All of these discourses were evident in the narratives presented in several of the campaigns, as well as within the various supplementary material produced on, about, or in response to, these campaigns. The discourses presented below provide a useful framework for understanding the constructions of authenticity both within the campaigns as a whole, and produced by the various individuals representing, or represented in, these campaigns. A summary of the key discourses (and their corresponding sub-discourses) can be found in Table 1 below.

*Table 1:* Summary of "Selling Stories" discourses

1. *Successfully authentic*
2. *Authenticity as work*
    - *2.1. Authenticity as hard work*
    - *2.2. You are what you dream*
3. *Authenticity involves change*
4. *Authenticity and desirability*
    - *4.1. All natural, uniquely me*
    - *4.2. Authentic "inners"*
5. *Authenticity as emancipation*

Most broadly, in terms of the campaigns themselves, the discourses answered the implicitly posed question "What is it good to be?" with specific "recommendations" regarding the ideal authentic individual. In terms of the individuals, these discourses appeared to provide an explanatory lens through which the individuals understood or viewed the world. More specifically, they were consistently employed by the individuals as a means of understanding themselves, their experiences, their emotions and their relationships with others. Furthermore, these discourses played a pivotal role in shaping and explaining, both by legitimising and undermining, the broad scope of behaviours and practices of possible engagement.

It is important to start by emphasising the degree to which these discourses of authenticity connect and overlap with one another. It was difficult to organise and separate the discourses which were so intimately intertwined. The analysis below, rather than presenting a set of fixed, mutually exclusive themes, aims to draw attention to the fluidity, intangibility of the ideas presented within this data, and highlight how the degree to which they are interrelated and interdependent allows them to support, reproduce and reinforce one another, thus strengthening the broader discourse of authenticity and naturalising its power to socially regulate (Parker, 1992).

It is also essential to note that all the campaigns but two both featured and targeted women alone. Only the Edgars', which featured the #BecomeYou story of one man, and Adidas Originals campaigns contained men. As mentioned earlier, even this Adidas Originals campaign released one version of their mini film with a solely women cast. This strong focus on woman was not an intentional decision within the research design. On the contrary, extensive and thorough effort was made to source campaigns that included men, however, the very few South African campaigns (For example, Windhoek Lager's "Keep It Real" advertisements released in 2009) that focussed on men and drew on discourses of authenticity had insufficient data or prominence to be considered relevant to this study. With the strong emphasis on women's experiences, the extensive data set provides an interesting analysis of contemporary discourses of femininity. In each of the following discourses below, I will explore the ways in which current debates around feminism and new media have shifted discourses of femininity, specifically in relation to discourses of authenticity, and how many traditionally masculine discourses (presented in slightly new and adapted ways) have come to shape feminine subject positions, practices and action orientation.

### 6.1. Successfully Authentic

*"I had no idea that being your authentic self could make me as rich as I've become. If I had, I'd have done it a lot earlier"* - Oprah Winfrey

This discourse was arguably the most pervasive in the data, both within and across different case study examples, although most of the references to success were implicit or closely tied to other discourses. In this sense, rather than being a separate discourse that stands alone *successfully authentic*, and discourses of success more broadly, shaped all of the main discourses in this analysis, including *authenticity as hard work, authenticity and desirability, authenticity involves change* and *authenticity as emancipation*. From this discourse personal authenticity was closely tied to personal success. In many instances, authenticity and success were conflated- they were discussed as one and the same entity.

More specifically, a dialectic was produced where being authentic was viewed as a sign of success, and achieving success was seen to be an indication of authenticity. The former, which frames "being yourself" as a difficult and significant achievement, in itself, and therefore a form of success, was a subtler but more pervasive argument which is expressed repetitively throughout the discourses of authenticity that follow.

> Jacqueline (PUMA): *There's a story behind every person. Days and nights, weeks and months of trying…There's one tiny moment that happens (screams) before a star is born. And that magic moment happens when you listen to you.*

This construction of success reflects a parallel but divergent finding made by Cloete and Duncan (2016) who, whilst exploring discourses of (predominantly academic) success amongst university students, found that many participants "explicitly framed [success] in terms of the ability to think critically, express their own ideas and find their own voice" (p. 36). This idea can also be linked to what Judge, Higgins, Thoresen and Barrick (1999) refer to as an intrinsic component of success. This is defined as "an individual's subjective reactions to his or her own career [or, in this case life more generally], and is most commonly operationalised as career or job satisfaction" (Judge et al., 1999, p. 622). This aspect of success was most commonly discussed in terms of listening to your "inner voice" and "following your dreams" both discussed in more detail in the *Authenticity involves change* and *You are what you dream* discourses respectively.

The second interpretation of this discourse suggests that authentic people become more successful, by being true to themselves. This was explored in a number of ways in the data. Most explicitly, all the campaigns chose to feature people who they referred to as "successful" people. In most cases these campaigns referred to renowned media personalities or famous sports people. The campaigns that deliberately chose not to feature well-known personalities (Jet, Dove and Woolworths) also specifically emphasised that the individuals they had chosen were successful in their relevant field. From this, success was defined generally in terms of achieving status and recognition within one's career. This echoes what Spohrer (2015) found in their study exploring discourses of aspiration amongst secondary school learners in the United Kingdom: "'success' was defined as an individual achievement based on individual talent and realised through a publically recognised and rewarded occupation, while aspirations encompassing activities outside the realm of the labour market or taking a collective form were implicitly excluded" (p. 415). This reflects what Judge et al. (1999) refer to as the extrinsic component of success. This is important because it represses the risk that "being oneself" may make one incompatible with the capitalist labour market.

Previously, extrinsic success was defined in more "objective" or observable terms including salary and promotion. Consistent with Spohrer's (2015) characterisation above, Judge et al. (1999) expand this definition to include a reference to occupational status which "related to societal perceptions of power and authority afforded to the job" (p. 622). An extensive literature explores the importance of occupational status, with Ganzeboom and Treiman (1996), particularly arguing that "occupational status constitutes the single most important dimension in social interaction" (p. 203). In South Africa this too appears to be an important area of exploration particularly in light of its long history of racial and gendered oppression, which means prestige based on occupational standing is inextricably linked to racial and gendered power inequalities (Morrell, Jewkes & Lindegger, 2012). In this sense, this analysis aims to more fully explore the ways in which these institutionalised forms of oppression are consistently maintained by discussing how discourses of authenticity, specifically in terms of their construction as success, reinforce and naturalise the hierarchical operation of occupational status.

More specifically, the implicit argument behind specifically choosing to feature "successful" people was that these people had managed to become successful by being authentic, and that being yourself would allow you too, to achieve success. Although very few participants

referred to success directly, many discussed key ideas associated with success, specifically success through achievement, including "being the best", "finishing first" or "superseding" others. These references to success were closely linked to notions of authenticity specifically constructed as being original or unique ("a blueprint") or choosing to live life one's "*own* way":

> Olivia (PUMA): *To be successful in anything, you have to be confident in yourself.*
>
> For Zoe, by Aristophanes (Under Armour): *I fight in my own way, so I will rise above all. With strength and will, I'll finish first.*
>
> Nomzamo (PUMA): *I am the blueprint. No copy will supersede a blueprint.*
>
> Olivia (PUMA): *You're going to be the best at whatever you're doing by being yourself. Never do anybody else. Do you.*

These quotes suggest that people have individual, special talents that are closely tied to or representative of their "true selves", and if one recognises, discovers or delves into these, one will draw out this hidden potential and become the best version of yourself. In other words, it is suggested that the "real you" is the best version of you, and therefore, being authentic will allow you to perform at your best and achieve the best possible results. These quotes also stress (either implicitly or explicitly) the importance of having *confidence* or *believing* in these special talents that represent one's true self. This confidence in "who you really are", was seen to allow you to *be* "who you truly are" and, again, this "real" self is the best and most likely to be successful. Many of the ideas discussed within the *successfully authentic* discourse explored amongst the large high end brands were also prevalent amongst the lower income brands (See Figure 17 below) discussed earlier.

> Dawn: *It's not about being better than anyone else, but being the best version of yourself.*
>
> Surf: *To be 'dazzling' means to be yourself. You have to love and accept your past and present, before you can learn to be the best you can be.*


*Figure 17:* Inspirational message posted by Surf on their Facebook Page (Surf Laundry SA, 2016).

The last quote is particularly important because it raises two essential components of authenticity, consistently discussed throughout many of the other discourses: self-love and self-acceptance. Similar to the reference to confidence, being successfully authentic is framed as an individual's ability to *recognise* and *appreciate* who they "really are" (including their histories) as a means of "truly *being* themselves", and thus, becoming the best and most successful possible version of themselves. This also raises the interesting paradox between reflecting on the past and connecting with the present (Schönfelder, 2012) in order to move forward and become both more real, and thus more successful. This is more fully discussed in the discourse *authenticity involves change*.

This discourse is used to justify and legitimate an individual's success because they can argue that they achieved it in the most "real" and "legitimate" way possible: by being whom they really are. The notion that being your true self is the best way to become successful is a common idea that has been expressed by many "self-made" people who have achieved socially recognised versions of success, including fame and wealth (de Botton, 2004). Perhaps the most famous reference to this is Oprah Winfrey, who regularly claims authenticity as the best path to success. Winfrey, who arguably built her "empire" on the assertion of her personal "brand" of authenticity, spends a considerable amount of time discussing the notion of "true selves", allowing guests a platform to share and express their "true selves" and has written numerous articles encouraging her audience to follow her lead and harness the power of "being yourself" to achieve success in their own lives (Becker & Engelmann, 2016). In one of these pieces published on her website, ironically authored by Mc Comb (2011) but signed (and seemingly narrated) by Winfrey herself, it is asserted that:

> *In an age of spin, there's nothing more valuable than authenticity, so if you're building your brand on a set of core principles, which are based on who you are and what you believe in, you can't go wrong. A woman who is living proof of this is Harry Potter author J.K. Rowling, who I recently chatted with in Edinburgh, Scotland. J.K.'s agent told her she'd never make money writing children's books, but for her it was never about the money. She always felt compelled to tell stories. And - seven unbelievably successful books later – following her heart and staying true to herself turned out to be her magical formula.*

The discourse of *successfully authentic* was also strongly evident throughout the entire August 2013 issue of O (The Oprah Magazine, South Africa, see Figure 18 below). In this issue, Winfrey (or rather, Oprah, the brand) released their annual "O Power List" (later dubbed the O Authentic Power List 2013), specifically focussing on women who have become successful by "being themselves". The magazine featured a short profile of each of the 26 "inspirational" women, both from South Africa and abroad, selected as part of the list because they "inspire others to follow and fulfil their purposes, as the truest version of themselves" (Oprah Magazine South Africa, 2013).


*Figure 18:* Cover of the August 2013 edition of The Oprah Magazine, South Africa ('O, The Oprah Magazine South Africa, August 2013', 2013).

Andrews (2013), again writing seemingly as Winfrey for the Oprah Magazine website, asserts that the list contains "women who are guided by their gut, always speaking their minds and not afraid to buck trends… [women] who are all unshakeably themselves". Several of these ideas, specifically listening to one's "inner voice" and resisting conformity will be explored in more depth in relation to the discourses of *Authenticity involves change* and *Authenticity as emancipation* respectively.

Perhaps more significant than the overt references to authenticity as a means to/of success (predominantly in terms of fame and wealth), explored in these two Oprah-related examples, is the stark lack of authenticity implicitly revealed of Oprah herself. In both these examples, and numerous others on her website, material is presented as Winfrey's personal beliefs, opinions and philosophy, and even narrated as if using Oprah's own words and stories, but the credit for the material is assigned to other (sometimes several different) writers. On the one hand, this is to be expected. Oprah, herself, cannot possibly be responsible for developing, writing, editing and publishing every piece of work associated with the many sectors of her brand. On the other hand, this raises serious inconsistencies between her supposedly steadfast and genuine commitment to personal authenticity articulated in theory, and her everyday practice of authenticity displayed in brand communications (Brown, 2010).

If Oprah wrote this material herself, as the first person narrations and "O" signatures suggest, why is another author credited in the same work? If Oprah herself was unable to write it independently or personally, why would the material not be written in third person, or alternatively, express the actual author's own views and experiences? I tentatively suggest that the answer to this may reside in creating the *feeling* of authenticity. The first person narration of Oprah's experiences gives readers the impression that they can *really* know *her* (Iatsenko, 2012), without the mediation or translation that would be present in a third person rendition. This is not to say that the ideas expressed do not accurately reflect what Oprah *would* say, or what Oprah claims to believe, but rather to stress that these ideas become unauthenticated by their strange and ambiguous means of production and presentation. In this sense, authenticity becomes little more than a symbolic emblem of the "O" brand philosophy. This reflects Moulard, Garrity and Rice's (2015) claim that celebrity authenticity revolves entirely around the audience's *perception* of various factors related to the "human brand" including stability, candidness and morality, to name but a few.

Another, more specific, branch of the "self-help" domain in which the discourse, *successfully authentic,* appears to be particularly is the "health" and "wellness" sector. Numerous "health gurus" draw on this discourse both as an explanatory model for explaining their rise to success, and to argue for the engagement in, or avoidance of, particular behaviours and practices legitimated through this discourse. For example, Kayla Itsines, an Australian fitness entrepreneur self-described as "one of the most influential trainers in the world" who was made famous for developing a set of exercise training programme e-books referred to as "Bikini Body Guides". She is particularly active on social media (specifically on her "personal" Instagram account) and regularly uses discourses of authenticity to both explain and justify her success, and encourage others to follow her lead. In one of her many posts she exclaims:

> *I am proud of who I am and my body because I've earnt everything that I feel today… In a world full of skinny teas, special secret supplements, waist trainers and Photoshop... focus on being the real YOU!*

The above quote (and the earlier quote by Surf) highlights that success comes not only from "being yourself" but also from "loving yourself". The emphasis on loving yourself as a key means of achieving and experiencing authenticity was prevalent throughout the data and will be explored in more depth as part of the *authenticity and desirability* discourse.

It is important to note, again, that most of the people featured in the sampled campaigns are women. Needing to explain, justify or account for their success appears to be a particularly feminine issue. Men are traditionally socialised to associate their primary worth with achievement and are therefore expected to be, and applauded for being, successful. The ideal of success has been closely aligned to desirable masculine qualities including functionality, competitiveness and control (Connell, 1995; MacKinnon, 2003). Women, on the other hand, are traditionally socialised to be submissive and passive, with their worth being more closely tied to physical appearance or congeniality (Malson, 1998; Wolf, 2002). Whilst these factors appear to remain important markers by which women value their worth, women are now also required to gain approval through more "traditionally masculine" ways (including having successful careers, earning a significant amount of money, being recognised for their work, or achieving fame). This was clearly articulated in the following two quotes:

> Ade (Under Armour): *I am a strong woman with massive career goals, but simultaneously I am soft and feminine. I am a doctor passionate about body health and balance, but I am also a protector of my country.*
>
> Natasha (Under Armour): *I figured out how to command my limbs of my immaculate womanness, [with] red lipstick war paint.*

These examples simultaneously emphasise these women's ability to control and influence their body and surroundings whilst still retaining typically feminine focus on softness and beauty but reframing this to be something passionate, fierce, intimidating or defiant. This shift can be framed by the rising popularity of individualism which creates the social conditions necessary for these discourses to operate by promoting the values of independence, competition and personal autonomy (Callero, 2009). Women, however, are additionally required to explain their success or achievements in order to maintain the traditionally feminine qualities by which they are still assessed (Wolf, 2002).

The discourses of success that shape the following discourses of authenticity can be located within the wider neoliberal context which both assigns personal responsibility for life outcomes to individual people and narrowly defines what resembles "good" and "bad" life outcomes (Spohrer, 2015). Both Raco (2009) and Sellar (2013) highlight the change from "expectational" to "aspirational" politics with the underlying intention of producing citizens who are self-sufficient and innovative. As Spohrer (2015) asserts, "in this new type of politics, individuals need to actively pursue labour market participation in order to be deserving of state support…resulting in a particular pressure on individuals in socio-economically precarious circumstances" (p. 412). It is important to stress that these seemingly innate goals, desires and personal traits of the "neoliberal citizen-subjects" are not naturally occurring and cannot be assumed but rather need to be continually instilled (Sellar, 2013). By closely tying authenticity to success, "the system" directly captures individuals' "souls" as a means of producing long-term, proactive and committed citizens (Spohrer, 2011). In other words, through this discourse individuals' personal aspirations (for example self-improvement, happiness etc.) become inextricably linked with capitalist modes of being (work and consumption) and thus "being yourself" and being "successful", in this context, become constitutive elements of the same project (Ehrenreich, 2009).

As mentioned above, *successfully authentic* was identified as a recurring and pervasive overarching discourse and therefore, notions of success will be regularly reintroduced and explored further in relation to each of the following discourses discussed below.

## 6.2. Authenticity as Work

*"To be nobody but myself-in a world which is doing its best, night and day, to make me somebody else-means to fight the hardest battle any human can fight, and never stop fighting" - e.e. cummings*

In contrast to common sense ideas about authenticity being something "natural" and "innate" that everyone simply possesses automatically, this discourse constructs authenticity as something that requires work in order to be achieved. This discourse was extremely prevalent throughout the data, with all of the campaigns drawing on it in slightly different ways. *Authenticity as work* was discussed in a number of different ways focussing most specifically on the difficulty and effort required in being yourself (*authenticity as hard work*) and how the type of work, specifically the dreams one pursues, is a reflection of, and formative in building, one's true self (*You are what you dream*). This discourse, as a whole, had a strong emphasis on individualistic values (such as independence and competition) and as such framed authenticity as closely associated with a culture of narcissism or a "preoccupation with the self" (Elliott & Lemert, 2009, p. 12). In other words, authenticity was seen primarily in terms of pursuing self-actualisation and self-fulfilment, and negation of "the common good".

### 6.2.1. Authenticity as hard work

The first sub-discourse, *authenticity as hard work*, focusses specifically on the difficult and challenging nature of the work required to "be yourself". From this discourse authenticity requires time and effort and is not easily attained. It was referred to as isolating work that needed to be done by oneself, more than often alone or without any assistance, or more commonly against resistance from others. Some of the examples of this discourse are provided below:

> Mimi (PUMA): *It's really hard to find who you are because you wanna be like so many other people who inspired you.*

Sakshi (PUMA): *The journey till here has been quite difficult. Changing people's views was not easy.*

Jacqueline (PUMA): *…[It's] when you're down and out, on your own, by yourself, on a mat covered in sweat, wondering: hey is this all even worth it?*

All of the above quotes emphasise the inevitability of effort, and very often struggle, in "finding yourself". Furthermore, they highlight that this involves an ongoing process that occurs over time. This was a common theme throughout several different discourses and, hence, will be described in more detail in later sections. Many of the commonly held key ideas about what "hard work" involves more generally were also referred to in this discourse of authenticity. Most commonly, the work of "being yourself", as seen within this data, required *determination, inner strength, courage, combating doubt and making sacrifices*. Each of these aspects will be explored in more depth below.

*Determination.*

The first, and most commonly referred to, way in which being or becoming yourself was constructed as work was that it required determination. This was exemplified by the Sinatra lyrics that formed the soundtrack to the Adidas campaign explored earlier: *"I did what I had to do, and saw it through without exemption, I planned each charted course, each careful step along the byway".* Determination was seen to involve ongoing, continuous effort, even when you did not "feel" like it, and especially when things became difficult.

Olivia (PUMA): *We all have days where we don't feel like we're good enough, something terrible happens or you fall or mess up a step. You need to find a way to keep yourself up. You have to wake up and be better than yesterday.*

Jacqueline (PUMA): *There's a story behind every person. Days and nights, weeks and months of trying. Years and years of walking by and nobody knows who you are. There's too much time that's just you and nobody else.*

Nidhi (PUMA): *You have to challenge yourself every day. Push your limits every day. Real strength comes from within. Tackle one challenge at a time till you achieve that final goal, to be the best version of yourself. To do you every day.*

These quotes highlight the perseverance that is required to achieve this ideal. Experiencing challenges, setbacks and failing were all seen to be an integral part of the process. Numerous

kinds of challenges were discussed as part of this discourse. Some referred to physical injuries, others stressed psychological and mental hardships and others, still, highlighted structural factors such as income or prejudice as the most challenging obstacles encountered.

> Anushka (PUMA): *Of course it isn't all easy. Every day I need the strength, the stamina and the determination to continue to be the best at what I do. And even then sometimes it doesn't happen.*
>
> For Teal, by Winslow Schalkwyk (Under Armour): *I've faced days, weeks, months and even YEARS of disappointment and it can become so soul destroying, if you let it…If I fail, I get straight back up, try again and push harder each time. But most importantly what makes me unlike any is, when I want something I know #IWILL get it.*
>
> Kay (Edgars): *That was a hard year for me. I moved over 9 times in the space of 11 months just squatting. You get to a point that people are like "why don't you give up, why don't you just go back home, why don't you just get a nine to five" and honestly I was just at the verge of giving up.*
>
> For Lindsey, by Oddisee (Under Armour): *I saw a mountain I had to conquer…countless stitches to mark the wounds I own…I rise above my lowest points, to overcome my broken joints.*

The above quotes stress the severity of these hardships faced in the process of finding yourself and the consequences these challenges had on people's well-being. Jay (Edgars) uses the words "soul destroying", and Kay (Edgars) talks about being on the "verge of giving up". Most importantly, determination was seen as "not letting" yourself be overwhelmed by the difficulties, continuing despite wanting to quit, and "owning" the literal or figurative "wounds". This suggests that these challenges become integrated into, and are a formative part of, one's authentic self.

### *Combating doubt and making sacrifices*

In the above section on determination, the quotes stressed that achieving personal authenticity required perseverance and stamina because it involved encountering a number of different life challenges. Many of the storytellers, in each of the sampled campaigns, went on to describe these challenges in more detail. The two most commonly discussed challenges that people faced when "being themselves" were (1) combatting an overwhelming sense of doubt

(both from within yourself and directed at you by others) and (2) needing to make difficult sacrifices.


*Figure 19:* Popular image of graffiti on public transportation (Chen Small, 2016).

Several of the personal stories explored in the various campaigns highlighted the experiences of debilitating doubt. Doubt was understood as negative messages that suggested they were not good enough to achieve their dreams, or should not even be trying to, to begin with. It involved a denial or rejection of an individual's strengths, capabilities and talents, and most importantly a lack of acknowledgment of who they really were or could be.

> For Natasha, by Dominique Christina (Under Armour): *Remembering the days when I didn't think I could, when I didn't know I should, when doubt was a hiss in my ear.*
>
> For Zoe, by Aristophanes (Under Armour): *I fight against those who dismiss me, my pain, and my potential.*
>
> Jacqueline (PUMA): *There's going to be a million voices telling you to just give up this big fight, you've done enough, just go home, take a hot shower.*

These quotes all use words of action like "fight" or "stand up" to stress that overcoming doubt is an active process that requires that you vigorously confront, defeat or move past the words that keep you static or passive, unable to be yourself (see Figure 19 above). This idea was also repetitively expressed in the Adidas campaigns, specifically in the "Original is never finished" campaign through Sinatra's famous lyrics: "*Yes, there were times, I'm sure you knew, when I bit off more than I could chew, but through it all, when there was doubt, I ate it up and spat it out, I faced it all and I stood tall.*". This, again, stresses that authenticity is not something a person can just have or be, they have to actively "do" it. Furthermore, the aggressive form of strength behind these words suggest a traditionally masculine way of

behaving (Connell, 1995; MacKinnon, 2003), and is in contrast to more traditional feminine ideals of submissiveness (Malson, 1998).

The second challenge or difficulty that was most frequently discussed as an integral part of the work required to "be yourself", was that it required the individual to make sacrifices. In other words, the work of "being yourself" came at a cost and individuals needed to choose to give up something else important to them in order to pursue this ideal. In this sense, the quest for personal authenticity is constructed as having an element of risk, in that an individual is most likely to have to lose something if they want to "truly be themselves".

> Kay (Edgars): *And I get to Jo'burg, no family no friends…*
>
> Sakshi (PUMA): *I've had to make a lot of sacrifices. During these times and the hardships, my family has been my biggest strength.*
>
> Mimi (PUMA): *There's a lot of sacrifices that you have to make… Do not sacrifice yourself. Believe in yourself.*

The last quote also raises an important point: pursuing this ideal was the most important thing a person could do. Other sacrifices were necessary and inevitable, but "sacrificing yourself", or making choices that prevented you from being yourself, was considered both undesirable and the only "real" way a person could fail. It is because this work of becoming yourself is so challenging, painful and risky that having continued perseverance and determination, in the face of these inevitable difficulties, was seen to require great degrees of personal strength and courage.

### *Courage.*

As explored above from this discourse being authentic is neither experienced as naturally occurring, innate or easy. For this reason, displaying personal authenticity is seen to be a bold and brave act of courage. Within this discourse, courage was referred to as either acting fearlessly, or continuing to pursue authenticity despite experiencing negative emotions including fear. Having courage was seen to be necessary at various points of the journey of becoming and being "yourself". It appeared to be necessary right from the start of the process, particularly in making the decision to begin the task of finding yourself.

> Ujjwala (PUMA): *And I wasn't afraid to go after [my dream]. You will find the courage to chase after what you really want.*

For Alison, by Aja Monet (Under Armour): *I lift myself, I raise, unafraid and daring.*

For Teal, by Winslow Schalkwyk (Under Armour): *… it's something I've never been afraid of, I've never been afraid to fail, to try or to get hurt and feel pain while doing it.*

Courage was also a necessary part of accepting that you would fail and that this would be painful. Knowingly choosing to engage in a process that would inevitably bring pain was seen to be brave. The ideas of courage explored in these stories also appear frequently in other media messages, particularly in the form of motivational mantras on self-help blogs and pop psychology websites, as well as inspirational images shared on social media. These images often include quotes on authenticity by famous authors or well-known life coaches (see Figure 20 below).


*Figure 20:* Inspirational image shared online (Plüg, Personal Communications, 2018).

Дарьей (PUMA): *Don't be afraid of your talent. Don't hide from yourself… Don't be afraid of you. Do you.*
Mahnka (PUMA): *Going on stage isn't easy at all. I've been performing all my life and every time I'm very nervous … You can be scared. But this fear goes away when you step up. You can be anything you want.*

The final two quotes raise two interesting and conflicting points. Firstly, it is suggested that we are often told to, or led to believe, that we should fear who we "really are". This suggests that our true selves are in some way intimidating, dangerous, or forbidden. This reflects Freud's (1962) construction of the id as the true or core self and, thus, his assertion that "men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved… on the contrary, [they are] creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness" (Freud, 1962, p. 302). This is similar to what Ferrara (1998) refers to as *antagonistic* authenticity and

its associated tendency to elicit reverent and fearful responses. In this case, the reference to being "afraid of you" above appears to be, more specifically, associated with authenticity as a challenge to traditional constructions of femininity as including submissiveness and self-denial (Malson, 1998). In other words, this quote suggests that women, specifically, are taught to fear their "true" selves as a means of maintaining their subordinate position. Thus, at the same time, these quotes also stress that experiencing personal authenticity is accompanied by a great sense of relief and freedom: all of our previous worries and fears subside when we finally "step up" and "be ourselves". This suggests that the fear is only temporary and the risk is worth the great reward.

*Inner Strength*

One of the key ways in which attaining and maintaining a sense of personal authenticity was considered "hard work" is that it required a great deal of strength from the individual. Although many of the people, particularly in the campaigns of the more "athletic" brands, were pictured "in action" (being physically strong, tough or resilient) the strength to which most of these campaigns (including the "sports-oriented" ones) referred was one of inner (mental and psychological) strength. Again, this idea was very prevalent throughout the sample with most of the campaigns (or their associated storytellers) referring to strength in some aspect of their narrative.

> Sucheta (PUMA): *You have to dig deeper to find your potential, your strength against all odds.*
>
> Nidhi (PUMA): *I had to be strong to overcome the obstacles of everyday.*
>
> Jay (Edgars): *…and the disappointment before meant nothing it was just something that made me stronger, it made me realise how badly I wanted this, and how perfect it was for me to be exactly where I was.*
>
> Misty (PUMA): *To match my strength is to feel your own.*

Dawn body lotion emulates these ideas within their promotional messages arguing that "being a strong woman [involves] not losing the uniqueness of who you are" (See Figure 21 below). More specifically, one of their brand ambassadors, Doris Msibi, suggests that being authentic is in itself a strength:


*Figure 21:* Inspirational message posted by Dawn on their Facebook Page (Dawn South Africa, 2017).

Furthermore, inner strength is seen to be an internal innate quality that some are able to draw on when they experience difficulties. These quotes raise two interrelated but contrasting ideas: firstly, inner strength is viewed as an essential tool to use as you fight to "be you" in the external world. Secondly, the above quotes suggest that inner strength is seen to come from "deep inside" a person where the "real you" resides, and, in this sense, is constructed as an integral part of the authentic self. This idea was exemplified in a quote by Rosie Motene who was one of the women featured in Oprah's Authentic Power List 2013.When asked where she finds her "power", she responds: *"Myself and prayer. I spend time on my own nurturing my inner strength. We are all born powerful. Its society that has dampened our beliefs in ourselves, pushed away our inner strength. We must constantly look into ourselves"* (as cited in Andrews, 2013). This quote reiterates the time, effort and work required to "find" and develop this inner strength and highlights how this work requires consistently defending this self from others in society who will try to diminish the power of your true self. This was a common theme throughout the data and will be returned to in the second sub-discourse of *Authenticity as work,* namely, *You are what you dream*, explored below, as well as in the final discourse in this chapter, *Authenticity as emancipation.*

All of these aspects that have been identified as characterising "hard work" strongly reflect the ideas presented in positivist personality or trait psychology theories which focus on the innate intrapsychic or internal qualities of an individual (Coon & Mitterer, 2007). Most relevant is the trait of "conscientiousness" which forms part of the "Big Five" personality

model perhaps most famously articulated by Goldberg (1981) but originally presented by Tupes and Christal (1961) through an extensive analysis of Cattell's (1957) complex system of "bipolar variables" (Digman, 1990) and further developed by Costa and McCrae (1988). Those individuals who score highly on the "conscientious" factor tend to be self-disciplined, responsible, hard-working, well-organised and high achievers whereas those who achieve low scores on this factor tend to be indolent, "irresponsible, careless and undependable" (Coon & Mitterer, 2007, p. 465). Judge et al. (1999) argue that conscientiousness has been identified as the personality construct which is most consistently associated with performance across various disciplines and sectors. It is suggested that conscientiousness is closely related to three other personality traits including achievement orientation, dependability and order (Judge et al. 1999). Thus, from this discourse, authentic subjects are positioned as being disciplined, responsible and self-controlled.

All of the qualities or traits discussed above also closely align both hard work and authenticity as more broadly shaped by discourses of success. These ideas can be located in broader meritocratic perspective, where status and success is awarded based on achievement (natural ability and hard work) rather than lineage or familial name. From this perspective, those who become successfully authentic through hard work are not only more competent and accomplished, but also morally superior (de Botton, 2004). These ideas can be further framed by the Calvinist notion of "The Protestant Work Ethic" as articulated by Weber (1958). This concept, which is referred to in many disciplines including sociology and economics, understands the behaviours or practices of hard work and discipline as intricately connected to or produced by an individual's religious beliefs- more specifically the values promoted within this faith. Miller, Woehr and Hudspeth (2002), drawing on the overarching argument presented in Weber's (1958) pivotal essays titled, "The Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism", suggest that:

> *The rapid expansion of capitalism and the resulting industrialization in Western Europe and North America was in part the result of the Puritan value of asceticism (i.e., achieving personal discipline through the scrupulous use of time and strict self-denial of luxury, worldly pleasure, ease, and so on) and the belief in a calling from God* (p. 3).

In this sense, authenticity is constructed as in the service of productivity (Beder, 2001). Although this discourse is framed as inspirational and empowering, allowing all a seemingly

rational and accessible means of achieving success, the socio-political structural factors determining which "real selves" or "authentic lifestyles" are validated and recognised make this much more difficult in reality (Leclerc Madlala, 2004).

### 6.2.2. You are what you dream

The second sub-discourse related to *Authenticity as work* refers to the close association that people made between who they "really are" and their personal dreams and aspirations. In other words, within the discourse, *You are what you dream,* when people discussed what "being themselves" involved, they often strongly linked this to following their "deepest" dreams or fulfilling their personal goals. This discourse was dominant throughout the data with all but one campaign drawing on it. When individuals discussed their goals or personal aspirations they tended to draw on broader romantic discourses that focused on having passion, love and inspiration. Although, due to the stark contrast in language associated with dreams and work, this second discourse of authenticity initially appears to be in direct opposition to the first sub-discourse, *Authenticity as hard work,* the two discourses are closely related.

This discourse was discussed in three interrelated ways, all of which, in some respect, connect them to the previous discourse on work. Firstly, having and believing in your personal dreams and goals was, in itself, considered both hard work and a worthy achievement. This suggested that "dreaming" or aspiring (particularly having *specific kinds* of dreams and aspirations) was disapproved of, or at least considered frivolous or a waste of time, by others in their lives or society in general. Many of the participants suggested, either implicitly or explicitly, that they had to "protect" or defend these dreams to prevent others from destroying them.

> Nidhi (PUMA): *To keep my goal my mission my dream in focus. To protect it from everyone else around. They say the mind gives out way before the body does. So then where do you find the strength to bring to life that single though that dream? You have to build it, little by little, every day.*

> Tashi (PUMA): *I was told not to have lofty dreams. I chose to pursue them anyway. Mountaineering is dangerous for girls they said. Boy, did I prove them wrong. They said you're too young you won't be able to catch up but I left them far behind.*

The quotes above highlight that, from this discourse, authenticity is constructed as both rare and fragile and needs to be kept hidden, at least at first, in order to be sustained. This reflects what was discussed in relation to the quality of "inner strength" required to complete the challenging work of being "true to yourself". It reiterates the idea that one's true self exists, to some degree, in opposition to, and defiance of, what others believe one to be, or try to demand one be. This idea will be more fully explored in the last chapter, *Authenticity as emancipation*.

Secondly, pursuing the attainment of these dreams in reality was considered to be a difficult and complex task that required all the qualities of hard work explored in the *Authenticity as hard work* discourse above. One's dreams, and hence similarly one's true self, do/does not just automatically manifest or exist naturally: they need to be "chased" or actively pursued if they are to be achieved.

> Lisa (PUMA): *If you want a certain kind of life, you can believe in it all you want. But nothing's going to happen unless you work for it.*
>
> Kay (Edgars): *... I had this dream and I knew that I wanted to make it a reality.*
>
> Ujjwala (PUMA): *And I wasn't afraid to go after [my dream]. You will find the courage to chase after what you really want. To chase after your wildest dreams and make them come true. All you have to do is believe. And do you.*
>
> Dawn: *Take charge of your year. Make the choices that get you closer to your dreams and goals. Take the leap. Trust yourself.*

These quotes stress the conflicting versions of what type of work is required to make these dreams materialise in reality. Some identified "being brave enough" to "believe in your dreams and yourself" as sufficient work for becoming yourself. Alternatively, others actively stressed that this was not sufficient, and that achieving authenticity required a more "rigorous" and "engaging" form of tangible work. Some examples include practising a skill or becoming more knowledgeable in a particular field. Most of the data suggested that *both* were required simultaneously. Dawn, for examples stresses that *"The first step to achieving your dream is to believe in yourself"* and, in the same post asserts that *"It takes endless energy and guts".*

Finally, it was stressed that an individual could both achieve and express their personal authenticity *through* their work. This idea reflects the discourse, *authentic artisans*, which will be discussed in the final analysis chapter on authentic craft brands. If one was to attain and maintain the authentic ideal, the work (in the more formal sense of the occupation or means of earning a livelihood) that one chooses needs to be something that they love and are passionate about. In other words, it needs to be a "dream" not a "job". As writer Sir Ken Robinson (as cited in Martinez, 2017) articulates, "Being in your element is not only about aptitude, it's about passion: it is about loving what you do … tapping into your natural energy and your most authentic self". The quotes below highlight the importance of selecting a career that was felt to be consistent ("fits" or "resonates") with who the individuals viewed themselves to be.

> Kay (Edgars): *I wasn't sure what I wanted to do after high school, you know, there were a lot of voices, you know, a lot of advice, until it came to a point where I was like I want to do something I really really like, something that <u>resonates</u> with me.*
>
> Mbali (Edgars): *The moment I started saying what my passion was and who I was, I became more free, and I became more me and that was when I found the perfect fit.*

These quotes also suggest that this career would only "fit" if it was seen to be something that they enthusiastically and actively enjoyed. Many of the individuals who shared their stories discussed how much they loved their work, and how important it was for them to have chosen to engage in an activity they felt passionate about. In this sense, being authentic was strongly located in *both* one's work and their inner most passions and desires, and most importantly, that these two should not be separate or contradictory. This construction is therefore in direct contrast to the experience of alienated labour common in Capitalist systems.

> Sakshi (PUMA): *There's only one way to get what you long for, do what you are passionate about.*
>
> Mimi (PUMA): *No matter what your goals are you have to have passion and you have to have love.*
>
> Nkuli (Edgars): *I am a person that whatever I do, I do it passionately, passion is hunger, and I make it a point that I put my heart and soul into anything that I do.*

> Naomi (Edgars): *I started venturing into everything that I enjoyed doing…and basically touching every point that makes me happy and makes me who I am, and also just being the best version of myself.*
>
> Anushka (PUMA): *I've never really chased fame or success. I just do what I love doing. I'm not about making it big. What's important to me is the passion I feel for the work that I do. That's what drives me- watching something that I've put my heart and soul into come alive*

The final quote, above, is particularly interesting because it highlights the tension that has been established between "superficial", "other-centred", externally-driven desires, like fame or wealth, and "genuine", "self-centred", internally-motivated desires, such as passion and love. This reflects the distinction made by Judge et al. (1999) between intrinsic and extrinsic markers of success but additionally adds a "moralistic" component valorising intrinsic over extrinsic aspects. This is similarly revealed in James's (2007) distinction between "true needs" and "confected wants" described in the previous chapter. Although intrinsic success, in the former sense, still appears to be important, desire for and achievement of this type of success is legitimated only if it happens to also correspond with the authentic and sincere definition of success of the latter variety. This "moralistic" discourse can, again, be framed with reference to the Protestant Work Ethic. As Miller, Woehr and Hudspeth (2002) argue "the manifestation of occupational rewards through success in one's calling came to be revered as a sign of being one of the elect, that is, chosen by God, to receive salvation" (p. 3). The firm differentiation between self-defined, and therefore genuine, aspirations and other-ascribed, and therefore shallow, aspirations was similarly expressed through the *authenticity as emancipation* discourse explored later.

Finally, it was emphasised that the formal work that one engages in is an expression of the "real you" and one's daily engagement in this passion (which represents you) is an integral part of forming this true self.

> Sakshi (PUMA): When I wrestle I feel complete. Wrestling is my strength. Wrestling is my identity.
>
> Mimi (PUMA): Ballet is a form of self-expression, it's an art form where you have to really find yourself.

Both the above quotes emphasise their passionate engagement in their chosen occupation as a fundamental part of them, specifically emphasising that without this engagement they would be "incomplete" or unable to connect with or "find" their real selves.

This discourse highlights the idea that individuals need to experience their lives as being meaningful, useful and having purpose if they are to "truly" experience themselves. This notion can be closely tied to the humanist conceptualisation of self-actualisation (Ivey et al. 2007). Maslow (1967) identifies self-actualisation as the pinnacle of all human needs. It refers to a person evolving, learning or growing to experience their fullest (and therefore most "true") potential (Coon & Mitterer, 2007; Corey, 2005; Ivey et al., 2007). From this broader Humanist discourse, it is suggested that if an individual is able to become the truest and best possible version of themselves, they will, in turn, attain or experience the most fulfilment both emotionally and psychologically.

Both the *Successfully authentic* and *Authenticity as work* discourses, as with the analysis as a whole, can be situated within an individualistic ideology which values and promotes "self-determinism, where free actors are assumed to make choices that have direct consequences for their own unique destiny" (Callero, 2009, p. 17). A strong individualistic emphasis on an individual's personal responsibility, specifically the notion of "reaping what you sow" is closely tied to the ideology of Meritocracy. The principles of meritocracy developed in response, and as an alternative, to the social system of egalitarianism (de Botton, 2004). A meritocratic ideology views inequality as both an acceptable and unavoidable aspect of all societies, provided that these inequalities have developed after an initial phase of society-wide equality specifically with regard to access of opportunities. De Botton (2004) explains that, in these societies all "privileges would be merited as would hardships" (p. 81) because without differing access to opportunities (including education, and the resultant wealth and social standing), inequality could only be as a result of each individuals' abilities and/or limitations. In other words, one's position in society, and the value they are ascribed, needs to be "legitimately" attained through personal effort. Reflecting on the discourses explored above, achieving (and displaying) authenticity has become a channel through which an individual is able to access power and maintain status or, alternately a legitimate ground on which it may be denied.

In addition, the onus for attaining such success, status or value lies entirely on the individual. The argument articulated by de Botton's (2004) in his "Three Anxiety inducing New Stories about Success", explored in the literature review, provided a useful additional layer of understanding to this discourse. In modern times, with sovereignty being replaced by meritocracy, a lack of status can no longer be attributed to poor bloodlines or a weak family name. Since status is attained, not by luck or by name, but rather by effort and success, people who manage to achieve commonly held symbols of status (in this case achieving and displaying the authentic ideal) are not only perceived to be more important, but are also seen to be better people. The implied result of this, of course, is that those who are unable to achieve these symbols are not only less worthy, but also "bad" people. As de Botton (2004) argues "they are bound to recognise that they have an inferior status, not as in the past because they were denied opportunity, but because they are inferior" (p. 91). This analysis stresses the severity of the consequences that arise from the meritocratic system in practice. Rather than "evening the playing field", as it so well-intentionally aimed to do, it instead continues to both legitimate and reinforce patterns of inequality which consistently limits many people's access to important material recourses whilst simultaneously inflicting upon them further psychological and emotional disadvantages, including the experiences of inferiority, shame and insecurity (James, 2007).

The previous discourses *successfully authentic* and *authenticity as work,* are closely tied to the third discourse, *authenticity involves change*. All three of these discourses had overlapping and corresponding ideas and as a result, each tended to reinforce and legitimate the others.

### 6.3. Authenticity Involves Change

*"I'm always looking forward, I'm always looking upwards. To greater things, to greater heights*" - Tashi (PUMA).

As with the previous discourse *Authenticity is hard work,* this discourse *Authenticity involves change*, challenges the notion that authenticity is something "natural" and "innate", and rather constructs authenticity as an ongoing process of change, improvement or progress. From this discourse, authenticity is linked to personal transformations that include changes of career, appearance and emotional experiences and, most importantly, that these changes *improve* them in socially defined ways. In other words, these changes allow them to move

forward and to "progress" in socially desirable ways. This discourse was again linked back to the overarching discourses of success as such progression was most commonly, although implicitly, understood as becoming more personally and professionally successful.

> Meg (Jet): *It's definitely a journey that I've been on and something that I've grown into. I'm still growing.*
>
> For Koinonia, by Winslow Schalkwyk (Under Armour): *With every stride. Pushing harder. Aiming higher. Hoping beyond what I know.*

Many of the individuals who shared their stories as part of the various campaigns drew attention to the fact that they subjectively identified an incoherence or conflict between their current life situations and their "true self". In other words, they felt that the lives that they were living were not a true or accurate representation of who they felt they *really were*. The quotes highlight that this lack of "fit" that they experienced between their current situations and their expected or best situation caused them to feel strong negative emotions including being unhappy, dissatisfied or distressed (Boyraz et al., 2014).

> Mbali (Edgars): *Have you ever worn that pair of shoes that just do not fit? You literally just wear them, you can't walk, you can't move, your whole day is ruined. That is exactly how I felt the day I woke up on my 25$^{th}$ birthday. I was in three corporate jobs that I completely did not like, so I made this decision, I woke up and I wanted to be happy and I decided the only way I am going to be happy is if I [change careers]*.
>
> Tshego (Edgars): *…because I went to an academic high school, I decided oh maybe I should study business management, three months into it I realised that I HATED it, I got a job at a youth market agency as a receptionist… I woke up one day, and I realised: "This is not for me".*
>
> For Teal, by Winslow Schalkwyk (Under Armour): *… silent in the midst of losing, knowing that within a cold force rages, incite times to change…*

In the quotes above, these individuals stress that they were feeling unhappy with the choices that they had made in their life, particularly regarding their careers, and were dissatisfied with where these decisions had "left" them. Experiencing this conflict, more specifically the negative emotional reactions provoked by this tension, prompted these individuals to deliberately alter some aspect of their current life in order to live in a way that *felt* as if it

more closely resembled their "true selves". This idea was also articulated by the popular and commonly quoted fashion icon Coco Chanel, "Hard times arouse an instinctive desire for authenticity" (as cited in Martinez, 2017).

The quotes above highlight an experienced conflict between what others/society expect/s from an individual and what feels right or consistent for themselves, and the need to "stand up to" or "stand by" what they really feel, rather than conforming to societal expectations. This mirrors Brown's (2010) definition of authenticity as "the daily practice of letting go of who we think we're supposed to be and embracing who we are" (p. 49). Brown argues that this is a particularly difficult task as many societies today promote a culture that values the need to fit in or "belong". She sees authenticity as "standing up" against cultural influences that determine everything we are supposed to "be" and being able to combat the shame and inferiority of not achieving those idealised standards. Ironically, one of these particular idealised standards by which one is now assessed and valued, is this very definition of authenticity.

The dramatic changes in "life trajectory" and the "epiphany-like" realisations that prompt these changes that have been discussed through the numerous quotes in this discourse are similar to what McGraw (2001) explores in his famous self-help book "Self Matters". McGraw similarly describes experiencing an intense dissatisfaction which he argues is linked to what he refers to as "selling out". This is defined as the process of sacrificing one's personal needs, goals and desires in order to meet the needs and expectations of others. The specific term "sell-out" is often used as it highlights that this sacrifice often occurs because people feel obliged to make decisions that would be financially or materially beneficial (rather than emotionally fulfilling) as these are the demands placed on us by the broader society – the most common "other" we often relate to. The quotes in this sample support this argument as almost all of the individuals who discussed making dramatic changes described the major life change as being, first and foremost, a change in career. In contrast, however, the type of new career that all of the participants chose allowed them to either make more money, or to gain more social approval through fame.

In contrast to the negative experiences of being inauthentic, when one moves into a position that more closely resembles their "true self", this change appeared to bring with it a multitude of other changes including improved emotional and psychological wellbeing. In other words,

individuals implicitly highlight the tension between experiences of alienation commonly associated with work and the happiness associated with being authentic. Most commonly participants discussed feeling more confident and describing a sense of relief.

> Kay (Edgars): *when this transformation happened it was not only inward, it was also outward, I learnt that the way that you dress is the way you'll be addressed, fashion is an expression, it's a statement you know, it's got its own lingo…it shifted the way I look at things, it shifted the way I do things, and today I can say I am a better person because of that message.*
>
> Jay (Edgars): *EVERYTHING changes, the way you feel about yourself, the way you dress, you feel more confident, you go "I know who I am". When you have a moment in life where you become the truest you, how you dress changes…it's how you feel about yourself, you express that through what you wear…and I remember feeling like "yes this is me".*

Furthermore, participants also identified external changes that accompanied this process including their outward appearance, specifically noticed in how they looked and dressed, the way that they spoke and how they interacted with others. These quotes highlight the ways in which personally feeling the inward changes as a result of "living more authentically" was insufficient. Individuals needed others to see this transformation externally and recognise the new improved real self into which they had moved. This discourse can therefore be understood as necessary for achieving or experiencing a feeling of social acceptance, and highlights the ways in which perceived (in)authenticity may prevent or promote this process. As Bruce (2008) suggests, individuals' intense wish to acquire "status symbols often reflect an underlying insecurity about achieving acceptance from others" (p. 54) and this is closely tied to experienced self-esteem.

The second common way in which this discourse was identified throughout the texts was by numerous references to "inner voices". Like dreams and goals, discussed earlier, one's "inner voice" was closely related and equated to one's authentic, real self. Many of the participants specifically referred to their "inner voice" as if it, in itself, was their true core.

> Sucheta (PUMA): *I thought I had my life all figured out. I had a job and I was on my way somewhere. One day I felt a flutter of movement came from deep in my soul. I left everything I knew to find my passion, to find out who I really was.*

> Tshego (Edgars): *As we grow up we kinda stop listening to our inner voice and forget about the things that made us happy when we were younger… It was the first time I actually listened to my inner voice and let it direct me…three months down the line I got a call: "You've got the role", and the voice again begins "Do it! Do it! Go for it!" … Whenever you have that feeling, listen to it, live your truth and find your passion.*
>
> Jacqueline (PUMA): *There's one tiny moment that happens (screams) before a star is born. And that magic moment happens when you listen to you. So just do you.*

Furthermore, the "inner voice" is identified, in addition to or in collaboration with the negative feelings discussed above, as the primary motivation or prompt for change. These quotes also stress that adherence to this inner most part of oneself and pursuing or adopting the changes it suggests, is the key to experiencing happiness (Ehrenreich, 2009). Furthermore, in conflict with the previous emphasis on outwardly presenting the true self to others, these quotes construct authenticity as an elusive and intangible entity that only they can subjectively experience and know. These elements are all strongly emphasised in Steve Jobs' famous quote:

> *Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most importantly, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary* (as cited in Martinez, 2017).

These quotes highlight the critical tension in the process of identity construction throughout the texts, where participants are continually required to seek outward affirmation for their choices and selves more generally, indicating the influence of others in the constructions of these genuine selves, whilst fervently denying their reliance on anything but their own subjective experience when identifying or determining authenticity. This contradiction is highlighted by the quote below:

> Melanie (Jet): *The way I've always felt with my career my family life, my personal life, I've always been true to who I am, whatever people perceive me to be it's who I am. I can't be anything I'm not.*

In this quote Melanie strongly asserts herself as genuine and authentic based on her own self-evaluation (how she "feels"), whilst simultaneously, and possibly unintentionally, emphasising the significance of other people's opinions or interpretations through the words "*whatever people perceive me to be".*

Several key factors can be identified from this discourse. Firstly, authenticity is constructed as having a strong affective element. More specifically, through this discourse, authenticity itself is constructed as a feeling or emotional experience (Adorno, 1973), and is also implicated in the production of a variety of emotional experiences. This was clearly articulated in the strong negative emotional and psychological states associated with experiencing one's self and current life situation as inauthentic. This is consistent with the wealth of positivist psychology literature which identifies the ways in which people can be or behave "inauthentically", and highlights the negative mental health consequences associated with these behaviours or experiences (Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson 2012). It also reflects Brown's (2010) findings that identified experiences of "anxiety, depression, eating disorders, addiction, rage, blame, resentment, and inexplicable grief" as being commonly associated "side effects" of "relinquishing" your true self (p. 53). Authenticity's link to affect was, again, reiterated in the significant shift in emotional and psychological wellbeing that was experienced when transformation into a more authentic self occurred. The following quote by famous yoga instructor Tara Stiles illustrates this idea.

> *If we don't feel, we simply follow what we think we should do. We're located only in our minds, copying the actions of those we've seen before. There is zero space for your own unique body and mind. Without feeling, we do not flourish. We do not express our true selves. Living with ease, we open our lives up to authentic, expansive expression of our true selves* (Stiles, 2007).

This construction of authenticity as an emotional experience (including its close alignment to psychological wellbeing), can be located within a broader set of discourses on health. Both the discourses of authenticity and health draw attention to the internal psychological experiences of individuals. Here authentic people are not only positioned as happier and more "at ease" than those who are inauthentic, but also healthier (Featherstone, 1991). This positions authentic individuals as responsible, proactive and self-aware as they are able to practice "self-care" and engage in activities of "self-improvement" and, as a result, are able to enhance their sense of wellbeing and continue to actively contribute to a functioning society.

Secondly, despite this change being articulated or stressed as predominantly an emotional process, many individuals also expressed that this transformation also includes a corresponding change in their outward or physical appearance. In other words, authenticity needs to be something others can see, and therefore this transformation can only be recognised as legitimate if one appears *("look as good as you can be"*- Jet), dresses, ("*What you wear matches who you are inside*"- Edgars and "*I don't dress my age, I dress myself the way I am*"- Dove), behaves *("I always had this attitude of they don't get to tell me how to live my life"*- Dove) and speaks (*"I said no way, you aren't me, I'm me*"- Dove) in ways that represent this newly acquired (or returned to) true self to others. This idea that authenticity should be visible to others or shown on the outside reiterates the idea that authenticity is something that should be consistently performed or practiced.

This can be explained by Goffman's (1959) work on social identities. He suggests that in their day to day interactions, people regularly feel obliged to reveal "who they are" to others around them and this tends to require that they engage in a regular set of social actions, of which consumption has become common. In other words, individuals tend to attempt to create a specific social image, through both consumption and self-improvement, that will be validated and approved of by their peers as a means of enhancing a positive sense of self (Bruce, 2008). This aspect, again, highlights the critical tension between authenticity to self (listening to one's "inner voice", true feelings and following one's deepest "passion") and authenticity for others (displaying one's true self to others). This is particularly relevant in relation to constructions of femininity. The traditional framing of femininity as a performance for others is constructed as inauthentic and thus the ideal of authenticity poses a radical problem for femininity. As a result, authenticity for others had to be consistently justified or denied, and femininity needed to be constructed in more traditionally masculine terms (for example through assertiveness and independence), in order for authenticity to self to be adequately maintained.

Furthermore, from this discourse, it is implicitly suggested that individuals appear to regularly experience themselves in a state of inauthenticity, and thus are required to continually work to change back, or return to, a previously existing stage of authenticity. In this way, authentic progression is defined as an infinite loop in which individuals are encouraged to relentlessly move "forward" as a means of eventually re-establishing a previously-held authentic self, only to change once again. A similar idea was strongly

emphasised in the Adidas campaigns. It was asserted that "… driving culture forward can recreate the idea of what is truly original…When something is pushed far enough, it becomes original again". This quote also highlights the interesting intersection between the past and the future in these discourses. Authenticity, as shown in the previous section on Crafting Authenticity, was seen to have strong historical roots and maintaining these origins was seen to be a key part of becoming or remaining authentic. A useful example of this was Surf's "commemorative" Facebook posts on Heritage Day in South Africa which suggested that "who you are" is closely tied to remembering or celebrating where you come from (see Figure 22 below). This provides a stark contrast to the numerous references to "looking upwards", "moving forward", "aiming higher" and "hoping beyond" where individuals perceive themselves to currently be or to have come from.


*Figure 22:* An example of a Heritage Day message posted by Surf on their Facebook Page (Surf Laundry SA, 2017).

Finally, when living inauthentically, individuals, appear to experience themselves as alienated from both themselves and others, and a change or return to a more authentic self reduces or repairs this alienation. The following quote provides a useful, although subtle, articulation of this argument:

> For Natasha, by Dominique Christina (Under Armour): *But I'm awake now, Can you see me?*

By referencing waking up, the above quote indicates a shift in, or altered state of, consciousness: a change "in the quality and pattern of mental activity" (Coon & Mitterer, 2007, p.224). The imagery of moving from the state of sleep (which implies passivity, disconnection and suggestibility) to one of waking consciousness (which implies clear and

organised alertness or awareness), suggests a shift from an alienated to a more connected experience of *the self to the self*. This idea was also expressed by Meg (Jet) when she asserted that you have to *"Keep reminding yourself of who you are and what you stand for".* This suggests that it is possible to "forget" who one is, and thus one needs to continually "alert" oneself to this separation as a means of prompting a return to, or reconnection with, this "real" self.

This is indicative of what Marx (1956) refers to as "self-estrangement" or "the loss of his self" which is understood as a separation or disjuncture from one's "intrinsic" self (p. XXIII). The last part of the quote "Can you see me?" continues with this idea to also suggest a previous position of alienation *from others,* and an attempt to reconnect with those from which she has been alienated. In addition, it highlights the need for others' recognition if one is to no longer experience herself as alienated. This reflects the broad sense in which alienation is understood to refer to the human "experience of feeling dehumanised" (Reiss, 1997, p. 16) and how this generally occurs when a person feels that their needs have not been acknowledged or fulfilled. Both of the above aspects or interpretations of alienation are expressed in the following quote by Marx (1956): "An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from his labour, from his life activity, from his species-being is the *estrangement of man* from *man*. When man confronts him, he confronts the *other* man [sic]" (p. XXIV).

In this discourse, change is seen to be a necessary component of achieving or experiencing authenticity. The message advocating the "possibility of change" (Robbins, 1991 as cited in de Botton, 1994) expressed in many of the narratives presented in all of the campaigns in this sample is similarly explored in many other "real-life" stories of "self-made" success, including those by Oprah, Dr. Phil, and Kayla Itsines, all alluded to earlier. This idea is also exemplified by the advertisement by Surf (see Figure 23 below) posted on their Facebook Page with the comment "Have the courage to go for your dream. If you're looking for inspiration, here are 4 ordinary women who prove you don't need to be rich to start your own business" (Surf, 2017).


*Figure 23*: Inspirational message posted by Surf on their Facebook Page (Surf Laundry SA, 2016).

Similarly, Dawn, as part of their marketing strategy organised a "Mentor Meetup" where young women could be "inspired to achieve [their] dreams through success stories from SA's most influential women". The event, which was held on 26 August 2017 in Johannesburg, gave "ordinary" people the opportunity to hear motivational talks from several well-known South African women who had achieved status or success through their careers. De Botton (2004) cautions against the danger that these narratives can have on "ordinary" people exposed to them. He argues that they give the (false) impression that idealised notions of success, beauty, wealth etc. determined by society may be readily attained if the individual merely commits to changing and improving themselves. The individuals who have already accomplished this progression tend to use their own life experiences as definitive proof of its possibility. This is illustrated by both the following quotes:

> Koinonia (Under Armour) assertion, *"I take on any opportunity that allows me to teach myself and show to others that 'Yes I can and you can'".*
>
> Ade (Under Armour): *I strive to inspire other women to believe in their ability and grow beyond what they think is possible.*

Two key problems arise from these "inspirational" narratives. Firstly, they disregard the skills and resources, unavailable to the majority of South Africans (Stevens & Lockhat, 1997), required to achieve such changes. Secondly, these stories place unnecessarily strong focus on individual (particularly intrapersonal) change whilst disregarding and omitting necessary amendments to broader macro structures. These institutions (including power and political systems) both produce the "lowly" positions of status to which these ordinary people are

assigned, and prevent access to the aforementioned resources required to navigate toward a more advanced position (Klein, 2005). As previously discussed, the individual and social implications of these narratives are serious as they result in increased feelings of shame, inferiority and self-blame, and allow unjust systems of power to remain unchallenged, if not strengthened. These ideas will be more fully explored in the final discourse, *authenticity as emancipation.*

### 6.4. Authenticity and Desirability

> *"Desire only exists when assembled or machined. You cannot grasp or conceive of a desire outside a determinate assemblage, on a plane which is not pre-existent but which must itself be constructed.... In retrospect every assemblage expresses and creates a desire by constructing the plane which makes it possible and, by making it possible, brings it about.... [Desire] is constructivist, not at all spontaneist"*
>
> Deleuze and Parnet (2007, p. 96).

This discourse, which will be returned to again in the following chapter on Crafting Authenticity, was prevalent throughout the data. It could be argued that the work of this discourse is more evident by what was omitted, rather than by what is mentioned in the various texts. The idealisation and desirability of authenticity is so well-engrained and well-accepted that it almost appears "to go without saying". It is important, however, to discuss the specific means by which authenticity is constructed as desirable, and the implications that this has for subjectivity. Through this discourse desirability and authenticity were linked in two key ways forming two closely related but separate sub-discourses, namely, *All natural, uniquely me* and *Authentic "inners"*. Firstly, individuals who were constructed as authentic by having unique, original or unusual physical characteristics, were identified as physically attractive *because of* these differences. Secondly, authenticity was categorised as being a desirable internal psychological trait and, therefore, those able to achieve or maintain an "authentic personality" were seen to be physically attractive to others.

In the most simplistic form, half of campaigns in the sample (Under Armour, PUMA, Edgars and Adidas), although choosing "real people" (as opposed to creating characters) who were sharing their "real stories" (instead of a fictional narrative), and despite a strong focus on racial and ethnic minorities (with the majority of the people included being African American, Indian or Korean) featured only extremely fit, toned, slim, smooth and lighter

skinned, long haired and young people. Most commonly the individuals featured were in the media industry (models, actors, television hosts and musicians) or were athletes (ballerinas, runners and health and fitness instructors). Furthermore, all the individuals were presented in a particularly glamourous manner enhancing their already conventionally physically attractive bodies with designer clothing (the product being sold), make up and dramatic stylistic action shots. When paired with quotes about being "unlike any", "doing you" and "becoming yourself", respectively, this deliberately creates the impression that authentic people are, automatically or inevitably, more "traditionally" physically attractive than those who are not. This contradicts the commonly-held belief that people, particularly women, who have a conventionally appealing appearance tend to be more shallow or superficial (Malson, 1998). Malson (1998) emphasises the construction of femininity as superficial: "It is about *looking* nice. It is 'a picture of someone', an image rather than an 'inner me'. It lacks the depth and internality of 'identity or individuality'" (p. 149). Here, femininity continues to be constructed as being about "looking nice" but, in contrast, reframes this *to be indicative of* (rather than negating) a well-established deep and profound connection with a true "inner me".


*Figure 24:* Melanie features in Jet's Love Yourself Valentine's Day marketing campaign (Somuah, 2016).

All of the other campaigns (namely, Jet, Woolworths and Dove) deliberately chose not to feature people who were models by profession and specifically claimed to select people who *did not* fit the stereotypical and narrowly-defined beauty ideals routinely portrayed in media images (see Figure 24 above). The women who shared their stories (and their bodies) as part of these advertisement campaigns are identified, both by themselves personally and by the

campaign in general, as having physical appearances that do not conform to the conventional criteria of physical attractiveness for women. Some examples of these include being "plus sized" (defined as anything above a size 12 in South Africa), androgynous (as opposed to explicitly "feminine"), having too prominent (and therefore "ugly") facial features, being old (above the age of 35) or having "frizzy" hair.

> Dove South Africa: *Beauty is not defined by shape, size or colour – it's feeling like the best version of yourself. Authentic. Unique. Real. Which is why we've made sure our site reflects that. Every image you see here features women cast from real life. A real life version of beauty.*

Several key points need to be made about this (general) assertion. Firstly, as seen above, just because the women are not professional models does not automatically mean that these women do not meet the conventional standards of beauty. In fact, despite claiming to "redefin[e] the ideals of sexy" ('Woolworths SA', 2017), all of the above campaigns *did* feature *predominantly* conventionally beautiful people in their images. In most cases, the campaigns added a few people who were considered not to meet these narrow and idealised standards of beauty (most commonly in terms of weight). In some of these cases, although each woman was presented in the initial launching images associated with the campaign, only the most conventionally attractive individuals were retained in the recurring images associated with the campaign thereafter. Both the Woolworths and Jet followed this format choosing to focus predominantly on thin women in the follow up advertisements for their campaigns.

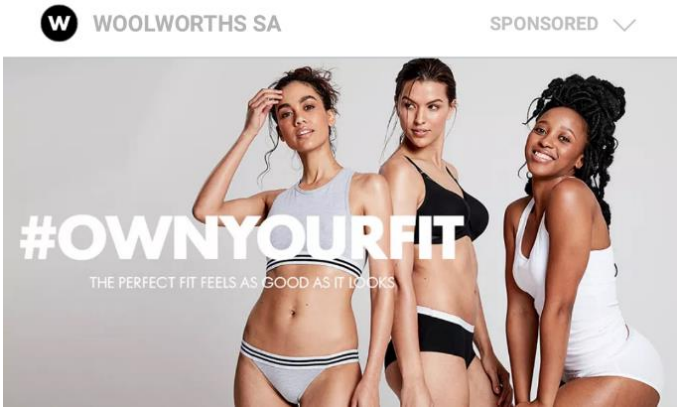


*Figure 25:* South African women feature in Woolworths' #OwnYourFit campaign ('Instagram post by Woolworths SA', 2017).

Secondly, these campaigns tended to feature people considered not to be conventionally attractive because they had one or two "flaws" but, apart from these, still maintained all the other traditional signs of beauty. The Woolworths image (Figure 25) above went as far as to disguise or crop these women's personally-identified flaws ("small breasts", "mom tummy" and "stretch marks", respectively) in the most frequently used version of their advertisement. This poses questions about the "authenticity" or genuine-ness of both the actual representations within, and the socially conscious intentions of, these campaigns. Noting these representations is significant. Through this process, these campaigns continue to link their brands to conventional beauty (young, slim, smooth-skinned, long-haired etc.) whilst both redirecting focus away from this reliance and stimulating increasing brand loyalty, as including a few carefully selected deviations to this norm presents them as genuine, sincere and progressive. Johnston and Taylor (2008) remarks that this "is part of a gender specific marketing strategy that cultivates brand loyalty using models and imagery that women can identify with, while conveying an appearance of corporate philanthropy" (p. 955). Despite these issues, it is still important to explore how authenticity was constructed as desirable within these campaigns.

### 6.4.1. All natural, uniquely me

As mentioned above, the notion of authenticity was used to supposedly challenge conventional notions of attractiveness and reframed as key to desirability. Here, consistent with both Heidegger's concept "Eigentlichkeit", and Ferrara's (1998) reference to "immediate uniqueness", authenticity was constructed in terms of an individuals' uniqueness and diversity, and desirability was determined by specifically highlighting one's individuality, or difference from others, as physically attractive. In other words, being desirable came from looking exceptional and distinctive, as opposed to the "ordinary" and "uninteresting" traditionally appealing bodies.

> Rain (Dove): *I loved the fact that I was different. I loved that I was unique. And I know that I am perfect for me. I know that I am me, I'm the only me.*
>
> (Dawn): *Your chips and cracks are what give you character and charm. Don't change them, the world needs your unique beauty…You are unique. Don't try too hard to fit in, STAND OUT… embrace uniqueness.*

From this perspective, “flaws” themselves were constructed as desirable because they were the attributes that allowed individuals to differentiate themselves from others, positioning them as unusual and appealing. In addition to this, authenticity, itself, was constructed as desirable through its articulation as real, natural and genuine as opposed to artificial and manufactured (see Figure 26 below). This is emphasised by the trending popularity of being “naturally glowing”, wearing no make-up, or not using social media “filters”.

> Dawn: *We don’t have filters to make us look great off-camera. That’s why there’s Dawn - no filter needed… Dawn gives you that natural glow that turns heads.*

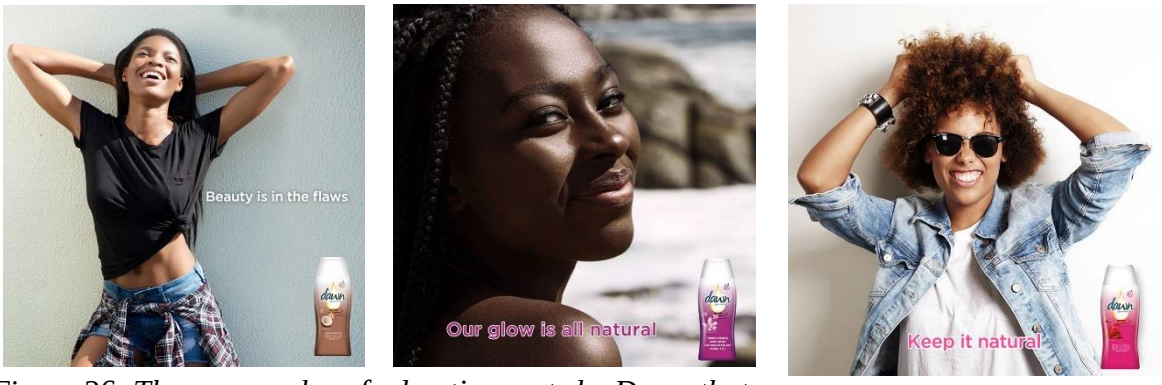


Figure 26: *Three examples of advertisements by Dawn that refer to beauty (Dawn South Africa, 2017).*

In other words, this discourse has been produced and reinforced by emphasising the many ways in which *in*authenticity is considered particularly *un*desirable. This discourse is commonly used to both confirm and reinforce the idea that someone is desirable because they avoid practices that may be considered to jeopardise authenticity or genuine-ness or indicate inauthenticity or artificiality. This is illustrated by Kayla Itsines previously mentioned quote denigrating reliance on “skinny teas, special secret supplements, waist trainers and Photoshop” and argues instead to “focus on being the real YOU!”. This idea appears to come as a direct response, and in contrast, to the rapid advancements in technology including the dozens of social media platforms (and associated image editing applications), specifically designed to help people shape their online representations of both themselves and their lives, now available to large numbers of people (Abidin, 2017).

This discourse, therefore, also provides a framework for understanding a number of these social trends. Two such examples include the tremendous amount of attention that has been given to the undesirability of wearing “excessive” make-up or of presenting overly edited or “biased” “InstaPerfect” images of one’s body and life. Many people (particularly men)

strongly object to these behaviours claiming that those who engage in these practice are "liars" and arguing that "it is false advertising!" that cause others to have "trust issues" (as cited in Casella, 2015). On the surface these obviously sexist and objectifying (Fredrickson, & Roberts, 1997) remarks are so outrageous they do not warrant acknowledgment but, at the same time, they illustrate a global shift toward valorising authenticity as desirable and how this discourse, as a whole, has shaped the way in which people can, ironically, perform their authenticity, particularly on social media, as a means of achieving desirable status. This can be seen through the deliberate disclosure of a "no make-up selfie" and the common inclination for popular bloggers and Instagram personalities to reveal "the truth" behind their "perfect" images (see Figure 27 below). In these examples, people document their shift from manufactured to natural, affected to authentic, and through this process of revelation, (re)construct themselves as desirable. This can be located within a broader religious discourse of authenticity specifically stressing the Catholic practice of confession. This is the process whereby sins, rather than being kept secret, are revealed as a means of producing a return to a purer, more authentic state of being (Guignon, 2004).


*Figure 27:* Two examples of 'authentic disclosure" on Instagram posted by @bridiebythesea and @saggysara, respectively (Grašytė, 2017; Grašytė, 2016).

On the one hand these types of authentic disclosure appear to be useful and important. A vast array of research has stressed the increasingly problematic manifestation of glamorised online depictions. This literature highlights the serious psychological consequences that both exposure to others', and presentation of their own, "perfect" lives, selves and relationships have on people (Abidin, 2017; Kleemans, Daalmans, Carbaat, & Anschütz, 2016; Mierzwa & Jurjewicz, 2016). The psychological consequences (including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and insecurity, to name but a few) can be framed using Festinger's Social Comparison Theory (1954). This theory argues that individuals, in an attempt to feel in coherence with

their environment, consistently assess themselves (including their opinions, appearance and capabilities) by comparing them to those in their social environment that they consider to be relevant or significant others (Ebren, 2009).

Festinger (1954) identified two possible "forms" of comparison that occur within this process: upward (involving others deemed to be superior in a particular category) or downward (involving those deemed inferior in a particular category) comparison. Upward social comparison has been significantly correlated with dissatisfaction and low self-esteem (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007; Myers & Crowther, 2009; Nabi, 2009). The advancement in media technologies, particularly online sharing and social media technologies, has dramatically increased the range of possible "significant others" available as relevant comparisons, therefore, significantly increasing the chances that an individual will form a negative, "upward" evaluation (Coupland & Gwyn, 2003). The authentic revelations or confessions draw attention to this comparison process. This allows people to acknowledge and recognise an incongruence between the "upward" comparisons that commonly occur with online representations and the much more positive "downward" comparisons that could occur with "truer" depictions of "reality".

On the other hand, however, these admissions neither challenge the notion of comparison as a whole, nor do they tend to reduce the frequency at which idealised or glamorous images are posted. In other words, this authentic disclosure allows people to legitimately continue to present their lives in an overtly glamourised manner, thereby continuing to both reinforce these (unrealistic) ideals and gain the social recognition and approval associated with these "perfect" desirable images. Additionally, these individuals position themselves as genuine, sincere and honest thereby securing yet another desirable quality worthy of social admiration (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper and Bouvrette, 2003; Johnston and Taylor, 2008). The social desirability of "authentic personalities" will be explored in the sub-discourse, presented below.

### 6.4.2. Authentic "inners"

This discourse explores the second key way in which authenticity and desirability were intricately linked. Through this discourse, being authentic was considered one of the most, if not the most, desirable internal psychological "trait" a person could possess. In other words, individuals stressed that people with "authentic personalities" are more physically attractive

to others. This appears to be a particularly popular idea. For example, roughly 80 percent of the Miss South Africa participants between the years 2014 and 2017 mentioned authenticity as their best personal quality deeming them most suitable for the title (Miss South Africa, 2014-2017). Additionally, "genuine-ness" appears to be a highly sought after desirable personality trait when choosing a potential romantic partner. Numerous empirical studies have found that authenticity, specifically "dispositional authenticity" (Brunell, Kernis, Goldman, Heppner, Davis, Cascio, & Webster, 2010, p. 209) which includes being genuine, open and truthful, as a key determinant of satisfaction within romantic relationships (Wickham, 2013). As discussed above in *All natural, uniquely me*, evidence of a *lack* of "internal" authenticity could also be used to justify why someone may be deemed *undesirable*. In other words, if one's actions or interactions with others can be interpreted as "fake" or superficial, they too become unattractive.

Many of the individuals represented in this sample shared these views, actively moving away from discussing physical features and, rather, spent considerable time emphasising internal attributes identified as being indicative of authenticity. These qualities, though produced internally were seen to have an outward manifestation. In other words, others were able to see or perceive this "inner glow" or "inner beauty" and this was identified as physically appealing to others.

> Heather (Dove): *Beauty isn't something that I feel it just is something that you are. It's something that comes out of you.*

As with *Authenticity as hard work*, several common traits were discussed as indicative of, and key to experiencing, authenticity. More specifically, being authentic was seen in people who were able to display confidence, be carefree, positive (optimistic or happy) or strong. All of these characteristics are illustrated in the quote below.

> Dawn: *"Glamour is about feeling good in your own skin" – Zoe Zaldana. We couldn't agree more. Unhappiness can negatively affect your self-image and your relationships with others. Do what makes you happy and your inner beauty and confidence will shine through. Glow strong girl.*

Many of these traits were conflated or discussed in very close relation to each other. In addition, as with many of the previous discourses, individuals tended to directly identify authenticity through the presence of other personal characteristic or discuss their association

in tautology. The most consistently referred to quality was confidence and it was seen to play a pivotal role in producing or connecting the other "authenticity-related" qualities. Confidence was referred to in many different ways throughout the texts. It was often discussed explicitly in relation to desirability with the overarching message being that confidence was "sexy" or that it attracted the attention and admiration of others.

> Dawn: *Confidence can be the difference between looking good and being fabulous. You have every right to shine so make it a priority with Dawn.*
>
> Surf: *Dazzling means walking into a room and owning it! [Wear] a white or bright outfit that makes you confident!*
>
> JOKO: *The best thing a woman can wear is her confidence… Let your inner strength be your best accessory*
>
> Mpho (Dawn): *I think that confidence is very very important because people buy people, so at the end of the day when you enter a room and you carry yourself with confidence, people are more likely to want to engage with you…you know you can be in the most expensive dress or the most expensive outfit but if you are not confident it does not translate. So wear whatever it is, you could wear your R99.00 bag, sack of potatoes, but carry it with confidence.*

This "the most beautiful people are [the] ones who are confident" (Finch & Killion, 2011, p. 44) idea was extended to include more implicit references to authenticity, with many individuals stressing the desirability of one being confident in "*who they are*" and being able to display confidence *by being* "who they are". Here, authenticity and confidence were often conflated or discussed in unison. Most commonly authenticity/confidence was articulated as "knowing yourself" and "being comfortable" with this self (Scheppers, 2010).

> Allero (Dawn): *I love to be confident. I love knowing who I am and being certain with who I am as a person. That for me is confidence and it is important and I feel that every young person you know, male, female should really have that within themselves.*
>
> Doris (Dawn): *…experience[s] in the limelight has taught [me] the importance of being comfortable in [my] own skin… Being on stage and in the public eye requires me to be confident, strong, grounded and focussed…And all that cannot be staged – it needs to be authentic in order to be sustainable.*

Marcia (Dove): *For me, beauty is …being well in your skin and being content.*

Joko: *True confidence and strength is being comfortable in your own skin.*

Being "comfortable in your own skin", was also commonly discussed with close reference to self-love (see Figure 28 below). From this discourse, people are understood as being desirable if they are able to love themselves, "as they are", for "who they are". Again, self-love and authenticity appeared to have a tautological relationship where being "true to oneself" was seen to be indicative of self-love, and loving oneself was seen to be an essential aspect of being authentic. Associating authenticity with self-love is a commonly-held idea, frequently disseminated through a wide range of media messages and cultural material. South African artist, Grady Zeeman has an online gallery titled "I am- Affirmations" dedicated to exploring authenticity as self-love. He asserts that "The greatest gifts one can give yourself and therefore the rest of humanity, are those of self-love and self-respect…where I am comfortable with who I am…Our truest power comes after the words: I am" (Zeeman, n.d.). Lady Gaga's (2011) famous song, "Born This Way" provides another popular and far reaching example. The connection between self-love and authenticity can be seen articulated through the lyrics "There's nothing wrong with loving who you are…So hold your head up girl and you'll go far…don't hide yourself in regret, just love yourself and you're set". This quote stresses many of the commonly emphasised aspects of this discourse discussed within this data set.


*Figure 28:* Examples of a Twitter "advertisement" using the notions of self-love and authenticity by @PDAthleisure (PDAthleisure, 2017).

In this study, self-love was seen to be one of the most important aspects of authenticity, and achieving authenticity through self-love was framed as one of the most important and influential achievements one could acquire in life. In these texts, self-love was defined in terms of "accepting yourself" specifically with all your "flaws", or being at "peace with your

imperfections" (JOKO). This extends the notion of flaws, themselves, being desirable (discussed above) adding that having the confidence to accept these differences, to "embrace them" and not hide them, and to love yourself *with* them, was also identified as desirable.

> Leanne (Jet): *Once you master belief in yourself no one can steal that love from you! #JetLoveYourself @jet_fashion* ❤

> Yoliswa (Jet): *For me it's just so important to realise, self-love- it's the root to everything. From your size 28 to size 48 it's really the same thing because if you have that you really really have everything.*

> Nova (Jet): *...the worst thing in the world is to not like yourself so I think it's good that there's a movement that's saying love yourself as you are, you are perfect as you are and we need to believe it and we need to remind other people when they don't believe it.*

> Grace (Dove): *I have a couple of acts where I start profile um just to show off you know my nose, my big wonderful nose.*

Both confidence and self-love were as articulated as being "care free", more specifically as not caring what others thought, and particularly not needing others' approval. This was a common theme running throughout the data and will be readdressed in the final discourse on *authenticity as emancipatory*. The first quote above, specifically, highlights how, without self-love, others' opinions can taint one's self-perception or "steal" one's self-approval. In other words, self-love was defined as involving a denial of, or challenge to, others' assessment or appraisal. This idea was most commonly articulated by individuals' reference to "not apologising" for *who you are*, including what you look like, how you dress, your beliefs and life choices.

> Joko: *[there's beauty] in looking silly and not caring that you do. Let yourself play, be silly and embrace your quirks - be unapologetically you!*

> Cara (PUMA): *It is all about accepting who you are and not apologising for it. At the end of the day if they don't like you, fudge off or whatever.*

> Allero (Dawn): *Hmm, I am very confident because I was brought up by a confident woman also. She wouldn't let the world tell her anything negative about herself. Whether someone thought that the hairstyle didn't look good on her or that she was a*

*little shorter than other women or whatever it was, she was like, 'well short girls rock! That's what I think!' And I'm part of that group of women so I'm going to embrace it. I just love myself, I am confident like that.*

Jessica (Dove): *My style is unapologetic 100% … They told me that I had to hide. They told me that I wasn't pretty enough. They told me that I wasn't thin enough. I just wasn't enough…it's fine to be the way that you are, don't have to feel sorry for who I am. I'm gonna do what makes me look and feel good.*

Naomi (Edgars): *Hey! When you know YOURSELF you'll realise that you don't need validation from others regarding whether or not you are enough.*

Apologies were seen as admission of failure as they were seen to valorise others' influence in the validation of the self. These quotes emphasise the importance of being "enough", for yourself, irrespective of what others might feel or define you as. These quotes, again, stress the importance of not hiding who you are and embracing your flaws as unique and desirable, irrespective of how others perceive these traits. In contrast to the earlier quotes emphasising the "outward shine" of the "inner glow", here desirability to and for *the self* is emphasised most strongly. It is important to note, however, the implicit contradictions operating within this discourse. It can be argued that desirability to and for the self cannot be considered mutually exclusive of, or separate to, others desires. When desirability is already constructed as "nobody likes someone that is insecure or desperate", the key strategy available for acceptance becomes hinged on valiantly highlighting self-love and defiantly denying importance of the other's gaze (Coupland & Gwyn, 2003).

The strong emphasis on self-love and self-confidence presented within this discourse raises several key issues. Firstly, confidence was not seen to be optional- it was a requirement. "Encouragement" to feel confident enough to both be yourself and love yourself can be read as thinly veiled commands. An inability to respond adequately to these demands was not only deemed undesirable, but considered a personal failure. More specifically, the impression that is given from these quotes is that people simply need to "choose" to be confident, to love themselves and to be themselves. This was exemplified by the "Choose Dawn. Choose Confidence- #YouGotThis" campaign. It is also important to note that all the campaigns in this sample, as explored earlier, chose to feature individuals who were either famous or considered successful professionals in their specific areas of work. In other words, these

women had already achieved a socially recognised form of status which, in turn, provides access to alternate (although traditionally masculine) means of achieving desirability other than their physical appearance. It can be argued that one's capacity to practice self-love, display self-confidence and to "just be yourself" is vastly improved when one has already achieved a position in society that is assigned value. The culmination of these factors, thus, create unattainable expectations of what being "authentically desirable" means for those who do not already have access to these cultural symbols of desirability.

These ideas can be located within a range of theoretical and empirical work exploring discourses of confidence and their broader social implications, particularly amongst women. Gill and Orgad (2016), for example, discuss what they refer to as the "cult(ure) of confidence" (p. 324) highlighting the extensive array of spheres in which women are "incit[ed] to self-confidence" (p. 324). Banet-Weiser (2015) focuses more specifically on the degree to which confidence (amongst other women's issues), through the commodification of "girl power", have become "a market for empowerment" which promotes "individualizing of social issues and commodifying of social activism through brand culture" (p.182). As with this current study, she foregrounds confidence as an individual commodity. Through an analysis of the "Confidence Coalition" in the United States, she describes a parallel practice whereby women are "encouraged" to "choose" self-confidence, and in her example, offered the opportunity to make a "pledge" to this effect (Banet-Weiser, 2015).

In both these cases, confidence is framed not only as a "choice", but as the only rational, sensible, or "correct" choice, and that all that is need for women to be able to "stand up" and "embrace themselves" is a little encouragement. These ideas suggest that the primary impediment to experiencing authenticity (specifically defined here as the confidence to be yourself), and achieving success more generally, that women face is low self-esteem. Remedying these ills thus tends to be aimed solely at "reversing" this position of "lack". Gill and Orgad (2016) reflect this point arguing that a "range of experts, programmes, and discourses are invested in establishing women's lack of confidence as the fundamental obstacle to women's success, achievement and happiness, and in promoting the acquisition or development of self-confidence as its ultimate solution" (p. 330). The implications of this construction are serious. By locating the problem of marginalisation at the personal (specifically intrapersonal) level, the "confidence imperative" directs attention away from the ways in which this supposed "low self-esteem" (systematically produced by the beauty

industry itself) amongst women, or their lack of socially recognised success more broadly, can be understood as a product of both the structural barriers and prejudices (such as racism, sexism, classism or homophobia) they face on a daily basis. In other words, this discourse "presents female empowerment in purely individualistic terms and [thereby] defuses feminist goals of larger social transformation" (Heinecken, 2006, p. 337). Furthermore, an easily attainable solution to the self-made problem is offered: more consumption. In this sense, this discourse continues to reproduce systems of structural violence by both reinforcing gendered imbalances of power and supporting an oppressive economic institution that relies on exploitation, and reproduces economic inequality (Reiss, 1997). As Gill and Orgad (2016) argue, this discourse "systematically re-signifies feminist accounts, by turning away from structural inequalities and collectivist critiques of male domination into heightened modes of self work and self-regulation" (p 324). These modes will be explored below.

Finally, this discourse, as in *Authenticity is hard work,* produced a complex contradiction between "innate" and "manufactured" authenticity. On the one hand, authentic desirability was perceived to be naturally or "innately" pre-existing within all individuals, and on the other hand, authentic desirability was simultaneously constructed as requiring continuous effort and work. While many of the above quotes suggest that loving and being yourself is a relatively straightforward task that could be achieved easily if you "choose" to "just believe" in yourself, at the same time, some individuals strongly emphasised the work required to achieve this position. Several people stressed that having confidence in yourself, and being yourself, was not an easy task and rather, it required effort, exertion and strength. Within these quotes, however, it was still articulated as something certainly achievable, especially if one was able to maintain a positive and optimistic outlook.

> Cara (Puma): *You know we all wear our different armours in life, everyone is insecure, it's just about being honest about that, having strength and vulnerability.*
>
> Dawn: *Amazing skin doesn't happen overnight. It takes time and effort. So don't forget to use Dawn everyday to give your skin that beautiful, natural glow.*
>
> Merlene (Dawn): *Focus on what you love about your body to help boost your confidence, emotionally and physically. If there are things that you don't like about your body, adjust them, work around them and focus on the positive.*

> Melanie: (Jet): *You realise that this is the body that I have and I can work towards that strength.*
>
> Yamangalisa (Surf): *I associate confidence with strength. It's that strength that comes from inside - it's a part of who you are.*

In contradiction to the previously discussed emphasis on loving yourself "as you are", without altering yourself, these quotes by highlighting the work required to achieve confidence and self-love, imply that being authentic *does* involve some form of change. In other words, similar to what was discussed in *Authenticity involves change*, these quotes suggest that authenticity required internal change of attitude, a progression that would enable them to "move forward" by allowing them to look and feel better, and succeed in the world more generally.

> Nomzamo (PUMA): *My main messages would be about self-love … If a young girl doesn't love herself for who she is, she will never be able to pursue the things she rightfully deserves in this life.*

What is alluded to in these quotes, is that developing a sense of self-confidence and self-acceptance of the "inner beauty" that resides in "being yourself" is not natural. It requires effort and a particular form of self-regulatory work. This idea reflects what Heinecken (2016) refers to when he argues that "postfeminism tasks women and girls with increasing requirements for self-surveillance" (p. 332). More specifically, women are required to carefully modify their interior selves as a means of ensuring that they become or remain sexually attractive (Gill, 2008). At the same time, women are often recommended to try to avoid focusing their concentration on their bodies or selves too much with the argument that this amplifies the "inevitable" struggle of "accepting yourself" (Finch & Killion, 2011, p. 44). This reveals the complex dialectic between how women are expected to "carefully maintain themselves without being vain" (Heinecken, 2016, p. 332).

The accounts presented in this data, and the responses to the campaigns more broadly, suggest that people, especially women, have embraced the notion of beauty through authenticity. Furthermore, the (contradictory and often implicit) mental and physical work (which may include anything from jogging in the name of "self-love", to "working to your strengths" of the body "that God gave you" by finding a good fitting pair of knickers or even getting the #naturallyflawless skin through laser treatment), needed to achieve this seemingly

natural ideal have come to operate as a significant channel for experienced personal empowerment. Although challenging oppressive beauty ideals that are based on the attainment of specific physical characteristics is essential, and additionally, problematising the argument that this notion is a single, universally oppressive standard, has been extremely useful in developing a more complex and nuanced understanding of gendered oppression. It is, however, dangerous to frame the empowerment of women through ideas and practices linked to either feminine beauty of women's bodies, more generally, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, as Johnston and Taylor (2008) argue, "the emphasis on feminine beauty and the body as a site of individual meaning and empowering play is prone to a naive self-determinism that assumes that women act completely voluntarily, thus minimizing corporate domination and the 'normalizing power of cultural images'" (p. 945; Bordo, 1993, p. 21). In other words, this overly individualistic conceptualisation of empowerment fails to challenge the larger social, political climates within which these processes unfold, and the unequal power relations by which these women are confined. This challenges the commonly held assumption that countercultural movements and non-conforming acts are automatically subversive (particularly of capitalist institutions) in and of themselves, and stresses the need to critically analyse these movements more fully (Frank, 1997).

Furthermore, the problem with valorising feminine beauty of any kind, irrespective of the proposed source, is that it continues to reinforce desirability as a primary means of women's worth by putting an inordinate attention on attractiveness. In other words, by replacing the thin beauty ideal with the authentic beauty ideal, this desirability continues to be narrowly defined, hierarchical and, as has been seen from many of the previous discourses, very difficult to achieve. Additionally, the conflict between the effortless surface level presentation of authenticity- "just be yourself" – and the more detailed reality of the work achieving this ideal involves tends to set up an unrealistic expectation which, when not achieved, places the responsibility and blame for this failing solely on the individual (de Botton, 2004). As this discourse is intricately tied to experiences of empowerment, many of these issues will be further addressed in the last discourse, *Authenticity as emancipation*.

### 6.5. Authenticity as Emancipation

*"I think we definitely live in a time where women are taking back their identity…And you know what we're saying? We're saying: I'm going to do me…I'm going to be who I wanna be, when I want to be, wherever I want to be"* - Nomzamo (PUMA).

*"I ask her what makes [Cara] feel empowered. '... You can find things that empower you in everything. It's just about being in the moment and being yourself. You can't think about being empowered – it's a feeling that comes from inside'"* (Niven, 2017).

This discourse is closely related to the discourse *authenticity as ethics* which will be discussed in relation to smaller niche brands in the final analysis chapter. Many authors have, similarly, detailed the corporate world's extensive history of assimilating "emancipatory ideals" (2008, p. 941) into their advertising agenda and how these, more often than not, have little or limited success in producing transformative results (Frank, 1997; Heath and Potter, 2004). A plethora of large, successful, international companies (such as Lush, Volvo and Coca Cola, to name but a few) highlight the broad ideas of "social responsibility" as a core part of their brand identity. Although it is clearly a useful and productive marketing tool, it would be simplistic to dismiss these purportedly well-intentioned and significantly well-received movements without fully exploring the ways in which these discourses enable or inhibit transformation at both the individual and societal level.

From this discourse, authenticity was identified as being closely tied to, and a key means of, experiencing emancipation. This discourse was articulated in a number of different ways throughout the data and relates, in some way, to each of the previous discourses explored above. On the most basic level, all of the campaigns chose to focus strongly on women, and framed this decision (and their campaigns as a whole) as intended platforms for women's empowerment. Three closely interrelated ideas were discussed as part of this analysis, including a focus on ownership, breaking barriers, and freedom. Emancipation, through this discourse of authenticity, was located primarily at the individual level through experienced personal empowerment of individual women. The discussion on breaking barriers, does begin to frame the discourse of *authenticity as emancipation* more broadly in terms of social and structural issues, but continues to offer solutions at the individual level. Both of the above ideas were closely related to experiencing a sense of personal freedom.

Firstly, from this discourse, being authentic was framed as actively "owning" a variety of different aspects of oneself, including one's body (as seen previously) as well as one's life decisions and choices. Here authenticity was seen as "taking charge" of your life, making choices for your life that felt real and consistent to you, even if (or perhaps because) they are different or contradictory to what others choose or think that you should choose. This process of taking ownership was closely linked to the idea of freedom as the experience was deemed to be particularly "freeing". By "owning" themselves and their lives women experienced themselves as being released and liberated from the oppressive constraints of others. This was epitomised by Woolworths' campaign slogan *"#Ownyourfit- it feels as good as it looks"* which stresses both the process of (re)owning what is rightfully "yours", in this case the body, and the favourable affective experiences associated with this process. Finally, the idea of ownership was seen through the repetitive assertions that engagement in the process of "becoming your true self", is entirely for your *own* satisfaction and admiration, and specifically not as a means of establishing validation from, or proving yourself to, others. This discourse draws heavily on the broad concept of human agency (Betzler, 2009). Specifically, in this context, agency was used to highlight autonomous, free-willing subjects or, as Burr (1995) argues, that "people also assume that we exercise choice and make decisions, and that, within the limits of our practical circumstances, we fashion our own lives and take responsibility for the kind of person we have become" (p. 39).

One of the common ways in which ownership was discussed was through the discussion of "paths". Many of the individuals represented in the campaigns discussed the importance of choosing *your own* path in life. These ideas were exemplified by both of the Adidas Originals campaigns discussed earlier. In both of their campaigns the song lyrics used to portray their overall message strongly emphasised ownership through "paths". In the "Original is never finished" campaign, Frank Sinatra's lyrics *"And more, much more than this…I did it my way"* drive home the idea that "being yourself" means doing things "*your* way". This idea was also commonly expressed in many of the relevant Dove campaigns which stressed that anything from how you wear your hair to what career you choose or how you raise your children, should be done "on *your own* terms". Here a strong differentiation is being made between "your" ideas, choices and feelings, and "their" commands and demands, and authenticity is specifically established through the decision to follow the former and disregard the later. Furthermore, the emphasis of "much more" and "*my* way/say" as well as the triumphant and defiant tone in which the statements are made (by Sinatra and Dove,

respectively) reflect the idea, discussed earlier, that being authentic is difficult and that "choosing your own path" requires hard work, commitment and courage and is, in itself, a form of achievement.

Two further aspects of ownership are presented in the quotes below. Firstly, as "choosing your own path" directly suggest, ownership is about choice: that there *is* a choice that can be made (as opposed to only one set path assigned to you) and that this choice is *yours,* as an individual, and not for someone else to decide. This also frames the construction of authenticity, and thus those who attain it, as being proactive and taking initiative.

> Misty (Under Armour): *The path to your success is not as fixed and inflexible as you think.*
>
> Lisa (PUMA): *Get off the beaten path. Why the hell not?... You're meant to go out there and live life exactly as you want.*
>
> Edgars: *Whether it's what you wear or what you do, your life is yours to live.*
>
> Nkuli (Edgars): *I come from a family where finances (gestures with hands) you know, it's one of those things, you know my mom is an accountant, my dad is an insurance broker, so I figured I have to follow into their footsteps too. I often felt like I wasn't finding my foot, and I just said "You know what, I want to take a leap of faith".*

Similarly, in the "Your future is not mine" campaign, Hamel-Buffa sings a closely related message: *"I'll never go down your road, I find my way on my own. I'll never follow your path, I'll make mine and I won't look back… I'm never gonna fall in line, your future is not mine".* Here what is stressed more explicitly, is that this path is "mine" specifically because it is not "yours". Many quotes specifically highlighted authenticity through differentiation of the self from others through their life choices or "journeys" (see Figure 29 below).

> Naomi (Edgars): *'YOUR' Journey, not 'OUR' Journey! …As long as everything makes sense to you, whether or not it makes you happy...that's ok because it's YOUR journey. Authentically yours...appreciate it and forget about 'them', 'they', 'he' or 'she'!*
>
> Cara (PUMA): *Don't follow the crowd, don't do what other people do because everyone else is doing it…Stand in your shoes and like be you.*

Pia (PUMA): *You have to unfollow the rest and be yourself.*

This is also expressed in the following quote by Surf:


*Figure 29:* Inspirational message from brand ambassador posted by Surf on their Facebook Page (Surf Laundry SA, 2016).

Furthermore, it is suggested that you made these decisions *on your own* without asking for "permission" from other people or "allowing" anyone else to prevent you from making the choice that you considered right for you. This was similarly expressed in the previous section exploring authenticity and desirability, specifically in the assertions of being "unapologetic" about who you are, or in this case, how you live.

> Lisa (PUMA): *You don't have to wait for someone to do it and show you that it can be done. That someone can be you. Do you.*
>
> Naomi (Edgars): *This life that you're living, you create.*
>
> Rihanna (PUMA): *The Do You campaign inspires all women to remain true to themselves, to follow their own rules and never to accept a "no" as a response.*

This raises a second aspect pertinent to this aspect of ownership: that "owning" yourself and your life was seen to involve going against what others expected of you, or determined for you. It was emphasised not only that this "path" or series of life decisions would be different from what others chose to do, but that it would very often contradict the unspoken but commonly-held and practiced "social rules" of accepted behaviour. Several quotes stress these notions:

Grace, Jessica, Rain, Marcia (Dove): [In response to others' constant criticism] *…They said. He said. She said. I said: no way! You aren't me, I'm me!... My beauty, my say.*

Дарьей (PUMA): *When we were kids we always had to follow rules. "You have to choose one thing to do" "You have to find one passion"-Do you doesn't mean doing this one thing. Set goals. 1, 2, 3. And if someone wants to tell you their rules, maybe they are just jealous.*

Tashi (PUMA): *Stand your ground, move mountains.*

Rain (Dove): *I always had this attitude of they don't get to tell me how to live my life.*

Grace (Dove): *I'm not gonna be defined by anyone's expectations.*

Pia (PUMA): *Forget about what you are supposed to do and what you're not. Break the rules, your fears and your doubts.*

Again, the idea of "standing up" to other people (previously discussed in the section exploring the discourse of *authenticity as hard work*) by actively confronting, contradicting or defying them is reinforced in these quotes. Finally, key to the discourse of authenticity as emancipation was that being authentic required self-validation as opposed to external validation from others. In other words, it was stressed that "being yourself" should be "for yourself" rather than to please someone else. Looking for recognition or approval from others in this way was frowned upon or viewed as being weak.

Lisa (PUMA): *It's simple, put the work in for yourself and nobody else.*

Anushka (PUMA): *But it's not about proving yourself to anyone. It's about proving yourself to you. Because you can do more. You can do better. You can do you.*

Mbali (Edgars): *I have to do something for myself, I have to be me.*

Sucheta (PUMA): *Because you do this for you. To show yourself that you can actually do you.*

This discourse highlighted the importance of foregrounding one's own personal opinions and holding these as more valuable or pertinent than anyone else's opinions (Callero, 2009). These quotes highlight an interesting and important contradiction- that achieving authenticity, as seen earlier, requires work, but this work can only remain to be seen as authentic if the

work is *for you*. In other words, making an effort for anyone but yourself would taint or "inauthenticate" the self that is produced. This type of contradiction was also explored in the discourse of *authenticity and desirability* where it was seen to be "sexy" (which implies the production of a self for others) to be "self-confident" (which implies not relying on the approval of anyone else but yourself). Both of these discourses draw on an intrapsychic perspective which stresses the need to be satisfied with yourself (your body, personality traits, behaviours and decisions) irrespective of what others might think. In this sense, work, transformation or self-improvement was seen to be genuine and legitimate if it was motivated by an individual's own needs or desires (Callero, 2009), as these were considered authentic.

On the one hand, these quotes can be understood in relation to the (previously discussed) construction of authenticity as asocial (commonly accepted and developed through the 19th century) which extends beyond the idea of authenticity involving defying social norms, and inserts another related aspect: being "antisocial". This is most evident in the "I'm going to be who I wanna be, when I want to be, wherever I want to be" assertions that imply not only a challenge to others expectations, but also a complete disregard for the needs and feelings of others. As Guignon (2004) asserts "The glorification of disorder and violence in today's society, especially in the youth culture, receives its justification from the ideal of authenticity just as does the mild-mannered decency promoted by Oprah and Dr. Phil" (p. 54). This reflects the idea, discussed previously, that authenticity appears to be closely tied to egotism and self-absorption (Elliott & Lemert, 2009) and a denial of, or disinterest in, the interests of society as a whole.

On the other hand, however, these quotes can also be framed in particularly "prosocial" terms. In the opening quote for this section Nomzamo (PUMA) uses the phrase "taking back". This suggests that authenticity involves reclaiming something that once was yours, but was either lost or stolen from you: specifically, your "identity". By explicitly stating that those engaged in this process are women, she is implicitly suggesting that men are responsible for this loss. She is drawing attention to the difference of experiences between men and women, and subtly highlighting that unjust power inequalities are responsible for these difference. The terminology here (standing up, taking back) strongly reflects a popular discourse of female empowerment that is now widely used in popular culture (Gill & Orgad, 2016). From Beyoncé's (2016) latest album Lemonade (with lyrics such as "What's worse, lookin' jealous or crazy? Jealous or crazy? Or like being walked all over lately, walked all

over lately"), through “feminist twitter” rants on serious social issues (for example the #metoo movement challenging sexual violence), to more humorous, ironic “not like other girls” or “me as a wife” memes (see Figure 30 below), all of which undermine discriminatory and oppressive gendered stereotypes that marginalise women.


*Figure 30:* Two examples of popular internet memes exploring shifting gendered identities (Plüg, Personal Communication, 2017).

One of the ideas that was closely connected to the above discussion of ownership through “standing up” or “taking back” was the notion of breaking barriers. Breaking barriers extending the process of ownership to include a more collective conceptualisation of emancipation which included the liberation of others and changes in broader societal norms. Breaking barriers was discussed in two different ways. Firstly, several participants made reference to structural factors that inhibit them from “being themselves” and, additionally, stressed that these factors prevented them from being recognised for their achievements and fully achieving the success that they deserve.

> For Misty, by Saul Williams (Under Armour): *The systemic structure built to keep me in place is the stage I dance on. Black and Woman… Born in a landmine…The oppressor's gaze ain’t all-eye-seeing, I'm unlike any.*
>
> For Alison, by Aja Monet (Under Armour): *I am a heel breaking the ground…I am a movement, focused and fierce…*

Both of these quotes stress broader social structures that oppress them, and the individual determination and effort required to confront them. It also highlights the violence implied by these barriers (“landmine”) and the equally violent action that is suggested is required to

oppose them. Secondly, several of the participants stressed that notions of authenticity should be used to help others feel empowered. This could be done by creating more opportunities for others, simply by "being yourself", inspiring others to experience the personal empowerment they have by choosing their own path, or reminding others that their authentic selves were worthy and commendable.

> For Alison, by Aja Monet (Under Armour): *I lift and carry sisters I am most free running for freedom.*
>
> ADE (Under Armour): *I strive to inspire other women to believe in their ability and grow beyond what they think is possible.*
>
> Nova (Jet): *I really believe that it's important for us as women to affirm and support each other.*

These quotes also suggest a connection between being authentic and a good leader. Similar to the dialect expressed in the discourse successfully authentic, it was suggested that good leaders should be authentic, and that "being yourself" is a powerful leadership technique. A particularly useful example of this idea was expressed in Misty's poem by Saul Williams as part of the Under Armour campaign:

> *…yet, like any born to blaze a trail, to sing a song and land in jail. To risk it all to change the game, to shift the form and take its name… To follow stars when chased by dogs and pas de chats to shatter norms, to solo and to feel alone, to take up space in history's home. To harbour hopes, wishes and dreams to bring the untold into being.*

This quote makes several implicit references to leadership. It draws attention to a leader being a pioneer who opens up spaces for others to follow ("trailblazer" and "following stars") and speaks out ("sing a song") about issues that are often silenced or marginalised ("bring the untold into being") and that should be challenged and changed ("shift the form") despite the risks and difficulties ("chased by dogs") as well as the isolation ("feel alone") that is associated with this process. Linking authenticity to good leadership is a commonly-held idea with a long history documenting its development (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2013). Many theorists in the organisational psychology and management science disciplines highlight authenticity as a key personality trait of both effective and ethical leaders (Eilam-Shamir & Shamir, 2013; Sinclair, 2013).

A particularly relevant example of authentic leadership can be seen in South Africa's late former president Nelson Mandela, who actively constructed himself as authentic in order to effectively lead South Africa into Democracy. Ciulla (2013) discusses the complexity of authentic leadership using Mandela as her case study. She argues that in some respect authentic leadership appears to have less to do with who the leaders "really are" and more to do with creating the impression of being genuine. This follows what Goffman (1959) is referring to when he asserts "When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them" (p. 17). Ciulla (2013) goes on to stress, however, that this exists on a continuum with many leaders displaying the sincere belief that who they really are and how they present themselves is truly consistent, whilst other leaders appear to essentially be "cynical manipulators". Boehmer (2008) also highlights this point in a biography of Nelson Mandela emphasising his ability to morph between numerous roles and perform them with such confidence they *appear* authentic:

> *…his chameleon-like talent for donning different guises; his theatrical flair for costume and gesture; his shrewd awareness of the power of his own image. Across his career he played such various roles…and allowed himself profligately to be photographed in these guises. As was seen, he delighted in acting the shape-shifter, assuming a range of contrasting masks and mien, and convincing others of their authenticity (p. 123).*

This quote, again, highlights the complexity and paradoxical nature of the notion of authenticity. On the one hand it supports the argument for a "multiplicity of authentic selves" which are continually (re)produced through performance (Nunius, 2012), none of which are more true or real. Alternately, and more probably as it were intended, it highlights how a performance inconsistent with a true core self undermines authenticity, producing inauthenticity or falsehood. Ciulla (2013) also stresses the tendency for leaders, like Mandela, to "lose themselves" to the roles they are required to perform:

> *Perhaps the more iconic such leaders become over time, the more difficult it is for them to be authentic…At some point followers expect them to play a role that is bigger than they are; and they cannot refuse to play it. After such leaders play these roles for a while, they and the rest of the world forget or no longer know who they really are (*p. 171*).*

This discourse, although much less common than the focus on individual transformative processes, is extremely important as it highlights what Messner (2002) refers to when asserting that there is "a tension between different contemporary feminisms: one, a radical and collectivist feminism that sees institutional transformation as a fundamental goal; the other, a liberal feminism that sees individual equal opportunity as the fundamental goal" (p. 84). Though this construction of authenticity raises pertinent issues regarding structural institutions that shape the kinds of "true selves" one can be and which "real people" are recognised and approved of, shifting and addressing these ills was still located at the individual or collective individual level, rather than political, cultural or broad social levels.

The emphasis on ownership and breaking barriers within this discourse are also closely linked to the idea of authenticity as freedom, more specifically personal freedom. As with the focus on ownership, freedom was closely linked to notions of both choice and agency (Betzler, 2009). In this discourse, individuals described the experience of "being yourself" as "freeing": it created the sense that they were no longer trapped, restricted or held back and additionally, it opened up a broader set of possibilities than they felt existed before.

> Mbali (Edgars): *The moment I started saying what my passion was and who I was, I became more free…*
>
> Lisa (PUMA): *You'll be surprised, the things that you can do if you'll allow yourself.*
>
> For Natasha, by Dominique Christina (Under Armour): *I, ambassador. I, fire starter. I, rain-maker. I figured out how to fly, how to command my limbs, of my immaculate womanness, the red lipstick war paint, I am a chariot of possibility.*
>
> For Misty, by Saul Williams (Under Armour): *As an idea points its toe to flex to shape the form of possibility I am testament twirled into afterthought the touch and taste of epiphany.*
>
> Grace (Dove): *…today I probably feel the most fearless I've ever felt. I definitely feel made for burlesque because it's such a freeing art form in a way, there's no real rules? When I perform I feel exhilarated I really do I feel like I can do anything.*
>
> For Alison, by Aja Monet (Under Armour): *I am what escapes what flees and flies what splits and dashes I am a dance I do not fall… [I am] the dust of toes wings waving in wind I move, I am a movement, focused and fierce, I smile. I laugh…*

For Jessie, by Kojey Radical (Under Armour): *I want to know what it feels like to leap from cloud to cloud and not look down…*

Many of these quotes draw on imagery from the natural environment (such as clouds, light, and wind) moving back toward a more innate and organic construction of authenticity. It suggests a shift back to a more primitive, natural self- one that existed "pre-socially". This reflects what James (2007) asserts when discussing how observing children can "remind" people how to be authentic as very often their engagement with themselves, others and the world around them is more simple and lacks pretence or pomp. The notion of a "pre-social" self that James (2007) is alluding to here stresses one that has not been tainted or distorted by either the opinions of others or, ironically in this case, the desires and needs produced by advertisers. At the same time, however, authenticity constructed through both ownership and freedom also challenge the substantialist conceptualisation that stresses there is one true, core self to which one needs to return (Ferrara, 1998). Instead it opens up the possibility of multiple potential "true" or "authentic" selves (Burr, 1995) which only the individual is able to determine by deciding what "feels" true and real to them.

This discourse, as with the discourse *authenticity involves change*, highlights the strong emotional implications of authenticity. Being true to yourself is associated with strong positive "freeing" emotions such as joy, relief, satisfaction and security. By implication, not being true to yourself is linked to overwhelming negative emotions including feeling trapped, insecure, anxious and ashamed. Closely linked to the idea of freedom as not being restricted, trapped or limited, and opening up more possibilities for being was being "undefinable". Several participants discussed how others wanted to "put them in a box"- they wanted to define how they could or should be. From this discourse, being authentic involved "breaking" these boxing or stepping out from the box to become "truly you". This reflects the notions of choosing your own path and breaking the rules discussed earlier.

Lisa (PUMA): *People always asked me when I was a kid: what do you wanna be when you grow up? But I actually think that you don't have to choose because choosing puts you into a box. Boxes are for things, they're not for people.*

Nkuli (Edgars): *I wanted to step out of my own box, and start doing my own thing.*

The ideas explored above may also be more fully explained within the context of the broader existentialist and humanist discourses. Within the existentialist discourses, individuals are

seen to experience the world as predominantly lonely, empty and isolated (Corey 2005). At the same time, however, individuals also possess both the ability and opportunity of human choice and, with this agency, they have the capacity to control and mould their futures. This discourse constructs individuals as having the ability to consciously and purposefully engage with their surroundings and the world more generally (Ivey, D'Andrea, Ivey & Simek-Morgan, 2007). By framing people as consciously aware and in control of their decisions, this discourse allows people, to a certain degree, to feel a relief from the deep and debilitating feelings of anxiety linked to "the human condition" (Corey, 2005).

On the one hand this discourse highlights the powerful emotional effect that personal transformation or liberation has on individuals. This enhanced sense of control and efficacy has a significant influence on how individuals experience themselves, particularly leading to increased sense of self-worth and well-being (Crocker et al., 2003). In other words, as discussed in the discourse *authenticity and desirability*, it is essential not to undermine or negate the political importance of personal transformation. More specifically, one of the main aims of feminist work is to show the ways in which broad social, political and cultural inequalities or subjugation come to be both "personalized and internalized" (Johnston & Taylor, 2008, p. 947) and therefore experienced at the individual level of subjectivity. Thus, recognising and alleviating these feelings and experiences, providing transformative shifts at an individual level, can provide meaningful disruptions to the fixed and hierarchical gendered social order. On the other hand, despite foregrounding women's agency to "shatter norms" and "lift and carry sisters", the agency described still reflects what Messner (2002) refers to as "reproductive agency" that channels "women's actions and bodies within the power relations of the current gender order" (p. 87). This was, perhaps, most noticeable with reference to authenticity and desirability, where women's value remained largely determined by their attractiveness, despite a shift in how this attractiveness was constructed and attained.

This discourse, and several of the others (including *Authenticity is about ethics* and *Authenticity as hard work*) have both strong moral and ethical elements (Haji & Cuypers, 2008) stressing that authenticity is not just ideal but rather an imperative for optimal social functioning. In this way, these discourses frame authenticity as a means of empowerment of marginalised groups (specifically women and to a lesser degree, people of colour). In other words, several of the discourses of authenticity explored through this data, suggest they are challenging structural inequalities on the basis of gender (and race) while, at the same time,

concealing the work they do to reinforce an underlying exploitative capitalist system that continues to oppress people economically, which historically effects marginalised groups (specifically people of colour and women) more severely. This is similar to what Berger (1972,) discusses when he asserts that marketing "turns consumption into a substitute for democracy. The choice of what one eats (or wears or drives) takes the place of significant political choice. Publicity helps to mask and compensate for all that is undemocratic within society" (p. 149). In other words, a critical aspect of neoliberalism, specifically the individualisation of political change, become reinforced through these discourses of authenticity.

These ideas reflect what several other authors, including Messner (2002), Cole and Hribar (1995) and Johnston and Taylor (2008), have explored. Although each set of authors discusses this issue in a slightly different way, and use slightly different terminology, all of these accounts highlight the means by which brands tend to draw on and (mis)appropriate feminist emancipatory practices and ideas. Both Messner (2002) and Cole and Hribar (1995) explore how Nike, with carefully selected celebrity "brand ambassadors", are involved in endorsing women's sport, and highlight the problems with this system using the terms "corporate feminism" and "celebrity feminism" respectively. Similarly, Johnston and Taylor (2008) use the example of Dove Real Beauty to discuss what they term "Feminist Consumerism". In detailing the importance of this slightly different conceptualisation they argue their term, Feminist Consumerism, stresses the origins of this (and similar) movements as being located in consumerism and hence highlight the "focus on commodity purchase and acquisition as a primary means to assert an identity, achieve a common good, express ethical (feminist) principles, and seek personal pleasure and social approval" (Johnston & Taylor 2008, p. 944). In other words, through the discourses explored above, authenticity becomes framed as both an ethical and feminist goal which can be easily attained through specific lifestyle consumption choices.

Exploring the functions of ideology is particularly important if we are to fully understand the ways in which ideas support or impede opportunities for transformative change to occur. In this context ideology can be understood as "a set of ideas, normative claims, and value structures that have an emotional component influencing their usage and appeal" (Johnston & Taylor 2008, p. 944). Closely linked to ideology is functioning of hegemony. Neo-Gramscian theorists argue that ideologies may function hegemonically to varying degrees based on their

capacity to promote, strengthen and legitimise both "power hierarchies and material inequality" (Johnston & Taylor 2008, p. 944). Neo-Gramscian concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony are particularly relevant in this analysis because they provide a framework for understanding the ways in which social change (particularly the difficult shift towards equality) are integrally shaped by both cultural politics and commonly-held views, rather than solely relying on "economic determinist accounts of social change" (Johnston & Taylor 2008, p. 944). More specifically in this study, a nuanced and critical use of ideology -in other words, one that extends to include more than *just* power inequalities based on class (Fegan, 1996), can highlight the ways in which discourses of authenticity may both provide opportunities for personal agency through practices (for example choices of career and appearance) while at the same time function as systems of domination and oppression by reinforcing hegemonic power relations. In other words, by seamlessly synthesising authenticity with numerous neoliberal and hegemonic feminine ideals (including hard work, success and desirability) women are encouraged to feel free to "follow their dreams" and "love themselves" whilst simultaneously maintaining the very system through which they continue to be marginalised.

# Chapter 7:
# Crafting Authenticity

*"We strive to capture an individual's essence through our custom design…We code into our designs symbolic representations of you, your life, your dreams and aspirations. Every design pays tribute to you as a unique individual"* – Jenna Clifford.

In an article published in the New York Times, Green (2010) shows how authenticity has become a popular catchphrase which can be used to sell any handmade product. The context within which he was writing particularly highlighted the association of high-end, upmarket, or niche products (such as craft beer or fair-trade coffee) with discourses of authenticity. This appears to be consistent, to a degree, with the South African context where a wide range of artisanal, "bespoke" and expensive hand-made items from leather bags (*Jekyll and Hide*- "Live Authentic") through luxurious beds (*The Hall Collection*- "Natural, Unparalleled Quality") to wholesome baked goods (*île de pain*- "Authentic Artisans") are branded as authentic. Although most of these higher end brands appear to explore object authenticity more prominently, a firm line between object and subject authenticity is difficult to maintain, and a morphing between what or whom is authentically portrayed in these examples provides useful insight that expands on the previous discussion that was more narrowly focussed on subject authenticity in mainstream advertising campaigns.

## 7.1. Brand Backgrounds

Fifteen South African artisanal, craft, or bespoke companies (see Figure 31 below) that self-identify as "authentic" were explored through analysis of their websites, Facebook or Instagram pages (and the text, image and video content produced therein) as well as online interviews showcasing their operations which were published on local lifestyle online magazines. A very brief background of each of the companies included in this analysis is provided below.

### *Clothing*

Two small, local clothing brands that identify as authentic were included. The first brand, FOUND. Collection is a designer fashion clothing line for women which was established by two designers and stylists from Stellenbosch (Western Cape). They describe their collection as "authentic and exclusive". The second, Jane Sews is a small artisanal company, based in Durban (KwaZulu-Natal) that designs and produces clothing, footwear and accessories for

women. They, too, explicitly discuss their desire to be identified as authentic: “I have always been inspired by nature's authenticity. My design and making hope to reflect this same spirit”.

*Food and beverage*

Three companies that produce perishable goods were selected as part of this sample. Firstly, île de pain- the “authentic artisans”- which has been defined as “a multi-faceted artisanal offering” (http://lovethecraft.co.za) is a small, family owned café that sells bread, pastries, chocolates, books and cooking equipment. Secondly, Sir Thomas Brewing Co., a small craft beer company run by two friends in Stellenbosch (Western Cape), produces a simple, all-natural range and unique range of pale ales and lagers. Their references to authenticity are more implicit, using inferences like “Real Beer. Real Ingredients”. Finally, Doubleshot a coffee shop in Port Elizabeth (Eastern Cape) develops and produces a variety of artisanal blended teas and hand-roasted coffee. This company explicitly identifies as authentic: “we pride ourselves in having an authentic, honest approach to coffee & tea”.

*Leather*

Unsurprisingly, with the urgent need to differentiate themselves from the dozens of faux leather and pleather providers, this was one of the niche markets which most commonly drew on discourses of authenticity when branding their products and companies. Three leather based companies were chosen as part of this study. Firstly, Jekyll and Hide, which sports a range of natural leather products including bags, jackets and accessories, established in Cape Town (Western Cape) in 2003, is one of the oldest and most renowned brands in this sample. Secondly, Blu Betty, based in Durban (KwaZulu-Natal), is a local company that manufactures genuine leather shoes and handbags for women. Finally, Freedom of Movement is a brand of locally hand-made leather products including watches, bags, shoes and clothing which is run by two brothers and based in Stellenbosch (Western Cape). All of the leather companies explicitly refer to themselves as authentic, usually in the official tagline after their brand name (for example: “Blu Betty-The Authentic Leather Co.”).

*Furniture*

Another specialised sector which very commonly use discourses of authenticity is the hand-made “to order” furniture niche, particularly those companies working with wood as their base material. Again, three companies were selected in this area. Firstly, Pierre Cronje, a Cape Town (Western Cape) based company that produces a luxury range of handmade solid

wood furniture. Secondly, The Hall Collection is a company specialising in custom made luxury beds (and additionally sells bases, mattresses, linen and sleeping clothes) that was established in 2006. Finally, Creative Wood Creations is a local company in Gordon's Bay (Western Cape) that manufactures custom-made pallet wood furniture. Pierre Cronje made mostly implicit references to authenticity (naturalness or uniqueness), whilst both the other brands actively identified as authentic ("our collection … is both authentic and superior in quality" and "Authentic Pallet Furniture", respectively).


*Figure 31:* Collage of the sampled South African brands' logos, all accessed from their websites (see reference list).

*Jewellery*

Two local jewellery design and manufacturing companies were chosen. Firstly, Jenna Clifford which is one of the original South African bespoke jewellery design companies which began as a very small, family-run business when it was first established in 1992. This company self identifies as valuing authenticity and claims that "our company has remained true to its original vision". Secondly, Meraki Jewellery Design, a small jewellery design studio based in Cape Town (Western Cape) that is owned and run by designer, Megan Keyser. She more implicitly embraces ideas of authenticity arguing for "embracing natural imperfections".

*Homeware*

Two different hand-crafted homeware brands were chosen as part of the sample. The first, Klomp Ceramics produces a range of unique ceramic tableware including plates, bowls and serving dishes all made by owner and ceramic stylist, Alexia Klompje. Alexia explicitly highlights authenticity as important in her work. The second, ARK, describe themselves as "a family of craftsmen" who manufacture a range of hand-made wooden products for the home

including chopping boards and serving platters. ARK makes more subtle references to authenticity through "natural beauty".

All of these companies were purposefully selected according to their particular relevance to the research questions and aims of the study. More specifically, all brands needed to: be smaller South African owned and based companies (as opposed to very large multinational corporations), make either explicit or implicit (as indicated in each background above) references to authenticity, have a significant online social media presence (have an active Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or Pinterest page, with a substantial following (at least 1000 likes or followers) and have at least one local lifestyle magazine article or blog post written about their owners, designers or operations. All data was transferred from the original online sources to a single word document and analysed, both within and across the different data sets, using a combination of Parker's (1992) and Willig's (2006) methods of discourse analysis as outlined previously.

### 7.2. Crafting Authenticity Discourses

From this analysis four key constructions of authenticity were identified, a summary of which is presented in Table 2 below.

*Table 2:* Summary of "Crafting Authenticity" discourses

1. *Material Authenticity*
2. *Authentic Individuality*
3. *Authentic Artisans*
4. *Authenticity as Ethics*

Each discourse highlights a different aspect of the product, process and/or brand (namely the raw materials, the design of the final product, and the curator, respectively), constructing each as authentic in slightly varied ways. These constructions of authenticity allow the brands to be perceived as naturally desirable, rational and functional, and morally superior, respectively. These subject positions, in turn, become available to individual consumers through consumption of these brands, and hence, the brands, additionally, position themselves as complementary to, and enhancing of, the individuals' self-identity and lifestyle.

### 7.2.1. Material Authenticity

Firstly, *Material Authenticity* refers to authenticity (of both the products sold by the companies and each brand as a whole) as articulated through or produced by the nature of the raw materials used to create the products. This construction was highly prevalent with all companies making several explicit references to the types of materials, produce, or core resources used, and linking these resources to notions of authenticity. Most commonly these materials were referred to as natural, fine, rare and high quality, although constructions differed according to the product or company in question. Some of the quotes that highlight the raw materials used include:

> île de pain: *food… based on fresh, carefully sourced produce and product*.
>
> Sir Thomas Brewing Co: *We believe that in order to be the best you have to keep things simple. That's why we brew our beers with natural ingredients only.*
>
> The Hall Collection: *The finest imported linens and bespoke beds have been chosen for our collection that is both authentic and superior in quality.*
>
> Creative Wood Creations: *Authentic Pallet Furniture- Hand Crafted from Hand-selected, Premium Raw Pallet Wood.*
>
> Pierre Cronje: *a great respect for the raw product… [because] wood is a rare natural resource.*
>
> Jenna Clifford: *Please rest assured that the utmost attention is devoted to the quality, cut and origin of our gemstones, pearls and other precious materials.*

These quotes suggest that authenticity comes from the most fundamental and basic composition of the product- *"crafted from high quality, natural fabrics"* (Jane Sews). More specifically, these quotes emphasise that the materials used are authentic because they are natural, raw, and hand-selected, which deliberately differentiates them from materials that are artificial, processed, and mass produced. This idea was similarly expressed by Freedman and Jurafsky (2011), in their analysis of authenticity portrayed through Potato Chip branding. They found that emphasis on naturalness, and the specificity and quality of the ingredients used, were key ways in which authenticity was established, particularly for expensive chips. This is consistent with these artisanal South African brands focus on producing leisure and culture for the middle class.

In addition, three things stood out from this focus on the authenticity of the raw materials used: natural/raw materials signify quality, they are rare, and they have longevity. All three of these factors were epitomised by the following excerpt from the *Jekyll and Hide* website:

> *"Leather is rare and luxurious. It is also nature's most authentic, most permanent expression of beauty…* [and we seek to] *create a combination of authentically crafted, genuine leather products, procured from the best leather merchants from all corners of the world".*

More specifically, quality is indicated through the words "*luxurious*" and "*best*", rareness is referred to directly, and implied through difficult procurement ("*from all corners of the world"*), and longevity is indicated through the material's "*permanent*" characteristic. All these qualities contribute to, or produce, the authenticity or genuine-ness of the product.

#### *7.2.1.1. Rareness and Quality*

Rareness and quality of the raw materials were often conflated or referred to in unison. These qualities are emphasised through words such as "purest", "natural", "clarity" and "finest". By stressing that the materials used were both rare and of high quality, the product is seen to be authentic by being unusual, unique and exclusive rather than common and mass produced. Rareness and quality of the raw materials were discussed most specifically in terms of the sourcing and processing procedures used.

##### *Sourcing*

Both the rareness and quality of the basic natural resources were closely tied to the method by, and location from, which they are sourced. Interestingly, both obscure local and exotic distant sources are mentioned as an indication that the materials used are unusual, original and of high quality. In this sense, authenticity is either linked to maintaining the original historical origins of the raw materials used, or by deliberately selecting indigenous, "home-grown" resources. For example, some references include being "imported" from foreign countries or collected from "unusual local" sources.

> The Hall Collection: *Our imported linens are woven from the finest extra long staple Egyptian cotton to create a noticeably luxurious finish. All our linens are crafted in Italy and embody the qualities of tradition we so admire.*

> île de pain: *[We] feature everything from the purest available water to specialty tea and coffee and wine selected from unusual local vineyards.*

ARK: *Our wood is handpicked from the floors of century old barns and buildings throughout South Africa. Each piece is unique, reflecting the natural beauty and distinct character of the wood grain.*

Furthermore, companies tend to emphasis the great care and detail that is taken to choose the raw materials. Authentic resources cannot be acquired randomly or easily. Here words like "handpicked", "carefully sourced" and "specially selected" indicate that the process is thoughtful and thorough.

Doubleshot: *First we hand-select the best seasonal beans, leaves and ingredients we can find, then use precision methods of small batch roasting and blending in an attempt to reveal the best characteristics therein.*

Jenna Clifford: *[The precious materials'] beauty and rarity are the result of the most precise and demanding search. We utilise only the most sought-after gemstones and pearls from the most exotic locations, and tolerate no imperfections.*

Difficulty locating the raw materials needed, and rigorous inspection of those selected, are constructed as a strong indication of both their products' quality, rareness and thus their authenticity.

*Processing*

In addition, many brands tend to stress that the process by which raw materials are developed into products was also authentic. As with sourcing the raw materials, extensive care and effort is stressed when referring to the manufacturing process, both in terms of finding the "right" producers- "true artisans", in the rare cases that products are not specifically made "in-house", as well as detailing the specifics of the manufacturing process. Here authenticity is emphasised by the strong differentiation between artisanal processes (authentic) and automated or mechanised processes (inauthentic).

FOUND. Collection: *The textiles are meticulously sourced and entrusted to a handful of local artisans who craft each garment with exceptional care.*

Jane Sews: *We spend months seeking out the best manufacturers.*

Furthermore, several companies emphasise the authenticity of their production processes by highlighting that they are rooted in tradition. In other words, the methods used had been perfected over decades and were therefore both genuine and reliable. Again, words such as

"ancient" indicate that these processes are authentic because they are pre-industrial techniques that do not rely on automation and mechanisation.

> Freedom of Movement: *Production methods are based on the traditional principles of leather craftsmanship, utilising the same tools that have been used to create authentic leather goods for decades.*
>
> Jane Sews: *In creating our leather bags and accessories collection we have taken the time to research and understand the various methods of tanning… Producing and working with vegetable tanned leather is a slow and deliberate process that honours the artisanal tradition.*
>
> île de pain: *The artisan breads are made utilizing … ancient techniques, and the chocolates and patisserie treats according to traditional recipes that do not rely on chemical leavening.*

Emphasis on a carefully considered, traditional process was used to accentuate the authenticity (and hence value) of the already existing or "innate" rare and superior qualities of the resources, or, at the very least, to ensure that this authenticity is not "lost" or tainted through the process. For example, the last quote above stresses that the authenticity of their materials is maintained through a process that does *not* use chemicals as these are artificial substances that would inauthenticate the natural materials. This reflects the more substantialist notion of authenticity that emphasises a real or core essence (in this case the basic materials) which an external representation (in this case the resulting product) must mirror, as Meraki Jewellery Design asserts: "staying true to the beauty of the materials used". Furthermore, it highlights the paradoxical nature of authenticity where both the manufacturing process and marketing representation carry the inherent risk of inauthenticity (Funk, 2015). Freedman and Jurafsky (2011) also identified process, location, and historicity as key ways in which brands articulated authenticity. Although they found that process was commonly used in branding of expensive chips, location and historicity was only associated with less expensive brands. In contrast, this study found that references to location and history were particularly common of expensive, high-end brands.

All of the above examples strongly emphasise authenticity as a key determinant of a product's desirability, and in turn, argue that the buyer too can become desired through its consumption. In other words, there is a close connection between object authenticity of the

products, and consumer value. More specifically, mass produced products are seen to have use value, while artisanal or unique products (like those explored above) offer identity value for discriminating consumers (Featherstone, 2007). In other words, products that are seen to be authentic (by being exclusive, unique or natural, to mention but a few examples), allow consumers to differentiate themselves from the anonymous crowd of mass-produced-product-wielding others. Berger (1972) stresses that the main aim of advertising is to produce envy or to "manufacture glamour". In this sense the promise of experiencing authenticity has been used to invoke envy in those who aspire to feel authentic, and more importantly, an opportunity to achieve this state of being is offered through these brands. Most importantly, by using these brands they will be able to *show* other people that they are authentic.

This construction of authenticity as desirable, as discussed in the previous chapter, highlights the degree to which authenticity has become an accepted and valued ideal, and more specifically, the degree to which authenticity has been closely tied to worth. This is specifically relevant within the historical context of mass society where rapid developments in technology (and the resultant mass production of indistinguishable goods) has produced the threat of being faceless or anonymous (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Berger, 1972). Procuring authentic products as markers of a unique and differentiated self has, therefore, become essential. This is facilitated by, "a newer and truer consumer culture of target niche marketing in which the forging of personal identity … [occurs] in world of plural, malleable, playful consumer identities, a process ruled over by the play of image, style, desire and signs" (Slater, 1997, p. 10). In addition, de Botton (2004) discusses how status, in consumer-driven societies has come to be seen primarily through material acquisitions. He argues that those able to acquire and display material possessions not only occupy a higher status than those unable to, but are also given more respect, attention, and "love" in the worldly sense (de Botton, 2004). Similarly, Berger (1972) asserts that "those who lack the power to spend money become literally faceless" (p. 143). The construction of authenticity as desirable, therefore, both contributes to, and is produced by, this dynamic.

#### *7.2.1.2. Longevity*

In addition to indicating quality and rarity, authentic raw materials are also closely linked to the notion of longevity. In other words, the use of authentic core resources means that the final products purchased would be durable and the positive effect of purchasing the brand would be long lasting. This construction plays out in two different ways. Firstly, more

obvious references to the durability of the actual products are commonly asserted by brands selling wooden, leather or linen products:

> Freedom of Movement: *The goal of the collective is to design products that last a lifetime…It is not only the raw, vintage look of Freedom of Movement leather that attracts discerning consumers, but also the longevity of the final products.*
>
> The Hall Collection: *Choosing quality products that have a long life, leaves a lighter impact on the earth and its precious natural resources. Our hand-made mattresses are made to last a lifetime and our fine cotton linens will be enjoyed for years.*
>
> Pierre Cronje: *All… pieces carry a lifetime quality and structural guarantee.*
>
> Jekyll and Hide: *[We] ensure we create products that are lifelong partners in the travels and adventures of life.*
>
> Jane Sews: *Made from the best materials to truly stand the test of time… because [of] its inherent nature to change and age rich over time... Own long-lasting leather. Own #Leatherwithintegrity.*
>
> Meraki Jewellery Design*: Each piece is designed to age with grace.*

Again, brands differentiate between that which is natural and therefore authentic, and that which is synthetic, chemical, manufactured and artificial and therefore inauthentic. These quotes stress that buying these almost always very expensive items would be a "once off" concern, because they would continue to fulfil your needs for years to come. The last two quotes take this one step further suggesting they will improve with age, taking on further appeal than they originally had. The emphasis on authenticity in this construction highlights that not only is the product desirable, but it is the sensible and optimal choice. This is a surprising return to the more traditional use of advertising which foregrounded a product's features and its functionality. Furthermore, consumers who choose these brands, in turn, are positioned as rational and utilitarian subjects, able to recognise the need for, and discern, authentic quality that would provide value for years. This notion of investment is available to the wealthy, but not the poor.

The more abstract interpretation of this construction refers to the ways in which the brands construct themselves as providing more than just a durable product, but as being integral to creating a pleasurable and wholesome lifestyle. Although most of the brands suggested this

idea in subtle ways, it was most prevalently expressed by île de pain, a company that sold products that are, ironically, very obviously perishable, such as edible goods.

> île de pain: *We have consciously chosen to showcase the daily work of the kitchen, patisserie and bakery, encouraging guests to witness the preparation of our bread and café dishes…*
>
> île de pain: *Each vibrant, flavourful dish is designed to nourish and uplift body, mind and spirit.*

These quotes stress that the food or baked goods in and of themselves, although clearly the main product, are not the only thing on sale. In addition to delicious food, what is offered is, firstly, the unique opportunity to experience the artistry of bread making and secondly, the long term effects of eating good produce: physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. Both of these prolong the value of the basic product, making it a long lasting and influential experience. This marks a shift of focus from the quality of a product to the identity benefits of consumption by specifically selling a particular form of subjectivity. Within this construction, consumers who choose these brands are not only seen to be sensible or functional, but also proactive, self-caring and foresighted. Furthermore, similar to the previous discussion on authenticity and irony, these consumers are also positioned as both sophisticated and cultured.

In all of the above examples, what is being sold is not an everyday, consumable object, but rather a long-term and valuable investment. This idea was clearly expressed in Berger's (1972) seminal work *Ways of Seeing*, where he describes the process of gaining value through "losing" money:

> *It proposes to each of us that we transform ourselves, or our lives, by buying something more. This more, it proposes, will make us in some way richer - even though we will be poorer by having spent our money* (Berger, 1972, p. 125).

What is suggested is that by choosing one of these artisanal products, you are trading your money for more value than it originally provided you, as the product is both less common and more permanent than the money itself. This reflects an overall trend in marketing associated with the move from Fordist to post-Fordist values and the related shift of focus from the traditional functionality and utility of products to how they could improve your life more broadly in terms of glamour, pleasure and wellbeing (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Featherstone,

2007; Mathur, 2014; Slater, 1997). This, furthermore, highlights the shift from fulfilling "needs" to producing "wants" that occurred in consumer culture in the late 1920's (Klein, 2000).

The conflation of needs and wants that occurs in increasingly consumer driven societies is explored in depth by James (2007) in his book Affluenza. James (2007) asserts that "[materialism] replaces our true needs with confected wants. We *need* emotional security or to be part of a community, we only *want* a newer iPod or car" (p. 209). He goes on to stress that over two thirds of middle class people living in developed countries with strong consumerist values (specifically Britain and Australia) hold the opinion that they are currently unable (and may never be able) to afford all the things that they really need. He suggests that this highlights "how widespread the confusion has become between wants and needs" (James, 2007, p. 52). Rather than locating this problem at an individual level, it needs to be emphasised that these ideas can be seen to originate from what is recognised, valued and rewarded in specific societies. In other words, if respect and worth is awarded according to acquirement of traditionally defined "wants", it is inevitable that they will come to be experienced as "needs", since the acknowledgement and care of others is indeed a very significant human need. This reiterates de Botton's (2004) articulation of status anxiety, explored earlier, specifically his assertion that:

> *Once food and shelter have been secured, the predominant impulse behind our desire to succeed in the social hierarchy may lie not so much with the goods we can accrue or the power we can wield, as with the amount of love we stand to receive as a consequence of high status. Money, fame and influence may be valued more as tokens of - and as a means to - love rather than as ends in themselves.*

In this sense, the search for authenticity becomes an essential human goal and, more specifically, that achievement of this ideal needs to be demonstrated externally for others to recognise and acknowledge, through the display of material acquisitions.

### 7.2.2. Authentic Individuality

The second construction of authenticity, *authentic individuality*, is stressed through the "one-of-a-kind" or unique nature of product designs. This follows closely from the focus on rare raw materials and extends to include that the final product, too, should be scarce, unusual and exceptional. This construction emphasised two main ideas- that the products being sold are

exclusive or limited; and that they have been individually tailored for your specialised needs and desires as a consumer. Overall, this discourse constructs authenticity as uniqueness, specifically defined as different from others (Ferrara, 1998).

This discourse featured prominently across the data set with all but two companies not explicitly referring to these ideas in some ways. Most of the brands sampled made some explicit reference to exclusivity, suggesting that their designs were authentic because they were limited and only a select few buyers would have the opportunity to own that specific design. In other words, exclusivity has been closely linked to the idea of uniqueness, specifically in terms of difference. If only a few of each product is produced, the chance of "sameness" (and hence inauthenticity) is reduced. Here words like "small run collections" (Jane Sews), "few of a kind" and "each is unique" were commonly used.

> FOUND. Collection*: To keep our collection authentic and exclusive, most of our items are few of a kind and only available once-off.*
>
> Jenna Clifford: *true objects of unique joy can never be mass-produced and for this reason we limit the production of our designs.*
>
> Klomp Ceramics: *she creates one-of-a-kind porcelain and stoneware pieces … All Klomp Ceramics items are unique, handmade stoneware pieces. Each piece is made and glazed by hand adding to its individual organic quality and character.*
>
> Blu Betty: *We eschew mass consumerism and prefer to be "artisanal" in context and offering… you are getting a product which is limited in production…*
>
> Jane Sews: *[it has] the ability to develop a beautiful patina and character making each piece unique... We do not outsource or mass produce.*

These quotes stress that authenticity exists in direct opposition to that which is mainstream or mass produced. In other words, authenticity was perceived in relation to individuality, being separate from and unlike others. This draws on what Ferrara (1998) referred to as *immediate authenticity*. He suggested that, from this perspective, a person's (or in this case a brand's and product's) qualities that distinguish or differentiate them from others are the features that make them unique and authentic. In other words, *immediate authenticity* can be viewed as a sum of all one's "differences" minus their "sameness". Furthermore, this discourse constructs authenticity as actively opposing mass production, homogeneity and conformity and instead endorsing a "realm of niche markets where consumers achieve distinction through specialized

identities and lifestyles" (Johnston & Taylor, 2008, p. 947). These ideas are more fully explored in the second part of the discourse, detailed below.

Closely linked to the notion of exclusivity was the idea that these bands were authentic because their products are custom made for specific clients. The key term representing this construction is "bespoke"- something that is produced specially to order. Most of the brands in this sample offered this "bespoke" option. Through this discourse, the authenticity of a product is constructed through individualised creation of something that is "custom-made, to measure, for you". This extends beyond the notion of limited exclusivity, to include emphasis on the particularity of a design suited for your specific needs and desires.

> Jenna Clifford: *Each piece has to be a masterpiece and feel totally unique. What corresponds with you may not correspond with your neighbour and we recognise the beauty and power of personalisation.*
>
> The Hall Collection: *The way we choose to sleep is intensely personal. This means the mattress you choose needs to be made according to your specific body type and needs.*
>
> Meraki Jewellery Design*: Each piece … serves as an affirmation of each wearer's personal style.*
>
> Blu Betty: *We strive for authenticity, quality and individuality in design and execution…allowing you to bring out your own individuality.*

Again this emphasises Ferrara's argument that our differences are key to our sense of authenticity. Since we are different to others, what we own, too, should be different to what others own. More specifically, the merchandise that you choose needs to fully represent *who you are* as a person. In this way the product both adds to, and becomes a representation of, the individual's "true self". In other words, here personal authenticity is expressed through personal style and individual consumption choices.

> Jenna Clifford: *We strive to capture an individual's essence through our custom design service… We code into our designs symbolic representations of you, your life, your dreams and aspirations. Every design pays tribute to you as a unique individual.*
>
> Freedom of Movement: *The name hails from the brand's aim of embodying a spirit of freedom through encouraging consumers to live in a way that reflects their true*

*identities. Each Freedom of Movement product has its own identity, and corresponds to a larger lifestyle/image embodied by either The Benjamin, The Ralph, or The Ted range, with each hoping to resonate with a different type of customer.*

Pierre Cronje: *Both our contemporary and heritage furniture celebrate the unique; reflecting individual style and showcasing the singular character of wood.*

This idea is strongly linked to what Moore (2002) describes as "second person authenticity" or "authenticity of experience". According to Moore's typology, this articulation of authenticity emphasises the audience's reception of the product or artwork, particularly accessing the degree to which it accurately or fully depicts themselves, their life or their experiences. From this perspective, authenticity develops through an interaction of individuals and things. In other words, "it emerges from the alignment of the listener's [consumer's] experiences of life with the aesthetic performance on offer [in this case, conspicuous consumption]" (Funk, 2015, p. 20).

This notion is further emphasised by another integral aspect of this narrative: the individual clients' inclusion in the design process. Bespoke creations offer the consumer the unique experience to be intimately involved in developing and choosing their personalised item, and hence are afforded the opportunity to see themselves as co-creators of the end product that they purchase.

Pierre Cronje: *Our bespoke designs offer clients the opportunity of full custom work and the ability to collaborate and work with our design teams in developing their unique solid wood investment pieces.*

Jenna Clifford: *It is only natural that people should be involved in that process to produce pieces that are uniquely special to them.*

These ideas closely reflect the labour practice of "consumer coproduction" which became common in the early 21st century with the rise of advanced capitalism (Dant, 2003; Schiller, 2010). This refers to the practice whereby customers are drawn into the production process by performing various types of "work" (which can include anything from featuring in media output to generating user comments online), although these forms of work tend not to be acknowledged as labour. This can be further framed by the concept of "immaterial labour" which Lazzarato (1996) refers to as "the labour that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (p. 132). In this case specifically, consumers contributed

intellectual labour during the design process and this was framed as beneficial to the client as it added significant expressive value to the item produced, and extended the worth of the consumption experience itself. Furthermore, many brands' websites featured "client testimonial" sections where the consumers shared their (generally positive) experiences of being involved in the production of their bespoke items. In this last example, the consumers' narratives become the primary form of "authentic advertising" used by brands, an idea that was discussed earlier in Chapter 5 and will be returned to in the final discourse below. Banet-Weiser (2012), Dant (2003) and Schiller (2010) highlight the importance of recognising and unpacking the implications of these changes in technology and practices. Banet-Weiser (2012) asserts that inclusion of consumers in the labour process has two concurrent and conflicting effects:

> *… it both tightens the hold of the corporation over the consumer (in that the consumer is now performing labour with no compensation) and also reveals the contradictions within the structure of "informationalized capitalism," by loosening some of the control from the corporation as far as determining the final product* (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 42).

The Pierre Cronje and Jenna Clifford quotes, above, reiterate the idea mentioned in the previous discourse that the purchase being made is of a long lasting experience, rather than merely a useful object, and thus differentiates between the functional and expressive value of goods, specifically framing "authentic" products as having identity value. Furthermore, involvement in the process highlights the deep connection between the designers or manufacturers, the clients and the items produced and there appears to be shared ownership of the design- the product authentically represents both the consumer and the creator. In other words, the brands develop "by 'engaging' consumers and building 'authentic' relationships with these consumers" (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 43). These points are more fully encapsulated by the third discourse explored below.

### 7.2.3. Authentic Artisans

The third discourse *authentic artisans* emphasises that the individuals involved in designing, manufacturing or producing these artisanal products are, themselves, authentic, original and unique creatives. In addition to identifying and representing individual consumers' personal selves, personalities and values through the products, all of the brands sampled explicitly

stressed that those individuals who "make up" the brand shared the values and beliefs that the brand stood for. In this sense, a company's image was only as strong as the individuals within it, and the authenticity of the goods produced relied heavily on these individuals maintaining this brand image.

> Jane Sews: *This is a story sewn by honest hands speaking to a simpler way of living.*

This construction was seen in a number of different ways. Firstly, it was consistently emphasised that the people creating the brand and its products chose this line of work for "the love of the craft". All of the brands sampled consistently emphasised the artistry involved in the production of their specific items, and hence could only be made by true artisans: creative people who were drawn to becoming highly skilled in a niche area because they were zealous about this specific craft. In fact, many stressed that this was not work at all: it was passion. In other words, the "authentic" artisan is constructed in direct contrast to the undifferentiated and alienated Marxist worker, which actively represses the underlying reality of sweatshop labour (Klein, 2000).

> Klomp Ceramics: *[It's] about doing what you love and remaining as honest and authentic as possible.*

> Sir Thomas Brewing Co: *True to our motto to make real beer the natural way. Genuine, with love.*

> île de pain: *It is our intention to share our enthusiasm and love for food and life with others – these are the qualities that attract so many people to île de païn…[this] for us, means freedom, happiness, abundance, and the ability to be authentic.*

> Meraki Jewellery Design: *[may-rah-kee] (adjective): This is a word that modern Greeks often use to describe doing something with soul, creativity, or love.*

The romantic notions of love, passion and dreams, and their close ties to authentic selves, were commonly mentioned throughout the data in this thesis, as a whole, and was more directly discussed within the in the previous chapter. From the above quotes it is clear that the "personalities'" of the individuals that form the brand are essential to how it will be received, and that there are more favourable and desirable "personalities" than others. More

specifically, that the customers will feel drawn to people (and hence their brands) if they exude "positive" attributes such as being joyful, enthusiastic and free. Furthermore, when putting a little bit of "soul" into their creations, their products become more valuable- they become personal connections. Here these ideas closely relate to what Beverland, Lindgreen, and Vink (2008) refer to as moral authenticity. In their study, participants identified products as being authentic if they were produced through authentic means (process) and, most importantly, by an individual who was passionately committed to their craft. This is supported by the local examples explored here who actively constructed themselves as avid lovers of their art, intricately involved with the entire process of design and production. In addition, it was stressed that the products created or promoted by the brands are true representations of the artists' personal selves- that their creations signify "little bits of themselves".

> Klomp Ceramics*: It's an exquisite expression of my deepest, most personal self. To make something with my own hands that tells a story feels so sacred and ancient to me. A privilege... To create and to live go hand-in-hand…Each piece is part of my story, and Klomp Ceramics is a collection of this unique narrative.*
>
> Meraki Jewellery Design: *meraki [may-rah-kee] (adjective)…when you put "something of yourself" into what you're doing.*

Both of these quotes are significant because they stress that the whole conceptualisation of the brand revolves around the idea of authenticity- that the brand or company is a true reflection of themselves personally, or of who they are as people. This can be seen in the words they have used for the brands' names. Klomp Ceramics literally has the owner and artist's surname embedded in the brand name, and Meraki Jewellery Design has chosen a Greek word that directly translates this idea. In this way these brands cease to be seen as brands, they become extensions of the creators who can then connect with their customers on a more intimate level, as acquaintances. This idea was similarly expressed in Beverland, Lindgreen, and Vink's study (2008). They found that consumers who evaluated a product's authenticity "morally" tended to reserve their support for brands they felt closely reflected their "personal moral values". This highlights one of the ways in which consumers are often inclined to view brands as having unique personal qualities or human characteristic (Moulard, Garrity & Rice, 2015) and seek to form a relationship with the brands that they choose. Goffman (1959) suggests that people feel a compelling desire to show others "who they are"

in their everyday life. More specifically, he argues that people actively pursue a consistent set of social behaviours (including consumptive practices) as a means of "communicating the self to others" (Schembri, Merrilees & Kristiansen, 2010, p. 624). If consumers are "using consumption to define and communicate who they are, consumers choose the product they perceive as having a desirable (brand) personality" (Schembri, Merrilees & Kristiansen, 2010, p. 625). This tendency explains the necessity of a clear articulation of artisans' and, in turn, their brands' (or vice versa) broad values which were expressed in a number of different ways (and on all of the platforms) by many of the companies in this sample.

### 7.2.4. Authenticity as Ethics

As seen above, many of these local brands were actively committed to both aligning and articulating their personal and brand values. Whilst exploring, more fully, the specific values that were raised and discussed by these brands, it became clear that this construction of authenticity was about "ethics". This connection has a long history and has been discussed in numerous ways by a variety of philosophers and theorists including Sartre (1983), Taylor (1991), Ferrara (1993), and Salmela and Mayer (2009), to name but a few. This was one of the most common and predictable discourses that was operating within the texts, with most brands being actively invested in positioning themselves as principled and responsible, honest and transparent, caring and "woke", and most importantly, concerned with the wellbeing not only of their customers, but also of the broader society and future generations. Through this discourse, these small brands were actively constructing themselves in opposition to, and morally better than, the "corporate giants" who took no cognisance of anyone's interests but their own.

One of the key ways in which this differentiation was maintained was through the advertising techniques used, or rather the seeming lack thereof. More specifically, none of the companies in this sample used "traditional" forms of marketing (television, billboard or print media advertisements), instead, all of the companies relied solely on their websites, social media accounts and word of mouth (for example at farm stalls/markets or through client testimonials) marketing to communicate their product and brand image to the public. As Blu Betty asserts: *"for the most part we prefer to market our products through our social media platforms…we prefer to be a smaller player in the fashion industry in SA and grow organically with our brand"*. This deliberate choice, in itself, positions these brands as a

more desirable alternative to the larger companies whose growth is not "organic" (i.e. authentic) because they manipulate people for profits and homogenise the market. One of the common alternate, and apparently more "organic", options that these brands have opted for is the informative interview (either in print or "mini film" in/on specialised lifestyle magazines or online blogs) where they share their passion for their respective crafts. In Durban, one film company particularly involved in producing these types of interviews is called Tomfoolery. A quote from their "manifesto", below, clearly aligns with "small brand" values and reiterates authenticity as an ethical imperative.

> *From the outside Tomfoolery is a production team but the truth is it's something more, and hopefully something different. What's locked up in this clumsy website is an idea, an honest expression of searching and a hunger for a different way to live life. A way for individuals to have the freedom to* ***be themselves****, whilst also living for something bigger than themselves [emphasis in original].*

As was previously explored in Chapter 5, moving away from traditional promotion techniques, and instead using more creative and authentic means to "tell their brand's story", has now become a readily used marketing strategy for all businesses, including the large multinational corporations. As alluded to earlier, these new "authentic" advertising techniques are particularly important because they allow both the brands, themselves, and their consumers to be positioned as ethically responsible, culturally sensitive and morally superior. As Banet-Weiser (2012) similarly asserts, "it is about creating and supporting a shifted manifestation of the citizen consumer, one who is critical of marketing and its unrealistic norms and is invited to develop this narrative in conjunction with corporate culture" (p. 42). This is further developed by closely aligning the brand with "socially conscious" values.

When looking more closely at the specific values that brands either explicitly or implicitly self-identified as holding, two main categories stood out from the data: firstly, a personal commitment to ethical environmental responsibility, and secondly, an active engagement in philanthropy and empowerment of traditionally marginalised groups. This self-important quote from Jenna Clifford highlights both of these main aspects simultaneously.

> Jenna Clifford: *…the company has made a considerable mark in their philanthropic endeavours which touch human and animal lives… Jenna is never shy to use her business as a platform to make the case for women's liberation and equal rights.*

This first aspect, personal commitment to ethical environmental responsibility, was a key common value amongst this sample. As global warming, and general environmental decay, continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing our time (Klein, 2014), brands (on both a small and local or large and multinational scale) attempt to respond to this widespread unease by stressing that they too share this concern. Brands tended to focus on how their materials were sourced and treated, emphasising that care had been taken to use as natural and "environmentally friendly" means as possible, as this was not only better for the customers personally, but also better for the long term protection of natural resources.

> The Hall Collection*: All the natural materials are sustainably produced, ethically sourced and hold the EcoLabel certification. This ensures that [we] protect the health of our clients and the environment…We believe we have a responsibility to be kind to nature and true to ourselves.*
>
> Pierre Cronje: *Responsible sourcing, sustainable timber.*
>
> Jane Sews: *It's kinder on the environment: Vegetable tanning uses only organic materials to produce rich natural colours. On the other hand, Chrome tanning requires toxic chemicals within the dyeing process.*

The first quote clearly indicates the direct connection that is being made between ethical responsibility and notions of authenticity, or, more specifically, that not being environmentally friendly would be inauthentic or not true to who "they are". In this discourse some of the key ideas included sustainability, being kind to nature or attempting to optimise their ecological footprint. One of the possible reasons why this value appeared so persistently, links back to the discourse of *material authenticity*, discussed earlier, that strongly emphasised that the core resources used to make the products were "all natural". This has two consequential effects: firstly, if the materials used are all organically available natural resources obtained from the physical environment, they are exhaustible. It therefore needed to be emphasised that they were doing everything in their power not to selfishly and unnecessarily deplete these naturally occurring gems from the environment. This also reiterates the necessity of longevity of the products that was emphasised in the earlier discourse. Secondly, if the value and desirability of the product was located in the natural

authenticity of the raw materials, the procedures used could neither taint the sourced material currently being made into products, nor damage the remaining naturally occurring materials yet to be gathered. The words used to highlight these ideas, again, suggest that this was not a company or brand but rather a real person or group of people who deliberately ensured that their choices and decisions were ethical.

In addition to environmental concern, many of the brands also emphasised their dedication to social change. This aspect focussed more on practices involving people, including those who sourced the raw materials and those who manufactured the produce. Several brands implicitly stressed that practices in which people were poorly treated would inauthenticate the end product as it would "taint" the pure or unadulterated nature of the raw materials and, thus, would not be truly representative of either the brand or consumer identity. Again, this discourse closely aligns consumer products with displays of personal authenticity.

> Jenna Clifford: *Because diamonds should be as pure as those who wear them, all diamonds sourced adhere to the strict regulations of the Kimberley Process to ensure that no conflict diamonds make their way into our jewellery. You can feel confident that the quality and ethical purity of our diamonds carries Jenna's personal promise.*
>
> Freedom of Movement: *Fiercely passionate about their beloved South Africa… [we were] resolved to boost the local economy through job creation and skill empowerment.*
>
> *Pierre Cronje: Pierre Cronje has indentured more budding craftsmen than the rest of the Western Cape furniture industry combined.*
>
> île de pain: *We are committed to upholding heritage and embracing evolution, supporting principled producers and local suppliers, developing people and creating community.*
>
> Jane Sews: *Linking arms with local makers has enabled Jane Sews to be part of building into community.*

Some of the key ideas that stand out from these quotes include a focus on sharing of skills as means of attempting to address South Africa's serious unemployment problem, and connecting with local artisans as a means of "community building". Both these aspects are particularly common characteristics of the new move to "socially responsible" brands who

"#choosecare". In this way the brands, and the people that create them, are constructed as principled and consumers who choose to purchase and display these brands are able to show the world that they too are morally superior. This stresses the link between consumption practices and individuals' subjectivity.

Although many of the companies stressed their commitment to both environmental sustainability and alleviating social injustices, very few companies provide much detail about how they attempt to achieve this. The one company that is particularly invested in conscientiously documenting *how* they go about this in practice, is Jane Sews. In addition to their numerous other references to material, individual and artisanal authenticity (explored throughout the previous discourses above), Jane Sews also actively construct themselves as ethically authentic by repeatedly drawing on notions of transparency, honesty and care. Through a series of "mini films", released via their Facebook page, all depicting the manufacturers (the *"hearts and hands that make"*) responsible for the products that they sell, Jane Sews *"hope[s] to inspire you to consider the process behind every product"*. This brand repetitively asserts the need to *"reconnect the maker to the wearer"* and argues the need for the full chain effect of the manufacturing and consumption process to become visible. This again, reiterates the idea that an unclear or dishonest (and hence inauthentic) process of operations will taint or reduce the authenticity of the final garment.

Three of these mini-films are particularly relevant. In both 2016 and 2017, Jane Sews released "Black Friday Done Differently" films, each dedicated to those people who work "behind the scenes" of their brand (in the factories) and pledge a "generous" donation as an indication of their respect for, and appreciation of, the hard work that these craftsmen do. Black Friday (the colloquial name given to the Friday that falls in the fourth week of November every year and marks the beginning of "Christmas Shopping Season", originally in the US (Swilley & Goldsmith, 2013) but now commonly "celebrated" in many countries across the world, including South Africa), a day dedicated to intensified consumption, was specifically chosen by Jane Sews, to starkly contrast the lived experiences of different groups of people. In 2016, they focussed on the factory where their shoes are made, presenting images of the craftsmen in action with the following text displayed throughout the video:

> *Jane sews aims to reconnect the maker to the wearer. That's why we are donating 10% of our Black Friday profits to benefit the makers behind our products. The*

> *drought has led to drastic increase in food prices. Industrial wages have not caught up with this inflation, significantly affecting factory workers. We pledge to provide Grocery vouchers for ever maker. This is where you play a vital role. Make a purchase with Jane Sews today and take care of someone this holiday. Let's #choosecare.*

In 2017, the clothing factory was featured and a similar message appeared:

> *Every Black Friday, Jane Sews donates profits to one of our factories. This year, we visit our Durban-based clothing factory. Number of garments produced per week: 350. Percentage of female workers: 90% women. People involved in making each product: 10. If you own a [lists numerous named clothing styles/garments]. These are the people that made your clothes.*

The film then goes on to show a series of different artisans each holding a sign that reads "I made your clothes" and then continues:

> *The majority of their day is spent seated behind their machines. Our plan. To provide a cushioned back support for* ***every*** *maker's chair. Here is where you play a part. This Black Friday, purchase any Jane Sews item and give somebody a little more support. Quite literally. Let's #choosecare.*

What becomes clear in these stylistic, beautifully captured and emotion-filled videos, is that Jane Sews, in the name of honesty and transparency and in order to continually reiterate their position as ethically authentic, is required to reveal that "Jane", in fact, does not sew. At least not on a daily basis for her own company. As shown through the film, that demanding, repetitive, and low paying task is left to poor women of colour, who are sitting for long hours in factories, using chairs without proper back support. These videos, presented as a *"real behind the scenes look into where your clothes come from"* appear to raise more questions than provide answers. Why do the workers not have cushions? Why are their wages not raised in accordance with inflation rates? And most importantly, why are customers being encouraged to spend more on a single day of the year to address these plights? If Jane Sews was as concerned and grateful as they profess to be, surely these basic requirements would be an everyday expectation and not singular charitable acts of good will. Furthermore, these films do little *"to connect the makers and wearers"*- an aim they dutifully echo on every platform. Although their customers can *see* some of the people who manufacture their

products, these people remain (mostly) nameless and voiceless and in no way are the makers themselves connected to those that wear their hard work.

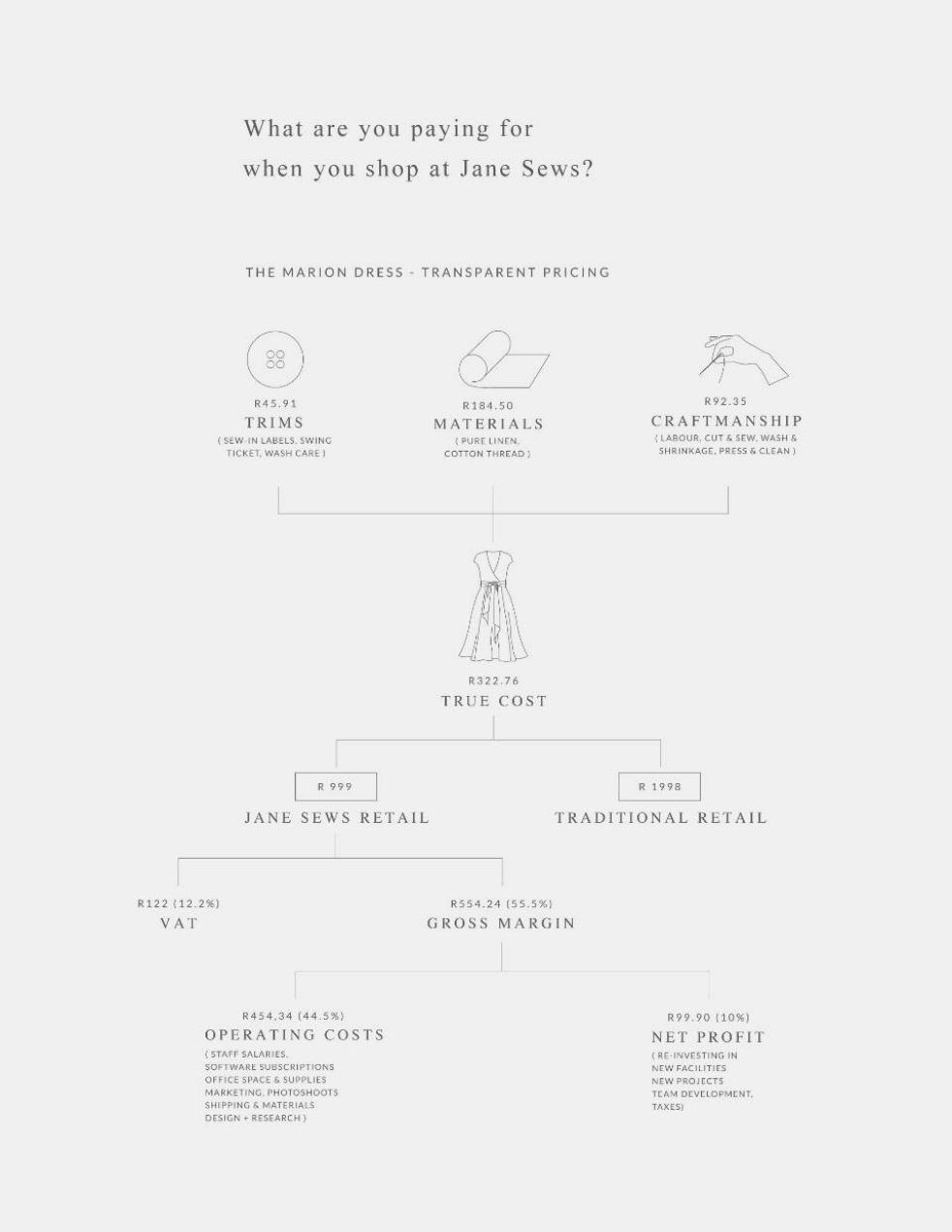


*Figure 32:* Breakdown of the major costs incurred in the making of the "Marion Dress" by Jane Sews (Jane Sews, n.d.).

These "meet the makers" films are just one of the ways in which Jane Sews enacts their authentically ethical image. In addition, Jane Sews has introduced a "Name the Price" section on their website. Here, customers are offered the option of using a number of different "discount codes" (for selected items- "sometimes we love a product so much we overproduce it"- the overruns) which allow them to pay between 60-80% of the listed price depending on

what they feel is fair. In addition, they have detailed a "transparent" breakdown of the major costs it takes to make one of their most popular items of clothing, the Marion Dress (see Figure 32 above). This move toward open and honest disclosure is the "in-action" practice of what the owner asserts in their film, Choose Care:

> *I would love our customers to know where their products really come from and I am challenged to be more transparent about how much our products cost to make by revealing more of the process.*

By seemingly "living what they believe" or "practicing what they preach", this company creates the impression that they are genuine and truthful people who respect both their customers and their staff.

Unfortunately, taking a closer look at what is represented as "transparent", again, raises more questions than provides answers. Who are the "labour"? Who receives the staff salaries? Do the "labour" get paid a salary in addition to the R92.35 allocated to them per dress? Is this R92.35 given to each "labourer" or is this shared across the total number of "labourers" it takes to make the dress? And, perhaps, most notably absent: Where is "Jane's" personal profit reflected? Even the contrast in terminology used to distinguish "staff" and "labour" reflects the inherent inequality and dehumanisation with capitalist systems where those who own the "means of production" are able to "extract the surplus value" from the workers (Antonio & Cohen, 2008, p. 103). What is especially alarming in this narrative is not that this is *still* the predominant form of "social contract" (this is so widespread it has come to be experienced as natural), but rather that this continues despite explicit and repetitive assertion that they are different, and that it continues *even in the name of* difference. Most striking is that in contrast to "Craftmanship", marketing and photoshoots fall under "operating costs" which is allocated R454.34 of the total dress cost. This gives the distinct impression that the company is more invested in producing videos that flaunt their craftsmen, than paying them.

In March 2016, Jane Sews developed a slightly longer short film called "Choose Care", produced by Tomfoolery, in which the founder of the company documents her thoughts and feelings about ethical consumption and the personal role that she sees for herself within this process:

> *I think consumption is a necessity but it doesn't have to be mindless or harmful, so I am questioning my own responsibility towards the environment and my accountability towards our customers…*

She goes on to provide a detailed account of how necessary it is "to slow down and really engage with the items that we bring into our lives" by considering how they were made, where they come from and how they come to hold value. Again, it is emphasised that the Craftsmen who manufacture the clothing are the ones to be most respected and valued in the company.

> *I am stirred to go further behind the scene to move all the way through the supply chain and kind of end up at the source. To highlight some of the single strands in the intricate web and consider the makers who are the heartbeat of this industry.*

It ends by making an indirect plea for consumers to commit more fully to ethical consumption, or her understanding thereof.

> *I don't have all the right answers but I am sure of this: If we can acknowledge that each purchase that we make is a meaningful act that has a chain reaction of consequences, then we can be empowered to open our eyes and our hearts to the idea that there are physical human hands that touch the things that we wear and those hands are lives and those lives matter.*

This quote stresses an extremely valid point: developing awareness of, and reflection on, the processes of consumption in which we often unknowingly engage is an essential (first step) to social change. At the same time, the video features beautifully crafted artistic images of herself wearing Jane Sews clothes. The severe contrast between the aesthetic appeal of the stylistic presentation of their process, and the moralistic message of caring about the "real process", is stark. Furthermore, at no point does she explicitly mention either her own, or the customers, continued role in making the "lives" she mentions more difficult through this "*chain reaction of consequences*", nor does she suggest we do any more than "acknowledge" that the maker's existence "matters" by opening "*our eyes and our hearts*".

Here, authenticity is explored in two interrelated ways. Firstly, the films purport to "tell the truth", specifically with regards to the conditions under which "real people", "truly live". Secondly, the films both include and evoke deep feelings or "real" emotion. This deep and heartfelt disclosure of emotion (*"I have really strong feelings towards how I want to treat*

*people and things")* is particularly important as it highlights the way in which both authenticity and the structural violence (to which she vaguely alludes) become represented as an emotional experience (Adorno, 1973). In other words, they become reduced to something that one "just feels" very strongly, rather than framed as a social relationship within which one's (particularly those with power) choices and actions have "real" or tangible consequences for others. Paradoxically, this construction of authenticity allows social injustices to be *felt as real* without fully recognising, or engaging with, what this *reality means*. This is captured in Jane Sews' invitation to the "caring consumer" to make additional purchases to alleviate the suffering of those producing the consumer goods, while in this very invitation further naturalising the exploitation of labour which creates that suffering in the first place.

After the film was released, the company produced a range of plain t-shirts featuring the words "choose care" or "la femme" (which could be purchased in either "white" or "milk", retailing at R450), arguing that caring for both the "makers'", and other marginalised women, involves supporting the company and buying more clothes.

> *This National Women's Month we launched the Choose Care Collection to celebrate two things that matter to us – embracing womanhood and fostering a culture of compassion. For every Choose Care product bought, 10% percent of your purchase will be donated to Woman For Woman. Let's #choosecare.*

Through these films, and related consumables, the brand offers customers the prospect of making "others" lives better, and, as a result, the opportunity to buy the identity of "caring for workers" as a bonus, which is not usually provided in the product. Jane Sews takes advantage of the process of revealing these poor conditions, while actively distancing themselves from, and disclaiming responsibility for, the cause of them. In other words, through this "transparent" revelation they both normalise and mystify this structure (Marcuse, 1964) whilst offering the consumer the fantasy option of symbolically addressing these social ills by spending more money. In this sense, within consumer activism ideology there is no conceptualisation for changing structural conditions, they merely propose that one changes themselves in relation to these conditions.

The aim of this section is not to provide the basis for a witch hunt (this I will pursue on my own time), after all, the owner makes it clear that she does not "consider [her]self to be an activist at all but…". It is, however, essential to note the damaging and marginalising effect that "good intentions" like these can have. This "Learn about ethical fashion and grab some new pretty things for your wardrobe" ('Jane Sews shopping experience and exhibition', 2016) approach to challenging inequality, now extremely common amongst large and small brands alike, is fundamentally problematic. From this consumption centric world view, consumption becomes the key means of achieving a sense of value in life, or is as Sklair (2001) argues, "at the centre of meaningful existence" (p. 5), and shopping becomes the primary practice through which issues of social justice may be engaged. Johnston and Taylor (2008) stress that the "ability of corporations to accommodate and capitalize on social dissent and alienation suggests the need to be sceptical of consumer-based strategies for social change". To what extent does this argument apply to smaller brands, particularly those who are seemingly dedicated to "making a difference"?

On one level, the example of Jane Sews' numerous endeavours at transparency could represent a well-intentioned (but arguably misguided) attempt to acknowledge the vital role that people (who usually remain unseen and unknown) play in the success of this company. Surely it is better than *not* recognising them? The beaming smiles of all the craftsmen featured in the films suggest that the answer is yes. Acknowledging them for their remarkable skill and talent, affording them deserved respect, and validating their worth, as both artisans and human beings, is absolutely essential. But surely so is a wage substantial enough to feed yourself and your family despite a rise in inflation; health care; adequate working conditions that include regular breaks, variation in tasks, and most certainly, a padded cushion for long hours of sitting at machines. Thus, on another deeper level, these films, presented as charming and charitable gestures, are nothing more than an insidious marketing scheme. As a result, they are therefore not only deeply problematic, but structurally violent, as they continue to exploit already marginalised people in a more subtle and complex way: their experiences are used to bolster the brand's image as caring, generous, fair and genuinely open. Through this, consumers are encouraged to continue to actively uphold a structure that systematically oppresses people based on race, class and gender, and no longer need to feel guilty or concerned about their direct participation in this process. In fact, they, like the brand, are allowed to experience themselves as altruistic, good people, who care for the less fortunate while doing it.

From this discussion it is clear that what initially appears to be a consideration of object authenticity also included a full, detailed and complex exploration of subject authenticity. These examples are important because they illustrate the way in which authenticity appears to be firmly engrained into the very fibre of the branded items. From the raw materials, through the selection, design and manufacturing processes, to the final "promotion" of (or rather lack thereof) the final product, the notion of authenticity is vigorously produced and maintained. Furthermore, these companies or businesses themselves, as a whole, including the people who own and work within them, are constructed as authentic, again reinforcing the idea that all they produce, too, will be authentic. In turn, by closely aligning themselves with these brands, consumers are able to maintain and perform their personal authenticity. On reflection, this seemingly natural form of authenticity appears to take a considerably large amount of time, effort and work. Not least of which is the work of manufacturing an "authentic" relationship between the "authentic consumer" and the "authentic producers", to deliberately mystify the material conditions of alienation required in order to produce these "authentic" commodities.

# Chapter 8:
# Conclusion

*"Without some degree of reflexivity any research is blind and without purpose"* (Flood, 1999, p. 35).

*"Self-reflexivity unmasks complex political/ideological agendas hidden in our writing"* (Richardson, 1994, p. 523).

*A researcher "appears not as an individual creative scholar, a knowing subject who discovers, but more as a material body through whom a narrative structure unfolds"* (Bruner, 1986, p. 150).

The analysis and discussion explored in the previous chapters highlight the complex web of interrelated, and often contradictory, discourses of authenticity constructed by numerous prominent brands in South Africa. This chapter will begin by providing a brief overview of the analytic framework developed through the previous chapters, highlighting some of the key insights and drawing attention to some possible recommendations that could be considered for future research. Finally, I will conclude with a personal reflection of my experiences of, and engagement with, the research process, highlighting my own role in the production of this work, and the significant ways in which I was, myself, shaped through this process.

## 8.1. Summary of Key Insights

Constructions of authenticity were particularly prevalent within both the technical aspects of the marketing strategies used, and the content presented within these endorsements. Furthermore, these discourses of personal authenticity have significant implications for the construction of identity for both those involved in the brand production and consumption, and the brands as a whole. In other words, these discourses, as deployed through this brand culture, produce particular kinds of subjects who experience themselves, relate to others, and engage with the world more broadly, in specific ways (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). Furthermore, through this analysis the thesis provides a critical discussion of the ways in which these discourses of authenticity work to produce and maintain (or challenge and subvert) ideologies and power relations that structure contemporary South African society.

Several key ideas stood out from the analysis. Firstly, discourses of authenticity played an essential role in shaping the marketing strategies used in both data sets. All of the brands in this sample chose to draw on marketing strategies that gave the appearance of being more "natural". In other words, all of the brands ensured that their marketing material did not "look like" advertising, in a deliberate attempt to distance themselves from the notions of superficiality, manipulation and "fake-ness" commonly associated with traditional marketing strategies. By choosing to use these "authentic" techniques the brands attempted to circumvent this cynicism by trying to construct a "real" and "personal" connection (Banet-Weiser, 2012) with the consumer as a means of mystifying the underlying instrumental economic relationship.

These brands drew on the narratives of "real people" to achieve this connection. The many discourses of personal authenticity that emerged from the content presented by these brands can be framed by exploring three interrelated overarching tensions that consistently re-emerged throughout the analysis. The first tension highlights the contradictory constructions of "natural" or "manufactured" authenticity. Throughout the data, authenticity was simultaneously discussed as being "naturally occurring" or pre-existing (Ferrara, 1998) and, conversely, as requiring rigorous work and change. For example, within the crafting authenticity brands, this tension can be illustrated through careful and detailed descriptions of *both* the rare and fine "raw", "natural" core materials used, *and* the rigorous and meticulous procedures used to process these materials.

The second tension that was established throughout the analysis was the contradiction between authenticity "for self" and authenticity "for others" (Goffman, 1959). Here individuals consistently constructed themselves as unique, different, original, and most importantly, differentiated from the anonymous mainstream mass. At the same time, however, individuals needed to perform this authenticity for the approval of others, paying close attention to the social recognition and status they received (de Botton, 2004). This tension was most noticeable in the discourses linking authenticity to both success and desirability. More specifically, notions of authenticity were concurrently used to challenge social expectations of what it means to be a successful or desirable person, while continuing to reinforce these both as legitimate social ideals. This tension, in particular, highlighted authenticity as a specific problem for femininity. Woman are continually striving to embody feminine subjectivities that are not primarily constructed by the expectations of others.

Advertising has identified and recognised these personal dilemmas and crises of contemporary subjectivity and exploited or mobilised them, in order to interpellate women more effectively into consuming subject positions.

The third tension emerged from the conflicting constructions of authenticity as a spontaneous, deeply felt, emotional and subjective experience, and authenticity as a vehicle for ethical, political or social change. Here individuals and brands tended to discuss authenticity as closely tied to the liberating experience or feeling of personal freedom which was assumed to be equivalent to, or a meaningful substitute for, broader social or structural change (Messner, 2002). In other words, authenticity was framed both as a key means of achieving personal emancipation, and as a useful way of helping others to feel empowered. This highlights how these discourses of authenticity function to personalise and individualise wellbeing and liberation in a way that dovetails with the overarching neoliberal ideological shift from social to individual responsibility. In this sense, "authenticity" loses its traditionally assumed critical leverage against social influence and coercion, and functions instead to produce "good" subjects of neoliberalism: motivated agents who are highly committed to their individualised lifestyle projects (Marcuse, 1964).

This final tension links back to the "authentic" techniques that produced and presented this content. It was particularly evident in the ways in which brands "co-opted" feminist ideals/agendas (Johnston & Taylor, 2008), again by choosing to feature "real people" and discuss "real issues", as a form of marketing. These brands were particularly adept at navigating the complexity of intersectional feminism (Crenshaw, 1989; Nash, 2008), exploiting the ways in which people are, always, simultaneously privileged and marginalised (for example featuring black women who were successful or famous, or plus-sized women who were white and beautiful). Here individuals could represent both the relatable and undermined ordinary person, and an inspirational role model for change. In other words, these brands carefully negotiated the boundary between "giving voice to the silenced" and reinforcing and maintaining the dominant neoliberal ideology, and the ideas and ideals that support this system. Through this, these brands were able to mystify their role in the reproduction of serious inequality, and simultaneously strengthen their position of power (Marcuse, 1964) by appearing to understand and share the burden of this marginalisation by constructing themselves as socially conscious, empathic and morally superior.

In summary, it is useful to reflect on Adorno's (1973) eloquent assertion that:

> *While the jargon [of authenticity] overflows with the pretense of deep human emotion, it is just as standardized as the world that it officially negates; the reason for this lies partly in its mass success, partly in the fact that it posits its message automatically, through its mere nature. Thus the jargon bars the message from the experience which is to ensoul it [sic]* (p. 6).

In this sense, discourses of authenticity present an attractive, aesthetic, but ultimately empty, offer. In other words, they offer the illusion of experienced autonomy, without substance (Washburn, 2007). More specifically in relation to this current analysis, the various elements discussed above work together to continuously conceal that these media are advertisements. In other words, these discourses mask that these media are deliberately constructed to link individuals' experience of themselves, specifically *their most authentic experience of themselves*, to an economic relation of commodity consumption. This is particularly innovative because it obscures the calculated economic transaction by presenting it as a liberating personal experience of empowerment and triumph over adversity, and a meaningful personal discovery and expression of the truth of the self. At the same time, it creatively makes this manipulation appear as its opposite: an act of defiance against conformity to external social pressures.

### 8.2. Possible Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis provides a small (and hopefully useful) glimpse into a research field that has a broad range of potential areas for further exploration. This is particularly relevant in the South African context where very little previous research has explored social constructions of personal authenticity. As was discussed above, the key focus of this study was to explore the discourses of authenticity represented in South African brand culture. Although it did provide a critical discussion of the subject positions into which individuals may be interpellated through these discourses, it does not claim to represent South African citizens in totality. Despite the broad range of data produced by "ordinary people" captured as part of this sample, by focussing on constructions specifically disseminated by brands, this study to a large degree explores discourses produced by representatives of the dominant ideology who have access to relative positions of power. This discussion is, therefore, particularly useful in providing a detailed account of the ways in which these systems of power are produced and maintained. Selection of a sample with a more nuanced focus on marginalised groups, with

data which is less deliberately or obviously mediated (but nevertheless still inevitably embedded within and produced) by this culture, however, may uncover alternate discourses of authenticity that were excluded, or remained concealed in this analysis (Parker, 1992).

Further research, therefore, could explore personal constructions of authenticity amongst South African people more generally, unpacking the ways in which the discourses used in everyday speech connect to, or diverge from, those explored in South African brand culture. More specifically, an essential area of exploration is the large groups of South Africans who are excluded from the arena of lifestyle consumption due to severe poverty. Here it would be important to discuss complex ways in which these individuals (in positions of extremely limited economic resources) negotiate and enact their identities within the context of consumer culture (Leclerc Madlala, 2004). It would also be useful to focus on the experiences of South Africans whose "true selves"' are already marginalised, disapproved of, or silenced. Although this thesis begins to uncover some of these complexities, as explored in relation to women above, discussing the constructions of authenticity amongst gender queer or transgendered individuals, for example, would prove a useful addition to the literature.

A final possible recommendation for future research could include an exploration of authenticity and trauma (Huber, 2012). More specifically, it could discuss the particular ways in which survivors of trauma grapple with experiencing authenticity, and how the discourses of authenticity produced (dis)empower or (dis)enable their self-understanding and engagement with others. Considering South Africa's history of violent colonial and racial domination, however, trauma cannot be assumed to be an individual issue alone, and research in this area would need to consider experiences of collective trauma (Collins, 2015). This specific recommendation regarding trauma arises from my ongoing process of reflexivity which will be detailed in my personal critical reflection below.

### 8.3. Reflection

One of the most important aspects of engaging in qualitative research is acknowledging how the "presence of the researcher in the research setting is unavoidable" (Holliday, 2002, p. 173), and more importantly to discuss the ways in which the researcher's role in the process, rather than an indication of lack (of objectivity, rationality, validity) is the central resource through which a complex, detailed and nuanced analysis can be produced (Finlay, 2002). From a social constructionist perspective broadly, the researcher is constructed as the author

of the analysis but in no way claims to produce or present a definitive or singular truth. Additionally, from a Foucauldian discourse analytic approach more specifically, it is important to note that all knowledge creation (including this particular research) is seen to be intricately connected to, and produced by, broader discourses and, as a result, the written material developed cannot be viewed as separate from, or evaluated without reference to, these discourses and discursive practices (Burr, 1995; Finlay, 2002; Willig, 2008). This, in turn, foregrounds the necessity of engaging in an ongoing process of self-reflection.

In this section I explore my own role in this research specifically discussing the dual means by which I both shaped, and was shaped by, the research process. This draws attention to the specificity of the analysis produced, based on my own subjectivity, emphasising how this would have been different if conducted by someone different. Here it is important to reflect on and critically discuss the ways in which my numerous and intersecting personal subject positions have influenced the findings explored in this thesis (Burr, 1995; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Willig, 2008). The concept of reflexivity is particularly important because it stresses the need to move beyond an acknowledgement of "bias", and include a focus on values and subject positions, specifically noting how these both influence, and are reciprocally refined through, engagement in the research process (Finlay, 2002; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Willig, 2008). Thus, it is also interesting to reflect on the ways in which, and reasons why, this process was personally challenging, and as a result, how I too was moulded through the process. This required an on-going and cyclical process of exploration, self-reflection and change in which I was continually looking back on the process, and on myself personally, moving to continually shifting places of self-awareness.

### 8.3.1. Process

One of the most challenging aspects about conducting this research was the elusiveness and fluidity of the construct under consideration. As was explored in the detailed historical background, the concept of authenticity simultaneously arose within several different disciplines, all of which drew on similar ideas but constructed the terms in alternate ways. More specifically, the paradox of authenticity made the discussion of this discourse more complex, as explicitly describing authenticity was seen to "inauthenticate" or negate its presence, but at the same time, it also needed to be declared and confirmed. In other words, as Funk (2015) asserts, "authenticity cannot be perceived in or for itself but can only be externally ascribed or observed as an effect of mediation" (p.13). What counts as authentic

when a great variety of things can be assessed using measures of authenticity, but authenticity itself is more often than not never fully described? In this sense, the individuals and brands featured were both *always* discussing authenticity and *never* discussing authenticity simultaneously.

In addition, as a result of this particularly "indescribable" quality associated with authenticity, all the discourses that rose from the texts were what individuals closely associated with their "real selves" but the real self itself, since "merely" a construction, always appeared just out of reach, unable to be fully captured by association. This is particularly common within a constructionist approach in general, where individuals regularly draw on complementary or contradictory frameworks of related ideas when describing their experiences or discussing themselves. What appeared to make this case especially complex is the degree to which authenticity is a commonly accepted and well-engrained social ideal, not only as *a* natural, truth but as *the most* real and important truth one holds. As Oprah Winfrey (2018) asserted in her recent Golden Globes acceptance speech "…what I know, for sure, is that speaking *your truth* is *the most* powerful tool we all have…" (as cited in Ryan, 2018). Furthermore, the extremely favourable associations made with authenticity, its undisputed positive value, made any critique or challenge complex and delicate. All of these factors made the discourses of authenticity extremely difficult to both identify and "hold onto" throughout the research process. This played out in numerous ways.

Firstly, finding data initially proved to be particularly difficult. After negative feedback responses to my research proposal, asserting that discourses of authenticity "did not exist", I began to question the legitimacy of the chosen area, specifically whether there would be sufficient "evidence" to find of its operation. This appeared to be closely tied to authenticity's automatic acceptance as true, real and innate. More specifically, it initially appeared difficult to look beyond these definitions (and personal experiences) of authenticity as such, to explore the nuanced ways in which authenticity, as with most firmly held "truths", is socially, historically and culturally constructed. I continued to engage more fully in the pre-existing theoretical and empirical literature on authenticity in order to establish a broad lens to assist in identifying instances of the discourses of authenticity "in action", and I immersed myself in these different sites to become more familiar or "in touch" with various kinds of articulations.

During this process of immersion in both literature and various cultural texts, another contradictory problem arose. As I began to develop more critical distance and, as a result, was able to recognise some of the discourses more easily, it became clear that notions of authenticity were particularly pervasive and, thus a great number of domains could be, or had at some stage been, constructed through these discourses. The issue then became deciding how to narrow down this extensive range, to provide a focused but deep area of exploration. The decisions around which texts or case study examples could be considered most relevant or interesting was a subjective process, and an alternate researcher, with a different background and interest would have focussed on a different set of texts. Firstly, I attempted to narrow the scope of the analysis by using the broad theoretical division between subject and object authenticity, although making this division in practice proved much more complex. I choose to focus on personal authenticity as I was particularly interested in exploring the implications that these discourses had in terms of subjectivity and social regulation. Furthermore, as a South African, I am most interested in local examples or material that received significant attention within South Africa. Although at first I intended to explore a broader range of cultural domains, the extent or abundance of data available amongst both small local, and larger national and international, brands allowed for a rich and detailed exploration of this narrow area.

Finally, another challenge in the research process arose during the ongoing analysis phase as separating and dissecting the numerous interrelated ideas was particularly difficult. More specifically, deciding on the "hierarchy" of discourses (which ideas formed main, overarching discourses, and which ideas formed related sub-discourses) proved complex as all the ideas explored within the texts were so closely interconnected. The discourses often strongly overlapped as individuals tended to conflate their ideas by discussing similar points in a variety of different ways with closely related but slightly differing implications. Here I needed to "artificially" divide the ideas, to unpack and explore each individually, whilst continually highlighting their operation in unison.

### 8.3.2. Personal

My intersecting identities are overwhelmingly privileged: I am white, middle class, cis-gendered, educated, employed, thin, and, I present (although do not identify) as heterosexual. My relative lack of oppression allows me the opportunity to take interest in a "frivolous" "middle class" issue, as authenticity has often been framed, as more serious issues (such as

the material issues of extreme poverty and social exclusion) have affected me less severely than many others. In other words, having relatively easy access to other core human needs (Maslow, 1943), I am free to explore "higher order" needs such as authenticity. On the other hand, as I delved deeper into this topic, it became increasingly clear that my relation to this area of exploration is more complex, and fundamentally shaped by my personal history. Furthermore, not only does this thesis strongly argue that the notion of authenticity is neither a "frivolous" nor "middle class" issue, it additionally highlights that the implications thereof have particularly problematic consequences, effecting the marginalised groups of society more severely.

*Do you love me?*

*"People who are not loved will disappear. Everything that is not loved will disappear from the face of the earth. We only exist through the love of others and that's what it's all about"*

(The father in Peter Carey's (1979), *"Do you love me?").*

Authenticity has always been a personal ideal I hold very tightly and highly, although initially unknowingly. Reflecting back on my life more broadly I have spent considerable time constructing myself in opposition to inauthenticity. On the one hand this appears to be extremely common. Who wouldn't think that being real or genuine, rather than fake or superficial, is an admirable and attractive quality? It is so *obviously* better. On the other hand, my desire for authenticity did not arise innately or emerge naturally, but rather was produced through my specific social history.

I was raised with the belief that being emotional, sensitive, vulnerable and gentle was extremely unfavourable, if not unacceptable. In other words, stereotypically feminine qualities were denied as they were identified as weaknesses or inadequacies. As a result, I was brought up under the constant insistence that I was not a "real" girl because I was "different" to all "other girls". And in response to this insistence, or rather the overwhelming risk of not meeting this demand, I "became" "not like other girls". I did not cry, I was stoic, strong, independent, assertive, aggressive and competitive. In addition to these other typically masculine qualities, authenticity, too, was assigned to me as a given. I *was* authentic, because unlike other girls I was *not* artificial, shallow, vapid or conformist. I had "substance" and "complexity" and I was not "a sheep". I enacted this position so seamlessly I appeared to be this way naturally, and personally experienced this version of myself, as "the real me". In

other words, I had introjected the dominant values in my household and unconsciously espoused them as my own. As James (2007) argues "A child raised this way may well become an excessively diligent pupil, and the parents will say, 'We're always telling her not to work so hard, we really don't pressurise her. She's always been like that,' and the child will say the same" (p. 246). In other words, children with introjected values tend to meticulously adhere to the ideals assigned by others, whilst both they and their parents firmly believe this to be self-generated.

One of the interesting points that stand out from reflecting on this early experience relates to the very specific version of femininity produced through the discourses of authenticity explored in this thesis. My ability to both recognise and identify "manly" articulations of femininity is closely tied to my personal socialisation into a similar gendered identity. By carefully reflecting on my experiences of embodying a femininity that emulated many conventionally "masculine" values and behaviours, and particularly unpacking the negative consequences I faced because of these experiences, I am able to challenge and problematise this contemporary construction of femininity in a way that may not be available to others. At the same time, however, listening to women and brands in this sample consistently valorise, and be rewarded for obtaining, a set of ideas that was consistently used to erase my feelings and experiences, and undermine or deny aspects of me that were valuable, was extremely painful.

Furthermore, this early experience strongly highlights the role that significant others have to play in how we experience ourselves, and specifically the "real me" we feel to be true. Despite actively constructing myself as authentic by "not following the crowd", as many of the individuals in this sample similarly expressed, my feelings, desires and actions did not have "authentic" origins- they were not solely internally generated, nor could they be separated from others at all. In other words, the desire to only meet "one's own expectations" was, in fact, socially expected from significant others, and society more broadly. This highlights the argument in the thesis that the very notion of being "authentically non-conformist" is both socially constructed and externally imposed.

Many years later I became more aware of the ways in which the demands and expectations placed on me had shaped who I had become and how painful it was to have had that imposed on me. I again unknowingly drew on one of the notion of authenticity as I began to actively

fight against this process, in a very similar way to individuals in this sample, claiming "I am *me, not* you". More specifically I attempted to reclaim the sensitivity, gentleness and emotionality I felt had been taken from me, or that perhaps may have represented the "real me". In this sense I actively adopted the opposite values in reaction to my upbringing, which too can be seen as an alternate form of introjection (James, 2007) as my values were still firmly rooted in, and a result of, this parental influence. Reflecting on this it becomes clear that I have never really known, or felt, "truly me", as separate to, and distinct from, others and this has been a consistent source of anxiety, fear and shame for as long as I can remember. By exploring the ways in which personal authenticity, as a whole, is socially and culturally constructed this experience becomes reframed and shifts from being an overwhelming "deficit" to liberatingly "normal". In other words, if no one really has an "authentic" self then my apparent "lack" no longer needs to be experienced as shameful. Furthermore, the experience of being "really seen" by others "for who I am" feels more closely connected to an awareness and recognition of ambiguity, fluidity and uncertainty rather than a consistent, well-established and fixed core self. In other words, "authenticity" does not need to be seen as a fixed goal, nor a straightforward trajectory towards coherence without contradictions. Instead, it may be experienced as dialectic of emerging self-insight and critical self-reflection that includes ambiguity, complexity and conflicts.

*I am "Jane"*

Arguably one of the most personally significant aspects of this research was the exploration of the South African artisanal clothing brand, *Jane Sews.* On the surface, every aspect of the Jane Sews brand (from their aesthetic of cool, muted tones and understated designs, to their "caring" and "enlightened" personality), represents who I am as a person- or rather who I wish I were, my "aspirational authentic self". Unpacking the discourses of authenticity used in the construction of their brand identity, specifically their "Black Friday" and "#ChooseCare" films made me extremely angry. This analysis revealed that Jane Sews, like the majority (if not all) of the companies operating in neoliberal capitalism, valued profit more than people (Chomsky, 1999). More troubling was that this brand specifically fostered an image of "care" as a means of making more profit, without engaging in this care in practice. Initially, I explained my strong emotional reaction as stemming from my disappointment that this charming and appealing, home grown, Durban-based brand with a seemingly strong social conscience had let me down. I was fully aware of the alarmingly violent social practices that large national and multinational companies engaged in, but I

expected smaller artisanal brands to be different-they said they *were* different and I had (almost) believed them.

Upon further reflection it become clear that the intensity of the anger that I felt could not be explained by this alone, and I began to notice that most of my anger was, in fact, self-directed. More specifically, this analysis had highlighted the similar ways in which I, too, am "morally white". I try to eat meat only three times a week, I buy cruelty free cosmetics and environmentally friendly household supplies, I recycle, I tip well, I treat all those who "serve" me well, etc. As much as I wanted to scorn and distance myself from "Jane", I was compelled to see myself in a similar light, actively positioning myself as an ethical and kind person who cares about others and the world at large. In other words, I recognised the many ways in which I, too, had fallen into the trap of unconsciously buying into an "ethical capitalism" which allows for the personal experience of good conscience while maintaining structural violence.

Through this analysis it became clear that having good intentions or wanting to be a good person is not enough. In fact, defined in these ways, even *being* a "good" person is not enough. Simply recognising that systems of oppression exist "out there" is insufficient for change to occur. I was reminded to acknowledge and consistently reflect on and question the ways in which these systems of oppression favour and privilege me, personally. And more importantly, I was prompted to unpack the ways in which I, myself, continue to reinforce, maintain and uphold systems of oppression that systematically violate others. As a person who has deliberately chosen to work toward addressing institutional violence and challenging the mechanisms by which gross inequality are produced, this process prompted a particularly depressing and distressing reminder of my implicit cooperation in a fundamentally unjust system. My hope is to hold on to this discomfort and use it to continue to engage with these issues whilst paying more attention to my personal role, shifting my engagement in ways that subtly undermine rather than reinforce an oppressive status quo.

To conclude, this personal reflection can, in itself, be framed as a "practice of authenticity" in that this "process of engaging in reflexivity is full of muddy ambiguity and multiple trails as researchers negotiate the swamp of interminable deconstructions, self-analysis and self-disclosure" (Finlay, 2002, p. 209). Moreover, this reflection highlights the ambivalence of "authenticity" in practice. On the one hand, authenticity involves the development of self-

insight and the critique of, and resistance to, social pressures. On the other hand, authenticity also simultaneously includes interpellation into narcissistic and individualised neoliberal culture where ethics become reduced to personal preferences and displayed through lifestyle consumption.

Perhaps Foucault's (1982) challenge that "the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are" (p. 216) thus requires a sustained critical engagement with the emergence and functioning of discourses of authenticity, paying specific attention to the complex relations of inequality, exclusion, exploitation and violence which they conceal.

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