Introduction

Disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and history have debated gender relations in Brazil. If we take sociology, there has been a recent discussion about the redefinition of men's and women's social roles. Over the past years, I have examined gender identity in the context of adult literacy. In this chapter, my aim is to discuss the results of my study conducted in two different adult literacy programmes in Portuguese as a mother tongue. Based upon CDA, I investigate voice and interdiscursivity in three different genres, focusing on the ways in which women's identities are textually mediated in a context of social change. The analysis indicates a co-existence of old and new identities among women across three generation groups, suggesting the need to discuss identity in relation to difference.

The tradition in studies of language as a form of social practice (discourse) has been influenced by Bakhtin's (1986) concern for voice, intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Voice is the language which identifies a particular group, while intertextuality can be defined as the voice of another in a text (for example, in reported speech). According to Fairclough (1992), interdiscursivity is the articulation of fragments of different genres in discourse. In this view, a genre is the language associated with a particular activity or social occasion (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 49).

In this chapter, I analyse women's identities in the following genres: (a) newsletter texts in a community adult literacy programme; (b) a discussion of advertisements in one adult literacy class of this programme; and (c) interviews with women learners in another adult literacy programme. The chapter will focus on genre analysis, mainly on the issue...
Gender Identity and the Politics of Literacy

of the articulation and contextualization of genres and discourses within changes in the order of discourse (Fairclough 1992; 2000; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). In my analysis, I will be concerned with elements of texts which are (re)articulated in the three genres, and which constitute gender identities in the context of the co-existence of old and new ways in gender relations.

Language and gender identity

The definition of women's and men's social roles has been debated in Brazil by sociologists, such as Bandeira and Siqueira (1997). There have been changes in gender relations: women now take up positions (which were previously associated only with men), in the workplace, politics and in other social domains. No doubt women have become visible social actors; however, the issue of equal rights is still an issue to be debated. In fact, there are ambiguities in women's gains in relation to civil rights. Such ambiguities are part of ideological struggles in social practices, which to some extent are constituted by language as a dimension of the social (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999).

In order to examine the co-existence of old and new ways in gender roles, I propose to consider these notions from a CDA perspective. Other scholars who have adopted the same perspective include Caldas-Coulthard (1999), Walsh (2001) and the contributors to this volume.

This chapter's theoretical focus is on interdiscursivity in genres and on gender identity. According to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:13), interdiscursivity is 'inherent in all social uses of language', but particular socio-historical conditions 'create particular degrees of stability and durability, and the social-practical costs of particular discourse practices are related to the formation of gender roles' (1999:166). This chapter's theoretical focus is on the interdiscursivity of old and new ways in gender roles.

Cameron rightly proposes to open the discussion rather than 'closing down prematurely this crucial area of debate' (1992:214). In order to problematize the debate about language and gender, I propose to consider these notions from a CDA perspective. Other scholars who have adopted the same perspective include Caldas-Coulthard (1999), Walsh (2001) and the contributors to this volume.

This chapter's theoretical focus is on interdiscursivity in genres and on gender identity. According to Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:13), interdiscursivity is 'inherent in all social uses of language', but particular socio-historical conditions 'create particular degrees of stability and durability, and the social-practical costs of particular discourse practices are related to the formation of gender roles' (1999:166). This chapter's theoretical focus is on the interdiscursivity of old and new ways in gender roles. Therefore, Cameron rightly proposes to open the discussion rather than 'closing down prematurely this crucial area of debate' (1992:214).
private sphere (the home) and new gender discourses in which women identify themselves with work and politics. In a study of women’s proposals to the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, both identities are found (Magalhães 1991; 1995).

In his discussion on interdiscursivity, Fairclough (1992: 124) refers to such terms as genre, style, register and discourse. Fairclough’s caveat is that such terms should be used cautiously, while acknowledging that ‘they enable us to pick out in our analyses major differences of type between the elements of orders of discourse which we might otherwise lose sight of’. I am particularly interested here in the notions of genre and discourse. I locate interdiscursivity in genres and discourses in orders of discourses, which mean the totality of discourses in an institution or in a society. According to Foucault (1996: 9), the production of discourse is organized, controlled and distributed by procedures which conjure up the power and danger of words and exercise surveillance over what is uttered, in what circumstances and on those people who are entitled to utter it.

My motivation for the study of genres and discourses is that both are sites of changes in gender identities. Fairclough notes that one strength in the Bakhtinian view of genre is that it allows us to consider both the constraints on social practices by conventions and ‘the potentiality for change and creativity’ (Fairclough 1992: 126). A genre refers to particular text types and to social processes of text production, distribution and consumption. Traditionally, genres represented identities as essentialist, mediated by stable textual conventions. Bakhtin’s famous quote refers to this historical dimension, viewing genres as ‘the drive belts from the history of society to the history of language’ (1986: 65). Fairclough advocates that changes in social practice are both manifested in the system of genres of a language and in part constructed by such changes.

Identifying oneself with prestigious genres in public domains can be highly indicative of changes in women’s identities. Both Hall (2000) and Giddens (1991) have linked changes in identities with globalization, viewed as the extension of free markets world-wide and the cultural dimensions of these economic changes. As a result of this, the idea that identities are open to change is quite accepted today, even in countries such as Brazil, which have been highly constrained by traditions from the influence of Portuguese Catholic-based colonization.

For women, having an identity (such as that of a writer) is no doubt a change in traditional gender identities, since women’s education is quite recent. In colonial Brazil, it is pointed out that women were taught to read and write in order to read religious texts and to keep domestic records (Araújo 1993). According to a European traveller from the nineteenth century, the education of a moça prendada (Portuguese phrase meaning ‘an educated young woman’) was often restricted to some knowledge of music, French, dancing, embroidering, knitting and of ‘the difficult art of peeling an orange’ (Leite 1984: 70 ff.)

Hasan (1996: 395) points out that ‘one very important fact to recognise about register variation is that not every member of a society enjoys the possibility of engaging in every kind of social activity’. She notes, for example, that in Pakistan occupations are still divided according to gender. Only women perform such activities as cooking, bathing children, feeding and dressing them, and cleaning the house, both as paid labour and as mistress of the house; whereas men perform activities such as driving taxis and trains or act as mechanics and petrol-pump attendants. Thus performing certain kinds of activity constitutes a self-identity for women.

Such an identity is constituted in a dialectical relation between discourse and other dimensions of social life. According to Kiernan (1993: 261), women’s speech may have been affected by their exclusion from public domains. Indeed, in ancient Athens, women had a vocabulary of their own, with a number of words inherited from a previously dominated race; they also created new words to hide their meaning from men.

One of the deeply-rooted identities constituted for women in traditional contexts has been that related to nurturing and looking after children in the capacity of mother or in such occupations as that of teacher. In relation to motherhood, the Brazilian historian Del Priore notes that both medicine and the Catholic Church played a significant role in supporting the Brazilian government’s development project, ‘shaping women for the act of procreation’ (Del Priore 1993: 31). In a study of medical discourse, I analysed data collected in the pediatric ward in three state hospitals in Brasilia, showing how doctors manipulated women to make them breastfeed their babies (Magalhães 2000a).

The state project referred to by Del Priore is legitimized by other institutions such as tribunals and schools. According to Graddol and Swann (1989: 143), ‘the institutions which have influence over language, our attitudes to it, and the way we use it are numerous and play some role in encouraging various linguistic differences and inequalities’. In a study of women’s identities in forensic texts about the so-called ‘crimes of passion’, Santos (1996) analyses four cases of homicide and attempts of homicide on women by their husbands or partners in the 1970s and 1990s, three in Brasilia and the other one in Rio de Janeiro. In focusing...
Gender Identity and the Politics of Literacy

on intertextuality and interdiscursivity, Santos emphasizes references to meaning of men’s violence and reinforcing the roles of husband, wife, father and mother at any cost. 

One other study by Lima (1997) indicates that Brazilian textbooks establish for women an identity associated with passivity, weakness and submissiveness. In addition, women are shown to be ‘incompetent or silly’ (Swann 1992:99). Lima also examines interview data and writing by 11—13 year olds. The following results are commented on by Lima: both boys and girls reported that, as with the forensic discourse investigated by Santos, school discourse legitimizes a traditional identity for women. However, as I have previously indicated, new values have influenced women in Brazil under the impact of intercultural relations brought about by migration and by exposure to new ideas and perspectives. In Radhay’s study of six mixed couples, there is clearly a new sense of identity, which she analyzes as a manifestation of hybridity (Radhay 1997:170ff.; Magalhães 2002). One other influence lies in the chance to meet people from other cultures as part of migration.

For Radhay, hybridity is embedded in the social process of language, so there is a parallel between the dialogical relation of self/other and the dialogical relation of voices in text/discourse. This parallel is based on Bakhtin, for whom one’s texts are full of fragments of the texts of others, characterized in varying degrees by otherness or by assimilation and also by conscious citation. The words of others in our texts have their own expression which we ‘assimilate, restructure or change’ (Bakhtin 1997:314).

Radhay’s analysis of the couples’ narratives suggests a negotiation between women and men, rather than a model of domination. This relation is explained as part of the conflicts which people have to negotiate in the life world. In such a model of social practice, which is part of the dialectics of structures and events to which I referred previously, discourse elements can be combined in new ways. When discourse propositions, discourse frames can be combined in new ways, when the reference of the proposition of the discourse frame is part of the reference of the discourse proposition, the discourse proposition can be combined in new ways when the reference of the proposition of the discourse frame is part of the reference of the discourse proposition. This is the analysis of the kinds of hybridity and of their consequences within the texts.

In the next section, I will consider gender identity in three genres of adult literacy: the newsletter Recovering, which was produced by the research team for the project Intertextuality, Literacy, Identity (funded by The National Council for Scientific and Technological Development/Brasil), in collaboration with teachers and learners of the Paranoá community literacy programme. Paranoá is a shantytown about 50 km from Brasilia. Seven editions of the newsletter were published; after that the project came to an end. In the meetings to organize the newsletter there were more women than men, suggesting that women had a greater interest in taking part in the activity of writing for the newsletter. The newsletter had the following genres: editorials, opinions, life stories, interviews, religion-based texts (one of the local interests), poetry, jokes.

Women’s identities in three different genres

Ways of expressing woman

In the context of adult literacy, examining the co-existence of old and new ways of expressing woman is crucial. In this section, I will analyze the different ways of expressing woman in the newsletter.

In the next section, I will analyze the different ways of expressing woman. The interplay of language and the contrast of the different genres in which the construct of woman is expressed play an important role in the construction of woman’s identity. These contrasting genres are a resource for the construction of woman’s identity. This resource is based on the construction of identity within the text and the social context in which the text is produced. The interplay of language and the contrast of the different genres in which the construct of woman is expressed play an important role in the construction of woman’s identity. These contrasting genres are a resource for the construction of woman’s identity.
Three interviews were carried out, two with the town’s mayor and one with the chief police officer. The interviewers were one woman (a learner) and three men (also learners). The interview questions were decided on in meetings in which all the members of the newsletter team were present. A fourth interview was planned, but the person to be interviewed—a member of the local council in charge of the protection of infants and adolescents at a time when the newsletter team was concerned about adolescent pregnancy and infant prostitution—refused to be interviewed.

The texts on religion were produced by three women (all learners) and three men (one teacher and two learners). Therefore it appears that both women and men in the town are deeply influenced by religion (not only Catholicism, but also by Pentecostal Evangelical beliefs).

Women had a great interest in writing poetry. In ten of the poems which were published, eight were produced by women (seven learners and one teacher), and only two by men (learners). One of the women also produced drawings to illustrate the poem of one of her peers.

For one of the life stories, two women (learners) interviewed street girls and boys, presenting their moving stories about being hungry and about police violence against children in the streets of Brasilia.

Jokes and messages were the most popular among learners, with 18 women and 12 men taking part in their production. They really enjoyed writing and reading these texts, probably because the texts were about themselves, and also because they were short and easy to write and read.

The analysis of the newsletter shows, therefore, that women and men had equal participation in text production, and also that women participated more than men in the production of editorials, poetry, jokes and messages. In terms of structural composition, both women and men followed the discourse conventions of the genres represented in the newsletter. Take, for example, the editorials of numbers 1 and 6. The first editorial, which was written by a male teacher, was entitled ‘Paranoá’s Anniversary’ (text 1), and the one which was published in number 6, written by a female teacher, had the title ‘Literacy Now’ (text 2: for these texts, refer to the Appendix. The following structure can be found in both texts: title, summary, development and result (van Dijk 1988; Hasan 1989; Fairclough 1992: 129); see Table 8.1.

The titles present the main ideas in the texts: the town’s anniversary (text 1) and literacy (text 2). The summary presents an extended comment about the main idea in the texts, so in text 1 we have information about how long the anniversary celebrations were (23 days/3–26 October 1997) and about what activities were organized to celebrate the town’s fortieth anniversary: the photograph and local crafts exhibition on 3 October, ball on 4 October, the Evangelical service on 5 October, the children’s week, ‘futsal’ games on 9–12 October, the pioneers’ and elderly people’s meetings on 17 October, the local schools’ and military parade, and kickboxing on 18 October. In text 2 we are given details about Cristovam Buarque’s ‘popular democratic government’ (1994–8), the governor’s concern about the low income population, and his adult literacy provisions. The development presents more details about the main idea, which in text 1 means the Crop Fair and concerts with local artists on 24 October; the local schools’ parade with the participation of the adult literacy community and pre-school groups; the Crop Fair and the regional food feast at the Central Square on 25 October (the anniversary day); football games and ‘fantastic’ concerts (rap groups and the Swing Brazil Band on 26 October). In text 2 we are told about the community groups which provide adult literacy in the Federal District in conjunction with local government, given a definition of the project as based on Freire’s notions of reading and writing in connection with community (generative) themes, and the three areas into which the government’s provision was divided are described (Freire 1972). The result presents the course of action which was followed: in text 1, the organization work by the local council (last paragraph); in text 2, one’s right to basic education and the laws about adult literacy (last two paragraphs).

Text 1 is related interdiscursively with two other discourses: one deriving from the community, represented by the local organization Cedep (Centre for the Cultural Development of Paranoá): ‘The Cedep Education and Culture Groups also took part in this parade showing integration between teachers and learners, both from the adult literacy
The phrase 'integration between teachers and learners' is a significant element of this context. The conjunction 'but', initiating the period, and the modal verb 'cannot' indicate the text producer's attitude towards the local council, presenting an argument in favour of 'law and order' (paragraph 5).

In relation to text 2, adult literacy and education in general flourished during Cristovam Barreto's government. In a visit to the adult literacy co-ordinator at the Education Foundation in 1997, we were informed that the Adult Literacy Unit was responsible for supervising adult literacy classes at local schools (supletivo, supplementary basic and secondary education), at the workplace (Novacap, the estate company and LSU, the garbage company), community groups such as those at Paranoá and volunteer groups.

Text 2 is concerned with 'the education of young and adult workers', recontextualizing literacy in terms of working people's 'real needs' (paragraph 6). Women are not explicitly mentioned, but surely they are part of the group of young and adult workers. In addition to this textual feature, the phrase 'a movement of organized social and community groups (unions)' recontextualizes literacy in terms which are different from those in text 1. The local council's work, particularly the good security scheme which guaranteed law and order, is noted in the introduction as an important element.

Interdiscursivity and gender identity

Interdiscursivity and women's identities in adult literacy

The newsletter production no doubt contributed to empowering women as writers. It is not unusual to find women attending literacy classes at the age of 60. Therefore, to be an author, and to see one's text published in the community newsletter, which means that it will be read by peers, neighbours and even local authorities, is not only breaking the tradition of literate men and illiterate women, but also increases one's opportunity in the struggle for employment. Thus, the text produced in the newsletter data indicates a shift in the order of discourse: the beginning of a social change process where new discussions are emerging, and where the perspectives of women, the members of the newsletter team, and other colleagues are being heard. This is a recognition of the gendered nature of literacy and the empowerment of women in public life. The newsletter production plays a significant role in the construction of a new identity for women writers. The newsletter production is a platform for women to express their views and contribute to the transformation of society.

Table 8.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identities</th>
<th>Newsletter</th>
<th>Class discussion</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writer</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine Commodity</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In comparing the three genres analysed, four different identities are observed. Such identities can interact in the way they are recontextualized in different genres, such as the ones discussed here. In the newsletter, women were viewed both as writers and workers. The writer identity is not considered in the other two genres.

In the class discussion at Paranoá, women are seen as having traditional identities as mothers/housewives. However, they are also perceived as feminine commodities, in a discussion of two advertisements in class. ‘In this view, women are not just turning themselves into “sex-objects”. They are actually involved in self-creation. We could turn feminine into a verb, to feminize’ (Talbot 1998: 171).

In the interviews at Taguatinga, in the Catholic University Adult Literacy Programme, learners commented on women’s identities as mothers/housewives. This appeared to be the usual identity for women in this setting, but one in four women who were interviewed considered herself as a worker.

The class discussion at Paranoá was motivated by the (generating) theme ‘health’, which had been selected by teachers and learners for the whole month. In keeping with this theme, two advertisements were selected for class discussion: (a) an advertisement on skin cosmetics; (b) an advertisement for a liquor brand, aguardente (Rodrigues and Magalhães 1997/98). The relation between reading and the advertisement was established by the teacher, Lolanda:

If you show them an advert, they will only be interested if you link your purpose with reading, writing and numeracy…our main purpose is awareness raising, critical awareness development, reading, not just reading between the lines, but world reading, right? Reading related to citizenship by someone living in society, this was our main purpose, but together with this purpose, we had others which were their own, because they are eager to learn, this is the main thing they want, right?

I adopt Thompson’s thinking (1990) as to how people interpret and assimilate symbolic forms in their daily lives. In addition, I take on board Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996: 31) remarks about visual texts such as advertisements: ‘The world represented visually in the mass media is a different world – and produces different citizen/subjects – from the world represented in language.’ Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999: 14) note that people can establish ‘their identities and their differences through the diverse ways in which they interpret texts, and more generally incorporate them into their own practices’. The reception and appropriation of advertisements is a complex social process which involves an on-going activity of textual interpretation and assimilation by individuals and groups with a socially structured past. Therefore, we should examine how people interpret particular advertisements, how they construct meanings in their reading and how these semiotic texts contribute to maintaining unequal power relations or to changing them. In gender relations, power is mobilized and maintained or changed in institutions such as the media.

The class discussion of advertisement (a) and (b) was conducted by the teacher with contributions from the learners. The first advertisement presents two photos: one at the top on the left, showing the skin cosmetics advertised; and the other, in the centre, presenting a magnified image of a withered grape. Below the first photo, there are two sentences directly related to the grape image: ‘Today you’re a grape (uva). But take care, the grape withers (uva passa).’ To the right of the photos, there is a presenting the qualities of the cosmetic brand and the addresses of the shops where it is sold. Below the text, at the bottom, the cosmetic brand is presented.

As soon as the discussion started, the learners noted that advertisements lie, deceiving the readers. The first comment by one of the men learners was: ‘But what a delicious grape (uva gostosa); you feel like eating it!’ Then Lolanda wrote the headline on the blackboard and the learners started to read the written text.

Based on the learner’s comment, the group established a relation between the grape image in the advertisement and the woman reader (‘you’re a grape’), who is represented as a ‘delicious’ (gostosa) grape. Therefore the learners interpreted the advertisement as a construction of the feminine commodity identity, which is based mainly on women’s bodies. Lolanda criticized the advertisement, remarking, ‘It’s absurd!’ The advertisement also compares women’s life cycles as noted in the way their bodies change over time: a young body with a soft skin passa; it changes, withering just like the grape in the photo. The learners acknowledged the ambiguity of the phrase uva passa, which in Portuguese can be both a noun phrase, meaning ‘raisin’, when it refers to the fruit surface texture; and a noun phrase and a verb phrase, in ‘the grape withers’, metaphorically referring to the grape as the body. In this sense, the fruit is reworded as the body (Fairclough 1992: 77). One of the women learners said that it was unacceptable to be led away by fashion, to spend money on beauty products, and worse, to consider an aged woman as an encarangada person (probably a dialect term for encarangada, a Brazilian Portuguese form, meaning ‘shrunk’, ‘useless’).
The analysis of (b) was conducted by Fernando, the second teacher. Based on their own experiences, the learners related alcohol to family arguments, addiction, illness, and loneliness. The aguardente brand 'NêgaFulô' (a dialect form for 'Afro-Brazilian woman/flower') was related to the model in the photo. The 'NêgaFulô' was taken to be drunk. As the advertisement presents some English words, the learners mentioned that the aguardente was an export product. Fernando noted a relation between the aguardente and the woman next to it. The woman is seen as the aguardente, and both represent Brazil.

One other point raised by one woman learner was the connection between the advertisement and Afro-Brazilians, because of the presence of what appears to be an African fabric. Advertisement (b) also presents two sentences on the left, next to the woman: 'Drink with responsibility. Appreciate quality.' The first sentence seems to have been captured by the learners, since they associated it with religion. As mentioned above in the discussion of the newsletter, religion is one of the learners' interests. One of the learners, Peter, made a specific comment about interdiscursivity in advertisement (b), pointing out that there are 'good women', those who are influenced by religion, and women who enjoy drinking. Therefore, the class discussion at Paranoá indicates that the learners interpreted and assimilated the hybridity in women's identities and in advertisements, making connections between traditional representations of women (religion) and commodified feminine identities (advertisements). Such hybridity can also be found in the class discussion as a genre, first in the way that learners were free to take part in the class, and second in the way that learners were free to express their ideas.

In order to map participants in the class discussion according to gender, Table 8.3 presents the main participants in the class discussion according to gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advertisement (a)</th>
<th>Woman</th>
<th>Man</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement (b)</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Man</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that both women and men are represented in the discussion indicates a pattern of equal distribution of speech turns. In the discussion of (b), it was a woman learner who made the leading comment, but women also took part. This heterogeneity is almost non-existent in the interviews with four women learners from the Catholic University Literacy Programme at Taguatinga, as a satellite town in the Federal District (Conceição 1999). These women's subjectivity is linked to the tradition of being a mother, nurturing children, and doing housework. They attend literacy classes in most cases because they want to learn how to sign their names, or to get away from their daily problems. Such is the case of Cida, who comments on her need to go out and 'forget about her housewife's life'.

Lucia, 64, had been responsible for looking after her brothers and sisters and an ill father. Now wonders she had been unable to attend school. Then she got married and had to take care of her husband and ten children. She refers to her husband as 'the light of her eyes', solving all her problems and 'guiding' her. She reads the Bible to her and helps her with homework. Again, the learner's comments in the interview represent women as part of the past Portuguese tradition of women, with each participant responding to each other directly. They represent a part of the past Portuguese tradition of women, where the female is seen as the center of the family and the male is seen as the leader. However, in the current discussion, the female is seen as the equal partner and the male is seen as the leader.

Amanda, 23, is the youngest learner in her class. She shows rather low self-esteem in relation to literacy: 'Everyone here knows more than I do. I can't learn writing. I don't know anything.' Amanda's view of literacy opposes the view advocated by the woman writer in the newsletter text: 2: 'Learner participation is not that in which the learner behaves as the onewho has no knowledge, but rather as the one who deals with different forms of knowledge in a setting in which everyone knows something and is willing to work, play, and learn something new.' In the current discussion, the female is seen as the equal partner and the male is seen as the leader. However, in the current discussion, the female is seen as the equal partner and the male is seen as the leader.
I wanted to learn it very much, and when my brother-in-law came up, I got a piece of the paper, and I asked him what was written in the paper, and he replied, and I spelled it, and I read the paper, but I was unable to write anything.

Sônia is thus different from her peers, viewing herself in relation to work and associating literacy with being promoted. Because of this, she was selected to move on to an Education Foundation school to complete her basic education: in her words, this means 'climbing a new step'. This clause indicates a new identity which opposes her past identity, recontextualizing the worker represented in the newsletter.

In sum, the interviews with three adult literacy learners from the Catholic University Literacy Programme present textual features which recontextualize the traditional gender discourse. However, the interview with one of the learners presents textual features conveying new ways of representing women, recontextualizing literacy and gender identity as associated with the workplace.

The recontextualization of gender identities in the newsletter, the class discussion and the interviews is part of the heterogeneity of practices in a social context influenced by global discourses. In this context, women and men have to come to terms with the dialectics between traditional local identities and globalized commodified identities which are constructed in a complex social process of interpretation and assimilation of linguistic and semiotic texts. The complexity of the process lies in the fact that modern social life is open to new intercultural influences at the workplace, in the classroom and even at home through the television. In such a textually-mediated social life, usually only part of the population, those who have access to (visual) literacy and to the prestigious genres of public life have real chances of taking part in group struggles for identity politics. In this aspect, the Paranoá literacy programme, probably because of its relations to other groups and institutions (lecturers and students from the University of Brasília, the Education Foundation, other adult literacy groups), offers more opportunities of access to identity politics than the Catholic university programme, so it is vital to discuss identity in relation to the politics of literacy.

**Conclusion: gender identity and the politics of literacy**

The analysis in this chapter is clear in relation to women's identities in the context of adult literacy, showing how they are recontextualized in three different genres. In the newsletter, we noted that women and men take part equally in text production, writing texts connected with public, prestigious genres such as editorials and opinion texts. These genres represent women as workers and writers. In the class discussion at Paranoá, women are considered to have different identities, as part of the heterogeneity of discourses in the community literacy programme. Two identities were defined in our analysis: the traditional identity of mother/housewife and that of the commodified feminine which is constituted in the media (magazines, papers, television, radio). In addition, the interviews with women literacy learners at the Catholic University at Taguatinga indicates the strength of the traditional identity, but also represents women in association with work. Further, the data indicates an interdiscursivity in institutional discourses which constitute gender, suggesting hybridity and fragmentation in identities and in genres, under the impact of changes in the orders of discourse, which have created the commodified self.

Such an identity change is part of global markets and the latter's influence on advertisements. Closely related to consumerism, the commodified feminine identity should be questioned because it imposes on women an objective about having a body which suits the European, white, middle-class, male ideal. To have this kind of identity is not in itself a value to be argued for. On the contrary, a feminist view should be critical of the global discourses which construct women's representations as bodies with a market price.

This is one reason to advocate here the need to invest in women's education. In order for women to be valued as citizens with the right to a position in political life, they must have their own social place and their own voice in public domains, which have both prestige and power. This position is connected with literacy/education.

The politics of literacy we have in mind will take hybridity and interdiscursivity as embedded in the social process of language and genres. As already discussed, one should assume both the dialogical relation of self/other and the dialogical relation of voices in text/discourse. Given the fragmentation of one's subjectivity, discourse conventions can no longer be taken for granted. Thus, we should discuss which discourse elements are to be drawn upon in terms of ethics. Such a debate has much to gain if viewed from the perspective of postcolonial identities. Bhabha (1994) suggests the notions of indeterminacy and contingency to problematize essentialist identities, related to such dichotomies as mind/body, culture/nature, writing/orality. The logic of indeterminacy and contingency allows us to discuss gender identities in new ways.
Last but not least, it is urgent that the recommendation of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (Hamburg, Germany, 1997) be adopted in Brazilian literacy programmes. The conference demanded that governments make gender explicit in adult literacy so as to promote equal relations between women and men. In a context of social change, discussing gender openly is a first step toward equality.

As Sônia remarks, 'now women are becoming liberated'. Nevertheless, she had to fight her husband's machismo, since he was against both her work and literacy class. In the end, he only changed his mind when he saw her wages contributing to their family income. The politics of literacy has to consider the many changes in gender identities, taking into account the present conflicts in gender relations arising from contradictory identities.

Appendix: texts 1 and 2

1. Paranoá's Anniversary

(1) 3rd October 1997 was the first day of a great celebration to commemorate Paranoá's 40th anniversary. The celebration went on until the 26th.

(2) During the celebration there were different activities, such as: the photograph and local crafts exhibition on the 3rd, the town's ball on the 4th, an Evangelical service on the 5th, the children's week, 'futsal' and other games on 9-12, the pioneers' and elderly people's meetings on the 17th, and the locals' schools' parade and kickboxing on the 18th.

(3) Several portable stages were built, a kind of radio station with several loudspeakers all over Paranoá and the largest stage for concerts at the central square.

(4) On the last three days, there were the opening of the Crop Fair and some concerts with local artists on the 24th. At last, the 40th anniversary of Paranoá which we all enjoyed was on the 25th. On this day there was the locals' schools' and military parade, more of the Crop Fair, concerts and regional food at the central square. The Cedep (the Centre for the Cultural Development of Paranoá) and Education and Culture Groups also took part in this parade show, integrating teachers and learners, both from the adult literacy course and pre-school. On the 26th, the last day, there were football games during the day between the Paranoá team and other towns. In the evening, there were the closing celebration with several festivities.

(5) But we cannot forget to mention the beautiful organization work by the local council, mainly the good security scheme which guaranteed law and order. This time, people just went to the celebration to have fun, so there were no arguments among the people present.

2. Literacy Now

(Resgatando Newsletter, 6, 1997, Paranoá, DF, p. 1)

(1) The DF (Federal District) has, for the first time, a popular democratic association with (University of Brasilia) - Cepafre - Ceca. The Governor, Cristovam Buarque, concerned about Brasilia's low income population's quality of life, refused to see them with a blindfold around their eyes forever. For this, he has sanctioned a law to end illiteracy in the DF and neighboring regions.

(2) Now there is the active participation of the Education Foundation providing its support to local groups which have been concerned about adult literacy for a long time. For example, there is Ceda in association with UnB (University of Brasilia) - Cepafre - Cepec.2

Points for Reflection

(4) The Governor is creating new conditions for everyone to have equal opportunities and to open up new perspectives, so that one can look forward to better working conditions, leaving behind underemployment and thus gaining better life prospects.

(5) The need for skills development is not being downplayed, but this is quite different from guaranteeing the right to education. This project is a proposal for the education of young and adult workers, addressing their real needs. Therefore, it is not just a question of replacing lost schooling.

(6) It is not a campaign but rather a movement of organized social and community groups (unions).
(8) It is linked to young people's and adults' all-round development, providing them with humanitarian values so that they can participate in social change.

(9) For Professor Paulo Freire, reading the world precedes word reading; for him the adult's knowledge must not be restricted to the knowledge of reality.

(10) People know that some values are attributed more social prestige than others.

(11) Learners attend adult literacy classes because they expect to learn a new way of reading the world.

(12) Learner participation is not that in which the learner behaves as the one who has no knowledge, but rather as the one who deals with different forms of knowledge in a setting in which everyone knows something and is willing to move beyond what they already know.

(13) There is also spontaneous learner participation through extra-class activities. Their involvement in food collection was a great help in the organization of kiosks for the June celebrations.

(14) One other significant aspect is the generating theme which is approached in different areas, each one with its own expertise, overcoming the fragmentation of knowledge, and allowing for an understanding of reality the way it is.

(15) Such actions will be performed initially in three different education areas: from Ceilândia (Cepafre) to Taguatinga, Samambaia and Brazlândia; Paranoá involving the local community.

(16) From Gama (Cepec) to Santa Maria and Recanto das Emas. Given the progressive nature and the number of consolidated experiences in these regions, this will ensure the effectiveness of this training in the literacy process that adopts the Paulo Freire method and others.

(17) It is necessary, therefore, to advocate and guarantee every person's right to learning — incomplete schooling or no schooling is a social debt to be redeemed.

(18) In Brasília, a permanent forum on adult literacy and basic education was set up in the DF and neighbouring regions.

**Laws about adult literacy**

- In the Brazilian Constitution (1988), Article 208, the State's duty regarding education will be effected by guaranteeing: compulsory and free basic education, including for people who had no access to it at the usual age group.
- Federal District law (1993), Article 225 – The State will provide young people and adults, mainly workers, with evening classes in basic and secondary education, by making accessible regular and supplementary programmes to them in such a way as to make education and work compatible.
- Article 45 – DF – To eradicate illiteracy ...the Federal District government will make an effort to eradicate illiteracy among public servants in the DF in two years ...
- Law 849, 8th March 1995, Article 1 – The permanent literacy and basic education programme for young people and adults was established in the DF.
- Article 2 – To promote the education of young people and adults who had no access to schooling or who were excluded from it.
- Article 3 – The permanent literacy programme will be co-ordinated and developed by the Office of Education through the Education Foundation of the DF, through investments in the development and training of teachers and volunteers responsible for teaching in local projects.
- Article 4 – Through state universities and non-governmental organizations which will provide pedagogic consultancy to literacy centres, including: (a) Provision of courses in literacy teacher qualification.
- Article 7 – The permanent literacy and basic education programme for young people and adults will be financially supported by: DF budget funding; financial contribution from persons and firms; income generated from other sources.

*(Regatando Newsletter 1, 1995, Paranoá, DF, pp. 1–2)*

**Notes**

1 Cameron (1990: 23) makes the following comment: ‘Lakoff maintains that women are forced to learn a weak, trivial, and deferential style as part of their socialization … she regards women’s style as a “dominance approach”. ’ There are other views, for example Walsh (2001: 5) refers to Lakoff’s work as the ‘accommodation model’. However, for my purpose here, I prefer Cameron’s term, ‘dominance approach’.

2 These are community adult literacy centres: ‘Cedep’ at Paranoá; ‘Cepafre’ at Ceilândia; and ‘Cepec’ at Gama.

**References**

Gender Identity and the Politics of Literacy


