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Navigating the 'new South Africa'

*An ethnographic study of the 'born free'
generation in Mpumalanga province*

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Thesis Submitted for PhD Examination
University of Sussex
April 2018

Declaration:

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

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Abstract:

This thesis explores the aspirations of black South Africans who were born after the end of apartheid. These young people are controversially referred to as the 'born free' generation. They were born into a democracy that officially offers them equal opportunities but continues to grapple with a legacy of racial discrimination, spatial segregation and unequal educational provision. Despite the majority of 'born frees' experiencing poor educational attainment and high levels of unemployment, existing research indicates that those in this category hold ambitious future aspirations, although these rarely come to fruition.

The focus of my work is the aspirations of rural youth and draws upon ten months of ethnographic data collected within a township in Mpumalanga province. It analyses selected curriculum content, observations, focus groups and interviews with two groups of young people – those in their last year of schooling and those two years out of school. Through ethnographic observations in one secondary school in particular, I elucidate how students' schooling environments relay particular discourses concerning what constitutes a 'good education' and what it means to aspire towards a 'good life.' Integrating insights from feminist, poststructural and postcolonial theories, I consider how the discourses of the 'new South Africa' are transmitted within the schooling environments, homes and wider social and political arenas which these young people occupy, thereby creating and structuring ways for them to speak and think about their futures.

My analysis engages with the shifting attachments that shape how South Africans living in a rural area construct their narratives of the future and demonstrates how these young people's performances of identity are both spatially constructed and affectively negotiated. By considering the silences and contradictions in their imaginaries, this thesis shows how the discourses through which these imaginaries are constructed create boundaries around ways of being and becoming that are deemed valuable and those that are not. In problematising an understanding of aspiration as an individual disposition, my research demonstrates that the hopes of young, black South Africans are rooted in social and spatial inequalities.

List of acronyms:

AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

ANC – African National Congress

APS – Admission Point Scores

ATR – African Traditional Religion

BBBEE – Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment

BCM – Black Consciousness Movement

CAPS - Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements

DOE – Department of Education

FET – Further Education and Training

HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus

LO – Life Orientation

NBT – National Benchmark Test

NGO – Non-governmental organisation

NIDS - National Income Dynamics Study

NP – National Party

NSFAS - National Student Financial Aid Scheme

OBE – Outcomes Based Education

RDP - Reconstruction and Development Programme

SASO – South African Students Organisation

TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission

TVET - Technical Vocational Education and Training

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Where the journey began

Behind every research project there exists some reason why the researcher was motivated to conduct the research. Meek (1988) has referred to these as 'paradigmatic moments,' which symbolise the central concern behind a study, the moment that researchers return to throughout their work (Conteh et al., 2005:x). My paradigmatic moment occurred two years prior to starting my PhD, when I was working for a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Mpumalanga, South Africa. The NGO sought to address educational disparities within the province through various programmes that supported teachers and students living within a disadvantaged rural community. One of its projects focused upon improving Maths and Science results for students in their final years of schooling and I provided career guidance for these young people. My role involved motivating students to achieve good enough results to enable them to pursue higher education. In supporting disadvantaged young people to enter into university, the NGO sought to help mitigate the legacy of inequality inherited from apartheid policies.

One afternoon I sat down with Polly¹, a young woman in her final year of schooling, her 'matric'² year. Polly did not have a strong academic record, and realistically, would not be able to improve her marks to such an extent that she could pursue further studies at a university. Yet whenever I asked Polly what she wanted to do upon completing secondary school, she expressed a determination to become a doctor. Polly appeared highly optimistic about this, often quoting motivational sayings such as 'anything is possible if I believe in myself' and 'I know I can do it if I just have faith.' Polly's academic results, her subject choices and seeming unawareness of the bureaucracy surrounding university applications and the institutional requirements, made the viability of her aspirations questionable. Yet she was not alone in expressing ambitious career goals, as her peer group similarly expressed 'high' hopes (in normative terms) for their futures, despite displaying little notion of how to achieve these aspirations.

Polly belongs to the group of young South Africans referred to as the 'born frees,' the generation born after apartheid and raised in a democracy that officially offers them 'free and equal access to education' (South African Schools Act, 1996) and opportunities denied to their predecessors. The pervasive discourse of 'freedom and a better life in the new South Africa' has created a general belief in upward mobility for 'previously disadvantaged' youth (De Lannoy, 2008:168). The

¹ All names of people in this study are pseudonyms.

² Also referred to as Grade Twelve.

expectation is that they will build a life different from and better than their parents' generation, who endured gross discrimination under apartheid. However, studies on youth aspirations in South Africa and across global contexts indicate social structures, as reflected in the class, race and educational background of parents, continue to have great bearing on what is possible to achieve, however high one's aspirations (Bok, 2010).

Although born free youth experience greater social mobility than their parents' generation, their higher levels of education are rarely able to deliver the promise of upward mobility at the level expected by young people themselves. This is indicated through how, despite being twenty-three years into democracy, for South Africans aged 20 – 24-year-old, 16% remain in school, 12% are in post-school education, 21% in employment, and 51% are not in employment, education or training (Branson et al., 2015:42). While young South Africans such as Polly may express themselves through a language of individual choice and agency, it is only for very few that the resources and opportunities accompany the rhetoric. Growing up in post-apartheid South Africa is for many 'a journey of a dream denied' (Soudien, 2003:64).

The protests of South African university students, which have occurred since October 2015, illustrate the failure of the post-apartheid state to deliver its promises. These protests were instigated by crowds of disappointed university students, who, mobilising under the banner of '#Fees must Fall,' disputed, among other things, the fee increase proposed by South African universities for 2016. They formed part of a wave of demonstrations, still ongoing across tertiary institutions in the country, and which have been met by a contrast of public uproar and support, with the media offering clashing commentaries of what it means to be young in post-apartheid South Africa. While situated at some distance from my research in Mpumalanga, these protests form a 'paradigmatic' anchor for this study. They symbolise a poignant historical moment, whereby the generation born after the dismantling of apartheid have come to question the extent to which they remain immobilised by an educational system that favours those from more privileged backgrounds. However, there is a disjuncture between the rise of student political consciousness and discontent, often mobilised around urban centres of higher education, and my experiences with highly optimistic and seemingly political disengaged youth residing in the rural peripheries of South Africa.

As only 3% of youth in Mpumalanga receive undergraduate degrees (StatsSA, 2011), it is unlikely that Polly and her peers will pursue the professions they have marked out to me. Yet, as many of these young people are the first in their families to have received some secondary school education, they belong to a generation able to consider careers once denied to the older members

of their households. As the majority of the parents and guardians of born free youth are limited in their abilities to provide the younger generation with career guidance to help them navigate the new democracy, I became interested in the influence of educational environments upon the aspirations of young black South Africans.

As the institution that potentially has the largest influence over young people outside their homes, the school is a meaningful site from which to explore how youth construct their future ambitions. Across international contexts, education has been positioned as a panacea for both individual and national problems. Whether such reasoning is based upon the Western discourse of education as key for modern development, the recognition of education as a human right or the use of education as a means to 'empower' communities, education is almost universally valued (Carey, 2013). Appreciating that education is political and not a neutral enterprise (Apple, 1990), it is important to recognise that South Africa has emerged from a history where education served as a means to forge divisions within society and construct particular forms of identity among students whereby non-white youth were identified as inferior to their white counterparts.

During apartheid, schools were utilised to achieve social separation and provided a legitimating arena for white supremacy, where presumptions of European superiority and African inferiority were established as modern truths about human progress and development. In the transition towards democracy, the African National Congress (ANC) highlighted educational deficiencies in the schooling offered to non-white South Africans as a major factor undermining social equality and opportunities for economic advancement. Moreover, they established the importance of education for the development of engaged citizens in 'the new South Africa' such that education was not merely necessary for economic development, but was the key to democracy itself. Schools were positioned as vehicles of change and the curriculum was deemed instrumental to this. Education was to be, in the words of Mandela, 'the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world' (2003).

This compelling notion of education as emancipatory has been adopted by numerous education-focused NGOs, within South Africa and across international contexts. It is the same belief that led me to work within this sector, as I was drawn to the promise of education as a societal equaliser. My entry into academia forced me to interrogate this premise and ask questions, such as, 'education for what?' and 'education for whom?' It also led me to realise how an uncritical valorisation of education, and higher education in particular, could risk disregarding important concerns regarding who and what controls the cultural production that occur within schools,

recognising that education can serve both as an instrument for transformation, and for the reproduction of (unequal) social norms.

1.2 The significance of this research

As a country that has only relatively recently achieved democratic status, following a prolonged struggle for liberation, South Africa is in the throes of re-inventing itself, politically and socially. A number of academics exploring the social construction of identities in South Africa have argued that, in contrast to the rigid structuring of identity positions under apartheid, there is now a more 'fluid and open horizon for identity construction' (Singh, 1997:120). In this context, 'individuals and groups are actively choosing how to express their social identities at the same time as institutions are attempting to shape and construct their existence and options' (Liebenberg and Zegeye, 2001:329).

There is a body of existing literature on youth in South Africa that explores how changes, which occurred post-apartheid, may or may not have given rise to new subjectivities. In recognition of how educational institutions provide a space for identity formation, much of this research has been carried out in schools and universities (Soudien, 2007; McKinney, 2007; Dolby, 2000). This thesis has been particularly informed by the writings of Soudien (2012), whose work has explored how young people across different schooling contexts negotiate their identities in the discursive spaces made available to them. Soudien argues that, although South African youth draw on discourses that are 'distinctly different from those of their parents' (2007:xiv), the construction of identity and renegotiation of raced and classed positions in post-apartheid South Africa is rife with contradictions and complexities.

While recognising that South Africa has undergone, and is still undergoing, extensive social change, this change is 'taken up and experienced very unevenly by different groups of young people' (McLeod and Yates, 2006:4). In the existing literature on the born free generation, there has been an emphasis on exploring the processes of integration within multiracial schools and how youth from different population groups express their identities in these contexts (Dolby, 2000; Fleetwood, 2012; Soudien, 2012). While racially diverse student bodies potentially speak to South Africa's future, they are not reflective of the wider population and there is a need for more research that explores the experiences of the majority of South Africa's youth, namely black students attending black schools. Within the existing literature on black youth, the focus has been upon young people living in townships situated close to urban areas (Bray et al., 2010; Swartz et al., 2012). As apartheid geographies continue to structure the opportunities available for young people

in the post-apartheid era, I am interested in the largely neglected experiences of youth residing in townships in rural areas, often at a distance from tertiary institutions and employment opportunities. While there is a number of small classroom studies that address the spatial production of inequalities in South Africa (Fataar, 2007; Christie, 2013), these have not considered how space and aspiration intertwine. There is also an absence of qualitative research concerning youth experience in Mpumalanga, as studies have tended to focus upon the Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. My research addresses these omissions within the literature.

Within existing studies of the born free generation, there is an emerging body of work which explores the university experiences of first generation learners. While these studies enable greater understanding of the vulnerabilities that previously disadvantaged youth are particularly susceptible to upon entering university, they cannot attend to the experiences of the majority of young South Africans – those who do not make it into university, despite expressing hopes to do so. In endeavouring to understand what makes certain aspirations come into being, my interest in youth transitions avoids a focus on how young people are entering into the ‘post-school’ phase of their lives, a topic which existing literature explores (Bangen and Kapp, 2005; Newman and De Lannoy, 2014; Dawson, 2014). Instead, I am interested in exploring how student’s schooling and local as well as broader social environments promote a particular envisioning of the future.

My interest in the future trajectories that young people might have reason to value provides a meaningful addition to the burgeoning literature on South African youth’s consumption practices and the emerging ‘black middle class’ (Southall, 2016). In doing so, it highlights how the ‘middle class’ can be understood as an ‘aspirational category’ for young people residing in impoverished rural areas (Heiman et al., 2012:19). The term middle class implies a normative dimension, premised on aspirations of social mobility through education, diligent work, and achievement, and on certain ideals of professionalism, domestic life, and, more generally, respectability. By considering the intersecting influences of race, class and space, upon young people’s envisionings of the future, my work responds to Lentz’s (2015) request that more researchers explore why and how normative middle class discourses become an attractive means of positioning oneself and expressing one’s social aspirations.

While there has been a number of South African studies which investigate how students’ racialised identities are connected to their understandings of the apartheid past (McKinney, 2007; Walker, 2006), there has been little attention to what educational spaces are doing in the production of young people’s future imaginaries. The poststructural lens that I have adopted enables me to

explore how subjectivity does not exist in a vacuum but is performed and enacted in relation to particular circumstances and environments. In taking up a poststructural framing, I hope to provide a more nuanced understanding of the social forces that shape young people's realities, an understanding that is lacking in the existing literature on youth identity in South Africa, which has tended to over-emphasise individual biographies (De Lannoy and Newman, 2014). In this way, my work counters the limitations of studies which explore the resilient practices of students who come from contexts of adversity and yet 'make it,' despite the odds (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Ramphela, 2002). I argue that these studies are limited in that they only address the experiences of a small minority of young people, privileging individual accounts over seeking to understand the social fabric of which they are a part. Instead, I consider the ordinary, everyday ways through which young black South Africans move through their social worlds, focusing on stories of neither success nor destitution. This is important given that, within existing studies on youth in Africa, there has been a tendency to focus on cases of resilience or upon extreme or atypical cases that either demonise or romanticise young people, rather than explore their everyday experiences (Seekings, 2006).

I have chosen an ethnographic approach to attend to the local practices through which young people position themselves and their futures. This offers a micro-level exploration of how a specific group of young people, within a specific township, articulate their subjectivities within this particular post-apartheid moment. Ethnographic research methods are suited to a study that explores schooling and identity, as it enables extensive observations, inside and outside of the classroom. An ethnographic gaze allows for a focus beyond individual lives, providing a richer exploration of the contradictory and multiple identities, negotiated by both the subjects of my research and myself as the researcher. This provides an understanding of how identity positions are constantly under process in ways that reflect, but do not necessarily reproduce, the wider formations of inequality within South Africa. By focusing on the experiences of young people living in a rural region, I demonstrate the importance of recognising the intersections between race, class and space – an intersection I expand upon in the following section.

1.3 Race, Class and Space

Life within South Africa continues to be shaped by what Soudien (2012) calls the 'shadow of structure,' a curtain cast by the gross racial discrimination at the hand of the apartheid government. Given that apartheid was also a 'spatial engineering project' (Shephard and Murray, 2007:5), apartheid geographies remain inscribed into the landscape and lingering forms of racial segregation continue to form deep craters within the geographic and social terrain. In post-apartheid South Africa, who can move in and through particular spaces is now largely a matter of class mobility,

overlain with 'race', a construct which functions largely as a proxy for 'class' (Bray et al., 2008). While the intersectionality between class, race and space are not the only significant constructs to shape young South African's subjectivities, they are particularly significant for this thesis and as such, it is imperative that I unpack what I mean when discussing these terms.

Race has been typically conceived of in two ways. The first way, that of the biological essence of race espoused by the apartheid government, deems it inscribed in our genes, and producing characteristics that determine our physiognomic, physical, intellectual and in some views, cultural characteristics. In contrast, this thesis recognises race as a social construction, an identity category that has no significance in and of itself, yet retains primacy at the level of politics and ideology that conditions social relations (Soudien, 2012). While it is now commonly accepted that race is 'a modern invention, a fiction, or a social construct,' it remains necessary to better understand 'what conditions race is summoned-to-life and allowed to materialise within time and place' (Nayak, 2011: 554).

As South Africa made the transition into a world of seeming equal opportunity across racial categories, differing ideological positions regarding how to approach race arose within the liberation movement itself. While the ANC professed a commitment to 'non-racialism,' disavowing racial and ethnic categorisation, racial categories have remained at the forefront of many social transformation initiatives, for example through race-based affirmative action and Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). Nearly half a century of apartheid policies led to the normalisation of identities in racial terms so that 'whiteness', 'blackness', 'colouredness' and 'Indianness' have become naturalised as 'self-referential and reproductive regimes, embodied in legislation, physical space and possibility' (Soudien, 2012:30). As such, there lies a tension between the promise of a post-racial society and the persistence of racialised identities.

In this thesis, I draw upon the racial categories of 'black' and 'white', not to inscribe them in an essentialised way, but because these remain the terms that people use to describe themselves. While using these descriptors, I recognise that race is not a singular or stable signifier. An understanding of intersectionality is useful here, in noting how multiple identity locations intersect, so that subjects who have been assigned the same racial category can have vastly different experiences of the same phenomenon, based on, for example, their different class, ethnicity and gender.

Given that apartheid and capitalism were inextricably linked, the relationship between race and class has a complex history. Capitalist structures were at the root of apartheid because it was

fundamentally a system of economic exploitation of the (black) masses that drew on racist ideologies to justify this exploitation (Wolpe, 1988). Thus the 'struggle to destroy white supremacy is ultimately bound up with the very destruction of capitalism itself (Slovo 1976, in Durrheim et al., 2011:68). The fact that the liberation in 1994 took a political form that did not adequately address economic inequality has had implications for the subsequent realignment that has occurred between race and class. My understanding of class, elaborated upon later in this thesis (3.6), is that it is a relational phenomenon, which does 'not exist ready-made in reality' but 'must be constituted through material and symbolic struggles waged simultaneously over class and between classes' (Wacquant, 1992:57).

While South Africa continues to have grossly unequal living standards, ranked as the country with the highest GINI co-efficient in the world (Barr, 2017), the lingering racial character of these inequalities has shifted slightly since the end of apartheid. The lines between race and class are not as clear-cut as they were, largely due to the post-apartheid governments' affirmative action initiatives aimed at economically empowering previously disadvantaged groups (Seekings, 2008). Nonetheless, although there has been a slight de-racialisation of wealth and the emergence of the 'black middle class,' socio-economic inequalities persist and race remains a 'key marker of inequality – political, economic and social' (Bentley and Habib, 2008:9).

During apartheid, while legislative acts such as the Population Registration Act defined who black people were, the Group Areas Act designated where they could live. People who had been categorised as having different races were declared as belonging, and not belonging, to particular areas and to educational institutions within those areas. Decades of colonisation set the groundwork for these spatialised relations of power, which were developed and formalised by apartheid into 'a hybrid sovereignty that tied race to place in structurally unequal ways' (Christie, 2013:775). These formations of power and opportunity have proven difficult to change when it comes to accessing education in post-apartheid South Africa. As noted by Christie, 'differentiated patterns of access, provision and performance fall along the lines of historical geography, albeit with blurring forms as race gives way to class in segments of the system' (2013:775). Writing about youth specifically, Bray et al. (2010) emphasise the dramatically contrasting contexts within which South Africa's youth are raised. There is a marked difference between the experiences of those raised in 'townships' and the young people who have acquired the social and economic capital that enables them to draw upon the resources associated with the formerly 'whites-only' suburbs. The term township refers to a black residential area created by the segregationist policies of the former

South African government. Although the characteristics of housing in townships vary, they are generally characterised by 'small dwellings, densely packed within the community' (Swartz, 2009).

While a growing body of scholarship and autobiographical writing has challenged stereotyped portrayals of townships as crime-ridden and impoverished (Mbembe et al., 2004; Dlamini, 2009) and attempted to dismantle the township/suburb binary, negative perceptions of townships, conveyed particularly through the media, endure. Spatial practices are still racialised in post-apartheid South Africa and continue to be structured through racialised discourses of belonging and exclusion (Dixon et al., 2005). Through presenting depictions of the 'rural' township in relation to 'urban' or suburban environments, I am not attempting to construct a false dichotomy between the two but rather draw upon these terms in order to probe the multiple meanings that those who live in rural areas ascribed to both. Given my interest in the interrelationship between space and race in post-apartheid South Africa, my research questions explicitly refer to 'rural, black youth.' In drawing upon these terms, I hope to highlight the discursive significance of racial and spatial differentiations in the construction of youth identities.

1.4 Research Questions

At the heart of this thesis is the intention to explore 'the qualities of discourses that circulate' and which open or constrain the diverse ways that people can imagine themselves, in the school and beyond it (Yon, 2000:125). I draw upon Foucauldian approaches to discourse and subjectivity, engaging with feminist, poststructural and postcolonial theorisations to explore how young people understand and construct their identities through the interplay of gender, space, race and class. Even though young people take on particular discourses as their own, I argue that they do not choose freely in this process, but work within the opportunities and constraints afforded by their embodied positioning within relations of power (Pomerantz, 2008). My interest in processes of identity formation evokes Foucault's concern with how we become particular kinds of subjects who produce particular kinds of knowledge of the world (1984). The research questions to shape my study are as follows:

- 1.) How do rural, black youth construct future aspirations in post-apartheid South Africa?
- 2.) How is space implicated in the production of these young people's identities and their envisionings of the future?

Instead of approaching the concept of youth as a discrete social group or a developmental life-stage, I am interested in both the way youth are positioned and the ways they seek to position themselves in society (Christiansen, 2006:11). By focusing upon one secondary school in a rural

township in Mpumalanga, I explore how certain subjectivities are privileged within this environment, influencing what young people consider valuable and what they do not. I am interested in how my participants' future aspirations reflect the wider discourses that have produced them as subjects of a particular post-apartheid history. As such, this research interrogates how the discourse of the 'new South Africa' is transmitted within the schooling environments, homes and wider social and political arenas which youth occupy, thereby creating and structuring ways for young people to speak and think about their futures.

1.5 Travelling through text

In the existing literature on youth and post-school pathways, spatial metaphors concerning 'transitions' and 'journeys' occur frequently (Cuervo and Wyn, 2014). The idea of young people 'navigating' new territories, which features in the title of my thesis, encapsulates my interest in social and spatial mobility. Yet metaphors related to transitions can be restrictive in that they direct attention to markers of progress that are predetermined by wider discourses of normative trajectories. My work is less concerned with designated arrivals, but rather with the social imaginaries which inform where young people locate their past, present and future lives.

During the write up of this thesis, I attended a public lecture hosted by the University of Brighton, where Judith Butler responded to a keynote presentation on the *Politics of Public Life* by Ariane Carravera. In her response, she reflected on the need to ask the question 'what moves people?' At the risk of oversimplifying Butler's discussion, I found this simple yet evocative statement echoed my own interests – what is it that compels young South Africans towards particular ways of being? Ahmed, who traces the word 'emotion' to its Latin roots, 'emovere,' meaning 'to move, to move out,' takes up the idea of emotion as movement (2004:11). The connection between 'movement' and 'emotion' is significant in this study, as I explore the discourses proposed to young people concerning what comprises a 'good life' and how these discourses are laden with affect.

By using the word 'movement,' I am not wishing to imply a linear 'progression' from one place or state to the next. Instead, this movement could be circular, haphazard or even backwards, recognising that sometimes it takes great effort to stay still. In this way 'emotions are not only about movement, they are also about attachments ... what moves us, what makes us feel, is also that which holds us in place' (Ahmed, 2004:11). The term 'aspiration' in itself implies movement, given its origins in the Latin 'spirare' (to breathe) and 'spiritus' (spirit). If we connect acts of aspiring to acts of breathing we can see that, as integral as breathing is to our being, so too is it natural to 'aspire' and be moved towards some 'thing,' even if the thing in question requires minimal

movement at all. This involves recognising that what is deemed worth aspiring towards is located within wider discourses at play.

As much as I am interested in the journeys of young South Africans, I have written this thesis in a way that also reflects upon my journey as a researcher. While ethnographers have noted how travelling to different locations is key to the notion of the 'field' and ethnography itself (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997), I am drawn to the idea of a journey for its ability to evoke how researchers 'move' between locations (including geographical ones), ideas and relationships. I have attempted, as much as possible, not to cover the tracks which led me from the start of my ethnographic process to my final written product. Instead, I will provide signposts of the various paths that I have stumbled upon in writing this account, appreciating that the route I have taken provides only a partial perspective of an expansive and irreducible social landscape.

1.6 Structure of thesis

This thesis is organised into eight Chapters. The next three Chapters situate the study, contextually, theoretically and methodologically. The final three provide a thematic analysis of my data, which leads to a concluding chapter that synthesises my main findings and core contributions.

Chapter Two locates the study within its post-apartheid context. It looks specifically at education under apartheid, changes which have occurred within the new democracy and the main challenges currently confronting the majority of South African youth. I close Chapter Two with an overview of the historical formation of my fieldsite, and the influence of apartheid policies upon present circumstances there. In Chapter Three, I explore the empirical and theoretical literature which informs my research objectives and approach, elucidating my understanding of terms and concepts that are of pertinence throughout the thesis. In doing so, I highlight the importance of recognising the context from which particular terms have originated. Drawing upon poststructural theories, I explain my use of discursive approaches to subjectivity formation, in order to explore how young people's future aspirations perform particular gendered, classed and raced identities. I argue that these discourses of identity are spatially constructed and affectively negotiated.

Chapter Four expands upon my epistemological framework, drawing upon some of the theories covered in my literature review. I discuss how I believe that the reality I sought to represent can (and cannot) be known and how this understanding has led me towards particular research methods. While any ethnographer begins with 'foreshadowed' problems, as discussed in the opening of this chapter, Chapter Four elaborates upon the exploratory nature of my project. It

provides background context into Intaba³, the township where my fieldwork took place and Inyoni, the school that was my chief field site. The chapter concludes by describing how I analysed and interpreted my data and how I dealt with ethical concerns that arose.

Chapter Five addresses my first research question and explores the discourses that are available to my participants as they construct their future aspirations. I pay close attention to the messages to emerge from the classroom and curriculum of the subject Life Orientation (LO). In doing so, I argue that the students' educational environments proposed particular ideas concerning what constitutes a 'good education', what it means to be a 'good student' and live 'a good life.' My analysis explores how discourses of the 'good life' create boundaries around types of people and ways of living that are worthy of legitimacy, and those that are not. These delineations become crucial for subjectivity formation, as individuals draw upon the discourses available to them in order to make sense of, and create value within, their lives.

Chapter Six explores the concept of 'space,' arguing that young people's multiple and oft-contradictory relationships with different spaces has bearing on how they construct their identities and envision their futures. As both the capacity to consume and to be socially mobile was constricted during apartheid, I argue that ideas of the 'good life' are often expressed through the desire to engage in particular forms of material consumption, as well as access specific spaces. In demonstrating the tendency of my research participants to equate rurality with traditionalism, blackness and South Africa's past, while associating urban spaces with progress, whiteness and South Africa's future, I argue that spaces continue to be racialised and marked by the wounds of the past.

Having mapped out my participants' multiple senses of themselves in place and time, Chapter Seven focuses on the silences and contradictions within their narratives. In keeping with a poststructural framework, I explore how my research participants are discursively positioned as raced and gendered subjects, as well as how they respond to and negotiate these positions, in both subservient and subversive ways. I explore the silencing of some topics, such as inequality, sexuality and sexual health, as well as how different environments prohibit or enable what becomes permissible to express, and how to express it. In Chapter Eight I conclude my thesis with an overview of my findings and their contribution to the field of youth studies, as well as suggest avenues for further research.

³ The names of places within this study are pseudonyms.

Chapter 2: Background and Context

2.1 Introduction

Twenty-three years into democracy, South Africa has undergone significant changes, at a social and economic level. However, as the 2015/2016 student protests across tertiary education campuses attest, unequal educational opportunities remain amongst the greatest obstacles to equality in the post-apartheid state. While South Africa's 'Freedom Charter' specifies the right for each child to have an education that opens 'the doors of learning,' these doors remain closed for the majority of the population.

This Chapter situates my research and fieldsite within its historical context, demonstrating the ways in which the oppressive policies of apartheid cast an enduring shadow over contemporary South Africa, a legacy with particular bearing on education, social mobility and the politics of identity. It begins with an overview of the apartheid regime, paying particular attention to how its ideology was (re)produced through educational institutions. I follow this with a discussion of the various transformations and curricula innovations to have occurred with the new democratic dispensation.

As well as outlining the changes that have occurred within secondary and tertiary education and their impact upon the current range of post-school pathways, I provide an overview of some of the wider social realities that influence the experiences of young black South Africans. Recognising how unequal educational provision has shaped both apartheid and post-apartheid society, I will discuss the 2015/16 student protests that took place during my fieldwork, protests that stemmed from growing dissatisfaction with the state of higher education. While the first part of this Chapter looks at South Africa as a whole, the latter part focuses upon my fieldsite, the former homeland of KaNgwane, now in Mpumalanga province. By providing an historical overview of the formation of this area, I demonstrate the enduring effects of the apartheid policy of separate development upon young South African's sense of identity and belonging, a theme that will be elaborated in Chapter Six.

2.2 Apartheid: Implementation, Resistance and Reconciliation

The history of South Africa has been described as 'three centuries of fractured morality' (Krog, 1999:68). This spans the importation of slaves to the Cape by Dutch traders in the seventeenth century to the systematic exclusion, for most of the twentieth century, of ninety per cent of the country's population from political, civic and social rights under apartheid (Swartz, 2000). This thesis does not have the scope to provide an exhaustive history of colonialism within South Africa.

However, I will provide a brief overview of pre-apartheid history recognising the importance of extending further back into South Africa's pre-apartheid history to provide a historical perspective on the roots of racial segregation and oppression.

The origins of apartheid can be traced back to the arrival of the first Dutch and British settlers, who arrived in South Africa in 1652 and 1765 respectively (Marquard, 1963). The period from 1652 to 1902 in what is now South Africa was characterised by conflict. There was internal conflict amongst the African or black population as well as conflict among the white settlers who were invading their territories. Local populations found themselves caught up in conflicts between different settler groups, notably the British and the Afrikaners (also referred to as Dutch settlers or Boers). In 1843, Britain annexed the Natal and in the 1850s, it recognized the South Africa Republic (formerly the Transvaal, now Gauteng) and the Orange Free State (now the Free State) as Afrikaner States.

Between 1899 and 1902, Britain conquered the Afrikaner states in a savage guerrilla war which led to the death of some 30,000 Afrikaner women and children in British concentration camps. The war left the Afrikaners with a claim to a historical legacy of having fought for their freedom against imperialism. Later, these events were drawn upon to confirm Afrikaners in their version of history, a history of their own victimhood that denied an African dimension. In 1910, the British brought the Cape Colony, Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State together to form the Union of South Africa, a white-controlled, and self-governing British dominion. After 1910, racial discrimination led to the formation of the African National Congress (ANC) as a resistance movement to defend the rights of local peoples. The institutionalization of racial discrimination was not a unique characteristic of the Union government, but rather a practice that was common among the colonizing powers. For example, the carrying of pass books, a mechanism of control and oppression utilised by the apartheid government, dates back to 1809. At this time the British ensured that every 'Hottentot' (or 'Khoikhoi' – the population group deemed to have been the first inhabitants of Southern Africa) had to have a fixed abode and anyone who wished to move had to obtain a pass from their master or from a local official.

Meanwhile, the Union did little to unite the Afrikaners and the British. Poor Afrikaners in particular felt marginalized under the new dispensation, and their sense of disenfranchisement led to the development of a distinct Afrikaner national consciousness and Afrikaner identity based on the Afrikaans language, a common religious faith and a shared history. The National Party (NP), founded in 1914, ten years after the end of the Second Boer War, became the key organisation for

Afrikaners to protect and advance their interests. The NP believed that these interests could be served by following a policy of racial 'separateness' which would allow them to maintain their own identity and autonomy. As the previous section demonstrates, the NP did not invent racial segregation. In keeping with what had been pervasive colonial practice, most whites, both English and Afrikaners, lived apart from the non-white population, especially from the African majority. However, apartheid - a term that in Afrikaans means separateness - gave a formal sanction and an authoritative legislative face to existing practice. Interestingly, all white people, no matter their European origins, were simply considered white, while the government refused to recognize the common Bantu-speaking origin of most Africans, and classified them into nine separate African subgroups.

Within the next part of this chapter, I will focus on the influence of apartheid, which started with the election of the NP into government in 1948. The policy of apartheid was the enactment of numerous policies of 'separate development', which called for social and spatial divisions between different racial and ethnic groups in South Africa. From 1948 to the late 1980s, the NP government systematically implemented regulations that physically segregated population groups and gave them different legal treatment/rights.

The first important piece of legislation enacted was the 1950 Population Registration Act, which classified South Africans according to their racial and ethnic groups. Using these classifications, the government established further measures aimed at segregating the country, such as the 1950 Groups Areas Act, the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act and the 1959 Promotion of Self-Government Act. These acts allocated the best available land to the white population, whilst non-whites were forcibly moved to assigned 'homelands', or 'Bantustans', the areas where they were said to have originated from (Neame, 1962). The control over the movement of non-white people into white areas was restricted through the 1952 Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act, which required all non-white South Africans to carry an identification passbook. Under the 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, public amenities, such as beaches and cinemas, became racially segregated (Neame, 1962). The prevention of racial intermingling was applied to private spaces through the 1949 Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and the 1950 Immorality Act, which forbade marriage and sexual encounters between white and non-white people (Marais, 2001).

Internal resistance to apartheid took numerous forms, from non-violent demonstrations, protests and strikes to armed resistance. Young people were involved in the struggle from its earliest days, and more formally with the founding of the ANC Youth League in 1944, of which Nelson Mandela

was a founding member. During the 1970s and 1980s, youth leaders became particularly active under the leadership of the now iconised Steve Biko, who was tragically killed by the apartheid state in 1977. Biko believed that to overcome oppression, black people first had to recognise its causes. He developed a philosophy of Black Consciousness that sought to liberate black people from an oppressed mentality, rejecting a white monopoly on truth (Gibson, 2008). Led by Biko, the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) was formed, guided by Black Consciousness principles. The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) of the 1970s rejected the ethnic categorisations of African, Indian and coloured people, embracing a unifying understanding of 'blackness.' The South African use of 'Black Consciousness' as it was developed by Biko in particular (1987) was that 'blackness' is not an essentialist idea. Instead, it was used by non-white South Africans to deliberately construct a political understanding of what bound them together. 'Black' did not describe physical attributes but was 'a state of mind' (Soudien, 2012:13).

The rise of the BCM and formation of SASO raised the political consciousness of many black students in South Africa, a consciousness that is demonstrated through the 1976 Soweto Uprising, remembered today on the National Holiday 'Youth Day.' This day commemorates how, on the 16th of June 1976, 20,000 students marched through the township of Soweto to protest against a new language policy which made Afrikaans a compulsory language of instruction. The protest ended in tragedy as the police opened fire on the unarmed students and an estimated 575 young people lost their lives (Christie, 1985). The devastating consequences of this day, referred to as the 'Soweto Uprising,' was an important catalyst for change and a symbolic turning point in the struggle for freedom. The image of Hector Pieterse (in Appendix 2.5), a child who was shot dead by police, with his distraught sister at his side while he is being carried by another young man, sent shock waves through the international community and helped lead to boycotts against South Africa. While the introduction of Afrikaans alongside English as a medium of instruction is considered the immediate cause of the uprising, there are various factors behind the student unrest, including frustrations over overcrowded classrooms, underqualified teaching staff and the lack of proper services in schools (Kenney, 1991). However, the decision to teach in Afrikaans was particularly contentious, not only because teachers were not equipped to do so, but because Afrikaans was the language of the oppressor.

Throughout the '70s and '80s there was growing local and international opposition to the injustices of apartheid and by the end of the 1980s, pressure on the state became too much to bear and change became inevitable. As the 1990s approached and political violence escalated throughout the country, the NP made a compromise with the ANC and both parties agreed that they needed

to play a joint role in building a 'new' South Africa. Extensive negotiations between the NP, under the leadership of F.W de Klerk and the ANC, under Mandela, culminated in the formal ending of apartheid and the transition to a fully inclusive democracy with the 1994 election (Fiske and Ladd, 2004).

Prior to and in conjunction with the 1994 elections, discourses of democracy and nation building circulated within the public domain. Mandela's government aimed to cultivate ways of overcoming the deep racial divisions of the past, re-imagining South Africa as a united nation. Numerous symbols and metaphors were drawn upon to forge a shared sense of civic belonging, the first of which came in the form of references to the 'new South Africa' with its suggestions of the birth of a nation. Official symbols became evident through the re-designed South African flag and a new national anthem that sought 'to balance ethnic linguistic sensibilities' by drawing upon multiple languages (Muller, 2001:29). The harmonious co-existence of diversity desired by the post-apartheid state is captured through Bishop Desmond Tutu's term 'the Rainbow Nation.' While the discourse of 'rainbowism' has since been de-romanticised and come under public and academic scrutiny (Gqola, 2001), the term remains prevalent within post-apartheid public discourses, even if only by those who wish to point out its mythical status.

It would have been impossible to attempt this ambitious project of social integration without acknowledging the violence committed during half a decade of institutionalised oppression. The question of reconciliation was thus firmly on the national agenda and with the announcement of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) came into being. The core aim of the TRC was to promote national unity and reconciliation by exposing, as much as possible, the gross human rights violations that took place within or outside of South Africa between 1960 and 1994. The process was deemed by many as 'born of a political compromise,' (Mamdani, 1999:33) since amnesty was made available to perpetrators who fully disclosed their involvement in political atrocities. Although the TRC established an official history of apartheid's violent excesses, its accomplishments were limited and its critics have argued that meaningful reconciliation could only come with greater economic development and redistribution (Besteman, 2008:10).

One of the means by which economic development has been sought is through BBBEE, which aims to redress the inequalities of apartheid by giving previously disadvantaged groups (blacks, coloureds, Indians and Chinese) economic privileges, supporting transformation by enabling meaningful participation of these groups in the economy, as well as promoting access to finance

for black business ownership. Although BBBEE has been deemed praiseworthy by some, it has received numerous criticisms. Among these is the view that its chief accomplishment has been to aid the creation of a wealthy black middle class, comprising 10% of South Africa's black population, without significantly affecting the 60% of black South Africans who still live under the poverty threshold (Swartz, 2016:17).

2.3 Educational legacies: From pre to post-apartheid classrooms

In addition to the political and social history outlined above, I will now focus on the history of education for black youth in South Africa. The first school for non-Europeans in South Africa was opened in 1658, for slaves brought to the Cape from other colonies. Not only was the education provided elementary in quality, its core objective was socialising slaves into subordination, providing the means by which the British exercised social control, spreading their language and traditions into their colonies (Msila, 2007:147). Throughout the 19th century, missionary education expanded, although the limited number of schools meant that most black children did not attend. The aims of these educational initiatives are encapsulated in a quote from Sir George Grey, governor of the Cape in 1855:

‘If we leave the natives beyond our border ignorant barbarians, they will remain a race of troublesome marauders. We should try to make them a part of ourselves, with a common faith and common interests, useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue. Therefore, I propose that we make unremitting efforts to raise the natives in Christianity and civilization, by establishing among them missions connected with industrial schools.’

This history illustrates the ideological foundations behind education in apartheid South Africa. As the NP took power, education played a crucial role in promoting and reproducing apartheid ideology. In line with apartheid's 'separate development' agenda, schools were racially segregated and provided distinctive curricula and funding structures (Molteno, 1984). The Bantu Education Act of 1953 designed a different curriculum for 'whites' and 'non-whites,' justified as presenting a more 'realistic' education for 'non-white' students, providing them with technical rather than academic skills and ensuring the creation of a low skilled labour pool for the apartheid economy. As Molteno (1984:93) surmised, 'Bantu Education was to prepare young Africans psycho-ideologically for the position in which the Bantustans placed them physically and politically.' Schools acted as various 'Ideological State Apparatuses' through which the government was able to reproduce state ideology, preserve Afrikaner identity and ensure that economic and political control remained in the hands of the white, ruling elite (Althusser, 1993). Significantly fewer resources were spent on black, Indian and coloured education, with black schools receiving the least amount of funding. The inequality rife within this system is indicated through government records, which show that during

the early 1980s, an average of eight times more was spent on white learners than on their black counterparts (SAIRR, 1983).

Given the role that schools played in the perpetuation of social exclusion and injustice in South Africa, education was to be the vehicle for the realisation of the new constitution – ‘to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights’ (RSA, 1996). As such, the new democracy set out to ‘transform educational provision to substantially improve access, quality, equality and redress for learners’ (Pandor, 2008:17). The South African Schools Act of 1996 repealed all forms of Bantu Education, instituted policies of non-racialism, and put more money into historically disadvantaged schools. It created a single unified national system, increasing access for previously marginalised groups, decentralising school governance, revamping the curriculum (for more details, see the following section), reforming tertiary education and adopting pro-poor funding policies. This new education system included compulsory education for all young people ages 7-15 (or until the student reaches Grade Nine, whichever occurs first), thereby for the first time making education compulsory for the black majority (De Lannoy, 2008:58).

Despite the educational reforms to occur post-1994, increases in expenditure for schooling have not been accompanied by equally improved outcomes (Branson et al., 2015). Differences in the quality of schooling on offer within different neighbourhoods still reflects the socio-spatial divisions of the apartheid landscape. While all public schools are subsidised by the government, schools with students from higher socio-economic backgrounds, generally situated in more affluent, formerly ‘whites only’ suburbs, can supplement these subsidies by charging higher fees than schools which serve students from poorer backgrounds, often located in townships.

The schools which served predominantly white students under apartheid remain ‘functional’ (although now racially mixed), while the majority of those which served black learners are deemed ‘dysfunctional’ and unable to impart the necessary hard and soft skills to enable learners to enter into and complete tertiary education (Spaull, 2015:34). The poor quality of education in townships is well known, and reflected through the increasing number of parents who go to great lengths to send their children to formerly white schools (often referred to as ‘Former Model C’ schools) outside the townships because of a ‘better quality’ of education (Ramphela, 2002). The number of young people in private/independent schools has doubled in the past decade and according to recent statistics, 2.2 million children – 15% of school enrolment – travel over an hour each way between home and school (Cronje et al., 2015:15). While there has been a ‘flight’ of students out of former

black schools, there has been no movement of children classified as coloured, white and Indian into black schools (Soudien, 2012:143).

This flight is understandable given the poor reputation of township schools, the majority of which typically face challenges such as overcrowding, absenteeism, lack of textbooks, and inadequate infrastructure. Their inadequate infrastructure is encapsulated by a press statement, released by the social movement 'Equal Education,' which showed that of the 24 793 public schools in South Africa, 93% percent have no libraries, 95% percent have no science labs, 2 402 have no water supply, 93% schools have no toilets (Davis, 2013). The vast disparities between schools indicate that South Africa is now effectively operating a two-tier education system: a high quality one that caters for the racially mixed middle and upper classes and a large poor quality system that caters for the black poor (Vandeyar and Jansen, 2008).

2.4 Outcomes-based Education: The formation of the 'universal' subject

Since 1994, the government has initiated several curriculum-related reforms intended to democratise education and eradicate inequalities. The most established of these was Outcomes-based Education (OBE) or Curriculum 2005. Whereas the apartheid system regarded the teacher as the authority and discouraged questioning, OBE emphasised experiential and applied learning, deemed the teacher as a facilitator to learning and encouraged critical thinking and learner participation (Cross et al., 2002). Borrowed from curricular developments in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, the policy came to South Africa as an example of 'best-practice' elsewhere (Soudien, 2012:332). It was presented as a solution to address the needs of the economy and produce workers more aligned to changing local and global markets (Cross et al., 2002). Proponents of OBE positioned it as a means to foster democracy and promote a new national identity (Department of Education, 2003).

The implementation of the new curriculum proved problematic, however, and its critics highlighted that the curriculum followed a Western model, inappropriate for the South African context (Jansen, 1998; 1999; Cross et al, 2002). The majority of educators, parents and students had not participated in the development of OBE and instead the curriculum was designed primarily by a white, small elite. One of the consequences of this was that many educators did not sufficiently understand the model or how to implement it. In addition, poor planning resulted in problems with the distribution of teaching materials, and educators did not receive enough support and training to implement the curriculum effectively (Jansen, 1998; 1999). The OBE curriculum has also been critiqued for placing a strong emphasis on the knowledge of learners, with teaching content

contingent on the experiences and knowledge base of the class and the educator, as well as the resources available in schools which were, given the post-apartheid context, hugely variable and unequal (Soudien, 2012).

The gulf between students in former white schools and former black schools remained vast, a disparity demonstrated through the hugely differential outcomes from several waves of attainment tests conducted throughout the country (Soudien, 2012). In 2010, the ANC decided to phase out OBE given its flaws and replace it with a system that takes greater consideration of the realities of the South African education sector. It has been replaced by the new National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), which was gradually phased in between 2012 and 2014.

The progressive, independent modern learner, as envisioned by the OBE curriculum, is still reflected in the vision of the ideal student as espoused by the Life Orientation (LO) curriculum, a subject that came into being with the launch of OBE. LO is a compulsory part of the primary and secondary school curriculum that is concerned with the personal, social, intellectual, spiritual and physical development of learners, so that they can 'achieve their full potential' in the new democracy of South Africa and 'make the most of life's opportunities' (Department of Education, 2003:9). Educational institutions are expected to use the LO classroom to equip and support learners facing the complex challenges that characterise living conditions for the majority of young South Africans. These include health problems (e.g. HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malnutrition, alcohol abuse etc.), environmental and safety issues, youth risk behaviour, extreme poverty and unemployment. The coursework is divided into several sections: Development of the Self in Society, Physical Fitness and Health, Careers and career choices, Democracy and Human Rights, Study Skills and Social and Environmental Responsibility. This thesis looks particularly at the 'Careers and career choices' component.

2.5 Education pathways

In South Africa, 'Higher Education' includes undergraduate and postgraduate education, certifications and diplomas and incorporates universities and universities of technology. 'Further Education' or Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)⁴ includes vocational training, career-oriented education and training offered in technological colleges, community colleges and private colleges. There are three ways of passing the government assessed matric examinations, which can lead students into different post-school educational pursuits. A 'bachelor degree pass' provides entrance into degrees at universities, a 'diploma pass' grants entrance into universities of

⁴ TVET colleges were originally referred to as FET (Further Education and Training) colleges and are still called this by my participants, despite an official name change in 2014. For this reason, TVET and FET will be used interchangeably throughout this text.

technology or diploma courses and a 'higher certificate pass' allows students to attend vocational colleges or complete a certificate course.

Post 1994, the tertiary education sector was restructured to deal with the fragmented and racialised systems inherited from apartheid. There are currently 23 institutions: 11 traditional universities, six universities of technology and six comprehensive universities (mergers between comprehensive and technical universities) (Branson et al., 2015:43). Among the universities are the formerly 'white' university and formerly 'black' universities. While these classifications no longer apply, their legacy lingers, and formerly black universities struggle to attract non-black students. Youth graduating from historically black institutions face higher levels and longer periods of unemployment. While there are numerous reasons why this may be so, one is that employers perceive the quality of education offered at these institutions to be of inferior quality (Moleke, 2006).

While traditional universities are the most aspired for pathway for South African youth across different contexts, they also have the most stringent entrance requirements, requiring a bachelor degree pass in addition to specific subjects depending on the programme chosen, and a pass on an internal entrance examination, the National Benchmark Test (NBT). The 2012 National Senior Certificate (grade twelve or 'matric') results indicated a 73.9% pass rate – but only 26.6% of those tested qualified for university. The matric pass rate is in itself not an indicator of the state of education in South Africa, as the matric class reflects the top tier of learners who have remained in the schooling system. This is because while South Africa has high levels of school enrolment and attendance amongst children aged seven to thirteen, schooling is compulsory only until the age of 15 (the end of Grade Nine) and the attendance rate decreases rapidly from there onwards. To illustrate: of 100 learners who started school in 2003, only 49 made it to matric in 2014; 37 passed; and 14 are qualified to go to university (Spaull, 2015:36). The students in my study are representative of those who have remained within the schooling system and are thus, on a relative scale, high academic achievers. While passing matric is in itself an achievement, it is generally not enough to enable entry into aspired for professions.

In contrast, a standard school-leaving certificate, calculated at a lower rate than a 'bachelor degree pass' suffices for technical certifications, diplomas or degrees. Students do not require matric to attend TVET colleges and can attend these after only having reached Grade 10. For these reasons, further educational programmes are deemed the more realistic option for the majority of young South Africans. Studies indicate, however, that black students often associate vocational work with the degrading working conditions their parents had to endure during apartheid (Ramphela, 2002)

and there is a strong preference for 'white collared jobs' and university degrees (Needham and Papier, 2011). Malherbe, who compiled the first major history of South African education, maintained that vocational education was 'never seriously applied to the well-to-do,' noting the tendency to believe that while 'work is honourable for the poor, it is 'dishonourable for the well-to-do' (1977:173). With this in mind, we can see how, for many young black South Africans in the new democracy, vocational colleges may not provide them with the prospect of a future they have reason to value.

When attempting to discern how to break intergenerational cycles of poverty, there is a widespread public perception, echoed through large-scale quantitative studies, that post-school education increases young people's employability and earning potential. Recent statistics from South Africa indicate that those with some form of tertiary education are more than twice as likely to be formally employed when compared to those with incomplete schooling (Cloete, 2009:8). Yet few young South Africans access education and training after school and even fewer successfully complete their qualification. That said, substantial changes have occurred within the tertiary education sector, most notably through the doubling of the number of black students enrolled in universities since 1995. Unfortunately this doubling accounts for only 16% of the black population between the ages of 20 and 24 against the 55% of young white people attending universities (Cronje et al., 2015).

In addition, only 38% of students admitted to university are likely to obtain their three or four year degrees within five years. 51% are unlikely to graduate at all (Cronje et al., 2015:2). While reasons for drop-out are numerous and beyond the scope of this study (see Murray, 2014), the unpreparedness of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds upon entering into university has raised concerns regarding the lack of appropriate support structures and the need for institutions to deal constructively with diversity in students' educational, linguistic and socio-economic background (Branson et al., 2015:51).

Aspirations aside, there remains numerous practical obstacles in student's ways, the first and arguably most significant being finances. The cost of higher education institutions is particularly expensive and includes not only tuition fees, but also application fees, the NBT, textbooks, transport, accommodation and living expenses. Families often go to extraordinary lengths to help finance further education, but often need supplementary support (De Lannoy, 2011). The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) provides low-income learners with loans based on a financial means test and academic promise. Although the governments support for students has increased 10-fold between 1996 and 2011, many learners still do not receive funding and others receive funding that does not sufficiently cover living expenses (De Villiers et al., 2013). The

demand for funding far exceeds what is available. University fees have also increased rapidly over the past two decades and are continuing to increase (Letseka et al., 2009), leading to a proliferation in the number of students, referred to as the 'missing middle', who fall above the NSFAS threshold but still cannot afford fees (Branson et al., 2015:45). Therefore, while universities may be the more desired post-school destinations, further education colleges are often the more realistic option available to students based on their academic achievements and financial means.

Another contributing factor to influence who accesses different post-school pathways is 'career guidance' or in many cases, the lack thereof. Given that matric subjects are chosen in Grade Nine (at the age of approximately fifteen), when employment seems a distant prospect, choices may be compounded by poor guidance around subject choice and future possibilities. The lack of externally marked standardised tests prior to the matric exam as well as the corruption of mark allocations, discussed further in Chapter Five, make it difficult for students to form realistic expectations of their matric results and accordingly to plan their futures. It is also not clear how students navigate the cumbersome post-schooling application process. Currently, each institution has its own application requirements and deadlines. Application forms can be lengthy and complex to fill out and financial aid applications require additional forms and documentation that may not be readily available (such as parents' payslips, death certificates or proof of income of a household). Many institutions want applications to be submitted online and charge an application fee, which makes multiple applications costly and for young people who do not have access to a computer or basic computer literacy, a difficult if not impossible task (Papier, 2009). These factors, combined with the reality that 'born free' students will often be the first in their families to have reached matric and be in a position to consider tertiary education, make it hard for young people to apply for post-school programmes (Branson et al., 2015).

The National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS), which compares the outcomes of parents from their children, show that the number of completed years of education have increased substantially across the generations: from three years for grandparents, to five – six years for parents, and an average of 10 years for the current generation (Cronje et al., 2015). However, this upward trend in education has not always translated into increased employment or a change in the type of employment that people take up. In the first quarter of 2015, the official youth unemployment rate was 37% for youth between the ages of 15 and 34 years (which equates to approximately 3,646,000 young people) (StatsSA, 2015). Unemployment among black male born frees of working age (15 to 24) was running at 53% and among their female equivalents at 61% (Graham and Mlatsheni, 2015:51). Altogether, 1.13 million black born frees of both sexes were recorded as jobless and a

third of young people aged 15 to 19 lived in households where no one is employed (Cronje et al., 2015:2,9). Race plays a pertinent role as just over 40% of black youth and 32% of coloured youth are unemployed, compared to 23% of Indian and 11% of white youth (StatsSA, 2015). Despite improvements in education and access to household services, higher levels of schooling have not necessarily translated into young people acquiring better jobs than their parents, even among those who are employed. Almost half of all black children in the country end up with a job that sits at the same skills level as their parents, which are generally among the lowest skills levels in the country (De Lannoy et al., 2015).

2.6 Contexts of adversity: Young South African's living conditions

Young people living in townships are particularly susceptible to a number of societal challenges; including compromised health, interrupted education, parental death or absence, teenage pregnancy, criminal activity, alcoholism and drug abuse (Perold et al., 2012:31-34). Many young South Africans also have to deal with the negative effects of high levels of crime as well as physical and/or sexual violence (Theron and Dalzell, 2006).

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS among South Africans aged 15-24 years is at 8.5% and 'has become a major health concern' (Cronje et al., 2015:19). Despite the increased availability of antiretroviral treatment in hospitals across the country, of the 1.09 million born frees who need treatment, 25% are receiving it (Cronje et al., 2015:2). The median age of first sexual contact for youth aged 15-24 is 17 years (Shisana et al., 2005) and although knowledge about the prevention of HIV is generally high, women in this age group have the lowest knowledge of HIV transmission (Shisana et al., 2009). Young female South African ages 15 – 19 are at the highest risk of HIV and eight times more likely to be HIV positive than similarly aged men (Shisana et al., 2014:26). While women have a higher biological susceptibility to HIV, 'a host of sociocultural and economic factors rooted in gender power inequities [further] exacerbate women's vulnerability to infection' (Pettifor et al., 2004).

Women are also affected by high rates of youth pregnancy, which is associated with health risks and socio-economic costs. Pregnancy and childbearing contribute significantly to women falling behind and dropping out of school, as well as discrimination within and exclusion from school (Menendez et al., 2014). According to a study conducted in Mpumalanga, women continue to bear the greater burden of child care, a reality linked to gendered perceptions of what constitutes the 'male' and 'female' role in families (Makiwane et al., 2012:6).

Having lost one or both of their parents, largely to AIDS, 3.24 million of the country's 18.57 million children (people below the age of eighteen) are orphans (Cronje et al., 2015:2). Research from Mpumalanga indicates the prevalence of multigenerational families, consisting of children, parents and grandparents. With the pervasiveness of AIDS, child-headed households are also becoming increasingly common (Makiwane et al., 2012:6), and was the case for several of the students at Inyoni.

While statistics relating to health remain dire, there are numerous indications of improved living conditions in South Africa. This includes the increase in access to television sets from 60% of adults in 2005 to 92% in 2013 and cell phone access, which, at the time of my study, was running at extremely high levels of 135 phones for every hundred people (Cronje et al., 2015:4). Statistics indicate that nine out of every ten South African households own a cell phone, and many urban and rural households access the internet via mobile phones. Internet usage had increased from 5.4 per hundred people to 41 over that same period, although 71% of black households still have no access to the Internet (Cronje et al., 2015: 19). The use of cell phones is significant, given that young people aged 15 – 24 account for nearly 72% of mobile ownership (Burns et al., 2015:89).

Any discussion on South African young people's living conditions would be incomplete without mentioning the 'social wage package', introduced by the post-apartheid government as a means to redress social inequality. This package includes social grants, no-fee schools, free public health and the delivery of Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses (De Lannoy et al., 2015:22). The provision of social services currently accounts for more than 50% of the government's annual budget and of the 18.57 million children in the country, 11.30 million (almost 61%) receive means-tested child support grants from the state. While social grants have changed people's circumstances, they are insufficient alone to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty. The grants target children and young people (ages 18 and below), pensioners (65+ years), and those with a disability (between the ages of 18 and 65 years). As such, unless a young person over eighteen has a disability or a child, they do not qualify to receive resources from the state. Many older people utilise their old age pensions to support children and grandchildren. For example, analyses of NIDS have indicated that job search among young people increase in households that access the Old Age Pension (De Lannoy et al., 2015:27).

2.7 The rise of youth social movements

Studies of the born frees have pointed at their alienation from democratic culture, characterised by low levels of participation in democratic institutions and poor voter turnout (Mattes, 2011). Almost

two million people aged 18 or 19 were entitled to vote in the national and provincial elections held in May 2014 but only 31% of this group registered to vote (Cronje et al., 2015:22). This lack of participation is echoed in young South Africans reportedly low levels of trust in politicians, political parties and local government (Malila et al., 2013). Yet despite a lack of involvement in formal political activities, young people have been at the forefront of recent protests seeking to shift structural and systemic oppression (Burns et al., 2015:85).

One of the first and most significant of these protests began when, on March 9th 2015, Chumani Maxwele, a political science student at the University of Cape Town (UCT), threw human faeces at a statue of the British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes. This statue of Rhodes has been positioned as a centrepiece of the UCT campus since 1934, overlooking the city of Cape Town that lies beneath it. The 'defamation' of the statue generated widespread international media coverage, a contrast of impassioned and indignant commentary from the public and what is referred to as the Rhodes Must Fall Movement (#RMF). The same spirit of activism has emerged at other tertiary institutions in South Africa, where Western epistemology as well as the raced, classed and gendered dimensions which continue to shape access to education in South Africa, are being challenged. The RMF movement poignantly revealed how, to Maxwele and his generation, the idea of 'freedom was an illusion, a promise heard but not truly experienced' (Njamnjoh, 2016:78). One representation of 'all that is wrong' is reflected through how, in 20 July 2014, only 4% of the professors at South African universities were black South Africans (Njamnjoh, 2016:88).

The RMF movement was followed by the October 2015 student strikes at universities, with students mobilising under the banner of '#Fees must Fall.' These protests were organised following the announcement of a 10.5% fee increase and 6% registration fee increase proposed by South African universities for 2016. The protests, which spread across the country and led to the shutdown of the majority of universities and technical colleges, encompassed the largest South African student movement since the 1976 Soweto Riots. While students succeeded in their aims of a 0% increase for 2016, this did not extend to 2017 and protests have been ongoing, causing Booysen to note that 'we are analysing a moving target' (2016:1). Further demands have included a call for free education and to put an end to the outsourcing of workers on campuses. While the solidarity of the protest action was short-lived and the aims of students were far from homogenous, these protests brought South African youth into the spotlight, both as agents of change and threats to the establishment.

While signifying the symbolic potency of these protests, it is also important to note that they have been largely mobilised by students who obtained the social, cultural and economic capital

necessary to enter into tertiary education. Their political activism does not necessarily speak to the experiences of learners still at secondary school and especially not to those from rural areas. Among other factors, this is demonstrated through recognising the role that social media played and continues to play in the mobilisation of South African youth (Bosch, 2017). Given the low levels of internet access for young black people, particularly those residing in rural townships, engagement in social movements is not a 'free for all.' As noted by Chigumadzi (2015), the call for transformation within the landscape of higher education in South Africa is not spearheaded solely by the disadvantaged strata of society but consists largely of the emerging 'black middle class' or what she refers to as 'conscious coconuts,' a mostly urban and educated generation of protagonists on the political scene. As my first data analysis, Chapter Five, will show, their voices contrast sharply to those of my research participants.

2.8 Regional Focus: The former homeland of KaNgwane

As mentioned in my Introduction, this thesis focuses upon the often-overlooked experiences of rural youth. My research took place in Intaba township in the Ehlanzeni district of Mpumalanga province. Mpumalanga, 'the place where the sun rises,'⁵ is approximately 200 km from Johannesburg, and shares its borders with Swaziland and Mozambique. Probably best known for containing the Kruger National Park nature reserve, the economy of the province relies upon its tourism, mining and agricultural industry.

According to Statistics obtained in 2013, Mpumalanga's percentage share of the national population of 51.77 million was 7.8 per cent. The poverty rate of the province was declared as 36.9%, with 1.52 million of its citizens living in households below the poverty income (StatsSA, 2013). As is the case across South Africa, Mpumalanga is marred by unequal incomes across races and unemployment. While the Department of Education of Mpumalanga annually receives a budget allowance of approximately 44% of the total provincial budget (StatsSA, 2013), the latest community survey I was able to access recorded that only 6.7% of Ehlanzeni's population has received post-school education, and only 29.5% has received secondary schooling (StatsSA Community Survey, 2007). In 2012, the matric pass rate, at 70.0 % was the third lowest in the country. There are several vocational colleges in the province and in 2014 the University of Mpumalanga was established, although to date only offers few degree programmes.

While these statistics situate Mpumalanga within the present, they do not offer insight into its historical formations. In order to understand this better, it is necessary to refer back to apartheid's

⁵ In siSwati, Ndebele, Zulu and Xhosa.

policies of separate development and its construction of 'Homelands' or 'Bantustans.' The development of these areas demonstrates the government's ruthless racial segregation through the deliberate organisation of space and political economy to benefit the minority white population. Presented as a means of enabling non-white population groups to govern themselves, the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 established tribal, regional and territorial authorities within black areas (Malan and Hattingh, 1976:8). The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 identified eight 'black national units' and articulated the national desire to move these units towards self-governing status (Malan and Hattingh, 1976). In total, ten homelands were created by the apartheid regime. Bantustans were splintered so that powerful resources – land and minerals – were secured in white hands with networks of transport and communication largely bypassing Bantustans (Christie, 2013).

Since the demise of apartheid, these homelands were integrated within the land previously allocated to whites only and nine new provinces were formed. The former homeland of KaNgwane is now within Mpumalanga. In 1993, KaNgwane became part of the South African province of the Eastern Transvaal, which changed to Mpumalanga in 1995. I have provided a map of the former homelands and current provinces in Appendix 1.1 and 1.2. The second smallest homeland in the country, KaNgwane was often identified as the Swazi homeland. The border between Swaziland and South Africa (then the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek) was settled in the Pretorius and Alleyne Commissions of 1866 and 1879 and later ratified by the Pretoria Convention of 1881 and the London Convention of 1884 (Van Jaarsveld, 2007). This meant that all Swazi chieftains in South Africa fell under the authority of the Union of South Africa after 1910 and under the Republic of South Africa after 1961. With the establishment of the Swazi Territorial Authority in April 1976, the Swazis of South Africa became a self-governing people with their own central authority in KaNgwane (Van Jaarsveld, 2007:32).

While the boundaries of the homelands were erased through their political reincorporation, apartheid spatial planning continues to influence the material realities of rural residents. A number of factors have reduced opportunities within the region, such as its poor soil quality, scarcity of water for irrigation and limited access to markets for the sale of goods. For these reasons rural households have been forced to diversify into a host of formal and informal activities, including the selling of fruits and vegetables from neighbouring farms, selling of livestock, car repair, shoe repair, security work, domestic work, and manufacturing (King, 2007). As with many other rural communities in South Africa, the local tribal authorities provide access to a variety of assets, including land title and certain environmental resources. The authority of the chieftaincy is

questionable, revered by some and disregarded by others. The complex connections that young people in Intaba have in relation to a 'rural' past and imaginings of an 'urban' future is a central concern within this thesis, and will be explored further in Chapter Six.

Research concerning residential areas has shown that even though many South Africans of different racial origins may now potentially live among one another, most continue to live in racially segregated spaces. One reason for this is that choice is largely constrained by socio-economic factors, as the majority of South Africans cannot afford to live in the more affluent, historically whites-only suburbs (Seekings, 2008). Although residential areas, school and leisure spaces have officially become desegregated, many of these spaces remain racially exclusive. In environments where different racial and ethnic groups have ended up living side by side, research indicates that interaction between different groups is limited. Instead, people continue to frequent particular shops or particular leisure spaces where their racial group is perceived to be the majority (Lemanski, 2006).

This leads to what Valentine (2008) describes as 'parallel lives', whereby diverse peoples co-exist, but this does not necessarily result in contact. Durrheim et al. (2011) further point out that while a vast number of black South Africans have little to no interactions with white people, the majority of the white population have casual and close contact with black South Africans. This is partly because inter-racial contact in urban areas is higher than in rural areas, and while most white people are urbanised, a large number of black South Africans reside in rural areas where interactions with white people are less frequent (Seekings, 2008).

While statistics indicate that black South Africans are more likely to be the victims of crime than whites (Durrheim et al., 2011), discourses of crime, particularly those circulating within the media, routinely portray white people as prime targets. Of even greater discursive significance than crime itself is the fear of crime which is a 'coded form of racial discourse' (Dawson, 2006:132). As argued by Dawson, with the demise of the official racist lexicon of apartheid, 'the discourses of crime and security have become the primary conceptual frame through which the economically hegemonic white minority represents national culture' (Dawson, 2006:132).

Although my participants had limited exposure to South Africans deemed as belonging to different races, they were exposed to black people with different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. While Intaba was predominantly siSwati speaking and made up of people who consider themselves, in the words of one matric student, '*Swazi but not from Swaziland*' (Phil), it was home to people of Shangaan, Shona and Zulu backgrounds, to name a few. Students and teachers often identified

with different ethnic backgrounds and spoke different languages in their homes. Given that many of South Africa's official eleven languages share the same linguistic bases, students from non-siSwati speaking backgrounds told me that they were still able to communicate with one another confidently and engage with the siSwati syllabus. Within South Africa, the idea of 'ethnicity' has been historically tainted through its use as a political tool. This is because part of the NP's divide-and-rule strategy was to exploit ethnic differences, differences that have subsequently been exposed as being 'partially invented, reinforced and entrenched by apartheid' (Adam, 1994:25). In Intaba, teachers and students rarely referred to one another's ethnicity. This might have been different if my study had taken place in an urban environment with more diverse ethnicities present or in part of the country to have experienced some of the recent xenophobic attacks (Crush, 2008).

2.9 Conclusion

Within this Chapter I have described some of the significant circumstances to shape the experiences of South Africa's 'born free' generation. I have illustrated how, as the generation whose lives are unfolding in a politically liberated South Africa, they have been subject to a range of policies and interventions aimed at mitigating the inequalities of the past. This includes the establishment of an overarching educational system, curricular developments, affirmative action policies and the expansion of a social grant system. As well as providing an overview of the history of apartheid and its institutionalisation of racial segregation, and of the current social and educational climate, I have offered some insight into recent youth-led social movements. While these protests took place at a distance from my fieldsite, they are significant reflections of 'South Africa's unfinished business' and how young people are speaking to power in markedly different ways.

While recognising the structural changes to have occurred since 1994, I have outlined the ongoing racial segregation and inequalities that continue to influence general living conditions and opportunities for South Africa's rural youth. As this Chapter has indicated, the participants in my study, who live in a rural zone allocated to their families by the apartheid regime, are navigating a world characterised by high levels of inequality and poverty that is the consequence of deliberate apartheid-era policies. The pervasive stark physical and material deficits which form part of their daily realities speak to continuity rather than generational change, and indicate that the majority of black South African youth continue to be growing up in contexts of immense disadvantage.

Chapter 3: Tracing the ‘ruins’ – A journey through literature

3.1 Introduction

In the social sciences the lore of objectivity relies on the separation of the intellectual project from its process of production. The false paths, the endless labours, the turns now this way and now that, the theories abandoned, the data collected but never presented – all lie concealed behind the finished product (Burawoy, 1991:8).

At the start of undertaking this thesis, I recognised the need for a theoretical framework through which to interrogate the concepts that are central in my study, such as ‘youth’, ‘transitions’ and ‘aspiration.’ I initially regarded theory as something to be integrated into the final research product, rather than of crucial significance in the shaping of the research process and myself as a researcher. This assumption reflected the position from which I began my doctorate, having recently worked for an educational NGO in Mpumalanga, and brimming with expectations and desires for what I hoped my research could achieve.

Through familiarising myself with a range of writings deemed as ‘poststructural’, ‘postcolonial’ and ‘feminist’ in orientation, I became aware of how theoretical concerns shape the design and conduct of every research project. The intention of this chapter is to position my study in relation to substantive research findings, as well as theoretically. It follows my journey through both empirical and theoretical literature; a road not marked by yellow bricks, but interspersed with foggy dirt roads and highways I felt unlicensed upon which to travel. In contradiction to the epigraph written by Burawoy, I do not consider the researcher to encounter ‘false paths’ because even the plethora of work that I engaged with but chose not to draw upon has helped me to discern what I now value as the most conducive means of analysing my data.

By working through ‘the ruins’ of my thought processes (St. Pierre et al., 2000), I hope to demonstrate how the practice of doing ethnography has opened up spaces for further inquiry and enabled me to reconsider some of the original assumptions that I brought with me to my fieldsite. Before I explicate my theoretical framework, it is important that I situate my research within the field of ‘youth studies’ and by doing so, explain how I understand the terms ‘youth’ and ‘transition.’ In tracing the origins of these concepts to predominantly Western approaches, I demonstrate the particular discursive work that these terms do, evoking connotations of young people as incomplete and not yet ‘adult,’ but on a linear pathway towards an envisioned adulthood. In contrast, I reflect upon the importance of viewing ‘youth transitions’ as more than a distinct stage or marker between

youth and adulthood. Instead, it encompasses a potentially protracted (and not necessarily realised) realm that links youth's experiences of the past and present with their imaginings towards the future.

I will follow my explanation of how I understand 'youth' and 'transitions' by exploring how the term 'aspiration' has been framed within South African and international studies. Using aspiration as a lens through which to unpack the relationship between 'structure' and 'agency,' I will consider the usefulness of Bourdieu's (1977, 2002, 1997) theories in resisting the binary construction of these concepts. From here, I discuss the recent trend within youth studies that has involved understanding young people's transitional experiences through the works of late modern theorists, Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992). In demonstrating the limitations of these approaches, which I argue privilege individualisation and agency at the expense of ignoring the structural barriers that continue to have bearing on young people's lives, I explain why I turned towards poststructural and feminist theories to understand youth identities. By unpacking key concepts such as 'discourse', 'subjectivity' and 'performativity', I explain how these theories have led me towards an understanding of identity whereby young people's aspirations and movement towards their futures are understood not as determined, but as shaped by the intersections of class, race and gender. My Chapter will conclude with a discussion regarding how theories of 'affect' can provide meaningful analytic tools through which to explore subjectivity as felt and embedded within particular histories, spaces and social structures.

3.2 Theorising 'youth' and 'youth transitions'

Beneath the broad banner of youth studies, 'youth' are often defined in culturally specific ways. While definitions usually involve age categories, these vary across contexts as the prevailing social, political and economic relations of any given society provide the meanings of age. South Africa classifies youth as being between the ages of 14 and 35 years, whereas 'developed' nations typically have an upper age limit of 25 years (Graham, 2012:6). This illustrates how understandings of childhood and youth do not solely refer to biology, and 'youth' is 'not a fixed demographic cohort' (De Boeck and Honwana, 2005:4). Instead, classifications of young people are often strategic and can be contested. This is evident through the use of terms such as 'child soldier', 'teenage mother' and 'youth violence,' among others. Such labels 'authorise the interpretation of biological chronology in social terms that may shift according to socio-political circumstances' (Bucholtz, 2002:527). Yet despite a lack of consensus around the topic of age, the category of youth is commonly viewed as a period of transition – the liminal phase between childhood and adulthood (Kehily, 2007). What this 'transition' means is variable, as lives are shaped along multiple paths of

transition rather than a single path or through a predefined set of stages, and the possibilities available to young people varies greatly across contexts (Johnson-Hanks, 2002).

As both an 'emerging influence' and 'submerged by power' (Coulter, 1998), 'youth' occupy numerous positions at once. This is evident through the ways in which public discourses have positioned young people both as 'vandals' and 'breakers', as well as 'vanguards' and 'makers' who create new networks, economic opportunities, cultural developments and social criticisms of the worlds they occupy (Honwana and de Boeck, 2005). Poststructural theories have alerted me to the different language used to describe 'youth,' a concept which is supposedly neutral and ungendered but remains implicitly male and, in being defined differently within particular contexts, has served particular purposes.

Within existing literature, most theories about childhood and youth have originated from the West and imposed Western notions onto the Global South with little regard for these young people's actual realities (Diptee and Trotman, 2014:437). While there has been an increasing focus on exploring the lives of youth in developing countries, much of the global policy discourse is still concerned with young people's 'transition into adulthood' (Morrow, 2013). This implies that individuals develop in linear ways, separate from their families and communities, and that there are identifiable features that indicate a 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' transition to adulthood, which is understood in normative and universalising terms. Depending on the social circumstances of the young person, it has been assumed that transitioning includes all or some of the following experiences: entering secondary school, leaving school, entering further education, training or employment, moving away from the birth family, entering marriage, having children, and voting (Cuervo and Wyn, 2014). Such an understanding of 'transition' has been critiqued for its assumption of a linear progression through a number of 'stages' by which young people enter into 'adulthood' (Gale and Parker, 2014:739). Social scientists have argued that it owes too much to naturalistic, universal discourses of psychosocial development (Cohen and Ainley, 2000), which aim to ensure that 'young people are steered on a path into healthy adulthood' (Horowitz and Bromnick, 2007:209). These discourses valorise and normalise particular 'pathways,' espousing ideals that are largely Western, highly classed, and which are particularly difficult for youth in 'Third World' settings to emulate (Jeffrey and McDowell, 2004:137). This means that the lives of young people that do not align with these established markers of progress too easily become invisible or pathologised.

Despite immense disparities in the experiences of youth across contexts, international policy literature on transitions often fails to reflect upon the socioeconomic contexts in which young people

from the Third World find themselves, that is, growing up in societies that can be said to be in transition themselves, with rapid social change and often uneven economic development (Morrow, 2013). In recognition of this, there has been a move within youth studies towards acknowledging the fragmented, complex nature of transitions, whereby 'young people may engage in adult practices incrementally and early, across multiple dimensions of their lives' (Stokes and Wyn, 2007:498). Some scholars have even suggested that the concept of transitions is redundant, because it sets up false dichotomies – between child and adult, school and work, marriage and leaving home - and assumes that young people move straightforwardly from one state to the next (Jeffrey, 2010).

Despite its shortcomings, I have chosen to use the word 'transitions' in this research. This is because I feel that it has the potential to represent how, in environments that ascribe to the institution of education, both young people and the social world of which they are a part anticipate a change or movement, through space and time, to occur at the end of secondary schooling. I demonstrate that these transitions are often uncertain and elusive, and that many young people may struggle to live up to the aspirations for post-school transitions that they have been encouraged to take on. An interest in how young people identify their future selves is at the heart of my understanding of transition as a process of continual 'becoming', influenced by a desire for 'belonging' (Cuervo and Wyn, 2012). The metaphor of belonging draws attention to how institutions and formal processes includes and excludes certain people. This is of interest for my research given that the youth in my study, having been historically disadvantaged and marginalised from education and employment, often have to work particularly hard to belong to the futures they desire.

While an interest in 'belonging' is often associated with citizenship (Yuval-Davis, 2011), my attention is not on institutionalised politics but rather the broader material conditions and subjective elements that connect young people to the past, present and future as well as to particular spaces. My understanding of 'space', discussed further in Chapter Six, sees it as a relational concept whereby locations are not bounded enclosures in themselves and social space contains 'a local articulation within a wider world' (Massey, 1994:3). The social construction of space refers to the production of material and symbolic practices in localised contexts, themselves 'produced within wider circuits of global, national and local scales' (Fataar, 2007:601).

Another important dimension of youth's envisionings of the future is their ties and relationships to others, be it family, friends, community members etc. Belonging understood in this way is about commonalities and differences with others, the 'social relationships that provide a life anchor and often play a crucial role in decision-making about the future' (Thomson, 2007:909). While any

imagining of the future may be idiosyncratic, 'the forms of imagination belong to the social field' (Johnson-Hanks, 2002:878). Johnson-Hanks eloquently expresses this by saying that 'the temporal coordination that young people face is the partially realised project of the social institutions that frame one's alternatives, which make certain aspirations plausible, possible, or almost unthinkable' (2002:878).

As South Africa transitioned into democracy, there was a sense of immense potential and opportunity for the young of the nation, who have been considered crucial in the building of a different and brighter future, whereby once unthinkable aspirations suddenly became thinkable. However, for many young black South Africans in particular, this period of social transition has been compounded by severe structural constraints, making it difficult for them to reach normative markers of autonomous 'adulthood,' such as employment, completing tertiary education or being financially independent of their families or the state. Their 'transitions' to adulthood are often 'protracted or even permanent' and typically involve a period of 'waithood' (Crause and Booyens, 2010).

3.3 Understanding 'Aspirations': Dissolving the structure/agency binary

Existing ethnographic studies (Bray et al, 2010; Swartz et al., 2012; Ramphele, 2002) indicate that black South African youth do not appear to be lacking aspirations, but are instead lacking economic, social and cultural resources that enable them to realise their aspirations. These findings thus imply a critique of the dominant, highly individualised concept of aspiration largely rooted within the discipline of Psychology. The presence of high aspirations among youth in South Africa has been linked to BBBEE and affirmative action policies initiated as a means to 'redress decades of exclusion suffered by the black majority' (Newman and De Lannoy, 2014:13). Equal opportunities policies are deemed to have raised the expectations of job opportunities, especially among black youth who may now, partly as a result of affirmative action, believe that the new South Africa offers previously undreamed of opportunities (Soudien, 2003). Qualitative studies indicate that young people residing in townships consider themselves to be empowered, expressing a strong desire to escape the trappings of poverty, largely though aspiring towards university degrees (Kamper and Badenhorst, 2010).

Empirical studies also indicate that young black South Africans deem themselves as individually accountable for their futures (De Lannoy and Newman, 2014; De Lannoy, 2008). Yet while studies show the young people to express a belief in the importance of education, there are often gaps between that value and education-related choices and actions (De Lannoy, 2008). It has been claimed that young South African's strong sense of personal responsibility reflects the 'meritocracy

myth' (Swartz et al., 2012). This invokes the idea that by hard work and personal responsibility a person is able to achieve their aspirations, without concern for social and political contexts (McNamee et al., 2004). In *The Moral Ecology of South Africa's Township Youth* (2009), Swartz indicates how few young people make an explicit connection between apartheid and their present life socio-economic circumstances. Bourdieu's concept of 'misrecognition' and 'symbolic violence,' defined as 'the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:167) offers theoretical insight here.

The normalisation of 'aspiration' can be seen as a form of symbolic violence, as it downplays the 'systemically unequal strategies and tactics involved in realising aspiration that school students adopt in their everyday lives' (Kenway and Hickey-Moody, 2011:152). While young people from a township in South Africa may be subjected to forms of violence (treated as inferior, denied resources, limited in their social mobility etc.), they might not perceive it that way; rather, their situation may seem to them to be 'the natural order of things' (Danaher et al., 2002:25). Their minds are 'constructed according to cognitive structures that are issued out of the very structures of the world' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2004:272).

The notion of 'structure' and 'agency' are compelling concepts for this thesis, given its focus upon how young people are navigating a post-apartheid landscape of seeming choice and opportunity, yet still constrained by the 'structures' of the world, the socio-historically informed factors to shape their economic realities and placed, gendered and racialised positions. The extent to which we are the authors of our own subjectivities and the extent to which we are the creatures of social and discursive forces is a longstanding debate within the social sciences. Within this thesis, I am particularly interested in how the concepts of race, class and gender also operate as 'structures' through which we give meaning to our social worlds. While definitions vary, 'structures' can also refer to social institutions, such as education, politics, families, media, and religion, which serve both to retain and sometimes challenge societal norms. Other things that could be considered structural might include the cognitive realm – such as linguistic structures. These structures often appear as 'impervious to human agency, to exist apart from, but nevertheless to determine the essential shape of, the strivings and motivated transactions that constitute the experience surface of social life' (Sewell, 1992:2).

I am wary of polarising the terms 'structure' and 'agency', recognising that they cannot be understood in isolation from each other and that change does not operate outside of structures themselves. While conceptualising social structures as a process, I am interested in the tendency of patterns of relations to be reproduced, even when actors engaging in the relations are unaware

of the patterns or do not desire their reproduction. By recognising that we do not 'act from nowhere,' it is useful to conceptualise agency as 'a specific engagement with the world whose meaning can only be derived from its location in the social order' (McNay, 2000:163). Therefore, agency, while an abstract concept, occurs through situated action, with actors who enact or construct identities and relationships in order to maintain their place within institutions and structures (Hitlin and Elder, 2007).

Over the last few decades, the intention of 'raising the aspirations' of disadvantaged youth has become a key policy strategy across the globe, aimed at enhancing such students' participation in tertiary education (Bok, 2010). Implicit herein is the assumption that students from low socio-economic backgrounds simply lack aspiration and the ability to take action and that raising their aspirations will break cycles of poverty. This is a misleading assumption as the aspiration for professional, managerial and technical (PMT) occupations is widespread even among young people from 'manual work' backgrounds (Yates et al., 2010). However, despite expressing high aspirations, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are much less likely than their peers from more privileged backgrounds to reach their goals and there exists a distinct gap between aspiration and achievement.

In a critical analysis of policy framings, Stahl (2014) argues that the current dominant neoliberal discourse, which prioritises a view of aspiration that is competitive, economic and status based, shapes the subjectivities of young working class males from South London who have been frequently labelled as having 'low aspirations.' His research demonstrates the importance of considering the entwined relationship between neoliberal ideology and the 'aspiration agenda' as young people strive for what they see as a 'good life' (Stahl, 2012). In an effort to enforce discipline and motivate students, Stahl found that the school served a vital role in espousing the rhetoric that gaining good grades would lead to successful jobs (2014:6-7). While motivated by government intentions to improve equitable access, this strategy posits higher education as a being part of a normative and universalised vision of the 'good life' (Sellar and Gale, 2011:123-124). Although Stahl's study took place in the UK, it parallels South Africa, where aspiration has also been framed as a personal character trait, a point which I demonstrates as rampant within the LO curriculum in Chapter Five.

Researchers interested in the wider social arenas within which aspirations develop argue that it is not necessarily 'raising aspirations' that is required, but an expansion of the 'capacity to aspire' (Appadurai, 2004). Instead of being an individual psychological characteristic or disposition, this capacity is shaped by social, cultural and economic experience and rooted in social, cultural and

spatial inequalities. In contrast, the normalisation of aspiration, framed in individualistic terms and implicit in policy discourses, is highly problematic. It fails to acknowledge that the least advantaged in any society have a weakened capacity to pursue the futures they aspire towards due to reduced access to resources with which to 'support experimentation and practice in pursuing desired objectives' (Sellar and Gale, 2011:124). For instance, unlike elite groups, whose aspirations may be conditioned by multi-generational university experience, less privileged students must often seek beyond their families and local communities for information about how to create and access post-school opportunities.

Existing research indicates the importance of familial background and, in particular, parental experience of higher education, in shaping young people's expectations and aspirations towards attending university (Reay et al., 2001, Ball, 2003). Bourdieu's works (1977a; 1990) have been highly influential here, with many scholars drawing on and developing the concepts of cultural capital and habitus to theorise the classed dynamics of trajectories into, and through, higher education. His concept of the different forms of capital (economic, social, cultural and symbolic) elucidates how societies are structurally stratified such that 'everything is not equally possible' for all individuals (1997:46). Theories of capital have especially influenced research that examines how structural inequalities, along the lines of class, race and gender, shape aspirations in ways that serve to reproduce social structures (Reay et al., 2001). Bourdieu demonstrates how class is shaped by people's access to different capitals that over time become literally embodied, that is, lived as bodily dispositions. He identifies four main types of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. While I will not discuss these in detail, economic capital includes income, wealth, financial inheritances, and monetary assets. Cultural capital can exist in an embodied state or in the form of cultural goods, resulting in such things as educational qualifications. Social capital comprises of resources based on connections, networks and group membership that can be used in pursuit of favour and advancement. Symbolic capital is the form different types of capital take once they are regarded as legitimate. All forms of capital have to be regarded as legitimate before their value is realisable (Skeggs, 2012:270).

Bourdieu's theories enable a move beyond the antimony of structure and agency as he considers it is through the workings of habitus that practice (agency) is linked with capital and field (structure). Habitus can be defined as a complex internalised core from which everyday experiences emanate. Choice is at the heart of habitus, which Bourdieu likens to 'the art of inventing' (1990:55), but at the same time, the choices inscribed in the habitus are limited. As a 'conceptual bridge between subjective, inner consciousness and the objective, external constraints of the material world,'

habitus disposes individuals to think and act in certain ways (Jenkins, 1992:74-84). Dispositions comprise of feelings, thoughts, tastes, and bodily postures, all of which are preconscious, internalised and 'inculcated by everyday experiences within the family, the peer group and the school' (Mills, 2008:80). Schools are of pertinence as they serve as a 'productive locus' that gives rise to 'certain patterns of thought' (Nash, 1990:435). Bourdieu proposes that the education system channels students towards an unquestioning acceptance of the established social system, thus reproducing the values of the dominant class and reinforcing the values of capitalist society.

Bourdieu's approach emphasises the way in which 'the structure of worlds is already predefined by broader racial, gender and class relations' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:144). While individuals are actively engaged in creating their social worlds, they are 'bounded by the framework of opportunities and constraints within which they find themselves' (Reay, 2004:435). In this way, Bourdieu's ideas move beyond a binary of structure and agency and towards a relational understanding of their dialectic. Bourdieu has been critiqued for having an overly determined view of agency, 'smothering the possibility for social change' (Giroux, 1983:7). Against this charge of determinism, he contends that 'habitus' becomes active in relation to a field and an individual's actions are ultimately the result of a confrontation between dispositions and positions within specific fields (Bourdieu, 2002:31).

An important component of Bourdieu's work is the process by which individuals in a stratified social order come to accept their position and the inequalities of the social order as legitimate (Macleod, 1995:112). Bourdieu believes that people absorb from their environment values and beliefs that guide their actions. They do not generally stop and think about their actions, nor can they explain why they undertook them. His theory of *meconnaissance* (or misrecognition) (1977b), regards social action, or 'practice' not to occur with an awareness of objective social circumstances. Instead, 'the power of the habitus derives from the thoughtlessness of habit and habituation, rather than consciously learned rules and principles' (Jenkins, 1992:66). Taking this into account, he asserts that 'the level of aspiration of individuals is determined by the probability (judged intuitively by means of previous successes or failures) of achieving the desired goal' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977b:111). Working class students do not aspire highly because, according to Bourdieu, they have internalised and reconciled themselves to the limited opportunities that exist for those without much cultural capital. This causes people to 'know how to read' the future that fits them, which is made for them and for which they are supposedly made (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:130).

In exploring the usefulness of 'habitus' for understanding the development of aspirations of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, two influential ethnographies added nuance to my

understanding of social reproduction, by challenging the predominant focus on the reproduction of the social order. These are Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour* (1977) and Jay Macleod's *Ain't no makin' it* (1987). Willis provides an account of working class boys in an industrial urban setting in the United Kingdom, challenging theories that he felt ignored social agency and struggle. By regarding academic work as irrelevant to their lives and orienting themselves towards the prospect of masculine industrial labour, the 'lads' in his study demonstrate that they are not passive recipients of their socio-economic context but instead actively construct a counter school culture. MacLeod similarly reveals how a group of white working class men in the United States disengaged from the educational achievement ideology as they believed they would get 'shitty jobs' anyway (1995:102). The 'Brothers', a second group in MacLeod's study, were young African American men who distinguished themselves from their white counterparts by virtue of their high aspirations and positive values towards education. This positive stance is shared by disadvantaged youth growing up in South Africa, who rarely openly reject the importance of education and typically claim to aspire for more than their parents' lives (De Lannoy, 2008). The presence of such high aspirations challenges Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) notion that the 'working class' develops depressed aspirations that mirror their actual chances for social advancement.

The findings of Macleod's (1995) follow up study conducted eight years later revealed that the 'Brothers' had failed to realise their aspirations and thus theories of social reproduction would appear to ring true. However, one cannot presume 'too simplistic a relationship between aspirations and opportunities' (Macleod, 1995:137). The higher occupational aspirations of the Brothers indicate that the connection between objective structures and subjective attitudes is tenuous: ideology can cloud, distort and conceal the mechanisms of social reproduction. According to Macleod, high aspirations may result from a late modern capitalist society's contradictory need to present an ideology of openness and equal opportunity at the same time as the underlying structure of class relations is maintained (1995). Macleod's follow up study also revealed that the majority of his research participants held themselves accountable for their conditions, blaming themselves for their academic mediocrity and for 'screwing up' (Macleod, 1995:250). This belief in the American Achievement ideology, which sees society as fair and full of opportunity, and regards an inability to meet one's aspirations as individual failure rather than the result of social factors, echoes strongly with my own findings, discussed in Chapter Five.

While Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' has drawn my attention to the complex relationships between socio-cultural background and life-world exposures that shape people's 'horizons of action' (Edwards and Rideout, 1991), I have found it limited in generating an understanding of why some

young people subvert their position in social space and aspire higher than their location. A focus on 'discourse,' discussed later in this same Chapter, has been helpful in both posing, and exploring my research questions. For example, the wave of student protests, which engulfed South African tertiary education, contradicts the notion that we 'refuse what is anyway refused and love the inevitable' (Bourdieu, 1977:86). My decision to explore the discourses that shape the ways in which my participants speak about their lives have alerted me to how important it is not to just consider whether young people have 'high aspirations,' but to probe how the expression of such aspirations have come into being.

3.4 Moving beyond theories of 'individualisation' and 'resilience'

Thus far, my review of existing international and South African focused literature on youth transitions reflects the transition from school to post-school pathways as largely determined by structural forces, such as a young person's familial and educational background, race, class or gender. Over recent years, there has been a move towards exploring the role that young people themselves play during transitional processes (Henderson et al., 2007). Many of these studies have worked with, or against, the writings of 'late modern' theorists, Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck. Both Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992) argued that as people have become increasingly freed from the traditional constraints of family and locale, they are able to exercise greater agency in the construction of their biographies. The emphasis on people understanding their position in the world through a belief in their own agency has been conceptualised by Giddens as part of a wider project of reflexive self-hood, in which young people constantly reflect and adapt as they navigate their way into adulthood, with self-identity 'constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives' (1991:244). These narratives are tied to the circumstances in which they are told, and draw on existing narrative repertoires that reflect the cultural and social resources to which young people have access.

Sharing Giddens's desire to move beyond theories which privilege the role of 'class' in the shaping of identities, Beck (1992) argues that contemporary Western societies have been shaped by a process of individualisation, characterised by a 'dis-embedding' from tradition, local, and familial ties. A core element of this theory is a belief that young people live increasingly fragmented and uncertain lives and have come to conceive of themselves as being at the centre of their own action. This has involved a shift from 'normal biographies' to 'choice biographies' (Beck, 1992). Normal biographies imply that there are few questions about what to do next, or who to be. In contrast, choice biographies refers to a life pattern in which much more appears to be within 'the orbit of individual determination' (Thomson, 2007:86).

Beck's notion of 'individualisation' has been critiqued for failing to acknowledge the extent to which inequalities remain and how opportunities are still profoundly structured. The idea of choice biographies feeds a misleading discourse around individual responsibility and agency, which 'ignores the constraints on the choices available to young people' (te Reile, 2004:246). In turn, Giddens' approach is criticised for universalising what is in fact a very white, middle class and western narrative style (Skeggs, 2002). The ability to 'story' the self can be seen as a form of privilege, as many young people may not have the necessary resources to produce these kinds of accounts of the self.

Giddens' (1991) and Beck's (1992) accounts of individual agency do not pay enough attention to the 'complex processes and practices through which privilege and inequality are forged and lives are lived' (Holland and Thomson, 2009:454). Both theorists write from a largely Western perspective, where socio-economic disparities are not as extreme as they might be in other contexts. Beck's (1992) concept of individualisation is particularly limited when considering the experiences of youth in the Global South and where there may be an absence of 'choice' in the creation of one's biography, yet still a desire to break from what was deemed normal for the previous generation. In emphasising change, both theorists fail to consider the extent to which people are connected to their pasts, be that through 'institutionalised inequalities that are reproduced over time' or through 'emotional connections to the biographies of others', particularly their parents (Thomson, 2007:90). Young people's ties to the older generation are one example, among many, of where differences may vary hugely across contexts. The construction and realisation of 'choice biographies' is particularly fraught in contexts where young people experience high levels of poverty.

Both Giddens and Beck highlight the global trend towards a sense of individual agency, but this supposedly 'universal' shift implies a neo-colonial universalism that speaks more to the Global North than the Global South. While I agree with many of the criticisms directed against these scholars, I am interested in the process through which the appearance of choice and control has been created (Henderson et al., 2007:19). Of significance for my research is the distinction between the feeling that people may have of being 'in control' and the actual reality of their situations. Where people consider themselves as individually accountable for their circumstances, 'crises are perceived as individual shortcomings rather than the outcome of processes which are largely beyond one's control' (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007:144). This is referred to as an 'epistemological fallacy' (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007).

In recent years, the idea that 'young people have agency' has gained weight within qualitative research on youth across international contexts (Durham, 2008). There are emerging studies concerning young people who protest against injustice, often in difficult circumstances, or who express agency through their own resourcefulness (Jeffrey, 2012). Yet the agentive potential of youth typically shrinks as we move from the North to the South and from areas of plenty to areas of scarcity (Christiansen et al., 2006). Within the literature on youth and post-school transitions in South Africa, there has been a tendency to focus on young people's agency expressed through resistance (e.g. student protests) or through acts of 'resilience.' Resilience, a concept that stemmed from the Global North, typically refers to individual characteristics that are associated with coping with stressful situations and mitigating the negative effects of risk factors (Rutter, 1987).

A psychological approach to resilience attempts to discover the characteristics that account for why some individuals are more resilient than others (Bracke, 2016). Existing studies focused on resilience among youth in South Africa typically employ a psychological approach that privileges individual experiences rather than taking into account broader social forces at play (Mosavel et al., 2015). For example, Dass-Brailsford's (2005) study on 'academic resilience' among black youth in South Africa illustrates the importance of supportive family contexts, as well as the role of teachers, peers, the wider surrounding community, role models and religious practice in aiding young people's ability to maintain motivation and a positive work ethic in moments of stress or crisis. Moving away from this individualist framing, I am interested in how an emphasis on the need for resilience is symptomatic of contemporary subject formation whereby, in neoliberal times, resilience has become part of the 'moral code' whereby 'good subjects' are able to act in resilient ways. In this approach, 'the modality of power through which individuals transform themselves into the willing subjects of a moral discourse is the subject's agency' (Bracke, 2016:62). This recognition requires looking into the power that resilience exercises on subjects and the ways such subjects come into being and are sustained. My interest in this stemmed from my initial stages of data collection, where I witnessed how post-apartheid schooling environments were encouraging students to regulate their conduct according to specific liberal values that privilege resilience.

Arguments concerning the neo-liberal manifestation of resilience have alerted me to how an emphasis on young people needing to cultivate resilience could potentially prevent the imagining of other possible worlds, as well as the agential modalities to pursue those imaginations. This reflects a form of 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2011), when a subject's relation of desire to something

(i.e. an attachment to unachievable fantasies of upward mobility) is in fact an obstacle to the flourishing that they aspire towards. Bracke (2016) argues that an attachment to resilience can be understood by the desire to frame difficult circumstances, such as the absence of food and shelter, an income or a job, or a safe environment, as temporary situations that will be overcome. It positions the resilient subject in the process of 'overcoming', a positioning which can be comforting in itself (Bracke, 2016:64). Yet rather than uncritically accepting resilience as a positive attribute, Bracke's writings have indicated to me that, while letting go of the hope of 'overcoming' has the potential to 'undo the subject', such 'undoing' might in itself open up new kinds of horizons (2016:65). While this approach to understanding 'resilience' is the antithesis to the largely psychologically framed existing studies, I found it a more useful lens for analysing expressions of 'resilience' within my data, as it enables me to both historicise and probe the function of such discourses.

3.5 Poststructural framings: Theorising 'discourse' and 'identity'

By moving beyond the individualised framings of reflexive modernity, and resisting a binary understanding of structure and agency, I have been particularly drawn to theorists broadly defined as 'poststructural' and 'postmodern.' While postmodernism and poststructuralism are terms which are often discussed together or used interchangeably, my interest is more specifically on poststructural theories than the broader umbrella of postmodern thought from which it originates. Although I share St. Pierre's 'certain exhaustion' with attempting to fix meanings to particular terminologies, a basic premise behind poststructuralism is a recognition of the partiality of knowledge (St. Pierre, 2000:477).

I became drawn to a poststructural sensibility, which encourages researchers not to give up on voice, but to 'give up on the promise that voice can provide truth, fixity, knowledge and authenticity' (Mazzei, 2009:47). I felt simultaneously liberated and constrained by the recognition that no theory or method can offer a privileged form of knowledge. At the same time, poststructural theories concerning subjectivity challenged everything I had believed, or wanted to believe, about the potential of being a person in the world, a free-willed agent with the ability to enact choice. I struggled with what I initially considered to be the bleakness of some poststructuralist writing, as I felt studies focused on discourse created a flat portrayal of a life, a representation in which a person was a one-dimensional figure on whom social messages were written (McLeod and Yates, 2006). Continued reading led me to appreciate that the poststructuralist research paradigm recognises both the constitutive force of discourse and of discursive practices, and at the same time considers that people are capable of exercising choice in relation to those practices. By recognising that a poststructural position does not deny the possibility of transformation, I found myself moving

towards a more nuanced understanding of discourse in which people can occupy multiple contradictory positions, and therein lies the potential for change and resistance.

A poststructuralist perspective on subjectivity constitutes a radical departure from the idea of universal truth and objective knowledge. On the contrary, knowledge is always situated, produced by and for particular interests, in particular circumstances, at particular times. Poststructuralist theories of subjectivity are often defined in opposition to the humanist model of identity, which views individual identity as comprising a stable core self that unfolds and develops consistently throughout life. The poststructuralist subject is discursively constructed (not born), created in and through socially, culturally and historically located interactions and is fluid, multiple and contradictory. Such an understanding of subjectivity implies that subjects are always under construction and constantly reconstituted within discourses that establish what it is possible 'to be' – as well as what counts as truth, knowledge, morals, normal behaviour and intelligible speech for those who are 'summoned' to speak by the discourse in question (MacLure, 2003:174-175).

As I have come to recognise the integral role of theory in the shaping of my project, I have also come to appreciate its influence over the construction of my research questions. As mentioned in my Introduction, my research questions explore the discourses that are available to born free South Africans as they construct their future aspirations, as well as how space is implicated in the production of young people's identities. Given my use of the word 'discourse' and interest in its relationship to the formation of 'identities,' I will now explain how I use these key terms in my research.

Throughout this thesis, I regard 'identities' as constructed within discourse and 'produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices' (Hall, 1996: 4). The degree to which individuals are able to construct who they are is regulated by the extent to which they have access to the 'material, linguistic, social and cultural resources that are valued within dominant discourses' (Bangen and Kapp, 2005:4). Thus young people's sense of self and understanding of what is a meaningful future is inseparable from specific cultural and social contexts.

Although there are multiple definitions of what comprises discourse or discourse analysis (Wetherell et al., 2001), I draw upon Foucauldian theories of discourse and the subject, interpreting his work as a 'tool of analysis' rather than as a closed theoretical framework (Tamboukou and Ball, 2003:2). Within a Foucauldian approach, discourses connect to institutions and to the disciplines that regularise and normalise the behaviour of those who find themselves within the sphere of these

institutions. The primary institution which this study focuses is the school. Discourses not only demarcate what it is possible to say, know and do, they determine what kind of person one is entitled or obliged 'to be' (MacLure, 2003:176). It is through discourse that the individual is 'fabricated' into the social order (Foucault, 1979:217).

While discourse is traditionally used as a linguistic concept, Foucault was interested in discourse as 'a system of representation' and was concerned with the rules and practices that provide a language for talking about 'a particular topic at a particular historical moment' (Hall, 2001:72). Discourse can be defined as consisting of 'laws of possibility, rules or existence for the objects that are named, designated or described within it, and for the relations that are affirmed, or denied in it' (Foucault, 1972:91). As most of the data to inform this research comes from spoken or written words, it is important that I recognise the close relationship between discourse and language and in doing so, clarify that I am not using 'discourse' in the purely linguistic sense. Gee (1999) helpfully coined the term 'Discourse with a capital 'D' to distinguish broader sociocultural conceptualisations from the more localised meanings of discourse (with a small 'd') within linguistic approaches, where discourse is often synonymous with text, communication or 'language in use' (MacLure, 2003:175). While I do not explicitly capitalise the term, I am referring to discourse with a capital 'D.'

When Pennycook (1995:115) asks the question, from a Foucauldian position, 'which is bigger – language or discourse?' the answer is discourse, since it is 'the condition by which language as a structure or a system exists.' Foucault emphasises that discourse is the superordinate term and does not refer specifically to language or uses of language, but to ways of organising meaning that are often, though not exclusively, realised through language. I am interested in the language that students produce, not as a transparent means of self-expression that assumes 'an already existing individual subjectivity which awaits expression' (Weedon, 1997:79), but because it is through language that discourse manifests and the discursively constructed subject takes up a speaking position. Embedded within relations of power, discourses remake themselves through forms of thinking, acting and speaking that both shape and are shaped by 'particularised, local meaning systems' (Currie et al., 2006:423). While my analysis takes heed of the specific local conditions within which my participants live, in attempting to historicise their identities I see them as 'constructed and produced within a particular historical moment and under particular historical conditions' (Darder et al., 2003:12).

Although Foucault's primary concern was not to trace the motivations and intentions of individuals but to 'uncover the workings of discourse over periods of time' (Mills, 2003: 27), I am interested in how my participants' future aspirations reflect the wider discourses that have produced them as subjects of a particular post-apartheid history. One of Foucault's key concerns is that we understand discourses, not simply as internally constituted, but in terms of the external conditions of possibility for the production of these discourses, what he refers to as the rules of exteriority (1970:127). I am interested in how the discourse of the 'new South Africa', transmitted within the school, home and the wider social and political arenas which my participants occupy, create and structure ways for them to construct their identities.

Foucault has been critiqued for having an overly deterministic position. He has been accused of representing subjectivity as 'just a form of incarceration' (Eagleton, 1991:146) and for setting up people to be 'prisoners of discourse' (Sarup, 1993:97-98). One of the dangers of some poststructuralist work, as argued by Hall (1996), is that discourse is 'centred' and seen as productive, while the subject is seen as decentred and disciplined, such that 'regulation' becomes the overwhelming characterisation of subjectivity: one is positioned in and by discourses. While appreciating that theories of discourse, which stand in stark contrast to ideas surrounding identity and agency which populate the modern world, can appear as deterministic, my understanding of discourse is one in which there is 'room to manoeuvre' (Schaafsma, 1998:255). Discourses are not rigid formations imposed from above. As there are always multiple discourses at play, so too are multiple subject positions available for the already-discursively-constructed subject to negotiate, even if this negotiation happens beneath the level of consciousness. In this way, discourses are taken up through dynamic processes, shaped by the external conditions of possibility, including not only institutions of social control but also factors such as randomness or chance, or what Foucault refers to as aleatory events (1970:127).

In Foucault's latter works, he develops a conception of ethics which is concerned with how to 'regulate one's behaviour' according to normative principles (Foucault, 1994:89). His notion of the ethical care of the self brings together (mental) reflection and (bodily) action as practices implicated in the subject's self-formation (Foucault, 1994). These 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1994:89) are regulated practices that go beyond mental attention to the self. Understood thus, ethical practice constitutes 'an exercise of the self on the self' by which subjects work on themselves as an object of art, to transform themselves and attain a 'certain mode of being' (Foucault, 1994:271,282). One interpretation for the Foucauldian concept of 'technologies of the self' is that it moves beyond an account of the self as merely positioned in or disciplined by discourse, by

describing how subjectivity is formed in the interaction between technologies of regulation and technologies of the self – ‘arts of existence’ or techniques for acting on, fashioning and governing the self (Foucault, 1994; Rose, 1990).

While these theoretical developments enable a consideration of the role played by people themselves in subjectivity formation, discourses come into being in ways that are not controlled by the intentions of individuals and ‘it is not easy to say something new’ (Foucault, 1972:49). Nevertheless, in Foucault’s latter works he considers how the operations of discourse and power contain the possibilities of struggle and resistance within them. Most notably he drew attention to the ‘tactical polyvalence of discourses’ (Foucault, 1978:100), saying that discourses should not be classified as either accepted or excluded, dominant or dominated but are constantly at play – multiple, shifting and open to being deployed in various ways.

Foucault was interested in the historical specificity of systems of ideas and their bearing on the processes of subjectification, rather than on the individual subject. Hall points out that some of the critiques that has been levelled against Foucault’s discussions of subjectivity is that ‘they offer a formal account of the construction of subject positions within discourse while revealing little about why it is that certain individuals occupy some positions rather than others’ (1996:10). Since this research considers the experiences of individual subjects, I will use the next section of this chapter to complement Foucault’s ideas with that of Hall (1996), Butler (1990) and Skeggs (2004). These scholars have provided great insight into how social identity categories such as ethnicity, race, class and gender are implicated in the processes by which subject positions are made available (or not) and taken up (or not) by individuals.

3.6 Self-making as Class-making: Theorising ‘subjectivity’ and ‘performativity’

By using the term ‘subjectivity,’ I am indicating that identities are not pre-given essences, but are continually created and re-created within discursive relations. The term subjectivity alerts us to how subjects are formed, and the range of influences, practices, experiences and relations that enable a person to come into being. If subjectivity is a (relatively) open-ended process of becoming then identities are the points, or moments, along this process when particular subject positions, structured in and through discourse, are taken up (Hall, 1996). Hall sees identities as being produced by the ‘chaining’ of the subject to the flow of discourse. Identities are ‘points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us’ (Hall, 1996:5-6).

Hall explains that the suturing of the subject into a position is only successful if the subject invests in that position (1996). This is significant for my research as it indicates the need to explore how

subjects identify (or do not identify) with the positions to which they are summoned, as well as how they fashion, stylise, produce and 'perform' these positions (Hall, 1996:13-14). Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (Hall, 1996:4). This contributes to an understanding of how individual subjects come to take up certain positions over others. Hall regards identification as a partial and ambivalent process that, in the moment it announces itself as 'identity', conceals its multiplicity. There is always 'too much' or 'too little'—an over-determination or a lack, but never a proper fit (Hall, 2000:17).

According to Butler it is because identity is incomplete that gender norms 'are continually haunted by their own inefficacy; hence, the anxiously repeated effort to install and augment their jurisdiction' (2000:114). This thesis regards gender, among other identity categories, not as something one is but instead something one does, a verb rather than a noun, a 'doing' rather than a 'being' (Butler, 1990:25). Words such as masculine and feminine are then 'social constructs', inscribed in a 'wider signifying chain of meaning within which one term refers to another' (Nayak and Kehily, 2006:465). As is evident through my own observations, discussed largely in Chapter 7, gender is not just a process, but it is a particular type of process, 'a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame' (Butler, 1990). For Butler, our sex is not something that lies beyond the discursive realm but is always produced as a reiteration of hegemonic norms. Thus 'being a 'proper boy' or 'proper girl' is a fantasy that is both hankered after and embodied through an approximation of its norms' (Nayak and Kehily, 2006:465).

Butler argues that, at the heart of becoming a subject is the ambivalence of mastery and submission, which occur, not in separate acts, but together in the same moment. She elaborates this point by stating that 'power acts on the subject in at least two ways: first, as what makes the subject possible, the condition of its possibility and its formative occasion, and second, as what is taken up and reiterated in the subject's 'own' acting' (Butler, 1997:14). Through Butler's theory of performativity, defined as 'that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names' (1993:130), she argues that discursive practices which appear to describe (pre-existing) subjects are not simply descriptive but are rather productive. The notion of 'performativity' rather than 'performance' is useful for my research, given that I am not framing this study in terms of interrogating pre-existing subjects who perform their identity at will, but am instead contesting the notion of a pre-given subject by exploring how the performance of identity enables people to become particular subjects who act in the world.

Skeggs takes up this idea of performativity through her work on class where she argues that class is 'not a pre-existing slot to which we are assigned, but a set of contestable relations; thus not a given, but a process. It is the process of 'evaluation, moral attribution and authorisation in the production of subjectivity' (Skeggs, 2005:976). Visions of the 'good life' reflect the practices, relationships and identities that are regarded as being of collective value, creating moral boundaries around types of people and ways of living that are worthy of legitimacy and those that are not. These moral boundaries are central to subjectivity formation as individuals draw upon the discourses available to them in order to make sense of and create value within their lives. As Skeggs (2004) calls attention to, class is a system of classification in which people are positioned as well as ascribed various characteristics and patterns of behaviour. One of Skeggs' main points is that class is performative and not only a system of classification, but also simultaneously a scale of judgement in which people with different occupations and aspirations are ranked in a social class hierarchy. Existing systems of classification and scales of judgement stem from positions that have gained dominance (Skeggs, 2004). This means they seem natural even though they represent certain perspectives and interests.

Skeggs (2004) describes the relationship between higher education and success as a middle class perspective on the individual and society that has received hegemony and been objectified. In making this argument, she draws inspiration from Bourdieu's argument that higher education is a common social marker that people use to situate themselves as middle class and to distinguish themselves from lower positions (Bourdieu, 1967). This type of self-making requires forms of capital that are unevenly distributed – 'the working class are not allowed access to the resources and technologies required for self-production' and thus 'self-making is class-making' (Skeggs, 2004:91). The invitation to 'choose' one's future becomes a test of moral character premised upon classed attributions of value, as young people must mobilise the symbolic resources required to align their futures with a life that is deemed good. The discourse of 'choice' exacerbates existing inequalities by revealing (and pathologising) those who cannot perform the 'good self' because they do not have the cultural resources to do so (Skeggs, 2005:974). This means that class is not only a system of classification, but also a scale of judgement in which particular life choices and career aspirations are privileged over others. While Skeggs is also concerned with how these processes are gendered, my thesis does not have the scope to explore the gendering of class trajectories in depth.

The ways in which certain pathways are privileged over others reinforces the influence of class upon how young people think of their futures. As stressed by Skeggs, (2004) the category of class has effects on those who are categorised because classing practices construct subject positions

that are valued or less valued. Thus, even seemingly innocent questions, posed out of curiosity about the lives of young people and asked by myself (and possibly student's teachers, guardians and other community members), also contained elements of positioning and have reinforced for me my role as the researcher whereby I too have set the stage for the performance and formations of particular subjectivities.

3.7 Signs that 'stick' to bodies: Theorising 'Affect' and 'Race'

From the initial stages of my fieldwork, I became aware of how the narratives of my participants were laden with emotion. I found myself drawn to the simple, yet provocative question posed by Ahmed: What do emotions do? (2004). I was wary, however, of any attempt to analyse people's expressions of emotion, both overt and covert, without reducing their responses to the level of the individual. In attempting to locate my participants' emotional responses as echoing something of the wider discourses in circulation, I looked towards theories of 'affect.' Feminist scholars, who understand emotions as 'collaboratively constructed and historically situated' rather than individualised phenomena (Boler, 1999:6) inform my understanding of emotion/affect.

My interest in affect draws inspiration from Walkerdine and colleagues' study *Growing Up Girl* (2001), which provides a compelling analysis of how cultural and social processes are experienced affectively. When analysing how girls' fear of failure operates within the production of educational success, they suggest that this anxiety is 'lived as psychic but it is produced socially and needs to be understood as profoundly psychosocial' (Walkerdine et al., 2001:145). While we never enter an encounter or space without history or affect, the origins of our responses are often untraceable to us. An understanding of emotions as socially produced and negotiated in relation to the subject positions that are discursively available to us highlights the importance of exploring emotional investments in order to understand how social constructions becoming meaningful to people.

A turn towards theories of affect can help offer insight into 'a realm beyond talk, words and texts, beyond epistemic regimes and beyond conscious representation and cognition' (Wetherell, 2012:19). In exploring how emotions are both discursive and pre-discursive, Wetherell draws on the works of Burkitt (1997, 2002), who considers that emotions are not objects residing inside the self, but are relations to others, responses to situations and to the world. Burkitt argues that the available narratives to describe feelings realise the affect. What may begin as only inchoate can turn into an articulation, mentally organised and then expressed, in ways that connect with and reproduce particular power relations. Feelings, which are often in process and unarticulated, form

part of the 'affective-volitional stream of everyday life that moves us to one end or another' (Wetherell, 2012:24).

Sara Ahmed, who traces the word 'emotion' to its Latin roots, 'emovere,' meaning 'to move, to move out', takes up the idea of emotion as movement (2004:11). Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions located in individuals, emotions can be understood as forces which mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective (Ahmed, 2004:119). Ahmed's idea of affective economies alerts us to how particular emotions circulate and are distributed across social and psychic fields, causing some signs to increase in affective value the more that they circulate. She demonstrates how language works as a form of power 'in which emotions align some bodies with others, as well as stick different figures together, by the way they move us' (2004:195). The material circumstances in which words are produced are lost, yet the traces of these contexts are carried through the words. As a result of this disjuncture, emotions, as signs, appear natural, personal, and ahistorical. These signs 'stick' to bodies, shaping them and generating the material effects that they name, in ways that are performative. What is repressed from consciousness is not the feeling per se, but the idea to which the feeling may have been first connected (Ahmed, 2004:120).

When considering the lingering emotional implications of apartheid policies on South Africans today, Fanon's (1967) concern with the psychopathology of colonisation and the individual, social, and cultural consequences of decolonisation has pertinence. With a background in psychiatry, Fanon was especially interested in racism's psychological impact upon colonised peoples and colonising agents, and the mutual constitution of the coloniser and colonised. His work shows that bodies are shaped by histories of colonialism, which makes the world 'white,' a world which is ready for certain kinds of bodies and puts certain objects within their reach. Such histories surface on the bodies of people, or even shape how bodies surface (Ahmed, 2004).

In this understanding, race is a social as well as bodily given; what we received from others as an inheritance of this history. For Marx, 'human beings make their own history, but they do not make it arbitrarily in conditions chosen by themselves, but in conditions always-already given and inherited from the past' (cited in Balibar, 2002:8). According to Ahmed (2007:154), such an inheritance can be considered in terms of orientations: we inherit the reachability of some objects, those that are 'given' to us, or at least made available to us, within the 'what' that is around. In the context of my research, and no doubt contexts elsewhere, 'whiteness' is an orientation that puts certain things within reach. This does not just include physical objects, but also 'styles, capacities, techniques, habits and aspirations' (Ahmed, 2007:154).

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced the different literature that has influenced the direction of my thesis. While there is not the space to include all the abandoned texts and returned library books, I have shown the importance of acknowledging the various work to have shaped the backdrop and foreground of my analysis. By engaging with scholarly critiques of the traditional, Western understanding of 'youth transitions,' my interpretation of transitions emphasises the importance of contextualising and historicising young people's experiences, without inadvertently privileging or reifying certain trajectories over others (Morrow, 2013:98). This requires recognising aspiration as rooted in social, cultural and spatial inequalities and not as an individual disposition or psychological state (Kenway and Hickey-Moody, 2011). In moving away from a linear model of transitions towards 'uncovering the complexity and ambiguity of youth transitions in post-colonial worlds' (Christiansen, 2006:14), I have drawn upon poststructural approaches to subjectivity to help me explore how young people negotiate contradictory and multiple subject positions. This requires recognising that while subjectivity is an open-ended process, subjects are not constituted within a limitless horizon of possibility and race, class, gender and space, among other factors, remains pertinent in shaping the available discourses through which young people imagine their futures.

Chapter 4: Of Methodology and Mess

4.1 Introduction

'Nothing is stranger than this business of humans observing other humans in order to write about them' (Behar, 1996:5).

Writer James Agee, sent by *Fortune* magazine on a mission to bring back an enticing story about impoverished farmers in the American South during the Great Depression, expressed a desire to 'tear up a clump of earth with a hoe, put that on a page and publish it' (Behar, 1996:5). This sentiment resonates with my own struggles to produce a 'good enough' ethnography (Scheper-Hughes, 1995), one that conveys something of the texture of my fieldsite, without reducing my research participants into caricatures of people, who serve as tools in my production of an academic argument. Despite identifying with Agee's frustration with the difficulty of representing raw human experience, I drafted the first version of my Methodology chapter in a style akin to a manual for assembling Ikea furniture. I gave the impression of fieldwork as neat and systematic, with research questions as clearly answerable.

While such an orderly approach is not in keeping with a poststructural orientation, it is indicative of enduring academic discourses, whereby research is often believed to be about producing certainties. As the first chapter that I wrote, it reflected my attempt, as a novice researcher, to impose authority over my work, in order to make it appear credible in the eyes of the academy. It was only after I had a complete draft that I recognised how incongruous this chapter was with how the rest of my thesis had developed. As I became more engaged with poststructural theories and ethnographic accounts that defied narrative conventions (Pandian and McLean, 2017), I have rejected the notion that we need to tidy things to make sense of them. Instead, I became convinced that researchers should accept the messy, contingent nature of the social world we research, embracing 'fuzzy, blurred and multiple meanings' rather than regard them as signs of personal failure or inexperience (McArthur, 2012:423).

Given the impossibility of any discussion on epistemology not to invoke ontology, the first half of this chapter will discuss how poststructural, postcolonial and feminist theories have shaped my lens of inquiry. From here, I share my approach to ethnographic writing, considering how my positionality influenced the process of gathering data and the creation of the final research 'product.' I follow this with an explanation of my research design 'in practice,' covering the selection of my fieldsite and participants and the key methods I employed, namely; participant-observation, interviews,

focus groups and the analysis of selected curriculum content. After discussing my approach to data collection, I reflect upon how I recorded and analysed my findings. My chapter concludes by drawing attention to ethical concerns, including the contested nature of 'rapport' between researcher and participants, as well as the need to engage in locally appropriate forms of reciprocity.

4.2 Finding my way: Poststructural, Feminist and Postcolonial intersections

Throughout this research I draw upon a range of theorists who identify, respectively or in combination, as 'feminist,' 'poststructuralist' and 'postcolonial'. While the desire to neatly label is antithetical to the overarching tenets of poststructuralism, my continued reference to works which call themselves 'feminist' has led me to reflect upon what I understand feminist epistemology to mean. Part of my development as a researcher has been to recognise how it is not the investigation of gender, or gendered social lives, that makes a research project feminist. Instead, it is a feminist sensibility which helps make visible some of the 'multiple discourses in which I, and my research participants, are caught-up, including discourses of gender' (Webb, 2014:12). While there are feminist theorists who focus on women's experiences as a unitary concept, other scholars argue that the category of 'woman' is not sufficient to understand the complexity of social lives, thus indicating the need for feminist research, which 'intersects gender with other sites of exclusion, including class, race and ethnicity' (Danvers, 2016:57).

This is not to claim that feminist research is unified in approach, for feminism is an area of diversity and debate, and claims for a distinctive feminist methodology have been widely contested (Benhabib et al., 1995). Modern liberal manifestations of feminism often carry 'Enlightenment dreams,' (Flax, 1992:448) hopes of not only achieving knowledge, but also a commitment to justice, emancipation and progress. While there may at times be a need to advocate for identity politics and employ 'strategic essentialism' (Soudien, 2012), as was the case with the BCM, for the purpose of this research I consider there to be more value in working with a theory of identity that regards it as 'discursively produced, contingent and strategic' (Weedon, 1997:176). In this view, gender and race, among other identifications, come into existence through the way people perform them, by a 'process of reiteration of which both 'subjects' and 'acts' come to appear at all' (Butler, 1993:9).

Despite different interpretations of feminist research, a feminist orientation always entails some theory of power, and 'a connection between politics, ethics and epistemology' (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002:13). It remains, however, that many feminists see a poststructural deconstruction of the 'knowing subject' as undermining the political project of feminism, removing the possibility of feminist researchers who work in the interests of 'women' and produce knowledge about and for

'women.' Butler responds to this by raising the question of who gets to be constituted as the feminist theorist who knows, and who is excluded from this (1992:14). For example, in a poststructuralist critique of feminist scholarship and colonial discourses, Mohanty demonstrates how white Western feminists writing about 'Third World' women produce these women as a singular category defined by their victim status. This effect is achieved by the assumption that white Western feminism is 'the yardstick by which to encode and represent cultural others' (Mohanty et al., 1991:55).

Mohanty's arguments echo Said's idea of 'Orientalism' (1978), within which he exposes the power of the West to produce knowledge of the East (the Orient) as the subordinated 'other' of the West. Through his work, Said puts postcolonial theory in dialogue with the poststructuralist critique of the grand narratives of Enlightenment. His writing has been instrumental in the development of postcolonial thought and theory that aims to 'shift the dominant ways in which the relations between western and non-western people and their worlds are viewed' (Young, 2003:2).

Anthropology's, and as such ethnography's, complex historical legacy as the child of colonial excursions raises concerns regarding whether it is possible to speak for others, either adequately or justifiably. As noted by Alcoff, 'not only is location epistemically salient, but certain privileged locations are discursively dangerous and may result in increasing or re-enforcing the oppression of the group spoken for' (2009:118). This raises the question, who can speak for whom? For example, can a white woman speak for all women simply by virtue of being a woman? Post-colonial theorists such as Mohanty (1991) and Spivak (1988) indicate that she cannot, but this leaves researchers unclear about who has the legitimacy to engage in representation. This becomes more problematic with the recognition of hybridity and lack of clear-cut boundaries and 'pure' identities of people (Bhabha, 1994).

Spivak provides an important response to the predicament of speaking for others. In her work 'Can the subaltern speak?' (1988), she argues that a simple solution cannot be found by merely providing a platform for those coming from less privileged positions to speak for themselves, since their speech will not necessarily be heard as legitimate, nor can it automatically serve as a reflection of their 'true interests,' if such exists. While recognising that to ignore the speech of the subaltern is to perpetuate the imperialist project, Spivak is critical of speaking for others, preferring to speak to and with, thus implying that the researcher neither relinquishes their role nor presumes the ability to authentically convey the experiences of the 'oppressed.'

Spivak's arguments demonstrate the necessity for researchers, particularly those working in post-colonial contexts, to consider to what extent their depictions of marginalised groups masks Western

complicities. She highlights how our discursive constructions are intimately linked to our positioning (socioeconomic, gendered, geographic, historical, institutional) and that encounters with and representations of 'the other' typically take the form of academics working from the West attempting to aid, develop, civilise or empower the Third World subjects of their research. For Spivak, the epistemic violence of imperialism has meant the transformation of the 'Third World' into a sign whose production has been obscured to the point that Western superiority and dominance are naturalised.

By recognising that there is no such thing as a 'non-institutional environment' (Spivak, 1990:5), our representations of the Third World are always institutionally constrained. This is relevant when considering how Western researchers, with their personal and institutional interests, go to the South to do fieldwork and retrieve information, whereby the Third World once again provides 'resources' for the First World (Spivak, 1990:96). It has bearing on my research, given that I was raised and previously educated in South Africa but conducted my postgraduate degrees at Northern institutions regarded as having (often superior) expertise on the 'Global South.' I bought into this myth, as might many of my peers when presented with the opportunity to undertake research at prestigious international institutions. I would have produced a very different piece of work had I remained at a South African university. Given the Western orientation of South African academics themselves, a controversial point raised through recent debates concerning the need to 'decolonise' the curriculum (Njamnjoh, 2016), I cannot presume what these differences might have been, only recognise that from where I wrote influenced how and what I wrote.

The theories to influence my data analysis can be largely located within the Western academy, where several of the scholars I draw upon are European men. This is a mark of particular conditions under which powerful bodies of knowledge have been produced. While some of these theorists are rejected by scholars on the grounds of being Eurocentric, inherently patriarchal and unsympathetic to feminism, I consider it important to distinguish between the fruitfulness of a theory and the affiliations of its author. As noted by Weedon, 'if Foucault's theory of discourse and power can produce in feminist hands an analysis of patriarchal power relations which enables the development of active strategies for change, then it is of little importance whether his own historical analyses fall short of this' (1997:13).

Although it is important to problematise the imposition of Western theories upon Southern fieldsites, it is equally important that I do not romanticise the pursuit of 'African' theory or grant it a mystique of lost glory that may have little bearing in enabling an exploration of the experiences of South African students navigating a post-apartheid world. I write this with recognition of the debates to

occur, internationally and in South Africa, regarding the need to 'decolonise the curriculum.' While I strongly believe in the importance of dismantling and re-evaluating forms of knowledge that have been traditionally held in high esteem, there is little clarity as to what decolonising the curriculum means in practice and this expression is often intended to have more rhetorical appeal than to provide the development of viable content. For my research, I find Spivak's writings useful in enabling recognition of how we are always situated within discourse, culture, institutions and geopolitics (Spivak, 1993:60) and we must be wary pursuing a change that only amounts 'to exchanging white heroes for black heroes' (Jansen, 1989:220).

While Spivak's emphasis on reflexivity has been critiqued for reinforcing the West's obsession with the self (Moore-Gilbert, 1997), Spivak's work is useful in encouraging researchers to be more vigilant about their practices. This requires recognising the history of one's prejudices, ultimately leading to a 'transformation of consciousness' and changing mind set which dismantles the perception that the Third World is 'in trouble' and that the researcher has solutions (Spivak, 1990:20). It involves letting go of assuming that concepts such as 'youth,' 'democracy' or 'participation,' to name but a few, are natural or incontestably good. To impose them unproblematically is to forget that they were 'written elsewhere, in the social formations of Western Europe' (Spivak, 1993:60).

4.3 'Speaking nearby' – Writing a Poststructural Ethnography

As a methodology with a contextual, relational and experiential approach to knowledge, ethnography could be considered ideally suited to feminist research. Yet while there is potential for this relationship, there are debates as to whether ethnographic methods can serve feminist agendas. As questioned by Stacey: 'Does the appearance of greater respect for and equality with research subjects in the ethnographic approach mask a deeper, more dangerous form of exploitation?' (1988:22). This concern echoes the uncomfortable relationship between postcolonial theory and ethnography whereby, given ethnography's roots in Social Anthropology, it has been intimately linked to the serving of imperial administrations, perpetuating the implicit and explicit power asymmetries of the colonial era (Asad, 1973). While recognising the potentially problematic relationship between my theoretical influences and my chosen methodology, through developing the dialogue between poststructuralism, feminism and postcolonialism I hope to analyse the 'discursive forces in which researcher, researched, and research process are entwined' (Pomerantz, 2008:25).

Historically, the distinguishing and unifying aspect of an ethnographic stance has involved a commitment to 'thickness,' to producing understanding through richness, texture and detail' (Ortner, 2006:43). 'Thick description' has been often equated with holism and the belief that it is possible to describe an entire 'culture' and grasp its underlying principles. While a commitment to 'thick description' remains at the 'at the heart of the ethnographic stance,' aspirations towards ethnographic holism have been challenged by reflections on the inevitable partiality of any account (Ortner, 2006:43). The limitations of a 'textual' rendering of culture has been debated at length (Clifford and Marcus, 1986), illuminating the predicament of ethnography as being caught up in the invention and not the representation of cultures. This 'crisis of representation' implies a disbelief in the possibility of capturing and conveying the full 'truth' of the object under the ethnographic gaze, whereby 'representation cannot deliver what it promises, unmediated access to the real' (Britzman, 2000:35). Such concerns extend to ethical dilemmas concerning how to represent the 'voices' of research participants. The problem of 'voice,' is linked to the problematics of writing, whereby scholarly texts might carry traces of colonialism, racism and gendered privilege in their very structure and poetics.

During the initial phase of designing this project, I was intent upon capturing and conveying the 'voices' of my research participants. Further reading led me to recognise that language lacks transparency as well as innocence and cannot provide a 'neutral medium' or vehicle for enabling access to the social world (MacLure, 2003:181). I began to not only question the politics of representation but the politics of 'voice' itself, my own and that of my research participants (Jackson and Mazzei, 2009). While initially drawn to a narrative approach, I was dissatisfied by accounts which did not seek to understand where 'voice' comes from, its historical location and enactment within particular contexts. Time spent within my fieldsite drew my attention to how what was not being spoken about may be as pertinent as what was being spoken. This led me to question what voice excludes, the 'voice' that happens not only through spoken utterances but also through what may be difficult or unthinkable to articulate.

I have attempted to demonstrate the situated, partial nature of research by avoiding the 'ethnographic present,' a characteristic mode of ethnographic writing which involves using simple or continuous present tense, developing analyses and generalisations from ethnographic research as if they represent a 'timeless description' of the people being studied (Davies, 2008:193). I have deliberately veered from this style and predominantly written about my fieldwork in the past tense, situating my interactions with participants within the time and place that they occurred. When first drafting this thesis, I toyed with the idea of providing biographies of my key research participants

as part of my appendices. I wanted to offer the reader greater context and insight into the characters I had come to know, people whom I feared I had not done justice to within the core body of my work. In organising my participants under pseudonyms and writing up thick descriptions of their appearances, personalities, and experiences, I still wanted them to retain the characteristics of humanist subjects. Over time I have come to see this desire as problematic, as it perpetuates the practice of illustrating people 'as whole as possible for our readers, believing that richer and fuller descriptions will get us closer and closer to the truth of the participant' (St. Pierre, 2009:229). Subsequently, I decided not to provide extensive biographical material on each participant, other than what was pertinent for my analysis. These methodological decisions, while minor, reflect my attempt to follow Minh-ha's advice that one should 'speak nearby' rather than attempt to 'speak for the other' (Chen, 1992:87).

In providing the space for researchers to reflect critically upon the conditions in which we have constructed our accounts, reflexivity enables a consideration of how we occupy certain position(s) and observe with a particular angle of vision. The ethnographer's age, gender, political identity, and life experiences, among other aspects, influence what is learnt during fieldwork (Yow, 1997). In the context of my research, my 'race,' appearing at face value as being a white South African, makes me a former 'oppressor' amongst black siSwati youth. By recognising that we must view our difficulties as significant data in their own right, I do not wish to try and eliminate 'investigator effects' but instead to 'understand those effects' (Delamont, 1992:8).

Despite the 'rainbow nation' discourse that appears to pervade post-apartheid public consciousness, the majority of youth born into the new democracy remain largely unexposed to people outside of their proximal environments. My 'whiteness' was a subject of intrigue to my participants, many of whom viewed my presence as an opportunity to demystify the white 'other.' As noted by Moore, 'otherness' is a site of power and desire both for the researcher and for the people they work with (1994). The desire to be 'other to oneself' is what drives many individuals to become anthropologists, and a similar desire to know the other and the secrets of their power is what motivates many people to engage with and work with anthropologists. Both students and teachers alike frequently mentioned how they felt my presence would help them improve their levels of English, a much desired skill among young aspirational black South Africans (Southall, 2016). Several of my participants also spoke about wanting to socialise with a white person because it enhanced their social status. This was made evident to me through statements such as '*My mother isn't going to believe I have a white friend*' (Sihle). In the initial stages of my fieldwork, I had students from across different grades ask to have my photo taken with them so that they could show other

people in the township they had a 'white friend.' My whiteness enabled a particular type of account that would have been different had a black researcher undertaken the same research. In appreciating that each interaction in my fieldsite was relational, I see my conversations with participants as joint productions.

My position at an English university was another point of intrigue to people within Intaba, as they expressed surprise and pleasure with my interest in their lives and they wanted to know more about what my life was like in the UK. Students often introduced me to family members or friends as being from 'London' (despite my telling them I did not live in London) and on several occasions I was introduced as being from 'New York' or 'America'. Being perceived as an 'outsider' by studying at a foreign institution and being of Middle Eastern heritage rather than of Afrikaans or English origin, was advantageous as teachers and students did not appear to put me in the same bracket as white locals in the area, despite my having been raised locally. My religious background as Muslim, a minority group within Intaba, was an additional source of fascination to students. Aspects of my Islamic identity, including my father's polygamous marriages, paved the way for discussions with my participants in which they demonstrated their views regarding 'traditional' versus 'progressive' lifestyles.

In recognising that the 'field' is not the world of others but the world between ourselves and others, I am interested in how 'identities are produced in the ethnographic encounter itself rather than coming to precede the event' (Nayak, 2006:426). The narratives that I elicited throughout my fieldwork are productive in the sense that narratives do things, constituting realities and shaping the social rather than being solely determined by it. In this sense 'race is something that we 'do' rather than who we are' (Nayak, 2006:426). This performance is significant because, although scholars generally agree that there is no biological basis to racial classification, race is still experienced by South Africans as a lived reality.

Given how race in South Africa has served and continues to serve as a marker of wealth, I was initially concerned about the car I drove, as it was a Mercedes station wagon and 'fancier' than I considered appropriate. An initial visit to my fieldsite indicated that the majority of teachers drove equivalently 'fancy', if not more expensive cars and this proved not to be a concern. In desiring to fit in with both pupils and teachers, there is a need for an appropriate dress code (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:66-67). At Inyoni, both male and female teachers tended to dress formally, often wearing suit jackets on blazing hot days. The students, in contrast, wore their school uniform as informally as possible and female students were often reprimanded by their teachers for wearing their skirts too short and showcasing bright lipstick. I wore clothes that was not as formal as the

teachers, although conservative in contrast to the trendy gear that the students adorned when I saw them on weekends. Students often teased me about my clothes and said they were old fashioned, as if I was *'going to church'* (Cezi). Given my position as someone studying at a Western institution and with connections to the romanticised 'London' or indeed, 'New York,' there was the expectation that I should display more expensively branded items, a point I reflect upon when exploring consumption practices in Chapter Six.

Like race, the researcher cannot escape the implications of gender. My gendered position meant that I interacted more with female schooling staff, as male staff were typically shyer in my presence, possibly as a sign of respect. While I had no difficulty engaging male participants in my research and I built close relationships with several of them, I spent more time with my female participants over weekends and outside school and typically exchanged more text messages with this group. Although this was not intentional, it reflects the ease with which I felt able to identify with the female participants and them with me. In focus groups particularly, female participants displayed their identification with me as a fellow woman with statements such as *'you know how boys are'* (Cindy, interview). This contrasted with how I was positioned in my interaction with male participants, where I was often asked for my perspective *'as a woman'* (Thomas, focus group).

During my write up, the different relationships I formed with male and female participants presented me with a methodological dilemma. Despite initially referring to the female participants as 'women,' I had a tendency to think of and write about my male participants as 'boys' rather than 'men.' Although this was not a deliberate decision, by constructing the men as 'boys,' I inadvertently sealed their status as younger than myself, moving them out of an arena of potential sexual threat. Despite the fact that many of my female participants were the same age, or younger than the 'boys,' I felt more comfortable referring to them as 'women,' identifying with them as 'women' of a similar age to myself. This has reinforced for me how I am as implicated in the performance of gender as my research participants, with our relational performances shaping the research process and product.

As a researcher in my late twenties, I was positioned as old enough to be seemingly accepted by the teachers (many of whom were a similar age to me), yet young enough to be seemingly accepted by the students and included in their social spaces. Regardless of age, researchers working within educational institutions face the challenge of not fitting into either the mode of 'student' or 'teacher' (Pomerantz, 2008). When entering my fieldsite, I initially spent more time with teachers than with students to ensure that they felt comfortable with my presence. Upon arrival, I was requested to

help with occasional teaching. Conscious of not being boxed into the role of teacher, I specifically asked that I provided assistance with the younger grades rather than the matric group. While I had initially not been keen to take on any teaching duties, my assisting with teaching junior classes provided an additional means to get to know students, understand the school system and justify my presence.

When some of the students initially referred to me as 'Ma'am' as a sign of respect, I asked that they did not do so, as I felt this label placed me in a position of superiority antithetical to my aims of establishing rapport and enabling a safe space within which they could express themselves. Over the duration of fieldwork I came to engage with my matric research participants on a more equal level than would be implied by a teacher/student relationship, although the ambiguity of my role never fully dissipated. Students often shared things with me requesting that I did not tell the teachers and teachers often did the same, requesting that I did not tell the students.

One of the most challenging aspects of being an outsider was that I was not a native siSwati speaker. This meant that I missed subtle meanings and insights in the words and actions of my participants. While I had studied a related Nguni language, isiZulu, and had some conversational ability, my level of siSwati remained very basic at best. I dealt with this challenge by asking people what particular terms or expressions meant if I did not understand and by being honest about anything I did not follow in conversation. At the start of my research, I offered students the option to be interviewed in siSwati, in the presence of one of my research assistants. This suggestion was not met with enthusiasm and so I disregarded the idea. I discuss the ethical concerns of conducting research that is not in my participants' mother tongue in section 4.7.

4.4 Finding the 'field' and selecting research participants

'Fieldwork,' a central activity for ethnographers, has been historically connected to the idea of the field as the place where one 'finds culture' (Rabinow, 2009:84). Yet rather than understanding fieldwork as bounded in space and time, I regard it as an ongoing process, as my relationship with my fieldsite and participants evolved and changed, even after I left the field. My fieldwork began before my formal arrival into Intaba, as I had worked here intermittently, in a voluntary and paid capacity, over six years previously. From having worked in this environment and being familiar with a number of 'gatekeepers,' I entered the field with some 'inside' knowledge and preconceptions regarding what I assumed I would further discover.

While my broad fieldsite was Intaba, I needed to identify one secondary school within which to base myself, observing lessons and getting to know teachers and students. The decision to focus upon one school and year group (matric) provided my study with the focus and depth that befits an ethnographic approach. In order to locate this key site, I visited numerous schools in the region accompanied by Rosemary, the Projects Director of the NGO for which I had previously worked. I had some prior knowledge of these schools and arrived with an idea of the school I wished to focus on due to my familiarity with its staff and premises, as well as its close proximity to the highway and local amenities such as the police station and library. However, this school turned out to be the one where I felt least comfortable and where I had the impression that the staff interpreted my role purely as an extra pair of teaching hands.

I had not considered Inyoni High (Inyoni), as a possibility, as it was further away than the other schools from where I lived (approximately a 40 minute drive). As fate would have it, this school struck me as housing the most friendly and receptive teaching staff and student body. The deputy principal and Maths teacher, a jovial man named Mr. Vusani, became my first point of call. Thereafter I visited several schools but I bypassed them due to receptivity and general ambiance. My fieldwork diary expresses as much:

'I could write pros and cons lists of why this school versus that school. But there really doesn't seem a point, when Inyoni is just the one that feels right. I'm not sure if that's academic enough – something 'feeling right' but ultimately, that's why I'm going there and not somewhere else' (8/10/2015).

Inyoni lies on the outer peripheries of Intaba and was commonly referred to, by both teachers and students, as the 'most rural school' in the area. It is located in a part of the township still under tribal leadership and the area approaching the school is known as 'the chief's land,' encompassing a wide expanse of agricultural farmland. At the end of the chief's property, the tarmacked road comes to a fork and a winding dirt path leads to Inyoni. The school is surrounded by a dry mountainous landscape, and other than a few mud huts located nearby, it is isolated and removed from the bustle of central Intaba. There was a drought in the province throughout my fieldwork and a dry, thirsty landscape and oppressive sunlight characterised my time there. Cows and goats grazed the surrounding fields and stray dogs, chickens and cats ran amok around the school premises.

Inyoni was one of the newest schools in the district, having started in 2007 with a student body of less than 100 and since growing to encompass 450 students at the time of my study. As is the norm for the area, it is co-educational and English medium, although teachers and students regularly switched to siSwati in the classroom. The staff consisted of fifteen teachers, one cleaner, two

administrative staff, two cooks and one security guard. There were two classrooms allocated per grade, except for Grade Eleven which had three classrooms as it is the biggest year group at most schools in the area, being the stage at which many students are likely to repeat a grade. Two classrooms were allocated to the teachers as staffrooms, one of which also contained the administrative staff and heads of department as well as several donated computers and a photocopying machine. Photographs of the school and surrounding region are provided in Appendix 2.1-2.4.

Inyoni was incomplete in terms of the initial building plans presented to Principal Thandi. The local Department of Education failed to deliver on initial promises and the original plans for the school reflected an entirely different establishment to the one that existed. The school did not have running water other than one water tank, which provided a limited supply through a single tap at the front of the school. The toilets were pit latrines and situated at the back of the school in several tin sheds. Nearby, there was a small shelter where the morning meal was cooked. The government provided the food for this meal which was given to all students. Inyoni lacked trees and its grounds consisted of dusty patches of grass with the exception of a small cluster of trees close to the pit latrines. Several benches, mostly broken, had been constructed from logs and placed here. In search of shade against the stark sunlight, students gravitated towards this area during their breaks and it is here that the school choir assembled and sang together in the afternoons. If this area was unoccupied, students often asked me to conduct interviews there, sitting together in the long, dry grass.

The classrooms were monochrome in appearance, featuring wooden desks for students, bricked walls, blackboards, cement floors and a jumble of broken orange chairs. Most of the classrooms had broken windows and birds would frequently fly inside and flutter over student's heads. Although the staffrooms had several plug points, each classroom had one single electric supply that was rarely utilised. The teachers always sat at the front of the class, next to the blackboard, and rarely moved around the generally packed classrooms. Different students would be allocated to walk between classes after lessons and to wipe the boards clean, although the chalky residue of previous lessons generally remained. The classrooms would be cleaned at the end of the day by the students, who swept the rooms with besoms – brooms constructed with twigs. This cleaning duty was taken up by the female students, a point I will elaborate upon when discussing gendered dynamics in section 7.5.

When not observing lessons or interacting with students, I spent time in the staffrooms. While the classrooms of students were generally bare walled, with the exception of graffiti markings, the staffrooms' walls were adorned with motivational quotes. These rooms had a friendly and casual feel, and students often wandered in to talk to teachers or submit assignments. It was here that teachers prepared teaching material, marked assignments and relaxed. Teachers often played music from their cellphones, and medleys of gospel and pop songs formed an ambient background sound against which constant chattering occurred. Time spent in the staffroom often involved teachers trying to teach me siSwati (with much laughter), sharing food and speaking, largely about our families but encompassing discussions on travel, religion, politics and their views on the youth of today, among other topics. While this space was one of laughter, gossip and intrigue, it was the same space where students were brought for disciplining, with the implement for punishment chosen on the basis of the 'crime' committed.

My fieldwork took place between September 2015 and June 2016, although more substantial classroom observations and interviews were from January 2016 to June 2017. This is because school years run from January to December in South Africa and my initial discussions with teachers indicated that they preferred for the majority of my observations and interviews to occur during the first six months of the academic year, as the last six months of matric are devoted to revision and examinations. With the exception of school holidays, I attended school three to four days per week, sometimes for full days (7:30am to 4pm) and sometimes for half days, depending on the activities happening at the time. Classroom observations concluded when the academic day ended at 2pm and my afternoons were often spent conducting focus groups or interviews with students. Interviews with teachers took place during breaks within the academic day. When possible, I met with students, teachers and other community members on weekends and during school holidays.

The school fees were R120 a year. At the time of the study this was less than £6.00. R80 of this was a 'security deposit' fee and R40 for paper, given to students at the beginning of the year. According to Mr Vusani, most of the students' parents were unemployed and those who were employed worked in menial labour positions. While I was unable to obtain exact figures, it appeared, as is usual in the area, that many households were child headed (run by a young person under the age of eighteen) and many of the students were orphans. The teachers were unsure of the personal situations of students, for example who was orphaned, who was HIV positive or in some cases, who had fathered or mothered a child. These 'silences' form part of my analysis, discussed in Chapter 7.

As 'participant observation provides a means to build rapport which aids interview process and outcome' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:109), I waited until the third month of fieldwork before inviting matric students to participate in a focus group in order to select what I had initially intended to be my 'key' participants. I chose a purposely large sample of twelve students, bearing in mind that this might change if participants dropped out during my research. This proved not to be an issue as all selected participants retained a desire to be involved. I was initially aiming for a 'purposive' sample (Cohen et al., 2007:114) which reflected a diverse group of students with different aspirations and academic attainments. I ended up with more of a 'convenience' or 'volunteer' sample (Cohen et al., 2007:113-116), skewed in favour of those who felt more confident in the company of an outsider and speaking in English. I sought an even split between male and female participants and orphaned and parented participants and had intended for all key participants to be in the final year of schooling, with ages ranging from seventeen to twenty-one. I confirmed my decisions with the teachers before conducting interviews, to ensure they did not have any reasons as to why someone should not partake in the research.

Shweder (1996:16) writes about how researchers arrive in the field with 'theoretically sophisticated and fashionable' ideas about sampling and come to realise that ultimately they do not select their informants but their informants select them based on little more than having had 'nothing better to do.' My own 'sophisticated' ideas were challenged as although I entered the field aiming to select a set of 'key' participants to interview on a recurring basis, my interactions with the matrices extended far beyond those I had initially identified as 'key' to the study. I had also not anticipated for a group of eight local post-matrices to also become chief informants. This group, whom I had met through my NGO work two years earlier and whom I discuss in my Introduction, proved incredibly insightful regarding my research design and in helping me to navigate unfamiliar spaces within the township. Two of the men in the group, Thabo and Morris, became my research assistants. While I had initially intended for Thabo and Morris to play a more explicit role within my fieldwork, in terms of providing translation of interviews, this did not turn out to be the case as my participants expressed a preference for being interviewed in English and by myself only. Instead, Thabo and Morris played a more informal role whereby they helped me bounce off my own findings and insights as they emerged. Being young men who were local to the region and having only recently left secondary school, they provided important reference points throughout my fieldwork, answering questions I asked them as well as presenting me with their own thought-provoking questions. As siSwati speakers, they also helped clarify any expressions or local terms that I did not understand. Their main contribution to my study, however, came towards the end of my fieldwork, whereby I reviewed

my anonymised interviews and focus group transcripts with them and sought their assistance on my developing analysis, a point I expand upon in section 4.6, Data recording and analysis.

4.5 Ethnography: The embrace of mess

4.5.1 Participant observation

While what constitutes ethnographic methods is subject to debate, central to ethnography is 'participant observation,' studying first-hand what people do and say in particular contexts. This is described as 'a way to collect data in a relatively unstructured manner in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied' (Dewalt et al., 1998:260). Participant observation or 'deep hanging out' (Geertz, 1998:69) enables the researcher to observe directly rather than only rely on what people say about their lives. In research with youth, it ideally involves engaging with all the microsystems of home, community, streets, and school in which young people find themselves (Swartz, 2009). For my research, the time I spent at school facilitated my entry into the social spaces that students and teachers occupied outside of school.

Shortly after starting fieldwork, I was asked, by teachers and students, to provide them with lifts to and from school. These car journeys, which involved a variety of rotating individuals, provided me with a greater sense of the terrain of the township and where people lived. They also gave me unobtrusive access into students' and teachers' home environments and the opportunity to meet their family members, sometimes sharing food and drinks with them or watching television together. While I had initially considered incorporating interviews with students' families into my research design, I quickly realised that this would lead to overwhelming amounts of data. I had intended for one of my research assistants to join me when I visited participants' homes and navigated unfamiliar social settings, but when I discussed this with my participants they were unanimously opposed to the idea. I respected their wishes although took care to not be alone without the participant in question in people's homes, as well as never visited after sunset.

Car journeys often included visits to the local shopping complex, where many conversations took place inside Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). This was usually the students' first choice as a destination and it is where we often met over weekends and holidays. KFC provided a venue for several interviews and was the setting for numerous informal interactions that was recorded through my fieldnotes and provided substantive material for my data analysis. After the first three months of tentative interactions, contact with participants opened into 'non-physical' spaces of enquiry, such as phone calls and text messaging. These communications did not form part of the

data I analysed but assisted me in the crystallising of relationships and the organisation of interviews and social gatherings. While most 'hanging out' occurred within Intaba, with the permission of their guardians I took several students to the nearby town of Gleneagles, where we visited KFC, among other cafes.

Aside from the time spent driving together, in cafes and public spaces such as parks and libraries, my ability to participate in aspects of young people's worlds which transcended the school's gates was limited. This was due to potential security risks, and a wariness of violating people's privacy. However, through expanding my networks within Intaba, I met other teachers, educational psychologists, religious leaders and traditional healers, referred to as witchdoctors or 'sangomas.' Where possible I engaged with students and teachers in surrounding schools and attended local events aimed at the provision of career-related information. I also attended some church services and on one occasion, a funeral.

At Inyoni, my observations took place in the matric classrooms as well as the general schooling environment. When attending classes, I attempted to be as unobtrusive as possible and sat at the back of the class to minimise being a distraction to the students. I prioritised observing LO and Humanities and Social Sciences classes. While my focus was the matrics, I observed the Grade Eleven's LO classes, as well as different classes across the grades, if the lesson's themes intersected with my research interests (for example, lessons related to South African history or current affairs). I had intended to observe History lessons but subsequently discovered that this was not a subject offered at Inyoni, or any high school within the vicinity. While the absence of History was significant data in itself and will be discussed further in Chapter 7, it reinforced how the fieldsite ultimately dictates the direction of one's research.

4.5.2 Interviews

Interviewing can be an important source of data in that it can generate information that is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain otherwise. While my initial research design emphasised interviews, further reading and exposures within my fieldsite led me to recognise some of the limitations of this mode of inquiry. While recognising that interviews do not offer 'an authentic gaze into the soul of another' (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997:322), they were a useful means to explore the discursive strategies and resources deployed by my participants. They are not a window into a person's inner world, but can function as a narrative device where people tell stories of themselves, forming a space where meaning is co-created and performed. The narratives that people generate indicate what it is possible (in a particular time and place) to imagine and speak about (Thomson, 2007:77).

By appreciating that it is the 'dialogue' between the researcher and the research participant which is important, I have explored both my questions as well as the answers that I received (Yow, 1997:64). As much as I have interrogated my own positionality, I have sought to acknowledge how my participants similarly made assumptions about me as the researcher that influenced the claims they may have made. Interviewees can make assumptions about the interviewer's cultural identity and modify what they say and how they say it in line with these assumptions (Phoenix, 2013). While we can minimise or monitor reactivity, we can also exploit it, for example how my participants responded to me, as a white, Muslim woman, was informative in its own right.

Due to the semi-structured nature of my interviews, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive record of all the questions that I asked. I have provided my initial interview and focus group schedules as part of my appendices (Appendix 4.1-4.3) but these are not indicative of the interviews themselves, which took an open-ended, improvisational and flexible structure. At times, I asked deliberately leading questions, appreciating that 'both directive and non-directive questioning produces different kinds of data that may be useful at different stages of inquiry' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:120). The majority of interviews occurred in empty classrooms or isolated patches of shade on the school grounds. Interviews that took place over weekends or during holidays occurred either outside the local library or in a corner of KFC. I interviewed a maximum of two people per day in order to give each interviewee appropriate attention and prevent myself from feeling inundated.

In total, I conducted fifty-nine interviews over ten months. Twenty-four of these encompassed two sets of interviews with my initial twelve 'key' participants. Seven of the interviews were with miscellaneous matric students. Of the remaining interviews, thirteen were with teachers at Inyoni, eight were with secondary school graduates residing in the area ('post-matics') and seven took place with different community members encompassing educational psychologists, religious leaders and NGO workers. All interviews ranged in length from 20 to 90 minutes.

4.5.3 Focus groups

Researchers of youth have advocated focus groups as a means to create a collaborative context in which young people can contribute without feeling pressure to provide the 'right' answer (McClelland and Fine, 2008). They are deemed to provide participants with greater control in the research process by opening up space for dialogue and contestation (Wilkinson, 2004). In the framing of my research methods, I had only intended to use focus groups to select participants. However, after the success of these initial sessions and following discussions with students

regarding the research design, I saw this method as a meaningful avenue to explore further. Therefore, in addition to my introductory eight focus groups, I conducted twelve more focus groups towards the end of my fieldwork.

The focus groups also helped generate interactive data, encouraging participants to 'unpack contested understandings' through discussion (Jowett and O'Toole, 2006:464). They were particularly suited to an epistemological approach that views meaning as collaboratively and contextually produced through discursive practice, rather than pre-existing and located in individuals. In my initial focus groups, I invited all matrices to partake. Of a group of (then) fifty-four students, thirty-nine attended. During the focus groups, which took place over school afternoons, I provided drinks and snacks. We met in empty classrooms, with closed doors to provide privacy and leave no risk of interruption. The groups varied between three to eight participants and were arranged by the participants themselves. This approach was informed by the suggestion that 'friendship groupings often helps to create a non-threatening and comfortable atmosphere' (Renold, 2005:13). My participants preferred same-sex focus groups, a factor that feeds into my data analysis and is discussed in section 7.5. As gendered identities are partly negotiated through speech, these same sex groups enabled particular performances for me. For example, in the context of the all-male groups, my methodology may have encouraged 'the discursive reproduction of a certain kind of macho masculinity' (Robb, 2007:124) that might have played out differently in a mixed group, or if I had been positioned differently by my participants.

Through initial discussions within my focus groups, I was able to elicit the views of young people regarding the research design. I hope that such discussions made the research process more meaningful to my participants, without implying that my intention was to 'empower' them (Bagnoli and Clark, 2010:102). While acknowledging the possibilities that focus groups provide, I am wary of overstating the potential of this method to redistribute power. This is important given that my research did not employ an explicitly participatory or emancipatory agenda.

4.5.4 Textual analysis

When initially designing my methodology, I was drawn to the idea of asking participants to keep a journal throughout my fieldwork. My interest in journals as a research method lies in its potential to access facets of life not easily articulated or accessed through interviews or observations. Rather than analysing diary entries, I intended to use this method as 'a prop' to elicit discussions within interviews (Thomson and Holland, 2005:214).

In my initial focus groups and in discussions with 'post-matrices,' journals emerged as a popular idea and the majority of matrices requested notebooks to keep a journal. As compiling journals requires time and effort, I let each person choose the regularity of their recording. While I introduced some basic structure for those who wished, by suggesting possible sub categories for entries, my guidance was not prescriptive and I avoided providing lengthy instructions that could appear off-putting and instead encouraged students to write about whatever aspects of their lives they wished to share.

Despite expressing enthusiasm about the idea, very few of my participants ever shared their journals with me and, as noted by one participant, Cezi, they may have been keen on the idea but, when recognising the implications on their time, changed their mind. It may have also been that participants were like Phil, who gave me a cheeky grin at the end of my fieldwork and told me, *'Aaah I just wanted the book Fezz!'* Although journals proved not to be significant props for discussions, the experience of distributing them, at students' request, alerted me to how my participants may have often told me what they felt I wanted to hear, indicating a limitation of 'inclusive' research designs, particularly in the early stages of fieldwork.

Additional textual material for analysis has been selected curriculum content used for LO at Grade 12 and Grade 11 level. The core, and in the case of my fieldsite, the only curriculum material that LO utilised was the 'Focus' textbooks (Rooth et al., 2013). These large, colourful textbooks brimmed with cartoons, pictures of smiling multiracial youth, diagrams of different exercise positions, motivational quotes, case studies and newspaper article excerpts. Throughout my analysis chapters and in Chapter 5 specifically, I have highlighted the key discourses to emerge within the texts that both echo and contradict views expressed by my participants inside and outside of the classroom. These extracts do not reflect the entire scope of the curriculum but rather the sections that have been useful in addressing my research questions.

4.6 Data recording and analysis

With few exceptions, interviews were electronically recorded and then transcribed. Given the nature of ethnography and the importance of informal conversations in generating findings, I often wrote extracts of conversations where the dialogue was not verbatim but my best rendering of what was discussed, recorded as soon after the discussion as possible. I personally transcribed each interview in full, as I felt that selective transcription could have led to the omission of potentially important insights. Other than interview and focus group transcriptions, I had extensive 'fieldnotes' to analyse. These notes were selective, given the impossibility of capturing everything at hand.

Schatzman and Strauss advocate an approach that ‘packages’ notes into three categories: Observational, Theoretical and Methodological (1973:101). While my own notes lacked such clear distinctions, I attended to each of these aspects within my note taking.

One means to cultivate researcher reflexivity, without allowing self-conscious reflections to dominate the research, is to keep a research diary. This diary is distinct from academic writing in that it does not attempt to present the research in a linear fashion. Instead, a diary can capture something of ‘the real inner drama’ of research ‘with its intuitive base, its halting time-line, and its extensive recycling of concepts and perspectives’ (Marshall and Rossman 1995:15). The purpose of a diary is not primarily about communicating the research to others, but rather to facilitate the research process through recording observations, emotional responses, thoughts and questions as they arise, stimulating reflections which can be later used by the researcher.

During my fieldwork I developed a companion method to diarising – recording ‘voice notes’ (Mazanderani, 2017). I recorded these notes immediately after leaving the field, but before sitting at my desk at home. The recordings were a useful means to decompress the day, as well as to express specific responses I had to conversations or interviews shortly after they had taken place. These commentaries reflected the immediacy of interactions, giving embodiment to a method generally dominated by text. Given that the research output is textual, the process of writing textualises experiences in the field and can create an uncomfortable distance between what is felt in the ‘field’ and what is expressed at the ‘desk’. Recording voice notes provided me with additional forms of self-expression that ‘speak back’ and confront the researcher in ways that ‘demand self-reappraisal’ (Hodder, 1998 in Dunne et al., 2005:88).

St. Pierre (2009:228) notes how, except for providing brief summaries of the technicalities of coding and describing the miraculous ‘emergence of themes,’ researchers rarely tackle the difficult task of describing data analysis. This is especially so in ethnography, whereby data analysis is an iterative process which formally takes shape in the development of analytic codes and the identification of key themes, but is ‘informally embodied in the ideas and hunches with which the ethnographer enters their field’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:59). While there are few agreed-on canons for analysing qualitative data, the analysis of ethnographic material is typically led by an inductive approach whereby the ‘patterns, themes, and categories of analysis emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis’ (Patton, 1980:306).

Once I had transcribed my data, I engaged in 'initial coding' which involved meticulously reading through printed copies of my fieldnotes, transcripts and LO curriculum content. As I reduced and developed my initial codes, I created a corresponding 'theoretical memo', which reflected more sophisticated themes, patterns and connections that I had begun to identify (Crang, 2005). The designation of codes was an iterative process of moving back and forth between developing initial codes and comparing them with the transcripts, in order to ensure that the codes were closely connected to the data (Merriam, 2009). From here, I assembled my different codes into thematic zones and reviewed these themes in relation to one another and the overall story the analysis told. I drew upon a method of physical sorting which involved creating multiple copies of my data and organising my material into different thematic folders. This process enabled me to engage with my material in a tactile manner, appreciating the considerable overlap that occurs when the same set of data attaches itself to multiple themes. I interpreted the data in light of my on-going literature review, drawing upon my theoretical memos in order to formulate my main arguments. This was a messy process, a mess I came to embrace as necessary rather than to be avoided. Part of this mess was due to the recognition that ethnographic acts of representation are always 'incomplete scripts' (Nayak, 2006:413). My foray into poststructural theories has disrupted any original desire I had for a seamless narrative. This meant that I really had to grapple with the contradictions within my data and understand these contradictions to be the points worth probing.

The conceptual and empirical dimensions of my research continually interacted through an iterative process, with theory enabling the interpretation, but not the determination, of my findings. As Alcoff notes, this procedure is most successful if engaged in collectively with others, by which 'aspects of our location less obvious to us might be revealed' (2009:129). The others with whom I engaged have been namely my supervisors and research assistants as well as friends and colleagues who have particular familiarity with either my fieldsite or my theoretical influences. In discussing my developing analysis with others, I have come to appreciate how reflexivity has to be both 'collective and contested' given the limits of individual visions and experiences (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002:119).

4.7 Ethics

Within a modernist paradigm, ethics has been seen as a set of abstract, transferable principles, primarily concerned with the process of conducting research and not broader issues regarding the nature of knowledge itself (Mauthner et al., 2002). While certain universal criteria to guide behaviour may be helpful and necessary, the tick box approach to ethics represents it as an 'abstracted

consideration' and is only effective when serving in tandem with ongoing introspection throughout the research process.

In recognition of the need to tick institutional boxes, this project received clearance from the Ethics Committee at the University of Sussex, permission from the school principals as well as from the local circuit manager and representative for the Mpumalanga Department of Education. At the outset of my research, I made information sheets available for teachers and students (Appendix 3). Within my initial focus groups, I discussed the research design in detail, making it clear that participants could opt out of the study at any point. In discussion with the school principal, oral consent was deemed favourable to written consent, for both teachers and students alike. Written consent held connotations of a contractual arrangement, which could have made participants feel formally obliged to engage with the research rather than do so on a voluntary basis. I did not seek written consent from students' guardians, as this is an inappropriate medium given illiteracy rates in Southern Africa. The school principal also considered it unnecessary, given that all of my participants were over seventeen and several were parents themselves and/or ran households.

In research with youth in general and within vulnerable contexts in particular, young people may be inclined to engage with researchers because they believe that it will benefit them in some way. Students are often something of a captive audience and may not feel at liberty to say 'no' to requests for involvement, assuming that they are 'under some tacit obligation to cooperate' (Denscombe and Aubrook, 1992:129). I avoided this by making my research explicitly voluntary, thus attracting particular students while others declined engagement. Given my status as an outsider coming from a more affluent background than my participants, it is possible that people took part in my research believing it would benefit them in some way, financially or simply through the status attached to engaging with a white person.

I saw consent as provisional and something to be constantly negotiated and re-negotiated throughout the research process. This is partly due to the difficulty of communicating to participants exactly what they are consenting to do, given that, in the early stages of negotiating access, an ethnographer cannot know exactly what will be involved. In my research, it was impossible to obtain consent from everyone in the school and I focused on obtaining the consent of those whom I interviewed. I found that regardless of whether people had knowledge of social research or not, they were more concerned with 'what kind of person the researcher is than the research itself' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:66-67). Each time that I attempted 're-negotiating' consent and checking whether participants felt comfortable with my presence, or the questions I was asking, I

was met with laughter. One of my participants, Lionel, told me once, *'please stop asking us if everything is okay, we are happy with you here, we are happy to talk, you must stop asking!'*

While the young people I met in Intaba seemed 'happy to talk,' I was still working within a context where most individuals had little or no knowledge of social research. While not attempting to condescend my participants, I focused on making my work as accessible as possible. This involved simplifying the aims of my research and expressing my research aims as being to understand more about my participants' lives and experiences, especially their views about their futures. In order not to influence my participants' responses, I occasionally 'downplayed' my personal beliefs and political sympathies (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:72), an ethical dilemma I have expanded upon elsewhere (Mazanderani, 2017).

Feminist scholars in particular have rejected the objectifying and seemingly 'neutral' stance of the researcher as neither possible nor desirable, arguing that meaningful research relies on 'empathy and mutuality' (Oakley, 1981). Yet while the desire for developing relationships with participants has been posed by some as an ethical imperative and antidote to the abstracted epistemologies that pervade traditional Western research, deepened rapport brings its own ethical concerns. In recognition of the 'disturbing ethical naivety' to arise when researchers romanticise 'doing rapport' (Duncombe and Jessop, 2002:6) I have drawn upon my field diary and voice notes to explore the interactions that occurred during fieldwork and the influence these interactions had upon the research process and product.

While I formed close bonds with several of my participants, I was careful not to take on too significant a role, given the impermanence of my position in their lives. Upon leaving the field, I have maintained sporadic communication with participants via mobile phone. These conversations are not extensive but they have solidified the bonds that we forged, relationships that did not abruptly end when I left the field or when my participants ceased to be specifically 'useful' to my research objectives. Therefore, while I take heed of Stacey's warnings regarding the ethical questionability of 'rapport' within the research encounter, I do not believe that ethnography is inherently exploitative. For example, listening to people during the research encounter has been argued to be a primary intervention in itself and one way in which 'giving back' can address 'the local ethics of immediate need' (Nama and Swartz, 2002:295).

Research with economically disadvantaged youth raises difficult questions regarding compensation. While it has become common for youth researchers to offer material compensation,

it has also been suggested that young people should not be paid to participate in research because this puts them in a 'contractual relationship' and 'diminishes their freedom to withdraw' (Alderson and Morrow, 2011:71). What one researcher might see as a legitimate way of saying 'thank you,' another might regard as an inappropriate bribe to encourage participation (Heath et al., 2009). In response to this, some researchers make a payment after the event, but give no prior indication of this to avoid the danger of payment affecting consent. Other researchers 'give practical help or provide fun activities to gain trust and cooperation' (Greene and Hogan, 2005:71).

I provided my participants with payment 'in kind instead of in cash,' through the provision of food and drinks during focus groups and interviews, as well as stationary to compile their diaries (Alderson and Morrow, 2011:69). The only exception to this was my research assistants, Thabo and Morris, whom I paid by the hour, at a rate approved by Rosemary, my gatekeeper. Given the nature of my research, it was inappropriate for me to assist students with their applications to tertiary institutions. However, I felt an ethical obligation to provide unobtrusive assistance where possible. One way in which I did this was to provide students with lifts to the police station where they could certify personal documents. I also responded to several students' requests to teach them basic computer skills. These sessions were initiated by only a few students and took place on the school premises or the local library. At the end of my fieldwork, I sent a request among my personal contacts for donations towards the purchase of benches for the school. These benches were donated and delivered on my last week at Inyoni, to prevent me from being put in the position of a donor, but still allowing me to extend my gratitude towards teachers and students alike.

My greatest ethical concern is how easily I did not resist the hegemonic hold of English. Although I arrived at my fieldsite with numerous siSwati textbooks and some prior understanding of the language, I was relieved that students did not wish to conduct interviews in siSwati. Beyond very informal conversations, which generally resulted in jokes, I did not press anyone to talk to me in siSwati. Frankenberg writes how, by avoiding naming itself, whiteness becomes 'power evasive,' silently reproducing dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage (1993:237). While 'whiteness' is not the same as 'Englishness', the use of English in postcolonial countries can be viewed as a complicit act with colonialism, owing to the fact that it was the language of the colonisers. It was not, however, the language of South Africa's most recent oppressor – a fact raised by many of my participants, who articulated a disinterest, and on some occasions, dislike for Afrikaans and an attraction towards English, the language which could 'open doors' (Petal).

Swartz (2009), who conducted her research in English in a South African township, found that when she shared her written interview transcripts with her research participants, they were unhappy that she had captured their words verbatim and asked her to edit their language. I took heed of Swartz's experiences and requested that interviewees indicate their preferences regarding whether I 'correct' their language or not. The consensus was that my participants wanted their grammar corrected as people did not want to appear as '*stupid*' or '*like they can't speak English*' (Phil, interview). In making these corrections, I have been careful not to change or obscure any meaning and have only corrected grammatical tense and misused personal pronouns.

While the 'trustworthiness' of ethnography is subject to debate, incorporating feedback from research participants, referred to as 'member checks', is argued as the approach which enables the greatest sense of trustworthiness (Swartz, 2011). Member checks also provide a way to communicate the results of my research to my participants, despite them not being members of the academic 'target culture' (Cohen et al., 2007:139). For these reasons, towards the end of my fieldwork I asked each person I had interviewed if they wished to review their transcripts with me. The general view was that this was a time-consuming and 'boring' activity, and with the exception of two teachers who asked to not be quoted in the study, all my participants expressed comfort with me using their interview material in my work. As my participants were uninterested in 'member checks', I sought permission to review their transcripts with other 'members' of the community, my research assistants. This involved printing all my transcripts and going through them together, paying attention to 'grey areas' that emerged – particularly regarding colloquial expressions or when I desired greater clarity regarding locally specific references.

Despite the school's lack of concern regarding how I proceeded with data analysis and dissemination, I did not want to engage in research that 'never brings the findings back to the community' (Shacklock and Smyth, 1998:89). For this reason, I wrote a report, summarising my key findings as they relate to the functioning of the school specifically. Veering away from the theoretical concerns of my thesis, I constructed this report in a style that was more accessible and appropriate for the local community and educators not coming from Social Science backgrounds. It was oriented towards practical insights and suggestions, particularly concerning the provision of career related information and the teaching of LO. I have attempted to make this report accessible to both the school and wider township community and distributed it to the NGO personnel who work across multiple secondary schools in Intaba, as well as the local educational district officer, who may share or utilise its findings at his discretion.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter shows how my position as a researcher inevitably shaped how my research was approached, reinforcing the need to appreciate methodology as encompassing epistemological, ontological, practical, political and ethical dimensions. By demonstrating the influence of poststructural, feminist and postcolonial scholars on my work, I have unpacked the 'myth of the objective, neutral observer, who leaves the field without influencing their data' (Ryan-Flood and Gill, 2010:2). In this Chapter, I have attempted to illustrate the messiness of data collection and the inductive nature of ethnography, which requires researchers to make space for the unexpected (McArthur, 2012). Some of this messiness involved engaging with new sets of participants, in unanticipated spaces, adjusting my research design in accordance with the responses I received and what was possible for me to observe.

By challenging traditional conceptions of ethnographic representation as the mere translation of an experienced reality, I hope to have demonstrated the constructed nature of cultural accounts, whereby representation is understood as partial and 'any tale told is merely one of many possible depictions' (Davies, 2004:5). In doing so, the aim of this chapter has been to set the tone for how I approached the gathering and analysis of my data, the seeming 'tale' I have chosen to tell within my subsequent empirical chapters.

Chapter 5: From 'Rags to Riches:' The myth of meritocracy

5.1 Introduction

Although my fieldsite was at a distance from the student protests, which I described in section 1.1 and 2.7, I found myself swept up in the fervour of these movements and their symbolic potency. When I first arrived at Intaba, I assumed that my participants would see something of their own impending struggle for higher education echoed in the challenges faced by other young South Africans. I found this to be far from the case, perhaps because students did not think of their post-school trajectories as rife with the difficulties that I predicted them to be. Instead, my participants expressed immense optimism about their futures and espoused the belief that anything was possible if they worked hard enough. Petal, a matric student, encapsulated the views of many of her peers when she told me, *'if they (the protestors) had worked hard enough, they wouldn't have had to pay fees in the first place, they would have got a bursary'*. As my fieldwork progressed, I found that most of the young people I met expressed a similar sentiment, indicating that those who were protesting the injustices of the higher educational system did not reflect the views of South African youth at large. This chapter shows that these expressions of frustration are especially disconnected from the views of secondary school students residing in isolated rural regions.

Upon observing lessons, I identified the LO classroom as a particular site that nurtured the idea that 'anything is possible if you work hard enough.' In this chapter, I will analyse aspects of the teaching and curriculum of LO to explore my primary research question concerning how rural, black youth construct their future aspirations. As a curriculum designed to help students succeed in the new South African dispensation, I am interested in what the LO curriculum portrays as a desirable future for young South Africans. By emphasising the importance of hard work, individual responsibility and social mobility, I argue that LO fits within a set of educational discourses that have been deemed to be technologies of neoliberalism (Bradford and Hey, 2007).

For the purposes of this research, I understand neoliberalism to represent the shift to 'a state that gives power to global corporations and installs apparatuses and knowledges through which people are reconfigured as productive economic entrepreneurs of their own lives' (Davies and Bansel, 2007:248). Peterson et al. (2007:49,53) argue that while an emphasis on the future is not new to Western modernity, what is produced through neo-liberal discourses is the conception of the individual as an 'agent of the future' so that 'the making of the present and of the future thus becomes an individual project.' Such an understanding of neoliberalism is relevant for this study, which has been informed by research which demonstrates how discourses of neoliberal selfhood

obscure enduring structural inequities, presenting particular challenges for young women, working-class, and racialised individuals, who are encouraged to interpret structural constraints through the lens of individual agency (Francis and Hey, 2009).

This chapter begins by looking at the different motivational rhetoric that circulates within the schooling environment and how this rhetoric reinforces the notion of young people as individually responsible for transcending their social and spatial locations. I consider the intersection between educational and religious discourses that emphasise positive and future oriented thinking over practical constraints. In 5.4, I explore what my participants consider a ‘good education,’ understanding this idea of the ‘good’ as influenced by their schooling environments and the LO classroom specifically. In demonstrating how the educational pathway of attending university is privileged over other options, I argue that students are channelled towards particular gendered professional trajectories rather than others. I show how the school, by dictating how students should ideally behave in order to achieve a life deemed successful, attempts both to discipline the minds and bodies of its students into model subjects and citizens. My analysis illustrates the pervasiveness of these discourses, such that my participants are also seemingly invested in a common understanding of a ‘good education’ and its relationship to a ‘good life’. This demonstrates that the discursive formation of being a ‘good student’ is not only an imposition of power, but also constructs the ‘good student’ as an autonomous, agentic individual. Thus the power of creating the ‘ideal subject’ is productive and multiplicitous rather than a singular hegemonic function.

5.2 Moving beyond ‘bad’ backgrounds: ‘Anything is possible if you work hard enough’

The core LO curriculum material drawn upon at Inyoni were the ‘Focus’ textbooks, edited by Rooth et al. (2013). I am particularly interested in the ‘case studies’ provided within these textbooks, as most of these had a motivational narrative, relaying the success stories of young, typically non-white South Africans who had ‘made it’ against the odds. They generally featured people who lived in dire socio-economic conditions, often in rural townships, and were often expressed as first person narratives, as can be seen below:

Example A: Persistence pays

‘My suffering has made me what I am. I never gave up. I was persistent.’ So says Ms Yvonne Lungcuzo, director of a tourism company. She started out as a homeless person. Now she has a beautiful office in Cape Town, is the director of a tourism company and owns a fleet of cars for her car-hire firm. She is motivated to succeed. ‘The secret of my success is hard work and perseverance. If you want to succeed, you have to be patient’ (Rooth et al., 2013: 8).

worked in a 'beautiful office' because of their persistence. At the start of my fieldwork I realised the significance attached to 'motivational speak' within Inyoni, as teachers expressed their appreciation that I had come to the school to 'inspire' the students to pursue university. These stipulations were concerning, as I had deliberately avoided espousing any motivation agenda and had neither encouraged nor discouraged students towards particular post-school pathways. Yet my presence in the field, as a white outsider attached to a foreign institution, framed me as part of the development related world that enters areas that have been marked as 'disadvantaged,' with the intention of providing social 'upliftment' and aid. In the words of Mr Vusani, *'when these students see a white person, they see someone who is coming into their school to give them something.'* As my relationships developed and teachers and students recognised that I would not be providing explicit motivation, I received requests to draw upon my networks and invite external speakers to address the school.

In response to these requests and in recognition of the numerous students who had expressed a desire to study medicine, I invited a local doctor to discuss different avenues towards medical careers. The teacher coordinating this event arranged for it to target matric students taking Maths and Physical Science – subjects required for medicine. This caused an uproar among the remaining excluded students who expressed not wanting to miss the opportunity to meet a doctor. I asked one student, Lindiwe, why she so vehemently wished to attend the session with the doctor, given that she had expressed an interest in studying Business Management and did not have the subjects required for medicine. She explained to me, *'Ah but the doctor will motivate me, she will tell me I can do anything I want in this life and then when she speaks, I will believe in myself.'*

Throughout my fieldwork, I attended several public presentations aimed at motivating students to 'believe' in themselves. These motivational talks often had echoes of a religious sermon where students were told not to engage in certain pastimes, as well as being encouraged to behave in particular ways, such as displaying a dedicated work ethic and abstaining from alcohol consumption and pre-marital sex. One such event, which occurred seven months into my fieldwork, was the annual 'Career Exhibition,' a day arranged by the provincial Department of Education geared at providing Grade Eleven and Grade Twelve students with information regarding post-school pathways. I had heard about this day long before it took place. Many of the students were eagerly anticipating the event and told me that it was hereafter that they would decide what university to attend and learn how to send an application. The exhibition was also a rare opportunity to have an excursion outside of the township and to meet students from other schools. It took place at the local soccer stadium in Nelspruit, which students reached through taxis arranged by their teachers. The

other schools who attended came from surrounding townships, reinforcing for me how the opportunity to meet students from the suburbs and from different racial groups remained negligible.

The day began with a motivational talk from a physically disabled celebrity swimmer, who reiterated the importance of working hard in order to succeed. He spoke about his childhood, as a young black man raised under impoverished conditions in a rural township, an environment similar to that in which his audience lived. He told the silent and seemingly spellbound crowd how he had always longed to escape but had never believed it was possible. Implicit in this is the assumption that students living in a township would automatically desire to leave it, an assumption that my findings, discussed in the following chapter, both correspond with and contest. His underlying message was that students could leave their township lives behind them if they were determined enough, but they had to rid themselves of 'bad' habits first. A large part of his talk was devoted to lamenting what he regarded as the lazy attitudes of South African youth today. He told the crowd:

'The problem with you youngsters today is that you are spoilt, you buy money for airtime⁶ to chat to friends, not to do your research. I myself have not watched TV for the last 8 months; my success is greater to me than that. I would not have got my Mercedes if I was sitting watching Generations⁷. You have to stop getting other people to help you with your dreams – your dreams are your dreams, don't cry if someone else does not support you, you've gotta do it yourself.'

When he closed his speech by declaring that *'Nothing is impossible in this life,'* he was met with a resounding 'YES' from the audience and enthusiastic applause. He then bid his goodbyes and one of the exhibition organisers came forward and said, *'I am sorry our guest speaker has to leave now to drive his beautiful Mercedes back to work.'* This statement, expressed with a wink, was received with several gasps and caused a group of young men to start laughing and slapping one another on the back. The organiser then asked the crowd to chant the phrases *'I am a winner'* and *'success knows my name.'*

At the end of the day, when walking back to the taxi rank, I discovered that most students had not acquired any education or employment related application forms, yet there were gushes of enthusiasm about the motivational talk. Events such as these, which attempt to 'raise' young people's aspirations by acting on an emotional level create 'wow' moments that affect students' perceptions of what is possible, yet there was no evidence of any practical output from the day (Brown, 2013:7). The perception that students needed to be motivated in order to transition into worthy post-school pursuits came up continually in conversations with teachers at Inyoni. Teachers particularly complained about the students' guardians, who they regarded as uneducated,

⁶ Mobile phone credit.

⁷ A popular South African soap opera.

'primitive' and generally unable to support the younger generation due to their lower educational levels. As well as seeing students' low levels of academic achievement as reflecting their family background, teachers deemed it to reflect their isolated geographical position. Staff room discussions often involved lamenting the barrenness of the schools' surroundings in contrast to the opportunities and resources more likely found in urban areas. This privileging of the urban over the rural is a point I take up further in my next Chapter.

While several teachers referred to students' backgrounds as 'disadvantaged,' no one explicitly referenced this disadvantage as a relic of apartheid. Instead, teachers acknowledged the effect of apartheid on their own lives and positioned the students' experiences in contrast to their own. This was demonstrated through comments such as *'they have all the opportunities now'* (Ma'am Leang). The opportunities available to students was contrasted to the teachers' experiences, most of whom were educated under the apartheid regime. Several female teachers in particular mentioned how, when they had left school, there was only the option to become a nurse, teacher or police officer. In an interview with Mr Tim, the Geography teacher, he told me that there was a '*chance*' that students could go to universities because of the opportunities nowadays, *'unlike before.'* That said, he considered this an unlikely prospect for most students. I probed this point further in an interview with him:

Fawzia: Why do the students end up not going to university?

Mr Tim: It's their family background, where they come from. Their parents are unemployed, some of them are orphans, you will find that if they finish their Grade 12 they are expected to be breadwinners because they are expected to look after their siblings...

While Mr Tim's comments indicated an awareness of wider social norms and structures, this is not the language of the classroom, which emphasised students as individually responsible for making a 'success' of their lives. In contrast to the elevated aspirations that students expressed to me, all of the teaching staff bar one viewed the students as having low aspirations, which they reasoned as being a result of their 'bad backgrounds'. When I probed with teachers and students alike as to what they meant by 'bad backgrounds,' it emerged that this was a way of describing students' circumstances of coming from a poor, black, rural environment. 'Bad' was synonymous for the seemingly politically correct label of 'previously disadvantaged,' the term commonly taken up within policy documents by the post-apartheid government. The teachers and students' demarcation of a 'bad' background implied that a 'good' background would be the historically advantaged background of being white and presumably living in or with access to urban environments. Specific references to race are silenced in these discourses, a point I take up in my third analysis chapter.

In an interview with the Head LO teacher, Ma'am Zonke, she told me:

'The majority of them, if you look at their social background, some of them they don't have the idea of going to tertiary. I think they don't have role models at home, they don't have people who actually push them, who say it is good to go to this university or that, they just hear that at school. We have to do all the motivation at school.'

The role of South African teachers as a motivational force who emphasise the importance of education for students has been noted in existing studies (Theron, 2013:259). At Inyoni, several teachers discussed how they felt students did not reach their career goals because they did not meet enough successful people who 'motivated' them. In pursuit of motivation, several of my participants told me that they like to go to church because of the 'motivation' they receive there. The pastors often have professions outside of the church, which gives additional weight to the words they convey. Cezi reflected on this when she told me, *'My pastor is a doctor so he motivates me very well. He says never give up, keep on trying, focus, follow your heart'* (interview).

When I inquired to various teachers as to why they felt the majority of their students did not end up studying at university, despite expressing a desire for this, the majority of responses I received did not reference socio-economic factors, although teachers referred to students' 'disadvantaged' backgrounds without detailing what this meant. A 'problem' with their 'background,' as expressed by several teachers, was that it lacked exposure to opportunities beyond their rural locale. As Ma'am Florence, the Agricultural Sciences teacher told me:

'At Inyoni our learners' outlook is very narrow, they don't even know what they want to do, because they don't know what is there, do you understand? And that in itself can make them not motivated, they really don't know what they can achieve or what they can be capable of. You see this place? It is just out...'

The LO curriculum helped cultivate the idea that students need to move beyond their disadvantaged backgrounds, reinforcing the belief that 'anything is possible' if you 'believe in your dreams.' A similar sentiment could be found within the South African media with popular television shows like eNews Channel Africa's 'Against all odds' that conveyed inspiring stories such as 'from security guard to a pizza outlet franchise' and 'from living in a garage to owning a jewellery company' (Burnett, 2014:196). Some of the disadvantaged backgrounds that are described within the LO curriculum are illustrated within Example B and Example C:

Example B:

'My name is Nhlakanipho Colin Mkhize and I come from the township of Imbali in Pietermaritzburg. I am the eldest of four children and I have a bursary. I am currently in my third year of study for a Bachelor of Science degree with Physics and Chemistry as my major subjects at Rhodes University. University was a far-off dream for me as a child growing up with a single mother. She struggled to put me through primary school. Fortunately in high school I was awarded a full scholarship at Carter High School. But even with this financial burden lifted, the struggle continued. When I was in matric, my LO teacher gave me a form to apply for a bursary...The childhood dream of university was becoming a reality. This opportunity has allowed me to dream even bigger!' (Rooth et al., 2013: 53).

Example C:

'The circumstances in which I grew up helped to make me stronger as a person,' says RONALDA BENJAMIN, a BComm (mathematical sciences) student at Stellenbosch University. RONALDA, the first person in her family who has had the opportunity to study further, grew up in an area that is known for gang violence and drug related crime. Her family also experiences many serious financial challenges. One of her referees describes her as a goal-driven person who is willing to learn so that she can make a positive contribution to society. RONALDA'S dream... 'I want to show the many young people where I come from that we can rise above our circumstances. To me it makes no difference where I come from. As long as I know where I am going, nothing can stand in my way.' My motto is: 'I don't look at circumstances I'm in, but the circumstances I would like to be in.' RONALDA also has advice for young people who are facing difficulties, but who want to build a solid future. 'Never stop believing in your dreams...If you have the will, there will be a way' (Rooth et al., 2013: 236)

Like the celebrity swimmer, both Nhlakanipho and RONALDA are people with whom my participants might potentially identify, given that they do not come from the privileged backgrounds typically aligned with university trajectories. Their stories may provide underprivileged students with the sense that, if these people can make it, so can they. According to the LO curriculum, the primary means to move beyond one's 'disadvantaged' background is through hard work, which will ultimately lead to acquiring a bursary for further studies. The curriculum provided basic information regarding how to finance studies, with explanations of financial assistance through learnerships, bursaries, FET colleges, and NSFAS. For example, it explains the need to calculate your Admission Point Scores (APS), as well as sit the NBT if you wish to attend university (Rooth et al., 2013:49). However, I never saw these features of the curriculum taught despite attending classes for the

entirety of the teaching academic year. For further details on how to apply to university, students needed to access the different websites mentioned in the LO textbooks. Alternatively, they could draw upon their personal networks, although the students' ability to do so varied greatly within this context.

This was not an easy task as there were no computers available for student use at Inyoni. The majority of students were computer illiterate and unable to search websites or to set up the email addresses required to send an electronic application form. While it was possible for students to send application forms via the post, each student I spoke to told me that they wanted to apply electronically, despite this being the more difficult option for them. When I probed as to why electronic forms were so strongly favoured, Sam explained to me that this was '*the modern way*.' While a desire to apply themselves to their futures in a 'modern way' was widely spread, it was not easily realisable, not only because of computer illiteracy but because while there was one library that had computers in Intaba, it was a 15-minute drive/1 hour walk from Inyoni and was only open at times when the students were at school. For this reason, cell phones were the primary means of accessing information. Yet while nine out of ten households in South Africa have mobile phones (Cronje et al., 2015:4) and mobile phones were prevalent within my fieldsite, students lacked the money for data and they often did not have phones with internet access.

Despite these obstacles, students and teachers spoke frequently about applying for a bursary without discussing the specifics. When I asked how they intended to fund their future studies, the majority of students told me that they would work hard, do well in matric and receive 'a bursary.' Lionel, told me, '*to reach my career goals the only thing to do is to study. The minute you get good marks they are going to want to sponsor you, for everything*.' Although the LO curriculum was rife with examples of people achieving non-descript bursaries, often with the aid of a teacher, both matrics and post-matrics expressed not finding their LO teacher helpful in providing them with specific information and this was echoed in my observations. One reason for this may be because Ma'am Zonke was unfamiliar with various bureaucratic systems. This reflects existing studies that demonstrate LO as being a subject often taught by teachers who have not received sufficient training (Rooth, 2005).

Students' desires for encouragement to pursue their post-school aspirations may stem from a sense of lacking motivation within their homes, given that the older generations whom they generally lived with did not have access to the necessary capitals or first-hand 'hot knowledge' to help them navigate unknown territories (Ball and Vincent, 1998). As the majority of my participants' guardians had not completed secondary school, many students regarded them as unable to provide

practical support and several of my participants were disparaging of their guardians' abilities to provide them with either assistance or inspiration. For example, Lionel, whom I discuss in the next chapter, frequently despaired over how his grandparents, who were traditional healers (also referred to as witchdoctors or sangomas), knew nothing of the world outside Intaba and did not understand his desire to leave the township and explore this world.

This is not to say that some guardians did not try to motivate those in their care, but rather that they may not have had the resources at their disposal to do so effectively. For example, Cindy, a matric, was an orphan who lived with her grandparents and younger brother. Her grandfather worked as a panel beater and her grandmother, who was unemployed, had been a domestic worker. Neither grandparents had attended secondary school. Cindy constantly told me that, despite this, she felt motivated and supported by her grandmother, so much so that *'you would never even know I am an orphan'* (interview). Although her grandmother was not literate and did not speak English, she would often ask to review Cindy's homework to make sure she was working. Cindy relayed to me, with what seemed like a mixture of pride and exasperation, that during the Easter holidays, her grandmother woke her up one morning at 3am because she had heard that there was a Mathematics revision session on television that may be useful to Cindy.

This anecdote signifies how, rather than being passive bystanders in the lives of the younger generation, the elder, predominantly uneducated members of the community may have their own ways of engaging with and motivating the younger generation to work hard, thereby achieving the educational and career opportunities that were denied to them during apartheid. Students often spoke about their educational futures in terms of their families' hopes and expectations, even when family members were no longer alive. Several participants mentioned how, if they were to attend college or university, they would be the first person in their family to do so. The students whose parents were employed generally worked as manual labourers (males) or domestic workers (females). Students' guardians displayed varied responses to the prospect of their young people leaving Intaba, ranging from those who, like their teachers, strongly encouraged a university trajectory to those who expressed a fear that if their young people leave the area, they would get lost in the temptations of an unknown modern world, which they themselves could not access or navigate.

While my participants unanimously expressed not being able to receive career guidance from their guardians, many spoke about receiving inspiration from other community members, particularly those deemed to have 'made it' against the odds or recovered themselves from difficult situations. This idea of succeeding 'against the odds' would appear to recognise that structural disadvantages

(i.e. the odds) continue to exist within South Africa. The message that this recognition emits is contradictory in that it implies that while everyone can effectively 'succeed', not everyone may be able to defy these 'odds.' As well as community members, older siblings and other relatives were significant influences over young people's aspirations, a point which the literature on 'role models' among South African youth indicates (Madhavan and Crowell, 2014). Several of my participants expressed wanting to go to the same institution as someone they knew. This was generally dependent on the social capital of the participant in question as there were some students, such as Sam and Dean, who had relatives studying at universities. Others, such as Simphiwe, told me that they did not know anyone in their immediate social circles who had studied further than matric.

Students' general lack of practical information regarding post-school pathways was further demonstrated through the influence of media on their aspirations (Du Toit, 2011). This first became apparent to me in an interview with Lucilla, who wanted to become a detective because of her love of watching criminal investigations. She told me, *'At home I watch investigations where a person is dead and they are investigating to find out what is happening and I realised I love those things so why shouldn't I do investigational stuff.'*

Lucilla, a single mother and orphan who lived with her maternal grandparents, was not aware of how she could study to be a detective or what the name of this degree was but it remained the primary plan she expressed throughout her matric year. She was not the only one of my participants who received career inspiration from television and cinema. The film 'Transformers' inspired Thomas to want to become a pilot, and 'Iron Man' drew Lionel into his interest in mechatronics. Lucilla, Thomas and Lionel are among many students who did not have any family or close friends who had pursued higher education and they draw upon popular culture to help them envision this space. This points toward the difficulties that students at Inyoni may face when they embrace the culturally mandated narrative of achieving a 'good education' but have little to no experiences to draw upon in order to realistically pursue particular pathways.

Most of the young people in my study had few, if any potential mentors with whom to discuss their ideas, in order to assess how they might materialise. In turn, as 'mentors' within this context appeared to largely to play a motivational role, such as the case of the celebrity swimmer or local pastor, their ability to provide practical support may be negligible. While the lofty dreams of many of my participants is not unique to my fieldsite, within this context such dreams rarely come to fruition and the absence of a tangible plan generally leads to a period of 'waithood' (Honwana, 2013). Within war torn and postwar contexts, the lack of opportunities available to youth is argued

as contributing to 'waithood' or 'wait adulthood,' where youth are 'stuck' in 'arrested liminality' as they struggle to meet cultural expectations that facilitates their transition to adulthood (Sommers, 2012:3,5). Youth transitions in many cases are postponed indefinitely, and for some people, 'youth' is a stage they cannot escape. Bellino (2017) argues that postwar generations are particularly positioned in a 'liminal' wait stage, as young people are anticipating the transformation embedded in democratic citizenship.

5.3 The power of positive thinking

Despite many of my participants referring to coming themselves as coming from 'bad backgrounds' – every young person I interacted with expressed being individually responsible for their futures. While the matric group in particular did not appear to have much of an understanding of apartheid history, as discussed further in Chapter 7, an awareness of being 'born free' and living in a post-apartheid land of opportunity occurred continuously in their narratives. As expressed by Zinhle in an interview, *'It's a free country; you can do everything you like...Education is free and err...pensions.....'* When I probed this further, asking Zinhle what she meant by 'free,' she responded by saying *'To be free maybe I can say like, maybe now you are going to go to work and you can do anything, like, what can I say? Like building a house....yah, now you can build a mansion not a small house, a big one.'*

The elevated aspirations of my research participants corresponds with existing research indicating ambitious future aspirations among young black South Africans (Swartz et al., 2012). Yet as noted in my literature review, studies on youth transitions across global contexts indicate that the social class and educational background of parents is the major consistent element affecting people's chances for post-school education and/or employment (Ball, 2003). Rather than referring to external factors which may hinder their possibilities, my participants spoke the language of individual choice. An excerpt from an interview with Lionel alludes to this:

Lionel: I think nobody is responsible for my future but me. When you are grown, you just have to look after yourself

Fawzia: Do you ever think the government is responsible?

Lionel: I honestly don't think a lot about the government since I cannot just expect anything from them as they have provided free schools and free clinics and stuff. I cannot blame them if things don't work out, I can only blame me.

In order to substantiate my findings, I explored whether a different narrative arose within the post-matric group, given that the majority of their peers were not attending the tertiary institutions they had aspired towards when at school, but were instead studying at local technical colleges, working

in local retail outlets, as cleaners, or not working at all. One of my unemployed post-matric participants, Lebo, did not have the finances to obtain an identity document that would allow him to apply for further studies or work. In an interview, I asked him what he considered were the biggest challenges which prevented him and his peers from achieving their aspirations. His response:

'Friends will give you different opinions about what you are expected to do, like if you want to be a doctor they will say, ooh, you are going to take many years before you start working. That corrupts your mind so you end up doing other things that you were not intending to do...The ones who went to university, they have a positive mind.'

Another post-matric, Sbusiso, similarly spent his first year after leaving school 'hanging around' the neighbourhood, without a plan and without any formal employment, being financially supported by his older brother. He told me that he had wanted to study to be a graphic designer, but did not have the required academic grades. He told me that, while he had intended to re-write his matric exams, he had ended up being too busy to do so, because of *'going to the gym and stuff.'* Both Lebo and Sbusiso did not refer to any broader structural forces at play but expressed the belief that individuals could do anything if they were motivated enough. While their plans had not worked out, this also did not influence the immense positivity they expressed about the future, a future in which their success was still yet to come.

My participants' account of things 'not working out' as something that happens to people who do not work hard or are not positive enough, draws on an individuated understanding of inequality that blames poor people for their own marginalisation. Given the emphasis that the LO teaching and curriculum placed on hard work, future-planning and personal responsibility, young people's investment in this narrative is not surprising. LO erases class divisions through discourses of individual responsibility, obscuring the 'distinctive ways in which particular landscapes of poverty are formative of thought, feeling, imagination, and identity' (Hicks and Jones, 2007:57). For example, Lionel, when speaking about wealthy black South Africans, told me, *'they are living their dreams because they worked for them'* (focus group). This understanding of success, similarly espoused by the LO curriculum and manner in which it is taught, disregards the lingering influence of history upon present socioeconomic circumstances. When students reference 'working hard' as the process for obtaining success, this narrative takes the place of a tangible plan for the future, which would require specific details about action required. When the 'working hard' narrative proves not to be enough to obtain this aspired for success, students are able to give up their dreams with greater ease, given the abstract nature of the dreams themselves. While notions of individual responsibility play out in a particular way in the 'new South Africa', the emphasis on there being no

one to blame but oneself reflects Furlong and Cartmel's concept of an 'epistemological fallacy' (2007).

As the school year progressed, I acquired a better sense of the matric students' academic results. I found myself continually surprised by how my participants, in their final year of schooling, continued to express aspirations for university courses that required results much higher than their own. Before leaving the field, I made inquiries with students as to how they would go about applying for their desired degree programmes and the discussions that followed confirmed my suspicion that students were unfamiliar with details concerning university requirements. Another feature which contributed to students' often false sense of optimism is connected to the grading system itself, whereby a pass was calculated at 30%. My participants often joyously informed me that they had passed a test or assignment, yet when I inquired as to their exact grades, these were typically between 30% and 50%. These marks would not enable entry into their desired career professions and, taking statistics mentioned in my Context chapter into consideration, the majority of students would not leave school with the bachelors pass required for university. Yet given that my participants were students who had received good enough results to make it into their matric year, their academic achievements were high, albeit only on a relative scale.

An additional factor contributing to students' expressions of positivity surrounding the future may be stemmed from the internal corruption concerning the allocation of Grade Eleven results. While these grades are not seen as significant as the matric results, it is generally Grade Eleven results that students use to apply to university and they therefore play an important role. One afternoon, sipping milkshakes with Cezi, she confided how her marks had been falsely adjusted. She said, *'Mr Smith gave me a new report and whenever I'm applying, I am going to use that one.'* My face must have shown some sign of disapproval because she hastily added,

'Grade Eleven is just Grade Eleven, it's not like it is matric marks. Mr Smith wants us to be accepted at university. But yah it's not like I worked for those marks, no, he was doing it for us so that we can apply. It's gonna be okay because I don't think there will be a university that is going to reject me now, the marks are too good.'

When I asked Cezi if she believed she would achieve these inflated marks in her final exams, she told me with utmost confidence that she would. She had decided to repeat her matric year to get higher marks and in making that decision, she believed she had demonstrated her determination to succeed. Cezi was one of a large number of students repeating their matric year, having previously failed at different schools. This was common in the area, and across South Africa at large. Instead of attaching stigma and a sense of failure to the repetition of a school year, my participants framed it as a positive sign that they were working to improve their results in order to

'make their dreams come true.' Several students, like Cezi, were repeating the year because they aspired to be doctors. The LO curriculum provided case studies which demonstrated the importance of not giving up and repeating a school year as a demonstration of a determined attitude, as can be seen in Case Study D:

Case Study D:

'Amukelani grew up in a rural poor family in Limpopo. Amukelani passed matric, but could not get into a higher education institution because her marks were too low. But she did not give up. She decided to enrol for Grade 12 again with the goal of getting a better pass. 'I knew that if I worked hard enough, I would get good marks and qualify for a bursary. I strongly believe that teachers do open the doors of opportunity, but it is up to us as young people to make the choices to go through the doors and grab them' (Rooth et al., 2013: 183).

As this case study illustrates, the need for a 'progressive narrative' is rife within the curriculum, as well as within the narratives of my participants who made statements such as, *'I didn't work hard last year but now I will'* (Phil) and *'I know now it is my time to shine and do better'* (Simphiwe, interview). In the United States, Newkirk discusses how students entering university have a 'psychological need to view their lives as progressive narratives...the literature of self-direction suggests that this future is claimable if there is sufficient personal will' (in Herrington and Curtis, 2000:359). Through stories of redemption, narrators often articulate how they experienced a 'second chance' in life (McAdams and McLean, 2013:81). Redemption sequences are not real events in people's lives but are instead ways of telling stories about the self, narrative strategies for self-making.

The need to express one's future in positive terms has echoes of Christianity within it, especially the positive thinking that is historically embedded in the prosperity Gospel of the Charismatic Churches. This is unsurprising given the high presence of religious institutions in my fieldsite, with approximately fifty churches within Intaba and new ones emerging continually. The most rapidly growing churches in the area were Evangelical/Pentecostal, known for attracting youthful congregations (Johnson, 2009). Writing about other contexts within sub-Saharan Africa, Gifford argues the one of the new (charismatic) churches' main characteristics is an emphasis on success, wealth and the power of positive thinking (2004).

Several of my participants linked their optimism to their religious beliefs, as they considered a lack of positivity to symbolise an absence of faith in God's plan for them. For example, even though Lebo, who I mentioned previously in this chapter, had spent one year immobilised upon leaving

school due to not having the correct identification documents to apply to university, he told me that he was not concerned about the future, as his faith would provide for him. He explained: *'I am a Christian, so I believe in God. He keeps his promises. So whenever I face any problems I know God is my source'*. In a similar vein, students often drew upon God as a resource when reflecting on the other difficulties in their life, thus acknowledging some of the obstacles they were facing, while simultaneously expressing that these would be overcome, not necessarily through practical support or innovation, but through the love of God. This perception was widespread within the area and is illustrated through Simphiwe's comments during an interview, *'I am always positive that I can do it, even though I can see financially I am not stable, but I always say that it can happen because I know God will help me. I feel like when I am at church everything becomes good.'* While in some cases religious belief has been found to support 'a resilient outcome,' placing faith in a higher power can sometimes delay individuals in taking the initiative to change their lives (Theron et al., 2014). Although I did not observe teachers appealing to religious discourses specifically, there are parallels between these discourses and the educational discourses taken up in the classroom. The messages to emanate from the church and from the school shared a moralising tone, with both placing an emphasis on young people being individually accountable for their lives, valorising mental and physical discipline and a Protestant work ethic.

5.4 A 'good education'

In order to explore how education appears to be valued within South Africa, it is pertinent to recognise how, during apartheid, Bantu Education was premised upon setting a ceiling on black South African's upward mobility. Across the Global South, education has been the most important tangible instrument of upward mobility and is a way of securing the capitals that will lead to upward mobility (Lentz, 2015). Within South Africa 'the possession of a university degree remains a ticket of entry to the black middle class in times of precarious employment prospects' (Southall, 2016:119). Scholars have argued that the promotion of higher education and its association with success and valued social positions has become widespread across the globe and is closely associated with development and modernity (Boli 1989). This understanding has become so dominant that it almost seems indisputable. The link between higher education and success is a middle-class perspective on the individual and society that has gained hegemony and become objectified (Skeggs, 2004).

Existing studies show that South African school leavers desire for white-collar rather than blue-collar jobs (Branson et al., 2015). A history of neglect of technical or vocational education and perceptions that TVET colleges are for those who have not succeeded academically has

contributed to their reputation as 'second-rate' institutions. This is further fuelled by the low-status and poor working conditions associated with menial and artisanal work in South Africa (Needham, 2015:45). In the LO textbooks, the focus of the career guidance section is upon universities and only a small amount of information is provided on TVET colleges, still referred to as FETs. While the curriculum attempts to paint FETs in a positive light and provides basic information regarding seeking employment after school, it presents it as an option that students would only choose if circumstances did not permit otherwise. This is demonstrated in the extract below:

'Not everyone is fortunate enough to be able to study after Grade 12. Perhaps you or your family cannot afford to pay for your studies at an HEI or circumstances beyond your control forces you to find a job after Grade 12. What will you do? Where will you work? The following are options that you can explore if you pass Grade 12 and do not want to, or can't study at an HEI: Learnerships, job shadow, apply at an FET college, take a gap year, join the national defence force or police, volunteer your services, join a skills programme, start your own small business' (Rooth et al., 2013:294).

When attempting to motivate students to work towards their futures, the LO curriculum provides a visualisation exercise which involves imagining oneself at university specifically, not studying at a vocational college or seeking employment elsewhere.

'If you cannot motivate yourself to study, then try to: imagine yourself in an academic gown walking up the steps of a university to obtain your degree, with your family and friends cheering for you. Imagine yourself finding your name in the newspaper – you have got seven distinctions for your grade 12 exams' (Rooth et al., 2013:102).

Throughout my fieldwork, I did not hear any teachers recommending students to pursue tertiary education other than university. In confidence, however, one of the school administrative staff, Portia, told me that attending a FET college was the best decision she had ever made. She had initially been studying at a university but dropped out because it was 'too fast' for her. Portia waxed lyrical about how all her friends who went to FET colleges had jobs and did not have to pay the more expensive fees required by universities. When I asked her whether she ever shared these thoughts with students, she was dismissive, saying that none of the students wanted to attend FET colleges because they looked down on them. It may also be that Portia did not want to admit to students that she had gone to a FET college, internalising the stigma attached to attending FETs, despite regarding it to have been the best option for herself. When I asked Ma'am Zonke, whether she considered her students to be thinking about attending vocational colleges, she told me, *'I think they look down upon them, they don't take it seriously, they have this thing of going to university.'* While Ma'am Zonke noted how students desired to go university and dismissed other pursuits, in other conversations, she told me how students did not have *'the idea of going to tertiary'* and how teachers had to do *'all the motivation at school.'* While these statements contradict one another,

what is apparent is that, for teachers and students alike, the school plays a role in promoting *'this thing of going to university'* as intrinsic to a general ethos of self-development.

Although initially all of the students I met expressed little to no interest in pursuing vocational careers, an underlying interest in attending FETs emerged once deepened rapport had developed between participants and myself. Two students, Petal and Lungi, approached me one school afternoon to say that, although they knew their teachers thought going to a FET college was not *'what we are supposed to be thinking of'* (Petal), they wanted to apply anyway. Their reasoning was that they did not feel they would manage the academic requirements of university and feared the high dropout rates. This perception stemmed from witnessing people within their community return home without completing their degrees, an observation in keeping with South African statistics which indicate that 51% of students are unlikely to graduate (Cronje et al., 2015:2). Petal and Lungi both worried that if they did not attend an FET college they would be stuck doing *'township maintenance,'* a humorous local expression they used to refer to unemployed youth who hang around the township, *'maintaining'* it through the absence of any other formal occupation. While I did not probe the meaning of this term in any depth during my fieldwork, it has struck me in retrospect that the choice of words are interesting in themselves in that they pose questions regarding what young people might be *'maintaining'* that is distinct from formal occupations/educational pursuits. This could be reflective of some of the values associated with a rural township in particular that young people believe are worth maintaining, and, as discussed in my subsequent analysis chapter, the same values that several participants valorised over discourses which privileged them moving to urban centres. The vast majority of my participants, however, did not desire to *'maintain'* the township and according to Petal, attending an FET college was one way of preventing this happening. Yet in an interview with Petal, she mentioned how she felt her teachers would not help her pursue studies at a FET college:

'I asked Mr Silinda about whether he had any forms for the FET and he looked at me and said 'Do I look like someone who knows about FETs?' So yah, we are not supposed to be thinking of those places....'

I wanted to see whether the stigmatised view of FETs was unique to Inyoni, or a view spread across the township and so I probed this point with my post-matric participants, who represented five schools across Intaba. Our conversations took place over focus groups and informal meetings at local cafés, where we spoke about what they and their peers had been doing since leaving school.

Fawzia: When you were at school, did people want to go to university or FETs?

Pauline: If people don't go to university they think maybe you are not that good, they don't even think of a technikon⁸...they think varsity⁹ is the place to be if you want to succeed. Yah when I was at school everybody was looking forward to going to varsity, nobody at that time had an application form for technikon, everyone had application forms for varsity.

Fawzia: But did that changed after they got their matric marks?¹⁰

Pauline: Yah that affected them so then they had to go to technikons if anywhere. But you still looked down on yourself, you don't think that technikon is the right place to achieve, you still stereotype, you still focus on one thing, you have been channelled.

The idea of being 'channelled' into going to university was illustrated through numerous conversations with matrics and post-matrics. It is reinforced through comments made, in a focus group, by post-matrics Thabo and Felicia:

Thabo: 'When you come home in the holidays, the neighbours and stuff ask you what university you are studying at. They don't ask about colleges...they only want to know the name of a university. And then even if you didn't go to one, or maybe you dropped out, you and your family have to make up a lie.'

Felicia: 'When people see their marks are low, they can't apply for university, they don't consider technical colleges, they just think the only way to achieve is university...and if they don't get good marks they must get some other jobs. Most of the time we blame ourselves, because I was the only one who wrote the exam.'

Rather than blaming their parents, their schools or the government, there was a tendency for students to blame themselves when life did not transpire as they had envisioned. The way that Lungi and Petal's aspirations to attend a vocational college emerged in the form of a confession signified for me that students had internalised the discourses which privileged university over technical colleges, and which circulated within the LO curriculum and school environment. As noted by Mills, 'discourse is a system that 'structures what statements it is possible to say,' (2003:66) and students did not feel they were permitted to aspire towards what was perceived as a lowly career.

While hierarchies existed between different careers, they existed within the school itself, where students were 'channelled' into particular directions from the year they selected their subjects (Grade Ten). In South Africa it is compulsory to take either Maths or Maths Literacy if you wish to matriculate. If you want a career in medicine, engineering or any Science related degree programme, you are expected to take Maths. The perception, among both teachers and students alike, is that Maths thus provides entry into more prestigious occupations, whereas Maths Literacy is designed for the less intelligent group who are not heading towards such 'successful' careers.

⁸ 'Technikon' is another way of referring to a technical college.

⁹ 'Varsity' is a colloquial expression for 'university.'

¹⁰ 'Matric marks' is a reference to the final year national senior certificate examinations.

This is evident through even the labelling of the classrooms, with Class A being the Maths class and Class B the Maths Literacy group.

The inferior positioning of Maths Literacy students was reinforced through a visit from a representative of a local company, a white woman named Marianna, who came to donate solar lamps to the school one afternoon. Stepping out of her shining white 4X4 armed with boxes of lamps, she greeted the matrics with exuberance. *'Who of you here is going to university?'* she inquired. The crowd bustling around her responded with enthusiastic cries of *'Me, Ma'am! Me!'* She followed this with the question, *'And what are you going to study? Do we have any doctors or engineers here?'* Again, cheers from the students and cries of *'Me!'* *'And do you take Maths?'* Marianna asked in response. When all of the students gave a resounding *'YES'*, Marianna gave a chuckle and retorted, *'No man, not Maths Literacy, I mean proper Maths!'* There was an awkward moment of students shuffling silently and exchanging glances among themselves whereupon Marianna broke the silence by asking the 'proper Maths' students if they (exclusively) were thinking of going to university and inquired again as to what they wanted to be, reiterating the normative suggestions of medicine, engineering and law.

At the time this occurred, I was unsure whether the Maths Literacy students were offended by Marianna's disregard for those she did not deem to be heading towards careers that had been marked as more valuable. However over the next few months, several of the Maths Literacy students independently raised the episode with me. Their responses varied, from the downright enraged, *'How can she say that, I'm going to do what I want'* (Sipho) and the despondent, *'I think, this is right, I am not going to be going for those clever jobs'* (Dean, interview). This scenario exemplifies how young people draw on the discursive resources they had access to in constituting subjectivities as academically competent/incompetent individuals, which in turn had implications for their post-school aspirations.

5.5 'Too much' freedom: Disciplining the mind and the body

While a university education took precedent as a milestone in students' future trajectories, Ma'am Zonke, drawing upon the curriculum, reinforced the importance of other milestones, and their ideal ordering. The following extract from the curriculum reflects the trajectory that the LO curriculum positions as ideal:

'Life can sometimes be like a snakes-and-ladders game. An unwanted pregnancy in Grade 11 can make you slide down a snake and have your career goal delayed. If you prioritise study, you get to the top of a ladder because your career goal is achievable. Sometimes priorities change, depending on when you have a goal. A good pass mark will enable you to get a bursary to do

engineering at university. Another life goal may be to be a parent and have two children, although this will not be a priority while you are in Grade 11. This goal may happen once you have completed your studies and have a good job, so you can provide for your children' (Rooth et al., 2013:9).

Ma'am Zonke reinforced this normative understanding of a desirable future through her teaching, explicitly stating that students should not have sexual relationships until they first had their university degree, a job and a car. Thereafter they could consider marriage, which should always come prior to children.

'You can be in a relationship only once you have completed your studies at university and you have a job. Some of you, if you are in a relationship before and someone breaks up with you, you will commit suicide. If you date now, you are not serious about your life. You will drink alcohol, you will end up sleeping with someone in a club. Maybe you get HIV and you will die. Having a child now is not a timely goal, you must do it later after you have your degree and you have your job and house and you are married' (Ma'am Zonke, matric LO classroom)

The student's actual realities often contrasted the ideals that Ma'am Zonke and the LO curriculum privileged, as most students told me that they were already in sexual relationships and several had children. When some students once asked Ma'am Zonke if she waited until she had her degree before her first relationship, she started laughing, hesitated and gave an unconvincing 'yes'. The students responded to this by also erupting in laughter. It appeared as though the class knew she was not being entirely truthful, perhaps in the same way that they held an awareness of the need to keep a public front about their own sexual relationships that concealed their private realities. In focus groups towards the end of my fieldwork, the all-female groups in particular complained about how the LO orientation classroom did not discuss student's actual experiences, such as their sex lives, as elaborated upon in section 7.5. This problem of LO not meeting students where they are at has been attributed to numerous factors, some of which pertain to the traditional and conservative backgrounds of teachers or their lack of training in the subject area (Hammett et al., 2009).

Ma'am Zonke frequently presented nightmare scenarios to students, such as *'you will get HIV and you will die,'* whereby a student could potentially make one unwise decision and then spiral into despair. The risks associated with keeping the wrong company were drilled into the students by their families, friends, teachers and the LO curriculum. When I asked what they feared most, a large number of students said they feared being *'led astray,'* (Xolile, focus group), succumbing to peer pressure or getting involved in *'bad things'* (Dean, focus group) after school. Many of my participants expressed a wariness of the *'fast life'* and temptations they associated with a move to cities, a topic I address in my discussion of space in the next chapter.

In an effort to enforce discipline and motivate students, the school espoused the rhetoric that gaining good grades would lead to a successful job. Teachers also expressed the belief that students were incapable of being self-motivated to work at home and would not work unless they were on school premises. This view explained why the school day started with a Maths revision class at 6:30am and why students were expected to attend revision sessions over their weekends as '*They do nothing at home*' (Ma'am Leang). Another way the school implemented this mentality is through the annual 'matric camp' whereby final year students were required to sleep, camping out, on school premises during the revision period prior to their final exams. Depending on the school, this camp could extend from one to three months. While I was not able to locate any literature on matric camps and am unaware if this occurs in other parts of the country, it was common in Intaba and took place at most of the schools.

Echoing Dunne and Ananga's (2013:203) research on school dropouts in Ghana, my findings indicated that 'the institutional regimes within schools demanded that these young people performed a student/child-like identity which structured their relations with teachers to whom they were subordinate.' This was despite the reality that often, outside the school, students had adult responsibilities, in terms of the economic and caring support of others. As well as disciplining students into a rigid work routine, Ma'am Zonke frequently requested that students repeat particular phrases within the class, as though their repetition would seal the messages into students' minds. Her favourite phrases included '*you have to see yourself somewhere*' and '*schoolwork is most important*'. Ma'am Zonke not only told students how to behave in their futures, she also implied that she was aware of what they had done in their pasts, namely, their weekends:

'On the weekend you are listening to music, dancing, not studying. When you go home you sleep, you eat, you watch TV, Generations, Scandal¹¹, everything on TV – all you do is eating and sleeping. You can wake up at 2am if you train yourself, you don't need magic. If you bath and feed yourself you can study.'

In assuming the worst of students, her views echoed that of the motivational speaker mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Ma'am Zonke's diatribes about student's supposed behaviour correlated with the staff's general perception that students have low goals and little respect for their futures, a view widely expressed among the older community within Intaba. When I visited a local sangoma, Mr Musunga, and explained my research and interest in youth in the area, he started swearing about the uselessness of youth today and how different they were from when he was young. He told me, and the group of matrics with me at the time, '*These young people have too*

¹¹ South African soap operas.

much freedom whereas when we were young we had to work for what we got.' I spoke to other teachers who represented several schools in the township and found that they generally shared his view of the youth as morally bankrupt and only interested in drinking and drugs. In a similar vein, Ma'am Florence complained that the youth unemployment rates were high because of students' laziness. Over tea in the staffroom one day she told me, *'There are opportunities now for everyone, these kids are born free, it was not like that in our day. They are just lazy, that's the problem.'*

What intrigued me most about this perspective was that it appeared widely shared and taken up by the younger generation. When I asked Anne, a post-matric, how she felt her peers were different from their parents' generation, she told me, *'We are different because we have more opportunities, they didn't have many opportunities back then, we have lots of opportunities to study but it is just that we are lazy.'* In an interview with Pauline, a post-matric participant, she also referenced the seeming possibilities that exist now and that did not exist during apartheid:

'I think I still have the opportunity to open every door that I want to. We have more freedom than our parents did. We have more rights, there are a lot of rights and we are misusing those rights. Those rights, they are the things that are destroying us.... We are having too much freedom.'

What is also interesting about this is that Pauline had actually received the grades to go to university but had not managed to do so because of finances as she could not pay fees or transport costs. Due to a lack of finances or employment, Pauline was forced to remain at home with her grandparents and baby. She expressed a lot of guilt to me about having a child at aged sixteen and this was perhaps what she was alluding to when she had 'misused' her rights.

One means of curtailing students 'freedom' within the school was through corporal punishment. While this has been officially banned in South Africa, it was a feature of everyday life at Inyoni. It was also encouraged by students' guardians, who, according to Principal Thandi, only visited the school premises to tell the teachers to beat their children. Teachers, when asking me about life in the UK, frequently brought up 'corporal punishment,' wanting to know if it was permitted there.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, whenever teachers would reprimand a student, they justified their actions in front of me by statements such as *'These ones never learn huh? You have to tell them over and over again'* (Ma'am Zonke). Such comments, and a desire to engage me in a group mentality of 'us' (the long-suffering adults) against 'them' (the unruly students) was not confined to the classroom. In the staffroom students were often referred to as *'hopeless'* and *'not going anywhere'* (Ma'am Florence), both to students and among themselves. The way that blame was placed onto the individual also reflects the school's emphasis on personal decision-making and self-determination.

Most students admitted to struggling to respect teachers who did not exert some kind of force on them. Mr Mangeni, a Science teacher recently promoted to Deputy Head Teacher, began using 'the stick' more after his promotion. Several of my participants told me that he was doing this so that they took him seriously in his new position. When discussing corporal punishment with teachers, several spoke of being forced to beat students as it was '*the only language they understand*' (Mr Mangeni). Almost all students I spoke to told me that they felt that physical disciplining was important, because '*it encourages us to behave*' (Petal, focus group), and '*it makes us know we can't get away with things*' (Lungi). My participants' seeming belief in corporal punishment complicates the neoliberal discourse as although the LO textbook seems to exclusively emphasise individual agency, both students and teachers talk about the role that teachers play in motivating students to succeed – and both see corporal punishment in this light, thus shifting the focus away from the individual.

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1979), Foucault examines the way that discipline as a form of self-regulation encouraged by institutions (such as the school) that permeates modern societies. 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' (Mills, 2003:44). 'Discipline trains, individualises, regiments, makes docile and obedient subjects' (Macdonnell, 1986:102). The school can be viewed as a disciplinary apparatus, an exemplification of government control over the normative realm in society which Foucault terms 'governmentality'. Within Foucault's concept of governmentality is the concept of 'biopower'. Biopower relates to the practice of modern nation states and their regulation of their subjects through 'an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations' (Foucault, 1976:140). Through the curriculum and pedagogical practices, the school can be interpreted as a site for biopower to be executed, but also a space in which it is productively received, internalised, and produced by individuals.

In addition to disciplining students to focus academically, teachers often expressed their concern about students' sexual promiscuity and a desire to discipline students' bodies by preventing them from engaging in sexual activities. Strong anti-pregnancy sentiments also featured throughout the LO curriculum and in classroom discussions. In the Focus Textbook, a comic strip presented several attractive, made-up looking women approaching a haggard looking woman with squealing children. Their speech bubble says, 'Come and join us for dance aerobics at the gym!' The woman responds with a wail, 'I don't have the time to exercise. I must look after my babies. Anyway, all my money goes for my baby food... I can't afford the bus fee to the gym' (Rooth et al., 2013:180).

Female students who did not have children often told me that they knew of other female students who were having children purely to access the child support grant. By framing their peers in a negative light, *'Can you believe she is not even in Grade Eleven and she has three children?'* (Cindy), female students who spoke about other female students in this way placed themselves in a position of relative moral superiority. Many teachers expressed a similar judgement over teenage pregnancy, as well as a frustration with this 'new government' that enables child grants to be given. These discussions, as well as examples from the curriculum, demonstrate how the moral reprobation of pregnancy fell heavily on women. During an interview with Ma'am Leang, she threw her hands up in the air and with great exasperation expressed, *'And the government is paying them! The government is paying these girls so that they think it is okay to go and make babies!'*

The notion that students have children to access government grants has come under scrutiny (Makiwane, 2010), but is still commonplace in every day discussions, even receiving a mention in the LO curriculum as follows:

'Some teenagers are falling pregnant to access social grants to alleviate poverty, according to a report by provincial health and social department. The report found 15,5% of teenagers in the study fell pregnant to access child-support grants. This behaviour forced children into inter-generational relationships, with contraceptives mostly ignored' (Rooth et al., 2013:181).

This extract demonstrates how the LO curriculum, with its reference to 'teenagers,' offers an apparently neutral gender imaginary to these students, as opposed to the highly gendered targeting of girls for sexual impropriety. In reality, my observations indicated that the moralising targeted girls only.

In the LO curriculum, those who abstain from sexual relations are depicted as the ideal:

'Nku is very happy. His girlfriend, Maria, has told him she loves him very much. He feels very confident and enjoys going to school. They are such good friends and share the same values. They both agree to abstain from sex. They talk a lot and tell each other everything...' (Rooth et al., 2013:15).

This emphasis upon relationships which abstain from sex as the desirable model was taken up by students in that, in the initial part of my fieldwork, most of my male and female participants gave the impression, in private interviews, that they were not in sexual relationships, despite me not explicitly asking about this or bringing it up in conversation. Yet as students became more comfortable with me over time, they started to reveal, in interviews, focus groups and informal conversations, that they were in fact sexually active, a point I elaborate upon in section 7.6. By inscribing a particular idea of what constitutes a 'good' subject (in this case one who abstains from sex and works hard to achieve good academic results), the school can be seen as a disciplinary

apparatus (Foucault, 1988), as well as an ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1970) that produces and reproduces a particular narrative.

Within my fieldsite, particular disciplinary practices had become part of what it means to be schooled or attend school, an expectation that was largely shared by students, their guardians and the teachers alike. Foucault's interest in power is in 'its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives' (Foucault, 1980:39). Following Foucault, I am interested in how power reaches the very grain of my participants' lives, so that they had come to believe particular ideas about what comprises a 'good student.' Power produces knowledge that enables individuals to govern themselves in accordance with sexually appropriate behaviour. Power in this sense is productive, not necessarily repressive. There is an interaction between 'not only techniques of domination, but also techniques of the self...the contact point, where the way individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves' (Foucault, 1993:203-4). This shows how, 'beyond the explicit regulation of behaviour through corporal punishment...schools operate formal and informal rules that regulate social interaction and signify social power' (Dunne and Ananga, 2013:198).

My initial interactions with students, in which they all widely professed a desire to study at a university, in acknowledgement that this is the aspiration they are expected to express, is one example of self-regulation. The manner by which students also initially expressed a belief in not having sex before marriage, discussed further in Chapter Seven, is another example. While both these examples indicate what discourses are available to young people as they construct future aspirations, the veneer of self-regulation was challenged by young people's expressions of resistance, through, for example, students' confessions of desiring to attend less prestigious institutions and of desiring to engage in sexual relationships prior to marriage.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored how such discourses of meritocracy, which prioritise an understanding of aspiration as an individual, apparently gender-neutral motivational force rather than as socially constituted, 'project responsibility for failure away from social structures and institutions and onto individuals' (Francis and Hey, 2009:226). I have demonstrated how there is a connection between the dominant discourses that circulate within Inyoni, which privilege individual agency over structural constraints, and the manner by which my participants expressed little sympathy towards the plight of student protesters, mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis. Given the pervasive rhetoric of 'anything is possible if you work hard enough,' the protestors' seeming inability to realise

the post-apartheid dream of everyone being able to equally access opportunities, demonstrated failure at a personal rather than a societal level.

The language to pervade the schooling environment and articulation of what constitutes a 'good' life, 'good' education and 'good' student can be linked back to the goals of the OBE curriculum, a curriculum which sought to provide learners with a 'script for modernity,' producing a universal subject with universally acknowledged 'good' attributes (Soudien and Baxen, 1997). Such attributes can be located in middle class discourses and representations of the ideal, gendered subject. My analysis shows how other circulating discourses, such as those stemming from the church and media, reinforce these ideals.

While there appears a partial recognition by teachers of how structures of inequality persist and continue to shape what lives are possible for their students, the languages they have to engage with this in the classroom are profoundly individualising and silence these wider structural issues. Yet while the discourses that are available to young people silence structural issues, they could also be argued as increasing students' sense of agency in contexts where they may feel otherwise disempowered. In my subsequent analysis chapters, I will probe whether alternative narratives of the future might exist and why it may be that the certain individualising discourses and understandings of what is 'good' retain their dominance.

Chapter 6: In search of the 'good life'

6.1 Introduction

Throughout my thesis, I have been interrogating the assumption that young South Africans are 'autonomous subjects with varying degrees of freedom to choose what kind of person to be' (Davies, 2006:425). While my previous chapter considered what discourses are available to rural, black South Africans as they construct their future aspirations, this chapter turns to my second research question and explores how space is implicated in the production of these young people's identities and their envisionings of the future. It looks at how students' narratives of the future express dominant ideas about what constitutes a 'good life,' drawing them towards particular ways of being and becoming and away from others.

I start the chapter by considering the accumulation of wealth and acquisition of material objects as symbols of status and upward mobility for young black South Africans. From here, I outline the role of 'space,' arguing that any envisioning of a future self requires spaces within which to perform this self. By presenting the complex pulls and pushes between what could be simplistically defined as the 'rural and traditional' versus the 'urban and modern' worlds that exist within post-apartheid South Africa, I explore the intersection between religion, 'culture' and space and demonstrate that young people have dual affinities and relational attachments to different spaces.

I understand spaces not as static physical settings, but as dynamic flows of social and economic interactions and practices. By considering how young people may have ambivalent and contradictory responses to different locations, this chapter argues for the need to explore the affective dimension of space, whereby spaces themselves are not neutral, but shaped by classed, gendered and racialised experiences. I show how, within my fieldsite, spaces, and the opportunities contained within them, continue to be shaped by a history of racial segregation, with areas marked previously 'white' and 'black' retaining the residue of such markings.

6.2 Consumption and the 'promise of happiness'

As mentioned in my previous chapter, my observations and conversations with students and teachers indicated that my participants felt 'channelled' into aspiring towards university, or at least feeling the need to express such a desire to me. While there are numerous reasons why a university degree may have been desirable to my participants, one of the most significant motives was that it was viewed as a gateway to financial prosperity. Material acquisitions served as signifiers of this success, specifically, large glamorous homes and expensive cars. The conspicuous consumption

of material objects, especially clothes, has become an important identity marker for post-apartheid South African youth, a point that the literature on i'khotane practices indicates (Howell and Vincent, 2014). The i'khotane youth subculture is a relatively new phenomenon that has emerged in some of South Africa's poorest townships. Loosely translated as 'licking the snake', the practice revolves around the conspicuous accumulation and consumption of expensive material items, such as branded clothing. These items are then destroyed, most frequently by burning them, in ritualised confrontations or 'battles' (Howell and Vincent, 2014:60). Those who are willing to destroy the most expensive item of clothing, or literally tear up or burn the most banknotes, win the confrontation, and in the process win respect from the audience. While this was not a practice that any of my participants appeared to be engaged in, it occurred among wealthier students in Intaba and several of my participants spoke of having witnessed 'battles' or knew people who had taken part in them.

The majority of my participants' future aspirations related to how much money they intended to make, and what they hoped to purchase with this money. There was little discussion about the nature of professions themselves. While students' dreams for their futures varied and took different forms, they were often fragmentary in nature and lacking viability. I reflected upon this through voice-notes recorded at the start of my fieldwork:

'Someone will tell me in the same breath that they are going to be a heart surgeon, a 'computer guy', a social worker who runs an orphanage and the boss of their own business where they will hire 200+ people. The actual nature of the work students want to do is rarely expressed, it's all about what the work might lead to in terms of lifestyle... the kind of house you can have, in the suburbs or in the township, the specific model of car you desire, the TVs, the private aeroplane... These aspirations are so huge in scale it's difficult to take them seriously or to believe that the students take them seriously themselves. Do they really think they will fly private aeroplanes or are they just saying that to me? The desire to have things that are visibly expensive is really important. I am told repeatedly, by matrices and younger students, that their future children will be sent to private school in the 'suburbs', they will drive the 'most expensive' car, 'more expensive than anything my teachers drive.' Several people have described their future homes to me. Mansions. With chandeliers. And ceilings that look like 'folds of ice-cream' (Voicenotes).

In discussions about their future lifestyles, my participants frequently referred to desiring to acquire particular branded items. Branded clothing and electronic gear was particularly sought after and within Intaba there was an abundance of stickers with the *Apple* logo, although I never once observed anyone possessing an *Apple* notebook, iphone or other product and the presence of any computer or laptop was rare. Yet I saw these stickers continually, in unexpected places such as the back window of a dirty pick-up truck, or on the seats of broken chairs left discarded at the rear of the school premises. When I brought my own laptop into Intaba to assist some students in setting up email addresses, the first question I received was *'Why don't you have an Apple?'* (Lungi). Along

with *Apple*, another highly desired brand was *Carvela* shoes. Although I only saw one student wearing these expensive Italian leather loafers, I continually saw students, at Inyoni and elsewhere, using the *Carvela* shoebag as a school bag. Sipho once came to me to show me that his uncle had given him the shoebag for his birthday. When I inquired whether he would ever wear the actual shoes he started laughing and told me that his uncle lived in Johannesburg and had taken the shoes with him, but as he could not wear them to school anyway, it was the bag that displayed the shoe's label that he wanted.

The importance of designer labels brings to mind Bourdieu's (1984) writings on practices of 'distinction' where he argues that the processes of identification and differentiation allows individuals to distinguish themselves. In my fieldsite, practices of consumption enabled individuals to show off objectified cultural capital, express taste and by doing so, 'articulate a sense of identity' (Kehily, 2007:272). My own lack of overtly labelled clothing was particularly disappointing to my female participants, who told me that they thought someone living in England would have more designer goods. This demonstrated how, in South Africa and perhaps other 'developing' country contexts, countries such as the United Kingdom continue to provide the template for modern progress, and there exists an 'unarticulated but everpresent...teleology of global white domination' (Soudien, 2012:172), whereby the Global North defines the sensibilities for what implies distinction in the Global South.

Black people's desire to accumulate expensive designer goods in post-apartheid South Africa, has been debated and pathologised within the South African media. Through emerging studies on the 'black middle class,' scholars have argued that 'conspicuous consumption' can be regarded as a means for individuals to 'transform wealth into status' (Southall, 2016:172). Given that the demise of apartheid saw South Africa's reintegration into a global economy which embraces conspicuous consumption (Hyslop, 2005), it is unsurprising that the upsurge in black spending since 1994 has been widely celebrated as a demonstration of freedom. Apartheid symbolised black oppression, poverty and exclusion from the capacity to buy anything but the bare necessities. In contrast, the capacity to spend embodies social agency, wealth represents success and 'black consumerism has become associated with a realisation of citizenship' (Southall, 2016:169).

Posel (2010) suggests that, during apartheid, the making of the racial order was a way of regulating people's aspirations, interests and powers as consumers. The premise of Posel's investigation into the racial nature of consumption is the claim that South Africa's new democracy has led people to see liberation as an opportunity for wealth and materialism (2010). She argues that, as whiteness was an entitlement to privilege and relative affluence during apartheid, blackness became an official

judgement about being unworthy of certain modes and orders of consumption (Posel, 2010:167). While the ANC has officially aligned with the doctrine of poverty eradication and the reduction of inequality, Posel (2010) claims their policies have fostered the growth of the black middle class, such that the 'aspiration of wealth' and the acquisition of expensive material belonging has become a significant part of the emancipation narrative.

In my fieldsite, different students told me, on separate occasions, that their future aspirations encompassed a desire to live in the suburbs, previously reserved for white people only, send their children to (historically white) private schools and drive '*white people's cars*' (Lungi). In envisioning their future selves, my participants desired a world of material prosperity denied to their parents' (black) generation but promised to them as part of the package of capitalism embraced by the new (multiracial) democracy. The role of race in shaping how my participants conceived of themselves, in time and space, is of central importance to this thesis and I will elaborate upon this in my next chapter.

My understanding of consumption views people's modes of consumption as integral to their senses of self, recognising that this sense is rooted within particular histories and that aspirations to consume are closely linked to the making and performance of selfhood (Posel, 2010). When talking to my participants about the work they wanted to do, what often emerged was the clothes they wanted to wear when working. In South Africa, fashion has long been associated with identity, not only with a chosen or appropriated identity but also through oppressive mechanisms (Musangi, 2009). During apartheid, black people were often required to wear clothing which outlined what function they were supposed to be serving, for example as a domestic worker or mineworker. Phil, the son of a panel beater and a domestic worker, expressed one day '*whatever I'm going to do when I leave school, I'm going to wear a suit and people are going to respect me.*' A discussion with my research assistant, Thabo, reinforced this view when he told me:

'If you are working in a good environment or if you have a good career, people will see this by what you are driving, what you are wearing and your house. So the dress code matters because it says that I am working now, I am not sitting at home doing nothing. As soon as I see you are wearing formal clothes I will think, okay, wow, you are working, you have status and power.'

Such views indicate the manner by which 'clothing and objects are experienced intimately: they signify the worth of the person' (Skeggs, 1997:86). In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, where so many young people are not working, but are 'sitting at home doing nothing,' clothes which signify a different lifestyle have heightened meaning. As Ahmed writes, 'objects provide a means to make us happy' (2010:577) and although happiness does not reside in objects, it is promised

through proximity to certain objects. The 'promise of happiness' dictates that if you do this or if you have that, happiness is what follows (Ahmed, 2010:577).

While material acquisitions were a marker of success, the ideal kind of success involved a combination of materialistic consumption and a strong notion of being able to 'give back' to their families and communities. This echoes the argument that members of the new middle class are expected to combine modern consumerist aspirations with a connection to 'traditional roots', including a sense of obligation towards their families and a commitment to the payment of bride wealth - lobola (Krige, 2009:21). My participants often expressed hopes to return to Intaba in later years, buy their family members new houses, kitchens and cars and fund younger family members to be privately educated in the suburbs. This sentiment of 'giving back' and 'remembering where you come from' occurred repeatedly in the LO curriculum and was a clear representation of when someone had 'made it.' The importance of wealth, not just for individual gain, resonates with James' (2015) study on indebtedness in South Africa which showed that people borrow considerable sums of money, as much to acquire flashy goods and branded clothes, as to invest in the likes of education, marriage and bride wealth, and funerals.

6.3 Rural pasts, urban futures

In conceptualising identities as performative, I am interested in how they are also constructed in relation to space. My understanding of 'space' draws upon Massey's work concerning space as a relational concept, where places themselves occupy 'a lived world of simultaneous multiplicity of spaces' (Massey, 1994:3). This differs from a more typical understanding of place as grounded, a fixed site with a distinguishable identity. Space has been conceptualised as infinite, neutral and objective, the 'abstract outside' (Massey, 2004:9). The relationship between these two ideas is important to me, in that it demonstrates how my participants can be standing (physically) in the place of Intaba, yet occupying (imaginatively) multiple other spaces at the same time. Massey (1993), through her concept of 'power geometries,' argues that social relations should be viewed more broadly than as if they existed in a single locality. In other words, 'place is constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular focus' (Massey 1993: 64).

The notion of relational space lets go of rigid place identities and acknowledges that multiple identities are produced within the same setting and social relations stretch far beyond the boundaries of certain places. This is appropriate in the context of my fieldsite, where my participants straddle multitudinous experiences. For example, matric student Sam described to me how he had spent one weekend worshipping his ancestors and slaughtering animals outside a sangoma's hut

A week later he told me about how he had spent his Saturday hitching a ride to the nearest town in order to gamble a small amount of money that he had made from doing manual labour jobs within Intaba. In order to elucidate the multiple ways through which my participants were envisioning their futures in relation to space, I will provide four cases that outline a range of positions taken up by my participants. These are the cases of Lionel, Cezi, Zinhle and Simphiwe and reflects data I collected through interviews and participant-observation.

Lionel lived in a remote part of Intaba, one and a half hours walk (each way) from school. At the start of my fieldwork, he was under the care of his maternal grandparents, both of whom were sangomas. His father was in prison, for reasons he said he did not know, and his mother had passed away, of causes also apparently unknown to him. According to Lionel, his grandparents were against him attending school, as he said *'they don't believe in such things'* and would prefer him to help manage the animals that they kept on their land. They had not, as far as Lionel was aware, received any formal education and had little respect for his dedication to schoolwork. They frequently complained about his rigorous Monday to Sunday school timetable, which prevented him from performing the tasks expected of him as a 'man' in their household. He told me: *'as a man in that house, you have to work, go and fix the shelter for the chicken, for the cows, for the goats.... It's really rural where I am...There were cows but they sold them now because I am attending school and nobody will take care of them.'* According to Lionel, he had to earn his keep in the house, providing physical labour in exchange for food and shelter. His grandparents complained when he told them of his high school grades, as they believed such achievements would lead to him being bewitched by other community members out of jealousy. Lionel expressed a vehement dislike in any belief in witchcraft and identified as a 'born again' Christian who did not feel Christianity was reconcilable with African Traditional Religious practices (ATRs). He did not feel an affinity to any particular church, but was opposed to the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), the predominant church in Intaba, which he considered 'too rural' and traditional. The mismatch Lionel felt with his grandparents' traditional values led him to run away from his home half way through my fieldwork. He moved in with an older woman whom he had met through extended family networks, who lived on the other side of Intaba. While his plan was ultimately to leave the area entirely, and study Mechatronics *'with white people'* at the predominantly Afrikaans University of Stellenbosch. Lionel was adamant that he would return to Intaba one day. He did not wish to live there himself but wanted to buy his grandparents a new house, despite the difficult relationship he had with them. He was also adamant that he would return to pay the 'damages' fee required in order for him to have access to the baby that he had with an unmarried local girl. This fee served

as a form of fine or reparation, as he had not paid the full dowry if he had married the child's mother. While this fee would not grant him full paternal rights, it would allow him to see the child. While Lionel's grandparents knew he had a child, they refused to acknowledge it until he had paid this fee. Without the material resources to pay this price, he remained stuck in a period of 'waitthood' and was not a 'proper' married man or father.

Cezi came from a nearby township and moved to Intaba to repeat her matric year, which she had failed at her previous school. Unlike most of her peers, both of Cezi's parents had jobs and she was among the wealthier students at school. Her parents had rented her a room in Intaba so she could continue her studies, a rare offering of independence not provided to any other student I met, all of whom relied on extended family networks for housing. Cezi's future aspiration was to be a doctor and she was unwilling to entertain the prospect of a different career. She felt extremely strongly about pursuing medicine and spoke about what this would mean to her family, especially her mother, who had wanted to become a nurse but had, had to drop out of school at fifteen when she fell pregnant. Cezi deemed the township where she came from to be infinitely preferable to Intaba, which she found '*only good for studying*,' '*too boring*' and '*quiet*.' She lamented the lack of cars in the area and the abundance of mountains, trees and cows. Cezi told me repeatedly, with pride, that there are no cows where she came from, only domesticated dogs and cats. Like Lionel, she complained about how 'traditional' Intaba was and the amount of sangomas' huts in particular. In her words: '*We grew up knowing that whenever these are those huts they are doing traditional things. I hate the traditional healers. Those people they are taking these trees, just cooking it and drinking that juice, no I don't believe in any of that. We must go to the chemist if we want medicine.*' Cezi's family were 'born again' church-goers and according to Cezi, did not do much of '*the traditional stuff*.' They were very encouraging of her becoming a doctor, particularly because none of her other siblings had university degrees. In contrast to the majority of her peers, Cezi did not express any particular belief system. Although she did believe that there were witches within rural areas, she told me that this was a belief that she felt belonged to the rural areas and by living in a city, she could distance herself from having to believe in such things. Cezi spoke at length about the mansion she hoped to buy in Sandton, a highly prosperous part of Johannesburg, after she had finished her medical degree at the University of Johannesburg. She did not intend to return to the township after her studies, but expressed wanting to move her family to live with her in the city. She told me she would be happy to never see Intaba again and that she wanted new friends and new experiences.

Simphiwe, like Cezi, came from a nearby township and had moved to Intaba in order to repeat her matric year. She was raised by her paternal grandparents but ran away from them to live with her half-sister in Intaba. Her father was an alcoholic with little involvement in her life. Her mother appeared to suffer from mental health problems, as according to Simphiwe *'she has a sickness in her mind.'* When I asked Simphiwe how her mother had become unwell, she explained to me, in a matter-of-fact manner, that she had been bewitched by jealous neighbours as a result of receiving good matric grades. She had never been the same since. Simphiwe told me that she believed in 'traditional things,' as well as church. When she was unwell, she believed her ancestors would be able to heal her, but when she needed inspiration for the future, she told me that she received this from her church. Upon leaving school, she wanted to study Veterinary Science at the University of Venda, a previously black university, because she liked the idea of continuing to live in a rural area. She told me that *'in those places, even if you are a low level, it's always a good place to be.'* Simphiwe then went on to tell me that she did not have enough 'jue' to go to a university such as the historically white, prestigious University of Cape Town. 'Jue' is a word that she invented with her friends and stems from the word 'jewelleries.' She explained it as, *'the dress, the style, the level someone is.'* Simphiwe expressed that she would not study in Cape Town because *'the level is too high'* and she did not feel comfortable being among people who have more money than herself. Her intention was to start studying at her own 'level', in a rural, predominantly black university, but to one day move into a city and live the life of the 'upper level.' She said that when this happens she would still visit Intaba, as she disliked people who moved away and looked down on where they originally came from because, *'money gives them too much pride.'*

Zinhle is part of the only Muslim family that attended Inyoni and she expressed great pride in her Muslim identity, which seemed to be a point of intrigue for other students, rather than a source of contention or animosity. She told me that, within the mosque in Intaba, there are people who believed in both ATRs and Islam and that they *'do them together.'* She personally found this confusing, as though people are believing in *'two gods'*, when it suited them. Zinhle wanted to be a doctor when she left school, and similarly to Simphiwe wanted to study at the University of Venda. She expressed no aspiration to ever move to a city, which she regarded as a dangerous places full of criminals and where people lost themselves. Like Simphiwe, she considered urban places to be full of inequality, where some people have big houses and some people have small houses, unlike Intaba, where she regarded most people to have the same sized houses. According to Zinhle, *'a rural area teaches me how to be a good girl, to be an African, to know things that were done by our grandfathers. Here you have more space whatever you are doing. You can farm, you cannot waste*

money like when you live in a city. Once Zinhle has completed her medical degree, she expressed wanting to come back and help her community by setting up a hospital. She told me that, although she loves Intaba and wants to establish a hospital there as well as build her parents a 'mansion' there, she will eventually move to a neighbouring rural area, as she did not want to die in the same place that she was born.

While these biographical sketches cannot express the range of views that my participants held concerning 'space,' I selected them due to their varied natures. Lionel and Cezi both shared a disdain for their rural locales, and wanted to leave traditional structures behind, moving towards the fast-paced progressive lifestyles promised within the cities. Cezi's disdain for 'cows' was echoed by other students on more than one occasion. 'Cows' were symbolic of rural life and continue to play a significant role within traditional African rituals, such as 'lobola.' For both Cezi and Lionel, moving 'up' in the world meant moving away from the township and distancing themselves from traditional belief systems, sangomas, and the pervasive influence of witchcraft.

As noted by Geshiere (1997), writing about Cameroon, discourses about witchcraft are particularly pertinent in situations of social inequality. In this context, witchcraft provided support for elites to accumulate greater wealth and power but could also be a weapon of the weak, enabling the poor to level inequalities. Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) have referred to witchcraft in South Africa as an 'occult economy' in which sinister individuals are believed to use mystical means to attain material ends and block the progress of others. Lionel, Cezi, Zinhle and Simphiwe all spoke about a belief in witchcraft being widely spread across within the township. Cezi and Lionel pointedly expressed wanting to move to urban areas so as to not be exposed to the witchcraft which they and their peers associated with rurality, where their potential future successes may be susceptible to heightened forms of jealousy.

In contrast to this view, Zinhle strongly promoted a rural lifestyle and, in keeping with literature on the 'rural idyll' displayed 'the centrality of ideas of safety and security within dominant imaginings of rurality' (Panelli et al., 2004:449). As mentioned in the previous chapter, within the LO curriculum, the category of 'rural' commonly signifies a geographically and economically marginalised population of students, who are assumed to struggle in the context of limited resources. While this framing may reflect certain aspects of students' realities, it overlooks the intensely 'affective nature of place' (Kenway et al., 2006:93), and fails to consider the power of rurality in shaping these young people's sense of self. Young people often produce their identities in opposition to others located elsewhere (Massey 1995). By exhibiting a mixture of fear and fascination towards the urban 'other', Zinhle is one of several participants who constructed their urban imaginings around the 'spectacle

of the 'other,' defining themselves in opposition to the dangerous city (Hall, 1997:225). This echoes the fear of the city as a space where one could lose one way and the discourses of 'too much freedom' discussed in the previous chapter. Ideas of immorality were often entwined with cityscapes, whereas students perceived rural spaces as implying connections to local communities, their families, their ancestors and 'tradition', and a way of life that promoted equality and mutuality, with less disparities in income and no one competing with one another. As cities were celebrated as a source of enterprising and cosmopolitan citizens, rural spaces were often represented as sites of traditionalism and decline. By reclaiming their rural identity in the image of the romanticised rural, students such as Zinhle resist the pathologies that are projected onto this space and give value to their own sense of place.

The rural idyll, deemed separate from the complexities of modernity, is a spatial discourse characterised by nature, safety, and community (Rye, 2006). As expressed by Phil, young people were much more inclined to be badly behaved in a city but rural areas promoted good behaviour and coming home '*before 9 o'clock at night*' (focus group). While Zinhle presented rural life as superior to city living, Simphiwe's desire to remain in a rural area indicates how place is imbued with affect. She expressed an awareness of her classed positioning by discussing her own low 'level' and how she did not have the capital, which she referred to as 'jue,' to engage with city life. This is not to say that she did not desire moving to a city at a later stage, but rather that her present fear of not belonging prevented this being an immediate goal. Both Simphiwe and Zinhle associated cities with feelings of discomfort and an inability to create what Harrison describes as a 'good ordering' between space and the body, instead experiencing 'the disturbance we feel when something is out of place' (2000:502). This 'something' was themselves. I would therefore argue that, for some young South Africans, their capacity for mobility is restricted by the 'emotional geographies' and what may be powerful attachments to, or a 'sense of exclusion or alienation' from particular spaces (Brown, 2011:20).

Hierarchies existed among the students themselves, with those who were positioned as 'more rural' and those who were less. These distinctions were often conveyed in the form of jokes. For example, Lionel was teased for living in '*the mud huts*' (Phil, focus group) and Cezi was renowned within her peer group for living in a rented room in the most developed part of Intaba. Following Bourdieu (1984), hierarchies among students are related to the structural inequalities that differentiate rural and urban places. For example, Cezi, by virtue of coming from a wealthier family and having travelled more than her peers, had a better sense of what city life contained and her own ability to navigate it. Simphiwe and Zinhle did not have the same kinds of capital at their disposal. Yet the

positions that students took up within the social stratification of Intaba did not dictate how they related to the space, as we can see in the case of Lionel, whose remote rural location made his desire to leave even stronger.

These findings show how 'localities have their own particular economy of mobility, operating at levels of the material, cultural and fantasy' (Thomson and Taylor, 2005:331). Nevertheless, we must not treat local economies of mobility as fixed typologies, for 'individuals and groups are positioned differently in relation to these conditions and associated meanings' (Thomson and Taylor, 2005:331). While some of my participants, such as Cezi and Lionel, desired to attend universities in the major cities, there were others, such as Simphiwe and Zinhle, expressed a preference for 'rural' universities. 'Urban' centres of learning were typically the historically white institutions, whereas what students referred to as 'rural' universities were the formerly black institutions. While some of my participants imagined attending urban universities and engaging in urban lives as characterised by glamour and sophistication, their actual engagements with urban spaces produced affects that were often more ambivalent, as is evident with Simphiwe. For many of my participants, ideas of the 'urban' was met with a mixture of excitement and horror. The fear attached to moving to urban spaces was often framed as a response to a wariness of the 'fast life' and all the potential illicit activities it embodied (be it sexual promiscuity, excessive partying, alcohol and drug consumption etc.). At the same time, the opportunities for consumption and recreational activities available in cities has come to define 'youth culture' internationally, and the reach of these mobile cultural flows creates what Katz (1998: 131) describes as 'a transnational burgeoning of desire' for the identities and ways of life offered by these symbols.

Discursive separations between the rural and the urban position the city as the place where modern life happens. If young people wish to take up the subjectivities offered by contemporary youth culture, they must become mobile, either imaginatively or through actual migration (Farrugia, 2016). My participants often acknowledged how outsiders might negatively perceive them. For example, Cezi lamented coming from the '*middle of nowhere*' and Lionel displayed visible embarrassment at the stray farm animals wandering around his home when I came to visit him there. Yet this sense of shame enveloped in the rural is not homogenous, and although there were many complaints regarding the backwardness and boredom of living in rural areas, there was as much regard for these spaces as lending themselves towards a celebration of 'culture'.

This was well illustrated during my farewell party, hosted by the school at the end of my time there, the students and teachers dressed me in 'traditional clothing,' performed what they referred to as a 'traditional African dance' and cooked 'traditional African food' for me. During the course of the

day, Principal Thandi took me aside and told me how glad she was, both to share her 'culture' with me and to remind the students where they came from. The desire to provide the students with this reminder was reinforced during the dancing ceremony later that day. While students were performing a bare-chested Swazi reed-dance, draped in traditional beads, several of the teachers started clapping their hands and chanting *'This is our culture.'* This affirmation of 'culture' equated with the 'rural' appeared to operate as a means for both teachers and students to affirm the cultural value of their backgrounds, revalorising the rural within 'hierarchies of prestige that privilege the city' (Farrugia, 2016:844).

While expressing the moral advantages of being raised within a rural area such as Intaba, Phil and Sam both complained about the lack of nightclubs in the area. They told me that, if they wanted to meet other people, it would be easier for them to do this in a city. Participation in urban night-time economies is key for the formation of youth subjectivities through consumption (Hollands, 2002), and functions as a contemporary coming of age ritual for metropolitan youth (Northcote, 2006). As the rural is aligned with nature and tradition, it is often deemed by young people as a good place to be a child, but not necessarily a good place to be a youth (Leyshon, 2008). This became evident to me through the number of participants who expressed wanting their children to spend time within the township, benefitting from the moral advantages of a 'rural' childhood, while at the same time wanting to themselves have homes within the suburbs, which would enable their children to access the education and opportunities available within cities. These views reinforce the observation that mobilities are 'not merely about migration' but indicate the desire to mobilise social resources that are distributed across diverse spaces in order to construct biographies that 'extend taken for granted urban/rural dichotomies' (Farrugia, 2016:840).

6.4 Ambivalent identities

Within my participants and my discussions about space, two main competing discourses emerged. These were namely; tradition, equated with rural living, and modernity, associated with urbanisation. Bhabha's notion of 'hybridity' is useful in describing the experience of my participants who, as the first of their generation in a new political dispensation, had the potential to cross borders into new terrains, and whose consequent experience of straddling multiple discourses is marked by ambivalence. The simultaneous desire to identify with both the new and the old, the urban and the rural, while at the same time rejecting elements of both, moves many of my participants into to a third space of negotiation and articulation of difference. According to Bhabha, this 'third space' is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation 'have no primordial unity or fixity; [and] that even the signs can be appropriated, translated...and read anew' (1994:37). This third

space has been conceived of as a liminal, shifting and fluid space, where the established hegemonic practices are challenged and negotiated.

While the majority of students expressed a desire to move to the suburbs, this dream often encompassed an intention to return to rural life once they had realised their aspirations. This corresponds with Cuervo and Wyn's (2012) research, which considers how young Australians use the educational capital they acquired in cities as a basis for returning to the rural places they grew up, as well as Englund's (2002) argument that rural–urban migrations in Malawi are part of a desire for improved standing within local rural communities. Such studies indicate the complex and non-linear mobilities through which rural young people navigate their biographies.

As well as wishing to retain connections to family members residing in rural areas, a number of students spoke about wanting to return to rural areas to live there themselves, once they had made a success of their lives. This resonates with Donaldson et al.'s (2013) argument that many educated and 'successful' black South Africans choose to live in townships rather than move to former all-white suburbs. He argues that such a position makes them role models within the community and will ensure that they remain 'noticed.' In making locational choices, the aspiring South African 'middle class' are responding to the opportunity to move into high amenity residential suburbs previously reserved for white people, but also to the desire to remain physically connected to social networks and cultural experiences found within the townships (Harrison and Zack in Southall, 2016:182).

Within my fieldsite, and rural South Africa more broadly, young people typically leave rural areas in search of greater employment or income-generating opportunities, better education, and health care, housing and welfare services (Hall et al., 2015:75). Mobilities are especially significant for rural youth, who experience a kind of 'mobility imperative' created by the accelerating concentration of economic and cultural capital in cities (Farrugia, 2016:836). My observations within the LO classroom illustrated to me why, beyond these increased opportunities, students may have felt a need or a pressure, to leave the area upon graduation. Ma'am Zonke continually provided visualisation exercises, stipulating the importance of students being able to envision themselves in the future, from the car that they drive to the house that they would live in. As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of her favourite phrases in the classroom was '*You have to see yourself somewhere.*' This 'somewhere' was never constructed as a rural space, despite many students indicating a preference for a 'rural' lifestyle. This 'somewhere' was instead always a place marked with the symbols of modernity and the urban. Social and spatial mobility often entwine with the

aspiration to 'go far,' as fantasies of self-advancement typically involve entering into higher education and exiting rural spaces (Corbett, 2007:772).

The LO curriculum reaffirmed the views stipulated by teachers and students regarding the 'poor rural.' As mentioned in the previous chapter, many of the students refer to being from a 'poor rural area,' echoing the teachers, the curriculum and the media's representation of rural communities as 'backwards' and barriers to South Africa's progressive future. In the words of Corbett, 'rurality is powerfully associated with the past, with place ... with stagnation, and with a kind of vague shame. Rural is the place we are supposed to have left behind in the march of history' (2006:295). While Corbett was referring to Canada, the same could be said within South Africa where narratives of rural inferiority make an association of the urban with sophistication and progress, and the rural with conservatism and backwardness, with a rural identity often being a stigmatised one. This can be linked to comments discussed in Chapter Five, whereby both teachers and students spoke of their 'bad backgrounds' as preventing them from succeeding in life. Yet contradictory messages circulated within the LO classroom at Inyoni. On the one hand, there was the expectation that students had to see themselves 'somewhere,' with this 'somewhere' being positioned as ideally away from Intaba, and on the other, they were not supposed to lose their 'culture.'

While the LO curriculum did not denounce traditional religious practices, it made vague references to the practices of 'some societies' or 'cultures,' many of which engage in seemingly 'primitive' customs, particularly with respect to gender and traditional family norms. An extract from the curriculum illustrates this:

'In some cultures, cultural norms affect relationships. For example, some cultures allow parents to choose husbands for child brides. These marriage relationships are not based on love, freedom of choice or how well the couple get on and like each other. Social views on gender roles influence and affect relationships. For example, if the male believes he is in charge of a relationship, the female will have less equality and say in the relationship. In some societies, male-female relationships are based on assigned roles, and not on the individual person's needs and feelings' (Rooth et al., 2013:16-17).

This extract makes an interesting appeal to western gender equality norms, which are very much at odds with the gender relations my participants navigated in their everyday lives and the expectations of woman to be primarily concerned with being mothers and men to become the heads of households. The extract also raises questions regarding who the curriculum is referring to when it says 'some cultures' and 'some societies'? From which perspective has this curriculum been written, given its Western and normative overtones? When referring to particularly unequal gendered 'roles,' this can be linked with the unequal gendered relations rampant within Intaba (and

South Africa at large), a point of discussion in section 7.5. Yet while there was no direct sense of where these 'some cultures' existed, through the narratives of teachers and students and the content of the curriculum, 'culture' was equated with 'tradition' and represented as the opposite of the progress and advancement deemed desirable for the new generation of South Africans. In one way, there was an expression of pride in culture with statements such as *'I will pay lobola even if I marry a white girl, it's in my culture'* (Phil, focus group) and *'this is our culture.'* On the other hand, there was a disdain with what was perceived as 'primitive' with comments like *'my grandmother thinks everything is about the ancestors but I don't believe in that stuff at all'* (Lionel, interview). The disbelief in 'herbal medicine' so vehemently expressed by Cezi and Lionel also arose within the LO curriculum, which strongly subscribed to a Western conception of biomedicine and disregarded the role of indigenous belief systems as healing aids. The following extract illustrates this point:

'In certain religions, various potions and medicines are mixed and given to sick people to take. Although some of the medicines may have healing properties, they have not been scientifically tested. For example if you drink herbal medicine together with prescribed antibiotics, you may cancel out the effects of the antibiotics and become seriously ill' (Rooth et al., 2013:192).

Although some scholars have suggested that belief in ATRs is slowly being eradicated among young South African due to social change and adoption of Western worldviews (Brittian et al., 2013), with the exception of Lionel and Cezi, I did not find this claim to ring true in my field site. Respect for ancestors and a centralisation of their importance, a belief in the possibilities of witchcraft and of information being received via divination, as well as the primacy of healing are all deemed part of ATR practices and were recurring topics that cropped up in conversations with students. Of interest is that they did not emerge in the narratives of teachers, all of whom clearly defined themselves as Christian and lamented the lingering presence of ATRs on their students' lives, associating such beliefs with South Africa's past and not its future. Many of the teachers told me that they felt it was a problem that students often believed academic success or failure to be a result of witchcraft, rather than within their personal control.

Yet while there was a general profession of Christianity, this being the religion that had the most visible presence on the school campus, most of my participants indicated the importance of ATRs in providing them with a connection to their pasts (Brittian et al., 2013:651). This sense of connectivity to the past helped them propagate a sense of 'belonging' among young South Africans. The idea of 'belonging' is important, in that it frames an understanding of the conscious, and unconscious efforts that people make to be connected to people, places and issues that matter to

them, as well as the historical dimension of their relationship to the historical moment within which they live (Cuervo and Wyn, 2014:903).

'Belonging' can itself be multiple in nature, and within my fieldsite it was more common to encounter a fusion of religious practices, as in the case of Simphiwe, than for my participants to express a distinct separation between their traditional belief systems and their churches (or in the case of Zinhle, her mosque). Young people's dual affiliations to religious groups is noted within the literature and is argued as common practice, particularly in countries where colonisation has taken place (Rule and Mncwango, 2006). Dual affiliations cropped up in some surprising avenues within my fieldwork, such as through my interactions with Mr Musunga, a local sangoma, who had a big sign on his wall that said 'Jesus is our Saviour.' It later transpired that he was both a pastor and sangoma, but he told me he felt no contradiction between these two roles, as *'Jesus provided me with the herbs and healing powers, and the sangoma training has taught me how to use it to do God's work'* (Mr Musunga).

This marriage of belief systems was not accepted by everyone and is a view attested by the likes of Lionel and Cezi, the teachers and a local Catholic priest I interviewed, who lamented his congregation's mesh of belief systems. The concern that African traditional beliefs are in conflict with Christian values is also reflected through the rise of charismatic churches in South Africa who have denounced the use of 'cultural practices' (Matsaneng, 2010). While there seems to be widespread disagreement as to whether one can be both pastor and sangoma this conflict seems to be lacking in the rural/urban discourse as my participants did not seem to find it odd that one can live in both urban and rural areas. This might suggest that it is not two conflicting systems of belief. The variety of responses to cultural practices within my fieldsite indicate the contradictory and multiple discourses to inform how young people position themselves, and are positioned within the spaces and gendered positions that they occupy.

6.5 The skin of space

The majority of my participants expressed a desire to leave Intaba, even if only temporarily, which reflects the potential struggles that young people may encounter when invited into 'improving narratives' of enhancing the life experiences of their parents (Skeggs, 1997:82). Such narratives, which in this case may require students to feel the need to move to a city or take on particular religious beliefs, form part of a vision for a better life that contains within it an implicit critique of the lives they currently live, including the people and places closest to them. In her study of working-class women's struggles to become 'respectable', Skeggs (1997:82) writes that 'class was

configured through the improvement discourse because in order to develop they have to differentiate themselves from those who did not or could not improve.'

Walkerdine calls for a more complicated understanding of upward mobility and 'the terrifying invitation to belong in a new place, which is simultaneously an invitation to feel shame about what one had been before' (2003:238). Her work suggests that invitations into normative (urban, middle-class and in the case of South Africa, historically white) visions of success are produced, in part, through affectively orienting the subject away from the location that precedes such mobility. Although researching in a different context, Walkerdine (2003) highlights the tensions at the heart of mobility narratives, which assign a negative value to people and practices that are central to one's identity. For example, within my research this is echoed in the experiences of Lionel, who expressed a sense of shame regarding his grandparents' traditional practices and rural lifestyle, a lifestyle he did not aspire towards. It also speaks to the experiences of Sihle, among others, who felt he had to do better than his father, who had worked as a manual labourer all his life, and Petal, who expressed her need to go to university in order not to become a domestic worker like her mother and sisters.

Space and gender are significant in enabling this 'improvement discourse.' Not only are my participants envisioning futures that were denied to their parents during apartheid, they are envisioning their futures in spaces that their parents were not permitted to occupy. As noted by Ahmed, spaces acquire the 'skin' of the bodies that inhabit them (2007). Universities within South Africa, particularly the historically whites-only universities, are spaces which have been oriented around some bodies, rather than others. While these spaces may now be 'multiracial' and open to all, whiteness remains in ways that might be invisible and unmarked, but is 'the absent centre against which others appear only as deviants, or points of deviation' (Frankenberg, 1993). The effect of this 'around whiteness' is the institutionalisation of a certain 'likeness', which makes non-white bodies feel uncomfortable, exposed, visible, different, when they take up this space (Ahmed, 2007:157). Simphiwe and Zinhle's aversion to study at historically white institutions, mentioned earlier in this chapter, expresses their discomfort.

The 'whiteness' I speak of is not reducible to white skin and non-white bodies do now inhabit historically white spaces, in South Africa and elsewhere. Whiteness is rather what the institution is orientated 'around,' so that even bodies that might not appear white still have to inhabit whiteness, if they are to get 'in' (Ahmed, 2007:158). What is recited is a very style of embodiment, a way of inhabiting space, which claims space by the accumulation of gestures of 'sinking' into that space (Ahmed, 2007:159). Simphiwe's ultimate desire to be comfortable in entering 'white' spaces and

live the life of the 'upper' level displays her awareness of the need to accrue a 'style of embodiment' and accumulate the kind of capital(s) required in order for her to successfully navigate this unfamiliar social field, and in so doing, subvert her own position in social space.

While Simphiwe did not use the term 'class' at any point, her desire to move from a 'lower' to an 'upper' level demonstrates her recognition of herself as being positioned with a lowly status. There are parallels between my participants' comments and concerns regarding their social position and studies on class and social advancement in other contexts. Within the UK, Walkerdine has explored how young women negotiate the shift from working-class to middle-class selfhood. Reflecting on the experiences of one such woman, she writes:

'What I want to think about is the way in which Lisa understands her old childhood subjectivity as a working-class girl in a council house and how she understands and fantasises her new subjectivity. I want to argue that she imagines remaking herself and this demands a complete negation of her Other self. She then engages in powerful and pleasurable fantasies about the kind of woman she wants to become. Held inside these fantasies, though, is a painful Other, that which she fears that she is and wants not to be' (2003:245).

Behind the future visions articulated by Simphiwe, as well as other young people in this study, there may exist a rarely expressed and 'painful Other.' While not solely manifesting along racial lines, this 'other' is marked by place, race and gender. The longer I spent within my fieldsite, the more my participants expressed a conflicting fear and desire to enter what has been historically marked as 'white spaces.' An example of this can be found in the rare times when students were afforded the opportunity to visit the closest cinema and shopping complex to Intaba – located in the formerly white provincial capital, Nelspruit, an hour's drive away. Lionel told me that he felt white people did not want to get close to him, and would walk on the other side of the mall in order to avoid him and his friends. He said that this happened all the time and that they were used to it. Rather than these experiences giving him a negative view of white people, however, he desired more interaction with them. For this reason he wished to attend the University of Stellenbosch, a historically Afrikaans institution located on the other side of the country and which has received substantial negative press for racism.

In my last interview with Pertunia, she similarly relayed to me her experiences of racism. The previous weekend, she had visited the same mall with a friend, and had been standing in a queue behind a white woman and her baby. She told me that she started making cooing noises to the baby and the mother had stared at her angrily and put the baby away in her pram. Pertunia expressed how sad this made her feel, like she was '*nothing*' (interview). On the same afternoon she relayed this incident to me, she wanted to know when next we could visit Gleneagles, a formerly

whites-only town where she might be met with the same discrimination that had caused her pain at the shopping mall. The pain associated with contact in the context of racism brings to mind once again the work of Fanon (1967). While I was struck by the resilience of my participants in desiring to continually return to spaces where they considered themselves not to be welcome, young black South African's everyday opportunities are constrained by the requirement for them to negotiate and adapt to dominant spaces of whiteness. Therefore, giving up on inter-racial interactions may not be regarded as an option if young black South Africans wanted to improve their social standing.

Numerous scenarios, similar to the two referenced above, were relayed to me by students, and were often followed by a comment regarding how happy they were to get to know me, a white person who wanted to spend time with them. The majority of other interactions they had with non-black people centred around interactions with the employers of family members – many of whom worked as cleaners or gardeners for white people living in nearby towns. All the white people they had interactions with were in superior positions to them, fuelling the perception that white people were 'cleverer' than black people. This reflects the manner by which, in post-apartheid South Africa, the formal power of white supremacy has been abolished, but the normative ideological power of whiteness lives on. While the demise of apartheid has led to many situations in which South Africans come into closer contact with one another, contact occurs within a context of unequal power relations in which 'whiteness' continues to be privileged over 'blackness'. Racialised patterns of reasoning continue to exist, often unnoticed and unchallenged. The limited exposure and contact time that the students had with people helped fuel these perceptions.

Differences and distinctions between 'people like us' and 'people not like us' can evoke intense affects of disgust and contempt, provoking extreme emotions of shame and humiliation among the dominated and those made abject (Tyler, 2008 in Wetherell, 2012:110). Yet while Lionel and Pertunia expressed feeling rejected by white people, this did not prevent them both from wanting to navigate white places. Instead of feeling forced back into established practices or remaining in predominantly black areas where he felt more comfortable, Lionel expressed an even stronger desire to spend time in white areas. Affect may at times cause us to repeat 'old scenes' (as is the case of Zinhle and Simphiwe), and other times, it may bring about change and jolt us into a 'new scene,' as is evident with Lionel (Wetherell, 2012:107).

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the contradictory, ambivalent and multiple relationships that young South Africans have with regards to the 'urban' and 'rural.' It probed the different meanings they attach to places and argued that these meanings are rooted within a history of racialised spaces.

In this chapter, I have explored how feelings of belonging are a crucial dimension of inclusion and exclusion, as belonging involves a relationship to place, with bearing upon racial, religious and gendered identities. I have shown that while many young South Africans desire to engage with the economic and cultural capitals associated with cities, these desires often require them to navigate multiple, contradictory spaces and occupy changing, hybrid identities which encompass a desire to return to rural spaces. In attempting to capture the shifting attachments that structure how young South Africans living in rural Mpumalanga construct their future narratives, this chapter argues for the importance of space in the formation of subjectivities.

My participants conveyed a dominant association between the 'rural' and what they called their 'traditional' culture, in opposition to an 'urban' life, which corresponded with modernity and opportunities available in post-apartheid South Africa. Yet while the majority of my participants expressed a desire to leave rural spaces and engage with the promises of the city, this was not a straightforward aspiration, given the immense sense of belonging, which most of my participants retained, to where they had come from. This sense of belonging not only encompassed relations to people they care about, but also represented connections to the past, to tradition and to 'culture.'

The contrast between students' backgrounds and the ideas about success to circulate within the LO classroom and, on occasion, the wider community of Intaba, generated 'a habitus divided against itself, both deeply ambivalent and consigned to successive allegiances and multiple identities' (Reay, 2007:1198). The poststructural framing of this project allows me to see these multiple subjectivities as inevitable. While this chapter has demonstrated the persistence of race and class in dictating who belongs and who is excluded from certain spaces, the embodied ways that affect informs our subjectivities will be taken up further within my next Chapter.

Chapter 7: Silences and contradictions

7.1 Introduction

In the previous Chapter, I began to explore how the spaces navigated by young people in South Africa continue to bear the marks of apartheid. In this Chapter, I consider the silences and contradictions in my participants' imaginaries. I will probe topics not spoken about or topics that, when spoken, were often in hushed tones and after greater trust had developed between my participants and myself.

I begin this Chapter by discussing the overt and subtle ways in which racial inequality continues to be manifest, I will look at discourses around gender, considering how pronouncements of gender equality often mask pervasive underlying inequalities. I show how the circulation of particular discourses allows certain things to be articulated and thought of at the exclusion of other modes of expression. I conclude my Chapter by looking at how particular social environments permit or constrain what it is possible to discuss. This involves considering how the topics of HIV and sexual relationships have been particularly silenced and how there exists a public face of what is permissible to speak about which often has little resonance with young people's private realities.

7.2 'Public' and 'hidden' transcripts of race

It is two o'clock on a Thursday and I am sitting in the staff room, my head resting sleepily on Ma'am Zonke's desk, waiting for the bell to ring. Ma'am Zonke, slumped in the same position next to me, is discussing the trials of being a mother of two energetic toddlers. It is five months into my fieldwork. Ma'am Portia, the administrative assistant, marches into the room, looks me squarely in the eye and says *'Faaz, your people are causing trouble. Why are you guys always causing trouble?'*

My people? Who are my people? *'Those men,'* she tells me, *'Those men, the ones from Cape Town.'* I have a vague recollection of Principal Thandi telling me that some men were coming to donate tablet computers to the matric students, resources to help them with their Mathematics and Science. I do not know these men or consider them 'my people.' What they are, is white people, and for the first time since I had arrived at Inyoni, my 'whiteness' was being acknowledged as a cause of 'trouble', beyond just an indication of difference.

I sit upright, defensive. *'I don't even know them Portia. What did they do?'* Ma'am Zonke stirs sleepily from her desk. *'Hawu!¹² Say sorry Portia, Faaz isn't like those guys. What did they do now?'*

Ma'am Portia mutters an apology and I awkwardly accept. She takes a seat beside Ma'am Zonke and myself and explains that one of the tablets has been stolen and Principal Thandi is not letting anyone leave the premises until it is retrieved. It is nearly home time and Ma'am Portia's annoyance is echoed through the grumbles of other teachers who stream in and out of the staffroom to complain, *'These children, you can't trust them with anything'* (Mr. Khanya) and *'Ah these kids, it's a bad idea to give them something that they can get moola¹³ from'* (Ma'am Silinda). With the exception of Ma'am Portia's comment, the teachers' grievances are directed at the students, from whom they appeared to expect bad behaviour. Yet there is something that is not discussed, but is reflected through Ma'am Portia's comment, where she positions the white people as troublemakers, and Ma'am Zonke's response, *'What did they do now?'* This implies that white people are always up to something devious. Yet what white people 'do' or have 'done' is not an open topic of conversation, censored perhaps because of my white presence in their midst.

Principal Thandi has locked the school gates and is patrolling the corridors like a suspicious watchdog, waiting to uncover and shame the perpetrator. I can make out the sounds of students protesting from within the school courtyard but choose to remain sitting quietly in the staffroom, uncomfortably aware of the situation in which I find myself, where it is black bodies accused of taking from white bodies. I have heard this story before – the media is awash with it, as are the people who live in Gleneagles. Expressions of *'I don't ever let Nancy (the domestic worker) clean where I keep my jewellery, gosh no, you shouldn't provide temptations'* and *'It's not that I'm racist but during apartheid there wasn't any of the crime we have now. This wasn't what Nelson Mandela wanted'* echo in my memory. These are among many implicit and explicit racist remarks I heard spoken by the white residents of Gleneagles during my fieldwork.

The sound of commotion, pushing chairs and bustling students fills my ears. The culprit has been found! But wait? The stolen item was in the car of the white men all along? Principal Thandi sheepishly announces this to the teachers, unlocks the school gates, and bids the students on their way. As I leave the staffroom, Portia grabs me by the arm and with one finger wagging in my direction, half-jokingly repeats, *'You see Faaz, it's the white people causing the problems.'* I laugh it off with a shrug, hiding my disturbance and go to find the student I had arranged to interview that afternoon. As I enter the classroom, the matric students' annoyance is apparent and a group of

¹² South African colloquial expression to show indignation.

¹³ Reference to money.

them gather around me to relay the afternoon's events from their perspective. On the blackboard someone has scrawled the words #Principal Must Fall, mimicking the framing of the protest movements that were spreading across the country and which, as mentioned in section 5.1, the students at Inyoni were aware of but did not indicate showing support towards.

I asked who wrote the message and with some laughter and jostling, Phil is pushed forward by a group of boys. I join in with the students' laughter, given that Phil is the class joker and most obvious suspect behind any act of defiance. I ask him why he targeted the principal and not the white men whose error led the students to be accused. Phil and several of his friends explained that it is the principal they are angry with, as she should have known they were not criminals. The principal, a black woman, failed to show solidarity with them. They said nothing about the white men, however, and did not appear to have the same expectations of them. While one reason for this may be because these men were strangers, unlike the principal, implicit in this is the assumption that white men may see them, black youth, as potential criminals. As with Ma'am Zonke and Ma'am Portia, I wondered whether there was the unspoken belief among the students that 'white men' may cause problems for them. For a fellow black person to do so, however, was a betrayal and infliction of a different sort of wound, one that they felt more able to articulate and protest against. Did the students and teachers expect white people to be racist and was my deviating from this being, in Ma'am Zonke's words, 'not like those guys?'

The scenario described above was extracted from my fieldnotes and is reflective of the extent to which a consciousness of race, both my own and that of others, pervaded my every interaction in Intaba, despite it rarely being an open topic of conversation. This was the case since the first day I drove into the township as an *umlungu*¹⁴ in the midst of a community that, while diverse in terms of ethnicities, was predominantly black. Yet race was an understandably sensitive and difficult topic to broach, often brushed under the table or when referred to, rarely referenced in relation to apartheid, despite its role in the institutionalisation and enforcement of racial categories.

Ma'am Portia's statement regarding 'white people causing a problem again' resonates with what Scott (1990) has called 'hidden transcripts,' which he regards as a subtle form of resistance against official discourses or 'public transcripts.' In this case the latter could be perceived as the 'rainbow nation' discourse of post-apartheid South Africa, where all races are framed as co-existing on equal terms. Because of their counter-hegemonic character, hidden transcripts emerge often surprisingly, challenging the discourses that serve the interests of the powerful. Scott points out

¹⁴ Local term for 'white person.'

that the struggle between the dominant and the dominated is not merely a struggle over material resources. 'It is also a struggle over the appropriation of symbols, a struggle over how the past and the present should be understood and labelled, a struggle to identify causes and assess blame' (Scott, 1985:xvii). While remarks like Ma'am Portia's indicate a 'subtle' resistance to the endurance of white hegemony, more overt forms of resistance to racial dynamics in South Africa have come to light through the racialised dimension of student protests and recent political developments, such as the rise of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a political party critiqued for reproducing racial stereotypes.

In post-apartheid South Africa, the public transcript of multi-cultural rainbowism has been argued as often masking underlying prejudices and animosities (Fleetwood, 2012). High levels of racial sensitivity and a desire to appear politically correct often result in race going 'underground.' Given the emergence of the black middle class, charges of overt racism have become more obfuscated, as racism is no longer as explicit as it was during apartheid. Drawing on studies on race and race relations in South Africa, Seekings (2008) points out that although evidence of explicit racism may have declined in the post-apartheid period, new, more subtle manifestations of racial discrimination have emerged. This reflects the persistence of racial discrimination in a softer sense, that is, in terms of social preferences and whom forges relationships with whom. Discourses of colour-blindness, while purporting to work within a post-race framework, have been severely criticised for masking racialised power relations (Ansell, 2006).

In the previous chapter, I highlighted the significance of space, showing how my participants' location in a rural black township constrained their ability to interact with people from different backgrounds and contributed to their imaginings of the rarely seen 'other.' As expressed by Sipho, 'White people...ah, they just drive past us on the way to somewhere else. You are our first whitey.' As time progressed and I developed greater rapport with students and teachers, I was asked questions regarding what it meant to lead a 'white' life. Below is an extract from an interaction with two matric participants, Lungi and Promise, that occurred towards the end of my fieldwork:

Lungi: Fizz, is it true that some white people go to university when they are eighteen?

Fawzia: Um... I suppose it's true...yah.

Lungi: Wow! You guys are clever huh? We just get pregnant and stay in school forever! (laughter) Have you ever seen a white person in school so late?

Fawzia: I'm sure some are...

Promise: No, you guys are so smart.

Fawzia: Um... Why do you think white people finish school earlier than black people you know?

Lungi: I dunno.

Promise: Is it because they have money?

Fawzia: Okay...so why do you think they have money?

Promise: Because they are brave. And they work hard.

Lungi: Yah! And smart. And then when you guys get together, you stay together.

Fawzia: What makes you think that?

Lungi: She watches too much television! (laughter)

Promise: No man, (wallops Lungi playfully with her hand) you see it when you go to the mall. You can see the white people sitting together nicely and like, talking to each other and stuff. And they are so happy.

Lungi: Because they have money!

Promise: Yah, they always have money.

Fawzia: Does it ever make you angry that they have money?

Lungi: No, why would it?

Promise: They work hard!

As well as illustrating particular heteronormative gender dynamics, which will be discussed further in section 7.5, this extract demonstrates some of the perceptions my participants had concerning a 'white' and 'black' existence in post-apartheid South Africa. It echoes the meritocratic rhetoric discussed in Chapter Five, whereby my participants believed that anything was possible if they worked hard enough. White people were successful because they had 'worked harder' than black people. The implication here is that black people are lazier, and thus deserving of what Lungi and Promise regarded as their subordinated social status. These offhand comments, which show young black South African's awareness of the enduring inferiority associated with black people in relation to white people, were commonplace among the matrics and post-matrics with whom I interacted. When I asked my participants where their ideas came from, I was often provided with references to television programmes, the primary lens through which most of them witnessed white people going about their seeming daily affairs. For example, Cindy and Petal frequently insisted that white men were more romantic than black men on the basis of the romantic comedies they had watched.

My participants often referred to themselves as 'blacks' and while this identification sometimes manifested as a positive identity marker, through comments like '*I am proud to be an African man*' (Phil), it was often positioned negatively when discussed in relation to 'white' lives. While some, such as Lungi, displayed an awareness of how black people typically had lower levels of education and higher levels of in-school pregnancy than white people, these social 'problems' were

individualised. Black people were deemed inherently 'lazy' in opposition to hard working, 'brave' and 'happy' white people. Another way in which students referred to themselves as 'blacks' was through accusations of greed or criminal activity, generally made in a humorous manner. For example, when Petal took a packet of potato chips from out of my car one day (with my permission), Cindy called out to her, *'Aaaah you took Faaz's chips, you're such a black!'*

Although I referred to this comment in my fieldnotes that day, looking back at these notes I was alarmed to see that I had not asked Cindy what she meant by that exclamation, I had simply noted it down. Being raised in South Africa, I have frequently heard similarly derogatory remarks, often made by black people referring to other black people and not the white-on-black racism of the apartheid era. What might have been strange to a foreign researcher was familiar to me and I neglected to give this comment the attention it may have required. This was an interesting, albeit disturbing, finding in itself in that it showed how I shared the group's 'tacit knowledge of black', despite also being aware that an attempt to define this risks 'crude generalisation, essentialism and racism' (Youdell, 2003:9). Drawing on Butler's notion of performative interpellation, my participant's utterance of racial labels is the constitutive process whereby individuals acknowledge and respond to existing ideologies, thus recognising themselves as particular subjects (1993:107). My participants' discursive practices which appeared to describe themselves as (pre-existing) subjects were not simply descriptive, they were productive (Youdell, 2003).

While references to race became more pronounced as my fieldwork progressed, teachers and students made frequent allusions to 'culture' when discussing race. In her research on desegregated post-apartheid English classrooms, McKinney (2004) noted that a recurrent way that students talked and wrote about racial difference was in terms of 'culture.' Her findings echo my own, whereby she found that students emphasised a view of culture(s) as discrete, generally homogenous entities, 'conceived along ethnically absolute lines, not as something intrinsically fluid, changing, unstable, and dynamic, but as a fixed property of social groups.' At Inyoni, teachers and students alike would make remarks indicating a belief that all 'white' people shared the same culture and all 'black' people shared the same culture.

While references to 'culture' may be a form of euphemism and a reaction to the discomfort felt in talking explicitly about race, 'culture' is particularly interesting in South Africa, given the how the architects of apartheid couched their explanations of racial difference in 'culturalist and religious rather than biological terms' (Dubow, 1995:288). While my participants continually referred to 'black culture,' their understanding of what constituted black reflected their own positioning in space and time. In this case, black culture was conceived of in relation to traditionalism and conservative

values. This would be a different 'black culture' to one found in urban spaces, for example, as subjects who occupy the same racial locations can have vastly different experiences of the same kinds of things based on the intersections between their different classed, ethnic and gendered locations. While I have discussed the significance of 'class' within my research (see sections 1.5 and 3.6), the term 'class' itself was never expressed during my fieldwork. Students generally painted 'black' and 'white' lives with a broad brushstroke, although there was some awareness of distinctions within the black community, as is evident, for example, through Simphiwe's reference to desiring to be on an 'upper' rather than a 'lower' level (section 6.3).

7.3 Difference and Desire

In Carrim and Soudien's (1999) research on student identities in desegregated schools in South Africa, they explored the tendency amongst students and teachers to portray people classified as coming from different races as being culturally different. While this difference was generally perceived negatively and rarely as a strength, my findings suggested that my participants had a more ambiguous relationship with difference. At Inyoni, difference, was regarded by students as something desirable as well as difficult and potentially upsetting. The desire to engage with difference manifested in various ways, one of which took the form of language. When I first arrived at Inyoni, several students introduced themselves by names that I later realised were not the same ones used by their peers and teachers. It became apparent to my participants that I was calling some students by their 'English' names and this caused much amusement and mockery. Phil, who once noticed the name I used to refer to one of his peers, burst into peals of laughter and exclaimed, *'Aaaah Sihle, he wants to be all proper so he tells you that his name is Robert!'*

While Sihle and other students' decision to use English names could be seen as a desire to 'be all proper,' it indicates an assumption that I would, as a white person, not be able to pronounce their siSwati names. It also potentially reflects a desire for the student in question to present themselves to me as more Westernised. According to Ma'am Leang, these names are often given to young people by their guardians so to *'help them get a job'* and to help them more easily navigate white contexts of employment. In South Africa, young black people who take on seemingly 'white' characteristics, ranging from the names they choose to how they spend their leisure time or dress etc., are often described as 'coconuts', whereby they are black on the outside and white on the inside. While this was not a term that came up within my study, it is a significant theme in South African literature (Matlwa, 2007) and signifies how ideas of success have been understood as a 'white thing' thus inspiring a mimicry of activities and ways of being marked historically as white.

As mentioned in my Methodology, a desire to speak English specifically was widespread among youth in Intaba. While students expressed a desire to speak English, they also expressed a fear of making mistakes and being laughed at by their peers. The fear of one's English being laughed at came up so frequently that I asked Morris why he thought this was the case. His response:

Morris: You see if black people are trying to talk English and they make a mistake, other black people will laugh, make fun of you, but a white person will never laugh. Most of the time we don't like to use English among ourselves because other students will think you are trying to act smart, trying to act better because hey, you know English, that means you are more educated than me. If I use my siSwati that means I am nothing just like everyone else.

Fawzia: But do you feel that students are ever angry about speaking English?

Morris: At my school everyone wanted to learn English, even though we struggled with it. We knew it would take us places.

In Intaba, English was deemed the language of prosperity, providing access to work as well as to other places and people. In Petal's words '*if we don't speak the same language as someone then English is the language that we use*' (focus group). This is not to say that the pressure to speak English did not manifest itself painfully for many of my participants as Morris's comment that using his siSwati made him '*nothing*' suggests. As being black was given inferior status, so too was being SiSwati speaking. The perception of English as 'proper' implies the inferiority of other languages. My comment regarding whether students ever felt angry about speaking English reflects the assumptions I brought with me to Intaba, whereby contrary to my observations, I expected students to be more politically conscious and to express more (overt) animosity to white people. It also reflects the guilty feelings I have come to associate with the English language whereby my exposure to postcolonial theorists has made me increasingly wary of how students speaking the language of the coloniser could be seen as acceptance or coercion into accepting a role in culture and supporting 'the weight of a civilization' (Fanon, 1967:17-18). I found, however, that within the context of my fieldsite, whether by choice or force, the meaning of the 'culture' in question had shifted and evolved through language so that it no longer 'belongs' to the coloniser, but 'relies upon the colonised to give it shape' (Yazdih, 2010:34).

Another avenue through which 'desire' manifested was through inter-racial relationships, as several male and female participants expressed a wish to engage in a romantic relationship with white people. Inter-racial relationships have a history of denial within South Africa, given apartheid's concern with the calcification of racial boundaries that were 'rooted in widespread anxieties about racial mixing' (Posel, 2001:73). An extract from a conversation with Cindy, a matric student, indicates a desire to permeate those boundaries:

Cindy: Okay, so I want to tell you something but you promise you can't laugh...

Fawzia: I promise.

Cindy: So....yeah well the thing is, you asked me my greatest dream right? Well, it's actually to have a whitey.

Fawzia: A whitey?

Cindy: A white guy! I want a white guy.

Fawzia: Okay. I'm not gonna laugh. But why do you want a white guy?

Cindy: Because they are so great. They know how to treat their woman hey? And white people, they care so much more about each other. Unlike us blacks, we will just stab each other in the back.

Cindy was among several of my participants, including teachers, to make the same admission. This was a confession largely made by my female participants, possibly because of the heightened rapport we had cultivated due to a belief in a shared gendered position. Several of my female participants also shared negative exposures they had had with black men within their community, incidents which led them to consider black men as violent and cheating, in opposition to the white men of the romantic sitcoms they enjoyed. This echoes the argument of Kehily and Nayak (2008: 329) that 'in a locality where male violence remained a routine feature of sexual relationships, television offered young women alternative images of gender relations based upon pleasure, desire and mutual respect'.

When I discussed with my male participants why they thought their female peers expressed a desire to be with white men, they commented upon the material prosperity and status that white men represented, whereby being in a relationship with a white person indicated that you had been successful in life. To use Simphiwe's terminology, someone from the 'upper' level wanted to be associated with you. In Thomas's words, '*Girls think white guys will buy them carvelas and they cost like R1800*'. In addition to this, Lionel, Phil, Morris and Thabo all independently conveyed the sentiment that '*white people are more gentle and they stay together longer*' (Lionel), a similar sentiment to that expressed by my female participants.

Lionel followed this statement by telling me:

'Us blacks are violent. We boss women about. We are a violent people, even see how the teachers have to beat us for us to listen to them. I think white people are very sensitive, always asking if things are okay.'

Lionel's regard of his fellow black community as a 'violent people' in contrast to the supposed sensitivity displayed by white people indicates the painful ways in which race encounters are frequently imbued with feelings, emotions and affective dispositions (Nayak, 2011:554). While

expressing a sense of pain at being rejected by white people, as discussed in section 6.5, I was puzzled to find how my participants, such as Lionel, still presented a prevailingly positive depiction of white people. With the exception of views expressed to me by several of the teachers and post-matics, discussed in the next section of this chapter, a sense of rejection from white people had not translated into overt animosity or if it had, this was not something that my participants chose to share with me.

7.4 Historical knowledge: In the classroom and in the blood

Given its sensitive nature, I was hesitant to discuss apartheid at the beginning of my fieldwork, unless it was a topic raised by participants themselves. On reflection, my hesitance to discuss certain topics demonstrates how I too drew upon the dominant discourses within Intaba and colluded in the construction of certain silences. While race was frequently and casually brought up without any probing from me, the term apartheid never explicitly arose within conversations. One matric student, Xolani, claimed he had not actually heard about 'apartheid', although when I explained what it meant, he told me, dismissively, that he had heard about it but that this had happened a '*long long ago*' (interview).

The majority of matric students expressed a similar sense that '*apartheid is over now*' (Cezi, focus group), had occurred before they were born, and had no bearing on their present circumstances. According to Ferreira, black students desire to disassociate from the role of victim (or 'affected') may be motivated by a desire to avoid being positioned as inferior (2013:18). A desire to disassociate with the negativity of the past is in keeping with a desire to frame one's future in positive terms, as discussed in section 5.3. The racism that saturated apartheid South Africa and shaped social and educational identities has been erased by a new inclusive 'multiracialism' so that looking back to the past was deemed as neither relevant nor helpful (Ferreira, 2013). This was the predominant view expressed by my matric participants as well as several of the younger teachers. One teacher, Ma'am Grace, even expressed some confusion when interrupting an interview that took place between an older teacher, Ma'am Khutsalani and myself. '*What are you guys talking about so seriously?*' she inquired. When Ma'am Khutsalani explained, with tears in her eyes, that we had been discussing apartheid, Ma'am Grace was shocked. '*Aaaaah you remember that stuff?*' she asked, forging a clear distinction between what happened 'then' and how life is now. In a later interview she told me that, being born in the late 1980s, she had no memory of apartheid and never thought about it.

Several of the older teachers, while speaking of the influence of apartheid on their own lives, did not wish to dwell on the topic with the students, particularly because they felt it must not be an

excuse for students not achieving at school and going to university. Part of what it meant to believe in yourself and your ability to be whoever you want to be in the 'new South Africa,' as discussed in Chapter Five, meant not locating the legacy of apartheid in their lives. Many students expressed the belief that it was destructive to discuss apartheid as it had the potential to '*make people jealous of one another*' (Simphele, interview) and '*blame white people*' (Petal, interview). In this way, the post-apartheid narrative of emancipation helped fuel the individualising ethos of the school.

As well as the influence of the school upon young South African's interpretations of the past, the broader community and family play a critical role in passing on an understanding of apartheid. Jansen (2009) draws upon the concept of 'knowledge in the blood' to explain how emotional knowledge of the apartheid years transmits from one generation to the next by parents and adults in society, influencing how the second generation see themselves and how they understand others' (Jansen, 2009:171). The scope of this thesis is not large enough to interrogate the influence of my participant's home environments upon how they did or did not locate themselves as racialised subjects shaped by a particular history. However, it is important to note that all of my participants expressed an awareness of living in a world that is socially, politically and technologically radically different from that of their parents' generation.

Echoing the findings of studies which focused upon how born free South Africans develop a national identity and idea of 'citizenship' (Hammett et al., 2009; Ferreira, 2013; Fleetwood, 2012), my participants often spoke about 'our country', 'our history', 'our future' and 'us South Africans.' It was common for students to express immense pride in being South African and for some, this pride was often articulated in relation to South African history. This was through the acknowledgement that, in the past, people had endured great struggles in order to bring about the present state of freedom and opportunity. They included themselves among those who have reaped the benefits of this struggle. The past was shaped by people who '*fought for us*' (Dean, interview) and several people referred to their family member's political involvements when speaking of overcoming apartheid.

Among my participants there were varied responses to how apartheid should be addressed within school, from those who felt it should not be taught or discussed at all, and those who valorised the past and regarded it important to know 'where they came from.' Most of the matrics, post-matrics and teachers fell into this latter category. An analysis of the responses I received to the question 'Do you think born free South Africans should learn about apartheid history?' was generally confined to formulaic expressions, whereby I was repeatedly told that it was necessary to '*know the past in order to build a future*' (Phil, focus group) and '*we must know the past so history does*

not repeat itself' (Sam, focus group). The majority of responses from both teachers and students, displayed a clear separation between the past and the present. This echoed existing studies of the born free generation failing to make a connection between their current circumstances and the apartheid past (Swartz et al., 2012).

The ambivalent responses regarding how to discuss race in the classroom is echoed in the enduring debates to have occurred regarding the subject of History in South African schools (Masooa and Twala, 2014). After 1994 there was sensitivity and even denial with regards to apartheid History, to the extent that 'a debate took place among textbook specialists, teachers and parents on whether the past should be taught at all in schools' (Hopken, 2006:21). Years of propagandist History mandated by the apartheid government led many to disdain the subject and when the ANC government took power in 1994, the sentiment among many was that it is better not to have any History than to have that kind of History again (Sieborger, 2000).

The devaluing of History as a school subject in South Africa is reflected through the vast, although undocumented, number of schools across South Africa, such as Inyoni, which do not offer History as an independent subject for students to take until their matric year. The majority of schools not offering History as a senior subject are those with a predominantly (if not entirely) black student body whereas the enrolment of History at more affluent schools remains stable. For schools that do not offer History as an independent subject, it falls under the subject 'Social Science' that is compulsory for students to take until Grade Nine. Social Science is a product of OBE, and combines History and Geography. Unless a student had the inclination and the school was able to support them in taking History post Grade Nine, they would be provided with only a rudimentary historical basis. This means that, particularly in the context of rural townships, students can complete their schooling without a solid grasp of what apartheid was and how they are located within its legacy.

While matric students displayed little to no animosity towards white people, several of my post-matric participants expressed an awareness of how their race and rural upbringing had positioned them at a disadvantage in relation to their white peers. There are several reasons why the post-matric group may have presented a counter-narrative to the matric group. The first is that they were older and increased life exposures may have taught them about the lingering injustices of 'history' in a way that the relatively sheltered environments of the school and the township did not. Another reason is that, having built a relationship with me which had begun several years prior to my fieldwork, this was the group that was more comfortable talking to me about sensitive topics.

Four out of eight post-matrics I spent time with spoke to me about how they felt the effects of apartheid negatively on their lives, with Morris even going so far as to tell me that *'apartheid is still there'* and we just do not talk about it because it is too painful to acknowledge. He discussed this with me at length in an interview.

'Most black people think that white people are better than black people because they have cars, they have beautiful houses, they live in towns while African people live in rural houses where there is no water. White people are more educated and when blacks see white people they see things they will never have, they see things they will never achieve, things that they can only achieve through white people. Most parents come from rural areas and go to the suburbs to work for the white people... that makes us feel white people are more clever than blacks. And according to me, white people do understand life more than black people. The only thing that black people think about most of the time is having fun and they do not think about the future, they think only about the present. When I have money, I want to spend it now. When I have money, the only thing that comes to mind is expensive clothes, liquor or partying, things like that, while white people think of investing their money in certain things which will make a profit for them, which will help them in the future, black people just think of the present.'

This passage speaks to several of the themes discussed in this thesis so far. Echoing the findings of Chapter Six, Morris notes how black people have been positioned as 'rural' and may desire to move to 'towns' and acquire the beautiful houses and possessions associated with white rather than black lives. He touches on the affective intensity of race discussed in this chapter, whereby the realisation that it is typically black people who work for white people fuels a belief in white superiority and black subordination. Yet while Morris indicated a greater political awareness than the views expressed by the majority of my matric participants, he too shared a belief in black inferiority, in which white people 'understand life' better than black people and thus, black people are partly to blame for their seeming lack of success. He constructs black people as hedonistic, in ways that resemble the moral discourses that Skeggs (2012: 278) highlights in her discussion of the hedonism often associated with working class lives. This demonstrates how affect intertwines with cultural circuits of value as some people get marked out as disgusting and others as exemplifying modern virtue (Ahmed, 2004).

7.5 Performing gender and sexuality

The discourses surrounding equality and race circulating within Inyoni can be paralleled to the discourses concerning equality and gender. While my observations and discussions with students indicated unequal gendered divisions within Intaba, when I asked students and teachers whether they felt there was gender equality in the area, the consensus was that there was. In one all-female focus group, I recorded responses, such as *'We are all equal now'* (Cindy) and *'A woman can do*

anything a man can do now (Cezi), that could have been copied directly out of the South African constitution. In general, there was an emphasis on the 'now' in relation to the 'the n.' The past was recognised as a time when women internationally, and black women in particular, were given very little opportunities. 'Now' was marked as a different era. However, time spent within the school and occasionally within my participants' homes, led me to observe the unequal gendered roles being performed, whereby women were expected *'to be breadwinners and also come home and cook and clean'* (Ma'am Grace, interview). I never once saw a man clean a classroom at school or cook and serve any kind of food within the home whereas I frequently observed women engaging in these activities. This echoes the findings of Dunne's (2007: 499) research in Botswana and Ghana, which demonstrates the ways in which 'normative school practices produce and regulate gender and sexuality.' When I inquired about the lack of male involvement in classroom cleaning, the women, both teachers and students, laughed off what they regarded as inherent male laziness.

In one all-female focus group, the women explained to me that it was not the men's 'style' to clean the classrooms and that the women accepted this and were used to this task. This was despite the fact that the female students were never specifically asked to take on the role by themselves and that the entire year group was requested to clean the class by their teachers. Phil and Sam often complained about not having any sisters in their families, as it meant they were expected to help with household chores, such as washing and cooking, that would have been allocated to a sister had there been one. When I had a conversation with Ma'am Leang about this, as well as the unequal allocation of tasks within the school, she started chuckling at my observation and retorted, *'Aaah these boys! What can we do? We can't change them. This is how it is.'*

There are similarities between my findings and Dunne's research which demonstrates how a 'genderregime' (Kessler et al., 1985) is formed 'through institutional practices (with inscribed social relations of gender), which symbolically construct and regulate everyday life and normalise unequal power relations' (Dunne, 2007:502). My work similarly reflects the institutional construction of gender inequality, through how specific forms of gendered behaviour and interaction are normalised. It indicates how the 'taken for granted' and seemingly mundane practices within the school are fundamental processes in the social construction of gender (Butler, 1990).

While on the one hand, there was a profession of equality of opportunity for all, on the other hand there was still a clear sense that women and men had different roles to play. This profession of 'equality' yet remaining unequal has resonance with Ahmed's conceptualisation of the 'non-performative' (2012:116-117), which she uses to explore the notion of 'commitments' made to equality and diversity within higher education contexts, commitments which are 'not simply doing

what they are saying' (2012:116). In the context of my research, the notion of gender equality functions as a non-performative, by being a citational practice that does not produce the effects that it names. In the world of the non-performative 'to name is not to bring into effect' and 'the failure of the speech act to do what it says is not a failure of intent or circumstance but is actually what the speech act is doing' (Ahmed, 2012:117). This means that a 'commitment' to gender equality, as part of the rights discourse which the new South African government was built upon, is articulated, but these phrases are largely empty when rarely brought into the everyday lives of young people living in rural areas.

When I asked questions related to the tasks expected of them, my female participants' lamented the lack of work done by the men in their life, often their brothers or male cousins. They felt their guardians did not treat them equally. Cindy went so far as to tell me that girls are treated like slaves whereas boys receive '*golden treatment*', such as not having to clean up after themselves or cook for their families. When envisioning their futures, several of my female participants spoke about how they would not have this same gender inequality in their homes and they wanted to have a '50/50' division of tasks within the household. As expressed in an interview with Cezi:

Fawzia: I have heard the term '50/50' a lot, what does it mean?

Cezi: It means that, because we are equal now and because women are also working, we should both help in the home. So if I am cooking, the men should do the dishes.

Fawzia: And do you think this will happen in your home?

Cezi: Ah men will never change....

My findings correspond with Ansell's (2002) study of the role that rural secondary schools in Southern Africa play in (re)producing gendered identities. Ansell identified two discourses that persistently arose within conversations relating to gender. These were the contradictory discourses of 'culture' and of 'equal rights.' Within the school, young women drew upon the discourse of equal rights when expressing their future desires. In their lives outside of school, the material realities of their lives made it a struggle for them to achieve equal rights. The challenges they faced was deemed part of the cultural fabric of society. This complex contradiction is reflected through how the young women within my study were fashioning their subjectivities in a historical moment dominated by popular discourses of 'girl power,' a seeming 'discourse of possibility' (Weis, 2008).

Most of my female participants framed their aspirations in ways that were unfettered by gender inequality, positioning themselves as liberated architects of their own realities. This 'girl power' discourse of choice and self-invention has come under scrutiny in other contexts (Ringrose and

Walkerdine, 2008), as scholars have indicated the potentially harmful effects of a neo-liberal narrative that positions girls as individually responsible for their futures. Such narratives, which echo late modern conceptions of an individualised world where one can carve out one's biography through choice, deny persistent gender inequalities and the impact of structuring factors such as race, class, religion and place.

Cairns (2014) argues that even when young women are invested in ideals of gender equality, few have access to critical discourses with which to reflect upon, and contest, gender oppression in their everyday lives. Although my female participants recognised unequal gender dynamics, they deemed these part of the essential nature of what it is to be man and what it is to be woman. Drawing upon the limited available discourses concerning how one can be a 'man' or 'woman' in Intaba, my participants' were actively reproducing existing gendered norms. Butler's (1990:25) theorisation of gender identity as 'performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results,' is useful in understanding the ways in which attributes and embodiments go unchallenged and become 'problematically assigned to the female gender' (Davies, 1994:5).

While some female participants fashioned themselves as modern, independent women, such as Cezi, others expressed a desire to take on a more traditional female role. For example, Petal told me that she felt honoured to be a woman, as the one who '*brings the family together and makes sure they stay together*' (interview). Lucilla echoed this understanding of women being chiefly connected to the home when she proudly told me, '*women know when there is no food in the house and how to take care of babies, things like that, but men will take care of the criminals to make sure you are safe*' (focus group).

These essentialised depictions of the men as the source of strength and provision, and the women as the source of care and looking after the home echoes a conversation I had with Mr Musunga. He told me that women's innate association with '*things of this world*', such as food, clothes and shelter, means that she did not have any transcendental powers. For this reason, it was deemed important for young people to have the surnames of their fathers, as, according to Mr Musunga, the ancestors only responded to the male surname, which has powers beyond the realm of the mundane. The religious significance attached to the male surname echoes how, within Intaba, particular gendered power relations are continually (re)produced with men remaining at the top of the chain of significance. When I asked a group of female participants how they felt about the privileging of the male surname, Lungi expressed the view that, '*men would not like it if you didn't take their name, it would be like we are not loving them enough. So it is better to make things easier for you and take the surname.*'

As much as my female participants were performing gender in particular ways, so too were my male participants. This performance was often tied up with place and what it meant to be a man in a rural area. For example, in a focus group with five men, they explained to me how their 'rural' and 'traditional' upbringing enabled not only the expression of their 'African' identity but of their worth as men. As stated by Sam: *'In a rural area, we learn more things as a man. I know if I am a man I have to wake up in the morning and go and fetch water, go to collect some roots and collect fire.'* The young men I met often expressed their masculinity as being centred on outdoor activities. These outdoor activities generally provided means for them to demonstrate their strength, be it through helping with farm animals, chopping wood or moving heavy loads.

Connell (1995) has been influential in shifting attention away from the notion of masculinity as a singular, universal essence and towards the idea of masculinities as plural and socially situated. Nevertheless, Connell shows that in any given context certain versions of masculinity become dominant. In my fieldsite, the more a man displayed elements of the strength associated with traditional macho masculinity, the greater authority he accumulated among his peers. This became evident to me through the unconventional choice of 'school president,' Sipho, a boy infamous within the school for being a bully. I was surprised by Sipho's election, given his out-spoken aggressive demeanour, his poor academic standing and his constant skiving off school in order to engage in various manual tasks within the area. One of these job was fixing the roads after the rains, a role he took upon himself in order to demand that passing cars provide him with money for his services. Many students told me that they disliked Sipho, that he was 'crooked' (Cezi) and 'he likes violence' (Lionel). Yet when I asked students why they had voted for him to be their school president, I was told *'Ah he is fearless, he will do the things we are afraid to do'* (Phil) and *'He is a strong man so we know we can look up to him, even if he is a bit stupid'* (Sam). While the teachers protested his election, as far as the students, male and female, were concerned, it was the traditional 'strong man' they desired to be in charge. When I inquired as to whether the school president was ever a 'woman,' I was met with much laughter with students telling me, *'No way, that would never happen!'* (Cindy) and *'We wouldn't even think of that, it's not in our culture'* (Lungi). This is interesting given that the title of 'school president' does not imply any specific gender, but has always been always taken up, unquestionably, by men. This is in keeping with existing studies of gender, sexuality and schooling, which, while focusing on the contexts of Botswana and Ghana, similarly show how the selection of prefects and student duties are structured by gender (Dunne, 2007:500).

In keeping with the clear gendered power hierarchies demonstrated among the students, all of the young men I met expressed aspirations to be the 'provider' in their future relationships. This role

was generally anticipated with enthusiasm. In a private interview, however, Thomas relayed to me the pressure he felt as a man, despite not wishing it to be any other way. In order to illustrate this point he relayed to me the hardships his mother had endured, as a single parent who gave birth to him at aged fifteen and was forced to drop out of school. Despite this difficult situation, his mother had managed to, in his words, *'give me a life'* and provide for him, through starting another relationship with a man who supported her. Thomas told me, *'You see it's easier for women because they can go and beg from men. But for a man, it's not easy, you have to go and work hard yourself.'*

While Thomas, and most of his male peers, accepted that their future partners, who they always described as female, might have jobs of their own, these jobs were believed to be inferior to the work done by men, who was expected, by both men and women, to be the household's chief breadwinners. While this did put a sense of pressure and anxiety on the men, this was only articulated to me in private conversations such as the one with Thomas. Within the more public arena of the focus group and in the company of each other, all male participants expressed this as something they felt proud to do as they acted out their masculinity for one another. In this way we can see how 'heterosexual masculinity was not something that could lie still, but continually had to be asserted, regulated and performed' (Nayak and Kehily, 2006: 464).

One topic that emerged continually was whether it would be permissible for their future wives to have a greater income than they would. The resolute consensus to this was that such a situation was not tenable and that, if the women were to be the chief financial provider, there would be no means of assuring that she would be faithful to you. In one of several all-male focus groups, my participants expressed to me the importance of men being the *'head of the house'* and *'the one in power'* (Phil, focus group). Lionel told the group he felt inspired by even just the word 'man.' He said: *'When they call you a man, you feel proud. If you are a man your role is to protect, to provide and when you are a woman the role is to support, to encourage, to help the man...'*

In three different all-male focus groups, the men expressed to me how the women's ability to support them (through the running of the household, among other things), was dependent on their ability to provide for her materially. This was not seen as an easy task, given that there appeared to be the belief that women only desired men who had money. Women were presented as inherently promiscuous and needed to be 'kept' through material provision. One of my participants, Sam, even painted a scenario for me: *'If I am wearing beautiful clothes, driving a nice car and then I meet someone's girlfriend on the road, she will see me wearing nice clothes and driving a nice car and she will forget that she has someone at home, she will approach me.'* Both male and female

participants told me independently of a common practice whereby, on the first day of meeting a man and exchanging phone numbers, a woman would ask him to provide her with airtime. If he agreed, they maintained communication, but if he did not, she may decide to call any potential relationship off.

When I shared some of the views expressed (anonymously) by my male participants to my female participants, I was surprised to find them in agreement. Several of my female participants expressed, independently of my asking, that they were drawn to men who had cars. Simphiwe, who came from a particularly financially needy background, discussed her hope that she would find a 'sugar daddy' who would be able to buy her 'those things a woman needs.' The things on Simphiwe's list included perfume, make up and pearls – items which fit into Butler's (1993) idea of activities which constitute a mode of 'girling' through which the action (e.g. putting on lipstick) produces the subject (the girl).

As well as expecting themselves to be the providers, my male participants had set expectations of the type of woman who would make an ideal wife. Walking with Sam one afternoon around the Intaba shopping centre we spotted, unusually for the area, a woman smoking at a street corner. Sam turned to me, a look of abject horror on his face and said, *'If you see a girl smoking then she is not a wife. Smoking and drinking and not working, that women is not a wife.'* Most of my discussions with male participants demonstrated similarly conservative attitudes concerning how a woman, and especially a wife, should ideally behave. The work of the Sonke Gender Justice Organisation (SGJO) provides an example of how men are managing 'the insidious encounter of neoliberalism with the patriarchies of apartheid and what is thought of as 'African' culture' (Soudien, 2012:237). Mbuyiselo Botho, a young man who worked for the SGJO in the township of Sharpville, told the story of how his male peers taunted him with the accusation that his work advocating for gender equality was 'letting the side down' (Khumalo, 2010:1). Upon giving a talk one day related to gender equality, a young university educated woman told him that although what he had said was interesting, nobody would take it seriously because it came from him. When he asked her what she meant, she said 'you are not a real man to me...you are still living in the township, you don't even drive a car...go and get a car and then come and inspire me' (Khumalo, 2010:2).

The mentality that Botho speaks of reflects a modern liberal ideology which demands that 'men do what it takes to assert their manhood' (Soudien, 2012:237). It demonstrates how the 'compulsion to perform straight masculinity is collectively imposed,' yet often taken up 'with relish,' such that 'the individual is both an effect of power and the element of its articulation' (Nayak and Kehily,

2006:465). My findings indicate that this is the same mentality prevalent within Intaba, beneath the veneer of gender equality. This demonstrates how modern, liberal understandings of gender fail to disrupt gender norms that have been entrenched in society through intersecting discourses of race, religion and culture.

7.6 Societal silences

As well as considering how my research participants may have consciously, or subconsciously, not raised sensitive topics with me, silences are often broader in nature and reflect what particular environments deem permissible or appropriate to discuss. Research on communication within families in South Africa demonstrates that young people may use silence strategically to avoid confronting distressing situations, and to conform to standards of respect as set by society (George and van den Berg, 2011). Within Intaba, there were occasions when keeping quiet may have been a necessary tactic, particularly when participants felt there could be negative repercussions to them articulating particular things.

The silences in my participants' narratives encompassed not only what their guardians or teachers did not discuss with them but also what young people did not feel able to ask. For example, Lionel told me that when his mother died, he had asked his family what had caused her death. His grandparents reprimanded him for asking and the topic was not discussed further. Similarly, Lionel did not know why his father had gone to jail, but feared asking anyone in case it was deemed disrespectful. Simphiwe, raised by her father's family, was forbidden to inquire about her mother's whereabouts. These are just two examples, among many, where my participants were not silent out of their own volition but rather that certain topics had been silenced within their families and local communities.

Silence as a strategy to avoid confronting distressing topics is seen as particularly common in environments where children are raised by grandparents, as the heightened age difference is believed to widen the communication gap. This is relevant in my research where 'multi-generational' and 'skip-generation' families were highly prevalent (Makiwane et al., 2012). Existing literature on silences among the narratives of young South Africans argues that silences fall in line with the cultural norm of teaching that children are not supposed to question adults about their behaviour (Nduna and Sikweyiya, 2015). This belief is echoed in the discomfort my participants expressed when required to ask their guardians about their incomes. This information was necessary for them to make applications for further study. Several of my participants told me that it was impossible for them to find out the earnings of their guardians, as making this inquiry would be an immense sign of disrespect.

Another silenced topic was depression. While there are no existing studies to substantiate the prevalence of depression in the area, both students and teachers frequently referred to depression as being common in Intaba. They linked this depression to suicide and several recent undocumented cases within Intaba of young people at local schools taking their own lives. The potential reasons why these young people may have taken their own lives was not openly discussed and when several of my participants shared their feelings of depression, this was expressed to me privately. As noted by Morris, *'I think people are depressed but they don't talk about it, they don't know how to express what they are feeling...'* Morris was so interested in the prevalence of depression within Intaba that his first career choice had been to study psychology, to help support people who he believed were suffering privately. While there are various practical reasons why he was not able to pursue this idea, he claims that it was always an impossible pursuit given that *'black people don't see the value in psychology – they won't go to someone to talk about their problems. That is a white thing to do'* (interview).

Morris's comment indicates how even choosing a course of study is infused with racial interpretations. It also contradicts my finding of how, over time, many of my participants desired to talk to me about their problems. This was possibly due to my seemingly neutral outsider status, as discussed in my Methodology chapter. Many of our discussions involved my participants describing difficult living conditions and situations of emotional, and on one occasion, physical abuse. While often sharing them with me, most of my participants expressed not wanting to talk about these situations with other people, not even their friends.

Several of my participants were orphans, and many more had experienced the death of a close family member. The cause of these deaths was rarely discussed. As expressed by Bongzi, *'we never talk about how a person died, if they died we just say they were sick.'* I experienced this first hand when attending the funeral of the school gardener. My first reaction, upon hearing news of his death was to ask what had happened. I received what struck me as a disapproving glance from Ma'am Fortunate, who curtly responded with a *'he had the flu.'* While I suspected but could not ascertain whether 'the flu' was a euphemism for HIV, it soon became clear to me that whatever the cause of someone's death, it was not appropriate to discuss this. Although many of my participants told me that their parents had passed away, I did not know the causes of their death. On most occasions, I did not probe this, but when I did ask students with whom I had built particularly strong rapport about this, it emerged that they often did not know themselves, or at least expressed as much to me. I once asked Lungi, an orphan who often spoke about the hardships of living without parents and being reliant on the income of her older sister, if she ever spoke about her parents' deaths to

other people. She told me *'we don't ever talk about it, we don't know how people's parents died or even if they did die. I don't want their pity.'*

Given the high rates of HIV, both in Mpumalanga specifically and South Africa at large, it is likely that a number of deaths are related to the illness. HIV never came up organically in conversations with my research participants, however, and it was only towards the end of my fieldwork that I broached the topic. In a focus group with Phil and Sam, I asked them some direct questions:

Fawzia: *Do you think that HIV is present in your community?*

Phil: *In my community I have never met someone who has passed away because of HIV.*

Sam: *I have not met someone but maybe that's because they hide it.*

Fawzia: *A lot of students are orphans, do you mind if I ask what you think their parents died from?*

Sam: *I have friends who are orphans but they never talk about how their parents died or how they left them, no, they just say they are dead.*

Phil: *Some of them they can't remember everything that happened, and it's painful when someone reminds you.*

Fawzia: *Do you think any of their parents died from HIV?*

Sam: *I don't think that they died because of HIV.*

Phil: *Most of the people, for example my aunt, passed away because of breast cancer, these are the diseases people are experiencing in our community.*

Sam: *Yes breast cancer and TB because most of our parents used to work in the mines.*

Phil: *And some of them because they are smoking they have cancer, lung diseases. Something like that.*

This conversation alerted me to how students are aware of the stigma attached to being HIV positive, yet adamant to portray to me their community as HIV free. This is the same view expressed by Mr Musunga, the sangoma, who raised the topic of HIV with me and said that: *'You might think that HIV is a leading cause of problems here but the real problem, it is erectile dysfunction.'* While I initially assumed that this statement was a joke, it transpired that he was being serious, and Mr Musunga felt annoyed that everyone made *'such a fuss'* about HIV. He said this to me despite my having not raised the topic of HIV with him, he seemed to simply predict that I would. As well as outsiders such as myself presumably *'making a fuss,'* my observations indicated that teachers were among this group, as they frequently spoke about HIV in front of students and several teachers telling me that they feared many of their students would contract the disease, if they had not already.

After spending more time with my participants, I felt more comfortable to discuss HIV with them in more explicit terms. I asked those who had told me that they were sexually active, if they had ever taken an HIV test. With one exception, everyone told me that they had not. While reasons for not doing so varied, Thomas expressed the view that if he was HIV positive, he would be so distressed by this information that he would '*die*.' I mentioned how, in discovering his HIV status, he might be able to take medication that would enable him to live with the disease. Thomas was dismissive in his response and instead referred back to the importance of having a positive attitude, indicating that the negative news concerning his health would cause him to die, not for health reasons, but because it would stop him being able to believe in himself. He deemed self-belief, in this sense, as akin to survival.

While HIV was a topic that rarely came up without my prompting, sex was a prominent topic of conversation, despite it not being something I had intended to discuss. This is unsurprising, given that studies on young people in South Africa indicate that more than a third of adolescents are sexually active and by the age of 17, half of all teenagers are sexually active (Francis and DePalma, 2014:624). In keeping with these statistics, most of my participants told me that they were sexually active, although this was something that most people only admitted towards the end of my fieldwork, once they were more comfortable in my presence and presumably less afraid of judgement. Students' sexual relationships were not a topic acknowledged by teachers and by their family members. Cezi was one exception to this, as she told me she could talk about sex with her mother, and as such, she passed on insights she obtained (generally concerning different contraception) to select female friends. This is in keeping with my discussion in the previous chapter regarding how Cezi positioned herself, and was positioned, within her peer group, as a modern woman who lived in her own rented accommodation and aspirations to move to the city to study medicine.

My participants' views on sex emerged as important, not only because they wanted to share them, but because their inability to discuss them openly reinforced their perception of 'good' behaviour and a 'good' life. The 'good life' that their teachers and guardians expected them to be aspiring towards was one in which sexual relations only occurred after marriage. While teenage pregnancy was often discussed in an abstract sense, students who were mothers rarely discussed their experiences of mothering. At the initial stage of fieldwork it only became clear to me who the mothers were because other students, or teachers, would refer to this. These references were often discriminatory, such as comments directed towards a student by Ma'am Florence, when she

exclaimed, *'She has three children before her matric! Can you imagine? Three children! Where does she think she is going to go in life?'*

It was less obvious to discern who the fathers were, although some participants told me that they were fathers in interviews. These often took the form of a sheepish confession, such as when Lionel admitted that he was a father upon my noticing that he had a screensaver of a baby on his phone. I had commented on the photo in the first few months of fieldwork, saying *'Aw cute! Is that your baby?'* While the intention of my comment had not been to make an accusation, Lionel immediately conveyed discomfort and said, *'Aaah I wanted to tell you, but I was worried that you would think badly of me.'* When I asked him why he felt that way, he told me that it was because *'we aren't supposed to have children when we are at school.'* While Lionel later spoke to me about his experiences of being a father and his struggle to take ownership of this role outside of marriage, there was an absence of discussions around men and fatherhood. When I inquired to several of my female participants who were mothers about the role that the fathers of their babies did or did not play in childrearing, I received responses such as *'Ah you know men, they are all the same'* (Anne, interview) and *'men, they can't be responsible'* (Lucilla, interview).

On the one hand, Lionel demonstrated an awareness of sex being something he was not supposed to engage in while still at school and that having a child while at school prevented him from being the 'good student' and thus the 'good subject' he felt he was supposed to be. On the other hand, he spoke quite differently about sex within an all-male focus group. Here, he, Thomas, Phil and Sam elaborated upon how important they felt it was for them to have an active sex life, how their older male peers encouraged them to do so because *'you need to have sex in order to be called a man'* (Thomas). The need for young men to feel they have to 'prove themselves' has been explored in the literature regarding discussions about sexual relationships in the LO classroom (Francis and DePalma, 2014). This literature indicates that while teachers largely profess the belief that girls rarely have sex just because they want to, boys sexual behaviours were largely attributed to social forces as well as the 'urge' (ibid, 2014:628).

Francis and DePalma's (2014) research found that men's sexual activity was seen as responding to their innate predatory sexual nature or social expectations of virility as a defining characteristic of masculinity. In contrast, women's sexual activity was often depicted as falling prey to men's sexual wiles or as a tool for social manipulation, usually for economic gain. There was a sense that girls would feel diminished by sexual experiences while boys would socially benefit from them. In this way, the LO classroom served as a playing field in which men and women were being socialised into different gender roles in ways that 'propagate the patriarchy', yet were viewed as

part of 'the natural order of things' (Francis and DePalma, 2014:624). All discussions around relationships centred on heterosexual relationships and any deviation from a heteronormative model was seen as against the norm and unnatural. Given the silences around homosexuality, I explicitly asked students and teachers about their views on same sex relationships and received a unanimous response that this was '*unnatural*' (Thomas). Given the stigmatisation to have contributed to these silences, it is unsurprising that no student openly identified to me as homosexual.

In private, my female participants spoke to me about their sexual desires, something they did not feel they could discuss with their teachers, given that they were told not to be sexually active and because women were not expected to have these desires. Several of my participants told me they wished they could have open discussions about sexuality, but they didn't want the conversation just to be about using condoms, because they *were 'bored of hearing about condoms'* (Phil, focus group), with using condoms equating to '*eating a sweet with a wrapper*' (Lungi, focus group). In one-on-one conversations, several of my participants told me that virginity was not actually a desirable status, but part of the public persona they felt obliged to present to their teachers and the older generation.

The contrast between the kind of conversations I had with my participants around sex and the discourses to circulate within the LO classroom demonstrate that, far from adequately addressing gender and its relation to sexuality, LO classroom practice has avoided these issues or even reinforced heteronormative assumptions (Francis and DePalma, 2014:625). Existing studies on LO indicate that culturally taboo subjects like sexuality are also often purposively avoided and the views and values of the wider community may impinge on what topics LO educators feel comfortable discussing in the classroom (Rooth, 2005). My research shows how teachers and students 'both contribute to and sustain the fiction of gender identity as a real and significant in foundational terms' (Nayak and Kehily, 2006:470). Within this context an understanding of gender identity operates as a 'comfort zone for both parties' and 'certainty of the educative experience' (Nayak and Kehily, 2006:470).

7.7 Conclusion

This Chapter has taken heed of Letherby's (2003:109) comment that 'silences are as important as noise in research and the interpretation of silence is as important as the interpretation of what is being said'. Two levels of silence emerged within my data. The first level of silence relates to where my participants may have not felt able to articulate things even to themselves, such as the sense

of inferiority and pain they associate with their race. While these feelings were sometimes expressed overtly, as was the case of my post-matrics, they generally manifested as whispers, subtle statements that alluded to more than what was being openly expressed. The second level of silence is one in which my participants did not feel able to talk about things within particular surroundings and among certain people, as there was not a 'safe' or appropriate space for them to do so and their environments dictated what they should or should not speak about if they wished to retain the status of being 'good' subjects.

This Chapter has unpacked some of the ways in which race and gender were habitually embodied within Inyoni. As noted by Youdell, 'multiple discourses are referenced through the meanings, associations and omissions embedded in the historicity of apparently simple and benign utterances and bodily practices' (2006:515). Elusive references to race and gender, made throughout this Chapter, reinforced how, in the ways that my participants spoke and felt about themselves and others, and how they have been oriented to understand ideas of 'success' and 'failure,' the power of social class, tied up as it is with race and gender, underlies feelings of individual worth, dignity and respectability' (Luttrell, 2008:62). Harding and Pribram argue that 'emotions are a crucial means by which individuals and social formations are reciprocally constituted' (2009:10). My participants' affective expressions were not merely their individual responses to structural conditions but represent the meeting point between dominant discourses and subjectivities – such that embodied affects are the means through which entrenched structures of power continue to operate.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

'At an interpretive level ethnographies remain delicate cultural constructions intricately interlaced through a diverse community of tellers, listeners, writers and readers who in turn may unravel and string together these 'truth regimes' differently' (Nayak, 2006:412).

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has drawn upon ten months of ethnographic data collected in a rural township in Mpumalanga province. Its purpose has been to explore how young black people are envisioning their futures in post-apartheid South Africa. The majority of observations, interactions and interviews took place among matric students at Inyoni High as well as with a group of young people who had matriculated two years previously. The chapter begins by outlining some of the possibilities for future research. From here, I discuss the theoretical and methodological contributions that this thesis makes to the sociology of youth. The chapter concludes with revisiting the core themes of my study, weaving together the key findings of each of my chapters.

8.2 Possibilities for future research

Throughout this thesis I have reflected upon how my position, as a white female researcher located at a foreign institution, had significant bearing over how my participants responded to me and how I responded to them. In viewing the research counter as relational, performative and inherently partial in nature, I do not consider my position as a limitation to the study. As noted by Nayak (2006:424), 'the truths that emanate from 'crossing the tracks' and engaging in research across the 'race divide' are no longer seen as part of an 'inauthentic' outsider approach but as a meaningful, if partial representation of race relations.' However, I do consider that the privileging of English in the research design prevented the study from engaging in the kind of depth that may have been achieved if my participants were expressing themselves in their mother tongue. It also swayed the participants that I was able to draw to the study, preventing the involvement of young people who had a lesser command of the English language and who may have felt it was off-putting or intimidating to talk to an English-speaking outsider. For these reasons, I consider a complementary study undertaken by a black siSwati speaking researcher, would provide meaningful material from which to enhance my own findings.

This study greatly benefitted from being conducted over a ten-month period, allowing for trust and rapport to develop between research participants and myself. In particular, the fact that I had known the post-matrics involved in this research several years prior to the study enabled a richness of discussion. This illustrates the potential value for work that explores student aspirations to be

conducted over a longer period, following young people's trajectories and changing subjectivities over an extended period. While longitudinal studies of young people's identity constructions have occurred in other contexts (Henderson et al. 2007, McLeod and Yates, 2006), there is currently no such equivalent from within South Africa. This is a space where future research would be meaningful.

While there is no shortage of research which illustrates enduring patterns of inequalities along the lines of social class, race and gender in South Africa, my research indicates the need for a greater interrogation of the role of space in the formation of young people's identities. Conceiving of space as central to the production of social formations can provide valuable insights into how inequalities are produced, endured and may be contested (Christie, 2013). An analysis based on spatial practices might be unlikely to achieve different overall conclusions, but it may 'enable different strategies for action' (Christie, 2013:778). Another area that requires greater research is the relationship between gendered identities and the construction of aspirations. While my research indicated how the gendered nature of the discourses available to participants was prominent, my findings show the need for a study specifically focused on gender.

Time spent within the LO classroom illuminated to me the importance of research which explores curriculum in context, viewing schools spaces as porous and embedded within wider societal relations and values which both shape, and are shaped by, what happens inside classrooms. This is important, given that schooling practices do not stem from policy per se but from 'localised practices...constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across spatial scales, from the global scale, through to tentacles of national political power, to the social relations within the town or settlement' (Faatar, 2007:600-601). While this research has explored the LO classroom, and to a lesser degree, the LO curriculum, as a site which influences the construction of young South African's aspirations, it would be useful for future studies to explore additional influences. This might take the form of analysis of newspapers, media, government documentation, political speeches etc. It could also involve interrogating the role that young people's guardians play upon the construction of their aspirations, in conjunction with or in contrast to the influences to come from their schooling environments and curriculum.

8.3 Theoretical insights

My thesis has shown how, as students articulate their visions of the future, they make use of the discourses available to them in order to establish their place within legitimate categories of being. In an effort to attend to the multiple, shifting attachments that structure the future narratives of young black, rural South Africans, I have proposed a theoretical approach that attends to the

ongoing and contradictory nature of subjectivity formation. In understanding subjectivity as something that is not fixed but is performed through discursive, spatial and social relations, my research has demonstrated how, in constructing narratives of their future lives, young people are actively producing themselves as subjects. This draws insight from Butler's question regarding processes of becoming: 'By what norms am I constrained as I begin to ask what I may become?' (2001:621).

While in principle, subjectivity is an open-ended process and the subject is continually being reconstituted, in reality, the range of possibilities are constrained by context. While the LO classroom may pronounce the neoliberal rhetoric of 'anything is possible if you work hard enough,' subjects do not work within a limitless horizon of possibility. The forms of power at work in a particular society will ultimately determine the range of subjectivities immediately open to any individual based on their gender, race, class, age and background (Weedon, 1997:91). A fusion of poststructural and feminist thought has enabled me to problematise this veneer of choice. This does not mean that there is no room for agency but that agency is 'radically conditioned' (Butler, 1997:14).

I have drawn upon theories of 'affect' to interrogate my participants' subjective experiences. These theories recognise that the ways in which people make sense of their lives is a critical starting point for understanding how power relations structure society (Weedon, 1997; Ahmed, 2004). An important insight that has emerged through my work relates to the ways in which any discussion around the future is affective, 'a question of hope for what we might yet be, as well as fear for what we could become' (Ahmed, 2004:183-4). My first analysis chapter indicated how neo-liberalism is affectively negotiated, such that my research participants saw themselves as individually responsible for their futures and blamed themselves if they did not achieve the goals and lifestyles marked out to them as valuable. My subsequent analysis chapters showed how space, class, gender and race manifested themselves in feelings of exclusion and inferiority as well as a desire to move up within a social hierarchy whereby the 'good life' associated with whiteness was seen as the precedent of success.

Although my research participants' emotions were experienced at an individual level, this does not exclude them from being operative, concurrently, in broader cultural structures and processes. Instead, my research participants' emotional responses to their past, present and future lives are the means by which social and cultural formations affect them, rendering them as 'feeling beings in a series of complex, intricate ways' (Harding and Pribram, 2009:13). This demonstrates how research that attends to affect can enable 'an exploration of larger socio-historical structures and

discursive processes as they are lived through particular lives and in particular places' (Cairns, 2014:233).

By drawing attention to the enduring influence of race upon how young people conceive of their futures, this thesis illustrates how the racial discourses of apartheid have been carried into the new South Africa. While my persistent reference to identity categories could run the risk of reifying the same categories I am seeking to abolish, 'by opening up the category of race to epistemological and ontological scrutiny we can yet appreciate that race comes 'with no guarantees'' (Nayak, 2006: 415-23). As noted by Nayak (2006:423), this approach can be helpful in enabling an understanding of race as having 'no solid basis outside the discursive, material, structural and embodied configurations through which it is repetitively enacted, performed and tenuously secured.'

Drawing upon a range of theoretical influences is in keeping with the iterative, inductive nature of ethnography, whereby the researcher may arrive at their fieldsite with particular theories in mind, yet find their inclinations changing as initial assumptions are challenged by their experiences within the field. This is not to advocate a romanticised approach towards theory, whereby my data are deemed the primary force in shaping the theory utilised. I chose the theories to inform this project and 'I am not separate from my data, nor should I be' (Davies, 2004:5). That said, the 'I' that initially came to this research is not the same 'I' to have written the final product, an account within which I am 'doing' something with theory. Deleuze eloquently expresses this sentiment when he wrote:

'When people follow Foucault, when they're fascinated by him, it's because they're doing something with him, in their own work, in their own independent lives. It's not just a question of intellectual understanding or agreement, but of intensity, of resonance, musical harmony. Good lectures, after all, are more like a concert than a sermon, like a soloist 'accompanied' by everyone else' (Deleuze, 1995:86).

This thesis has demonstrated the various theorists to support the 'doing' of my analytical work. My engagement with some of the key concepts to occupy feminist, postcolonial and poststructural writing (reflexivity, subjectivity, power, discourse, ethics and voice, to name but a few), have led me to question the grounds of my own authority and illustrated how theory can achieve more the closer it gets to the skin (Ahmed, 2017). As I reach the end of my doctorate journey and reflect upon my development as a researcher, standing back from my work I find that I see myself in it 'more objectively, more as an object' while simultaneously finding that I am writing 'more subjectively, more personally' (Richardson, 1997:2).

Four years ago, I began what I thought was a project about career guidance in post-apartheid South Africa. As I envisioned it, the thesis would provide insight, not only into what born free South

Africans desired to 'be', but also into how students were, or were not acquiring, the information necessary for them to move towards their desired careers. My original goal had been for my research to inform the design and implementation of the LO curriculum. While I have retained a concern with how to better support disadvantaged students as they transition out of secondary school and into the world of employment or further education, I soon realised the limitations of my original aims. I had begun my PhD with an uncritical acceptance of and belief in the aims of LO. I wanted each student to be able to pursue higher education, accepting the idea that a 'good life' goes hand in hand with what, in normative terms, might be classified as a 'good education.' I had not appreciated how this idea of the 'good' was enabling particular middle class, modernist discourses regarding what constitutes a valuable life. This is not to say that I now disregard the potentialities that higher education provides, but rather that my interest shifted from a focus upon how students could access this 'good life' to an exploration of the ideas behind what constituted a 'good life' and where these ideas might have originated from.

At the start of my journey as a researcher, I sought to express my participant's 'lived experiences' and 'stories', and was less interested in any form of analysis that I felt would sully the sacrosanct voices of participants themselves, the data that I believed would 'speak for itself' (St. Pierre, 2009:227). My forays into poststructural, feminist and postcolonial thought has indicated for me that experience is not simply material but that what occurs it is also discursive. These theories have helped me to recognise the need to interrogate the bearing of our location and context on what it is we are saying. The voice that I adopt throughout this work is one that challenges the notion of authentic meanings, that moves away from a wish for heroism and rescue and towards a methodology that can tolerate the impartiality of knowledge and the 'detour of not understanding' (Lather, 2009:17).

In demonstrating how this work has been in itself a journey, I hope to have drawn attention to 'the archaeology of construction' and 'sedimentary grounds of ethnographic authority' (Britzman, 1995:231). In this way, I have moved from a desire to 'explain' towards a more self-conscious theoretical stance, one which is aware of how we are all 'subject-effects' (Spivak, 1988:204), inescapably positioned in a variety of discourses, our personal and institutional desires and interests unavoidably written into our representations. Yet refusing the possibility of 'full truth' (McLeod and Yates, 2006:83-84) does not cancel meaning or remove the possibility of learning something new and of gaining insights, while being mindful of the constructed nature of research encounters.

8.4 Thesis summary and substantive contributions:

In my Introduction, I outlined my motivations for exploring this particular topic and the questions to shape my research process and product. Following this, Chapter Two described the context within which the research took place, paying close attention to the history of apartheid and the legacy it continues to have over contemporary educational, economic and social realities in South Africa. In Chapter Three I provided an overview of the literature to inform this work. By discussing the limitations of understanding 'youth,' 'transitions' and 'identities' as fixed categories, I argue for the contribution that poststructural theories can make to understanding the socially constituted and contradictory discourses which inform the race, classed, spaced and gendered positions that are available for young people to take up. My fourth Chapter expands upon how poststructural, feminist and postcolonial theories have shaped the ways in which I collected and grappled with my data. By providing a description of my research methods, as well as my fieldsite, I pave the way for an analysis of my data, which occurs in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

Two of my analysis Chapters have responded to my research questions, in the order of which they appear. The first of these, Chapter Five, focuses on the school and the way it makes certain discourses available, as well as excludes others. My findings demonstrate how my participants, drawing upon the discourses circulating within the LO classroom as well as the general school environment, typically adopted an individualised approach to the future. Working within the discursive frame of individual responsibility and self-improvement available in LO, I argue that students appear to regard their potential success and failure as a measure of their very selfhood, a reflection of their personal capacity to move outward and upward beyond the constraints of their raced and classed locations within a rural township.

Although personal dreams and career goals varied, the value of university education arose repeatedly during discussions with teachers, matrics and post-matrics involved in this study, such that my participants felt 'channelled' into a university trajectory. My findings demonstrate how particular disciplinary practices were naturalised within the school environment, so that my participants' invested in specific ideas regarding what it means to be a 'good' student and consequently, good citizen. While the school made limited discourses available to young people regarding what and how it is possible for them to be, my findings illustrated that these discourses often contradicted students' actual experiences.

As my first analysis chapter demonstrates that students formed an association between a 'good education' and a 'good life,' my second analysis chapter, Chapter Six, seeks to explore how space was implicated in the production of my participants' identities and understandings of the good life.

It argues that young people often have contradictory responses to different locations (such as the township they come from, or different institutions of higher education) and express future aspirations that seek to mediate these contradictions. While 'class' was not initially a concept I thought that I would be studying, it emerged as highly significant given that the lives that young people desired reflected classed positions which have been deemed valuable. Chapter Six looks at how stories of classed mobility intersect with narratives of escaping rurality. In conceptualising class-making as a felt and embodied process (Skeggs, 2004), my findings illustrate how the affective impact of classed inscriptions are heightened amid the neoliberal discourses of self-improvement which isolate the individual as solely responsible for creating their own future. This illustrates how young, rural, black South African's sense of place in the world, and sense of self in place, is produced through a geography of identification that is deeply embedded within negotiations of gender, class, race, and other social structures.

In understanding their lives as full of opportunities denied to the previous generation, born free South Africans carry the weight of parental hopes and expectations, which often centre on the dream of 'bettering' their own lives. Such 'improvement narratives' can be seen to offer students motivation, but this visualisation for a better life is tainted by its implied critique of the lives they currently live. My analysis shows how, while many young people express a desire for movement and improvement, these desires were not always at the expense of wanting to rid themselves of local attachments and the hope to retain connections to their homes, rural environments and cultural and religious traditions was widespread within my fieldsite.

In keeping with the poststructural orientation of this thesis, an important theme that recurred throughout this work is that the identities young people develop are internally divided. Their futures are not entirely scripted by the social forces that characterise their societies. In 'a society deeply marked by its racialised past but also striving to make a different present and a new future' (Walker, 2005:133), rural black youth are likely to make complicated investments in particular subject positions, in being and becoming one kind of person rather than another. While there are signs that young people's subjectivities are able to 'break the mould of apartheid' and draw on discourses that are different from those of their parents, the re-making of identity is fraught with complexities and contradictions (Soudien, 2007:xiv). Chapter Six demonstrates how South Africa's history of segregation, which I describe in Section 2.2, continues to influence the meanings and affects that young people attach to different spaces, be it the institutional spaces of higher education or their local shopping centre. By showing how 'spaces' remain racialised within South Africa, I argue that students' race-based mappings of different places are not simply visions of elsewhere. Rather,

racialised understandings informed my participants' sense of self, and are as much about self-definition as they are about imagining others.

Chapter Seven provides an extension of my analysis of race and identity, exploring the silences and contradictions to emerge in young people's framings of their futures. It shows how, although the 'new South Africa' has a constitution centred around equality among people of all races and genders, racialised and gendered positions continue to have an often unacknowledged power over how young people think of themselves and their futures. Echoing the findings of Chapter Five and Six, this Chapter demonstrates how the public face of what is permissible to speak about often contradicts young people's private realities. In exposing the silences surrounding 'apartheid', this Chapter shows how, by perpetuating notions of individual responsibility and agency, the neoliberal discourses that pervade the post-apartheid schooling environment neglect to interrogate the role of history, politics and economics in the shaping of young South African's trajectories. This leaves students dreaming of success but with little sense of how to locate themselves within a particular historical legacy, as well as how to navigate significant structural obstacles.

In exploring what it is that LO positions as the ideal future worth aspiring to, my research indicates the need to consider the gendered, raced and classed nature of the curriculum itself. Its understanding of 'goodness', while presented as universal in nature, is premised on a particular understanding of who the subject is. LO can be interpreted as a manifestation of a historically specific vision of schooling, a text which provides a specific understanding of success and silences rival epistemologies of knowing the world (Soudien and Baxen, 1997). The prioritisation of progression to university (and, by extension, professional careers) as the most acceptable 'aspirations' runs the risk of overlooking and 'denying other futures and possibilities' (Brown, 2013:7). It also means that, if students fail to reach these goals, their notion of themselves as inherently inferior becomes sealed.

Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) concept of symbolic violence is useful for understanding the processes by which my participants accepted the discourse of emancipation through higher education, even when they did not have the means of gaining the necessary capitals to realise their aspirations. As mentioned in Chapter Three, 'symbolic violence is 'violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2004:272). In this context, symbolic violence is 'constructed mutually by the persistence of apartheid's social, political and economic structures, and by the tendency of a large group of subjects to accept the world as it is' (Swartz et al., 2012:30). While time and increased exposures may challenge the extent to which my participants 'accept the world as it is', the majority of matric students in my study spoke about

apartheid only in relation to the past. Drawing upon the discourses proposed to them through their school and wider social arenas, they placed a heavy emphasis on the opportunities currently available to them, the power of positivity and a belief in their own ability to pursue higher education and be materially successful. My study shows how the discourses which are made available by the school and particularly exemplified by the LO curriculum incorporates forms of individual achievement from which most of the young people in my study, and South Africa at large, are structurally excluded. While LO potentially has the opportunity to open up a space for young people to address some of these challenges, this thesis argues that, by not providing a platform through which to discuss social structures, it paves the way for possible shame and disappointment.

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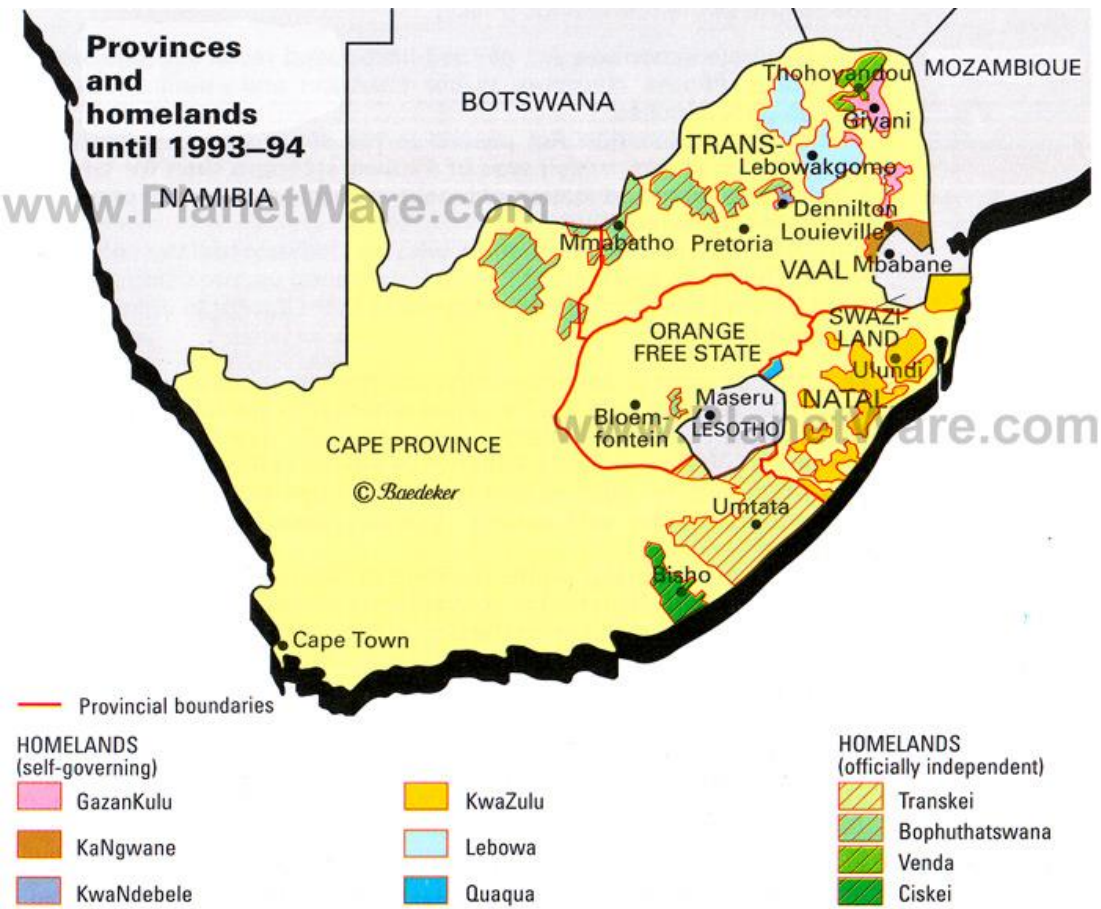
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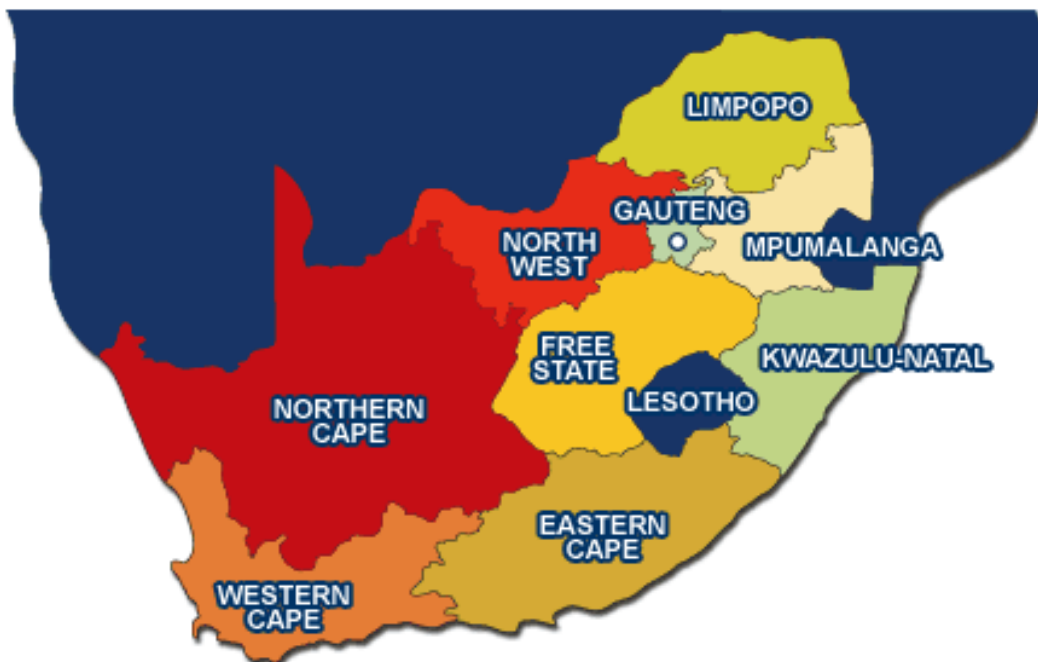
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10. Appendices

Appendix 1.1 Map of former Homelands



Appendix 1.2: Map of Provinces of South Africa



Appendix 2.1 Photograph of Intaba



Appendix 2.2 Photograph of Intaba



Appendix 2.3 Photograph of Inyoni



Appendix 2.4 Photograph of Inyoni



Appendix 2.5: Soweto Riots

Appendix 3.1 Information Sheets for teachers:



University of Sussex

Information Sheet for key teachers

Title: Navigating the 'new South Africa': An ethnographic study of the born free generation in Mpumalanga

About the study:

My name is Fawzia and I am a PhD student in the Department of Education at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. For my research, I would like to look at how students from Intaba transition from their last year of schooling into education or employment opportunities. I am particularly interested in how students develop future aspirations and how their schooling experiences, interactions among one another and with their teachers influences how they build futures for themselves in the new South Africa. I want to understand how students in their matric year take action to reach their future goals.

I would like to observe students as they move from Grade Eleven into Grade Twelve. This will involve observing their classroom interactions. During these observations, I would be at times recording what people are saying in their own words. I will not record anything that anyone does not wish for me to record. While observing, I will remain a silent spectator, and not interact in the classroom, unless you wish for me to do so. As well as general observations, I would like to focus my study on the experiences of ten students. These students' involvement will be voluntary and I will invite all students who are interested in my study to attend an initial discussion, where I will select my key participants. Once I have selected these ten students, I will arrange to interview them one-on-one, on school premises, at three stages during the school year. I will also ask that they keep a 'journal' for me where they record their ideas and plans over the year. This will not be compulsory and should not take up too much of their time or interfere with their school work.

I would like to visit the school and attend classes two-three times a week for ten months. I will only attend classrooms that you are comfortable with me attending and will respect your wishes in the classroom in every way. I am seeking your consent to:

- Conduct observations in your classes
- Interact with you informally on school premises (the staffroom etc.)
- Meet key participants parents with you in your parent-teacher meetings

Recording, anonymity and confidentiality

I would be recording my observations in a notebook. I will record interviews on an electronic device, and later transcribe this onto my password protected computer. All these records will be confidential. In my final report, I will change the names of all the participants and of the school and do my best to make no participants identifiable.

Purpose of study:

The data collected in the school will be used for my PhD study, for publishing academic papers and for presentations. After I complete my research, I will share my findings with the school in the form of a document and/or presentation. There are no rewards or payment for participating. However, it is my hope that my findings will be useful to you and/or other educators within Intaba, so as to understand how best to support students to successfully their future aspirations realise. I will be willing and available to discuss any ideas with you regarding how to make my research as useful and meaningful as possible to you and your fellow teaching staff.

Research funding and approval:

This research has been funded by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. It has been approved by the Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) ethical review process.

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Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this study or any recommendations.

Best wishes,

Fawzia

Appendix 3.2 Information sheets for Grade 11 and 12 students



University of Sussex

Information Sheet for students (Grade 11/12)

About the study:

My name is Fawzia and I am a PhD student in the Department of Education at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. I am interested in your lives and want to understand more about how you think of yourselves and what you would like to do when you leave school. I am interested in finding out more about the big influences on you and what you see as important in your life. I want to understand what you think it means to be a young person living in South Africa today.

During this study I will be attending some of your classes with you, as well as attending other school activities in which you participate. My study will be focused on the experiences of ten matric students, but will also involve my interactions with grade 11s and grade 12s. By spending time with you at your school, I want to understand how you, as students, think about your futures. I will often be writing down my observations in my notebook. This will include writing down what people say, in their own words. If you do not feel comfortable with this, please let me know and I promise to respect your privacy. In my final report, I will change the names of all the participants and that of the school and I will do my best to make sure that it won't be possible to identify you. If you would like me not to observe some specific events in which you are participating, you can let me know at any point and I will respect your privacy. If you do not want to speak to me but you are uncomfortable telling me this, you can talk to your teacher at any point and they will let me know.

While I am very interested in learning more about you and your lives, please do not share with me any private information which may compromise your well-being or safety or that of your friends. I will respect your confidentiality at all times but I will have to break this if you share any information relating to criminal activity or indicating that you could cause harm to others or yourself. You may ask me not to use data about you at any time and I will respect your wishes here.

Purpose of study:

The data collected in the school will be used for my PhD study, for publishing academic papers and for presentations at university. There are no rewards or payment for participating, but I hope that by engaging in my research, you will have the opportunity to have your voice heard. After I complete my research, I will share my findings with the school in the form of a document and/or presentation. If you have any ideas about how you think I should share my research, please let me know, as I would love to hear them!

Research funding and approval:

This research has been funded by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. It has been approved by the Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) ethical review process. It has also been approved by your school principal and teachers.

Contact information

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Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you would like to find out more about my research, I am always happy to explain anything, so feel free to ask questions. Please don't be shy! If your parents would like to understand more about my research, they are also welcome to contact me or meet me on the school premises.

Thank you!

Fawzia

Appendix 3.3. Information sheet for all students



University of Sussex

Information Sheet for all students

About the study:

My name is Fawzia and I am a PhD student in the Department of Education at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. I am interested in your lives and want to understand more about how you think of yourselves and what you would like to do when you leave school. I want to understand what you think it means to be a young person living in South Africa today.

During this study I will be attending the Grade 11/12 classes, as well as attending other school activities in which they participate. My study will be focused on the experiences of students who are moving from Grade 11 into Grade 12, but will also involve interactions with the broader school community. By spending time with you at your school, I want to understand how you, as students, think about your futures. I will often be writing down my observations in my notebook. This will include writing down what people say, in their own words. If you do not feel comfortable with this, please let me know and I promise to respect your privacy. In my final report, I will change the names of all the participants and that of the school so that so that it won't be possible to identify you. If you would like me not to observe some specific events in which you are participating, you can let me know at any point and I will respect your privacy.

While I am very interested in learning more about you and your lives, please do not share with me any private information which may compromise your well-being or safety or that of your friends. I will respect your confidentiality at all times but I will have to break this if you share any information relating to criminal activity or indicating that you could cause harm to others or yourself. You may ask me not to use data about you at any time and I will respect your wishes here. However, six months after I finish my data collection in August 2016, this will no longer be possible as I will be in the process of sharing and possibly publishing my work.

Purpose of study:

The data collected in the school will be used for my PhD study, for publishing academic papers and for presentations at university. There are no rewards or payment for participating, but I hope that by engaging in my research, you will have the opportunity to have your voice heard. After I complete my research, I will share my findings with the school in the form of a document and/or presentation. If you have any ideas about how you think I should share my research, please let me know, as I would love to hear them!

Research funding and approval:

This research has been funded by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. It has been approved by the Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) ethical review process. It has also been approved by your school principal and teachers.

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Thank you!

Fawzia

Appendix 3.4 Information sheet for key participants



University of Sussex

Information Sheet for key participants

My name is Fawzia and I am a PhD student in the Department of Education at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. I am interested in your lives and want to understand more about how you think of yourselves and what you would like to do when you leave school. I am interested in finding out more about the big influences on you and what you see as important in your life. I want to understand what you think it means to be a young person living in South Africa today.

If you agree to take part in this study, then you are agreeing to:

- Observations at school (in classrooms, in break/lunch time etc.)
- Three Interviews
- Creating journals to bring to interviews

Observations: During this study I will be attending some of your classes with you, as well as attending other school activities in which you participate. By spending time with you at your school, I want to understand how you think about your life now as well as your future. I will often be writing down my observations in my notebook. This will include writing down what people say, in their own words. If you do not feel comfortable with this, please let me know and I promise to respect your privacy. In my final report, I will change the names of all the participants and that of the school so that so that it won't be possible to identify you from my report. If you would like me not to observe some specific events in which you are participating, you can let me know at that point and I will leave.

Interviews: As well as observing you in your classrooms and 'hanging out' with you at school, I would like to interview you three times between October 2015 and August 2016. These interviews will be electronically recorded and take place on school premises. They will last about 1 hour and we will schedule them at a time that is most convenient for you. You are welcome to stop the interview at any point if you do not feel comfortable. I will share all the information from the interview with you before using it in my research, as I want to make sure you are happy with it. While I am very interested in learning more about you and your lives, please do not share with me any private information which may compromise your well-being or safety or that of your friends. I will respect your confidentiality at all times but I will have to break this if you share any information relating to criminal activity or information in which you indicate that you are intending to harm others or yourself. You may ask me not to use data about you which I have collected and I will respect your wishes. However, six months after I finish my data collection in August 2016, this will no longer be possible as I will be in the process of sharing and possibly publishing my work.

Journals: I will provide you with stationery to create journals during your last year of school. The aim of these is to record things that are important to you/events and activities that happen to you and any plans you are making for what comes after school. You can record these journals in any form you wish and we will discuss different ways you can do this at a journal workshop which I will give you more information about soon. Journals should be brought along to interviews and you can share whatever contents you wish to share with me in this safe space. I will not use any material from the journals that you do not wish to share and these journals will be yours to keep and take home.

Purpose of study:

The data collected in the school will be used for my PhD study, for publishing academic papers and for presentations at university. There are no rewards or payment for participating, but I hope that by engaging in my research, you will have the opportunity to have your voice heard. After I complete my research, I will share my findings with the school in the form of a document and/or presentation. If you have any ideas about how you think I should share my research, please let me know, as I would love to hear them. I hope that, by us spending time together, in school and during our interviews, I can encourage you to share aspects of your life and think about your future in a meaningful way.

Withdrawing from study:

If you decide you would no longer like to be involved in the study, you are welcome to withdraw at any point. If you feel uncomfortable with telling me that you would like to withdraw, please tell your teacher and they will let me know. Remember that this is a voluntary study and it is your decision if you would like to be involved or not.

Research funding and approval:

This research has been funded by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. It has been approved by the Social Sciences & Arts Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (C-REC) ethical review process. It has also been approved by your school principal and teachers.

Contact information

Ms. Fawzia Mazanderani
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Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you would like to ever find more about my research, I am always happy to explain anything, so feel free to ask questions. Please don't be shy! If your parents would like to understand more about my research, they are also welcome to contact me or meet me on the school premises.

Thank you!

Fawzia

Appendix 3.5 Information sheet for group discussion



University of Sussex

Invitation to take part in a group discussion (Grade 11/12)

Dear Grade 11s,

As you know by now because you've seen me in your classrooms, I've come to spend time in Intaba and at your school because I want to know more about you and your lives. I hope that in my time here I will get to know and talk to as many of you as possible, but because it is not possible for me to talk to everyone, I'd like to ask if some of you would be willing to give me some more of your time.

If you think you'd be happy to do this and you would like to know more about why I am here, please come along to a group discussion. In this group discussion, you can find out more about me and I'd also like to find out more about you. If you would like to attend the group discussion, please give your names to either me or to your teacher by *(add date here)*. The group discussion will take place *(provide details here)*.

Plan for the discussion:

Depending on how many people would like to come, I will ask you to meet me in groups of 5. I will give you the date and the time you should arrive at the classroom. The group discussion will not last longer than 1 hour. In this group discussion, I'd like us to all sit together and you share with me some things about yourself.

This could include: Where you come from; How long you have lived in Intaba; How long you have been at the school.

It will also include a little bit about your personal background: Who do you live with; What they do; What you would like to do when you leave school; What are your hopes and fears for the future?

It will also include how you feel about school and your general interests: What subjects do you take; What are your favourite and least favourite parts of school; What are your hobbies and what do you do for fun/on the weekend?

Please note: This session is meant to be an open discussion, with you and some of your other classmates. You do not need to share any personal information that you do not want to share and you can feel free to leave the group at any time if you do not feel comfortable being there. This discussion will be in English. If you would like to come to the discussion but feel shy talking in English, please let me or one of your teachers know beforehand and we will try and make a plan to make things more comfortable for you.

It is not compulsory for you to come to a discussion, and it is completely up to you if you want to come and speak or not. Nobody minds if you do not come and this discussion is not related to your schoolwork or school marks in any way. If you decide to come to the discussion and you share information with me that you do not want me to include in my study, I promise that I will respect your privacy and not include anything you don't want me to include.

This discussion is so that I can find out more about you and you can find out more about me. It will be very relaxed and should be a nice opportunity to talk about what interests us both.

Thank you and hope to see you soon!

Fawzia

Appendix 3.6 Information sheet on journals



University of Sussex

Invitation to take part in a journal workshop

Dear *(name here)*,

I would like you to come to *(venue here)* on *(date and time here)* to discuss 'journals,' what they mean and how I would like to use them in my research. As I mentioned before in the focus group, I would like you, as one of my key participants, to keep a journal during your last year at school. This is to record important events in your life and how you feel about yourself and your future over the course of ten months. I'd like you to bring these journals with you each time we meet for an interview.

In this journal workshop, I'd like to talk to you and my other key participants, about how you can use your journals in a way that is meaningful to you.

Some things your journal could include: Important events/activities that happen to you, different steps you are taking to reach your future goals, extracts from newspapers/magazines, how you feel about school/home/your future, important conversations with people, what inspires you. Anything that you think is important in your life!

Creativity in the journal: In the workshop, I'd like us to talk about how you can make your journals fun and as creative as you would like. For those of you who are artists – you are welcome to draw. Some of you might like to take photos and others might like to write poems. It is also fine if you prefer just writing – the choice is up to you.

Important information: Keeping a journal is not compulsory and if you do not wish to do so, that is fine. There will be no strict instructions for how you want to keep the journal and there is no 'good' or 'bad' journal. You can write in your journal every day or you can write in it as little as once a month – that is up to you.

Privacy: Please only share personal information in your journal that you are comfortable talking to me about. If you feel that you share anything with me in an interview that you would prefer I do not include in my study. I will not quote or describe anything in the journal unless you are happy for me to do so. Your journal is your own – please do not feel that you need to share it with anyone else outside of our interviews. If you feel pressured to share your journal with anyone else, please let either me or your teacher know.

Who provides the journal: I will provide everyone with equal amounts of stationery to create their journals.

Who keeps the journal: The journal is yours to keep! The only time that I will see the journal is when you show it to me in our interviews.

Translation: If you would like to write your journal in SiSwati or Afrikaans instead of English, please come and talk to me about it. We can make a plan where either you translate the journal for me in your interview, or I ask someone else to do so. I would only do this if you feel comfortable.

The idea of the journal workshop is to find out more about what works for you and how to make this a fun and useful way of me getting to know you.

Thanks for your time!

Fawzia

Appendix 4.1 Interview guidelines

Observations:

Observations will take place in school classrooms and broader schooling environment

Areas I will pay close attention to in formal classroom environments: Career guidance components, discussions regarding students' futures, the provision of practical guidance regarding students' admission to tertiary institutions, discussions of apartheid history, current affairs, teacher-student interactions, peer-on-peer interactions.

Areas I will pay close attention to in informal school environments: General conversation around what students consider important in their lives, discussions about their families/friends/teachers, schoolwork, television shows, consumption, religious or extra mural activities, hobbies, discussions about the future/what comes after school.

Areas I will pay close attention to when interacting with teachers: Teacher-teacher interaction in staff rooms, how teachers discuss students' development, where they consider students will be heading after school, teachers awareness of opportunities available to students, Teacher-parent interactions in meetings.

In-depth interviews with key participants:

These questions will only be asked once some time has been spent with the participant (through participant-observation at school, interaction in focus groups and journal workshop). They require a degree of trust to have been established. They present some indication of potential areas to cover within the interview, but are not prescriptive in any way and will also rely on the contribution that participants make themselves through sharing journal entries with me.

Interview 1: (December 2015)

- Questions regarding (where relevant) background information: Family background (number of siblings/who heads household etc.), occupation of family members/educational history.
- Questions regarding (where relevant) academic background: What subjects have you chosen and why? Who helped you make those subject choices and do you think they influence your future decisions? How do you think you are performing at school?
- Who are the important influences on you and why?
- Do you have any role models? Please elaborate, if so.
- What do you want to be when you leave school?
- When did you first get that idea?
- What do you think you have to do to reach your career goal?
- How do you find school at the moment? Is it difficult/easy? How are your grades? Do you think you have the grades to reach your future goal?
- What are your dreams and what are your fears?

Interview 2 (March 2016) and Interview 3 (June 2016):

- Who is the most useful source of career related information in your life? (i.e. do you learn about things from school or at home/where?)
- Have your teachers provided guidance for you to think about future? If so, what have you learnt from them?
- What has been the most important thing you have learnt in school? Are there any lessons that stand out?
- What practical steps are you taking to reach your career goal? (i.e. Have you looked at tertiary institution websites, been in communication with any relevant potential employers etc.)
- What do your parents and/or teachers think you should do when you leave school? Why do you think they think this? Do you agree with them?
- Have your future goals changed and if so, why? What are your current goals?
- Are you aware of the academic requirements for your desired career and do you meet them?

- Do you think there are any obstacles in the way? If so, how do you think you will overcome them?
- Who do you think is responsible for your future?
- What gives you strength and inspiration in your life?
- Who are your close friends/relationships? Do you have any partners/children?
- If you imagine yourself in 5 years time, where are you and what are you doing?
- Do you want to leave Intaba? If so, where would you like to go?
- Have many of your family members/friends left Intaba?
- What do you think it means to be a 'born free' South African?
- Do you ever think about South Africa's history? Can you tell me a bit about what you understand about South Africa's history?
- What kind of life do you want to live in the future? What is important to you? (e.g. do you want a family, a nice car, a university degree etc.?) Can you tell me what is most important to you right now?

Appendix 4.2 Focus group ideas

Meet with entire grade and re-iterate why I am here – to know students better, understand their lives more. Explain that in order to do this I will be working with some students more closely than others. If you think you'd like to be one of those students.....(provide information – explain the need for students who feel comfortable talking). Explain confidentiality, how this is a safe space, they are experts in their own lives and I am there to learn etc.

Introductions:

- Ask students to introduce themselves, anything important I should know about them.
- Tell me a little bit about your family life – where do you live/who do you live with.

Questions about the future:

- What are the most important influences on your life?
- What do you think you want to do when you leave school/why?
- What are some of the key issues that young people face when meeting their goals?
- How important do you think it is to discuss future plans when at school?
- Where might you discuss/create your future plans if not at school?

Questions about LO:

- What are the main messages you receive from L.O?
- If you could change anything about L.O, what would it be?

Questions about research:

- What do you think research is? Explain...
- Assess interest levels in being involved in my study/explaining three in-depth interviews.
- Assess interest in journaling/ask students what they feel would be their preferred way of expressing themselves to me and if they would like a translator present or not/ assess interest in partaking in a book club.
- What do you think are other ways that I can understand your lives and experiences better?

Appendix 4.3 Teacher interview outline

Personal background:

- What subject do you teach?
- What led you to teach at Inyoni in Intaba?
- How did you become a teacher?
- What were the most significant influences in your life which informed the career direction you took?
- Do you feel you had 'career guidance' in your life? Please explain.

Views about students:

- What do you think are the most important influences on students' lives?
- In your experience, what are some of the most common aspirations that students express when at school?
- In your experience, do most students end up doing what they said they wanted to do when in highschool?
If so, why? If not, why not?
- What do you think is the biggest obstacles that students face in achieving their future goals?
- Do you think students are aware of these obstacles? Please explain your answer.
- What is your opinion of Life Orientation as a subject?
- Do you feel that there is anything that is lacking from the school curriculum? If so, please explain.
- How do you think students at Inyoni compare with students from other schools in the area?
- Do you have any questions or ideas for me? For example, what do you think are important issues I should be considering or looking at in my study?