

Tracking The Future: Young Women's Worlds

By

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ii. Abstract

This research focuses on young black women's identity construction in the context of democratic South Africa. It focuses on how they negotiate adolescence and young adulthood as black females in a country with a history of racism. The assumption in the newly democratized South Africa is that opportunities are given on merit as opposed to the inequalities that existed according to racial differences during apartheid. The study aims to find out how young people construct and negotiate their identities and their view of their futures as well as possible threats to these future identities within this context. The young women's narratives give insight into the state of the socio cultural context of post apartheid South Africa. These young women narrate their lives as the hinge generation: they are the first generation to grow up in the new and free South Africa the first generation to have access to a broad range of opportunities that were denied black people during apartheid governance. The young women's narratives reveal a very fluid sense of identity. Their lives do not follow the patterns of the lives of the previous generations including those of their parents. They do however, negotiate these opportunities in the context of inequalities inherited from previous apartheid governance. Impoverished livelihoods, death of family members, gender inequities, poorly developed school systems and poor social amenities that they face in everyday life pose possible constraints to their envisioned futures.

The study is based on the theorisation of self as a narrative, a story to be told. The self is understood as fragmented and changing as opposed to a single fixed entity. The narrative approach allows for the participants to tell their own stories bringing together past memories, anticipated futures as well as ongoing experiences they consider important. A total of 10 women took part in the study; 5 from Amangwane a rural community located in the Drakensburg area and 5 from the urban location of Chesterville. Their life stories were collected through in depth interviews in a wider context of narrative approach. Further, there was a follow up interview for each participant giving focus to central themes. A two phase analysis was used to examine the way the narratives were put together as well as paying attention to the content of the narratives in order to understand meaning attributed to events and experiences.

The young women's narratives were structured by an interaction of regressive and progressive plots. This is reflective of the challenges and difficulties that they face in their everyday lives in the South African context. The major regressive moments were financial difficulties, death of loved ones and motherhood. In the midst of these challenges, most stories were generally progressive towards the future. Some, however, were in the midst of uncertainties and some of the life stories were entrapped in difficult life circumstances that made it difficult to see success in the future. The key themes that came from the stories were poverty, place, family structure, gender, language and education. Poverty was experienced as very significant and real. It hampered everyday lives and the construction of future identities. The rural areas are the most hit by poverty especially female headed families. Fathers were constructed as possible solutions to economic problems because of their ability to access resources. Migration between urban and rural spaces is prominent in the rural women's narratives. Urban areas presented improved life opportunities. Even so, urban space is fragmented and racially stratified. The urban young women's narratives show a desire to succeed and move out of townships into suburbia. English is considered to be the economic language and its use provides young women with access to resources and a better life. Education is constructed as important by the young women as it gives them access to their desired future identities. However, schooling experience is characterised by lack of teachers, inadequately trained teachers and poor education standards. Gender inequities pose challenges which constrain the young women from reaching their full potential. The young women negotiate their lives in a context resonating with apartheid effects. They are faced with challenges and very difficult life circumstances. They however remain hopeful and are able to construct alternative future identities for themselves.

Contents page

i. Acknowledgements	ii
ii. Abstract	iii
ii. Table of Contents	v
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Racialised history	1
1.2 Language	3
1.3 Gender	5
1.4 Youth identities	6
2. Theoretical Framework	9
2.1 Youth Development	9
2.2 Family structure	12
2.3 Narratives	17
2.4 Relational self	22
3. Methodology	26
3.1 Qualitative paradigm	26
3.2 The role of the researcher	27
3.3 Narrative enquiry	31
3.4 Participants	34
3.5 Data Collection	37
3.5.1 Interview Questions	39
3.6 Analysis	40
3.6.1 Narrative Analysis	41
3.6.2 Thematic analysis	42
3.7 Ethical Considerations	42
4. Narrative analysis and discussion	44
4.1 Progressive narratives	45
4.1.1 Nobuhle- “a narrative of overcoming”	46

4.1.2	Thobile- “on the road to success”	47
4.1.3	Thembi- “a narrative of pressing towards the future”	49
4.1.4	Nomusa- “getting there”	51
4.1.5	Thobeka- “negotiating and embracing adult roles”	52
4.1.6	Zinzi- “a narrative of a content life”	55
4.2	Narratives in the midst of uncertainty	56
4.2.1	Zoleka “narrative of negotiating challenges and obstacles”	57
4.2.2	Khanyise- “struggle for integration in extreme adversity”	61
4.3	Stable narratives- narratives caught ‘in between’	64
4.3.1	Thando “a reluctant interview life story”	64
4.3.2	Mandisa - “poverty entraps me”	67
4.4	Conclusion	69
5.	Thematic analysis and discussion	71
5.1	Poverty	71
5.2	Place	74
5.2.1	Townships	75
5.2.2	Rural spaces	81
5.3	Family Structure	85
5.3.1	Fatherhood	88
5.3.2	Child headed household	91
5.4	Gender	92
5.4.1	Motherhood	92
5.4.2	Multiple roles: family and career	95
5.5	Language	98
5.5.1	English as access	98
5.5.2	Distancing and identification as black	105
5.5.3	Ambiguities and uncertainties	106

5.6	Education	109
6.	Conclusion	115
7.	References	119

Appendices

Appendix 1-	Fast Forward Brochure	127
Appendix 2-	Copy of consent form`	129
Appendix 3-	Interview transcripts	

Figures

Figure 1:	Nobuhle's life story	46
Figure 2:	Thobile's life story	47
Figure 3:	Thembi's life story	49
Figure 4:	Nomusa's life story	51
Figure 5:	Thobeka's life story	52
Figure 6:	Zinzi's life story	55
Figure 7:	Zoleka's life story	57
Figure 8:	Khanyise's life story	61
Figure 9:	Thando's life story	65
Figure 10:	Mandisa's life story	67

Tables

Table 1	Profile of participants	35
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Chapter 1 Introduction

South Africa provides a very particular socio-political and economic context in which young people negotiate the transition into adulthood and construct their identities. 1994 marked a historic time for South Africans. It was the dawning of democracy, where people would not be treated differently because of skin colour. This change brought with it hope for a new society in which people are to be perceived as equal and availed of equal opportunities. The previous apartheid government had produced gross inequalities in society along racial divisions and not least affected was the education system. South Africa's Group Areas Act of 1950 (revised in 1957 and 1966) entrenched residential separation of people according to their perceived racial differences (Ajam, 1987). This was a legal way of achieving the ideological aims of the apartheid regime and affected the provision of all services, including schooling. The apartheid government introduced a 'separate development' system with the group areas act where the homelands would have their own assemblies and governments departments. With only 13% of the country's land area, geographically isolated land with poor infrastructure, the homelands fared badly. There was wide spread poverty. The migrant labour system remained one of the most important ways of making a living for many of the black households. This, however, came with personal costs. Statistics show that as much as 54% of all Africans lived outside of the homelands in the 'white areas' in the 1970's (Aliber, 2003), indicative of splitting families across racialised space.

1.1 Racialised history

The results of this segregation are still patently obvious. Statistics show that in 1995 based on a per adult equivalent poverty line of R352 per month, 61% of Africans were poor compared to 38% of coloureds, 5% of Indians, and 1% of Whites. Very little has changed in the recent years and the stark racial differentiation in socio economic conditions remains today. Statistics also reveal that 72% of those below the poverty line are found in rural areas, and 71% of all rural people are poor (Aliber, 2003). Chronic poverty, which is understood as poverty that is passed on from one generation to another, is evident in South African society. It remains an enduring feature in black communities. Aliber (2003) gives an explanation of this through his argument on the transmission of poverty from one generation

to another with the effects of poor resources in black communities resulting from the apartheid regime:

“... poverty was transmitted not only through consecutive generations of households, by virtue of their lack of opportunity to accumulate human and other capital, but at the level of communities as well in the sense that they were deprived of infrastructure and amenities, and were often situated in remote, marginal areas without economic prospects” (2003, p.476).

Social groups were also polarized by race based geographical space segregation in urban areas. South African urban space was shaped by apartheid and its ideals. Space was organised racially which allowed for resource control and limited capital input into non white areas (Landman, 2006). This effectively distanced white people from black people socially. Spatial segregation and the associated policies influenced, in a significant way, the lives of the people who lived in the different spaces. The government systematically invested in some spaces while disadvantaging others. ‘White’ people were located in more developed and affluent suburbs with other ‘races’ living in poorly developed townships and even less developed homelands. This geographical separation entrenched subsequent inequalities which became manifest in social amenities and everyday life experiences (Lemanski, 2004). The urban area was thus characterised by “spatial fragmentation and segregation” (Landman, 2006, p.4).

The socio-economic status of particular areas was reflected in the school system and specifically, in the implementation of the Bantu Education system. The Bantu Education Act was put in place in 1953 allowing for the state to restrict education for ‘blacks’ so that they could only occupy positions such as subsistence farmer, industrial labourer and domestic worker (Ladd and Fiske, 2004). Further, the staff for such institutions were inadequately trained and the institutions themselves were of undesirable quality. This historical ‘geographical’ structuring of apartheid remains largely in effect today and so Ajam’s (1987) observation remains apt: “In South Africa, the group area, the school, and the social status are inextricably bound” (Ajam, 1987, p.313).

Even though some changes have taken place since 1994, the newly democratised South Africa has inherited a system which continues to be marked by inequalities in which many

learners are still being taught in conditions not conducive for learning in the new era (Fedderke , De Kadt, R. & Luiz, 2000). Many learners continue to grow up in conditions of poverty as their parents have not been equipped to sufficiently provide for themselves and their families, making it difficult to keep young people in schools. The government has been faced with huge challenges which include developing capital and human capacity in trying to redress these conditions. Further, the teaching staff from the previous years could not simply be replaced with properly trained staff (Ladd & Fiske, 2004). Thus, the new South Africa has echoes of the old one in most of its education institutions with the effects of Bantu Education still resonating. Moreover, the relationship between 'race' and economic inequality has evolved to take more complex forms, different to those in the apartheid era in South Africa (Erasmus, 2005). Evidence shows that although inequality is no longer simply a function of race, class distinctions are increasing rather than decreasing. Statistics show that South Africa has the second highest inequality index in the world (Kingwill & Cousins, 2006). It is within this context that this research into young people's identities takes place.

1.2 Language

The above description of South Africa's transition from apartheid to a democratic nation highlights how the effects of separating people on the basis of race had far reaching implications for current social formations and relations between people. Language is pivotal in these processes. Norton (1997) argues that language as used in everyday conversation, allows for a continual negotiating of who we are and how we relate to others and the world. It is through language that we are able to engage in the construction and negotiation of identity. The history of language is a distinguishing marker of the history of the apartheid governance. Clearly, language is central to the national life of South Africa as a country. Historically, language was at the centre of policy and politics (Thessen, 1997). The uprising of 1976 is the most famous example of this. The uprising was in response to an "attempt to force a transition to dual English-medium/ Afrikaans-medium policy early in the primary years' (Thessen, 1997, p.489). This completely disregarded other languages while pushing the interests of these two without the consent of those that were going to be affected. The SOWETO learners were protesting against the use of Afrikaans as a teaching medium and, at the same time, advocating for the use of English over Afrikaans.

English was, and is currently, the most widely used language within the economic sector, making it the dominant language out of the official 11. This is largely due to the South Africa's linguistic history, embedded in a colonial history and implicated in contemporary global markets. The Language policy and Plan in South Africa has a dual purpose (Wright, 2002). First, it provides a means "for protecting and nurturing the nation's linguistic heritage in an equitable manner" (Wright, 2002, p.159). Further, it "aims to address the linguistic consequences of colonial and apartheid language policy in the past and to foster effective national and international communication for the future (Wright, 2002, p.159). The language policy seeks to counter, as much as possible, exclusions caused by the use of language. Wright uses Myers- Scotton definition of 'elite closure' which is put in place when "the elite successfully employ official language policies and their own non-formalised language patterns to limit access to non elite groups to political position and socio-economic advancement" (2002, p.159). This is what happened in South Africa. The apartheid regime used English and Afrikaans as official languages and their use effectively cut off black South Africans from advancing socio-economically. The level of the ability to speak English in a proficient manner correlates with the "level and quality of education" (Rudwick, 2008, p.105). The apartheid regime benefited white people; Afrikaans and English speakers. The economy was not only divided along racial lines but linguistically as well. Today language continues to play a divisive role economically. People who are less proficient in English, which reflects their level of education, are limited in their job prospects. An increase in the degree of fluency in English is directly proportional to improved socio economic conditions for black people. The increasing dominance of English creates a significant challenge to South Africa's principle of multilingualism. This brings to the fore the tension between policy and reality. English as lingua franca continues to be further entrenched as the process of black empowerment progresses (Wright, 2002).

The divisive role played by language in South Africa can be seen in at two ways 1) identity and 2) access to power and economic resources. The role of language in South Africa has been highly contested as seen in the Soweto uprising of 1976. English continues to dominate the central economy. English is associated with economic power. However, those who choose to use it are excluded from the collective identity of the townships and regarded as outsiders (Rudwick, 2008). People speaking what is regarded as "excessive"

English are labelled “coconuts”. The term ‘coconut’ has negative connotations and serves to disqualify particular individuals from being authentically black, suggesting that they are not true to their roots. These individuals are disparaged as, although they are black, they behave ‘white’.

A look at the historical back drop will help us understand the linguistic landscape in KwaZulu Natal townships. English as a language was introduced to the Zulu people in the 19th Century through the missionaries and their succeeding English medium schools. A small number of black students attended these schools. Those who were able to converse in the language were referred to as the “Black Englishmen” (Rudwick, 2008, p.103). English also took the role of lingua franca in the Gauteng province as people from many linguistic backgrounds live there. In contrast, the majority of black people in KwaZulu Natal speak isiZulu and Afrikaans did not feature much historically. The linguistic homogeneity that characterises KwaZulu Natal townships isiZulu rather than English is used as lingua franca as in contrast to other South African townships where there is a multilingual population.

English is the official medium of teaching in schools; in both primary and high schools. However, a lot of black learners have English as a second language. This poses challenges for them in learning especially in areas that require highly developed levels of cognitive academic language functioning (Thessen, 1997). Evidence shows that mother tongue would be best suited as medium of instruction in the classroom. However, there is minimal educational material in African languages (Banda, 2000). Furthermore, people instructed in English stand a better chance of employment. Added to this, parents and students seem to prefer English as the medium of instruction because of the advantages it has attached to it (Banda, 2000; de Klerk, 1999). Even though code switching takes place in classrooms during learning and teaching, the young people are able to speak a certain amount of English. Day to day activities are carried out in isiZulu even though it is common to get isiZulu- English code switching used by more educated people.

1.3 Gender

It is clear that transformation in South Africa is taking place in a context resonating with voices of the old structures of power and domination. In addition to the obvious racialised dynamics described above, social life in South Africa is structured by gender and class. Day

to day experiences are shaped by “race, class and gender-based access to resources” (Kehler, 2001, p.1) and black women fare the worst. Their access to “resources, opportunities and education, as well as their access to growth and wealth of the country is severely limited” (Kehler, 2001, p.1). The concept of gender includes the constitution of sexual division of labour which is social roles ascribed to males and females. It also refers to cultural beliefs that guide how men and women interact in society. Gender is thus relational. It is dynamic and can change. It is defined by a particular context. It changes according to socio economic and political changes within that context. Within a given society, women’s position will be determined by the level of access to paid employment and how that particular society regards women’s reproductive and domestic role. Cultural beliefs and norms allocate women roles of primary care givers and men the role of bread winners. This influences attitudes towards women and ultimately reasoning that drives policy making (Kehler, 2001).

Women are the most vulnerable workforce because of their position in society. They are the first in line to feel the effects of economic reforms such as privatisation. With the state spending less money on social services the burden of care-taking falls to women, especially those of low socio economic status. This leads to what Kehler describes as the “feminisation of poverty” (2001, p.4). Women are reported to experience poverty more severely when compared to men. Gender discrepancies inhibit women from reaching their full potential as well as contributing to the economy (Bentley, 2004). The government of South Africa seeks to redress gender inequality through its allegiance to constitutional rights. The government has pledged to seek equality for all citizens in the constitution which stipulates that people will not be unfairly discriminated against on the basis of their gender. However, this has not been realised for several reasons. For example, women continue to take the subservient role and are considered to be primary carers for children.

1.4 Youth identities

The study focuses on how young women from previously disadvantaged schools construct and negotiate their identities in post apartheid South Africa; how they tell their stories forward, negotiating their current and future identities. Historically, young black people

were prominent in political movements (Freeman, 1993). They were integrally linked with the struggle for political change. The 1976 SOWETO uprising is a prime example of this where young unarmed black students died at the hands of the police while protesting against adapting Afrikaans as a medium of instruction (Marschall, 2006). In the wake of a new South Africa, young people can be considered 'a new generation' in the sense that they are born into a context that is conceptualised to be different to that of their parents and older siblings. People look to them as having opportunities as they are 'born free'. The older generation of young people are considered the 'lost generation' in relation to the consequences of apartheid in their communities. They have been subjected to indignity, dehumanisation, impoverished conditions, and high levels of crime (Freeman, 1993). While young people born and living post apartheid may be thought of as escaping the worst of the country's racialised history, they are also confronted with other demands for shifts in identity. "...the young people are now expected to develop an identity which differs from the hegemonic struggle identity of the past decades" (Freeman, 1993, p.161).

The education system in South Africa has caused much frenzied activity over the past few years as high school leaving results continue to consistently show that students from previously disadvantaged schools are under performing. In 2009, only 60.7 percent of those who sat for the National Senior Certificate exams passed, which means that 39.3 percent failed (Hamlyn, 2010). The problems pertaining to this are attributed to the apartheid era. This, I believe, is only one manifestation of the challenges that arise from the legacy of a system that actively disadvantaged some people while advantaging others. In this context, I am interested in how young women from disadvantaged communities, who have managed to obtain a matric pass, position themselves in the New South Africa, and how they make meaning of their lives in this persistently unequal context. It is of great interest to see how they foresee and work towards their futures in the face of the specific educational barriers and other marked inequalities that they encounter.

As adolescents on the verge of young adulthood, the young women are at a particular developmental phase in their lives where meaning making acts to construct "causal coherence [...] to integrate experiences" (McLean, 2005, p.683). They begin to think about constructing their life stories as a way of giving account to their life experiences and explaining how past events led to or influenced other events or aspects of the self. I was

interested in finding out how these young women would tell their stories in relation to their 'race', gender and history. Through this process the wider economic, social, cultural, political and historical context will be availed for interrogation to see if indeed opportunities are available to all or what barriers still exist for these young people as they construct their futures.

The nature of the lifestory gives me the ability to do this as it seeks to bring forth the “voice and spirit within a life- as- a –whole personal narrative” (Atkinson, 2007, p.224). This approach is built on a respect for individual storytellers and a regard for the subjective meaning carried within their stories. The life story has an advantage in that it allows for us to “step inside the personal world of the story teller and discover large worlds” (Atkinson, 2007, p.224).

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

The principal theories that inform this study are theories of youth and development, family structures narrative theory and the relational conceptualisation of the self. Family is considered to be of contextual importance for youth development. The study draws upon Erikson's theory of identity selectively. This theory is useful in its idea of identity as something that is constructed. It is however limited in that it restricts the identity vs. role confusion to the adolescent stage and assumes that this stage is all about conflict. It is further limited by conceptualising identity as an individualised project. It is for these reasons that narrative theory and a relational conceptualisation of the self will be employed. The self narrative process provides a way for researchers to gain an understanding of the self as a meaning-maker in relation to others within a particular context, a with a place in society, culture and history.

2.1 Youth Development

Adolescence is typically understood as a period that emerges with biological maturation (Stevens-Long and Cobb, 1983). During this period individuals are to accomplish certain developmental tasks. The period ends when a self-sufficient state of adulthood has been achieved. During adolescence, individuals become aware of themselves and the fact that they are in a process of change. These changes occur biologically, cognitively, socially and psychologically, all of which interactively create a developmental path from childhood to adulthood.

Adolescents develop social and intellectual skills which effectively separate them from younger children. They are expected to begin planning for their lives. They are to start thinking for themselves and making future plans. This is evident in the South African education system where young people are expected to make subject choices at the end of grade 10 with the assumption that they will make choices that are in line with their future careers. They are expected to start taking responsibility for their own lives. Young people are expected to give coherent accounts of themselves, as seen in education practices, e.g. they might be asked to write essays about their family traditions (Baddeley & Singer, 2007).

Piaget's (2003) theory of intelligence gives an account of how thought processes develop. He argues that development is an interaction between biology and the environment. The stage of cognitive development that particularly concerns adolescents in this model is formal operational thought. This is where formal thought gets perfected (Piaget, 2003). This stage is characterised by completion of reflective thought. Within this stage the capacity to thinking hypothetically is developed. Thinking is not limited to what is real and what is in the here and now. Adolescents "gain the capacity to reason in terms of verbally stated hypothesis, and no longer in terms of concrete objects and their manipulations" (Muss, 1998, p.187). The ability to think abstractly develops. They are able to grasp and employ the use of higher order abstract logic that is needed to understand and use puns, proverbs, metaphors and analogies. The adolescent's improved capacity to think abstractly allows for the application of logical processes to social and ideological matters. We can see this in the increasing interest in interpersonal relationships, politics, philosophy and religion. Adolescents also think about their thinking, or develop metacognition. They are able to reflect on their way of thinking. This leads to increased introspection and self consciousness that is often found at this stage. Thinking develops to multidimensionality; instead of thinking about issues on a single plane, adolescents can begin reasoning in multiple dimensions on an issue and showing more complex form of thought. One other change found at this stage is the ability to see things as relative as opposed to absolute (Piaget, 2003).

Erikson argues that the key task of adolescence is construction of a coherent and purposeful self-concept (or identity) (Adams & Montemayor, 1983). Erikson's psychosocial theory of human development suggests a linear arrangement of stages that people pass through as a process of development (Santrock, 1998). These stages range from infancy through a series of stages across the life span. Each stage consists of challenges that a person faces and will hopefully master. A person has to complete a stage before being able to move to the next one. Unsuccessfully mastered stages may give rise to problems in the future. Typically in line with Erikson's theory, adolescence is understood a 'crisis of identity' where identity vs. role confusion are experienced, and young people are faced with the question of what their goals in life are and what their defining identity will be. Young people begin to analyse who they are and what they are about, career paths, gender identities and sexual preferences

become points of focus. The identity crisis is what Erikson terms a “psychosocial moratorium” or a transitional gap between childhood and adulthood. The young person experiments with different identity options such as looks, career options and fashion. She/he is also begins to evaluate and invest in meaningful relationship with other people.

Marcia (cited in Kroger 2000) built on Erikson’s model and suggested that instead of identity confusion or resolution, the developmental stage of adolescence consists of the extent to which an individual has explored and committed to domains considered important in life like occupation, religion and politics. He suggested two phases: 1) a time of choosing or crisis and 2) commitment that distinguish the developmental process of adolescence. A crisis is an unsettling time where choices and values are being re-examined. This leads to decision making and an adaptation of new values or commitment to these values (Kroger, 2000).

McAdams (2001) offers another way of extending Erikson’s theory. He agrees that adolescence is a significant stage for identity construction. He, however, argues that our identity is in fact made up of the coherent, albeit often complex narrative that we construct out of our life experiences. This life story is not simply an expression of the underlying construct of identity, but it is the fundamental way in which we know ourselves and, to a large extent, the ways in which we are known by other people. McAdams suggests that the stories we create of our lives are constructed from the abundant repertoire of cultural myths, images, symbols, settings and plotlines that we learn from family, community, literature, art and media.

According to Erikson, it is in late adolescence that the crisis of identity is overcome. Identity is therefore understood as a task for adolescence that has to be undertaken before a person can become an adult. McAdams (2001) argues that although identity is not a project confined to adolescence it does take on a particular significance in adolescence as people begin to give their lives structure by developing ‘self defining’ stories. McAdams (2001) refers to the “narrative bump” in people’s life stories in which the experience of adolescence and early adulthood take on disproportionate prominence in accounting for identity. The stories are internalised and evolve to “integrate the self synchronically and diachronically” (McAdams, 2001, p.102). Identity is integrated synchronically when current

varied roles and relationships that may conflict are integrated. In the diachronic sense, identity integrates when, over time, you can see and accept change in your interests. By the time one reaches adolescence, when formal operational thought develops, the young person begins to work on integrating his/her life by putting it together in a culturally meaningful story. At this stage the young person has an ability to think abstractly and begins to imagine different ways that his/her life might be.

It is important to contextualise these universal theories of youth development. History and culture intertwine to construct adolescence in particular ways in South Africa (Macleod, 2003). Some South African adolescents are engaged in (gendered) roles that may be considered adult in nature in other contexts, especially in developed countries. An example of issues pertaining to the South African adolescent is the 'child headed household'. This is as a result of one or two parents dying, leaving the older child in care of his/her younger siblings. This scenario is exacerbated by the AIDS pandemic (Foster, Makufa, Drew & Kralovec, 1997). With increasing financial pressures on already impoverished households, extended family members find it hard to cope, leaving parentless children to fend for themselves and effectively, rear themselves (ibid). Some roles that young women have to fill include carrying out chores in the homestead, looking after younger siblings, cooking, fetching water as well as making sure that their homework gets done. This shows the composite effects of gender, race and class on the nature of adolescent development.

2.2 Family Structure

When considering parenting and family practices, the Western nuclear household cannot be taken as the norm. It represents a narrow conceptualisation of the family. Instead, family must be conceived of as a culturally specific institution (Russell, 2003). From a Western perspective, people who live together are for the most part members of a conjugal nuclear family. The nuclear family can exist in states ranging from a childless couple that is newly married to an elderly couple whose children have become independent. Even though evidence points to the disintegration of the traditional Western family (e.g high divorce rates, premarital births) some features remain obstinately unchanged. The couple remains the central core around whom households are formed. The western conjugal family household is not common in South Africa, especially among the black community where

extended family networks are traditionally very important. The absence of a couple among South African households does not mean that the family is malfunctioning. Rather, it marks it as a different system (Russell, 2003). The traditional African family is an extended network of individuals who are defined as family members (Bohman, van Wyk & Ekman, 2009). This is a range of relations which include grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. In African tradition, old people are associated with wisdom and knowledge. The elderly serve as a connection to understanding life in the past. Their responsibility is to mirror “cultural beliefs and attitudes, while expressing wisdom” (Bohman *et al*, 2009, p.447) as well as giving the younger generation guidance and life principles.

The apartheid system, historical events and traditional practices, have in a number of ways contributed in complex ways to different types of family structures in South Africa. Not least of these were the apartheid laws which placed restrictions on movement (Pass laws), provided inferior education (Bantu education) and limited employment opportunities. Black South Africans may have “... a set of domestic practices shaped by very different circumstances and legitimated by very different conception of kinship (and hence responsibility) from those in the West” (Russell, 2003, p.37). Bozalek (1999) argues that the policies created under the apartheid regime, have in very significant ways, influenced caring within the South African context. Family members were dispersed in an attempt to provide for their families. Laws such as Group Areas Act 41 (1950), the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act 52 (1951), and the Black Resettlement Act 19 (1954) were prominent in the reorganisation of households. Estimations show that about “3.5 million black people were forcibly removed from their homes, causing economic, physical, and psychological suffering” (Bozalek, 1999, p.88)

The group areas act meant that men from rural areas would leave their wives and children with their parents in search for employment in urban areas which were more economically viable. Migrant labour in South Africa was legally enforced through the apartheid laws that separated living space on the basis of race. This meant that families were separated and often for long periods of time. Work permits were awarded to individual men and did not cater for women and children. Obtaining a work permit had the ramifications of family division. The man, who was the most employable, would be away for most of the year. Men were housed in hostels which were made inaccessible to people who did not have work

permits, including wives and children. The wives would, however, sometimes join their husbands illegally. They would usually leave their children behind in the care of relatives or take some of the children especially young ones. The elder children might accompany them to help with caring for the young ones. Thus the hostels were often populated to over 3 times their capacity. They were characterised by violence, crime, delinquent behaviour and poverty (Jones, 1993).

Labour migrancy brought about separation of married couples, domestic residential instability which ultimately affected the children (Jones, 1993). The family existed in a state of separation over different geographical areas. Wives had to fare without their husbands while children grew up practically fatherless. A 'good' mother or father was coined as one who could provide materially for their child. They did not have to be in physical contact with him/her. Children born to migrant families were normally left in the care of other family members in the absence of one or both parents. They may have had to move around to relatives and their early years may have been characterised by domestic instability, upheaval, fragmentation and uncertainty.

The effects of labour migrancy are still being felt strongly today. This movement opened up mobility between urban and rural areas. Migration in South Africa is mainly characterised by circular migrancy, which was reinforced by apartheid (Collinson, Tollman & Kahn, 2007) People continue to migrate to urban areas for employment and better opportunities which may include schooling opportunities. However, in some instances, urban areas are not perceived as places for settling because of what they are associated with (Jones, 1993, Collinson *et al*, 2007). This separation of such an intimate institution as family is one of the reasons that gives rise to the dynamics found in families that characterise South Africa (Smit, 2001). The political changes, intertwined with cultural beliefs and practices rendered households more fluid and varied.

Another common family feature in the South African family is the multigenerational family. The presence of the elderly in multigenerational families can be attributed to socio economic factors and the African tradition of extended family. Edmond, Mammen and Edmonds, Mammen and Miller (2004) argue that old age pension structures living conditions in certain ways leading to an increase in dependants in the household. The

presence of the elderly structures the household in a particular way giving much needed financial relief. The state pension, although barely sufficient to sustain an individual is often the sole income for an entire family. The social grant is sometimes the “only financial support of the extended family in South African black communities where the majority of poor people reside” (Bohman et al, 2009, p.447).

The traditional extended family practice and reliance on old age social grants coalesce to form multigenerational families. Households function through the input of multiple earners and various caregivers. Children’s help within the household has evolved to include both paid and unpaid labour (Bozalek 1999). Previous research (Bozalek, 1999) has shown that only a small proportion of children in South Africa live with their biological parents. A large number of them live with their grandparents; either maternal or paternal. The biological parents may or may not provide for them financially (Russell, 2003). The readymade household that many young women are situated in provide an ideal ‘child- rearing group’ and is usually situated in the girl’s mother’s household. This setup creates an environment that helps with child caring while young mothers continue with their education or go to work. Single mothers can go look for jobs with the assurance that their children are safe with family members. However, bearing a child in adolescence is not always easy; it is difficult to organise time for studying and motherhood. It also increases the financial burden as the young mother is still in school and does not have means of providing for her child (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). The child is most often born into households with limited resources (Kaufman, de Wet, & Stadler, 2001)

Traditionally, children belong to the lineage of their socially defined father. The patrilineal rules give children ‘proper identity’ (Russell, 2003). The ancestors, who are the dead, legitimise customary domestic practices. They are considered to be most powerful and are thus venerated accordingly. This practice has survived many changes which include the introduction of Christianity in South Africa. In Zulu culture it is traditionally believed that the father is the one who introduces the (his) child to the community (Richter & Morrell, 2006). Fathers are expected to give their children their names thus identifying them with the family and, importantly, the father is the one who introduces the child to the ancestors in a traditional ritual where the elders in the family call upon the ancestors to bestow their

blessings upon the child and protect him/ her from misfortune. The ancestors will then be able to recognise the child and protect him/her. It is believed that failure to do so, will result in the child being susceptible to misfortune, a sense of being displaced in the world with a significant impact on the identity of the child and later adult (ibid.).

Richter and Smith (2006) found, through their 'Children's view of fathers' study, that children had a desire to spend time with their fathers and that lack of attention from fathers was distressing. In cases where their fathers are not in the picture, the children might often be given their unwed mother's father's name. In cases where their mother's mother was also not married, they will take their grandmother's name (Russell, 2003). Being a child is framed within particular discourses and is in relation to parental figures, usually a mother and/or father. Mothers are traditionally believed to be nurturing and preserving. In a study by Edwards, McCreanor and Moewaka-Barnes (2007) youth reported that their mothers were strong, nurturing and provided supportive relationships. They were constructed as homemakers and provided continuity of care. In South Africa, motherhood and politics came together to produce a distinct picture of motherhood (Hasshim, 1993). Women are seen as custodians of culture and transmitters of heritage. This means that they are responsible for teaching their children values as well as taking care of their moral well being.

The construction of women as mothers is not limited to the biological mother, but encompasses "any woman continuously involved in child care" (Burman, 1994, p.95). The investigative lens of developmental Psychology has shifted its focus from the child with the mother becoming the main focus. This has led to intervention in trying to help the mother 'mother'. Motherhood is substituted for parenting, with fatherhood remaining silenced. The idea of a 'good mother' was created (Macleod, 2003). As interest in parenting practices increased with the concern of the rise of single headed households, there was a rise in interest in fatherhood. Fatherhood is constructed as different from motherhood as fathers are seen as complimenting mothers, helping them mother better. This influences young women's ideas of what it means to be an adult. The mother is responsible for keeping the home fires burning, while the father is out working for a wage to provide for his family. A family without a man to act in the capacity of a father (for example, a single female headed family) is thus seen as detrimental to the family's economic survival, creating a pathological family.

The prestigious social status of men in the society can afford children better lives as they (men) are able to access resources in the community (Richter & Smith, 2006). The absence of a father and low socio-economic status of the household combine to disadvantage children. "Children are not necessarily disadvantaged by the absence of their father but they are disadvantaged when they belong to a household without access to the social position, labour and financial support that is provided by men", (Townsend cited in Richter and Smith, 2006, p.55). The discourse of fatherhood is even at play in the absence of fathers, with their role being perhaps especially highlighted in their absence. Within the Zulu culture, a person is considered to be a fully fledged member of the society through other people as the Zulu adage goes: '*umuntu, ngumuntu ngabantu*' meaning a person is 'a person through other people'. In this context, a person's understanding of the world places great importance on the extended family and community network. Our sense of our selves is thus developed in relation to others and these 'others' feature in the stories or narratives that we tell of our lives.

2.3 Narratives

Children learn to tell their stories through conversation about the joint past they have with their parents, otherwise known as "joint reminiscing" (Baddeley & Singer, 2007, p.179). They learn what to include, exclude and emphasize. The process is enabled and shaped by culture, how story telling is organised in their particular culture. Through this process, parents prepare the children to carry the family's stories as well as stories of their culture (Baddeley & Singer, 2007). As children grow into adolescents they progressively acquire the ability to organise their experiences in a narrative form making this stage important in identity formation.

Adolescents find themselves in a stage where the social and cognitive changes that they experience bring with them an opportunity to begin to narrate the story of their own lives. Individuals have learned how to tell stories by the end of childhood development (McAdams, 2001). The idea of a narrative implies intentionality. It is therefore important for human beings to develop intentionality creating essential conditions for story telling and understanding. Evidence of motivated or goal directed behaviour is seen of course from

early childhood. Children attain, through intentional action, the sense of the “self-as-I” (McAdams, 2001, p.104). Intentionality allows for us to act on our desires and beliefs to reach our goals and stories enable us to organise these actions over time. Once children are able to talk, parents encourage them to talk about their experiences. This social process leads to autobiographical memory (McAdams, 2001).

Autobiographical memory allows us to locate and define ourselves within an ongoing life. It is during adolescence that we learn how to organise memories and other self-relevant information coherently into a life story. Through the creation of a life story, adolescents begin to deal with what Erikson considered the major psychosocial task of their life stage: the exploration and formation of a mature identity. This narrative identity is established in adolescence and evolves over the course of adulthood, reflecting the person’s changing concerns, roles, priorities and self conception. Cultural scripts (cultural values, norms and practices) available to us influence the way we remember and feel about the past (Baddeley & Singer, 2007). In considering the social factors that coalesce to create the young person’s emerging narrative identity, one should not lose sight of the fact that the identity development journey that is only beginning with this initial effort at a life story. During adolescence, or at any point during adulthood, we may reconfigure the narrative trajectory we have developed.

McAdams (2001) argues that the construction of life stories is based on autobiographical memory. The encoding and recollection of such memories is shaped by personal goals and other concerns. Research has shown that people mostly recall more personal events from adolescence and early adulthood (10-25 years) when compared to events from other lifetime periods. This produces what is termed the ‘memory bump’ or the ‘reminiscence bump’ (McAdams, 2001). It serves to support the emergence of a self that is stable and enduring (Rathbone, Moulin & Conway, 2008). The memory bump emerges at a time when young people are becoming concerned with identity and are engaged in forming integrative life stories to deal with the psychosocial challenges they face. A possible explanation for the existence of the memory bump is that young people are going through a lot of significant changes and positive events in their lives (Baddeley & Singer, 2006). These include falling in love, completing school, getting a first job and perhaps having a first child. Narrative allows

for the narrator to highlight some experiences while muting others. Some experiences will be relegated to 'not important' while others will be relegated to 'oh, I forgot that'.

Bauman (1996) presents a narrative view that emphasises connecting the self to others through different metaphors and exploring the question of development and directionality in identity construction. He suggests that the modern conceptualisation of identity can be likened to a pilgrim's progress. The pilgrim is travelling towards a goal, which is the meaning of the world and the identity of the pilgrim. This goal is always not yet reached. It is always in the future and in this sense, meaning and identity exist as a project. People never actually realise who they are, they are forever reaching for it. Identity, in this sense, is a process, resonating with Erikson's view of identity as a destination (Santrock, 1998). Adolescents, according to Erikson, have a linear visualisation of the future and view adulthood as a destination. It's a place they want to arrive at. However, Bauman argues that the modern way of conceiving of identity might have worked previously but the current world is "inhospitable to pilgrims" (1996, p.23). The nature of the post modern world, "messy and incoherent", is such that it cannot be sufficiently covered by one metaphor (Bauman, 1996, p.26). He therefore suggests metaphors for the post modern world: the stroller, the vagabond, the tourist and the player. They are ways of thinking about who we are, modes of being in the world (Bauman, 1996).

A narrative view of self resists the fixity or linear progression implied by earlier models but nonetheless recognises a measure of coherence to the self. The "narrative is a symbolised account of human action" (Sarbin, 1986, p.3). It is a telling of a story giving meaning to people's actions. "Human beings think, perceive, imagine and make moral choices according to narrative structure" (ibid.). Their way of constructing meaning and acting upon the world is shaped by narrative structure or the "coherence, directionality and organisation" of events (Sarbin, 1986, p.8). The meanings we make of the world are threaded together by plots that causal sequences and links between events (Sarbin, 1986). Narrative structures events in such a way that they are experienced as coherent and seem to move in a certain direction over time. In order to achieve this sense of movement and coherence, the account must have what Gergen and Gergen term a "valued end point or goal state" (Gergen & Gergen, 1986, p.25). Events will be selected and organised in such a way that they make the goal state more or less likely (ibid.). For example, learners finishing school are aspiring for

careers and particular kinds of adult lives which they hold in high regard as great achievements. In order to reach these goals, events preceding adulthood should be organised in such a way that these careers and particular lives would be made more probable. For example, they will have to choose appropriate subjects and perform well enough to be able to gain access into tertiary institutions where they will study for their careers. A strong sense of self, through coherent and more integrated narratives, enables them to look into the future with confidence. The more complete the story the more integrated the self (Crites, 1986). The life story should be able to connect the past and the present accounting for past experiences in the present and making it possible to conceive a future in a way that makes sense. Through their story-telling, young people will put together meanings they make of the world in recognisable plots.

These stories that we tell about our lives (self-narratives) are told using specific historical conventions and, in particular, patterns of dominant beliefs and values but they also project forward in time. People require adventures in order for satisfactory life stories to be constructed and maintained (Scheibe, 1986). Adventures enrich the narrative, they propel it forward. Careers can be thought of as “adventures” or achievements of purposes to fulfil in projected future adult lives. “Narrative constructions are the socially derived and expressed product of repeated adventures and are laid over a biological life progression that often extends beyond its storied span” (Scheibe, 1986, p.143). Adventure in this sense can be understood as entailing excitement and willingness to take risks. Human identities are considered to be evolving constructions emerging out of continual social interactions in the course of life and creating links between the past and the future. We also use stories to knit a future for ourselves, looking into the future and carving out possible ways of reaching our desired futures. Gergen and Gergen (1988) came up with categories that capture the varied ways narratives develop in relation to our desired futures. Narratives can be progressive, regressive or stable in relation to the anticipated end. Narratives are deemed progressive when experience in a narrative is structured in such a way that a desired end or outcome is made more probable. A regressive narrative is one that is continuously moving away from the preferred end goal. When events are connected in such a way that the person remains essentially unchanged with respect to the valued position, a stable narrative is produced.

To show how narrative aids in understanding human action, Crites (1986) explores the relationship between narratives and our experience of time. He highlights the process of reflexivity in remembering. The 'I', who is in the present tense, gives an account of the 'me' who is in the past tense. The 'I' who is the narrator speaks and recollects what is in the past. This is an embodied presence. The 'me', being the narrative (the story being told), is not physical as it is a recollection of events in the past, (things not in the present). The 'I' is thus telling a story about 'me' in the past tense. The self in the past is recognised and claimed through a narrative (by telling a story) that links it to 'me'. This is how a person is able to experience a coherent self, through a narrative (Crites, 1986). This clearly shows that even though the self is experienced as coherent, it is not a single entity. It is spread through time and across a set of connections of relationships (Crites, 1986, p.55). This nature of the self implies that it can change, take different forms producing different selves and different accounts of the self.

This understanding of the self as discursively constructed is further elaborated in the suggestion of life as narrated or "enstoried" (Fay, 1998). Human activity is narrational in character and form and as such, we live stories. We weave the past and the future together in our actions in daily life creating intentional actions that are goal directed and motivated. Before we act we look back to get an account of how we got to the present and create future possibilities. We also tell stories in retrospect and get to appreciate narrative patterns that were otherwise overlooked (Fay, 1998). Narrative structures and connects life events into a coherent whole and seems to move in a certain direction over time. This is what gives the self a sense of coherence and continuity.

Recollection is continually taking place. We are constantly involved in a process of reconstructing what is happening and telling ourselves about it. The past and the present are two sides of the story and the present is only able to be interpreted if it is linked to the past or the future. Crites refers to Kierkegaard who argues that "we understand backwards... but we live forward" (Crites, 1986, p.165). We use the past to create future stories for ourselves. We tell the story backwards but live forward in terms of this story. Therefore the present is not stationary but is always "projecting into the future" (Crites, 1986, p.63). The future is mysterious in that we are never certain of it and this makes the

search for self knowledge a process of reaching out for the unknown and never to be known.

South Africa presents a socio-political past that is at odds with these adolescents' perceived futures. The environment that the young people are growing up in is different from that of their parents in that it is not defined by apartheid and yet is not completely free from it. If we indeed "understand backward but live forward", it is of great interest that we hear from these young women how they construct their identities and draw from a rich history to create new ways of being. The young people have different stories to tell to those of their parents but they are drawing from stories constructed in a context different to their own.

2.4 Relational Self

At first glance, narratives may seem to be a personal project that is 'monologic' (Gergen 1994, p.207) or an individually articulated story. However, for narratives to be successful in constructing individual identity, they inevitably entail dialogue. Gergen (1994) argues that "self narrative is a linguistic implement embedded within conventional sequences of a conventional sequence of action and employed in relationships in such a way as to sustain, enhance or impede "various form of action" (Gergen, 1994, p.104).

Social constructionists, argue from a post modern perspective that identity and meaning are not found within the mind of the individual, rather, identity is socially constructed. Everyday life is constructed with narrative identities that are developed in conversation with other people (Fishbane, 2001). Gergen (1994) argues for a relational view of 'self conception'. He views self conception as discourse between people about the self and in this sense the self is relational. The self is a narrative that is made understandable within relationships in which we are involved. We use stories to make ourselves intelligible within our social worlds. Gergen (1996) argues that, rather than having one particular self conception of ourselves, we have the capacity to build numerous conceptions of our selves. He uses George Herbert Mead's idea that the capacity to build numerous conceptions of ourselves is in response to others' behaviour toward us. We give an account of our actions through story telling, creating accounts of our-selves for others. We tell stories of our families and

friendships showing how we relate with other people or not. We identify with others through our stories.

Stories are used to make events socially visible and create expectations for future events. For example, for the 1976 Soweto uprising to make sense, a story had to be told around the events that led to it and in retrospect, the events that unfolded are treated as a consequence of this very event. Narrative accounts make everyday actions visible and create future anticipations. They give coherence to our everyday experiences. In this way “the narrative becomes the vehicle through which the reality of life is made manifest” (Gergen, 1994, p.186). Self narratives do not belong to an individual; they are found within relationships and are products of social interchange. “To be a self with a past and potential future is not to be an independent agent, unique and dichotomous, but to be immersed in interdependency” (Gergen, 1994, p.186)

Sampson (1989) suggests that the self is a “mediated product of society” (1989, p.6). The relationship between self and society is one of “interpenetration” (society is woven into the fabric of who we are). The self and social should instead be viewed as permeating each other; they are dialectically related. This is seen in Anthony Giddens’ duality of structure of the social world; its capacity to be both systematic and dynamic (Billington, Hockey, & Strawbridge, 1998). This refers to the society’s progress being both structured and not random and always changing rather than being static. Giddens argues for two types of consciousness namely practical consciousness and discursive consciousness. Practical consciousness is embodied in our everyday life practices. It is characterised by an unreflective way of carrying out everyday life (Billington *et al*, 1998). As a result it perpetuates the existing social structure. The patterns are learnt, internalised and played out. This shows the systematic nature of the social world. It is structured, with the structures being external to us. Discursive consciousness on the other hand shows that people are not just passive in relation to the society (Billington *et al*, 1998). It involves the individual being able to reflect on their everyday life practises in a critical way. This shows that there is no core or essential self. The self is continually being made and consists of multiple identities. This gives space for resistance, allowing for change. Change thus lies in human agency, expressing the dynamic part of the social world. Duality of structure shows a

fluid connection between the social and the self, that there is a movement between the two entities. The self permeates the social and the social permeates the self. Social life is structured, patterned and regulated. These structures are external to us. We are born into a social life, a world with already existing structures. We reproduce these structures. These structures, like people, are dynamic and changing. The possibility of change is given in human reflexivity; our ability to interpret and reinterpret the world (Billington *et al*, 1998). This view of the self is commensurate with a narrative notion of identity. The self is not independent from social and contextual factors. Life stories are told in relation to social structures and identities constructed through interaction with other people in society.

Society cannot exist outside of the ways in which people interpret the world. The same is true for people: every person's subjectivity and mental life are constrained by the way in which they make sense of the world within a particular context and in relation to particular social structures. Shweder (1991) similarly, argues that human beings have an interdependent relationship with society. The one cannot be analysed in the absence of the other. We use cultural artifacts to shape our environments. On the other hand our subjectivity is altered through this process. Consequently, the altered state of our mentality creates new artifacts in response to sociocultural environment. Thus the society and the self cannot be understood outside of each other; their "identities are interdependent" (Shweder, 1997, p.74)

Hall (2000) employs the concept of identity as strategic and positional, constructed in relation to time and context and so always in the process of change and transformation. The idea of a core identity gets replaced with multiple and fragmented identities constructed within different and sometimes interacting and contradicting discourses in relation to the 'other' with whom we interact and against whom we define our-selves. They are constantly destabilised by what they exclude. The difference that is essential for the process is not fixed at a particular point. The prevailing discourses hail the social subject in an attempt to get them to respond. Hall (2000) states that identities are a point at which "there is temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us to see. They are the result of a successful articulation or chaining of the subject into the flow of the discourse" (Hall, 2000, p.19).

Fay (1996) argues that “we are complex, dynamic compounds emergent from our interactions with others” (Fay, 1996, p.47). The self and other have a dialectic relationship and are not bound up entities independent of each other. The contents of our minds are made up of material we get from other people. Fay (1996) uses an example of the feeling of shame that illustrates that our characteristic experiences are derived from others. One feels ashamed because of fear of being seen by others for performing or feeling in inappropriate ways; a fear of being measured against a collective social standard and failing to measure up. Our respective cultures equip us with the necessary material with which to describe ourselves and the ideals we measure ourselves against. These also serve as the basis on which we obtain our identity.

Parker (1989) expands on the idea of the self being a mediated product of society. He uses Foucault’s ideas of self-understanding and power to formulate an argument that “the self is constructed in discourses and then re-experienced within all the texts of everyday life” (Parker, 1989, p.58). Discourses, which are socially made, frame how we experience the world. “The self is constrained as the subject and object of discourse at a particular historical conjuncture” (Parker 1989, p.63). Discourses, which are power-laden, frame how we experience the self, making the self the object of discourse. It is through this process that subjectivity is produced (ibid.). This shows how the self is social and contextualised. The South African setting, its socio-economic, political situation and history and associated discourses, matter very much in how young people construct and experience their identities in childhood both at school and at home and post-school in the transition to adulthood.

The fact that the self is constructed in a particular context suggests that, rather than being unitary, the self is fragmented or multiple with no one ‘true’ self formed in different discourses (Parker, 1989). Relationally, we are ‘different’ according to our varied life histories and the sense of self we get from the different roles we play in society and social institutions in relation to others. For example, a child is a learner in relation to educators (teachers) and the school. The sense of self as ‘learner’ is found within the process of learning and teaching and in relation to others. When we talk about who we are, we are also talking about who we are not, setting ourselves in opposition to others, or experiencing the self in ‘difference’ (Fay, 1998; Hall 2000).

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Qualitative Paradigm

This research was conducted within a qualitative paradigm, exploring how young women from previously disadvantaged schools construct and negotiate their identities in post apartheid South Africa. The study is interested in how these young women tell their stories forward, negotiating their current and future identities. The study collected and analysed stories from young black women who have matriculated in order to explore how they construct their identities with regards to 'race', gender and future aspirations within the social, cultural, political and historical context of democratic South Africa.

Narrative inquiry is particularly appropriate for this study because of its ability to capture the *messiness* of the lived world. My aim is to understand the worlds of these young women and the meanings they attach to their lived experience and anticipated futures rather than try and control them and fit them into neat predetermined categories. "Narrative inquiry begins in experience as expressed in lived and told stories. [...] it involves the reconstruction of a person's experience in relationship both to the other and to a social milieu" (Pinnegar & Dayness, 2007, p.5). I want to explore how the self and society interact in these narratives and the construction of self and, in this manner, revealing the social, cultural and political context of democratic South Africa for scrutiny.

From a positivist perspective, objects of study are treated as physical things enabling for the development of social laws, following the same process that is used to develop physical laws. "An essential feature of this stance is the sense that things being studied are real and that they exist independently and are not brought into existence by the act of studying" (Pinnegar & Dayness, 2007, p.9). Scientists aim to have a separate position from their subjects of study, who are perceived as having an "independent object like existence, with no intrinsic meaning" (Pinnegar & Dayness, 2007, p.9). The aim is thus to attain neutrality and not taint the outcome of the study. This view renders the person and phenomenon of study atemporal and static rather than context bound. This also puts the researcher in a bounded, static and atemporal position in relation to the researched. The aim is to render the research systematic, reliable and unbiased. The researcher and participants are isolated

from each other and the distance between should be preserved and guaranteed when they interact. This stance positions the researcher as knowing and the subject of study is explainable. In this manner, “true beliefs about the social can become valid and sure knowledge” (Pinnegar & Dayness, 2007, p.10). This would then lead to the idea that there is a secure base from which knowledge about the things being researched can be asserted with surety.

By contrast, narrative inquiry focuses on the narrative as both the method and phenomenon of study (Pinnegar & Dayness, 2007). Narrative inquiry is characterised by the “use of a [life] story” (Pinnegar & Dayness, 2007, p.25), recognition and appreciation of the “interactive nature of human science research” in the social world and the contextualisation of research (ibid). Recognising human science research as an interactive process moves away from “a position of objectivity as defined from the positivist, realist perspective towards a research perspective focused on interpretation and the understanding of meaning” (Pinnegar & Dayness, 2007, p.9). This brings to light the fact that the researcher and participants are positioned in a relationship to each other. They will learn and change through this relationship.

3.2 The Role of the Researcher

The conditions of objectivity in the research process assumes the possibility of atemporal knowledge. “This is a state whereby the findings of research are considered outside time, and time itself is a neutral and controllable entity” (Pinnegar & Dayness, 2007, p.10). From this position the matter under study can still be asserted to exist even after the conditions of its original findings have changed over the course of time. However, these atemporal claims do not consider the meaning that time is given by culture and the events that construct it. Researchers render participants and interactions under study static when they behave as if they can be held still during the process of research. They also behave as if their action in the research process will not affect what is being studied. They do not consider the fact that their observation might cause changes in the phenomenon of study leading to change in how they think about it. They assume that the research process places the researcher and participants in a static space, each uninfluenced by the other. “Within this perspective, researchers act on the premise that context can be controlled in ways that

result in decontextualised findings” (Pinnegar & Dayness, 2007, p11). By contrast, narrative research takes into account the interactive social space that exists between the researcher and the participants, that they are placed in relation to each other. The researcher and the focus of research are part of the research process. This situates the researcher and the respondents in time and place. They are not stripped of their history and worldview. Instead of being static they are dynamic and they grow and learn during the research process.

From this perspective the researcher and participants are seen as collaborative constructors of knowledge. This section serves to reflect on my position as the researcher in relation to my participants. Personal reflexivity refers to the acknowledgement of the individual self as a researcher and the fact that my personal interests and values influenced the process of the study from start to finish. It serves to “reveal the level of personal involvement and engagement” (Tindall, 1994, p.150) that I have in the study. “The experience of exploring personally relevant topics, and being actively engaged with participants feeds back into life experiences, often triggering personal change”. Functional reflexivity refers to “a continuous, critical examination of the practice and process of research to reveal assumptions, values and biases” (Tindall, 1994, p.151). The reflection section enables readers to “judge content in the context of the perspectives and assumptions by which it was shaped. It also allows readers to reanalyse material, to develop alternative interpretations and explanations” (Tindall, 1994, p.151).

Going to one of the participant’s home for our interview gave me insight into her life, insight that I would otherwise not have had without this experience. The context helped me ‘hear’ her story in more than a textual way. I did hear about poverty, the different types of households, the extended family, the rural village, the impoverished community, all of which I got to see. I got to understand what building a house for this participant really meant; the meaning it held for her family and their place in the community. I got to realise that some of my understanding of the stories was limited by my knowledge and experience of not only my participant’s culture, but her socio-economic context. Being in this context allowed for me to break beyond these would be limits. I knew and understood poverty from what I had witnessed in my own context (place, culture, economy and politics). I understood poverty in terms of the standardised poverty line in dollars. I was, however, blind to the different dynamics that existed within the context of my study; the different ways that

poverty, for example, is manifested and experienced in rural South Africa. I was personally struck by the level of poverty that most of the young women in my study had to endure. This was real poverty that they experienced in their everyday lives. It was indeed amazing to see them look beyond their past and immediate circumstances and constructing a range of possible paths for their future. How they could remain motivated was a high level of human resilience for me. I found myself marvelling on many occasions how resourceful and strong South African women are; the young women in the study and those mothering them.

The experience made me realise that I don't simply take in the lifestories as told by the young women but apply my own theoretical framework to try and understand the meanings and symbols used to tell the story. Gubrium and Holstein (1998) say

“Listeners are not simply narrative depositories or passive receptors. Neither are they discursively homogeneous. They collaborate in both the whats and hows of narrative practice, invoking cultural meanings and expectations and supplying biographical particulars of their own, all in relation to the local auspices of narration” (Gubrium and Holstein, 1998, p.181) .

Perhaps Gubrium and Holstein's "new ethnography" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008, 1998) may have a place here. This refers to narrative study within the context of the production of the narratives. They argue that the study of narratives should be broadened to go beyond examination of their internal organisation to incorporate "the social organisation of the storying process as meaning-making activity in its own right" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2008, p.261). This is to enable the inclusion of contextual influences and dynamics that shape narrative. The researcher is actively involved in determining what counts as suitable information in the study and how it should be analysed. However, even in similar cultures, people's stories turn out in individuated ways. The meanings they attach to their experiences differ within the same cultural ways of organising the story. "To know someone else requires the ability to interpret the meaning of the various states, relation and processes which compromise their or our lives" (Fay, 1998, p.25). Our being human and the ability to experience allows us to understand another person's experience, allowing for us to study lives different to our own. Critical reflexivity of our own lives allows for this to happen (Fay, 1998).

The experience of story-telling within the initial interview created an intimacy between me and the participants. The young women became more than just research participants; they are individuals with personal experiences and feelings. I found myself wanting to know how their lives carried on, if their dreams and hopes were becoming a reality. Our narrational interaction had opened up a space where our worlds came together, a connection if you will, of each other's lives. They shared heart-rending memories with me. Emotions were evoked. I became extremely tearful on one of the participants' accounts. I found myself reflecting on my own narrative(s) in the face of the life-stories that were shared. The fact that the narrational interaction opened us to each other's lives meant that I became a feature in the young women's narratives even outside the interview context. One of the participants' mother passed away shortly after I had concluded the second set of interviews and she phoned to inform me. This was a sad time for me as well, imagining her grief. She expressed anxiety for her studies and future as her mother was her key provider. This went to show that our connection went beyond the research context. Thobeka also called me to let me know that she had given birth. She had been highly expectant at our last interview. I also became engrossed in their narratives. I was so invested in them so much so that I became disappointed and hurt when events did not take place the way they had envisaged them.

The Freedom Day celebrations and boycotts that occurred during the last phase of my data collection (27 April 2010) made me pay serious thought to something I had been mulling about. The Pan African Party Youth Congress showcased demonstrations, wanting PAC to be given recognition for organising the protest that ended up as the Sharpsville massacre in 1961. This for me highlighted a desire for the struggle stories to be re-told in certain ways, giving credit to some actors, serving particular purposes. For a while I had been asking myself what ideologies exist to shape the stories of the young women involved in the study, if their stories were constrained in particular ways in accordance to the prevailing ideology. Within a democratic system everyone is thought to be free. It is after all, a government of the people by the people for the people. Were the silences around particular subjects (for example gender, 'race' and sexuality) indicative of an existing powerful ideology?

It was only towards the end of my research study that I began to interrogate the use of the word 'interview' when asking the young women to take part in the study. Some of the

young women are at a stage where they are looking for various life opportunities to open up for them. Interviews provide a means through which people's suitability for various things including jobs and schooling opportunities are determined. So, the word 'interview' is significant as it is attached to hope for access to opportunities that are much needed.

3.3 Narrative enquiry

Story telling has been in existence for a very long time and across all cultures. It has been used in societies as a means of encapsulating history and cultural values, passing them on to the next generation. We tell stories to account for our experiences and actions. In African folklore, stories are used to teach lessons to children and explain why things are the way they are. They are used to give meaning to life. Story telling is inherent to our being. We think and speak in story form (Atkinson, 2007).

Life stories function to guide us psychologically through the different phases of our lives. We are able to gain awareness of ourselves developing and changing over time through the use of life stories, those we tell to ourselves and to other people. Life stories arise from lived experiences but they are not simply discovered. They entail the "retelling of one's life as a whole in the voice of the teller, as it is remembered..." (Atkinson, 2007, p.241). Stories aid in self integration through understanding our experiences and the meaning we attach to these experiences. Through stories, we get to see our lives both objectively and subjectively. Life stories have the capacity to affirm, validate and support our social experiences. Stories in their nature are not bound to the present. They help us understand the world and our place in it (Atkinson, 2007). The use of life stories allows for people to use their own words to tell personal stories. This allows for recognition and appreciation of "personal truth from the subjective point of view" (Atkinson, 2007). The life story can be useful for both the person telling his/her story and the researcher gathering such stories. The life story brings to the surface "experiences, circumstances, issues, themes and lessons of a lifetime" (Atkinson, 2007, p.125). It allows for us to access "the personal life of the story teller and discover larger worlds" (Atkinson, 2007, p.124).

Life stories are in and about life. Narrative realism and narrative constructivism are two different ways that try to account for the relation between stories and life. Narrative realism argues that human lives are inherently storied. The stories are discovered, as opposed to them being constructed. Furthermore, human lives are ordered according to “particular narrative patterns of events” (Fay, 1998, p.180). They have a beginning, middle and an end. They start with birth and end in death and in between are “natural climaxes, denouements and so on” (Fay, 1998, p.180). Self knowledge and knowledge of others come into place when we uncover the plot and make it known.

Narrative constructivism takes an almost opposite view to narrative realism. It purports that human lives are stories told in retrospect. The role of historians and biographers is to put meaning and structure to otherwise unintelligible lives of people. This view argues that instead of life itself being a narrative, the narrative is produced by the work of historians and biographers trying to make sense of life. In this way, narratives are viewed as constructions as opposed to them discovered outside the individual.

In this view, stories consist of more than “actions and their intentions” (Fay, 1996, p.184). Results brought about by these actions and intentions form an integral part of the stories. The results largely shape how the story will be told. The actions are (in retrospect) positioned and “redescribed” in ways that make these results more probable (Fay, 1996, p.184). In this retrospective view, the unintended consequences of an action may turn out to be far more significant than any intentions on the part of the actor. For example someone may suggest going to a particularly interesting sounding seminar because she thinks that her friend will benefit from it. Should the friend then meet a man that she falls in love with, she may thank her friend for ‘introducing’ them, although this was not her intention and this seminar may feature strongly in the friend’s life story as an important event that set in motion the love affair that followed. Many stories can be told about the same events as Fay aptly put it “there is no definite story to be told about a life” (Fay, 1996, p.186). Identity is an ongoing project subject to negotiation all the time. New causal outcomes will call for the revision of the stories, making identity an ongoing construction leaning towards the future (Fay, 1996).

Stories account for series of events happening one after the other, connecting them in some recognisable pattern. Causal outcomes relay the connectedness between various events. When trying to tell a life story, the teller selects certain bits (intentions, acts and their effect) which are considered significant to the story. These will be used to order the story in a recognisable way and portray it in a certain light, according to how the teller wants it to be seen. So, biographers tell stories according to how they (and the biographees) want them to be understood, selecting events deemed as important to them. Different biographers will thus portray the same life differently (Fay, 1996). This shows that there is no “definite biography” (Fay, 1996, p.188).

Narrativism takes a midway position between narrative realism and narrative constructivism. It captures realism’s idea that “narrative form is not accidental nor a mere representational device and that our identities as agents embody narratives” (Fay, 1996, p.194). It also takes captures what is correct about constructivism, that the narrative account of individuals is continuous and fluid. Human actions are teleological (meant to achieve a particular purpose) in nature. They are of necessity directed towards the future to bring about a particular goal state. Actions are thus intentional, motivated by particular considerations. These considerations are influenced by one’s past, how she/he reached her/his current position. Therefore the “moment of acting is precisely the coming together of the agent’s sense of his/ her past history, present situation and future possibilities” (Fay, 1996, p.192). Interpretation is constantly taking place. It puts narratives into life. While you’re living you’re telling a story. The two are realities are not separate, they are intertwined (Fay, 1996).

Through life stories, the participants’ own particular experiences are captured in their own voices. Their life experiences and their relation to others are brought forth through their voices. The individual is able to relay her/his story from a stand point “that allows her/him to see her life subjectively across time as it all fits together, or as it seems discontinuous, or both” (Atkinson, 2007, p.124). The participant is able to relay the reality of their world through his/her story. In this way he/she becomes the first interpreter of her story. Their own construction of their reality and the ensuing narrative is the focus of interest of this study.

3.4 Participants

The research used purposive sampling drawing research participants from young people who participated in the Fast Forward programme (see Appendix 1) at University of KwaZulu Natal. The Fast Forward programme aims to explore ways of generating a future for young people to open up new horizons and help them think about themselves in new ways. The programme focuses on helping young people re-think their identities and social roles, especially with regards to relation to race and gender (Bradbury and Miller, 2010). They are provided with role models who model how to overcome possible barriers to success. Furthermore, the aim is to develop the sense of potential and agency.

Snowball sampling was most appropriate as the respondents had now left school and were hard to find. Initial contact was made using a list of all Fast Forward participants in the years 2003 to 2007 and identifying those studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal where I had access to them through the university's student system. The first respondent provided contact details of the people with whom she was in the programme and these were contacted for interviews and for further details of others whom they knew. The participants were 10 women; 5 from Amangwane a rural community located in the Drakensburg area and 5 from the urban location of Chesterville. Table 1 below presents a profile of the participants.

Table 1: Profile of participants

Name	Place	First Interview	Second Interview	Time lapse between the two interview
1. Thobile*	Amangwane	Working at a holiday resort Saving money to further her education Helping provide for her family	Is studying in TUT, Pretoria Has stopped working Has halted business plans	1 year 7 months
2. Mandisa*	Amangwane	Currently not studying and unemployed	Is registered to study for nursing in Joburg, resides in Soweto.	1 year 7 months

*Pseudonym

3. Thando*	Amangwane	Is studying in UKZN, Pietermaritzburg	Has moved to Johannesburg to stay with her sister and is continuing with her studies.	8 months
4. Thobeka*	Amangwane	Working in Johannesburg and saving for further studies	Studying at UNISA Expecting her first child Will stop studying for a semester to take care of the child	2 years
5. Nobuhle*	Amangwane,	Studying at UKZN	Studying at UKZN Looking for a job for next year Financial constraints	7 months
6. Thembi*	Chesterville	Nursing- studying/working	Studying and working as a nurse Senior student Making plans to specialize in the nursing field.	1 year 7 months
7. Khanyise*	Chesterville	Studying marketing at IMM- through correspondence Studying full time at ICBC bible college	Completed her studies Worked shortly for a company before she quit	7 months
8. Zinzi *	Chesterville	Recently completed Access programme and waiting to start first year at UKZN	Studying at UKZN	3 months
9. Nomusa *	Chesterville,	Studying IT at ICESA city campus Works on Sundays at Global Supermarket	Has completed her diploma Works as a cashier Is looking for a job aligned with her qualifications	1 year 7 months
10. Zoleka*	Chesterville	Studying at UNISA part time Sings part time	dropped out due to financial problems is the family's breadwinner Saving for further education	2 years 10 months

* Pseudonym

3.5 Data Collection

A pilot study with 10 respondents (Selohilwe, 2007 & Tshambi 2007) was carried out and this provided the basis for successive interviews of the study such as: which questions to ask first and how to set the interviewee at ease with the whole process. Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) argue that pilot studies can yield valuable insights into the process and the outcome of the study. The pilot study was particularly helpful in enabling me to familiarise myself with the interview process and the context of these participants' lives. In particular, this more general narrative interview study highlighted a significant aspect of the participants' lives that had not been anticipated. Several participants spoke of the problems they experienced due to the absence of fathers in their lives. Reflection on the results of this earlier study also enabled me to narrow my focus more specifically on young women and the gendered nature of their stories.

The study used semi-structured in-depth interviews, in the wider context of a narrative approach. The design was semi-structured in the sense that the interviewer prepared questions that initiated the interview and were aimed at eliciting a reflection on the participants' present lives and anticipations of a future, i.e. to elicit a 'story' of life both past and future. The interview then flowed in the direction dictated by the interviewee's answers in relation to a particular theoretical framework (Wengraf, 2001). An imposed structure would interfere with the features of story-telling, which allows participants to select and organise the versions of their lives that they wish to tell (Sarbin, 1986).

In-depth interviews, as used in this case, seek to "go into something in depth" and reveal the depth of the matter which is more complicated than appears on the surface (Wengraf, 2001, p.6). For purposes of this research, the surface realities of post apartheid South Africa presents us with a picture that 'black' youth have more opportunities available to them now and it is up to them to grab hold of such opportunities and utilise them. The research explored to what extent this is the case, to reveal the depth of the issue, in terms of participants' experiences and their own discursive understandings of their lives.

The interview was structured in such a way that it started from a single narrative question which was "Can you tell me about yourself, where you grew up and what you are doing now" (leading to the production of a life story) and giving particular focus to certain parts of

the individual's story. The interview, adapted from Wengraf's (2001) model, is composed of two parts. The first part involves asking the participant a single question to elicit the full narrative. It also involves the interviewer asking questions to get more of the life story about topics raised within this initial narration. Before the second part of the interview, a preliminary analysis took place where presenting themes common to all participants were identified. These themes were language, 'race', community, space, family, schooling, gender and future outlook.

The prominent themes in the life stories were explored further through focused in-depth interviews. In-depth interviewing searches for deep information and understanding. Deep information can be understood in several ways in this regard. Firstly, it refers to an attempt to gain the same level of understanding that participants have of their life events and meaning that are attached to their actions. This is achieved by "subjecting yourself and your own social situation to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation [...]" (Goffman quoted in Johnson, 2002, p.106). Second, in depth interviewing seeks to go beyond common sense understanding of experience by exploring contextual boundaries of the experience. The aim is to go beyond the surface reaching deeper for more "reflexive understanding about the nature of that experience" (Johnson, 2002, p.106). Third, deep understanding enables us to be able to perceive of experience or phenomenon of study in multiple ways, the different meanings attributed to it and be able to represent it.

The in-depth interviews were conducted upon the foundation of intimacy laid down by the narrative interviews. The life stories brought our worlds together through the sharing of cherished memories and experiences. The in-depth interviews were conducted after varied amounts of time which ranged from a few months to 3 years after the first interview for the different participants. It was of interest to find out how the participants' life stories had changed, if they had, in the time period between the two interviews; in what ways were they retold or recomposed and if goals had changed. As a result, the second interviews were started with story-telling for 'catching up' purposes, finding out what had been happening in the participants' lives (as well as mine) since we last met. The second interviews were conducted within the wider story format but with greater focus on the central themes. This is as a result of the fact that narrative provides a means through which individuals can

convey their understanding of events and experiences (Mishler, 1986). The particular themes that were focused on prompted story-telling, making them meaningful and coherent with the participants' lives and linking these individual stories to the wider socio-political context.

The interviews were mainly carried out in English. The participants are matriculants and were to a great extent, able to communicate in English. The participants were however, encouraged to express themselves in isiZulu if they wanted to. My conversational isiZulu was put to use in these cases. I would then repeat what the participant said back to them in English to make sure that I had full grasped what they were saying.

3.5.1 Interview Questions

A general narrative framework was applied through a series of possible sub-questions to participants. There was a broad question which will be used to prompt the story telling. Further questions were then used to expound on the details of the story as it unfolded, seeking clarity and more information. Sub questions specifically focused on exploring 1) relational and contextual aspects of identity and 2) conceptualisations of the future and perceived threats.

1. Narrative

1.1 Can you tell me about yourself, where you grew up and what you are doing now?

2. Relational

2.1 Who are the significant people in your life?

2.2 How do these people impact on your life?

2.3 In what ways do you think who you are has been affected by where you come from?

3. Future

3.1 How do you see yourself in the future?

3.2 What do you see yourself doing in the future? Why?

3.3 Do you see any problems in achieving what you want in the future?

3.4 What will help you achieve this projected future?

Although 'race' as a marker in the construction of identity was of interest, no specific questions were formulated so that the researcher could hear from young people if they use race in their identity constructions without putting words in their mouths. Gender was also explored as it came up in the stories. In instances where there was silence around 'race' and gender this was probed in the second interviews in which more specific questions were posed in relation to the themes identified in the first interviews. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed¹ with the permission of the participants.

3.6 Analysis

Treating data produced as narrative assumes that individuals give meaning to their experiences through life stories. Through narrative analysis one gets to systematically study personal experience and meaning attributed to life events (Riessman, 2001). The object of investigation in narratives is the story itself (Riessman, 1993). Analysis allows for the informant's story to be examined and analysed as to "how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on and how it persuades a listener of authenticity" (Riessman, 1993, p.2). This analysis looks into both the content to which the language refers and the forms of telling about the experience.

Life stories are used to arrange events and circumstances in our lives in ways that give these events a coherent order (Atkinson, 2002). Narrative analysis is interested in the chronological order of the story told. It focuses on the sequencing of particular elements, and how some elements are given priority over others. It also focuses on how the past is used to explain the present, how the present is used to account for the past, and how both the past and the present are used to construct the future (ibid). Life stories encapsulate the present story, past experiences and a horizon for future expectations. The process of

¹ The transcripts of the interviews are available in a CD in appendix 3.

analysis explores these relations with the aim of reconstructing the interaction between the past experiences, the present and future expectations (Wengraf, 2001). Wengraf's (2001) was adapted model to suit purposes of this research. The method places focus on both the form and content of narratives. Analysis was aimed at examining the way the narratives were put together as well as paying attention to the content of the narratives in order to understand meaning attributed to events and experiences (Eliot, 2006). Analysis was carried out in two phases: narrative analysis followed by thematic analysis.

3.6.1 Narrative Analysis

The first phase of analysis was focused on the structure of the narrative and how plot dynamics and the young women's lives changed over time across the two interviews. This section focused on the way the young women shaped their stories. Riessman says "[h]uman agency and interpretation determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted and what they are supposed to mean" (1993, p.2). I was interested in how each story teller made use of particular narrative devices to render her story credible (Riessman, 1993). The method allows for the informant's story to be examined and analysed as to "how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on and how it persuades a listener of authenticity" (Riessman, 1993, p.2). I also investigated if the story was told in a recognisable way, if it was temporally ordered, or if there were other narrative styles used (Riessman, 2008). I wanted to establish which events were given more weight in the narrative and the purpose of doing so.

Events that occur in life are given coherence by narratives through which the events are made sense of (Gergen & Gergen, 1986). Gergen and Gergen (1988) put into categories, narratives according to the way they moved over time towards their goal or valued end. The different categories are progressive, regressive and stable. Experience in the progressive type of narrative is structured in such a way that the goal is made more probable. A regressive narrative is one that is continuously moving away from the preferred end goal. A stable narrative is one where events are connected in such a way that the person remains essentially unchanged with respect to the valued position. These form a basic foundation for other possible and complex stories (Gergen & Gergen, 1986). They combine in a narrative to

make more complex and intricate plots. Drawing on Gergen and Gergen's (1986) basic plots, Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber's (1998) model was adapted to draw up a life course graph for each individual, detailing patterns of progression, decline or stability in their narrative. These were inferred from particular forms of speech from the interviews (Lieblich *et al*, 1998). Riessman (2001) argues that turning points can be used to signal change in identities over time. These are points that indicate radical shift from the expected trajectory in a person's life.

3.6.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method that allows for identifying, analysing and presenting themes. The themes encapsulate "something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 82). Themes derived from the data were examined in an attempt to get a collective 'story' connecting the individual women's stories. The researcher was responsible for organizing the themes in a way seemingly coherent to her (Aronson, 1994). Furthermore, thematic analysis allows for different angles in viewing the 'story' being analysed. This makes it suitable for analysing life narratives as they are characterised by meanings and different ways of creating coherence. Thematic analysis follows a series of steps which include transcribing, being familiar with the data, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Within narrative analysis an attempt is made to keep the story intact by "theorising from the case rather than from component themes (categories) across cases" (Riessman, 2008, p.53) as happens in grounded theory.

The themes were listed and organised into theme categories as follows: language, 'race', community, family, schooling, gender and future outlook. Data falling under each theme were collected from all the participants and grouped together. The themes were checked for correlation with those that had already been established. Although prior theory guided inquiry, new themes were noted and literature reviewed to enable analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Riessman, 2008).

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Appropriate measures were taken to address ethical concerns. These included assuring the respondents of confidentiality, obtaining consent forms (See Appendix 2), and using pseudonyms to protect the identities of participants. However, this was challenging as I was using the snowball sampling method to get participants for the study. I obtained the names and contact numbers for subsequent participants from other participants. Some of the participants' anonymity was therefore compromised.

Furthermore the purpose of the research was explained to each respondent. However, the researcher had to constantly negotiate the boundaries of issues that emerged because of the open structure of the interview. For example, in many cases, discussions of the role of participants' fathers brought up frustrations, disappointments and hurts inflicted by absent fathers. A great deal of sensitivity had to be exercised to prevent participants feeling unexpectedly exposed when this issue was explored. This highlighted the importance of confidentiality. Where appropriate, follow up was made and counselling support offered.

Chapter 4 Narrative analysis and discussion

The first phase of analysis focuses on the structure of the narratives told. It explores the form of the stories and how they were told. This entailed looking at how the stories were ordered, whether they were temporal or episodic. Life lines were drawn to illustrate how the narratives' plot dynamics changed over time. Gergen and Gergen (1988) distinguish three simple story lines- progressive, regressive, and stability and these basic story lines were used to analyse each of the 10 participants' stories. However, it should be noted that none of the stories fit these neat directional narrative forms entirely. In particular the "stability" narrative does not have the connotation of complacency or contentment suggested by Gergen and Gergen's analysis and appears rather as a trapped, static, circular and fragmented story-line in which nothing new seems possible or little progress is made. The majority of the narratives display a strong sense of positive direction and progress towards desired goals. Although none of the stories are simply regressive, all stories included severe regressive moments and some stories are characterised by several extreme up and down movements in which the temporal line cannot be said to really entail any progressive direction and suggest that these young women are in the midst of uncertainty, in which the future narrative may take either a progressive or regressive turn. These basic life stories thus come together in complex and intricate patterns. In some cases the young women's narratives were comprised of a combination of different basic narrative forms intertwined with moments of dramatic tension. This made for remarkable and compelling stories. The young women's stories were collected over two interviews for each person. The time between the two interviews ranged from 3 years to several months.

The young women, save for Khanyise and Zoleka, structure their early years' narratives through their school experience. Everything else, for example stories about family, is fitted around the school experience. They do this for two possible reasons 1) people recall more personal events from adolescence to adulthood and school played a significant role at this time and 2) schooling experience channels them to their goals which are predominantly framed in relation to careers and success. Research has shown that people mostly recall more personal events from adolescence and early adulthood when compared to events from other lifetime periods (McAdams, 2001). This is a time where young people are becoming concerned with identity and are engaged in forming integrated life stories to deal

with the psychosocial challenges they face. The young people are going through a lot of significant and positive events in their lives (Baddely & Singer, 2006). These include falling in love, completing school, getting a first job and perhaps having a first child. A 'memory bump' or reminiscence bump' is produced making this period the most recalled (McAdams, 2001). Some experiences will be relegated to 'not important' while others will be relegated to 'oh, I forgot that'. Schooling experience has been highlighted as important for the young women in the study.

McAdams (2001) argues the encoding and recollection of memories we use in our life story construction is shaped by personal goals and other concerns. We remember that which helps explain our current state and that which drives us to our goals. The young women's focus on schooling experience could be due to the fact that they have just come out of school and in their given context of South Africa, schooling is perceived to play a very important role in the outcome of one's future. With the demise of apartheid, class is increasingly a more significant social category than 'race' in determining quality of life. Education is seen as critical in enhancing social mobility enabling improved livelihoods through better jobs and salaries. The young women want to succeed in life and to do this by entering the job market by getting educated. The young women who talked about motherhood all expressed regret in having babies in adolescence and experienced it as a regressive moment because it derailed their progress towards their goals. However, the level of negative impact was different for the young mothers and this is denoted with different sized dips in their life lines.

4.1 Progressive narratives

The majority of the women's life lines (Nobuhle, Thobile, Khanyise, Thembi, Nomusa and Zinzi) show a generally progressive inclination. Events are progressing towards the expected goals. The young women are living lives that they had generally expected and hoped for. They are realising the aims they had when they finished school. Their narratives reveal how they connect their past and the future, and the fact that the future, from this view point, looks positive, hence the upward mobility of their narratives.

4.1.1 Nobuhle “ a narrative of overcoming”

Nobuhle’s life story was mainly gradually progressive with a period of regression. She comes from an impoverished background and is studying towards a degree hoping to be successful in life. She became a mother while at high school and this was interpreted as a regressive moment in her life. She regrets this happening as she had to stay at home for a year to take care of the baby, stopping her schooling temporarily. However, she managed to secure funding to study towards a degree in Psychology, carrying out her dreams of getting educated. This progressive narrative of overcoming difficulties is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

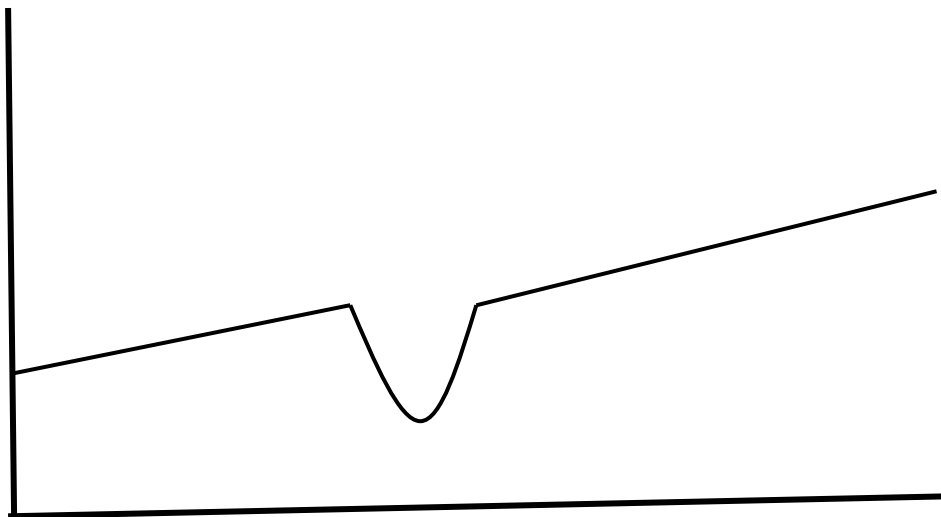


Figure 1: Nobuhle’s life story.

Nobuhle’s narrative is organized by chronological time. She recounts her childhood and the prominent people in it, being her mother and grandmother. She goes on to talk about her schooling experience as well as her role at home as a girl child. She talks about the significant event of falling pregnant towards the end of high school. This time was interpreted as a mistake. It denoted regression in her storyline as it took her away from her goal of being educated. Her story is characterised by wanting to be educated, being successful in her life and providing for her son as well as helping her mother out. There is a sense of overcoming impoverishment that characterised her childhood. Nobuhle talks about her experience in registering at university. She talks at length about the difficulties she encountered while securing accommodation. She was new to the university and was unfamiliar with the procedure for applying for and securing accommodation. She talks about

herself as helpless and uninformed. This was reflective of her moving from a rural area to an urban one, the challenges she faced as a result of the difference between the two areas and how she acclimatised.

Two years had passed since the first interview. She was in her first year of university when we first met and is now doing her 3rd and final year. She feels her narrative is progressing steadily as she is moving towards the target goal of completing her Psychology degree. Even though she is still studying, she has taken to supporting her son through selling muffins. She has taken on both roles of mother and student in her stride and sees the roles and the juggling they require as inevitable for women. She worried about getting a job after she completes her degree. She wanted to apply for an available internship but could not as she owes the university money and cannot access her academic record which was needed for applying for the internship post.

4.1.2 Thobile “on the road to success”

Thobile’s life story was characterised by a progressive line. She has however, experienced a regressive moment after the death of her father. For her, being deprived of someone who provided financially meant that she could not realise her dreams of being educated at a tertiary institution and being successful in life. She described the life with her father as good. Despite hardships and obstacles in her life, Thobile is highly motivated to make her life successful. She takes challenges in her stride and does not let them deter her from her goal. The form of her narrative is reflected in Figure 2 below.

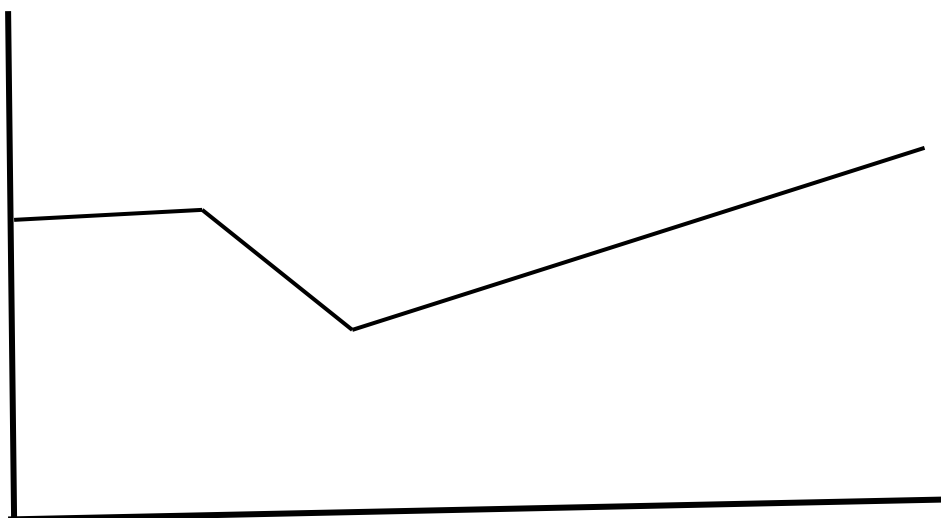


Figure 2: Thobile’s life story.

Thobile's narrative is temporally ordered, closely following the basic chronology of the lived life. She starts off by talking about where she grew up and her primary and high school experiences. She then goes on to talk at length about the Fast Forward programme at UKZN as a positive moment, changing the line of her story. She is very clear about the order in which things happened, and she guides me through her childhood and schooling experiencing, leading to where she is currently. I asked for clarification at several points. I prompted her with non verbal cues (*mhhh, ohhh, eish, ja*) for her to give more information. Thobile was born to unmarried parents but was cared for by both of them. Her father passed away when she was young and as he was her primary provider, this altered her view for the future as she could not afford 'good schools' and the subsequent tertiary education. This was a difficult time in her life. She moved to stay with her aunt in Durban for a few years, before moving back home where she completed her schooling. She was chosen to be part of the Fast Forward programme during a special programme with learners from Nottingham in the United Kingdom. A small group of learners from Chesterville and Amangwane hosted exchange students from Nottingham, spending time with them, showing them their home areas and talking with them about the socio-political histories of these places and their current everyday lives. She looked for a job and got one at a holiday resort after she matriculated with the hope of saving for further studies. The rural place she comes from provided job opportunities through tourism. Despite hardships and obstacles in her life, Thobile is highly motivated to make her life successful. She takes challenges in her stride and do not let them deter her from her goal.

It was a year and a half since her first interview during which time she had been working at a holiday resort in the Drakensburg and was trying to save money to further her studies. She is now studying towards a degree in teaching at University of Pretoria. Her life story is progressive as she is moving towards the goal of being educated. While working as a waitress, she helped support her family which is now hard to do as she is a student and in need of financial support herself. It had previously been hard for her to think about going to school as she was providing for her family. She has since made the difficult decision.

Thobile had originally expressed a desire to study travel and tourism. She is, however, currently studying towards a degree in education. While the change concerning her career field can be attributed to identity construction and experimenting with different career roles, the change can also be attributed to the socio economic realities that she faces. Thobile was able to secure funding to study towards her degree in Education. Teaching might be more practical as it offers quicker rewards.

4.1.3 Thembi “ a narrative of pressing towards the future’

Thembi’s life story was generally progressive. The death of her father when she was about 12 was painful and deprived her and family of the sole bread winner. She had previously wanted to be a doctor but the lack of qualified Mathematics teachers at her school mean that she could realise her dream. She was admitted to study at UKZN through a Science foundation programme but decided to go study and work as a nurse concurrently when the opportunity was availed. She has since progressed to senior student. Figure 3 below presents the narrative direction of Thembi’s life.

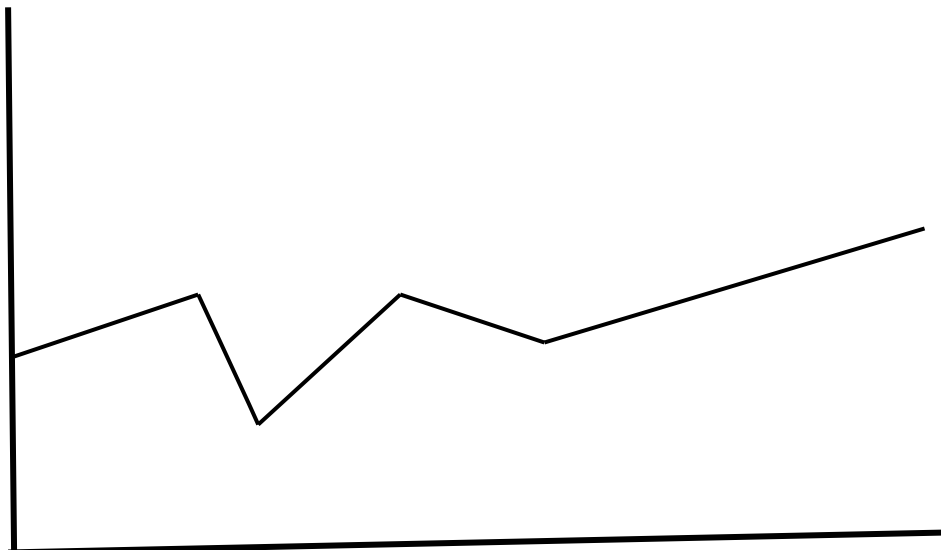


Figure 3: Thembi’s life story

Although Thembi’s narrative starts by telling me where she grew up, she then jumps across time to tell me that her father ‘died’. It was as if to say the rest of her life story will be the way it will be because her father had passed away. Her father passed away in 1999 when

she was about 10 years old. She then went back to the chronological order to talk about her schooling experience, from primary school to high school. She deliberated on how she made her career choice.

I caught up with Thembi two years after we had the first interview. Her life story seems to be progressive as she is near completing her training. Her life circumstances remain, to a large extent, the same. The change she drew on in the two years since we last saw each other concerned her career and growth as a potential nurse. She reported a change of heart in pursuing a medical degree after her training as a nurse, which was what she had previously wanted to do. The change is attributed to the available opportunities in being an accomplished nurse and being able to choose different work environments.

Thembi is continuing with her nursing studies. She is now in 3rd year and is a senior nursing student, one year away from completing her studies. Her plan of wanting to be a doctor has changed. She no longer wants to be a doctor. She is instead focusing on developing her profession in the nursing field.

O: Okay. You wanted to do medicine before? (E: Mmhmm) You first wanted to be a doctor?

T: Yeah. I wish, I don't think I still have the strength to go and study again cause now you're not credited if you want to so you have to start afresh. Although it would be easier for me now.

O: But you don't want to?

T: No.

She analyses her place in the world of work in terms of 'race' and gender:

T: You know in the nursing profession there are more females and we have like in the management in the matron's office we have one male and the rest are females and oh in management we do have there are more whites you can say than Indians than the blacks.

4.1.4 Nomusa “getting there”

Nomusa’s narrative is characterised mainly by a progressive story line. Her father, whom she had a particularly close relationship with passed away when she was in grade 12, a crucial time for her. She however ‘did not fail’ her matriculation exams. Her great grandmother who was her primary care giver also passed away. She has since completed her Information Technology (IT) diploma and is working as a cashier while looking for a Job in the IT field. So her story line is relatively stable at the moment, but has an optimistic projection into the future as reflected in Figure 4 below.

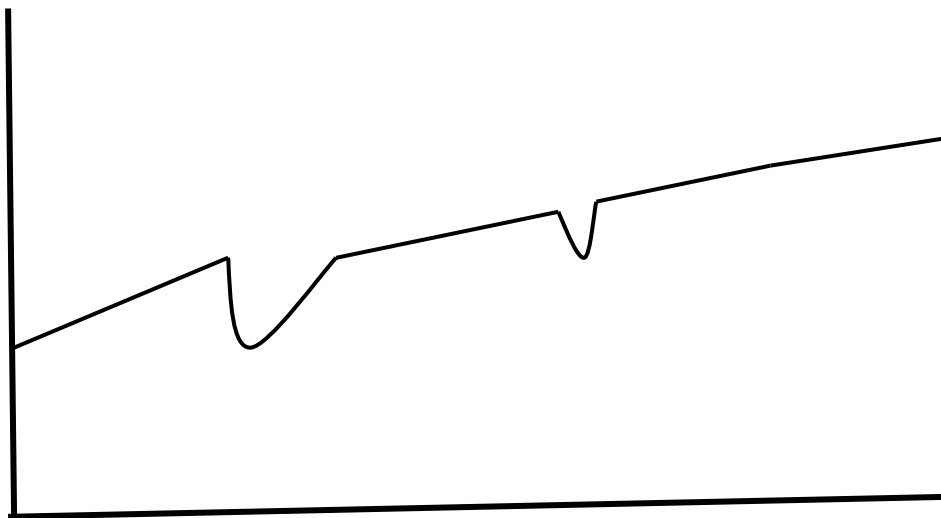


Figure 4: Nomusa’s life story.

Nomusa’s narrative follows a general chronological order. She starts off by saying where she comes from and goes on to talk about her schooling experience. I probed her to give more information and expand on certain topics. She wants a life different to that of her mother’s. She is determined to have a child only when she is ready and to avoid teenage pregnancy which her mother and grandmother went through. She wants to be successful in life.

In the year and a half between the interviews, Nomusa managed to complete her diploma in IT. Her life reflects the stability story line as she has accomplished her goal state. She is currently looking for a job while working at the same place she has been while studying. She is not particular about the type of job and has been to an interview that did not bear

fruit. When asked if her life had changed in any way she responded by saying ‘nothing much’ which denotes a fairly stable narrative line.

She is currently working as a cashier and is looking for a job as a receptionist even though her qualifications are in the Information Technology field. She has had an interview that although seemed successful was not fruitful as the salary offered was not enough for her basic living expenses.

4.1.5 Thobeka “negotiating and embracing adult roles: the challenges”

Thobeka’s life story was generally characterised by a progressive line. She is a highly motivated young woman and does not regard some of the challenges and obstacles she has faced as regressive save for her pregnancy and imminent motherhood. Even though she views the pregnancy as a challenge to her studies and perspective future, she is more determined to finish her studies and be able to provide for her child and give the child a childhood different to her own one that is not impoverished. Thobeka’s life story is generally progressive although she is experiencing some immediate difficulties and uncertainty at the moment. Despite the little dip in her current circumstances, Thobeka’s story line is progressive, as can be seen in figure 5 below.

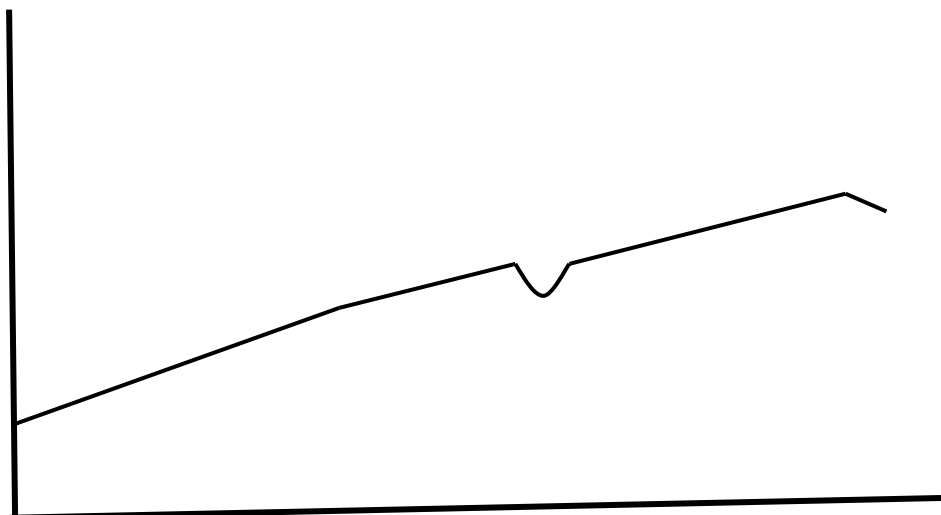


Figure 5: Thobeka’s life story.

Thobeka’s narrative is ordered chronologically. She guides me through her childhood, explaining various life events ending with an account of where she is. She was born in Johannesburg where her father worked in the mines. She then had to move to her parent’s

home as the place they were staying in was not big enough for all of them. This was typical of families that stayed in mining hostels. She was put under the care of various members of her extended family. The death of her grandmother, who was one of the people who took care of her while her parents were in Johannesburg, was a marker in her life. Her matric results were not good and so she registered to upgrade them. Her family could not pay for her tertiary education and so she decided to work and save in order to further her studies. Similar to Thobile, Thobeka does not focus on the obstacles that she is faced with in her life in the construction of her future. She is highly motivated to reaching her future goals which one is to further her studies and be successful in life.

It has been two years since her first interview. Thobeka was previously working in an attempt to save money for further education. Saving the needed money had been very difficult as she did not make enough to support herself. She has since started studying through National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSAFS). Thobeka is in her first year of studies and is pregnant. This has been a cause of great disappointment for her. She feels that she is not ready to have a baby as she is still studying and does not have a spouse who might have helped her with the responsibility of raising a child.

The pregnancy and imminent motherhood are making it very difficult for her to go on with her studies. She has to make adjustments which include quitting studying for a while. She wanted to stop going to school because she needed to take care of the baby when it was born as there was nobody else to take care of her/him. This disruption highlights the level of discrepancies in gender equality in South Africa. A young woman is forced to choose between taking care of her child and getting on with her tertiary education. She does not have the resources to have someone look after her child while she studies. This shows how in the South African context, as well as other countries in Africa, mothers bear the greatest burden in child rearing, contrary to the constitutional ideal of gender equality

She is now staying with the father of her child as she found it hard to continue staying with her brother, who does not know that she is pregnant. She feels compelled to take on 'wifely' duties as she fears that her boyfriend will otherwise not find her useful and throw her out.

T: I am staying with my boyfriend (O: mhmm) but soon I don't want to stay with him

O: why?

T: He expects me to cook, wash everything. Hai!! (claps hands) I don't like that. I want my space. Serious, I need my space

O: He expects you to cook and wash?

T: yes. Another day when I was going to school, he goes to work. I come early and he comes late. So when I get to the house I have to cook, to clean to wash dishes, to iron for him. Aa- aa, I don't need that.

Thobeka is however, willing to carry out the duties within marriage and seems to accept quite unquestioningly the highly gendered nature of the institution of marriage. This suggests an ambivalence in her positioning. Although she is unhappy at the unevenness of domestic labour in her current situation with her boyfriend, she accepts that this would be inevitable in a marriage relationship.

T: Ja, it is a woman's role (O: mhmm) ja. When you are staying with your man, you must cook for him. You do eh wife duty if you're a wife (O: ohh, ok) but that is my side. I am not his wife but if you're a wife you have to it's a wife duty (O: ok).Ja you have to cook for him, just like to to spoil him- it's a wife's duty if you are a wife, to cook for him, to spoil him (O: mm!) just like you do things that he will remember really like when he goes with his friends he will say "oh, my wife" you know "I have my boast, I am this kind of a man". You know When he comes home he must feel home, ja

O: So you don't mind doing that just as long as you're married?

T: ja. I won't mind doing that

O: what's the difference?

S: no. I am not his wife now. So I don't want to do it now. I don't want to really really to do it now, ja. The time is coming when it comes.(laughs) when it will come, ja

4.1.6 Zinzi “a narrative of a content life”

Zinzi’s life story was characterised by a combination of progressive, regressive moments in a gently progressing story line. She reports her father’s retirement and moving to a ‘black school’ as difficult times. She had a child after she finished matric and defines this as a “mistake”. Her life line is currently stable as she continues studying towards a degree in social science. Her storyline presented below includes big dips or regressive moments but is now progressive.

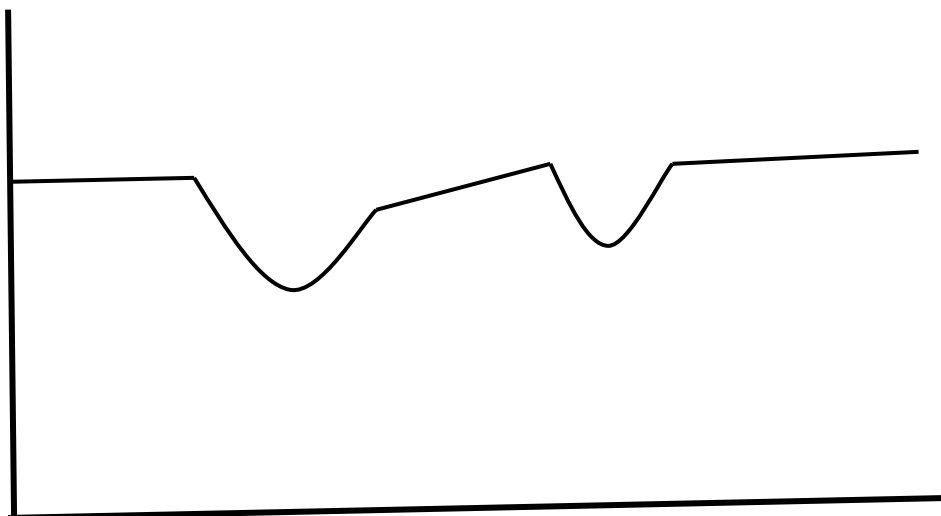


Figure 6: Zinzi’s life story.

Zinzi’s narrative is characterised by a stable life line. She ordered her life story in a chronological manner. She started off by talking about her schooling experience, starting with primary school until where she is currently, in university. She explicitly talks about the schools she attended in racial terms. Her primary school was a previously “Indian” school. She then went to a ‘black’ school as her parents could not afford the school fees any more after her father’s retirement. Her family went through a particularly difficult time financially. She dedicated a lot of time to talking about her schooling experience. Language was also central to her life experience as the use of English gave her advantage over other learners at school. She said that being a young mother was a ‘huge mistake’.

Zinzi's life story is a stable one. She passed the ACCESS² programme at UKZN and is now studying towards a degree. This has been a major change in her life. She is also working part-time to support herself and her child.

Ok, what happened was, ja, I was waiting for my results – passed my access program. And then what happened, I was at home for like two weeks, just being at home. And then I got -- I went to apply for a job there in Pavilion for a job vacancy. And I've now got a job in Ooh La La, one of the retail stores – dresses for ladies, dresses. I was working there the whole of December and January, until I stopped twenty-four January and I came to register, twenty-fifth.

I stopped twenty-fourth, but I'm going to be working part-time on Weekends. Tomorrow I'm going there, Saturday and Sunday I'm working. Ja, it's just to get cash for my daughter.

The above lifestories show a general trend of narrative progression and have a sense of triumph and overcoming. The progression is in relation to achieving perceived future goals, especially those related to education. The young women reflexively use their existing positive experiences, as well as those past to extend into their future identities, constructing favourable future outcomes.

4.2 Narratives in the midst of uncertainty

Zoleka and Khanyise's life lines were characterized by a combination of progressive and regressive plots and are still in the midst of uncertainty. They are uncertain of what is to come in the future given their past and current experiences. They don't know whether they will move towards their desired goals or not. Experience gained from the past is used to project into the future creating uncertainty. The narratives show possible ways the exercise of agency can be constrained in their everyday lives. Poverty, illness and the death of family members who were the primary financial providers were the main causes of the regressive features. These can have negative effects on future identity possibilities. Crites (1986) argues that coherent and integrated narratives are an indication of a strong sense of self

² This is a university initiative that offers students from disadvantaged schools access into the University of KwaZulu Natal's College of Humanities.

allowing for an individual to look into the future with confidence. The more complete the story, the more integrated the self (Crites, 1986). The life story should be able to connect the past and the present accounting for past experiences in the present and making it possible to conceive a future in a way that makes sense. Both women demonstrate a strong sense of self but are unable to project into the future with confidence due to the ups and downs they have experienced in their lives.

4.2.1 Zoleka “a narrative of negotiating challenges and obstacles”

Zoleka’s life story was characterised by an interaction of progressive and regressive story lines. This made for a strong and compelling life story interspersed by dramatic tension. Her mother’s illness was a particularly painful moment and caused possible depression as well as affecting future outlook as she was the bread winner. She narrated that the Fast Forward programme helped her to construct a positive future outlook. She however had to stop studying as she could no longer afford the school fees. She dropped out and had to look for a job to support her mother and sister. She is doing well at her job even though the pay is minimal. She is currently trying to enrol for short courses as well as getting her driver’s license. Figure 7 below presents Zoleka’s life story as characterised by several dramatic ups and downs.

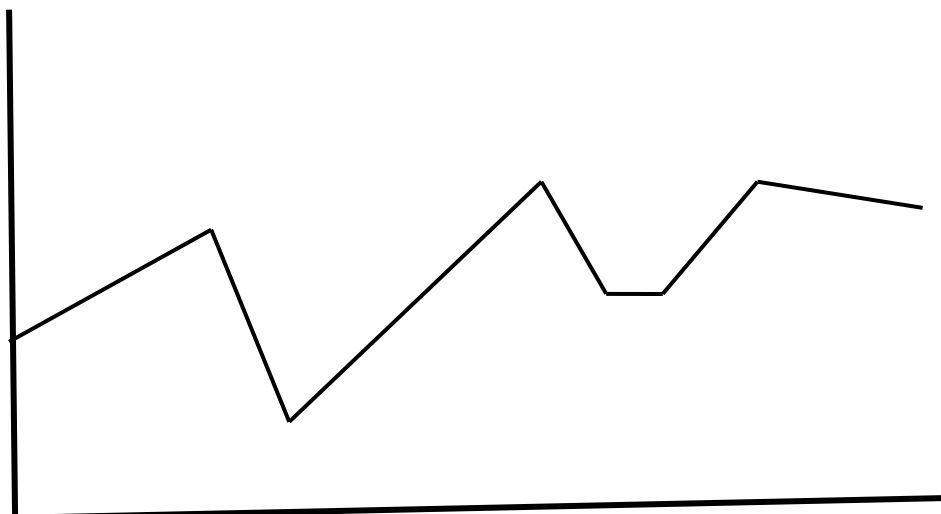


Figure 7: Zoleka’s life story.

Zoleka's second narrative took place 3 years after her first interview. Her narrative is comprised of regression and progression story lines, the makings of a strong and compelling story. Her narrative has a strong sense of dramatic tension. Zoleka's narrative is not organized temporally. She uses an episodic approach to structure her narrative. She talks about events that were very meaningful to her, whether painful or joyful. One such event was finding out that her mother was HIV positive. This was very hard for her as her mother was the only bread winner for the family. Her future prospects did not look good. She places a lot of emphasis of the Fast Forward programme at UKZN which helped her construct an alternative future for herself. This was a particularly significant moment for her as her life changed in an important way. She could now start imagining her life as possibly successful. She talks about her impoverished community and how it can be developed. She shows how its lack of development is failing the people and how she wants take part in making it better for future generations. Her narrative is shaped by a want to succeed in life and give back to the community.

After months of trying to arrange for a second interview, Zoleka finally admitted that she had been purposefully avoiding me. This was because she felt she had nothing to tell me as far as her narrative was concerned. She reported that there was nothing going on in her life. On further investigation, it became apparent that Zoleka's life was not what she had previously envisioned. It was a taking a different route to what she had intended, thus making her story line regressive. She had dropped out of school due to financial difficulties. She had also become her family's bread winner. She had to drop out of the group she sang with and found it difficult to pursue her passion for singing due to family responsibilities. The story had not reached her perceived end goal and so did not make sense to her. It felt disjointed causing psychological stress. She felt she had failed and was frustrated. This was despite the fact that she had had certain achievements; was able to pursue her driver's learner licence and pay for the lessons as well as register to upgrade her matric results which she also financed. This necessitated a retelling and recomposing of her narrative.

Z: Yeah, but my plans were, should be doing my third year, you know? So things did not go as I planned. And I have to support my family, you know? I'm the eldest one, and my mother's unemployed so I have to provide for my family, so that's kind of holding me back.

During the second interview, Zoleka was able to tell me that it was actually her mother and not her 'aunt' whom she had said had HIV. The rapport we had built enabled her to talk freely about such a sensitive topic. This strongly supports the fact that interviews are more than just a site for generating information, rather they are social encounters.

Z: And there's something I want to tell you again, you remember the aunt I told you about that is you know, that is, I just found out that she is HIV positive? You know? And the aunt that I was talking about there, at that time they found out that she was HIV positive. [O: Aww.] And at that time I couldn't handle so I said my aunt you know, yeah, but that hasn't taken away from the belief that I'm going to make it in life, you know. So those are the things you know? I've got my sister here, and she's going, you know, you know. I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine. (Second interview)

Zoleka had to quit further studies due to financial difficulties. This was a very big challenge as extending her education post school represented a means to a better life for her. Her inability to progress to her desired goal state make her feel trapped. She is unable to see her future as she used to and therefore feels deprived of her future.

Z: Come on man, come on. You know, you know all that stuff you see, I don't, you know being there, you know, I don't like being there, you know, I feel like I have no future, you know the thought of it.

O: What's happening?

Z: I want to go back to school. That's my desire, you know, I want to be something, I want to have a promotion, which yeah I will strive for that, I will strive for that.

We see how the plot dynamic interacts with the narrative content in Zoleka's narrative. The fact that her life is perceived as not progressing influences the meaning the narrative carries. Because she see herself as 'stuck' and unable to progress, the narrative is similarly truncated and she is unable to elaborate on a possible future story. Conversely, of course,

this lack of a future narrative makes it difficult for her to act with an orientation towards the future and further contributes towards the sense of being 'stuck'. We live according to narrative and tell narratives of our lives.

The second interview also helped her put things into perspective. The narrative helped her put her life events into perspective and make her story coherent. By being able to evaluate her past and present, she gets a clearer perspective on her goals for the future. She can now look at her life with hope for the future. It seems that having an audience to tell her story to, has helped her look at her own life from the interviewer's perspective, enabling her to see other possibilities by creating a storyline for the interview.

O: But this is the process of it, it doesn't mean it's the end.

Z: That's why it's like you know, I can do it, there's still time, I'm 22, I can still make it, you know, you know? [O: Yeah.] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[...]

Z: Hey One, yeah, you know when I have a stress, sometimes I think, ukuthi, I don't have a future, it ends here, you know. But eh, when I'm in my senses, despite the pain, you know that I would be dealing with at that time, uhuh, I stopped believing in those things, I will believe what I want to believe.

O: What do you see? How do you see yourself in the future?

Z: Mmhmm. Mmhmm, One. [Silence] Hey One. What do I think? I think I see myself, if I might say as a, a mother of nations [O: Wow.] Yeah. It's where, it's where I'm aiming you know, I want to be someone healer, I think, and I want to be someone's pillow strings, eh One, hey I'm going somewhere, I'm going somewhere. I'm going somewhere, that what I believe. [Silence] That I believe. That I believe. [Silence]

She said she had come to accept some of the challenges she is faced with because she is a woman and women go through hardships. As she goes into young adulthood, she takes on the role of woman which is inherently about struggle, according to her. She has had to sacrifice singing and acting in order to work and provide for her family. She sounded very

frustrated about this as she felt she did not have any other choice. She feels frustrated because her life events are seen to be regressing from her goal point.

Z: What can I do? Please tell me One. What can I do at this stage? At this stage, what can I do? You know? It's like some, some of the things it's like some of the things you have to sacrifice, you know, you have to sacrifice, as much as I love singing and acting, but I had to sacrifice that. Cause the group that I was with you know, there are shows, there are rehearsals, which at that I should be at rehearsals and I should be working, and my mom is like you're not going there wena, you're not even going, you know, and you know ukuthi, you know cause I haven't lost i-respect for her, so some other things I will swallow them as raw as they are, but yeah that's what I maybe, uh.

4.2.2 Khanyise “a struggle for integration in extreme adversity”

Khanyise told a life story characterised by a combination of progressive and regressive lines illustrating the many challenges and obstacles she was faced with, throughout childhood and young adulthood. She went through a period where she tried to commit suicide, but survived. Her mother passed away when she was nine years old. She was then fostered by her mother's ex boyfriend's family. She is constantly reminded that she and her brother do not belong to this family. She however, continues to live with them. Figure 8 below presents this up-and-down fragmented narrative in terms of the chronological events that Khanyise experienced.

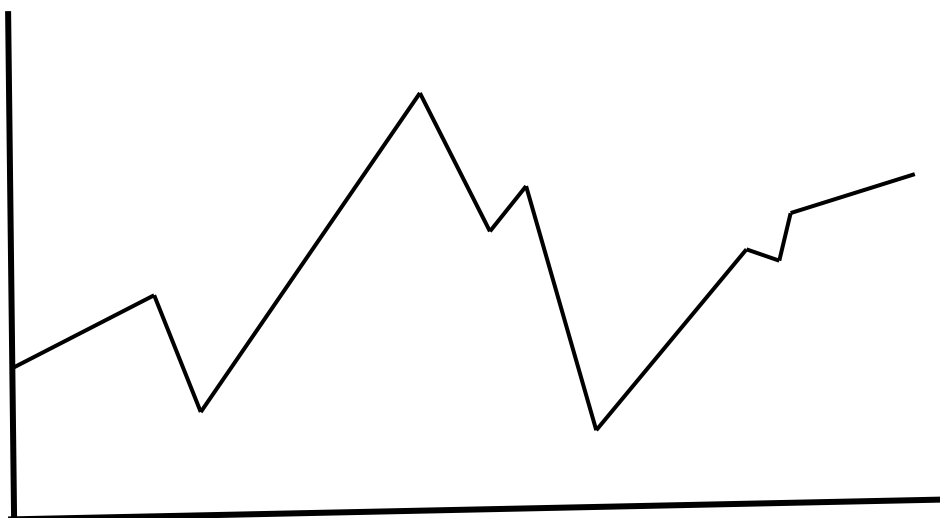


Figure 8: Khanyise's life story.

Khanyise's narrative revealed a combination of temporal and episodic characteristics. Her narrative stands out from other narratives as she chose to start by narrating the last three years of her life. She started her life story at the point where she completed her high school, placing events in a temporal order. She then talked at length about how she made her career choice and the different options she went through. She also decided to register to study at Bible College as a means of discovering "who [she is]". She devoted a lot of time to talking about God and her experience of him. She narrated in detail how she became 'born again' and showed how her world view is shaped by her belief. Her narrative took an episodic character when I started probing certain things she was telling me. These episodes seemed connected to one another by loose association rather than by causal or chronological links.

Even though Khanyise had experienced very difficult times, she was clearly struggling to integrate these experiences into a coherent sense of self. Khanyise's story, like Zoleka's was forceful, demonstrating resilience in the face of the very hard circumstances she faces in her life.

She shares her experience of her workplace and reflects on the ways in which her co-workers position her in overtly stereotypical ways, assuming that because she is a young black woman, she would be willing to accept favours and indulgences from a wealthy man in exchange for a sexual relationship. Her indignation and resistance to this positioning is strongly asserted.

K: You know, it's just some rich guy and who would tell you . . . and so he wanted my number. And they will ask me at the office: can you just give the man your number. And for what purpose? So he can call you , he can give you like free stuff and he can even buy stuff for this office, buy stuff for this. I'm like --.

O: Are you selling me?

K: I mean, yo! That, that, that's how things were and I was like, no. I'm not giving no person no number, whether he can give me airtime that's like three

hundred. I said, I don't buy myself a three hundred, a three hundred airtime and because I can't afford that airtime. And so if I still don't, can't afford that airtime I'm not going to take it from anybody else and so thank you and stuff. And like: no, you can actually, you know this man can actually teach you your driver's licence and get you to school, educate you. I'm like, whatever! I mean, they have the nerve of actually saying stuff like that and they're quite old people.

She feels displaced in the place she calls 'home'. Her foster grandparents constantly remind her and her brother that they are not part of the family.

K: No, most of the time it was at me. I mean, I, I, I couldn't understand it. I couldn't understand, I couldn't be in that house without being shouted at for something that I don't understand what the heck, you know. Yo, things like: you're not supposed to be here. You're not my daughter and whada whada and all those weird things. ja, I mean I couldn't understand. I mean the -- You know, for a while I got like depressed because I couldn't understand like, understand that how could you take me and then after a while and then, you know. I felt like, like I'm more like tolerated you know than like part of the family.[...] I mean, every single day of my life that's what I face. Every flippen single day I --.

Khanyise is aware of the challenges she is faced with. But she exercises agency in the face of the obstacles she faces in her socio cultural world.

K: Ja, I mean I guess when you're different you always face obstacles where everyone wants you to be normal. Want to be, wants you to be just like them. And if you don't, if you're not --. It's like there's always a price you need to pay for being different. When you need to, to, to, to change things and, and, and stand for something, there's always the price that you need to pay. Even if it means that you, you're excluded from everybody else. Even if it means that nobody will greet you, even if it means nobody will actually say, start a

conversation with you. Which is fine, but at least they know what you stand for.

The above lifestories are characterised by multiple challenges and uncertainty about the possibilities for constructing desirable future outcomes. However, in the face of these extremely adverse circumstances, both young women find ways to assert a coherent sense of self and integrate negative experiences into their life stories. The trajectory of these stories is far from simple or unidirectional, suggesting fragmentation and complexity.

4.3 Stable narratives- narratives caught 'in between'

Thando and Mandisa's life story lines were generally stable. The young women's evaluation of the events happening in their lives remained generally the same over the course of time with little sense that things may either improve or decline in the future. Contrary to Gergen and Gergen's stability which denotes positivity; a life story being steady, these young women's narratives appeared unchanging, as if their lives were 'stuck'. Their life situations were not improving. Their narratives are trapped in unfavorable life circumstances making it hard to see success in the future.

4.3.1 Thando- 'a reluctant story'

Thando's life story was mainly stable. However her father's retirement and consequent lack of money for her education indicated a regressive moment for Thando. This was a difficult moment for her and she "cried most of the time". She attempted to avoid the second interview for a considerable time and she says that nothing much is happening, her life has been going slowly and she attributes this to her slow progress with her studies. Her storyline is presented in Figure 9 below.

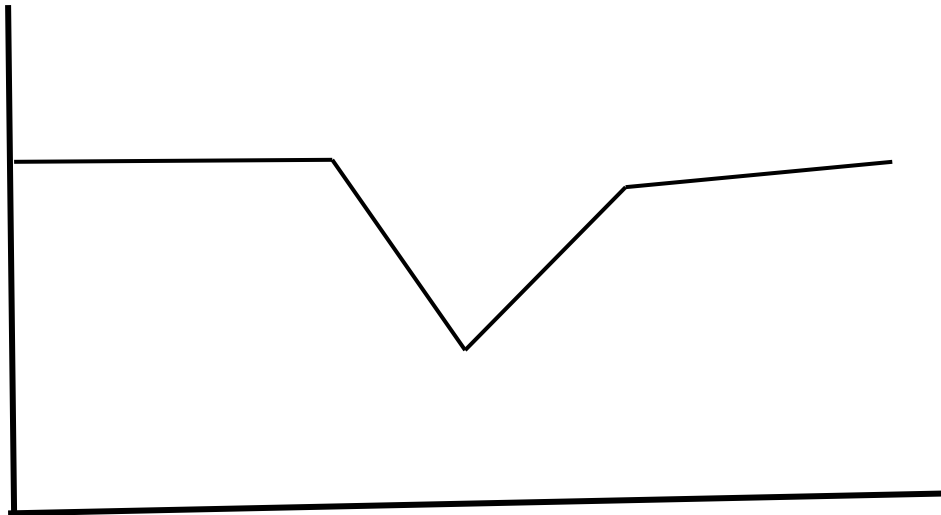


Figure 9: Thando's life story

Thando is the last of seven children. She was born in Bergville where she obtained her primary school education. She then went on to Amangwane High School where she did grade 8 to grade 12. Thando's story is interesting as it stands out in a particular way from the rest. Her life story depicted what I have termed a "reluctant story". She gave minimal information about herself and her family and only responded to questions from the interviewer without giving information freely. She avoided talking about her life experiences in depth. She starts off her story in a temporal manner that is, however, devoid of causal linkages. The story is organised by time as far as her schooling career is concerned.

T: I'm Thando, I'm from Bergville, um, I started primary school at Bergville Primary School, and I went to high school at Amangwane High School from Grade 8 up until Grade 12. Um, yeah, and?

The lowest point in her life is when her father could no longer afford to pay for her school fees as he had retired from his job. The narrative is a medium through which individuals construct and express meaning (Mishler, 1986). Individuals get to express their understanding of events and experiences through the use of a narrative. It structures events in such a way that events are experienced as coherent and seem to move in a certain direction over time. Thando seems to think that her birth was a mistake and not planned for. She is the last born of 6 children. Her parents retired while she was in her first year of tertiary education and are not able to provide for her educational needs.

This was clearly a very difficult time for Thando. She narrated that there were times when she even questioned her existence:

I was worried and I was crying most of the time and, ja.

[...]

I knew at some point my dad would stop working. At times I would like say to my mom: maybe I wasn't supposed to be born, because you have a lot of kids, why? Mom said, just shut up! You don't know what you're talking about. I love all my children and I don't regret having any of you.

The reluctance that she displays in telling her story may indicate an avoidance of a painful past or at least the reluctance to speak to the interviewer about this past. The life story can be viewed as a bridge between “the telling and the living of a narrative and between the whole parts and the parts of the life being narrated” (Atkinson, 2007, p.230). Maybe Thando is still struggling with understanding if her life is a “mistake” and so presents an avoidant or reluctant story. The proper inclusion and usage of causal explanations in a narrative gives the story credibility (Sarbin, 1986). Through causal accounts, a protagonist explains how she came to be and who she might be in the future. Thando's narrative in both interviews did not make great use of causal explanations. Her account did not provide coherent causal explanations for how she believes she has developed over time. Her narrative reveals ‘magical thinking’. She said the following when asked what she would change in her life:

O: *Ok. If you were to change one thing in your life right now, what would it be?*

T: *In my life? That's a hard question. I would change the campus.*

Thando's second life story interview took place two years after the first interview. She has since experienced financial problems as her father is retired and cannot pay for her school fees. This changed affected her life in different ways. The lack of finances presented a lot of psychological stress for her. The financial problems which affected her studies made it seem like her life was progressing slowly. With little income coming in, Thando did not want to be a burden to her aunt with whom she was staying in Tongaat in order to be closer to her

school in Durban. She has moved in with her sister in Johannesburg as she is be able to take care of her financial needs since she is working.

4.3.2 Mandisa “poverty entraps me”

Mandisa’s life story was characterised by a stable story line as she felt that her life was caught within poverty. Her life started showing progression after her mother had saved enough for her to train as a nurse and at the same time her sister had started working and was contributing financially to the family. Her storyline presented below reflects this relatively stable line with an anticipated progressive orientation towards the future.



Figure 10: Mandisa’s life story.

Mandisa’s narrative is primarily structured through the theme of poverty. She defines her life in terms of poverty. This is seemingly they way she can make meaning of her life. She starts her life story by introducing herself as coming from a poor family.

M: I’m Mandisa[...] I’m coming from the poor family, poor family. I think the poorest family, ja...

Mandisa’s life story line was constant because she felt trapped in hopeless circumstances of poverty. She felt like her life was going nowhere. Narrative structures and connects life events into a coherent whole and seems to move in a certain direction over time. This is what gives the self a sense of coherence and continuity (Fay, 1998). Mandisa’s life, however, does not seem to be moving. She finds herself within cycle of poverty and finds it difficult to transcend it. Aliber (2003) defines chronic poverty as poverty that is passed on from one

generation to another. This is a consequence of being unable to accumulate due to a deprivation of infrastructure and amenities as was the case under apartheid. Being situated in a remote area with minimal economic opportunities exacerbates the situation.

When we are cooking at home, today we are using the cow dung to cook food to eat. Because we don't have enough money to buy wood and electricity stove. But we are trying, ja. And my mother is still struggling and trying.

[...]

I remember that when I, when I go to school --. When I go to school I used to, I was coming to school with no food in my stomach. But in the afternoon my mother would make sure that we were going to find the food, so that we can cope with our studies and not to lose hope.

Mandisa's second interview took place 2 years after the first one. In the time since we last met, her life story is showing progression, albeit to a limited degree. She has the promise of enrolling to train as a nurse and has since moved to Johannesburg to stay with her sister. Her family has had access to much needed capital providing her with a glimpse of hope. Her sister has helped change the family's impoverished state.

M: ...Now she is, she lay buys some sofas and a wall unit. But things have changed because even the neighbours see that.

Her father is also now supporting his family financially and is coming home more regularly as opposed to staying away for as long as two years previously.

M: Mmmh, she, he gives us money, eh, he give my mom money, and he come at home in holidays now, ja. Coz last time he used to stay in Jo'burg for as longer than two years.

With some money coming in, Mandisa has been able to get enrolled in a nursing school. Her mother, who is unemployed, was able to raise money towards her school fees. Mandisa was, however, still faced with financial problems as the money was not enough to cover the

needed school fees. Her sister is working in Johannesburg and this promises an improved life for Mandisa.

Mandisa and Thando's lifestories seem stuck at unfavourable points in their lives without much promise of progression and are overwhelmingly determined by financial constraints. The possibilities for these young women to imagine future lives are curtailed by the immediacy of these very real material difficulties. These narratives reflect the continuing inequality of South African society within which hopeful young matriculants must navigate their way into adulthood.

4.4 Conclusion

The elicited life stories reveal change over time in various ways. The stories highlighted the young women's involvement in the exploration and formation of a mature self. Gender stories become more pronounced over the progress of time in their lives as they took on adult roles which turn out to be gendered. Socio economic conditions of poverty are evident in the young women's lives as they shape, to a certain degree, their life experiences, constraining their lived lives in various ways. The gender inequities and socio economic factors featured in the narratives reflect the social reality of the South African context in which the young women are negotiating their identities. Most of the stories were shaped by their desires to be successful in their lives. They wanted to achieve something with their lives. Success was mainly defined in terms of studying and getting a job afterwards, something that their parents were not able to experience.

Many of the young women deliberated on talking about the process involved in their career decision making and the choices they had to make. Late adolescence and early adulthood mark a period of change and activity in identity construction. The young person experiments with different identity options which include career and roles. They are faced with the question of what their goals in life are and what their defining identity will be (Santrock, 1998). Erikson argues that adolescents are involved in the construction of a coherent and purposeful self-concept (Adams & Montemayor, 1983). Through the creation of a life story, adolescents begin to deal with what Erikson considered the major psychosocial task of their life stage: the exploration and formation of a mature identity. This narrative identity is

established in adolescence and evolves over the course of adulthood, reflecting the person's changing concerns, roles, priorities and self conception.

Cultural scripts (cultural values, norms and practices) available to us influence the way we remember and feel about the past (Baddeley & Singer, 2007). The use of narratives allows these young women to organise their experience with the available resources that their socio cultural environment offers, thus reflecting the larger social world. Their narratives give insight into the state of the socio cultural context of post apartheid South Africa.

Analysis of narrative structure shows the young women in the study exercising agency at various points of their lives, or recognizing the constraints thereof. Some narratives are told in an attempt of overcoming constraints imposed on the story teller's agency. Despite the obstacles, however, these young women in the study revealed great determination to achieve their perceived goals. A strong sense of self created through coherent and more integrated narratives, enables them to look into the future with confidence (Crites, 1986). Crites (1986) argues that the more complete the story the more integrated the self. These young women are able to connect the past and the present accounting for past experiences in the present through their life stories making it possible to conceive a future in a way that makes sense. The young women in this study revealed clear movement and fluidity in their identity. They had the capacity to project into their future in positive ways despite challenges that they faced in the past and current times. The young women's narratives revealed how they exercised their agencies and the different ways that their agencies were constrained. Gender inequities, poverty and loss of bread winners posited significant constraints on the exercise of their agencies.

Chapter 5 Thematic analysis and discussion

This section focused on the content of the narratives order to understand meaning attributed to events and experiences. It involved identifying prominent themes and organizing the themes in a coherent manner. The themes identified are: poverty, place, family structure, gender, language and education.

5.1 Poverty

Figures show that inequality remained relatively unchanged across all households between 1975 and 1996 (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). At the same time, inequality within each racial group increased significantly. This implied that there was a decrease in the inequality between racial groups. However, the poor got poorer while the rich got richer among the 'black' population within this period (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). The rural areas are the most hit by poverty. All the young women from the rural area, except for Thando, reported the effects poverty, especially during their childhoods. Statistics show that 71% of people based in rural areas are poor and they account for 72% of poor people in South Africa (Aliber, 2003). This affected Thobeka, Zinzi and Mandisa's day to day life.

Thobeka: *Like, they don't struggle too much now. When I was young I was struggling, because other days we sleep with pap only, you know. Ja, we were struggling. Ja, like we come at home, we were coming from school, at home there is no food, you know? Ja.*

Zinzi: *They [our parents], they took us to location schools. Ja, they sent us to location schools whereby you walk to school. Ja. Because there was a time when my father, my father used to work at So ja, and then he retired. After retirement he got some money and then after the money, the money was gone, finished. My father just couldn't afford to take us to school where we had to take a taxi or take a bus . . . the bus fare, ja. So we had to go to the location school. So you just, you won't believe if I tell you the life I had. At that time I was doing grade, grade seven. So I had to go to grade eight in high school and there*

was no money. We didn't have food and we had to go to school without food. Came back from school, there's still no food. At grade seven I was in Overport, so my mother was waiting for me to finish at high school before I go to --. Waiting for me to finish primary before I go to high school, so it was the last year when I was still in grade seven when there was no money at home. So we had to walk from Chesterville to Overport.

[...]

It was a very hard time. It was a hard time because my mother was unemployed and my father was retired. And then the money was gone, he didn't do any investments or anything. And then it was tough – my sister was still at school, my brother was not working. We were trying to open a tuck shop but the tuck shop didn't work because we also ate from this tuck shop so it didn't work. They were trying but then it was like a couple of -- Two years, it was a process of two years ok and then after my sister was Ja, she went and studied for one year

Story telling allows people to put together meanings they make of the world in recognisable plots (Crites, 1986). Mandisa's story was dominated by poverty. This was seemingly the way she could make meaning of her life experiences.

Mandisa: *[...]I'm coming from the poor family, poor family. I think the poorest family, ja. When I say the poorest family, it's because my father doesn't support us. My mother used to struggle, where for the school fees from- [...]*

[...]

In childhood -- In my childhood I didn't see my childhood. Ja, because I was knowing nothing. I started to see myself when I was doing grade seven. Ja, because I didn't see my mother how it --. How hard she is trying to give us a better life. Ja, but now I see. She's trying to, to, to not show others that we are poor. And they don't see because we always just hide that. But if you can come to my home you can see. Ja.

The financial situations in Thobile and Zinzi's families changed as the number of earners increased. Bozalek (1999) says that sometimes children are expected to help out financially within the household. Households functioned through the input of multiple earners and various caregivers.

Thobile: *But now because I'm working, ja, so I have to help her. And also my mother when she gets some temporary jobs to do some washings and stuff, ja, we do get the money and buy some food and stuff*

Zinzi: *It was so frustrating, yo! And then she took my sister to college for the Metro police thing and then ja, it went well after all that. After studying she, she was employed then things started to change within the house. Starting to buy new things, you know, afford. And there were a lot of things we started to have, have inside our house. Ja.*

[...]

*It helped us a lot because we knew each and every month we're going to get like a huge grocery from her and then she bought a fridge, she bought a stove. And then everything was ok, it helped us. We even had that -- We even, you know, had that ambition to go to school Started not to be lazy to go to school [...]*Because we started -- We had breakfast before we could go to school, we had breakfast before we go to school. Ja, so it motivated us a lot. And then we, we matriculated. Because it's just two of us, my sister and I, that were still in high school at that time.

South Africa's old age pension is reportedly the government's most effective anti-poverty intervention (Bhorat & Kanbur, 2005). Social grants play an important in helping financially in the household. Pension receivers often become bread winners due to the high unemployment rate in South Africa (Duflo, 2003). The family becomes dependent on an allowance that can barely sustain one person. It gives much needed financial relief. All the rural women reported their families' dependence on grandmothers and their pensions.

Zinzi : *You know when it [life] changed? It didn't change when my sister got a job, it's changed when my father applied for pension grant and then my mother applied for pension, also applied for pension grant. And then things started to change because we had no electricity at home and then my mother got the electricity back on with the pension grant. Because when you get those pension grants for the first time you get a big amount, so then we got, my father got the water back because we didn't have water.*

Thobile *Like she's [grandmother] been supporting us, ja, for a long time. Ja, since she got her pension. Because she's the one who got, you know, always by the big things like the flour, rice, those things [...]*

Nobuhle *[...] And at home the only person who was working was my grandmother. She was working in Jo'burg as a maid. And -- Oh, ok, she retired and in 1999 I was doing grade six. As from there, there was no-one who was working. We were dependent on her pension [...]*

Nomusa *[...] so from that money and her pension money she'd take care of us. She was like a rock for the whole family [...]*

Mandisa *I -- When I was in the high school it was not so bad, because my grand --. I have grandmother and so my grandmother helped us with her pension [...] Ja, she's helping. But because of my sister who was at school, that money was used to go to the school fees for her*

It is indicative of the severe levels of poverty, that entire families survive by relying on government old age pension grants that are far from adequate to support even the single aged recipient of the grant. In addition to often providing primary care and support for children in families where mothers are absent or working, Grandmothers contribute in significant ways to the financial upkeep of the family. Their pension money is used for things ranging from basic necessities such as food to paying for school fees.

5.2 Place

Space in South Africa was shaped by apartheid and was also used to serve apartheid ideals (Landman, 2006). The more affluent suburbs were associated with 'white' people while other 'races' were found in poorly developed townships and even less developed homelands (Landman, 2006). The young women's narratives featured geographical space in significant ways. The participants all came from quite homogeneously racialised spaces: some from a township and some from a rural area. Their communities and the pertaining cultures held particular meanings, which affected their lives in various ways. Specific environments were associated with certain behaviours and ways of thinking that were inadvertently associated with the racial group found in those areas. Where a person is geographically located, will to a certain extent, shape how they will experience life. Movement across geographical space was linked to family ties and economic reasons.

5.2.1 Townships

Through their narratives the young women constructed suburbs and townships in contrast to each other. The differences were mainly framed as due to socio-economic factors. The apartheid legacy which separated geographical space according to racial lines and the resulting economic divide are the basis of the difference found between these two areas (Lemanski, 2004; Landman, 2006). Khanyise says:

Ok, I'm going to compare from a person who lives in the suburbs to a person who lives in the township. A person who lives in the township will have like, limited resources, smaller houses. And most of the time the people who live there depend on, basically, the government. Most of them, they're not working. Most of them -- It's kind of like, limited, in a whole lot of things. And while other people that like lives in the suburbs, they're kind of like more educated. They, you know, they're educated. They're wealthy and stuff. Even their lifestyle is different than ours because of what they're exposed to. The knowledge and everything, you know. So they have means for a whole lot of stuff. Well, in the

township, people they do -- Most of them, they're just families who work very hard, you know, for their kids and stuff like that. And ja, that's the township.

[...]

Ok. Like, there were so many -- I mean like, there were so many -- There were kids from like different worlds and I was like coming from a township. And there's a whole lot of kids from like suburbs, you know, that they have like different backgrounds and you get into varsity, there's a whole lot of things going on. In terms of like their lifestyle, you know, and I was saved and I was like, you know, whoa!

Zinzi: *The suburbs normally in apartheid era, it used to be the first class people and the location the third class people. People that are poor and people that cannot afford living in the suburbs area.*

[...]

A location is an informal settlement that they --. A location, it's different It's just -- A location, it's just houses that were built by --. In the apartheid era there's those formal houses that were built in the apartheid times for black people.

Khanyise: *[A township is] where all the black people are in. We have like small houses and everything like that. The lifestyle is different.*

Zoleka: *Uh, that, can I say, we don't have much opportunities, (O: hmm) you see, we are actually, it is like we living in a box, you know, to exposed to many things, you know...*

Zinzi reports that class and financial viability rather than 'race' have become a basis for spatial separation. Erasmus (2005) says that inequality has progressed from being simply a function of race and that class distinctions are increasing rather than decreasing. According to statistics, South Africa has the second highest inequality index in the world (Kingwill & Cousins, 2006).

Zinzi: *No, there's not much difference now. But there is a difference. There's a difference because people are not different now, people are all the same. You can live wherever you want, you can study what you want. You can go wherever you want, if you're black or white it's all the same. You can live in suburbs area as long as you afford it and stuff. Ja. There's no -- There is a different, quite a large difference*

Although people are free to move where they might desire as deemed by Zinzi, the movement has been in one direction. A high number of the emerging black elite have moved into previously white spaces. However there has been virtually no movement the other way (Ladd & Fiske, 2004).

The apartheid race based geographical space segregation which separated 'white' people from 'black' people made easy social distancing between the two racial groups. This led to the increasing polarization of social groups which continues to increase differences between social groups in post apartheid South Africa (Lemanski, 2004). Khanyise tries to make sense of the socio economic dynamics in her township by attributing the difference between the two spaces to different ways of making meaning.

*Ok, this is another thing that's different. Sort of like, our thinking. **Our thinking's like, there's always going to be that like being limited. That I cannot move from where I'm at.** And you see, even though some of the people I went to school with, they're kind of like limited in like: ok I'm going to this school, I'm just going to get out of matric and just work. Instead of like going and furthering my studies, because of a lack of money. And we're limited in terms of like -- It's like, you know, you think like, my father was maybe like a teacher and you think maybe like I too am going to be the same. And you think that there's no, there's nothing else beyond that, and this is who I am. . . . that's it. Ja.*

Zinzi also talks about a way of thinking that is particular to townships:

*Even my brother, my other brother he used to have those ups and downs not going to school. You know, he even got the **location mind** of the, of not being around. Of being with friends at all times, of friends that have a bad influence[...] Because he was drinking and they always phoned from school and told my mother he's not coming to school. He hasn't been to school for like the past two weeks.*

Townships are talked about as a historical creation but are also in the present. The young women are aware of this and through their narratives try to distance themselves from the apartheid ideology that is entrenched in the spatial separation. They are trying to separate themselves from apartheid and yet are living within its effects. They refuse to be tied to a particular identity but seem to prefer to assume and discard particular identities as the need arises and seem to have a very fluid sense of possibilities for themselves. Through their story-telling, the participants connect the past and the present and make it possible to conceive of a future in a way that makes sense (Crites, 1986). The young women's narratives reveal that the racialisation of space has led to the racialisation of some behaviour. "Township" seems to be made synonymous with black people and conjures up negative connotations. Zinzi attempts to distance herself from this identity.

There are no white people staying at the location, only black people stay in locations. As I told you that location, it, it -- Maybe it's our great great grandparents who lived there because of oppression, oppressed because of the apartheid era. But they were not allowed to be with white people and stuff, so then from then their generation to their generation until us, we had to live there. So now, it's different now because you can, you can move from a location to a suburb, now. At that time our -- Our great grandparents could not do whatever they wanted at times. So now you can move, but then now you need to study and you know and get, be employed you know so you can afford to move away from location.

But then the location, there's nothing wrong with the location, it's just that you know black people how they live their lives, kind of corrupted there in the suburb areas. You know, there are a lot of tsotsi's and you know violence. But there's not much. That's, that's what people have in mind when you come with the word location and the black society. Something just comes up in mind that, ok corruption and violence but maybe you know, it's not that bad. It's not that bad. Because me myself, I have never been maybe, I mean accused or whatever or . . . or robbed inside the location. You know it has changed, but then in past years if our parents tell us it looked bad, it was a bad settlement. It was bad you know.

Zoleka, on the other hand, does not distance herself from this identity. Her being 'black' makes her part of the 'common' identity.

Ja, eish, I am a black person (O: hmm) so, our community, (O: Hmmm) is, Is...what can I say, not that.... Shall I say civilized, (O: Hmmm) [...]

Identity is a convergence of the individual as a social subject and the processes which produce subjectivities. The prevailing discourses hail the social subject in an attempt to get them to respond (Hall, 2000). The young women's response to the dominant discourses shows that the suturing of the subject is "an articulation, rather than a one sided process" (Hall, 2000, p.19). It is a two sided process with the subject being hailed and the subject investing in the position.

Nomusa:

[...] It's very difficult, because you have to know who you are and where you want to go. Because without that, you can end up doing a lot of regretful things. Like drinking [...]

[...]

When you're living there [in the township], ja. You have to know where you want to go. You have to know the purpose, your life's purpose. And then you have to wish big for yourself. You have dreams and hopes for the future. Know your facts. In that way you'll be able to make it. That's the only way you can make it.

Although there is a perceived ability to be able to transcend the geographical separation of the racial groups, this remains difficult. Getting out of the townships is more than getting away from the geographical space. It is in a way, a metaphor of getting away from what the township represents; poor development, minimal resources and impoverished livelihoods. Zinzi shows through her narrative that the way to get out of the township and essentially transcend the difficulties it imposes is through education and getting a job.

The people -- Ja, they choose their lives, because there are people like us, they're at varsity from Chesterville, that come from Chesterville. Since I was young, since I was born I was living in Chesterville. I haven't moved to anywhere besides Chesterville.

[...]

You choose your life, you know. You apart yourself from people who are corrupted and you choose your own life – ok, now I want to be like this because at the end I need to have a, I have to have a good future.

Zinzi, Nomusa and Thembi talk about pregnancy, school truancy and drugs as characteristics of township life. They distance themselves from this way of life.

Zinzi: *People choose how to live their lives nowadays, how do you want to live your life. There are small kids in Chesterville who, who dropped out of school at the age of fifteen, at the age of fourteen and they chose to live . . . their lives. Smoke dagga, walk up and down the streets, they don't know what to do. A lot are like boys, the majority of them are boys. So that also makes Chesterville is Chesterville. There are little children that are not educated; they just drop out of school and don't even --. Because there are a lot of schools around the location. You just walk to school. I don't know, maybe it's the parents that are lazy to give pressure to the children to go to school or is it children, the children that are lazy to go to school or what. But then, ja, the majority of them are boys.*

For Nomusa teenage pregnancy is considered to be a township feature. It is almost impossible not to have a child when you're young. Not having one is an achievement.

... she always told me not to be like her when I was growing up, so ja, I didn't come become like her. To look at her, I mean, it's a township so imagine the life there. Some of the kids they have children like, when they're fifteen. So, my mom also had me when she was fifteen.

[...]

That is how life is like in the township: it's very fast. You get children at a very young age, so it's when you don't have a child when you're twenty it's like, wow! How did you do that, you know [...] It's a strange thing. It's like a strange thing, because you, you, you're different from the others. Few people get successful in townships.

Thembi says of the people in her township:

Most people -- Ok children go to school, but like children there like partying most of them and like there are few people who are interested like in school. Ja, but, but although like the, the the the older like generation, like encourage the children to to go to school but most of them are not interested [...]

5.2.2 Rural spaces

Rural areas were, under apartheid, impoverished, and economically dysfunctional the effects of which are persistent today. Many black men had to move to more developed and economically viable urban areas to find jobs. This led to fragmented families. A significant number of families in rural areas, especially those headed by women live below the poverty line. Due to the prevalent poverty, many of the children are malnourished (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Job prospects are bleak within these areas.

Thobile: *My community. My community -- I think in my community there are a lot of things, you know, lacking. Like, like knowledge about things like AIDS. Because*

you can hear when people talk about things and you can see that there are a lot of things that are missing. And they believe so much in witchcraft, ja. So, ja, we do lack sometimes. They do lack. Even if you try to tell them something they don't believe you because they believe what they believe in, ja. And there are a lot of youngsters which are not going to school. Not because they don't have money, but because they don't want to and no-one is going to tell them to.

[...]

T: Because they say so. Because they failed maybe many classes like maybe three times and they say: they give up, I'm no longer going to go to school. Without any valid reason at all. And they tend to be criminals, ja.

O: Because there's no like -- Because they don't have the education to do anything else.

T: Ja, because they don't do anything for a living. They don't want to work. Sometimes they do get temporary jobs but they get finished easily because they steal and do those stuff. And then they come, they come back and stay at the bottle store nearby, ja.

Nobuhle: *[...] I can see that our community is like, is not the way I want it to be. . . . there are some facilities that are available. Ja, but I want to help them but I don't know what or how. And the problem with it is that people around us and people that don't want development. I don't know for sure, but like if they are doing this thing, water project, there are pipes running it you know. And some people who cut those pipes, I don't know why. Because it's helping them, it's all to help them. But they are cutting it, you know. There are some stories in there. I don't know if they don't want development or they don't want to be developed. I don't know. Because they think it's going to help them. It's hard helping people like that, you know. But in future I want my family to be like, to improve a bit.*

From the perspective of these young women, the more developed urban areas make everyday life easier. This is because of the availability of jobs which are very scarce in rural areas.

O: *Ok, how was life different between these two areas?*

Thobeka: *As I said, Bergville, we were like struggling, we were struggling a little bit. Life in Jo-burg, it's cool. Because you know, I don't struggle. Ja, I stay with my brother and my sister-in-law, ja. They are working and I try to find the job, the piece jobs and I work . . . Like I didn't struggle too much, I don't struggle at all.*

[...]

[The communities] are very different, ja. The Bergville community like if you don't have something, you must ask like the neighbours. They like the family, ja, the community at Bergville are like family, they help each other. Like Jo-burg, you do your thing, I you do your, my thing, you know. Like there is no other . . . just interfering into other problem, you know.

Thobile and Thobeka's narratives reflect on movement between spaces in South Africa. Migration in South Africa presents a complex picture with different types of migration occurring for different and sometimes linked reasons which include personal conflict, political violence and looking for work (Smit, 1998). For Thobile movement across geographical space was linked to personal conflict:

I was born in Mazizini and then due to some family matter they had to move to Durban to stay here with my aunt there. And then I stayed like for seven years there.

[...]

ok. I was staying with my grandmother, my mother, my two sisters, my two uncles and my cousins, my three cousins. Ja. And then what happened was that I was still going to study here but due to that year there was a problem – my father died – so I had to move to there so they can just help me with the school

and stuff, and then I moved to Durban. But otherwise, ja, and then due to the treatment that I was getting there, so I chose to come back again to study home.

[...]

I grew up at Mazizini area here in Bergville. I started school in School and then I, until, until grade three, and then I went to Durban to study at . . . High School in Umlazi. Ja, and then I came back here and studied at . . . until, until grade ten. And then I came here at . . . High School in 2005 and then I studied here, and then in June, is it June? Ja, we went to the Fast-forward program, ja, then we went to Durban.

Thobeka's narrative shows circular rural–urban migration. This is a two-way migration taking place between the rural and urban spaces. It reveals a degree of social connection between rural and urban spaces. Circular migration points towards the strong links between rural and urban spaces that exists in South Africa. A lot of urban migrants migrate with the expectation that they will return to their rural homes on illness or retirement (Collinson, Tollman & Kahn, 2010). So in this manner the rural household is considered as the 'real' household (Smit, 1998).

I was born at Gauteng, at Baragwanath hospital. I lived there, maybe I grow up like I was -- When I was five years I go back to Natali, Bergville, yes. I grow up there and I study my lower grade and my high school.

[...]

Because my -- Like, my father have a home at Bergville so we must go back to Bergville. [...] The place was so small, like, my father he was renting the other place that was so small. So had to go back to Bergville.

You know like, Bergville is but I don't like Bergville that much, you know. The thing -- Like I tell myself that I'll study, get a job, and I'll make money then I'll take my parents to Jo-burg to stay with me. Ja.

Interestingly, the young women who are rurally based showed significant movement between rural and urban spaces when compared to the urban based group whose movement was limited to township and city within the same province. Even though Thobeka and Thobile were the only two women whose first interviews talked about movement between rural and urban space, all five rural based women were involved in migration from rural to urban and displayed temporary migration as their families are based in the rural areas. By the time of the second interview, they are all studying in urban areas; Thobeka, Mandisa and Thando in Soweto, Thobile in Pretoria and Nobuhle in Durban. Thobeka, Mandisa, Thando and Thobile were able to migrate because some family members were already in urban areas.

5.3 Family Structure

The structure of families in South Africa moves from the narrow construction of the Western idea of a family to different forms of families. South Africa's political history has significantly contributed to the shape of the existing household structures. Laws serving apartheid ideals separated family members across geographical space. Urban areas which are more developed and economically advanced provided much needed employment and this divided households into urban and rural components (Jones, 1993; Bozalek, 1999). The African traditional family is made up of an extended network of individuals who are considered as family (Bohman *et al*, 2009). This includes grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. The young women in this study tell of their own childhood and being cared for by different family members who include extended family.

Thobeka: *My grandmother asked me to stay with her. I was doing the primary, and when I did the grade six my grandmother passed away and I go back home.*

[...]

[Life] changed a lot, because I was doing grade six and she passed away. And like my mom said: ok you must finish the primary. And then when you go start

the high school you will come back home. I stay with uncle's wife—I was staying with my uncle's wife and her two kids [...]

Nomusa: *[...]-- Oh, I've got an uncle that's taking care of me now, my dad's brother. Ja, when my dad passed away [he] took the whole responsibility for me, ja. [He]'s taking care of me – I'm like [his], his other daughter. He's got two daughters and I'm like the third one. I'm the eldest though. Ja.*

[...]-- Every month he sends money. He pays school fees for me. That's why, also why I want to pursue my studies, because I still have someone who's taking care of me.

Khanyise: *I lived with my mom, right, my gran and my sister, the sister, my sister's mom. My mother's sister had some kids you know, my family, my cousins. And then when my mom died my gran also died that same year. And then you know my mom, my sister's mom was like twenty or something like that, twenty something, so she was very young. And she got all weird and depressed about it so the way that she dealt with this was just to go out and drink, and drink again, and again and again. . . . my cousins . . . , Thandi the first one and the second one is Promise. So the first one just went off doing drugs and stuff like that and the second one did the same thing. So they both are now HIV positive [...]*

Life is not always good with extended family. The children's lives are not stable. They may move around different relatives and the living experience is not always pleasant. Their early years are characterised by domestic instability, upheaval, fragmentation and uncertainty (Jones, 1993). Some children may experience constant parenting from those who have taken over the role. Some, however, do not experience constant parenting and this can be damaging in the long run.

Nomusa: *[...]So when [my grandmother] passed away, we had to adjust to that. Because I had to move from that family to my other family, to my dad's family. So it affected me a lot, in terms of different ... To adjust to the things that my dad's*

family used to do, you know. I used to be so uncomfortable, because I was so used to living with my grandma, my other grandma. But now it's fine because I've grown up now.

Thobeka had a difficult time with her aunt and was made to feel as if she was not really part of the family.

When she wash the clothes she like wash the clothes of her kids. Like mine, ha-ah. I was doing the washing all. I was ironing my clothes but her kids she was doing all their stuff. And I fell like, oh I am out.

Thobile made a choice to forgo better education and an improved livelihood she was offered in Durban as her stay with her aunt was unpleasant. She was made to feel that she had to trade labour in order to earn her keep, making her feel disadvantaged and exploited even when she was 'at home'.

Thobile: *Ja, life there was nice. It's just that my aunt was you know, having attitude and stuff. And sometimes tell you about your life, that you, you are, and all sort of things, ja. But anyway, life was good. I was studying at a very good school, [...] So I decided no, I can't stay for this. And then I just called them at home and I told them I won't be staying any more in Durban, I will come back and study here. Even if we don't have money but I think we will just try to make a plan, we will make a plan.*

[...]

T: *I used to clean, wash, ja, like that. But sometimes, ja, she would say things that will upset you.*

O: *Like?*

T: *Like saying you have to work, because you have no choice. And because I bought you these shoes, so, all those things.*

The extended family plays an important role in the lives of these young women. Typical of diverse South African family structures, members of the family do not necessarily live

together and, in most cases, may be scattered over different geographical areas and movement between urban and rural spaces for the purposes of work is a standard pattern. The significant role of women in the participants' stories is very evident; mothers, aunts and grandmothers seem to be both the primary carers and financial providers for the participants.

5.3.1 Fatherhood

There was a sense that the fathers could have somehow made the circumstances of their lives better had they been present. Men are awarded a prestigious position in the community which allows for them to access resources that women would normally not be able to access. The father figure thus comes to represent the possible solution of the participants' problems. This is supported by Richter and Smith (2006) who argue that children with an absent father are disadvantaged when they do not have access to labour and financial support provided by men.

O: *So how was life like with living with your father?*

Thobile: *It was very good, ja. Very nice relationship. He was working at Eskom, ja. He was doing, working at Eskom and then he was shocked and then passed away.*

With her father passing away, there was no source of income for Thobile's family. Her future was altered by the passing of her father as there was no one to pay for her school fees.

T: *Passed away. Ja, it did change, because while he was still here I used to get everything like I wanted. I knew that one day I will be studying, you know, and ja. But after his death I saw there was no chance for me to do all those things, but what I had to do now was maybe to find a job so I can just support my family and my younger childrens, my younger sisters, ja.*

[...]

[Life changed] a lot. Because I always knew that I would go to school and I will get, like, a better life. But when he passed away my thinking changed and I knew

eventually that I have to provide for my family. Because, ja, there was that difficulty at work with my mother, ja, so ja my thinking did change from that.

O: *How do you think your life would be different if he had lived?*

T: *If he had stayed. I think maybe I would be at the highest university, I would be studying and then, ja.*

Zoleka talks about an absence of emotional support from her father, someone to guide her through life and affirm her.

O: *What would you have liked of him to have done?*

Z: *Emotional support, (O: Hmmm) uyabona, from a father, (O: Hmmm) uyabona cause mina no mama we are strong, we are tough (O: Hmmm) so, you must have that, that male ezokuba beside you ukuthi hayibo lalela, kukanje, uyabona, (O: Hmmm). That man figure uyabona, (O: Hmmm) ezongitshela ukuthi that is right, (O: Hmmm). Uyabona, uyabona, that support from daddy, (O:Hmmm) uyabona, ya, (O: Hmmm). Angizange ngibe nako ukuthi daddy, daddy, daddy, I did not have that, (O: hmmm) Uyabona....*

[Emotional support, (O: Hmmm) you see, from a father, (O: Hmmm) you see 'cause my mom and I, we are strong, we are tough (O: Hmmm) so, you must have that, that male who will be beside you and that hey listen, it's like this you see, (O: Hmmm). That man figure you see, (Interviewer: Hmmm) that I told you that is right, (Interviewer: Hmmm). You see, you see, that support from daddy, (O: Hmmm) you see, ja, (O: Hmmm). I do not know to have that daddy, daddy, daddy, I did not have that, (O: hmmm) you see....]

O: *Hmmm, so how do you think that could have affected your life?*

Z: *Ha, big time, (One: Hmmm) big time, big time, ja,*

The father's failure or inability to provide for his family and children was experienced differently by the young women. Thando and Nomusa felt disadvantaged by their fathers' pension statuses while Mandisa attributed her family's poverty to her father's lack of

financial support. Thembi and Nomusa's future schooling plans were altered by the death of their fathers.

Khanyise narrates a different experience of fatherhood to that of the other young women. She was 'fathered' by her mother's ex boyfriend, whom she continues to call refer to as her father and with whom she has a strong positive relationship as an adult.

[...] I was like twelve, before I went to high school and she passed away. My father was not there and this sort of thing kind of like affected my dad because you know we kind of had a good relationship, like my dad used to come to my school. Like every day, walk me to school It sort of like affected him a lot because my mom was going to like get married and stuff, but not to him, to another guy from church [...]

[...] And ja, and then she passed away and my dad had to come back and he quitted his job. I don't know why he decided to, but he quitted. It's been kind of like that from that year until now, most of the time he was like very very very far away, so most of the time I didn't like, you know, sort of like go and talk to him or something like that. Or, you know because –

Khanyise maintains that Sipho is her father even though she knows who her biological father is. Her idea of a father figure is one to whom she has emotional ties. Sipho is also the one whom her mother had chosen to be the father figure for her children and he is perhaps a link to their late mother.

K: *Because I discovered that I had another dad, actually, my real dad. I discovered that. And because I remember when I was younger there was this man . . . that used to come to my house but I didn't know him. His name was Sipho. So I see him and --. But after a while I thought it was a lie, because I know there was nothing, my dad was my dad. . . . this thing with my mom hurt him so much that was some --. I'm, I'm very talkative.*

O: *That's fine! That's fine! You can go on.*

K: *So there was this other time where my --. I wanted to talk to him. I was just very upset about everything and [..]*

*And when I wanted to talk to him he was like, you know what Khanyi, you can go. You can go to your own father and whatever. And I was like, I was like You know as a kid I was like you know, he's mad. It was just like weird and stuff. I don't know if I like really actually accepted the fact that he's not my dad. Because he's a cool person. **Even now I still think that he's my dad and I still feel the same way, whether he likes it or not. So he's stuck with me.** And, and then this guy came and then into my life and stuff like that. [...]*

(Emphasis added)

This emphasis on the emotional relationship that Khanyise shares with her 'father' is less emphatic in most of the women's stories about their fathers. Fathers were predominantly constructed as providers by the participants and the absence of fathers was seen as detrimental to the participants' futures especially regarding the consequent lack of finances for further studies.

5.3.2 Child-headed household

Khanyise's childhood revealed her experience of being the head of the house while still a child herself. Her mother had passed away and she was under her extended family's care. Children with both parents dead are often left to fend for themselves. They do not get proper parental care or supervision (Foster *et al*, 1997).

...she[aunt] had two kids, two kids at that time. And they're like younger than me, like two years younger than me. And then we lived together with my brother. It's just me and my brother and two cousins and we lived, just the four of us, we lived alone most of the time.

[...]

Ja, I was like really the oldest and we had to live like alone most of the time because they drank. They'd come back at night and stuff like that. And then my other aunt, she was the oldest, was no better. I mean she can drink from like Monday to Friday and from Friday to Monday. I never see her, you know, like sober. The only thing she does is like just make noise and that's it. So the community, you know, they started thinking --. They started to complain about it, so they were going to send us, me and

my brother, to the social workers and stuff like that. Because my two cousins were like, they had their mother, even though she was drinking every day. But they had their mother and stuff like that. And so -- But instead of the social workers taking us, suddenly she no you can't take them and everything. So instead of that she took us to our father's family.

5.4 Gender

5.4.1 Motherhood

The high frequency of teenage pregnancy in South Africa has been attributed to multiple reasons which include ignorance, curiosity, peer pressure and fear of attending clinics (Kaufman *et al*, 2001). The young women in this story were concerned about unplanned pregnancy and the consequences thereof, especially the financial implications of being a teenage mother. Mandisa, Zinzi and Nobuhle were all mothers by the time of the second interview and reported regret at unplanned pregnancy.

Mandisa: *Having a baby? It was a mistake. I don't think I'll get any more child, because I was --. I did see that I was, I was bringing another problem [...]*

Zinzi: *Yes, I was seventeen. I made a huge mistake in my life, but then ja [...]*

Nobuhle viewed pregnancy as a crisis in her life from which she recovered:

[...] I like experiencing things, new things in life. And even though my life got nearly destroyed, was nearly destroyed, but I tried to fix those things.

O: *What do you mean your life was nearly destroyed?*

N: *When I got pregnant, ja. Because I thought that was the last thing. Actually, I was not going to like continue and study but my grandma said, ok, it's fine. Because I passed matric with good results. Ok, then she said I could continue at that time. Ja, that -- It like -- [Speaks in Zulu] in my life, because I was a bit stressed, you know, about those things. Now I can say it's a bit far, but still I'm a bit guilty.*

Having a child is interpreted as a deterrent for being successful. This is something Nomusa wants to avoid:

It's very hard. When you get a child it's like you don't have a future.

Nomusa wants to reinvent her mother's story. She is "thinking backwards and telling her story forwards" (Crites, 1986, p.165), using the past to write a story in the future that is desirable for her, choosing to change what she sees in the past:

Nomusa: I managed -- I managed because I used to think of my life that my mom went through. What she went through when she grew up and had me. She was very young; she had me when she was like fifteen. So I used to think of all of that and I didn't want to repeat the same thing that they did. She also used to warn me. She used to just sit with me and speak nicely with me and ask me not to do any of those things. So I had my first boyfriend when I was like doing grade twelve. And it's still the same guy I'm with now. So, I managed.

Bearing a child at an early age also increases the financial burden as the young mother is still in school and does not have means of providing for her child. The child is most often born into households with limited resources (Kaufman *et al*, 2001).

O: *Why do you feel guilty?*

Nobuhle: Because I had to leave my baby with my grandmother, for which she is too old to look after a baby, you know. And she's the one who has to support the baby, you know. Because the father is not well. I can say, he's not working, his work is not right. Ja.

Nomusa: Like imagine me I'm like twenty and I'm being taken care of by my, my uncle. Just imagine if I can get a child now – he wouldn't, he wouldn't.

Motherhood adds increased responsibility for the young mothers. They juggle motherhood with life challenges. Macleod (2003) says that adolescence is a stage where one is simultaneously a child and an adult and that bearing a child thrusts one into adulthood.

The young women are faced with making mature, adult decisions (Chigona & Chetty, 2008).

Zinzi: *Because we have babies now, people get babies right away, we let them right. So we have to afford to, to give life to the babies. And we have to have our own family now and stuff. So if you choose your life you say: ok fine, if I don't go to school or don't go to the varsity, or what am I going to do in ten years time? What am I going to be in four years time?*

Zinzi *Like mentally, the way that I used to think changed. Because, ok, when you are a child you are different. Before I had a child the way I was thinking is different from now, because when I'm doing things now I'm thinking of her. I have to be like this, so my daughter will be like this. And you know, that's also put pressure on me, Whatever I'm doing I have to think: is it right or wrong, where it's going to get me to. And will my baby benefit from that, or what will happen. It's really changed my way of thinking.*

Nobuhle: *Now I know that I have to think for another person, not for only myself. If I'm thinking of doing anything, I must remember like, that I have a child. Everything I do, I just have to think that I have a child – I have to do this and that for him, you know. And the behaviour. I have to behave myself because I'm a mother now. You know, even in the community I can't just do anything as a teenager, you know. What else?*

[...]

I think what's challenging is that as a mother, you have to like, you have to think for someone, you have to like --. You have to -- You don't have to focus on yourself only. There's someone that also needs you.

Although the young mothers all report regretting having children early, they are all determined to succeed in their lives so as to provide a better future for their children. Having a child in adolescence is particularly challenging as they have to negotiate adult roles

while they are not yet adults themselves. This problem is compounded by gender disparities in the society as typically the young woman is solely responsible for the child.

5.4.2 Multiple roles: family and career

While women are primarily constructed as mothers and home keepers (Burman, 1994) these young women all construct future roles for themselves beyond this. Nomusa's idea of being a woman was broadened when she was made aware of the possibility that she can be more than just a mother and wife; she could also pursue a career at the same time. This woman modelled success for her because she was successful in both her domestic and carrier lives.

[...] there was this one woman – she's married and she's also working as a manager – I don't know exactly but she was something big working at the bank. So we were asking her how her life was and she told us that she manages. She had a husband that loved her, they had kids and she was managing. And she kind of took me when I was listening. I said: wow, she's such a good woman.

[...]

A high position at work, it's like your employees are your kids now and you also have kids at home. So she managed. She was telling us how not easy it is, but she was coping. She kind of took me, she was like my role model. Ja, I wanted to follow her route.

Zinzi views herself in the future as a wife, mother and career woman bringing together seemingly opposing identities. She seems to have a very fluid sense of possibilities for herself. She refuses to be tied to a particular identity and is able to envisage multiple identities for herself (Bauman, 1996). For her, being a woman is more than being a nurturer:

I see myself a married woman with kids and a husband. Also being an independent woman. Sometimes I think two, two sides. It might be an educated woman with kids, educated with But I won't depend on my husband, I would be living with him but then I would have my own cash. My own things, my own stuff. Yes.

Independent woman means having your own things, not depending on somebody. Where if he, he leaves you now and you don't have an apartment, you don't have money, he takes your car and stuff. So I want to be independent and have my own car and my own stuff. Not dependent on someone. Ja.

In some cases, being a woman seemed to be a rigid and pre-constituted category. This category might be better understood as being context bound. The idea of being female is culturally shaped for Zoleka. This defines females in relation to men as well as having economic consequences.

Zoleka: *Us, black people, (O: Hmmm) We believe ukuthi intombazane, ...kodwa that is old stuff, (O: Hmmm) Ukuthi intombazane when... noma ingangafunda to that level, vele ufundiswa amaparents akho, amaparents akho we try by all means ukuthi uye lapho ufike kulevel lena yokuthi ubene career, a stable career, then umzali will say, hawu, uyazini ngizozamela ingane yami and I will end up esehamba maybe getting married then angishiye, then, kuyafana so, I might as well ngihlale nengane yami nje isiqedile ihambe iyosebenza e Pavillion as a waiter and they thought that is the life, uyabona, (O: Hmmm) Being a waiter, that is the life,*

[Us, black people, (O: Hmmm) We believe that a girl....but that is an old believe sort of thing that is old stuff, (O: Hmmm) That a girl when...even if she can be educated to that level, off-course your parents will be paying, and your parents would try by all means that you study to a certain level that you have a career, a stable careers then your parent will say (O: Hmmm) Being a waiter, that is the life,]

O: So, boys got more education than the girls?

Z: Sita I can say that because I can tell you that even umfana anga become a doctor, (O: Hmmm) Uzoba vele naye, angithi umfana wakhe. (O: Hmmm)

Instead uzothatha umuntu ngaphandle, he will like marry somebody else and bring that perso home uyabona, (O: Hmmm) To stay that name, uyabona, (O: Hmmm) Cause it is about, it is about supporting your family, ja (O: Hmmm) It is like, it is about ya, having, uh, a world/work family or provide for a family, (O: Hmmm) Uyabona,

[Sita I can say that because I can tell you that even a boy can become a doctor, (O: Hmmm) Well yes, the parent will support the boy as he is his/her child (O: Hmmm) Instead he/she will bring a person from outside, he will like marry somebody else and bring that person home you se) (O: Hmmm) To stay that name, you see (O: Hmmm) Cause it is about, it is about supporting your family, ya, (yes) (O: Hmmm) It is like, it is about ya, having, uh, a world/work family or provide for a family, (O: Hmmm) You see]

O: Hmmm, it's like your parents are choosing where to invest,

Z: Exactly, it is... ja to them it is investing, uyabona,

[Exactly, it is...ja to them it is investing, you see]

Bearing a child in adolescence is not always easy and it is difficult to organise time for studying and motherhood (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). But Nobuhle's story tells of a successful integration of roles despite these difficulties.

Nobuhle: *I remember in matric, I can say I passed but I forced. Because everything was, I don't know. But it was fine, first semester, I did fine. And when I got pregnant it was June, I think. It was June, and I got like depressed and I didn't write the June exams. I don't know, but I couldn't sleep the whole night. And I would just wake up at seven in the morning and go to school and I like, I think I was depressed you know. And then I am starting the second semester, I got sick you know. To that time I stopped going to there, to study. There was study times at school in the evening and in the early morning. I stopped going there because I was sick, really. I forced myself, and the June results were fine because I got a number one in class.*

The young women are aware of the potentially conflicting roles of mother and career woman that they are taking on and are determined to make both roles work for them, illustrating a fluid sense of identity. They are able to reflect on their cultural beliefs that ascribe roles of subservient mother and wife for women and make choices to become successful career women as well as mothers and wives.

5.5 Language

Language features strongly in participants' narratives of identity. Through the use of language in everyday conversation, we are at all times negotiating who we are and how we relate to others and the world (Norton, 1997). Language enables us to engage in the construction and negotiation of identity. On the one hand, English serves as access to resources and a better life. However, the use of a second language complicates these processes of identification. Even though English is widely recognised in its association with economic power, those who choose to use it become excluded from other forms of collective identity (Rudwick, 2008). These young women's narratives reveal the tensions. They want to identify with English because of its power and what it grants them access to. They also distance themselves from the coconut identity and identify with being "authentically Zulu". The two identities are set up as conflicting with the young women having to negotiate both.

5.5.1 English as access

The English language is associated with access into another way of life; a 'white' life, one of privileges, economic prowess (Wright 2002; Rudwick 2008). Its use is perceived to elevate one's social class, above that of other people in the community. Its use enables an individual to access power and economic resources as it is the dominant language within the economy.

For Zinzi the use and knowledge of English language was a marker of having escaped an impoverished lifestyle and mentality. Her family were deliberate in what they wanted,

which is improved life conditions and this was understood as attainable through learning English.

*But now I went to preschool then went to a black school where we speak isiZulu from the morning until afternoon every day. Our daily lives we spoke Zulu **but** then because we, we know in life what we want, so we change our life and then this is the right thing. Somebody did this, that's why he or she is like this. So why one might be able to do this in order to be like him or her.*

Zinzi is indicating that English made a particular change in one's life through the examples of other lives they had witnessed. Wright (2002) argues that increased fluency in English tends to be followed by improved socio economic conditions for black people. Zinzi views fluency in English as the compelling choice.

[...]Some people they even ask you, why are you speaking English if you, you are a Zulu-speaking, or when you're speaking to a person who speaks isiZulu. You were brought up with isiZulu, why are you speaking English? They don't understand, but you know why, I think it's those people are, the majority of those people are not educated. They don't know that English is the way to go now. If you can't speak English you cannot go anywhere in life now. But they don't know any of that, so the majority of them still are people that have not been educated, they haven't been to the varsity or ja, they just don't, they're clueless. So that's why they, they're shocked if you speak English amongst black people. Because now if you, if you are in the varsity you understand why you have to get used to speaking English. You as an individual practise; you just understand why it is, because most of the things are done in English.

Without English, it is difficult to attain resources necessary for further studies and improving your life chances. Zoleka says:

Okay, we have, ya we have ama libraries, uh, uthole ukuthi kwesinye isikhathi the processes enzekalayo to get access to the library, izingane children are like ngingathini not enlightened about zona lezozinto, like if ufuna ukwenza iaccess card kunamacomplications nje, so children end up bengenayo interest uyabona

yokuya e library, and that kubabulala first their confidence cause bona they know ukuthi uh, angikwazi uku utter e English word, uyabona, it is over with me. So, bese beyahlehla uyabona, (Yes, we have , yes, we have libraries uh, and you realized that at some point the processes are are to be followed to get access to the libraries are complicated and children are like, how can I say it are not enlightened about these things, like if you want to gain access card there are complicated and children ended up losing interest you see, to go to libraries and it kills first their confidence because they know that uh, they cannot utter an English word, you see, so it is over with them. And then they just quit, you see).

It is interesting to note that Zoleka code-switches between English and isiZulu in order to make her argument for English and the access to knowledge that it provides. English plays a vital role in education in post democratic South Africa. English is the official medium of teaching in South African schools, however, the majority of learners have English as a second language. This poses challenges for them in learning especially in areas that require highly developed levels of cognitive academic language functioning (Thessen, 1997). Evidence shows that mother tongue would be best suited as medium of instruction in the classroom. However, there is minimal educational material in African languages (Banda, 2000). Furthermore, people instructed in English stand a better chance of employment. Added to this, parents and students seem to prefer English as the medium of instruction because of the advantages it has attached to it (Banda, 2000; de Klerk, 1999). The young women's stories showed an awareness of the power of English in education as well as the associated issues. Zinzi says:

[...]I'm here today because of it [English language]. Ja. And I'm glad that I am, that I can express myself in English and even at the university most of the things are done in English. You can't tell me that you're going to have your own exam paper that's written in isiZulu because you can only speak Zulu or whatever. You have to learn to speak English; you are forced to do so. Otherwise you can't even be a student, so that's what is happening.

English language played an important role in Zandi's studies. It helped her make sense of what she was studying. The ability to speak and use English brought about a sense of control over her studies and the resulting sense of achievement.

I also liked my high school, but not as much as I liked my primary. Because that's where I started to see things --. I didn't know English when I was doing grade four. As I said, everything was just so blank, and then when I was in grade five things started lightening up. Ja, I learned a lot of things. My English teachers were very good with me and I used to be very good with language – English language.

Being able to understand and use English enabled Zandi to perform well in her studies. English made it easier to grasp what was being taught. She was able to help her class mates with their work as she could understand it.

[...] And everyone just came to me for momentum. And I also didn't know everything. It was just one question in March and most of the students didn't get it. Ja, it, it -- I know English. I'm careful with English so it was a question that required simple things like --. Uhm, momentum, what was it about? But it was a simple thing.

O: *But it had more to do with the language --.*

Z: *With the language. Like you had to understand the extract, ja, and then apply it. So I kind of understood it very easily and most of the students didn't take note of it, so they can't, didn't get it right and I did. Ja. And he thought I was so good with momentum.*

Similarly, Zinzi had an advantage over other learners because of her background in English from her previous school.

Since I was from, I came from an Indian school I was passing with flying colours, everything was you know. Because I was combined now with those children who came from primary school, from the African schools.

Because of South Africa's history, language is often elided with 'race'. Schools that are made up of racial groups that use English as a medium of learning are labelled as superior when compared to those that have racial groupings that use vernacular languages as their medium of communication. Thembi talks about her experience of attending various schools in terms that slip between 'race' and language:

Ja, because I went to, to -- From grade one to grade five I was in an English school. And from, from grade six and seven I went to Coloured school, Sydenham. And then I just thought that I'm a black, and I haven't went to a Black school and thought I must go and hear how is the education there. And, and I haven't done Zulu. At that time I didn't do it. But my aunt, my other aunt used to, to teach me to write the things in Zulu and it wasn't bad, I knew it a bit. And then I went there and it was like my performance just like went like this (uses a hand gesture to indicate dramatic acceleration). I don't know why.

Zinzi speaks of English in racialised terms. Even though she is black, she is distancing herself from other black people through the use of English in her schooling experience:

I was used to that life, of Indian life, you know. I wasn't used to a black school and walking to school, you know. I was used to speaking English from morning till afternoon. Because when I came to Chesterville they were like, ooh, you're speaking English. And I never got used to speaking Zulu, I used to combine the words in Zulu and English. They were like oh, you think you're too clever, you're speaking English. And I was like, I'm coming from an Indian school, you know. Ja.

Zinzi also shares a similar experience.

The Indian school, there was a difference. I do know the difference but then not that much. Because in the Indian school you find Indians. There are Zulu people there, but then it really helped me to go to an Indian because that's when I, that is where I was taught how to put a sentence together, how to read, how to write. From grade one I was, I went to . . . Primary. They taught me a lot of things –

how to read, how to write, how to --. Because now I speak English and I speak English through that knowledge that I took from Indian school. Ja, before I went to the Zulu-speaking school. Ja, it really helped me with everything.

[...]

O: How was that? The experience of changing schools?

S: It was bad. It was bad because I had to learn isiZulu.

O: You didn't know Zulu?

S: I didn't know how to do Zulu. I learned in high school. I had to start doing a lot of things in Zulu where in primary we used to do it, we used to do everything in English. Ja, it was hard for me but then . . . ja, it was hard.

The introduction of English as a medium of instruction in her schooling was perceived as means of socio- economic upward mobility by Zinzi. This gave her confidence in her studies. De Klerk (1999) illustrated, through her study, that the use of English and associated accents increased learners' confidence.

*But now I went to preschool then went to a black school where we speak isiZulu from the morning until afternoon every day. Our daily lives we spoke Zulu **but** then because we, we know in life what we want, so we change our life and then this is the right thing. Somebody did this, that's why he or she is like this. So why one might be able to do this in order to be like him or her.*

Code switching by teachers and students has been reported in classrooms (Rudwick, 2008). It reflects on the speaker's competence with both language, or in other instances lack of competence in both languages (de Klerk, 1999). Thobeka's narrative shows that code switching was present in her primary school to a certain extent.

But when I was at primary we had this --. My, my English teacher give us like --. He would give me, she would give me a card. When I found you, if you are in my class, when I found you talking Zulu then I give you a card. I give the card to you. And when you find someone, when the teacher she like comes back: Sindy, who

did you give the card? I say: One, you know. Like you would say like the card I give to tell her you know, all of you guys are going to be punished, you know.

Thobeka's experience shows the divide between urban and rural spaces in relation to the use of English. English is considered to be more important in urban areas and is spoken in a more eloquent manner. This might be attributed to the historical racialisation of space, the fact that urban areas are more affluent (Lemanski, 2004; Ajam, 1987) and the conglomeration of people with different first languages (Rudwick, 2008).

Thobeka: *Yes. Ja the primary is great. Our high school say: you know what, just go and talk alone, you know. Ja. But when I come -- I arrived Jo-burg, wow, English is great. Ok, like you can com -- Like it's a common language. You can like communicate with all people, you know. Because if you, if you don't understand Setswana, you know, you must talk English. If you don't understand Sesotho now, ja. Ok, ja.*

[...]

I remember this girl, the other one of them Jenny. I didn't know whether she was having the flu, like, wow. I used to run and sit alone. . . . wow. What am I going to do now? Because like my English, you know -- Like when you stay at Bergville they, you --. Like when you study at school you study with English, but usually they talk Zulu, you know. Like in English you just say ok, it's fine. Like when you go to some other place like Jo-burg, you're wow, hau hau hau. The small kid, you know, the young young one talking English, like wow, that's great. You know, ja.

Thobeka is pursuing her desire to learn better English. She feels that she is not fluent in conversational English because of her school's disadvantaged status.

Where I improve my language, I'm still improving, you know. I think there is nice English there, seriously. But when like you like, model C school, ja, like There was those guys who, who come from their primary maybe they did at Bergville Primary. Bergville Primary it's a model C school, you know. Ja. You know it's ok . . . those guys coming through Bergville, you know you talk the

*English, huh? I'm not a white guy, you know, you must talk alone, you know.
That wasn't encouraging, it was discouraging.*

5.5.2 Distancing and identification as black

Identity is a convergence of the individual as a social subject and the processes which produce subjectivities. The prevailing discourses hail the social subject in an attempt to get them to respond. Hall (2000) states that identities are a point at which “there is temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us to see. They are the result of a successful articulation or chaining of the subject into the flow of the discourse” (Hall, 2000, p.19). The use of English produces particular forms of identification for these young women that simultaneously create disidentification and distance from others.

Khanyise: *There was this other time, now this other guy So this guy's like You know I walk down the street and he . . . me and there was this other time he just said another guy shouldn't greet me, because you know I'm, I'm a They called it a white chick, you know. So you know they were kind of like: you can't speak to her because she's you know, kind of like a white chick and that upset me very much. Because I know I'm not. Seriously I am not a white chick. And so at that time I was very upset, you know I was really very upset so he said it and I didn't say anything. I just walked away because I know, you know, when I get angry. And so the guy just carries on and he comes to me and he says, you know what you can stop looking at me like that because I'm going to just hit you. And I'm like, ok, and I'm just walking away again and then he comes again. And you know what he did? He slapped me, like really. I was like, oh my God, you did not do that! Yes, I'm telling you. And I had to and I was like no!*

Khanyise's encounter shows how the use of English serves to divide people. It has very real effects and can be risky and dangerous. The power inherent in the ability to use it may be threatening to other people who do not use it. Khanyise's identity as a black person was

challenged as a result of her use of English. She was not being authentically black or Zulu by using English. She was behaving like a 'coconut'; even though her skin is black she is behaving like a white person by speaking English (Rudwick, 2008). By being a 'coconut'; being white on the inside and black on the outside is an identity category that places one such person at odds with the township identity (Salo, 2009). She embraces both her black identity and her identity as a black English speaker.

5.5.3 Ambiguities and uncertainties

The young women's narratives bring forth ambiguity between identities they find themselves negotiating. They want to identify with English because as it promises maximum financial benefits and political rewards (de Klerk, 1999). However, in an attempt to identify with being 'authentically' Zulu, they also distance themselves from the "coconut" identity. The young women find themselves continually negotiating the seemingly polarised identity positions. Khanyise says:

You know, when you're in the township you can express yourself in any way. But if you speak English, you know, it's like you're trying to make yourself look better than anybody else, like that mentality. I don't know what, but you know, what's amazing is this: I've never spoken in English with anybody except to my friends. And I'm not talking to you, I'm speaking with my friends. But when I'm talking to you I make sure that I'm speaking Zulu.

Identification evokes a sense of commonality, of shared characteristics that marks one as belonging to a particular group. Hall (2000) argues that this sense of identity as oneness is fictional. The use of English locates Khanyise out of the perceived common "Zulu" identity. She wants to identify with what the language has to offer but also feels rejected out of the common Zulu identity because of the use of English. It is challenging to bring the two identities together.

Yes. Ja, you get like totally rejected by everybody and they like don't want to associate with you because they think that you're making yourself look better.

Or whatever. And I never understood what the heck was that. I don't understand some people; I don't understand their reasons why they do that. It, it's just a language. It's a language, it doesn't change who you are, but it's just a language!

Identity construction is influenced by the interaction of power and exclusion (Hall, 2000). According to Hall (2000), language functions within the perimeters of power and institutions. This points to the fact that identities are not innate and predetermining, rather, are the result of “[...] naturalised, over-determined process of closure” (Hall, 2000, p.18). Identity is constructed in relation to time and context and so is always in the process of change and transformation. Zinzi’s experience shows that identity is multiple and fragmented and is constructed within different and sometimes interacting and contradicting discourses.

Zinzi: *[...]Some people they even ask you, why are you speaking English if you, you are a Zulu-speaking, or when you're speaking to a person who speaks isiZulu. You were brought up with isiZulu, why are you speaking English? They don't understand, but you know why, I think it's those people are, the majority of those people are not educated. They don't know that English is the way to go now. If you can't speak English you cannot go anywhere in life now. But they don't know any of that, so the majority of them still are people that have not been educated, they haven't been to the varsity or ja, they just don't, they're clueless. So that's why they, they're shocked if you speak English amongst black people. Because now if you, if you are in the varsity you understand why you have to get used to speaking English. You as an individual practise; you just understand why it is, because most of the things are done in English.*

As a lingua franca, English is also used in bridging the possible communication gap between different language groups. KwaZulu Natal townships are characterised by a linguistic homogeneity which effectively closes off the need to learn and speak other languages (Rudwick, 2008). Khanyise shows how the preferred use of the vernacular language, in this

case isiZulu, can create barriers between different groups speaking different languages. Indeed this was seen in South Africa during the xenophobic attacks of 2008 where linguistic “tests” were used as a criterion to distinguish between South Africans and non South Africans. Individuals were asked what an elbow was in isiZulu and failure to answer meant that you were a foreigner (HSRC 2008; AfricaFocus Bulletin 2010). Being black for Khanyise is not limited to the exclusive use of isiZulu. Language does not determine one’s racial or ethnic identity.

Khanyise: *I don’t know, some people don’t like English. I don’t know why. They just want you to just speak Zulu. They still have this thing that, you know, we’re not white and so we’re not supposed to be speaking that language, we’re supposed to speak Zulu. And sometimes like you know my question was: why is it --. What if I just like speak Sotho because it’s a black language, why does it, you know --. What if I’m speaking Sotho and I can’t speak Zulu to you, so, you know.*

O: *Yes, what’s the difference?*

K: *You know, that person, they’re just against the language. I don’t know why, I’m telling you. You know there was this other time I had to just take a taxi and I had to speak to a person there, I had to like find words like really I was like really struggling. The thing is like I have different friends, some are Xhosa, some are like Sotho, some they’re like Tswana; they all speak different languages. So the only way that we can communicate with each other is speaking English. So I don’t understand why a person will actually say: ok, you can’t speak English. I don’t understand it. . . . they don’t read like English books. I don’t understand it, why now? **Why are they fighting against the language? Because this is the simplest language you can actually speak. You can say whatever, but English is simple. It’s just very easy to retrieve everything from memory when you speak, than these other languages [...]***

People labelled as coconuts usually attend school outside townships in multiracial areas (Rudwick, 2008). Space has a history of racialisation with predominantly white areas being associated with affluence. The movement from townships to suburbia is effectively the crossing of boundaries of the old Apartheid social and racial spaces, indicating progress in

socio economic status. This move entails education and the ability to speak English which is the economic language allowing one access to jobs and a better life.

5.6 Education

Apartheid policies were developed to methodically deprive black schools of resources. The most significant impact was observed in school facilities and teacher training. The required qualifications for teaching in black schools were a senior certificate and three years of additional as of the mid 90s. However, training institutions were ill equipped and so teachers received poor training (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). The government spent more money on white schools with an individual white student receiving 10 times more financial support than a black student. By 1994 the government was spending two and a half times more on a 'white' student than it was spending on a 'black' student. The situation was worse for rural areas. The consequences were far reaching and the effects persist in post-apartheid South Africa (Fedderke *et al*, 2000, Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Students continue to be taught in less than ideal environments with a lack of properly trained teachers. Khanyise contrasts education between her township and the suburbs:

K: Ok. Even though we learn, you know from the same books and stuff, it's different in terms of like we don't --. We didn't have teachers. There were certain subjects that we had to learn on our own.

O: Yes. Like?

K: Like, I remember I didn't have a math teacher until grade 12. And even though I had one but it was very difficult to find, you know, to learn, when you haven't had the backdrop, the background of math. And physics, without a teacher, also biology. You know, we had to do certain stuff on our own. You know the laboratory like, the equipment, we didn't have it. It was like, limited. And it's like, everything we learned, it's like you have to do an experiment. Things like, doing it from the book and we just had to just memorise everything, how it's supposed to be and how the results are supposed to be. So, that's how we actually like, you know, learnt everything.

Thembi talks about lack of teachers and teachers who did not receive adequate training in her schooling experience. According to her, this made their education of sub-standard quality.

Thembi: *We did have a Maths teacher, but he was not good. Like we weren't taught things that we, that we, that were supposed to be known by a, a learner who is doing grade eight. And we passed and everything but we didn't know how we got marks that we didn't understand and everything. I even got a trophy that I was the highest, but I didn't know what highest am I because I don't know anything like about Maths, so I don't consider it that. And in grade nine we didn't -- In grade eight we didn't --.*

O: *You didn't have a Maths teacher at all? At all?*

T: *No. In grade ten, did we? No, we didn't. And I think another guy came, like another guy from the community came and taught us. And you know that if someone is not a teacher and comes and just teaches you something that is --. If you he comes in grade ten, he thinks you know things from grade eight and stuff and he will jump and do this and this even though you don't understand everything. Like we are starting to do external exams now, which is like more confusing, more confusing. And in grade eleven our teacher came and he was good. Then I knew that I am going to pass my Maths. But then maybe he taught us for one month and then he died at school[...]And then there, thereafter I don't know there were problems about the principal. Our principal left – the one that was strict – and other teachers left. And the school became like a disaster.*

Fiske and Ladd (2004) say that black schools have inherited a lack of “culture of learning” due to struggle against apartheid. Students are reported to “see little economic or other payoffs in academic achievement” (Fiske & Ladd, 2004, p.58). However, the young women in this study consider education as key to employment and improved life chances.

Zinzi: *I want to have a successful life. Like, like people -- You know, everything in life's on your hands nowadays, at your hands. If you want -- It doesn't pay to be*

somebody who is not educated, who is lying around the location. You won't get anything back, because you will end up ok, not educated, starting to finding jobs that will not pay you the right amount or, you know, so you can afford life.

Thobile: *[...] there's other guys there, she's learning at CUT and she always tell me that school is very important and everything else. Because once you are educated and get the diploma or degree or whatever, it's easy for you to get a job and you get more advantage of getting, you know, the jobs, ja. From the government, from the banks, you know, ja*

Thembi *[...] Although like I couldn't believe it, like something like a dream, when you are still at school. Like I want to do this and this. Even when I, I passed my matric, it was like, even though I said I wanted to study something, it was like it was something far away from me. But the following year when I was in university I couldn't believe it that I am really studying and now I still don't believe that I am studying now. Like, like there is a light that I am going to or something. Like I don't believe it.*

Even though the young women have such a high regard for education, it is difficult to get educated without money. Many learners continue to grow up in conditions of poverty as their parents have not been equipped to sufficiently provide for themselves and their families, making it difficult to pay for their children's education (Ladd & Fiske, 2004). Thobile says:

[...] I wanted to finish matric and then go to school to study. But I knew that it's difficult for that to happen, because even if I got, I got exemption. Even if I got like a bursary that wouldn't help because my family, no-one could have come and support me. Because I also need money to buy food and stuff, you know.

O: *So you're saying a bursary wouldn't have helped anyway?*

T: It would have helped, but even if you are, ja. Even if you do have a bursary you still need some little bit of support, someone who's going to give you like R500. But there's no-one to give me that amount at home.

Finances played a significant role in deciding in which field to study for Thobile:

T: To study. I like travel and tourism, because I've worked so much with like people, like the guests because I'm working at the hotel. And also, I like being a teacher, ja, I like being a teacher. Because I've always loved that. Because even at school when I used to, when I understand something better I used to like to tell other learners and then go to the front and then write to them, you know, and stuff. I love being a teacher, ja. Because like I want a job -- I want to do something -- I want to study something that can easily get me a job, you know. And not --. [...] And not a very expensive course

Even though education is now run by a single national department, learners in previously disadvantaged schools continue to be taught in environments not conducive to learning (Fedderke *et al*, 2000). High school leaving results continue to consistently show that students from previously disadvantaged school are under performing (Mail & Guardian, Jan, 2010). The students reportedly perform much better at internal exams when compared to national exams. This shows that while education policies focus on equal provision of education, the standards of previously disadvantaged schools do not match those of other schools.

Thobeka: I feel bad bad bad. I was like shocked, wow. I didn't expecting this. Because June, you know, June 2006 I did, I did very well, you know. You know, December my results going to be perfect, you know. But when I -- When the results coming you know like, wow. I'm not expecting this.

Thembi: And the other thing that was scaring me in matric, you know when you have other other other people that are ahead of you and people that you see they are

intelligent and clever. And when they did their matric some of them failed and you would see that, what about me? Which means I'm also going to fail. And I was, I was scared of doing matric. I thought I was going to fail. And I thought about this thing that the results come out in the newspaper and there's the thing that you write exams that are not set by your school. Eish, that usually made me scared, but the thing is the good matric results started with us. It started with us.

School presented a sense of achievement for Mandisa and Thobeka. It also presented an idea of future escape from their current circumstances. Schooling conveys a sense that the future will be better as it leads them to their desired futures. It allows Thobeka and Mandisa to project into the future, with the hope of being educated.

Thobeka: *The life was great because like I was studying -- You know, I was working hard, like studying, like ok ok. The teachers recognised me, ok this girl she's doing [her] work. And you know, like ja.*

[...]

When I start grade eight, like they did recognise me because there was --. I was doing like programmes. Like they select, if they selects the kids, you want to do what program like? Like I . . . for the breast cancer. (O: Wow) And I'm having a certificate for that. Ja, and I was like doing sport, like athletics. Ja, it was great my grade eight. And grade ten I write, I wrote -- There was a competition about maths, I don't remember. Like we were writing, like they give you like maths thing, you know? Ja. And I have certificate for that. I don't remember what was this, CC, or CCM project, something like that, ja. And my grade eleven was great. My grade twelve was great too, but when I --. Like the end of the year, grade 12 2006, I didn't write. My mom was having the problems, she was sick and I was little bit, little bit lagged. I was little bit lagged, that's why I did upgrade my subjects.

For Mandisa, school was a place where she could get away from the impoverishment. She took pride in her school achievements, which were not limited by the poverty at home.

Mandisa: *But because I was clever at school I was --. I wasn't a slow learner. I did get, I did get opportunities. Many things. Like they took me to Cape Town when I was doing, when I was doing grade twelve. Oh, about the Fast-forward I did. They was -- The teachers -- The teachers were taking people who are just clever, who are not slow, who are not the slow learners.*

6. Conclusion

This study focused on how young black women in post apartheid South Africa tell their stories in relation to their 'race', gender and context. Life stories allow us to connect the past and the present accounting for past experiences in the present and making it possible to conceive of a future in a way that makes sense. It is of interest to see what impact memory has on shaping democratic South Africa. South African society has indeed changed in the most profound ways. Racial segregation is no longer enforced in areas like education and geographical space. Young people aspire for things that were not availed to their parents and their older siblings in the previous apartheid regime. However, inequalities inherent from the apartheid era continue to shape the young women's everyday life experiences and their emerging adult lives along race and class lines. Material inequalities and poverty continue to structure everyday life while race and class continue to define and separate space. Poverty remains a reality for the majority of black people. It affects their day to day life experiences and impacts on what life choices can be made. Schooling and consequent employment is curtailed by lack of finances. Families are not able to educate their children due to lack of finances. This has a great impact on the young women's envisioned future identities. Gender discrepancies found within South Africa impede women from fully reaching the potential. Women bear the greater responsibility of child rearing. The young women were disadvantaged in some ways by unplanned pregnancy. They had to shoulder the responsibilities and financial implications of being a teenage mother. At the same time, there is a certain level of agency revealed in the young women as they show that they are not confined to their context and past.

The geographical spaces in which young people live affect in significant ways, various aspects of their day to day lives and their future opportunities. The apartheid aim of segregated space creating different social identities resonate within the current South Africa. The urban area is characterised by spatial fragmentation and segregation inherited from the apartheid era. Material differences between spaces correlate to racial groupings. Previously white areas remain more developed while black areas are impoverished and enjoy very little development in social services. The young women aspire to move into suburbia but are aware of possible constraints that might hinder them from doing so. Moving to the suburbs is about crossing the boundaries of the old Apartheid social and

racial spaces. Some young women seek another language to try and describe their space, dissociating it from the influences and connections to apartheid. They try to construct new versions of and rural spaces.

The young women in this study hold education in high regard. They consider education as key to employment and improved life chances. However, they are faced with many challenges with regards to education. Previously disadvantaged schools are educating learners in less than ideal environments with a lack of properly trained teachers. There has also been a high incidence of absent teachers. Students from such schools are underperforming at national level exams. Many families not been equipped to sufficiently provide for themselves, making it difficult to pay for their children's education affecting their future and life chances. The young women lived in household structures that might include extended family members. Some young women had their early years characterised by domestic instability, upheaval, and uncertainty as they could not live with their parents and were cared for by different family members. Fathers were constructed as providers and as having solutions to the obstacles that the young women faced in their lives.

Language plays a significant role in the context of South Africa as it shapes the young women's everyday experiences. It has a great effect on how they construct their current and possible identities. English serves, in South Africa, as access to resources and a better life. It provides access to maximum financial benefits and political rewards. However, those who choose to use it are excluded from other forms of collective identity. The young women are aware of these complications that come with using a second language. They want to identify with English because of its power and what it grants them access to. However, they don't want to be regarded as inauthentic and so distance themselves from the 'coconut' identity. They have to negotiate between these two identities.

Race was to a certain extent an invincible and pre-constituted category. It influenced in many ways the young women's everyday life experiences and future possibilities. This is due to its prominent role in the segregation of apartheid South Africa where people, space and social services were segregated racially. It intersects in interesting ways with different factors to disadvantage the young women in the study. The young women in the study did not very clearly talk about 'race'. However, race as a concept was at play in covert ways.

Race is intertwined with the experience of using (or choosing not to use) English language. Those who chose to use it were constructed as not being 'authentically' Zulu and excluded from the collective 'black' identity. They were labelled as 'coconuts': 'white' on the inside and 'black' on the outside. They looked 'black' but behaved in 'white' ways because of their use of English, which is associated with 'whiteness'. In some instances, schooling experience was analysed in racial ways. They regard formerly 'non-black' schools as better especially because they use English as the medium of instruction. Because South Africa's social life is racially stratified, the young women's experiences of everyday life has racial implications which are evident throughout their stories although they do not use 'race' as an overt marker for talking about their lives. The effects of this stratification are still felt even though the apartheid government is no more. Residential places remain fragmented mainly along racial lines. The young women continue to negotiate their everyday lives in places that were deprived of social amenities because of the 'race' orientation.

The young women show, to a certain degree, an ability to think beyond their constraining worlds, envisioning a range of possibilities and future identities. Discursive consciousness shows that people are not just passive in relation to the society. They are able to reflect on their everyday life practises in a critical way (Billington *et al*, 1998). The young women are able to express some level of agency. Their agency is, however, limited in two ways; through discourse and materially. The self is experienced within a variety of power-laden discourses which constrain and shape how we experience the world. "The self is constructed in discourses and then re-experienced within all the texts of everyday life" (Parker, 1989, p.58). Post-apartheid South Africa speaks of an envisioned racially united South Africa. The notion of the 'rainbow nation' plays on racial identities perpetuating the use of race as a marker of identity. So, in this way race continues to be a prevalent discourse. The embodiment of everyday experience of being black living in a disadvantaged area can be an obstacle to agency. Poverty and hunger is a reality to many young women.

The exercise of agency allows for the young women to be able to project desired future identities. Their narratives showed clear movement and fluidity in identity. They are not tied to a particular identity but seem to prefer to take on and discard particular identities as the need arises. This is reflected in the young women's narratives where they choose to use English because of the economic benefits it offers even though they are aware of the

disidentification and distance from others it creates. Their narratives show that they are not bound to one certain identity. Their projected future identities are non-racialised and are constructed as accessing resources that were previously denied black people. Perhaps their covert use of race is an attempt to separate themselves from apartheid identities. They want to break forth into the socio- economic world that black people could not access in the past. Education is envisaged as key to doing so. The narratives in this study show new ways of envisaging the self in democratic South Africa.

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PARTICIPATION CONTRACT

The programme is open to all Chesterville Extension High & Amangwane High Grade11 learners who want to come. 50 Learners from each school will be selected. There are some ground rules for participation. Please read this through carefully.

Thinking about and creating un-known futures is not easy and so you need to be prepared to **work** during the programme. This work will be mixed in with lots of play but you will be required to work in groups with your peers, think hard, talk lots, and read and write interesting stories.

The programme starts at **9am SHARP** every day and learners **must** be on time or they will not be permitted to attend. It is a full day programme, ending at **4pm** each day. Learners who choose to come to the **FAST-FORWARD** programme must attend and participate in **ALL** sessions on **all five** days.

There are important rules on the University of KwaZulu-Natal campus that protect the safety of all students, e.g. no drugs or firearms are allowed. These rules and other rules related to the use of the facilities on campus will be upheld during the Programme. The instructions of University staff and Programme facilitators must be respected at all times.



fastforward thanks...

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UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
ACCESS AND RETENTION PROJECT

THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
Our thanks also go to Prof. Fikile Mazibuko,
Deputy Vice Chancellor and
Head of College, UKZN.



Chesterville Extension High School &
Amangwane High School
in partnership with



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL
School of Psychology

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Memorial Tower Building
Durban
4041

Phone: (031) 260 7593

Fax: (031) 260 2618



Fastforward

Imagine if you could press the
fast-forward button on your life ...

>>What picture of your-self would you like to see?

>>What story would you like to hear told?

>>What song would you like to hear sung?

If you are eager to **explore** the future, you
are invited to spend some time with us at
the University of KwaZulu-Natal on

fastforward!



PART ONE: MOVING & SHAKING INTO A FUTURE!

Welcome to the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This will be **your** place for the next three days! University staff will be there to welcome you and show you around. During the week you will have the opportunity to meet many interesting people. **You** will interview and photograph them to tell the **FAST FORWARD** story in your own way.

DAY ONE: Monday 30/6/2008

Drama Workshop

Lights, camera & ACTION! This workshop uses drama techniques to explore your own life and the important social issues that affect us all. Bring your mind, body and soul for a process that ends in an explosive group performance!

Music and Dance Workshop

This workshop will see us making music and using your bodies in movement to explore who we are. We can all appreciate and move to the beats, sounds and rhythms of Africa!



Bring clothes that are easy to move in. NO SKIRTS!! You will want to be able to move/jump around.



DAY TWO: Tuesday 1/7/2008

Sexuality Workshop

Our second day together will be spent talking about something that you usually do not get the opportunity to talk about – SEX! There is a lot that we think we know about it, but there is a lot more we **need** to know.



www.Computer_Workshop.co.za

Whether you are a beginner or an experienced computer user, this is your opportunity to explore the internet. Your imagination is the only limit in this virtual world.



DAY THREE: Wednesday 2/7/2008

Talking Careers

Find out the stories of people at work by talking to them about the choices that they made, the luck or accidents that happened along the way, and what they like and dislike about what they do. Lots of interesting and unusual work in the world!

Think about who you are, who you will become and the kind of work that you'd like to do.



PART TWO: LOOKING BACKWARDS & FLYING FORWARDS!

These two days are spent in the mountains of the Berg: a different place for Chesterville learners but a familiar space for Amangwane learners.



DAY FOUR and FIVE: Thursday 3/7/2008 and Friday 4/7/2008

Natural Heritage

The Drakensberg has been declared a world heritage site and we will energetically explore this beautiful place by hiking, playing team games and learning about the relationship between people and the earth.



Cultural Heritage

What is our heritage? We will spend time thinking about where we come from and where we would like to be in the future. We will talk about what it means to come from a place like Chesterville/ Bergville; what it means to be isiZulu or isiXhosa; South African or African and learn about the special history of the SAN people.



Appendix 2- Consent Form

Consent Form

Tracking the future: from school to where?

Researcher Name: One Selohilwe
Address: Howard College, University Of KwaZulu Natal, Durban
Phone: 0727623392

Supervisor Name: Jill Bradbury
Address: Howard College, University Of KwaZulu Natal, Durban
Phone: 031-260 3261
Email: Bradbury@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. This form outlines the purposes of the study and informs you on how you will be involved as well as your rights as a participant.

The purposes of this project are to find out about the lives of people who took part in the Fast Forward programme between 2003 and 2005 and have since matriculated.

Information for this research will be collected through an interview which will be audiotaped. The interview will be divided into two parts with the second interview taking place at a later stage where you will be notified.

I will use the information from this study to write a report where the information you give me will be included.

I will guarantee that:

1. A pseudonym will be used instead of your name in the written case report.
2. Your participation in this research is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice.
3. The records and reports written will be safely stored and will only be accessed by myself and my supervisor Prof. Jill Bradbury. All information will be treated as confidential.

I _____ agree to the above terms

Date _____